

ITEM 8 - QUESTIONS

(1) Question from Councillor Gruffydd Williams

In the context of the latest decision by the Supreme Court, what arrangements are in place to confirm that women in Gwynedd have access to places and opportunities of all kinds for women only.

Response - The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Legal and the Welsh Language, Councillor Llio Elenid Owen

The Council is in the process of considering the implications of the ruling taking into account further information e.g. the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Interim Guidance, published on 25 April. It should be noted that the Commission is looking to update their guidance after consultation, and put it before the Westminster Government before the summer recess. According to the Commission "We know that many people have questions about the ruling and what it means for them. Our updated guidance will provide more clarity".

We will look at our policies, guidelines, procedures and so on, to see if they align with the ruling.

(2) Question from Councillor Sian Williams

An important issue that has come to my attention in the last year, particularly in my own town, Cricieth, is anti-social behaviour among young people. It is a topic that concerns me greatly, as it is our responsibility, as a society, to nurture and support the next generation to be well-rounded and responsible citizens who have hope and value in themselves, and in their villages, towns and areas.

Cricieth is not unique. There are other areas in Gwynedd that are experiencing similar challenges, and other counties across Wales and beyond are struggling. You only need to open a newspaper or read messages on social media to see how things are.

It's important for us to get to the root of the problem. Why do young people behave like this and what can we, as a community, do to support them or tackle the problems? In Cricieth, we have seen damage to the public toilets and the maes, climbing fences to private gardens; stealing from local shops and sleeping overnight in car parks.

Obviously, the police and other agencies are aware of the situation and there is action and cooperation.

But with the recent fine weather, the situation has exacerbated. The small minority of young people who behave in this way have been excluded from school. The punishment is proving to be ineffective as they do not receive support or guidance through the schools or from other services during this period.

My question is, is it possible to open a discussion with the council's education department and other support agencies to consider another way of tackling the challenges faced by these young people and their families? A process of offering guidance and support, rather than excluding young people, who are obviously experiencing life's challenges? A system

that would protect these young people and lead them along a better path, so that the community in Cricieth can sleep quieter at night and take pride in having extended a hand, rather than tarring all the young people of the area with the same brush? After all, only a handful behave in this way, most of our young people are responsible and courteous.

This is the future of our society, they are valuable and important individuals, and in my opinion, investing in the next generation is crucial for us, here, in Gwynedd.

Response - The Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for raising this important issue. I fully agree that anti-social behavior among young people is an issue that deserves urgent and careful attention, and I appreciate your commitment to looking for constructive solutions.

I, and the Education department would be more than happy to meet you to discuss the subject further. I completely agree that the Education department needs to be included in discussions, but I also believe that the issue is much wider than that. It is an issue that requires a cross-departmental response, including youth services, social services, health and, of course, the wider community.

We see clearly that exclusions from school, although they are a disciplinary action, often make the situation worse rather than solving it. Young people who are excluded lose structure, support and access to positive role models during key periods in their lives. Instead of offering guidance and support when it is most needed, exclusions can create distance and a greater risk for them to fall deeper into harmful patterns.

It is therefore essential that we look at solutions that focus on including, supporting and empowering our young people, not pushing them to the sidelines. This method not only offers a better future for the individuals involved, but also strengthens our local communities in the long term.

I look forward to arranging a meeting with you to discuss the next steps, and to work together in order to create a method that reflects our commitment to investing in the future of our young people here in Gwynedd.

(3) Question by Councillor Elfed Williams.

Gwynedd residents continue to suffer, and it has been over ten years since the Welsh Government's fuel poverty scheme caused damage to their homes leaving them damp, untidy and in need of repair.

Some residents of private houses in Deiniolen, Dinorwig, Clwt y Bont and Fachwen are financially at a loss and others are struggling to pay for repairs.

The Arbed project, funded by the Welsh Government, aimed to improve the energy efficiency of the houses while ensuring that the owners would have lower energy bills. But inferior works in the Deiniolen area have left the owners with damp houses developing into mould, with incorrectly reinstalled drainage pipes, untidy render and cracks in the walls.

Recently, 42 houses in Arfon have been approved for repairs by the Welsh Government. I very much welcome this work for the homes of residents in the community, but I remain concerned about the residents who will not be eligible for the repairs under this year's Welsh Government scheme.

It's high time all the residents of Deiniolen saw their homes repaired, having suffered damage to their property for so many years. It is the responsibility of the Welsh Government to rectify this, as a result of inferior work undertaken due to their Arbed project.

Therefore, my question is this: is the Council committed to ensuring that all Arfon housing residents receive repairs from the Welsh Government and receive the appropriate support they are due?

Response – The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, Councillor Paul Rowlinson

Firstly, I'd like to highlight that Arbed was a Welsh Government scheme, and many homes across Wales have been affected by defective work under that Scheme, not only in Arfon but in many places across Wales. The process of ensuring a fair solution by following the claiming procedure set by the Welsh Government has been long, and often very complex. The properties' owners have given a lot of time and effort to do this.

Siân Gwenllïan, Member of the Senedd for Arfon, has raised this matter with the Government since 2017 and last year Welsh Government agreed to look at the cases of those residents that had contacted her. Unfortunately, Welsh Government has announced that no new cases will be added to the list.

Although the Council does not have any part in the process, I am happy to write to the Government to ask why they are not willing to consider any new cases.

(4) Question by Councillor Rhys Tudur

When making decisions relating to the procurement of goods and subcontracting of services, in what way does this Council have scoring criteria which give companies/businesses/organisations points for:

- community benefits that they provide and would provide for the Welsh language;
- their use of the Welsh language;
- having a high percentage of staff who speak Welsh;
- demonstrating that they have commitments to the Welsh language and language policies;
- having a training plan for improving Welsh language skills;
- supporting Welsh-medium apprenticeships;
- using Welsh as the language of internal and external correspondence?

Response - The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Legal and the Welsh Language, Councillor Llio Elenid Owen

The procurement arrangements and internal evaluation process are legally managed under national procurement regulations (Procurement Act 2023). According to those

regulations, the assessment and criteria must be equivalent and related to the purpose of what is desired to be procured.

As part of the procurement process to purchase goods and services to provide services to the public, the Council uses different criteria to assess the proposals. Typically, the criteria include price and quality assessments along with any other specific requirements.

However, the Cabinet approved an amendment to the current Sustainable Procurement Policy at its meeting on November 7, 2023. As a result, the Council has developed and adopted social value assessment arrangements, and the Welsh language is one of those measures. This requirement is now additional to the price and quality criteria.

Consequently, we can assess businesses' commitment to investing time and money to promote and develop the Welsh language while fulfilling the agreement with the Council. The commitment can be varied depending on the size and nature of the company that has tendered, and we do not currently limit them to specific proposals. The proposals can offer apprenticeships, training, Welsh signage within the company, or any other proposal that demonstrates their commitment to promoting the language.

The Council purchases a wide variety of goods and services from different fields and occasionally purchases unique and specialized goods and services. Often, only non-Welsh companies from outside the County can meet those needs. Nevertheless, where it is necessary to have services or systems through the medium of Welsh, the Council specifies this need in the tender, and as a result, we will not accept applications that do not meet those requirements.

The Sustainable Procurement Policy is currently being reviewed due to recent national legislative changes and is intended to be presented to the Language Committee for comments in the near future. It will also be presented to the Cabinet as part of the Council's usual arrangements.