
THE CABINET, TUESDAY, 13 MAY 2025

Present-

Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, Menna Trenholme, R. Medwyn Hughes, Dewi Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, June Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Llio Elenid Owen and Paul Rowlinson.

Also present-

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Rachel Jones (Childcare and Play Team Leader), Carys Fôn Williams (Head of Housing and Property Department), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance Department), Ffion Madog Evans (Assistant Head of Finance Department), Rhodri Jones (Democracy Team Leader), Ffion Mai Jones (Executive Support Team Leader) and Iwan Edwards (Democracy Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor Craig ab Iago.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2025 were accepted as a true record.

6. FLYING START EXPANSION

The report was submitted by Cllr Menna Trenholme.

DECISION

1. To accept the grant offer to expand the Flying Start Programme in the county by
 - extending the full scheme to the rest of the Penygroes area due to the reduction of eligible children in the current programme
 - extending the childcare element only to additional areas – Phase 3

2. To support the Head of Children and Supporting Families Department, in consultation with the Head of Finance, to submit business cases and accept grant offers for the Childcare and early years Capital Programme.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted by the Cabinet member for Children and Supporting Families which gave an overview of the proposal to extend the Flying Start Scheme. It was noted that the report included the full extension of the Flying Start scheme to the rest of the Penygroes area due to a reduction in the numbers eligible for the current programme and the extension of the childcare element to additional areas.

It was explained that the Flying Start programme was already available in seven communities in Gwynedd. It was noted that the service had provided the first phase of expansion of the work in parts of Tregarth, Bethesda and Blaenau Ffestiniog. It was reported that a new area had been added in 2023, namely Deiniolen. It was stated that the project was still facing a decline and following analysis of the most deprived areas it was explained that extending the service to the rest of Penygroes would be the best step.

As for phases 2 and 3, it was reported that phase 2 had been operational since 2023 and served eight LSOA areas. Attention was drawn to the challenges within the sector such as lack of provision in rural areas, the sustainability of the Childcare Sector and increased staffing costs. It was noted that the success of the next steps would depend on close collaboration between early years services, local providers and Welsh Government funding.

It was noted that the Government had announced the third phase of expanding Flying Start, again limiting it to funding the childcare element only. It was explained that the scheme would target an additional 147 2-year-olds during 2025 in more areas in Gwynedd. It was explained that areas for 2025 had been identified.

It was explained that the Early Years Service was working with the Housing and Education departments on major capital projects in Tywyn, Penygroes, Deiniolen, Bangor and Cricieth (total capital expenditure of approximately £3.5million) which was a great investment for children in those areas. It was reported that taking advantage of these two early years programmes would contribute towards the Priority areas of "Gwynedd Yfory" and "Gwynedd Gymraeg" in the Council Plan by giving children the best possible start in life.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Gratitude was expressed for the important work being undertaken and it was applauded but concern was expressed about the challenges facing the provision of this service. It was highlighted that it was more than a childminding service and an important part of the children's education. It was emphasised that it was important that the Council and Cabinet provided as much support as possible to ensure that the work continued.
- The scheme was welcomed explaining that the Member had encountered examples in his own area with some children receiving provision and others

not. They expressed their disappointment with this and stated that they wanted to see the programme continue to grow so that the Council could offer free childcare to all children in the county. Attention was drawn to areas where expansion was recommended during 2025-26 and it was asked if there was a timetable for this scheme. It was noted that not much clarity could be provided at this time as they were awaiting a response from the Government.

7. HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The report was submitted by Cllr Paul Rowlinson.

DECISION

1. To extend the period of the Housing Action Plan for another two years until the end of the 2028/29 financial year
2. To commit the usual annual sum of £6m from the Council Tax Premium fund towards funding the extra two years.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property who provided an update on the Housing Action Plan. A request was made to extend the period of the Scheme until the end of the 2028-29 financial year. It was noted that the Cabinet needed to make a decision to enable the Housing and Property Department to plan ahead to ensure that key projects and schemes were realised in a timely manner and to their full potential.

An overview of the scheme's background was provided stating that the Full Council had decided to use a percentage of the money received from raising the second home premium to provide housing for young people in their communities. To implement this, it was explained that the Housing Action Plan had been approved by the Cabinet to include 33 projects across five key areas to ensure that the people of Gwynedd had a suitable, affordable and quality home.

It was noted that there had been significant changes to the housing situation in Gwynedd in recent years, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit and, therefore, the opportunity had been taken to review the Scheme, taking advantage of new opportunities to expand and help even more residents of the county with their housing situation.

Overall, it was reported that good progress had been made on the Scheme so far with almost £70m invested to help the people of Gwynedd with their housing situation. It was noted that new opportunities may arise during the scheme, as national circumstances were continually changing. It was explained that the flexibility already allowed to vary the exact allocation for individual projects would enable the department to act proactively in the face of any changes in the housing market over time.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Support for the Premium on empty houses was highlighted, questioning whether it was possible to raise the higher Premium on long-term vacant properties. In response, it was agreed with the comments stated that the current premium was appropriate. However, it was noted that consideration should be given to raising the premium for houses that had been vacant for a very long time.
- Concern was raised about the condition of houses held by the Council in the smallholding sector. In response, it was explained that the Smallholdings Estate currently offered homes to 39 families in Gwynedd areas. It was noted that the Council had a responsibility to ensure that the houses met the requirements in terms of condition and health and safety. It was explained that there had been no investment in the vast majority of the houses attached to the smallholdings. Also, as a result, it had led to a decline in the quality of housing which had subsequently led to an increase in maintenance costs. It was noted that the intention going forward was to work with the tenants to raise housing standards and ensure consistency.

8. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2024/25 – REVENUE OUTTURN

The report was submitted by Cllr Huw Wyn Jones.

DECISION

To accept the report and consider the final financial position of the Council's departments for 2024/25:

	Column A Gross Over/(Under) Spend 2025/25 £ '000	Column B £ '000	Column C £ '000	Column CH £ '000	Column D Adjusted Over/(Under) Spend 2024/25 £ '000
		Recommended Adjustments			
Adults, Health and Well-being	857			(757)	100
Children and Families	3,805			(3,705)	100
Business and Care	(15)	15			0
Commissioning Service	(191)	191			0
Education					
Economy and Community	281		(281)		0
Highways, Engineering and YGC	656			(556)	100
Environment	1,349		(1,100)	(149)	100
Housing and Property	(3)	3			0
Corporate and Legal Management Team	(48)	48			0
Corporate Services	(42)	42			0

It was noted that there was significant overspend by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, the Children and Families Department, the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department, and the Environment Department in 2024/25 (please see column A in the table above). The following financial virements (which were explained in Appendix 2 to the report) were approved

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- In line with the Cabinet's decision on 21 January 2025, to not allow departments to carry any underspend into the next financial year by excluding clause 16.3.1.(C) of the Financial Regulations (See column B in the table above).
- Confirm the financial support of £281k above the contractual payment to Cwmni Byw'n lach, and use £1.1 million from the Parc Adfer Contributory Earnings Recovery fund to fund the overspend in the field of Waste (See column C in the table above).
- The departments that were overspending to receive one-off financial support, limiting the level of overspend to be carried forward by the Department to £100k (See column CH in the table above).
- On Corporate budgets:
 - use (£5.144 million) of the underspend on corporate budgets to support departments that had overspent in 2024/25. The remainder of the underspend of (£1.548 million) on Corporate budgets to be transferred to the Transformation Fund, to be used for the Council's priorities.

Amounts had been approved to be carried forward (the "Over/(Under) Adjusted Expenditure" column in column D above and in Appendix 1).

The financial virements from the specific reserves were approved as outlined in Appendix 3 following a review of the reserves:

- harvest £1.275 million from various funds and transfer it to the Transformation Fund.
- De-commit £375k of historical or non-committed schemes in the Transformation Fund.
- Move £2.5 million from the Financial Strategy Support fund to the Transformation Fund so that they are available for the Council's priorities and to fund one-off bids into the future.

DISCUSSION

The report detailing the final financial position of the Council departments was submitted outlining the reasons for the overspending or underspending. It was highlighted that the situation had improved since the August and November reviews. It was noted that overspending continued in the out-of-county care areas of the Children and Supporting Families Department, the Derwen Service, Domiciliary Care Service and the field of Waste. It was explained that significant grant receipts and a favourable position on a number of corporate budgets were

helping to alleviate the financial situation for the Council as a whole by the end of the financial year.

Attention was drawn to some departments individually to provide a rationale for the budgets.

An overspend of £857k by the Adults Department was highlighted as a reduction from the £3m forecast earlier in the year. It was explained that this was due to the department receiving substantial grants and income near the end of the financial year. It was emphasised that significant pressures remained in the field of Domiciliary Care, with higher staffing costs and high sickness levels and non-contact hour rates, while there were also significant pressures on the budget of private domiciliary care providers. It was expressed that the use of agency staff was one of the issues in in-house residential care.

It was explained that the overspend of the Children and Supporting Families Department was higher than anticipated and now stood at £3.8m. It was explained that this was due to an increase in the costs of out-of-county placements due to package complexities and the recent increased use of non-registered placements that were more costly. It was expressed that pressures were also seen on the budget of the Derwen Service and on the support of support plans and field workers.

In terms of the Education Department, it was noted that the field of school transport had received an additional budget allocation this year and, as a result of this, additional grants had been received along with a reduction in expenditure that the department was underspending (£191k) at the end of the year.

It was explained that Cwmni Byw'n Iach in recent years had received financial support from the Council which was in excess of the contractual payment of the provision contract, to enable them to maintain their services. It was expressed that the need for financial support would continue in 2024/25 with the required amount having increased to £281k by the end of the year.

Overspending was highlighted in the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department explaining, in relation to the municipal field, that a combination of factors was the reason for this, including additional pressure on the budgets of street cleaning staff and public toilets cleaning.

It was emphasised that an annual trend of overspending in the field of waste collection continued and was responsible for the overspending of the Environment Department. It was further explained that the lack of parking income was also evident this year and had increased by the end of the year.

While significant pressure on the emergency accommodation service within the Housing and Property Department remained, an additional budget allocated from a council tax premium, an additional one-off budget and an additional grant from the Welsh Government had assisted with the additional pressure.

Projections on the state of school budgets highlighted a significant reduction in school budgets, but following the receipt of a grant from the Welsh Government at the end of the year, it was noted that balance levels had been maintained.

The adequacy of the Council's specific funds was reviewed again by the Head of Finance at the closure of the accounts this year, in line with the policy approved some years ago. This review had been successful in harvesting £1.275 million of resources which had been transferred to the Transformation fund for use for the Council's priorities.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- The Welsh Government had been called upon to rethink the way they allocated their grants, as receiving last-minute grants in the financial year made it very difficult to plan for the long term.
- Pride was expressed that the Adults Department's overspend had been significantly reduced. It was noted that it was important to remember that a large amount of the money the Council had received was one-off funding and, therefore, there was no guarantee that it would be available in the future. The Cabinet was therefore asked to be alert to the constant pressure on the Adults Department and to be prepared for that in the future. Finance Department staff were thanked for their support in significantly reducing spending.

9. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 – END OF YEAR REVIEW (31 MARCH 2025 POSITION)

The report was submitted by Cllr Huw Wyn Jones

DECISION

To accept the report on the end of the year review (31 March 2025 position) of the capital programme.

To approve the revision to the Capital Budget approved on 7 March 2024 and revised on 15 October 2024 and 21 January 2025 from the programme's financing perspective (as shown in part 3.2.3 of the report), that is:

- an increase of £4,409,000 in the use of borrowing
- an increase of £17,639,000 in the use of grants and contributions
- an increase of £75,000 in the use of capital receipts
- a decrease of £422,000 in the use of revenue contributions
- a decrease of £3,898,000 in the use of the capital reserve
- an increase of £1,555,000 in the use of renewal and other reserves.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted stating that its main purpose was to deliver the revised capital programme, and approve the relevant funding sources as part of the 2024/25 year-end system. It highlighted that £82.5m had been invested in capital schemes, 72% of which was funded through specific grants.

It was added that £33.4m of proposed additional expenditure had been re-profiled from 2024/25 to 2025/26 and 2026/27. It was noted that some of the main schemes included £16m from Schools Schemes – Sustainable Learning Communities and Others, and £10m from the Levelling Up Fund.

Since the last review, it was highlighted that the Council had been successful in attracting additional grants of £19.382m which included a £10.613m Shared Prosperity Fund Adjustment from the UK Government and a £1.8m Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme Grant from the Welsh Government.

10. EISTEDDFOD YR URDD

The report was submitted by Cllr Nia Jeffreys.

DECISION

The Cabinet resolved to:

- a) approve a commitment in principle to invite the Urdd to hold a National Eisteddfod in Gwynedd in 2028
- b) approve a contribution of £200k from the transformation fund as a contribution towards the costs of hosting the Urdd National Eisteddfod in Gwynedd.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted emphasising the importance of the Urdd along with its message of peace and goodwill in Wales and beyond. Pride was highlighted in inviting the Urdd to Gwynedd to host the Urdd Eisteddfod in 2028.

The Executive Support Team Leader added that the report asked for the support of the Cabinet to invite the Urdd along with approving the associated financial element. It was explained that the Council had been very lucky to have held many Festivals and Eisteddfodau over the years, but it was highlighted that there would be a demand for resources, but that it would bring benefits and a boost to the area.

It was explained that the Urdd and National Eisteddfod had been in the county over the years, and it was emphasised that it was a matter for the Urdd to decide on the exact location of the field and the region it would be located. By establishing the principle, it was expressed that the Council would need to contribute £200k which would be funded from the transformation fund. Despite the contribution, it was explained that the economic benefit would be much higher than this.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Gratitude was expressed for the report and the desire to invite the Urdd was supported highlighting the importance of the Urdd's work to young people, not only locally but nationally.

The meeting commenced at 1:00pm and concluded at 2:10pm.