

ARTHOG

CYNGOR
CYMUNED

COMMUNITY
COUNCIL

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Dilwyn Williams
Chief Executive
Gwynedd Council
Council Offices
Shirehall Street
Caernarfon
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Dear Sir

COMMENTS REGARDING THE PROPOSED 5.5% RISE IN COUNCIL TAX AND OTHER MEASURES PROPOSED TO INCREASE REVENUE

Reference to Gwynedd Council increase in 2019 rates and cut in general services

Arthog Community Council, while understanding that Government funding has been cut to the local authority, feel honour bound on behalf of the residents within the Community Council area, to voice major concerns at proposals yet again to increase council rates to local residents.

Gwynedd Council quote that their funding has been cut repeatedly from the national government for over a decade which has put severe strain on the authority's finances with regards to future services. It has to be pointed out, that this exact same problem is being endured by local residents who repeatedly see their annual council tax rise for less and less service, but often well above national inflation.

Gwynedd has one of the lowest overall incomes per person in the UK, said to be in the bottom ten of the national UK league table. Yet, persistently, Gwynedd Council seem to think that ordinary people struggling to make ends meet on these low and often static wages, can repeatedly find more money for this declining service. This is not the case and we, as councillors, are finding local people telling us they are suffering extreme hardship as a result of this continual annual rate rise. These are often people who are in the divide line of working full-time, but not being in a position to claim benefits. Old age pensioners are also often in the same position with a negligible increase in their yearly income not proportionable to the council rate increases. Clearly, Gwynedd Council must acknowledge that pushing the problem on to the residents of Gwynedd is not a solution, in either short or long term. It might be the easy solution from the Council's viewpoint, but it is not acceptable, nor practical, to the Gwynedd residents who have to fund this and see a continual decline in their living standards.

The UK inflation rate at the time of writing falls somewhere between 2.4% and 3%, yet Gwynedd Council are quoting a possible Council Rates increase of 5.5%. With low wages and high inflation, it is clear to see that Gwynedd families will fall yet further behind financially as a result of this out of proportion increase.

Arthog Community Council sympathise with Gwynedd Council's predicament, but at the same time it is clear that the cash cow that is the public are now bled dry and alternative funding must be found, whatever that may be, to make up the shortfall of council funds. We, Arthog Community Council, would be grateful of an explanation from Gwynedd Council as to how said council expects the low earning public of Gwynedd to keep funding these extra fees?

We would also like to raise the issue of Gwynedd Council looking to charge for the repair or replacement of waste bins. It has come to our attention that the green waste bins provided, and the brown garden waste bins, have been fitted with type of wheel axle which, over time, especially in coastal communities where salt air is evident, rusts, rots and breaks down. This then requires the resident to contact the council to initiate a replacement axle. Would it not have been more financially prudent to have fitted axles that don't rot (stainless steel) to avoid this unnecessary expense in the first place? It seems whomever initiated these receptacles did not think the problem through sufficiently, thus incurring additional cost that could be put to better use.

What's more, a majority of damage to bins is caused by the bin collectors themselves who have repeatedly smashed the cantilever access lids on the recycling bins, smashed bin lids on the large waste bins, and snapped the handles off the small brown food bins used for waste food collection. It also brings in to question whether the bins are actually fit for purpose? This suggests to us that Gwynedd Council are not actually in tune with the reality of the actual situation and need to do some research before trying to apply costs to residents who probably have not damaged the bin themselves in the first place. In the majority of cases, the only contact a resident has with their bins is when filling them and taking them to the roadside pick-up point, hardly heavy-duty abuse. It's obvious, at least it is to our councillors, that the greater likelihood of damage is when the bins are being man-handled by the refuse collectors themselves and vehicle hydraulics. Our local residents often complain to us that their bins are literally thrown on the floor and often scattered loosely and are often left encroaching in to the road after the refuse collectors have been. Working people cannot be expected to be home after bin pick-up to retrieve their bins, so some common sense by both Gwynedd Council and the refuse collectors on this point is needed.

Another issue with bins is that in many areas high winds will blow even full bins over. Many residents put a weight on the bin lid to keep the bins in place. The refuse collectors do not put the weights back and the empty bins then blow off down the street. Alternatively, you would expect the refuse collectors to apply common sense and lay the bins on the floor to avoid them blowing away. It needs to be pointed out here, that residents have done what is expected of them and applied common sense to keep their bins in situ, yet the council representatives do not, and it is they that cause many of the issues associated with broken and lost bins. It appears to many residents, and rightly so, that Gwynedd Council are somewhat detached from the reality of this situation regards bin damage and this needs to be addressed.

Again, Arthog Community Council would be grateful to hear Gwynedd Council's response to the above issues regards bin and refuse collection and as to how it aims to alleviate these issues instead of simply assuming the general public are to blame.

It also has to be said that when major businesses suffer hardship, jobs are lost. It is a hard fact of life, but maybe Gwynedd Council needs to look closer to home when it comes to raising rates etc and see if cuts to office premises and even staff might be more appropriate to generate new funds.

We hope that Gwynedd Council will take these constructive comments in the spirit that they are intended. Gwynedd Council asked for comment and Arthog Community Council has replied.

Yours sincerely

ANGELA THOMAS - CLERK
For and on behalf of Arthog Community Council

Cc: Dafydd Edwards
Liz Saville-Roberts