

MEETING OF THE FULL COUNCIL 3/10/24

Present: Councillor Beca Roberts (Chair)
Councillor Ioan Thomas (Vice-chair).

Councillors:- Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Dafydd Owen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Alan Jones Evans, Dylan Fernley, Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Jina Gwyrfai, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, R. Medwyn Hughes, Iwan Huws, Elin Hywel, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gwilym Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Linda Ann Jones, June Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Dewi Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Gareth Coj Parry, Nigel Pickavance, John Pughe, Rheinallt Puw, Arwyn Herald Roberts, Elfed P Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Meryl Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Angela Russell, Peter Thomas, Menna Trenholme, Rob Triggs, Rhys Tudur, Einir Wyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams, Gruffydd Williams, Sasha Williams and Sian Williams.

Officers: Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Dylan Owen (Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Services), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Ian Jones (Head of Democracy Services), Carys Fôn Williams (Head of Housing and Property), Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education), Steffan Jones (Head of Highways, Engineering and Gwynedd Consultancy), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager), Sion Huws (Propriety and Elections Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Glyn Daniels, Anwen Davies, John Brynmor Hughes, Dafydd Meurig, Llio Elenid Owen, Gareth Roberts, Dyfrig Siencyn and Hefin Underwood.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on 11 July 2024 as a true record.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

4. THE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences were extended to the following:-

- The family of Mandy Parry from the Corporate Services Department, and Ian Jones, Head of Department gave her a tribute.
- The family of Dewi 'Pws' Morris who had settled in Nefyn for many years, and who was best known as an actor, singer and a second to none leg puller, but who was also a poet, author, presenter, composer and language campaigner.

It was also noted that the Council wished to express condolences to everyone within the county's communities who had lost loved ones recently.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect and remembrance.

It was noted that several Council members had been ill recently and they were wished a full and speedy recovery.

The following were congratulated: -

- Everyone from Gwynedd who had been successful recently at this year's National Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf were congratulated, especially Eurgain Haf, Pontypridd, who was originally from Penisarwaun, on winning the Literary Medal, and Carwyn Eckley from Penygroes on winning the Chair for an ode in remembrance of his father, Padrig Eckley, who was a solicitor with this Council before his untimely and premature death in 2002.
- The band, Cowbois Rhos Botwnnog, for winning the Album of the Year.
- Councillor Louise Hughes on her award as the Army Cadet Force volunteer of the year.
- The Council's Procurement Service Team who had been nominated for a national award as a result of their work to demand social benefits to Gwynedd when tendering a food contract.
- The Housing and Property Department for reaching the short-list for the Best Supported Housing Development: Rural/Suburban in the Inside Housing Development awards. It was noted that this was the second time that the Department had reached the short-list, and although they were not successful on this occasion, it was a huge credit that they had reached the short-list from the hundreds of nominations received.
- Cricieth Creadigol community arts group on coming to the fore in the Creative Lives Awards 2024, their aim was to celebrate and recognise the importance of creative activities of all sorts in local communities.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. QUESTIONS

(The Cabinet Members' written responses to the questions had been published in advance.)

(1) Question by Councillor Angela Russell

Given that Wales' climate is getting wetter year on year, I would like to ask, what steps are Cyngor Gwynedd taking to upgrade the A499 road between Pwllheli and Llanbedrog. This would save the residents of Llanbedrog, Abersoch, Botwnnog, Sarn and Aberdaron from having to use narrow lanes past Cefn Llanfair and Rhydyclafdy etc. which means congestion as lorries and buses come face to face on these narrow lanes.

Reply - Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal and Gwynedd Consultancy, Councillor Berwyn Parry Jones

As you can see from the written reply before you, Natural Resources Wales is the body that leads on the Flooding Management Project in the Pwllheli area. You will see that work on the A499 is an additional option that is being considered, but further work is required before an enhancement scheme can be drawn up for this road. However, I can assure you that we as a Council will press to have a road enhancement scheme as part of the project, and of course, we will update you as matters move forward.

(2) Question by Councillor Huw Rowlands

What use does Cyngor Gwynedd's Highways, Engineering and YGC Department make of external contractors, and what monitoring takes place to ensure quality, value for money and compliance with their contracts?

Reply - Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal and Gwynedd Consultancy, Councillor Berwyn Parry Jones

It is true to say that the Department uses a number of contractors for the different work areas we undertake, this means a considerable amount of monitoring work by officers. Moving forward, we are trying to internalise some of these contracts to try and ensure better accountability and consistency, and also to develop the internal workforce's skills and keep the benefit local. In addition to this, for example, there are many grass cutting contracts that are ending and there will be a need to re-tender. The hope is that it may be possible to create smaller packages that will mean that more local contractors can cope with the work, in the hope that all of this will improve the service to Gwynedd residents.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Huw Rowlands

Can the Department report back once they have had an opportunity to re-consider how matters will be implemented?

Reply - Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal and Gwynedd Consultancy, Councillor Berwyn Parry Jones

Certainly, we will report back following this. Also for information, the grass contracts will go out to tender hopefully at the beginning of the year so that there will be new contractors in place by spring.

(3) Question by Councillor Rhys Tudur

Considering the comments from the Officers and Cabinet Member of this Council that the procedure for active travel grant applications puts rural areas at a disadvantage, what means has this Council used to press on the Welsh Government to change the procedure, and to what extent has the pressure been effective?

Reply - From the Deputy Leader, Councillor Nia Jeffreys (in the absence of the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Dafydd Meurig)

A written response had been provided. Unfortunately, I think and also to be honest, the important sentence is that there has been no significant change in the criteria of the Active Travel Programme from the Welsh Government, and this despite the great pressure that this Council had placed on them. There were attached documents to the written response. There was a letter dated 9 February from the Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn to Dr Dafydd Trystan Davies, Chair of the Active Travel Board. Another example was the response to the consultation on the National Transport Delivery Plan in October 2022, and the presentation by this Council's officers to the Welsh Local Government Association's Rural Forum. Therefore, these were examples of the pressure we had placed.

However, the situation was not all negative and I think that it is worthwhile to read aloud the list of what is happening in Gwynedd in this field. Already completed were:-

- Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor - Part 1
- Lôn Las Ogwen

- Bike Shelters at Ysgol Cymerau, Pwllheli
- Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn, Bala

Work was underway to develop the following schemes:-

- Llanrug to Caernarfon
- Chwilog to Afonwen
- Tywyn to Aberdyfi

The list went on to mention that the following schemes had been approved for further development, i.e.: -

- Bike Shelters in Schools
- Development of the Active Travel Bethel to Caernarfon scheme
- Development of the Chwilog to Afonwen scheme
- Improvements to the current Ysgol Llanllechid path
- Development of the Ffôr to Pwllheli scheme
- Contribution to the Active Travel provision for Ysgol Trefferthyr, Cricieth
- Development of the Ysgol Maenofferen and Ffordd Glyndŵr scheme
- Development of the Llanrug to Caernarfon Active Travel scheme.

£900,000 had also been secured to realise the second phase of the Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor Active Travel Scheme and over £400,000 to introduce improvements outside Ysgol Trefferthyr, Cricieth as well as Ysgol Rhostryfan.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Rhys Tudur

Given that the Council, according to the examples, have brought pressure to bear regarding the expected means, i.e., via consultations with rural forums, and considering, as the Cabinet Member said, that the system has not changed, and rural areas continue to be under a disadvantage in the grants system, what new means will this Council use to bring pressure to bear on the Government to deliver and get more fairness to rural areas?

Reply - From the Deputy Leader, Councillor Nia Jeffreys (in the absence of the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Dafydd Meurig)

As a fellow-member in the Eifionydd area, I often preach for the need to ensure fairness across the county, especially for rural areas. May I also thank the Member for his work as a Local Member. I've had the privilege of visiting the Ward and going for a walk along Lôn Goed, and have also walked on the road from Afonwen to Chwilog. Therefore, I fully understand the frustration and the importance of this subject. I will take every opportunity, every consultation, every meeting with the Minister, every meeting of the Welsh Local Government Association, to press the matter forward, as every other Cabinet Member and officer in this Council will I'm sure also do. As the majority in this Chamber, I will also certainly press for and strive and campaign for a Plaid Cymru government in Cardiff in 2026, because this is how we can have a real understanding of rural needs across this county and across the whole of Wales. In my opinion that is the actual answer - a real change down in Cardiff Bay.

(4) Question by Councillor Jina Gwyrfaï

Rented social housing in Gwynedd is distributed through the Council's Housing Options list in collaboration with the housing agencies, Adra, Cynefin etc. What are the arrangements to ensure equal rights and opportunities for tenants, specifically in contractual matters?

Reply - Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago

I cannot add much to the written response. It comes down to the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. One thing I would add - I recall at one point everyone said that this Act would be one of the most innovative acts in Europe. In the end, it wasn't, but it was a further step forward from the situation that previously existed.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfai

As I strive to help a family that is facing decanting it came to my attention that the policies and procedures of housing agencies are not uniform by any means. There are obvious differences between them, which is a matter of concern. Shouldn't the Council ensure that policies and procedures i.e. the paperwork for our tenants are uniform for all Gwynedd tenants to ensure fairness for all?

Reply - Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago

To be honest I thought that they were already uniform, therefore I will ask the Department to look into this, but I would say that we as a sector in Gwynedd collaborate very closely. I chair the Gwynedd Housing Partnership. Our officers frequently meet with officers from every housing association. The housing associations meet very frequently. We are trying to ensure that residents get the best experience. I would say that we succeed to do this, and the Government has recently praised us in Gwynedd, and said that we are the best in Wales in terms of our relationship with housing associations. Therefore, perhaps everything is not perfect, but we are definitely moving in the right direction.

(5) Question from Councillor Gruffydd Williams

In light of the Welsh Government's white paper proposals to make local connection less of a consideration for social housing, and given that there are constant complaints on the ground that speaking Welsh or having roots in a community is not a sufficient consideration in relation to having priority for a social house here in Gwynedd, which is a stronghold of the language, what exactly are the efforts being made by Cabinet to try to change this extremely damaging prioritisation system?

Reply - Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago

I was appointed as Cabinet Member for Housing in 2017, and one of the first things we did was to re-draft the Housing Allocation Policy. Prior to this change there were other housing needs that trumped the local element, therefore one of the matters that the new Housing Allocation Policy did was to place much more emphasis on the local element. I believe that we have succeeded. By now 97% of our social housing go to local people, which in my opinion is excellent. The white paper the member refers to talks about undermining this. We agree with many matters in the white paper, but there are also matters that we do not agree with. In order to do something about this, we are doing everything we can - I cannot think of anything else we can do. We have participated in a consultation. The Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, has written to the Minister outlining our concerns. Officers from the Housing Department have met with the Government's housing officers. I have been to several meetings with the Welsh Local Government Association, with other cabinet housing members across Wales and have spoken to Julie James AM, the former Housing minister, and I cannot think of anything else we can do. We do not like what is happening, but again, until we vote for Plaid Cymru as the Welsh Government, there is nothing we can do about this.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Gruffydd Williams

Given that there is already a policy on a housing estate in Powys with the aim of protecting and promoting the Welsh language, which gives priority to *"applicants with a connection to the Machynlleth town Council area for at least 10 years, who are Welsh speakers and in housing need"*. My question is, now that the AONB Joint Committee and 12 town and community councils in Llŷn and Eifionydd call on Cyngor Gwynedd to act on the recommendations of the Welsh Speaking Communities Commission to protect and promote the Welsh language, and that the Welsh Language Commissioner had confirmed that Cyngor Gwynedd had failed to comply with the Welsh Language standards, when will Cyngor Gwynedd follow the lead of Powys County Council and establish housing allocation policies with the aim of protecting and promoting the Welsh language?

Reply - Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago

Every person in the Cabinet gives priority to the Welsh language. I would say that the one thing that unifies all of us is the Welsh language. This is true about the group on this side of the Chamber, and all the Council's officers. We are all trying to protect and promote the Welsh language. I'm not sure to what the member is referring to. We are not discussing when we will copy Powys County Council, therefore I'm not sure how I can give a fuller response to what I've already said.

(6) Question by Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts

Considering that:

- all decisions made, and all policies introduced by this Council are required to be subject to a Welsh language impact assessment
- and that it then follows that the measures to manage holiday homes and the social housing allocation policy have both been subject to such assessment
- and that (i) information is not gathered about the language of applicants on the social housing waiting list and (ii) that we are still awaiting data on the linguistic impact of the premium in the context of movements from holiday homes to primary residences
- and that the impact cannot be assessed or monitored without this information,
- and that there are legitimate concerns on the ground regarding the impact of either policy on communities in Llŷn and Eifionydd (and Gwynedd more widely, no doubt)

What intention is there to remedy this situation so that resources are not wasted producing impact assessments in these fields that are so lacking as to give the impression that they are merely sophisticated exercises to distort and conceal the true and potential impacts, of the policies and decisions in question?

Reply – Cabinet Member for Corporate Support, Councillor Menna Trenholme

Cyngor Gwynedd does all it can to promote the Welsh language in our communities and gives this due consideration when creating policies. We take pride in the fact that we have reviewed our impact assessment arrangements including Welsh language impact assessments to ensure that we comply with the relevant legislations and address the equality, Welsh language and socio-economic disadvantage characteristics. The current arrangements were developed with the co-operation of the offices of the relevant commissioners. We will soon move to using a new electronic version and arrange further training for staff.

The Council is required, under the Welsh Language Standards (Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011), to consider the impact that any change in policy or procedure (or creating a new policy or procedure), will have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English. It is also required (under the Equality Act 2010) to consider the impact that changes in any policy or procedures (or the creation of a new policy or procedure) will have on people with protected equality characteristics, to ensure fairness and build good relationships and since April 2021 pay due attention to addressing socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decisions. All assessments are made based on the available data. The allegation that they are exercises to distort and hide the real, and potential, effects of the policies and decisions involved is incorrect.

We will continue to undertake assessments in accordance with the legal requirement and consider whether there are opportunities to develop and improve this in future.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts

Given that this is a question that originally derives from a notice of motion that did not reach the agenda for specific reasons and considering that I understand that the notice of motion, if it was turned into a question, had received a full reply, this answer is disappointing to say the least, and is insufficient. The question goes after fairly specific points regarding gathering data and organisational and policy matters. I think that it has been set out fairly logically according to the points. It is a question that calls for observations from at least three departments, the Housing Department, the Finance Department and the Legal Department, to have a full answer. Given all of this, was it possible to know who drafted this deficient, incomplete and insufficient reply, and in consultation with whom?

Reply - The Chief Executive

To start off, I would like to say that I do not agree that the reply is deficient or incomplete. It is a combination of information from several different departments and from different officers. If you wish to have further information or further discussion regarding this subject, I am very happy to have this discussion with you and to go after the individual departments to provide further information.

7. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/24

In the absence of the Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, the Deputy Leader, Councillor Nia Jeffreys presented the report asking the Council to approve and adopt the Annual Performance Report and Self-assessment 2023/24.

The Deputy Leader thanked all Council employees for their work over the year, during a very challenging period. She also thanked the members of the Governance and Audit Committee for their observations and to the Cabinet Team for their work leading on the specific areas.

The Deputy Leader referred to some priority areas in the report, namely:-

- Gwynedd Yfory - nearly 5,000 primary age children received a hot, nutritious lunch, every day in schools.
- A Homely Gwynedd - over 200 additional homes had been created for Gwynedd residents.
- A Caring Gwynedd - the first house had been purchased for the Small Group Homes service for children in the Porthmadog area and the light extra care housing provision for adults had opened in Pwllheli.

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- A Green Gwynedd - work to transform two landfill sites in Gwynedd had led to the restoration of 74 acres at Ffridd Rasmus, Harlech and 32 acres at Llwyn Isaf, Penygroes.

The Deputy Leader then referred to one story behind the statistics, highlighting the importance of putting a face to Council work and names to the statistics and also to acknowledge successes.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. The following matters were raised by individual members: -

- It was noted that the story behind the statistics was not at all unique and all the work undertaken by officers made a positive difference to the lives of Gwynedd residents, despite the financial crisis. The Deputy Leader's gratitude was reiterated to all Council staff.
- Special thanks was given to the Ardal Ni Teams, the street cleaners, street enforcement staff and also the refuse disposal staff for their hard work in all weathers.
- It was noted that the statistics indicated that 5,400 people had left Gwynedd during the year, and it was asked what the reason for this was. In response, it was explained that a very high percentage of the 5,400 was as a result of deaths and lack of births, rather than outward migration. Obviously, young people were also leaving the County, however, it was trusted that work opportunities, provision of affordable housing, together with other schemes in the Council Plan would assist to attract them back.
- It was noted that Osian Rhys, a young officer working on the Arfor Scheme, had given an inspired presentation in a Seren Network evening in Pontio recently on the benefits of returning to this area to live and work. It was intended to give him an opportunity to give this presentation to a wider audience as many young people were bound to identify with him and his passion and wish to see young people returning to Gwynedd. These messages needed to be maximised and disseminated.
- The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being was thanked and everyone working to push the Penrhos Site Scheme forward, however the need to keep on working to complete the work was emphasised as there were currently no nursing beds available in Llŷn.
- It was noted that part of the report that referred to the regeneration of communities and town centres (page 16) stated that Town Centre Plans had been drawn up for Bangor, Caernarfon and Porthmadog and it was asked was there any reason why Pwllheli had not been included. In response, it was noted that the scheme for Pwllheli was underway in close cooperation with the Town Council.
- Concern was expressed that the introduction of Article 4 had caused a great deal of problems in Llŷn. It was noted that only 1,000 of the 4,000 respondents to the consultation were in favour of the introduction of Article 4, and it was questioned whether a consultation should work in this way. It was noted that a very significant number of houses had come on the market in Llŷn since the introduction of Article 4, and many businesses were about to or had closed. Reference was also made to wider problems in the area, including the lack of doctors, ambulances and public transport. In response, it was noted that the consultation was not a referendum, and careful consideration had been given to all the responses. It was further noted that several references had been made to the data in terms of the impact of Article 4 and the Council Tax Premium, and the report to the Council in December on setting the Premium for 2025/26 would include information regarding the impact, together with the research undertaken over the summer.

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- The style and language of the report was welcomed, and a hope was expressed that the document would be easily available to Gwynedd residents to see the good work that was proceeding at such a challenging time.
- Referring to page 40 of the report, it was noted that the Age-friendly Gwynedd bid submitted to the World Health Organisation had by now been received with great praise given by the Organisation. Therefore, work would continue under the Age Friendly partnership established within the Council.
- It was asked how the Council decided where to buy housing. In response, it was noted that the Council would not disregard any location as there was a need everywhere and the members were asked to inform the Department of any opportunities to buy houses in their areas. However, it was noted that the Council had to be very careful and not to compete against local people who also wished to buy those houses.
- It was noted that there was lack of new houses for rent in the small villages and it was asked whether it was possible for the Council to build some housing themselves. In response, it was noted that Gwynedd was not an Authority that holds a social housing stock and the Council's role in terms of providing rented housing was to ensure that the housing associations provide as much finance as possible to enable them to do so. However, the Council itself had started building houses to try and fill the gap in provision where first time buyers were unable to buy their own houses, and should the Council fail to sell those houses for some reason, such as a lack of local people in need and in a situation to buy, then consideration could be given to letting those houses for rent.
- It was noted that the areas of Meirion and Dwyfor in the county were amongst the poorest in Wales, if not in Europe, and young people had to leave the area to seek work. In response, it was noted that the Council was fully aware of the need to create work for all the county's residents and did everything within its powers to facilitate this. For example, it was noted that the Supporting People programme provided support for people who live in poverty by ensuring that they claimed every benefit owed and benefited from every opportunity.
- It was noted that there was no active travel scheme in Meirionnydd and a path had been requested for many years from Dinas Mawddwy to Mallwyd. In response, reference was made to the criteria for grants and it was noted that consistent pressure was placed to try and ensure fairness across the county.
- It was noted that it was very difficult to analyse the self-assessment as it did not evaluate schemes according to the areas they belonged to. It was felt that this made it difficult to identify the Council's main barriers and what schemes had not been delivered, etc, and the officers were asked to take this into consideration when drafting a report.
- It was asked what model was used to measure population. In response, it was noted that Gwynedd was 21st out of the 22 Welsh councils in terms of change in population last year, and this had hit the revenue budget for the coming year. As part of the work of trying to address the enormous shortfall of £14m facing the Council, the figure for next year had been looked at, and it was seen that Gwynedd was now 5th out of the 22 county councils. It was not known from where this figure had come, however, it was welcomed as it would mean less impact on our budgets next year.
- Referring to the aim of A Thriving Gwynedd of creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for community enterprises and businesses to thrive, it was noted that the Llanuwchllyn community enterprise had managed to buy the Eagles public house with funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). An appreciation of the guidance given by Council officers throughout the process of applying for the grant was expressed, and it was asked what the future forecast regarding this grant was. In response, it was noted that gratitude should be expressed to such community enterprises as not many schemes could be realised without the cooperation with the third sector, as well as the partnership with officers. However, the Levelling Up Fund, the Shared Prosperity Fund grants and the Arfor funding would end in 2025, despite the promise given of 'not a

penny less' during Brexit, and the importance of bringing all the pressure possible to bear on the two governments in this respect.

- It was noted that a great deal of the Council's work was unseen in the background and the fact that the report demonstrated the range of services provided was welcomed. For example, it was noted that the work of the Autism Team was not visible to most people, and they were thanked for all their work supporting children and adults with a diagnosis or awaiting diagnosis, not only by providing specific groups for parents and children who were waiting for a diagnosis, or who were concerned about their children's behaviour, but also by training staff. It was also noted that the internal Autism Team would provide training soon for social workers so that they could support foster parents, families and teachers.
- It was noted, as well as attracting young people back to Gwynedd, that there was a need to consider how to attract people who originated from other parts of Wales, to come and live in Gwynedd.
- In terms of comments regarding the lack of jobs in Gwynedd, it was noted that there were many opportunities available in the care, health and education sectors. It was also noted that they were looking forward to the establishment of the Gwynedd Care Academy which would be an excellent opportunity to develop a career in the care sector.
- In terms of the earlier question in the discussion regarding why Pwllheli had not been included on the list of towns where the Town Centre Schemes had been planned, it was suggested perhaps that there was an unintentional tendency to see what was in front of us and to forget about issues on the periphery. In response, it was noted that Pwllheli had been included in the 2024/25 Plan and that placemaking schemes for the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme were currently being developed in Pwllheli.
- It was suggested that there were several references in the report to 'plans were drafted', 'workshops were held' etc, but successes on paper did not convince people at grassroots level, although it was understood that there were processes to be followed for each development and scheme. In response, it was noted that the frustration could be understood, but there were matters occurring at grassroots level that made a difference.

RESOLVED To approve and adopt Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2023/24.

8. NOTICES OF MOTION

- (A) The following notice of motion was submitted by Councillor Cai Larsen under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded: -

As we now approach a year since the war in Gaza began, Cyngor Gwynedd states that:

More than 40,000 Gaza residents have been killed by Israel security forces - the vast majority civilians.

Approximately 10,000 people - mostly civilians - remain undiscovered but are almost certainly dead.

Over 90,000 have been injured - again with the majority of them civilians.

Close to 200,000 have died due to the indirect effects of Israel's military campaign.

The vast majority of the 2.2m people living there have lost their homes, or have had to move out of their homes.

There are people whose families live in Gaza among the residents of Gwynedd.

In view of this, and in view of a number of other current horrific situations such as Ukraine, Yemen and Myanmar, the Full Council, as part of the process of the annual review of the Investment Strategy, calls for consideration to be given to adding a

provision that meets the principles of protecting human liberties and respecting international law.

The member set out the context to his motion, and noted:-

- That things had moved on since he drafted the proposal in terms of the number of deaths and the extent of destruction, and also in terms of the geographical location of the destruction, but that he didn't want to refer to those atrocities specifically because the proposal spoke for itself.
- That the people of Gwynedd had responded to what was happening in the Middle East by holding regular vigils in Caernarfon and demonstrations in various places in the county, including a long-lasting and brave demonstration by students in Bangor.
- He wished to explain why he believed the Council should review its investment policies and strategies to prioritise ethical investments in the Israeli context, and in the context of a long record by that country's leaders of ignoring international law and human rights and doing so deliberately over a long period of time when there was no war ongoing.
- That this long-term behaviour included: -
 - Constant and long-lasting abuse of Palestinians.
 - Overuse of force.
 - Unjustified murders.
 - Depriving people of the right to assemble and move freely.
 - The practice of extending the Israeli presence on the West bank of the Jordan, which was contrary to the 4th Geneva Convention, a convention that prohibited an occupying power from moving its own population to lands they had occupied.
 - Mass punishment - even before the current raid the blockade of Gaza deprived Gaza residents of easy access to food, medicine and economic opportunities, which in itself created a humanitarian crisis before this raid had begun.
 - Discrimination against people of Arab background within Israel's borders, discrimination in terms of democratic representation, economic opportunities and access to services.
 - The use of military courts to prosecute civilians and the use of a parallel military prosecution system that reduced transparency, reduced fundamental rights and led to long periods of nonjudicial incarceration.
 - Restricting rights to self-expression and restricting the rights of internal organisations to criticise Israeli policies toward Palestinians was a long-standing issue.
- That what was happening in the Middle East right now and had happened there since founding the state of Israel, reflected a totally repugnant perception that the lives of people from some religious and ethnic backgrounds had far more value than others.
- That he realised that the issues referred to were not limited to Israel, and passing the motion would ensure that this Council looked at its policies in order to prioritise ethical investments in general, not just in Israel.
- However, he referred specifically to Israel for two reasons, namely:-
 - That the current atrocious circumstances had been going on for nearly a whole year and was spreading further and further from day to day.
 - That the West's relationship was much closer to Israel's than it was to other countries, with a very poor record regarding respecting international law and human rights. As the Israeli economy integrated into the Western capitalist system there was a higher risk that investments from this Council were making their way to Israel.

- That the Council was asked to support the motion in order to state our opposition to what was happening in the Middle East today, and what had been happening there over the decades and also in to underline the belief that was core to our Welsh values, that every human soul had equal value and that value was independent of religious, ethnic or state background.

Several members expressed their keen support to the motion. During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

It was noted that the courageous stance of Bangor University students was partly responsible for inspiring this motion. It was emphasised that it was a matter of pride that the Bangor campus was the only one throughout these countries that had stood unbroken since May, and the students were thanked for their remarkable stance and endurance, which had drawn together a wide range of Gwynedd residents and beyond to support and stand with them. It was also noted that everyone was welcome to attend the extra vigil organised on Monday, 7 October to mark one year since the bloodshed had begun.

The opinion of the Monitoring Officer was sought on matters relating to the appropriateness of the wording of the proposal, namely: -

- That the proposal listed figures, but was it possible to do so without a report attesting to the accuracy of those figures?
- That the last paragraph of the motion stated that we call for the addition of a provision that addresses the principles of protecting human rights and respecting international law. Therefore, was there a suggestion that the existing provision was not in accordance with law?
- That this was not a report on the burden on resources of acting in this way or the appropriateness of doing so given that we were dealing with public funds.
- Was the Council able to invest in accordance with morality, apart from that which was in accordance with legal order?
- There was no link between the last paragraph of the proposal and the preamble, and did the proposal refer to any state with an army, or any company that produces the smallest pieces for military weapons, etc?
- Were the fundamental considerations in this case what was in accordance with the law as it stood and what brought the best investment for public money?
- There was no reference here to the risk implications for the organisation, whether legal through challenge or financial through less profitable investments.

In response, it was noted:-

- That the notices of motion went through a process of sorting and filtering to get appropriate proposals.
- That the figures in the proposal had been put forward by the proposer and were probably based on information that was public anyway. Also, the Council was asked 'to note' the figures, rather than to 'adopt' them.
- That the wording of the proposal had been framed very carefully as a request to 'consider' these matters, evaluating the risks, propriety and legality of adding the provision sought when reviewing the Investment Strategy. The proposal did not presume the outcome of that review.
- That the aim of the wording was to undertake a review in terms of ethical investment wherever that occurred and was not limited to Israel or any other country.
- That it could not be said that a proposal requiring such research could be said inappropriate, especially given also that the full Council would adopt the

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Investment Strategy at their meeting in March. The report to the Council would give advice on the appropriateness, legality, and also risks of these matters.

On a point of clarity, and in response to a question, it was confirmed that the proposal was about the Council's Money Investment Strategy, not the Pension Fund money.

It was asked how there was investment in Israel if the Council was committed to the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions organisation in 2012. In response, it was explained that the motion required specific wording to be included to highlight the Council's aspiration for ethical investment, but that 95% of the Council's funding was in cash investments in any event.

In his closing comments, the proposer noted:-

- That the proposal was a compromise, and therefore some of the clarity had been lost. However, it was a compromise that he had been happy to make.
- The Investment Strategy already contained priorities regarding, for example, net zero and responsible investment.
- The effort to undermine the motion was a surprise to him.

A registered vote was called for on the motion.

In accordance with Procedural Rules, the following vote on the motion was recorded:-

In favour	48	Councillors: Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Dafydd Owen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Alan Jones Evans, Dylan Fernley, Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, R. Medwyn Hughes, Iwan Huws, Elin Hywel, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Berwyn Parry Jones, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gwilym Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Linda Ann Jones, June Jones, Cai Larsen, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Gareth Coj Parry, Nigel Pickavance, John Pughe, Rheinallt Puw, Arwyn Herald Roberts, Beca Roberts, Elfed P Roberts, Meryl Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Ioan Thomas, Peter Thomas, Menna Trenholme, Rhys Tudur, Einir Wyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gruffydd Williams, Sasha Williams and Sian Williams.
Against	1	Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts.
Abstention	5	Councillors Jina Gwyrfai, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, John Pughe Roberts and Rob Triggs.

The Chair noted that the motion had been carried.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

As we now approach a year since the war in Gaza began, Cyngor Gwynedd states that:

More than 40,000 Gaza residents have been killed by Israel security forces - the vast majority civilians.

Approximately 10,000 people - mostly civilians - remain undiscovered but are almost certainly dead.

Over 90,000 have been injured - again with the majority of them civilians.

Close to 200,000 have died due to the indirect effects of Israel's military campaign.

The vast majority of the 2.2m people living there have lost their homes, or have had to move out of their homes.

There are people whose families live in Gaza among the residents of Gwynedd.

In view of this, and in view of a number of other current horrific situations such as Ukraine, Yemen and Myanmar, the Full Council, as part of the process of the annual review of the Investment Strategy, calls for consideration to be given to adding a provision that meets the principles of protecting human liberties and respecting international law.

- (B) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Dewi Jones, under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-
1. Cyngor Gwynedd states that we believe responsibility for the Crown Estate should be devolved to the Welsh Government. Any profits generated by the Crown Estate, here on Welsh lands and waters, should remain in Wales, for the benefit of our residents and communities. Responsibility for the Crown Estate is already devolved to the Scottish Government.
 2. This Council also states our dissatisfaction that we are obliged to pay annual fees (in the form of leases) to ensure that Gwynedd residents and visitors have access to various sites, including our beaches and other facilities. In 2023, Cyngor Gwynedd paid a total of over £161,000 to the Crown Estate. Lease fees in 2023 ranged from £35 for 'Bangor beach front', to £8,500 for 'Dwyfor beach front', to £144,000 for 'Hafan Pwllheli'. In a period of severe financial hardship for public services, we believe that it is immoral that such fees go towards the maintenance of the British Monarchy and to the coffers of the Treasury in London. This money should remain in Gwynedd to support the people of Gwynedd.
 3. We are calling on the Chief Executive to arrange to open discussions with the Crown Estate regarding the fees paid by Cyngor Gwynedd. We would urge the Chief Executive to try to persuade the Crown Estate to delay further invoicing until the Council's financial position has improved. We note that the Crown Estate's profits have more than doubled from £443 million in 2022/23 to £1.1 billion in 2023/24, in the same period Cyngor Gwynedd has seen their budget cut in real terms.

The member set out the context to his motion, and noted:-

- In a period of serious financial hardship, that it was a disgrace that this Council had to pay a number of leases to the Crown Estate to ensure that residents and visitors to Gwynedd have access to our beaches and other facilities.
- That a further delay in further invoicing would create a financial saving that would contribute to protecting essential services that are under so much stress at the moment.
- Wales is a country that is rich natural resources, with her land, coastline and seas that possess the potential to power our economy, to reinforce our communities and support us to lead the way when addressing climate change. However, at the moment, these resources were managed by a body accountable to the Westminster Government, not to the people of Wales and the revenue that derives from the Crown Estate in Wales goes to the UK's Treasury in London.
- Should the responsibility for the Crown Estate be devolved, the profit generated from Welsh land and sea would remain in Wales, enabling us to invest in infrastructure, public services and community projects to suit our specific needs.
- Wales could lead the world in the field of renewable energy development, especially sea wind, tide energy and other innovative green technology, however, to do so we would need the authority to manage our own resources, with a focus on sustainability and long-term benefits for our communities and environment.
- That the devolvement of the Crown Estate related to much more than merely who manages our lands and seas, and involved confidence in our ability to

govern ourselves, trust in our vision for the future, and the confidence that we can shape an economy that serves the people of Wales.

The Chief Executive asked for the proposer to consider strengthening the direction in the second sentence of the third paragraph of the proposal by amending the wording to read *'We would urge the Chief Executive to try to persuade the Crown Estate not to charge the Council rent until the Council's fiscal position has improved'*.

The proposer agreed to the change and there was no objection to this from the floor. With this change, the proposal was seconded.

It was noted that it was not understood why the Welsh counties could not take advantage of the resources they have and keep the benefit truly local, rather than all the money going to Cardiff, and the proposer was asked to consider amending the first sentence of the first paragraph of the proposal to read *"Cyngor Gwynedd states that we believe that the responsibility for the Crown Estate should be devolved to Welsh local authorities."*

The proposer noted that such a change could have far-reaching implications for the Council, and as neither he nor his fellow members had not had an opportunity to weigh-up and consider this seriously, he sought members' support for the proposal as it stood.

Referring to the second sentence of the third paragraph of the proposal, it was noted that the reference to *'until the Council's fiscal position has improved'* was vague and a definition was required. In response, it was agreed that it was difficult to define what constituted a better fiscal position and that it was difficult to see in the current financial climate how the Council could ever reach a better fiscal position.

It was noted, although it was fully agreed that Wales should manage its own natural resources, those resources should not be diversified into the hands of multinational corporations pushing for net zero and pushing more people into fuel poverty.

The following amendment to the first sentence in the paragraph was proposed and seconded, stating: -

"Cyngor Gwynedd states that we believe that responsibility for the Crown Estate should be devolved to ~~the Welsh Government~~ local authorities in Wales."

The amendment was discussed.

The proposer of the original motion noted that considerable thought had gone into the motion, but he did not see that the same level of thought had gone into the amendment. He did not believe that the proposer of the amendment had done any kind of research on the subject or presented any kind of evidence, and on this basis, he urged members to reject the amendment and support the original motion.

It was noted that while it would be necessary in due course to argue how to benefit Gwynedd, it was necessary to benefit the whole of Wales first as a nation.

The amendment was voted on, and lost.

In his closing comments, the proposer noted:-

- That the Crown Estate had made a profit of £443m last year, and this figure had more than doubled to £1.1bn this year, while Cyngor Gwynedd's budgets and other authorities had been squeezed and services had to be cut.

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- In terms of the comment about energy developers in Wales, devolution of the Crown Estate would give us more control over who gets energy permits, etc., and bring the decisions closer to the people of Wales.
- Having seen the response to this proposal on social media, it was clear that many people had been discussing the Crown Estate over the past few days. It was important that the people of Wales realised how bad the current deal was and we had a responsibility to fight for a fairer deal for our residents.
- There was encouragement for local authorities and other councils across Wales to follow the same direction as this Council, and the people of Wales were encouraged to contact their elected members at all levels calling them to push for the devolution of the Crown Estate to Wales.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely: -

1. **Cyngor Gwynedd states that we believe responsibility for the Crown Estate should be devolved to the Welsh Government. Any profits generated by the Crown Estate, here on Welsh lands and waters, should remain in Wales, for the benefit of our residents and communities. Responsibility for the Crown Estate is already devolved to the Scottish Government.**
2. **This Council also states our dissatisfaction that we are obliged to pay annual fees (in the form of leases) to ensure that Gwynedd residents and visitors have access to various sites, including our beaches and other facilities. In 2023, Cyngor Gwynedd paid a total of over £161,000 to the Crown Estate. Lease fees in 2023 ranged from £35 for 'Bangor beach front', to £8,500 for 'Dwyfor beach front', to £144,000 for 'Hafan Pwllheli'. In a period of severe financial hardship for public services, we believe that it is immoral that such fees go towards the maintenance of the British Monarchy and to the coffers of the Treasury in London. This money should remain in Gwynedd to support the people of Gwynedd.**
3. **We call on the Chief Executive to arrange to open discussions with the Crown Estate regarding the fees paid by Cyngor Gwynedd. We would urge the Chief Executive to try to persuade the Crown Estate not to charge rent on the Council until the Council's financial position has improved. We note that the Crown Estate's profits have more than doubled from £443 million in 2022/23 to £1.1 billion in 2023/24, in the same period Cyngor Gwynedd has seen their budget cut in real terms.**

- (C) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Elwyn Edwards, in accordance with Section 4.19 of the Constitution and it was seconded:-

Cyngor Gwynedd is calling on the Westminster Government to hand over the right to the Welsh Government in Cardiff to designate 1st March of each year as an official national holiday in Wales recognising St David as the Patron Saint of Wales. This is done in the case of the Saints of Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Council also seeks the support of the Welsh Government for this (it has previously stated its support) as well as all County, Town and Community councils in Wales.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely: -

Cyngor Gwynedd is calling on the Westminster Government to hand over the right to the Welsh Government in Cardiff to designate 1st March of each year as an official national holiday in Wales recognising St David as the Patron Saint of Wales. This was done in the case of the Saints of Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Council also seeks the support of the Welsh Government for this (it has previously stated its support) as well as all County, Town and Community councils in Wales.

- (D) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Meryl Roberts under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded: -

Cyngor Gwynedd is fully opposed to the brazen and cruel cuts of the Westminster Government to abolish Gwynedd pensioners' fuel payments this winter. These cuts will mean that at least 85%, namely over 20,000 Gwynedd pensioners, will miss out on fuel payments. To this end, we send steadfast correspondence to Keir Starmer, as prime minister of the United Kingdom, criticising his cruel policy and asking if he can overturn it.

Members expressed their keen support to the motion. During the discussion, the following matters were raised:-

The Council's Age Friendly Champion, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan referred to the work that was underway within the Council to support people, such as: -

- Encouraging people eligible for Pension Credit to claim it, and by doing so to receive a heating payment automatically.
- Assisting people on the borderline of eligibility for Pension Credit by promoting the additional benefit that are available to them.
- It was intended to establish a cross-departmental Winter Payments Taskforce for Pensioners very soon with the aim of developing a campaign to ensure that the county's residents are aware of, and receive what they were entitled to.
- Holding a series of Living Well, Living Healthily events. The first of these events would take place at Canolfan Glaslyn, Porthmadog on 7 October, where over 20 different agencies would be present to hand out information and to assist people to complete application forms etc. An event had been organised in Caernarfon on 1 November, with further events to follow in the south of the County and in the Bangor area.
- Working with the Government's services and the Department of Work and Pensions to determine what was the best way to communicate with individuals.
- A meeting had taken place with Rhian Bowen-Davies, the Older People Commissioner, who also reiterated her concern regarding the proposal to stop the winter fuel payments.
- A session took place in Porthmadog for Council members to given them advice on where to refer people who approach them for information. It was noted that the number who attended the session was disappointing, but it was intended to organise another session soon.

According to the recent figures, 1,977 of Gwynedd residents did not receive their due Pension Credit, a loss to Gwynedd of £456,000. However, since the Government had made the announcement, 20% of those people eligible to receive Pension Credit now received it because organisations such as Cyngor Gwynedd and others had been encouraging people to claim. This meant that the savings made as a result of revoking the winter fuel payments would be less than the Westminster Government had expected.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely: -

Cyngor Gwynedd is fully opposed to the brazen and cruel cuts of the Westminster Government to abolish Gwynedd pensioners' fuel payments this winter. These cuts will mean that at least 85%, namely over 20,000 Gwynedd pensioners, will miss out on fuel payments. To this end, we send steadfast correspondence to Keir Starmer, as prime minister of the United Kingdom, criticising his cruel policy and asking if he can overturn it.

The meeting commenced at 1.30 p.m. and concluded at 4.40p.m.

CHAIR