

Complete Agenda

CABINET

CYNGOR GWYNEDD

DATE	Tuesday, 17th December, 2024
TIME	1.00 pm
LOCATION	Hybrid Meeting - Siambr Hywel Dda, Council Offices, Caernarfon, LL55 1SH and on Zoom This Meeting will be webcast https://gwynedd-public-i.tv/core/portal/home
CONTACT POINT	Sioned Mai Jones 01286 679665 / cabinet@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET MEMBERS

Members	
Nia Wyn Jeffreys	Leader of the Council
Menna Trenholme	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families
Craig ab Iago	Cabinet Member for Environment
Dewi Jones	Cabinet Member for Education
Huw Wyn Jones	Cabinet Member for Finance
June Jones	Cabinet Member for Highways, Engineering and YGC
Dilwyn Morgan	Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Llio Elenid Owen	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Legal
Paul John Rowlinson	Cabinet Member for Housing and Property
Medwyn Hughes	Cabinet Member for Economy and Community

AGENDA

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THE CABINET TUESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2024

Present -

Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, Craig ab Iago, Dilwyn Morgan, Paul Rowlinson and Menna Trenholme.

Also present -

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance Department) and Rhodri Jones (Democracy Services Officer).

Item 6: Lowri Wyn Morton (Senior Research and Analytics Officer, Corporate Services).

Item 7: Carys Fon Williams (Head of Housing and Property Department).

Item 8: Sioned Eirian Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department).

Item 9: Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services Department).

Item 10: Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department).

1. APOLOGIES

The Cabinet Members and the Officers were welcomed to the meeting by the Deputy Leader of the Council.

All Council staff were thanked for their hard work to ensure that Gwynedd residents were safe following the recent poor weather.

Attention was drawn to the global White Ribbon campaign day (25 November), which worked to stop violence against women and girls. It was confirmed that Cyngor Gwynedd had received an accreditation in May 2022, as an acknowledgement of efforts within the organisation to make a genuine difference.

No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

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 15 October 2024 were accepted as a true record.

6. COUNCIL TAX: DISCRETIONARY POWERS TO ALLOW DISCOUNTS AND / OR RAISE A PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY DWELLINGS

The report was submitted by Councillor Paul Rowlinson.

DECISION

Recommend to the full Council that the following is the preferred option with regards to the level of Premium on the Council Tax of Second Homes and Long-term Empty Dwellings for the 2025/26 financial year:

- **That Cyngor Gwynedd allows no discount on class A second homes, under Section 12 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. no change).**
- **That Cyngor Gwynedd allows no discount and raises a premium of 150% on class B second homes, under Section 12B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. no change).**
- **That Cyngor Gwynedd allows no discount on homes that have been empty for 6 months or more and charges a premium of 100% on homes that have been empty for 12 months or more, in accordance with Section 12A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. no change).**

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted confirming that a decision had to be made on the Council Tax premium levels for second homes and empty dwellings annually in a meeting of the Full Council. Members were reminded that the Premium levels were currently 150% for second homes and 100% for dwellings that had been empty for 6 months or longer (long-term). It was explained that the premium levels would automatically increase if there was an increase to the Council Tax setting.

A recommendation was proposed for the premium levels for second homes and empty dwellings to remain on the same levels for the next year.

The need to follow guidelines published by the Welsh Government was explained, confirming that new guidelines had been introduced since the premium levels were decided by the Full Council last year. It was detailed that the latest guidelines noted that the Local Authorities had the power to increase empty dwelling premium to encourage owners to bring these dwellings back into use, as well as increasing the supply of affordable housing available and make communities more sustainable.

It was reported that the latest guidelines introduced by the Welsh Government noted that a number of factors should be considered when deciding on the premium levels of Council Tax for second homes and empty dwellings. It was detailed that these included:

- The number and percentages of long-term empty properties and second homes in the local area
- The locations of the buildings
- Impact on house prices and affordability
- The local economy
- Tourism industry
- Public services

- The local community
- The Welsh language

It was reported that the Council had considered a number of other measures to ensure that more houses were available for residents to bring empty properties back into use.

It was confirmed that a public consultation was undertaken before introducing a Council Tax premium for second homes and empty dwellings for the first time, and before the premium was raised over 100%. It was ensured that the Council had implemented this requirement, reminding members that the latest consultation had been undertaken when increasing the Council Tax premium for second homes to 150%, back in 2022. It was noted that the latest guidelines had noted that there was no need to undertake further consultation should the Council wish to increase the premium levels once again, but evidence must be presented to show that detailed processes had been followed to justify reaching that decision.

It was reiterated that the Council's Research and Information service had been undertaking research on the impact of the Council Tax premium on second homes and empty dwellings recently, noting that there was not much change to the situation. It could be concluded from the results of the work that the premium levels did not need to be changed this year. It was reported that the results of the research did not show that the current premium levels were unsuitable. It seemed that the historical tendency of a main dwelling being converted into a second home had changed as a result of the premium, confirming that more second homes had been converted back into main residences. It was suggested that the Council Tax premium policy worked.

It was emphasised that the Article 4 Direction was also a useful tool for the Council because a planning application had to be presented to convert a main residence into a second home or short-term holiday accommodation, since it had become operational in September 2024. It was explained that these planning applications could be refused if the building was in an area where residents experienced difficulties finding a home due to the pressures of second homes on the community. The importance of monitoring the Direction was emphasised, ensuring the need for it to be operational for longer before assessing its impact fully.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the Welsh Government had expanded letting thresholds within the Non-domestic Rating (Amending the Definition of Domestic Property) (Wales) Order 2022, to approve a self-catering property paying non-domestic tax instead of Council Tax, if it did not reach the thresholds of the definition of the Order. It was explained that the property had to pay a second home Premium, as well as Council Tax if it did not address relevant thresholds. It was confirmed that the Council had the discretionary power to choose not to increase the premium in such situations, noting that consideration would be given to using these powers in the future, reiterating the need to develop a clear policy of the relevant exemptions. It was reiterated that the relevant types of developments included barns that had been converted into holiday accommodation, annexes, holiday cabins and caravans.

It was explained that the Welsh Government's latest guidelines noted that it was possible to appoint a revised premium level for dwellings that were empty for a long period. It was confirmed that this allowed the Local Authority to increase the incremental Council Tax premium levels on empty dwellings as they became empty for increasing

periods of time. It was reported that some Local Authorities increased the premium levels according to this arrangement and it was noted that this would be considered by Cyngor Gwynedd for the future.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Attention was drawn to Plan 3E of the Housing Action Plan which detailed Council Tax exemptions on empty homes, in situations where residents purchased homes in which they were unable to live until work had been completed.
- It was confirmed that further research into the impact of the premium on the housing stock in Gwynedd was intended, to ensure that the latest information was available for the Council when deciding on the Council Tax premium levels annually.
 - In response to an enquiry on capacity and resources to gather the necessary data, it was acknowledged that the Information and Research Service was not located within the Finance Department but officers had given assurance of their enthusiasm to continue to gather this data for the future.
- It was asked whether a timetable had been taken into account to consider increasing the incremental premium levels on dwellings that were empty for extended periods.
 - In response, it was confirmed that a timetable had not been decided at present, but the need to engage with other Authorities was emphasised to get a better understanding of their arrangements and the impact that this had to ensure that empty dwellings were used once again.
 - It was assured that conducting this research was a priority for the Council, confirming that resources would be released to complete this.
- The possibility of conducting a public consultation following this necessary research on empty dwellings' incremental premium levels was explained. It was confirmed that some Authorities were increasing the premium level to a maximum of 300% for properties that were empty for a period of 5 years or longer and conducting a consultation would be necessary to ensure that such an arrangement was suitable to this area.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND PROPERTY

The report was submitted by Craig ab Iago.

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted confirming that the housing crisis continued in Gwynedd and nationally.

Pride was expressed that Cyngor Gwynedd was the only authority in Wales that had reduced homelessness numbers and the costs of bed and breakfast emergency accommodation this year. It was reported that this confirmed the Department's robust procedures and policies. It was reiterated that the Department had held a 'Homelessness Awareness Week' recently to educate and draw attention to this subject, noting that the response to the campaign had been positive.

Pride was expressed that Dôl Sadler, a supported accommodation site for homeless individuals, the first location of a wider plan in Gwynedd, had reached the short-list for the 'Best Supported Housing Development: Rural/Suburban' award from Inside Housing recently. Hundreds of nominations had been presented for the award and the Department was very proud to reach the short-list.

It was reiterated that other projects were underway to get to grips with the homelessness emergency, namely 137 High Street, Bangor. It was confirmed that this project was a good example of the support available for anyone who experienced homelessness and it was hoped to get more similar locations in the future.

It was confirmed that over 317 social houses had now been built since commencing the current Housing Action Plan. It was reiterated that this had helped to provide 840 Gwynedd residents with a home. It was reported that there were over 220 houses underway over the next year.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Attention was drawn to the fact that the figures for providing Telecare service had reduced recently and it was asked whether there was an opportunity to collaborate more effectively with the team providing the service.
 - In response to the observation, it was acknowledged that these figures had reduced recently because officers were developing a digital version of the service, instead of an analogue version. Due to this, it was noted that they needed to visit each house that used the service to upgrade it. It was acknowledged that this had put an additional workload on the service and had led to a drop in numbers who received Telecare support for the first time. It was confirmed that this work was proceeding well and they hoped that every service user had the digital version by the end of March 2025.
- It was confirmed that the Scrutiny process was very important to the Council's operation, noting that the Department had received positive feedback about the Housing Action Plan from the Care Scrutiny Committee.
 - It was reiterated that the Department had also attended a Care Scrutiny Committee to discuss the Allocation Policy and other matters, noting that they were very constructive sessions. It was added that a recent Scrutiny session had been held with the Department and representatives from the Housing Agencies and that it was a very valuable opportunity to share a lot of information.
- Reference was made to the support Packages available for private landlords as part of the Leasing Scheme Wales, appealing to Meirionnydd landlords to contact the department to discuss the opportunities available to them.
- The Department and its partners were congratulated for their work in the homelessness field.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY

The report was submitted by the Head of Economy and Community Department.

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, reminding members that the Department was responsible for three schemes within the Council Plan. It was reported that a general risk was seen in all of those schemes, which was that their main funding source would come to an end at the end of March 2025.

It was explained that updates had been confirmed since submitting this written report to the Cabinet. There was an update that the Government's 'Levelling up' plan funding had been extended until March 2027. It was reiterated that the Department was expecting confirmation that the SPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) budget was being extended for an additional year, with an official confirmation on its way.

It was acknowledged that financial uncertainty continued with some funds, namely the ARFOR fund. It was noted that more information regarding this budget was expected following the Welsh Government's budget announcement within the next few weeks.

Details were given on the Regenerating Communities and Town Centres project, noting that there was progress to the project's development following the SPF budget. It was explained that 22 enterprise and local organisations projects were being implemented within the project. It was confirmed that a budget of £1.8 million was currently being used to develop these projects until March 2025. It was reported that a Placemaking Plan had been developed for Pwllheli, Porthmadog and Bala, with a plan being prepared for Dolgellau. It was reiterated that additional Transforming Towns funding had been confirmed to improve Canolfan Bro Tegid, Bala and Cynllun y Tŵr, Pwllheli.

It was confirmed that the Strategic Outline Case for the Bangor Health and Well-being Hub had been approved by Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board, noting that a request for financial contribution from the Welsh Government had already been submitted.

Attention was drawn to the 'Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for community enterprises and businesses to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work' project. It was explained that a £1.4 million budget funded by the SPF had been delegated to Business Development Funds, with 45 Gwynedd businesses having received offers of support to date.

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn was thanked for his prominent work to ensure an ARFOR budget to Authorities in west Wales, with the hope that the funding would continue for the next financial year. It was also reiterated that he had also been doing leading work within the North Wales Growth Deal Application plan, giving special attention to the Digital Programme, Energy, Tourism, Agri Food and Land and Property plans.

Reference was made to the 'Gwynedd Business Week' held in October. It was explained that it had been a very successful week with many businesses taking part in events in Dolgellau, Bangor and Pwllheli. It was confirmed that a specific newsletter would be shared with all Gwynedd Councillors with further details about the events and the feedback received from Gwynedd businesses.

The Gwaith Gwynedd service was thanked for their support this year, as they ensured that 203 Gwynedd residents had got a job during 2024/25 to date. It was reiterated that 8 job fairs had also been held to help residents to find work and help employers to fill vacant posts. It was confirmed that over 130 employers had attended these fairs with over 750 individuals present.

It was noted that a new management structure for the Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan was now operational and led on the development of the Action Plan for 2024/25. The fact that arrangements had been successful was added, thanking all the partners.

Reference was made to the Llewyrch o'r Llechi programme which created local benefit to the Wales Slate Landscape World Heritage Site designation. Attention was drawn to upgrading work which had been undertaken in Neuadd Ogwen, Bethesda recently, noting that it had almost been completed by now. It was noted that many investments were being developed currently, namely Parc Padarn, Llanberis Slate Museum, Blaenau Ffestiniog link path and Aelwyd yr Urdd Blaenau Ffestiniog. Pride was expressed that £2m had been confirmed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to extend support to the slate communities for a period of 5 years.

Pride was expressed that the Byw'n lach company had managed to restore the service following very challenging years as a result of the pandemic. It was confirmed that performance levels had increased to the same levels as the pre-Covid-19 period. Reference was also made to a number of improvements and upgrading work underway in Parc Padarn and Parc Glynllifon. It was explained that these Rural Parks used a new customer satisfaction reporting system and an increase had been seen in the results compared to 2023/24 when the system was used for the first time.

It was acknowledged that the summer season's fluctuating weather this summer had had an impact on the Department's maritime service. It was explained that this was mainly seen in the lack of income in the car parks of the county's beaches. However, it was noted that the fluctuating weather had been beneficial to some services, such as Neuadd Dwyfor.

It was explained that the Lloyd George Museum was closed so as to complete renovation investments currently. It was hoped that the museum would re-open by Easter 2025 after the work had been completed.

It was reported that there was a pattern of reduction of the number of people who used library books. However, it was emphasised that an increase had been seen in the number of digital service users, as well as the services provided in libraries to support people. It was confirmed that a very positive response had been received from service users. Nia Gruffydd (Library Service Strategic Manager) was thanked for her leading work to develop changes to the library management system (LMS) for the benefit of libraries throughout Wales. It was confirmed that her work would ensure a more cost-effective service nationally.

It was noted that the Department was working to achieve savings plans currently. It was acknowledged that further work was being undertaken to check the income levels of Neuadd Dwyfor as part of this work. It was anticipated that the Department would overspend by approximately £127,000 by the end of this financial year. However, it was

emphasised that steps had been identified to try to manage and reduce this deficit over the coming months.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn was thanked for his work within the Economy and Community field locally, regionally and nationally. Specific attention was drawn to his work on the Sustainable Visitor Economy Strategy, ARFOR and the Rural Forum.
- The Byw'n Iach company was praised for ensuring an increase in use and income following the pandemic. Attention was drawn to the Byw'n Iach customer satisfaction results, asking the Department whether there was an intention to upgrade fitness rooms and other departments of the leisure centres.
 - It was confirmed that there was an intention to upgrade the centres. It was emphasised that a financial bid had been submitted to the Council this year. It was also explained that a fund was available to this end, but it would be used as required, instead of completing all the work across the County together. It was also noted that this allowed the Department to have the opportunity to assess whether the upgrading work would lead to an increase in users and income.
- The Department was thanked for their work. The staff and councillors were encouraged to share information about the successes of the economy with the County's residents.

9. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE AND LEGAL SERVICES

The report was submitted by Councillor Menna Trenholme.

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted on the Corporate Services Department, drawing attention to the following main points:

It was confirmed that the Department led on 6 projects within the different priority fields of the Council Plan 2023-28.

It was reported that a fifth series of the 'Women in Leadership' development programme was currently underway. Pride was expressed that women from every department were interested in taking part in the programme. Pride was expressed that the figure of women in managerial posts was 41%, which was an increase of 11% since establishing the project. It was confirmed that data was increasing, and the impact of the project was being updated continuously.

A pilot to submit anonymous job application forms was held this year. It was noted that the pilot would be adopted in the long term for posts from the 'Team Leader' and higher pay point, following positive feedback by managers who had appointed staff during the

plan's period. It was explained that it was a standard method of considering applications and it was confirmed that the arrangements would be reviewed every 6 months.

Members were reminded that the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 had been adopted as part of the 'Ensuring Fairness for Everyone' project. It was explained that different services within the Council collaborated to manage various aspects of the plan. Pride was expressed that work had been undertaken to develop detailed milestones for all areas, with all of them on track to be completed in a timely manner this year. In addition, it was noted that training on manager duties in the equality field was in the process of being created, with specific information on how to conduct equality impact assessments. It was emphasised that heads of departments had access to information that provided an accurate picture of the number of staff who had completed the core training on equality.

Pride was expressed that there were over 300 applications for the apprenticeships plan this year, noting that this was approximately twice the number of applicants last year. It was confirmed that 15 new apprentices and 5 new professional trainees had been appointed. It was explained that this meant that the Council currently employed 51 apprentices and professional trainees on full-time contracts. Pride was expressed that 8 apprentices and 2 professional trainees had completed their qualifications and received full-time jobs with the Council recently. Attention was also drawn to 4 additional people who had been employed through the Talent Pool.

Specific attention was drawn to the Information and Research Service, thanking them for their detailed work in assessing the impact of the Council Tax Premium recently. It was reiterated that they had also received acknowledgement recently for their review of older people care services for the future in Gwynedd through the Llechen Lân plan, as the work had reached a short-list in a national event in the research field, with the result to be announced soon.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- The Department was congratulated on the success of the 'Women in Leadership' plan and apprentices plan.
- Reference was made to the 'Keeping the Benefit Local' plan, asking for further information on the development of the plan.
 - It was explained that the plan tried to ensure that local businesses could compete and win procurement contracts with the Council to ensure that as much of the Council's expenditure as possible would remain local. It was noted that this led to social benefits for Gwynedd. It was reported that there was an intention to build on the benefits for the future.

The report was submitted on the Legal Services Department, drawing attention to the following main points:

It was explained that the Legal Service's performance was being monitored by receiving feedback from the Departments that used it. It was reiterated that the feedback received within the current financial year confirmed that 100% of the Legal Service's users were very satisfied with the service provided.

Pride was expressed that the Service had benefited from being part of Cynllun Yfory for some years, and it was noted that the Service had managed to attract individuals'

interest who achieved their qualifications and received jobs within the Service. It was elaborated that the Service had also benefited from the apprenticeships scheme, noting that the Service's first para-legal apprentice had been appointed recently. It was confirmed that an apprentice had also been appointed within the Elections Team.

Assurance was given that the recruiting problems within the Legal Service had now been resolved, noting that the Service could plan to address regional requirements. It was explained that an increase was seen in the demand for resources as the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee prepared to be operational.

It was confirmed that two elections had been held recently. It was explained that the General Election was a new challenge for the Elections service as it was a cross-border election, requiring effective collaboration with the Conwy and Denbighshire authorities.

All the staff from the Corporate Services and Legal Services were thanked for their work over the last year.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Attention was drawn to the Welsh Government's pilot scheme to establish the most accurate and effective way to register electors without them having to apply.
 - It was explained that the Council had committed to the pilot to automatically register residents to Government elections, using data that was available to the Council. It was hoped that this would increase the number of voters in the United Kingdom elections and the Senedd elections in Wales. It was noted that the pilot would be implemented from 2025 onwards and therefore the Elections team worked on systems to resolve any defects.

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The report was submitted by Councillor Dilwyn Morgan.

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted thanking all care workers who were working to support vulnerable people throughout the year, and especially during the extreme weather recently.

It was confirmed that there had been work to upgrade care homes in Abermaw and Dolgellau. In the same manner, pride was expressed regarding the work in Hafod Mawddach. It was confirmed that work was ongoing to find suitable individuals to use the equipment available in Abermaw and Hafod Mawddach currently. Pride was expressed that the necessary specialist Dementia care was now available to patients in Hafod Mawddach following a challenging period.

It was acknowledged that the Council's ability to act as a landlord in Tŷ Meurig, which provided accommodation to individuals who received the Department's support, had been challenging in the past. Despite this, it was confirmed that the Council had received confirmation that it was possible to act as a landlord and provide tenancy, ensuring more control over the provision for similar developments. It was elaborated that the Department had collaborated with the Housing and Property Department to design the building in the hope of receiving planning permission when timely.

It was explained that there was a slight slippage in the timetable to develop supported housing where it was intended to be ready by the end of the current financial year. However, it was confirmed that the Department was trying to ensure that this house in Pwllheli would be ready before summer 2025. It was elaborated that a second house in Penrhyndeudraeth was likely to be ready by spring 2025.

It was reported that the tendering work to develop Canolfan Dolfeurig had been undertaken recently, but the bids submitted were substantially higher than the funding committed to within the Council's Plan. It was elaborated that the department had been holding discussions with the Welsh Government regarding the possibility of funding the gap in the plan's costs and it was emphasised that the decision would be announced very soon, to be able to commence the development of the site.

Pride was expressed that a Learning Disability Career Pathway Coordinator had been appointed and work to promote work opportunities and support individuals into paid work was underway.

It was explained that the percentage of unmet domiciliary care hours was at its lowest for a year, with 84 individuals waiting for domiciliary care. It was emphasised that the Department was holding discussions with partners nationally to ensure that fewer people had to wait for a domiciliary care service in the future.

Attention was drawn to the Older People, Physical and Sensory Disabilities Service, acknowledging that the waiting list to receive a care assessment continued to increase. It was explained that the main challenge related to lack of occupational therapists' capacity. Emphasis was given to the fact that the Department was aware of these challenges, trying to ensure that resources and officers were targeted effectively to resolve some of the problems arising.

It was noted that an increase could be seen in the percentage of adults who received direct payments to fund their own care arrangements. It was elaborated that many guidelines had been developed, as well as campaigns to promote this proposal.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- All the individuals in the County who were unpaid carers were thanked. It was acknowledged that their work was extremely important as part of Care provision in Gwynedd. It was emphasised that one of the Department's strategic priorities was campaigning to share information about the support available for unpaid carers, such as education and work support, encouraging carers of any age to contact the Council if they were caring for their loved ones.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 2.30pm.

CHAIR

CYNGOR GWYNEDD - Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of item:	Wellbeing Strategy / Plan
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Llio E. Owen
Relevant Officer:	Catrin Love
Date of meeting:	17 th December 2024

1. Decision sought:

Cabinet approval of the staff Wellbeing Plan to support staff wellbeing over the coming years.

2. The reason why the Cabinet must make the decision:

It is important that Cabinet Members are aware and satisfied with the content of this Plan, which is a key strategy in supporting staff wellbeing for the next few years.

The Plan is presented to Cabinet for formal acceptance after a lengthy consultation process. Those consultations have included the Corporate Management Team, the Corporate Health and Safety Panel and Forum, Departmental Health and Safety Forums, Assistant Head of Department Forum and the Manager Network (Rhwydwaith Rheolwyr). The document has also been scrutinised at the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in October.

3. Introduction and Rationale

It's imperative that the Council has a clear framework to be supporting the well-being of staff.

Protecting the well-being of its staff is a moral responsibility of any employer. Failure to do so also presents financial and legal risks to the Council.

The benefits of incorporating well-being into all aspects of the Council's culture include:

- Attracting new employees
- Retaining our current employees
- Lowering sick leave rates
- Improve the performance and development of our staff.

As such, this Plan ties into several other priority projects in the Council's Plan, such as Workforce Planning.

3.1 Background / Introduction

The Wellbeing Plan presented today is a document outlining the Council's priorities for the well-being of staff over the next few years. The Council has had a detailed program of work on maintaining and supporting staff wellbeing for many years, which in turn has led to recognition through Corporate Health Standard accreditation by the Welsh Government where the Gold award has been awarded on a number of consecutive occasions. Unfortunately, that accreditation scheme has now come to an end.

Since lockdown, however, it is universally recognised that the challenge in terms of staff well-being, and the mental well-being of the general population has increased dramatically. Recent figures from the 'MIND' organisation highlight that a third of the working age population believe their mental health has deteriorated significantly since March 2020. This is reflected in the numbers of staff who have been making use of support available through the Council, where there has been a significant increase in Counselling Service use etc. We also know of course that the Council's sick leave figures are an increasing challenge with the true cost in 23/24 calculated to be £5.7 million.

In reflecting on the extraordinary period that has taken place since March 2020, it is also fair to say that there has been a shift in mindset within the field as a whole about the effectiveness of some past wellbeing strategies, and a recognition that no wellbeing strategy is going to reach its full potential when it exists isolated within an organisation, without being intertwined with other core culture priorities plans, and leadership. To this end, a 'Healthy and Satisfied Workforce' is now one of the work streams in the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan which is a priority in the Council's plan 2023-28, and this strategy is an important piece of that work. This sets a robust infrastructure for staff well-being issues to be at the core of the council's culture as a whole, and the way we develop our Leadership and Management into the future. Immediately, by having developed closer links to wider work on council culture, an entire section on wellbeing was incorporated into this year's Workforce 'Llais Staff' Questionnaire on staff wellbeing, the results of which have been fed into this Strategy.

Legislatively, there is a statutory duty to be supporting and greeting the well-being of staff. Employment Acts, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act, and the Equality Act impose stringent requirements, and indeed, the duty to be protecting the mental health of staff is one that is increasingly being addressed by the Health and Safety Executive. The Well-being of Future Generations Act also sets requirements for the development of sustainable programmes that greet well-being, economic, social, environmental and cultural.

Through the above, it will therefore be seen that steps have already been taken to provide the foundations to this strategy, and that it is time for a new strategy that greets the demands of the post-pandemic era, and the specific challenges it brings. The risks of not having a strategy are triple-fold. They are moral ones of contributing to the decline of staff well-being, financial ones from the absence figures and the risks of compensation claims against the Council, and legal ones of being unable to meet the minimum of what should be doing to protect workers. A healthy workforce is at the heart of everything the Council is committed to in terms of serving the Public, and it is a factor that weaves into so many other priority

workforce work streams, such as attracting and retaining staff, and the staff appraisal process, to get them to thrive at work and be able to give the public the best possible service.

The draft Strategy is based on good practice and the latest research in the field nationally and internationally, and presents three foundations for well-being that are based on work by the Investors in People organisation. The success of the strategy is dependent on collaboration at a Council-wide level and at all levels of the Institute, so that the principles permeate the organisation and reach all staff on the front line.

The corporate co-ordination on this area takes place within the Safety and Wellbeing Health Service. Expenditure and the need for a resource is monitored and assessed as part of running that Service, and in the past bids for more money have been made, and approved. In recent years, this has included a one-time bid for funding to be targeting mental well-being within the workforce, and another bid for a permanent budget increase for Medra Counselling. Again, this was approved. We will closely monitor the increase in referrals to the Occupational Health Unit following the launch of a new absence policy and system to ensure the resource is adequate to cope. It should be noted that attracting and retaining staff in the Council's Occupational Health Team is historically challenging.

3.2 The rationale and justification for recommending the decision

The Plan has generally been welcomed during the consultative process, with any relevant comments incorporated, and it is very timely to ask for Cabinet approval before the end of the year in order to pres ahead with detailed work plans in the new year.

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and the main issue arising is the need to ensure equal access for all staff to information about wellbeing support whether they have a digital account, or not.

3.3 Next steps

A detailed programme of work will be implemented based on the three well-being foundations within the Strategy, and consultees have been clear during the consultations about what the priorities should be.

4. Views of the statutory officers

4.1 Chief Finance Officer

In addition to our ethical and legal duties, there are positive financial obligations in doing the best that we can to support well-being. The report highlights the substantial financial costs of sickness absence, and whilst we will never completely eliminate sickness absence, I fully support the efforts to do as much as possible to protect the well-being of the Council's staff."

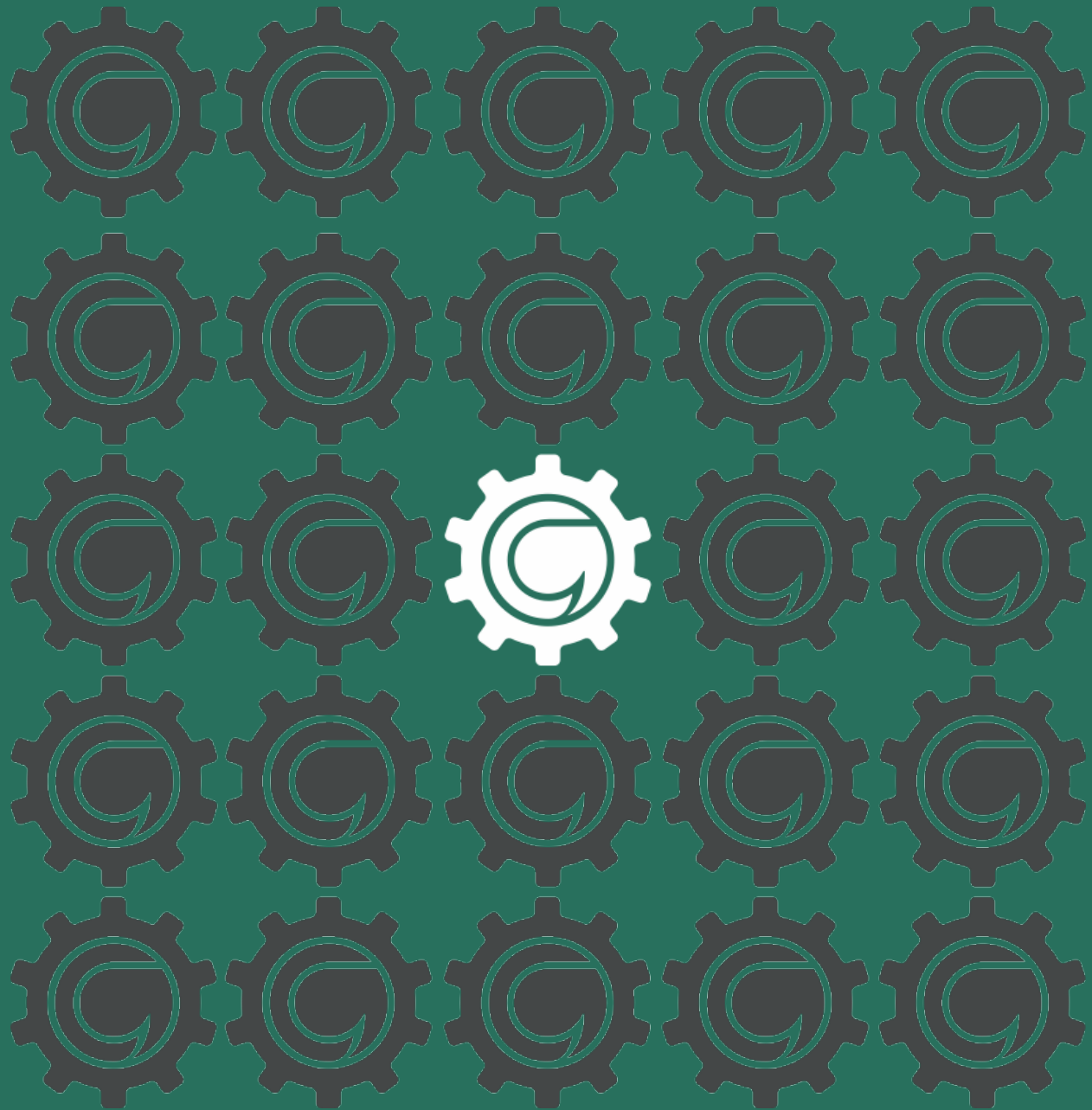
4.2 Monitoring Officer

It is noted in the report that several objectives can be achieved with the adoption and implementation of a Staff Wellbeing Strategy. It represents an important positive commitment to the well-being of Council employees. But, it is also an important vehicle to ensure that the Council fulfils its duty of care towards its staff. I welcome the Strategy and confirm the propriety of the decision sought

List of Appendices:

List of Background Documents:

Council Staff Well-being Plan 2024 - 2028



**CORPORATE
SERVICES**

CYNGOR GWYNEDD

Health, Safety and
Well-being Service

1 October 2024

Cyngor Gwynedd Staff Well-being Plan

FOREWORD

Welcome to Cyngor Gwynedd's Staff Well-being Plan. The well-being of our workers is paramount to us in the Council and is one of the key work streams of the **Ffordd Gwynedd Priority Project - A Satisfied and Healthy Workforce**. A healthy, satisfied and resilient workforce allows us to perform better, achieve more, adapt to change more quickly and this is essential to provide first class services for the people of Gwynedd.

WHY DO WE NEED A WELL-BEING PLAN?

Having a structured and comprehensive Well-being Plan assists the Council to:

- ✓ Attract new employees;
- ✓ Engage, motivate and retain employees;
- ✓ Create a healthy and inclusive culture;
- ✓ Reduce sickness absence rates;
- ✓ Improve the performance and development of individuals;
- ✓ Improve productivity and ensure success.

WELL-BEING IN CYNGOR GWYNEDD

At Cyngor Gwynedd during 2023/24:

- The cost of absences for the Council in real terms was £5.7m
- **14,404 (22.13%)** work days were lost due to sickness absence related to stress, depression and mental health problems;
- 7,718 (11.86%) work days were lost due to sickness absence related to musculoskeletal problems;
- 'Other sickness' was recorded as the main reason for the sickness of **22.79%**;
- Long-term absences contributed to **51%** of the Council's sickness absence days;
- On average, every officer in the Council has lost **10.29** work days a year;
- **2.72%** more sickness absence days were lost in 2023/24 compared to 2022/23.

- 665 staff members were referred to the Occupational Health Service
- 194 Council staff members were referred to the Counselling Service (Medra)
- 129 Council staff members were referred to the Physiotherapy Service

During October 2023, a Staff Voice Survey was shared with every member of the Council's staff. The purpose of the Staff Voice Survey was to find out what Council employees need to ensure that the people of Gwynedd are central to their work; what support or assistance they need to do their work and what information do they need about benefits, their rights and responsibilities.

Having analysed the data and staff opinion on well-being in the Council, the following is a summary of the main themes and some of the observations made by staff on well-being matters:

Their Manager's Role

- *Need more training for Line Managers on how to deal with their staff*
- *I need more support from my line manager*
- *There is a need to maintain contact between employees and team managers to ensure that all information is shared*
- *Very fortunate to have him as a Manager. This has proven to me that the Council is genuinely concerned about staff well-being. My manager holds a 1 to 1 with me to see how I am.*

Stress

- *Too much work pressure, too much extra work being forced on us*
- *Increasing work pressure*
- *Divide work more fairly between the team*
- *It would be good to see the Council consider workload and capacity. The number of officers with large workloads will ultimately affect well-being.*

Promoting well-being events

- *I do not feel that anyone asks about my well-being*
- *It was only by chance that I found out that there are several support services available*
- *It is not good enough to leave it to the employees to try to find the support that is available for them*
- *Highlight more of the good support that is available - not everyone knows about it*

Work environment

- *The offices do not promote well-being, everything is dated.*
- *Need a working environment that is fit for purpose, and nicer*
- *Need a space where we can eat our lunch*
- *We need suitable desks and somewhere to go for a break from the desk*
- *The offices' image is disastrous and shabby and it makes one feels joyless when walking in*

We spend most of our lives in the workplace. According to Public Health Wales (2019), there is increasing evidence that the workplace could be an effective place to improve individuals' well-being. If we are unhappy at work for whatever reason - it could be poor relationships with co-workers, excessive work pressure, or an unsupportive Manager; it will affect our well-being. Being employed can offer financial security, social connections and a sense of belonging. In brief, to ensure well-being, individuals need to feel satisfied in their work. The Council therefore plays a significant part in influencing employees' general health and well-being.

By ensuring that we realise our vision, we can attract, recruit and retain staff in a way that demonstrates that we take their well-being seriously so that they contribute proactively to the Council's productivity and effectiveness.

OUR VISION

"Work together to improve well-being across the Council's entire workforce creating the best possible work environment to ensure that we create a healthy, resilient and productive workforce that can work to the best of their ability to serve the residents of Gwynedd."

OUR AIM

Our main objectives in terms of the well-being plan are based on three foundations, namely:

1. Leadership and Management
2. Sustainable support
3. Environment

There is more information about the three foundations below, but before we consider them further, we should also highlight the Plan's action principles. These are the principles that we will adhere and commit to while delivering the Plan. We commit to:

- Ensure that our vision, aim and objectives are consistent with wider arrangements and procedures in the human resources and health and safety areas;
- Ensure that the plan's key objectives are consistent with the objectives of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan;
- Ensure that all relevant stakeholders are aware of this statutory requirement.
- Ensure that well-being matters are coordinated corporately to ensure that the service and the proposals are fair across the Council, and that specific programmes are targeted and prioritised as needed.

FOUNDATION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Objectives

- Ensure that well-being is a central part of our strategic priorities for our leaders and councillors across every function in Cyngor Gwynedd and ensure that everyone is aware of the statutory requirements.
- Create a safe and healthy work environment that nurtures a culture of positive well-being, where our employees' well-being is an integral part of everything we do.
- Create effective managers with strong working relationships in line with the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan.
- Improve leaders' visibility and ensure that they engage with employees regularly and advocate the importance of well-being.
- Ensure that our employees understand their roles, their expectations, their focus in the future and create feelings of personal commitment and satisfaction.
- Improve leadership training so that leaders understand the links between well-being and other core areas such as health and safety and performance and development.
- Equip and empower managers to hold regular conversations with their staff about their well-being.
- Improve well-being for our varied workforce and ensure that well-being is considered a responsibility for everyone across the Council.
- To be recognised as an employer of choice that is concerned about well-being and recognises the role that well-being could play in the broader picture including improving productivity and working methods.

FOUNDATION 2: SUSTAINABLE SUPPORT

Objectives

- Provide a range of effective well-being support based on the needs of our workforce, using a collaborative approach.
- Our sustainable support focuses on four key well-being principles, namely:
 - Mental
 - Physical
 - Social
 - Financial

1. Mental Well-being:

- Promote a culture where mental well-being can be discussed openly.
- Equip employees with the skills, knowledge and confidence to care for their own mental well-being and support others.
- Provide better access to support, advice and referrals.
- Ensure that stress risk assessments are completed and reviewed regularly.
- Identify 'Well-being Champions' across Council Departments with Time to Change Wales.
- Continue with the i-Act training programme and mental health first aid.
- Continue and further develop specialist support for the workforce in terms of neurodiversity.
- Hold health promotional campaigns that reach every member of staff through visits, websites, posters, qr codes.
- Develop policies and procedures that represent best practice in terms of mental health, including creating an open and inclusive culture which shows respect towards the individuals who suffer from mental health conditions and the stigma that could exist around this including an alcohol and drugs policy;
- Offer 24-hour support for all staff by providing on demand counselling services;
- Promote a zero tolerance culture in terms of bullying and harassment.

2. Physical Well-being

- Create an environment where employees feel they have been empowered and educated about their physical well-being
- Support employees to care for themselves and to take positive steps around health such as a healthy lifestyle, sleep, nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol.
- Establish programmes for specific clinical conditions;
- Provide an opportunity for all employees to increase their physical activity by raising awareness of options for a healthy lifestyle, sleep pattern, smoking alcohol.
- Encourage staff to follow Public Health Wales' five ways to well-being framework.
- Support staff's physical health in the workforce by promoting our existing proposals and continuous research to develop new ones
- Support employees who are ill to remain in work and to return to work following sickness absence through the Occupational Health Service.
- Physiotherapy sessions for eligible staff who have been injured at work, or who suffer with symptoms that affect their daily duties.
- Ensure that our staff who work in a physical field receive Health Surveillance sessions in accordance with the Health and Safety legislation.
- Improve the working environment and ensure that staff complete a workstation self-assessment.

3. Social Well-being

- Continue to improve the relationship we have with each other across the Council.
- Nurture healthy, collaborative, nurturing and supportive relationships, which includes good leadership, to nurture a genuine community within Cyngor Gwynedd.
- Encourage civic and community engagement to improve a sense of belonging and create strong links within the broader community of Gwynedd.
- Create strong links with the broader environment we live in and work in by working with the people of Gwynedd.

- Develop a relationship with schools, university, the broader community to promote open opportunities such as apprenticeship programmes and Cynllun Yfory.
- Ensure that learning opportunities are available for employees such as training programmes that are relevant to the post along with opportunities to develop and expand horizons;
- Create an inclusive environment which celebrates equality and diversity.

4. Financial Well-being

Objectives

- Support individuals to become more aware of their financial situation.
- Reduce financial stress by assisting employees to manage their finances better and to become more financially secure. This will include fields such as debt management, budgeting, savings, pensions, investments and living within our means.
- Maintain and continue to develop a comprehensive benefits package for staff
- Promote employment practices that avoid low wages, unfixed contracts, unfair pay

3. FOUNDATION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL

Objectives

- Further build on the work environment in every workplace to ensure that safety and well-being is an integral part of the workplace.
- Ensure all our employment policies support staff wellbeing, not merely this Plan.
- Create an inclusive environment which celebrates the equality and diversity of the workforce.

- Identify and target intervention and support in workplaces where data supports more intensive intervention / support to identify and address the root of any patterns of absence.

HOW WILL WE IMPLEMENT THE PLAN?

The purpose of our Plan is to ensure that well-being is a crucial part of our ethos as a Council. Well-being needs to be central across the whole Council by developing and creating a culture where well-being is promoted on every level across the Council and has a positive impact on everyone's individual and diverse needs.

We do this by means of:

Our Culture

- Continue to work on having the appropriate culture in place so that well-being becomes one of the core values of the Council and is integrated in our procedures, policies and work practices.
- Increase visibility and awareness of well-being, improving the way of referring to internal and external resources.
- Develop a clear communication plan to ensure that messages about well-being are embedded and reach the Council's workforce.

Prevention

- Focus on assisting employees to make better choices, to change behaviour and better manage their well-being.
- Make well-being a routine and not something that's considered only in times of change, emergency or distress.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of the Occupational Health Service and any well-being schemes related to the service.

My Well-being

We will:

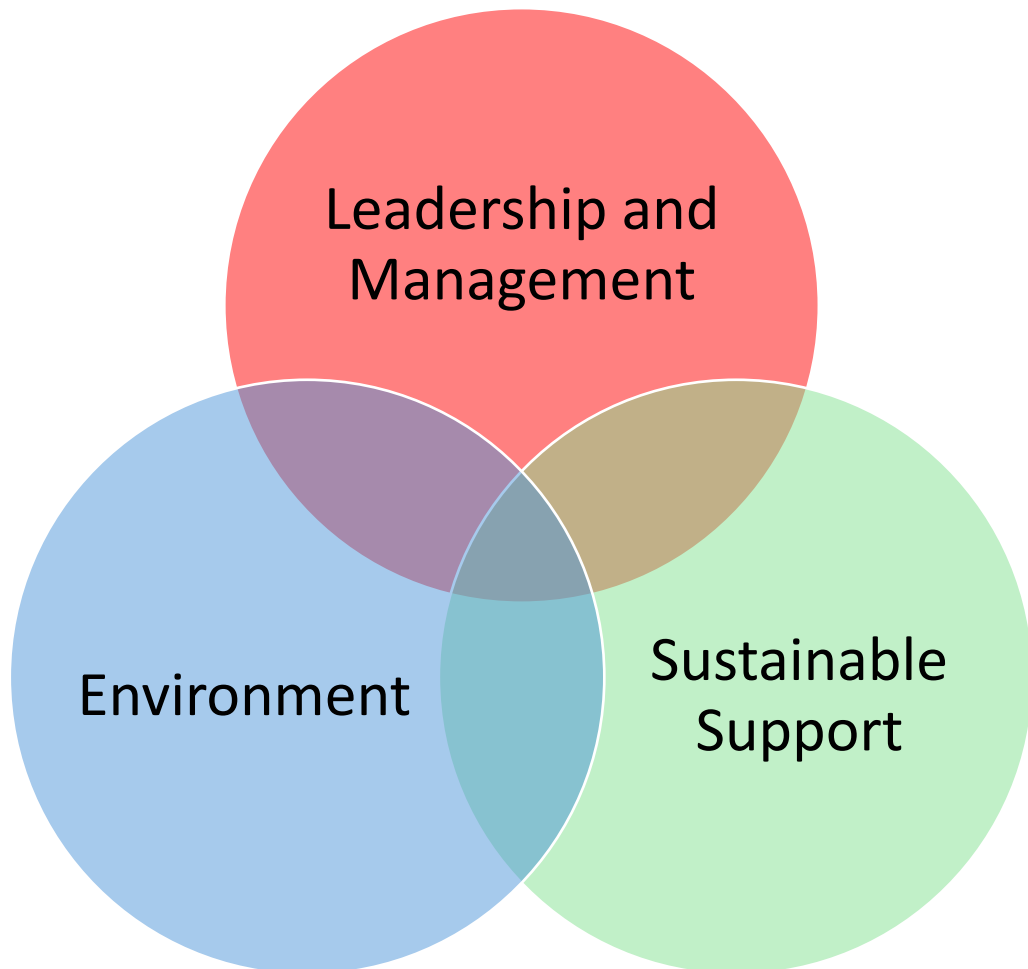
- Raise awareness of the need for everyone to take personal responsibility for their well-being and acknowledge the advantages of schemes used by Cyngor Gwynedd and how they could be used to support individual needs.
- Map what well-being means to individuals at different times in their career by identifying and understanding the key times that are important to people, and the impact these could have on their well-being which will in turn shape our well-being campaigns.
- Celebrate the diversion of our people, promote well-being inclusion and work to ensure that well-being is considered a priority for all.

Evidence-based Collaboration and Action

We will:

- Ensure that well-being initiatives are based on the workforce's needs and on firm research evidence.
- Give and receive feedback and share good practice to nurture collaboration.
- Improve our method of gathering data to learn more about our employees and track trends to measure success and areas of improvement.
- Track and measure action plans and hold regular reviews.

OUR INTEGRATED WELL-BEING MODEL

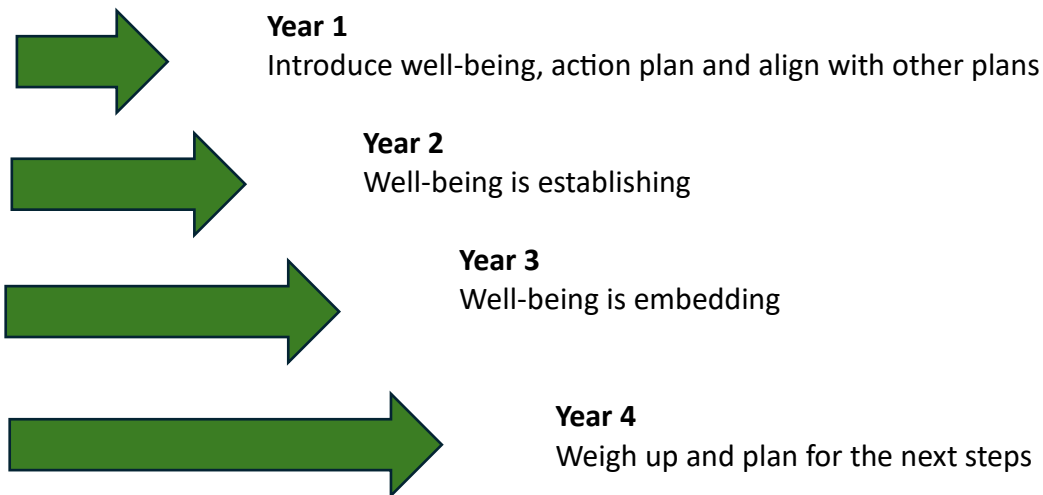


To implement the Plan effectively, a long-term action plan will be needed that includes specific details and the actions we will take as we proceed to deliver.

There will be a need to ensure that this plan is reinforced by business plans and specific services such as the Council Plan and the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan.

An annual report will be produced at the end of every year to review progress and impact and in order to ensure that the Plan aligns with the Council's broader strategic objectives.

Ultimately, every individual in the Council should see and identify with the aims and vision of our Well-being Plan.



MEASURING SUCCESS

Success can be measured in several different ways. Our method of measuring success in terms of this plan is through a cyclical process of collaboration, reflection and reviewing improvement.

We will use a variety of measures to measure the impact of the Well-being Plan and to ensure that well-being thrives and is central to the success of Cyngor Gwynedd.

Here are some of the methods we will use to measure success:

- **Sickness absence levels;**
- **Regular surveys and continuous feedback;**
- **Develop well-being impact assessments;**
- **Monitor and evaluate any well-being interventions to ensure that they remain effective;**
- **Annual evaluation report and action plans updated;**
- **Customer satisfaction / Reach organisational aims;**

RESOURCES

In light of the current financial climate, we will have to maximise our existing resources to deliver the plan. This means that the Health, Safety and Well-being Service within the Corporate Services Department will mainly lead and coordinate the work. However, there is a key role in terms of the Well-being Champions and also the departments in terms of owning, contributing and implementing this plan. It is inevitable that this means that aspects of this plan cannot be delivered in ideal methods and to an early timetable.

With more resources, it would be possible to expedite the programme and possibly offer more intensive and comprehensive interventions but a business case will need to be submitted to do this on a case by case basis.

REVIEW PERIOD

It is intended to monitor the plan's progress through the Ffordd Gwynedd Officers Group and also the Lead Group of that priority project. We will also report as needed to the departmental Performance Challenging and Support meetings and to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Council Cabinet.

Work Programme - Year 1 (2024 - 2025)

Project Number	What?	Whom?	When?
1.	Develop the Staff Well-being Plan and obtain the observations of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	April - October, 2024
2.	The launch of the Council's Sickness Absence Policy to include the electronic system that management get access through 'hunnan wasanaeth'	Human Resource Manager	
3.	Arrange a Health and Wellbeing Road Show that targets blue collar workers and care homes.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager. OH Team Leader	
4.	Hold a strategic session with the Corporate Management Team on the contents of the plan	Assistant Head / Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	October, 2024
5.	Consult with the Corporate Forum with a request for them to submit it and discuss it at every Departmental Forum.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager. OH Team Leader	October 2024
6.	Submit the Plan to a meeting of the Council Cabinet for adoption	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	November, 2024
7.	Produce and implement a Communication and Engagement Plan with staff, add the document to the intranet, the Chief Executive's live session, staff bulletin etc.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	December/January 2025
8.	Give a Presentation on the Plan within the Managers' Network.	Assistant Head / Health and Safety Manager and the Team Leader	November 2024
9.	Recommence the I-Act training for existing managers and managers who come to work within the Council.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	October/November 2024
10.	Identify and raise awareness and hold training for Well-being Champions within Council Departments by 'Time to Change Wales'.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	October 2024
11.	Create a work programme for the role and boundaries of Well-being Champions across the Council.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	November 2024
12.	Review Cyngor Gwynedd's Well-being Policy and launch it	OH Team Leader H&S Team Leader	March 2025

13.	Create a programme of activities and support for all Council employees including an invitation for external partnerships to give presentations, such as the menopause, alcohol and drugs policy, 'Mind Cymru'	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	March 2025
14.	Develop links that can provide support for staff namely Occupational Health and Medra.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	February 2025
15.	Create reports for Heads of Department to include crucial information to create ownership and provide better data to manage well-being within their Departments.	Health, Safety and Well-being Manager OH Team Leader	April 2025

Assessment of the impact on the people of Gwynedd

This document assesses the impact the policy, procedure, plan etc will have on the population of the county and operates on the basis of a number of laws.

- **Equality Act 2010.** It places a duty on public organisations to have due regard to the impact of any new policy, procedure, scheme etc (or in modifying them) on people with protected characteristics. We are required to
 - abolish unlawful discrimination, harassment and persecution and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - promote equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Build good relationships between people who share a protected trait and those who don't.
 -

In Wales the specific duty states the need to make an impact assessment following specific guidance to consider the impact that a change in any policy or procedure (or the creation of a policy or procedure from scratch), will have on people with protected equality characteristics. A timely assessment must be made before making a decision on any relevant change (i.e. that has an impact on people with a protected characteristic).

- **Socio-Economic Duty.** Wales has implemented this further duty which is part of the Equality Act 2010 giving a duty to address socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decisions.
- **The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.** The Council is required to consider the impact that a change in any policy or procedure (or the creation of a policy or procedure from scratch), will have on opportunities for people to use Welsh and to ensure

that Welsh is not treated less favourably than English. This document therefore ensures that these decisions protect and promote the use of Welsh.

- **Well-being and Future Generations Act 2015.** The Council has a duty to implement the five ways of working, and to respond to the 7 national well-being goals.
- **Armed Forces Act 2021.** Councils must have due regard to the impact of this proposal on those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, along with their families.

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Author: Catrin Love

Date: 6/12/2024

Version: Wellbeing Plan 2024

STEP 1 - Main Aims and Objectives of the Policy or Practice

1. What is the objective of what is being assessed?

- New or reviewed policies, practice or procedures (meaning a change in service provision or employment practices)

2. What are the intended aims, objectives and outcomes of the policy or practice?

Promoting well-being and well-being support across the Council's workforce

3. Who are the main advisory groups (stakeholders)?

There has been significant consultation on the scheme, which has included the following:

- Corporate Health and Safety Panel (membership consisting of Elected Members, and Trade Unions)
- Corporate Health and Safety Forum, and Departmental Forums (including staff representatives)
- Corporate Management Team
- Manager Network, and Assistant Head of Department Forum
- Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

STEP 2 - Engagement Data and Impact Assessment

4. Has an attempt been made to comply with the duty to engage in accordance with what is described above and has sufficient information been gathered to proceed?

Age

Details of engagement. Please note any consultation or engagement you have done or intend to do

Operation	Dates	Knowledge
Llais Staff Survey	September 2023	Quantitative and qualitative data
Corporate sick leave data	2023/24	Quantitative data

National data on well-being issues	2024	Latest best practice plus information on the effectiveness of some interventions
Referral data for Occupational Health and Medra	2024	Information on address rates and any salient messages

5. What information is available about the impact on each of the features and topics below?

Race	No comments	No negative impact predicted or identified in the engagement process
Disability	Improving awareness of neuro-diversity issues within the workforce	Offer better support to diagnosed members.
Sex	No negative impact identified or highlighted in the engagement process	No negative impact - offer equal support
Age	This work weaves into wider social wellbeing work that has identified the differentiated needs of different cohorts of staff	Undeb y dyfodol network set up for young staff to socialise as a result of comments received from young staff in particular
Religion and Belief	No comments	No effect
Sexual Orientation	No comments	No effect
Gender redetermination	No comments	No effect

Marriage and Civil Partnership	No comments	No effect
Pregnancy and Maternity	No comments	We have policies in place to support pregnant workers and maternity, and no negative impact is anticipated by this Plan
Welsh language	No comments made	The well-being support is available bi-lingually with the exception of one element, that being the Occupational Health Physician, but a succession plan is in place to greet this matter in going forward.
Socio-Economic Considerations	Lack of access from frontline staff who don't have digital accounts	Lack of equal information for all of the workforce
Those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families	No comments	No effect
Human Rights Watch	No comments	No effect
Other	No comments	No effect

6. Are there any data or information gaps and if so what are these and how are they intended to be dealt with?

As part of the consultative process, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee has asked for data on the impact that working hybrid has had on wellbeing nationally, and work is ongoing to provide this data.

7. When considering other key decisions affecting these groups, is there an incremental effect (cumulative effect)?

None identified

8. What does the motion include to show that you have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (to promote equality of opportunity; to help eradicate discrimination, harassment or unlawful victimisation and foster good relationships and wider community cohesion) as covered by the 3 aims of the General Duty in the Equality Act 2010?

The proposal looks to reduce the gap between the workforce who have access to digital accounts and those staff who don't have.

9. How does the proposal demonstrate that due attention has been paid to the need to address disparity from the cause of socio-economic disadvantage? (Note that this is about closing inequality gaps rather than just improving outcomes for everyone)

The proposal looks to reduce the gap between the workforce who have access to digital accounts and those staff who don't have.

10. How does the proposal demonstrate action in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Mesur y Gymraeg (Wales) 2011), not to treat Welsh less favourably than English, and to ensure opportunities for people to use Welsh? Also how is it acted in accordance with the Council's language policy and strategy to take every opportunity to promote the Welsh language (beyond bilingual service delivery) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?

The support available to staff is completely bi-lingual apart from the Occupational Health Physician, but a medium-term plan in place for greet this element.

11. How does this proposal meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act by implementing the five ways of working, and responds to the 7 national wellbeing goals including the creation of a More Equal Wales?

The requirements of the Act are woven into the Plan throughout its contents

STEP 3 - Acquisitions and Partnerships

12. Will this policy or exercise be carried out in whole or in part by contractors or in partnership with other organisation(s)?

No

STEP 4 - Deal with Negative or Unlawful Impact and Strengthen the Policy or Practice

13. When considering proportionality, does the policy or practice cause a significant positive or negative impact or create unequal outcomes? (Summary of impact identified above)

Significant Positive Impact:

No negative impact identified

Significant Negative Impact:

No negative impact identified

14. Any deliberate negative impact should be explained and why it is thought that action in this way is justified (for example, on the basis of improving equality of opportunity or building good relationships between those who share a protected trait and those who do not or because of objective justification or positive action)

Not applicable

15. Will any of the identified negative effects count as unlawful discrimination but are inevitable (e.g. funding reduction)?

No

Note the reason for saying so and the justification for continuing

Not applicable

16. What other measures or changes might be included to strengthen or change the policy / practice to show that due attention has been given to the promotion of equality of opportunity; help eradicate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation and build good relationships and wider community cohesion; as the aim of improvement is dealt with in the General Duty of the Equality Act 2010?

A detailed communication plan to support the Scheme to ensure we reach all cohorts of the workforce

17. What other measures or changes could be included to strengthen or change the policy / practice to show that due attention has been paid to the need to reduce unequal outcomes as a result of socio-economic disadvantage?

No further steps have been identified but there are other projects underway (not related to this Scheme) that will facilitate the work in assessing the digital access need of the whole workforce.

18. What other measures or changes could be included to strengthen or change the policy / practice to show that due attention has been paid to the need to increase opportunities for people to use Welsh and not to treat Welsh less favourably than English in accordance with the Welsh (Wales) Bill 2011 and to reduce or prevent any adverse effects that the policy/practice may have on the Welsh language?

We take every opportunity to influence partnership agencies in the use of the Welsh language.

19. Is there enough information to form a balanced view and move forward?

Age

STEP 5 - Decide to Go Ahead

20. Given the information gathered in Steps 1-4, is it possible to move forward with the policy or practice or not, and if so, on what basis? Choice of:

Continuation of the policy or practice in its current form

STEP 6 - Actions and Arrangements to Monitor Results and Review Data

The Impact and Equality Assessment (IEA) process is ongoing and does not end when policy/practice and the IEA have been agreed and implemented. There is a specific legal duty to monitor the impact of the policies/exercises on equality on an ongoing basis to identify whether the results have changed since you introduced or modified this new policy or practice. If you do not have the relevant data, you should be taking action to correct this in your action plan. To view guidance on data collection you can review their [Measurement Framework](#)

21. What actions identified in Phases 1-5 or any additional data collection will help monitor the policy / practice when implemented:

Operation	Dates	Timetable	Narcissistic Responsibility	Add to Service Plan
Communicating wellbeing proposals with frontline staff	2025	Throughout next year and continuously thereafter	Catrin Love	No

22. What arrangements to monitor and review the ongoing impact of this policy or exercise will be implemented, including timescales for when it should be formally reviewed:

Monitoring and Review Arrangements (including where results will be recorded)	Schedule and Frequency	Lead Responsibility	Add to Service plan

Corporate Health and Safety Forum	Quarterly	Catrin Love	No
Gwynedd Road Officers' Group	Monthly	Geraint Owen	No



Title of report:	Complaints and Service Improvement Report Quarter 1-2 2024/25
Cabinet Member	Councillor Llio E. Owen
Contact Officer	Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Services
Date of meeting:	17 December 2024

1. Decision sought

Cabinet is asked to approve the report and offer any relevant comments or suggestions about the Council’s performance in dealing with complaints in an appropriate and timely manner.

2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the Council’s performance in relation to dealing with complaints and improving services, highlighting successes, challenges, and developments. This is to ensure that the Cabinet is satisfied with the performance over the periods in question.

An analysis of quantitative and qualitative data is presented, which is a measure of the Council’s performance in this context for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 together with preliminary information about the previous years.

3. Introduction and Reasoning

3.1 Background

The Council's “Complaints and Service Improvement procedure” was introduced in 2015, drawn up under the supervision of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. It corresponds with Welsh Government guidelines and is therefore in line with the complaint’s procedures of other public bodies.

The Cabinet adopted the procedure with the aim of bringing specific benefits to the citizen by focusing on the solution instead of the process and allow Officers to deal quicker with complaints.

The ownership over responding to complaints was moved to the individual Departments, but with the function of harmonizing and offering guidance continuing under the leadership of the Monitoring Officer with the support of the Service Improvement Officer.

The *Concerns and Complaints Policy* was updated on 1 April 2021, and responsibility for the implementation of the *Complaints and Service Improvement* procedure was transferred to the Corporate Support Department under the care of the *Service Improvement Officer* within the *Organisational Learning and Development* team.

It should be noted that this procedure is not relevant to Social Services users as there is a statutory procedure for them. Schools also implement their own complaints procedures.

3.2 Responding to Complaints - An explanation of the terminology that is used

3.2.1 Resolving Informal Complaints

Complainant informally contacts the Service Improvement Officer or the relevant service to resolve the concern.

3.2.2 Investigating Formal Complaints

Complainant presents a formal complaint through the complaints procedure. An investigation is undertaken by an officer within the Service, who is senior enough and is independent from the source of the complaint.

3.2.3 Complaint to the Ombudsman

The complainant could go to the Ombudsman if they are not satisfied with the Council's formal response.

After looking at the complaint, the Ombudsman may decide on one of the following:

- *No Investigation* – where the Ombudsman is satisfied with the way the authority has dealt with the matter and feels that there is no need for a further investigation. It could also be a matter beyond its jurisdiction.
- *Premature* - if the Ombudsman is of the opinion that the authority has not yet had an opportunity to consider the matter.
- *Hold a further investigation* - where the Ombudsman feels that further investigation is needed, to assess how the authority has dealt with the matter.
- *Settlement* – where there is an agreement with the complainant, and they accept the resolution.

4. Frequency of the Report

The Annual Report for 2023-24 was presented to the Cabinet in May 2024. Unfortunately, the Ombudsman's Annual Letter was not received until 9th September 2024, therefore it was not possible to include it with the Annual Report for that period. Therefore, the Annual Letter is being presented with this report.

'Live' data is available to Heads of Department, the Senior Leadership Team and the Cabinet at any time upon request.

This Report summarises the developments for the period 01/04/2023 – 31/03/2024, focusing on Valid Formal Complaints and complaints submitted to the Ombudsman.

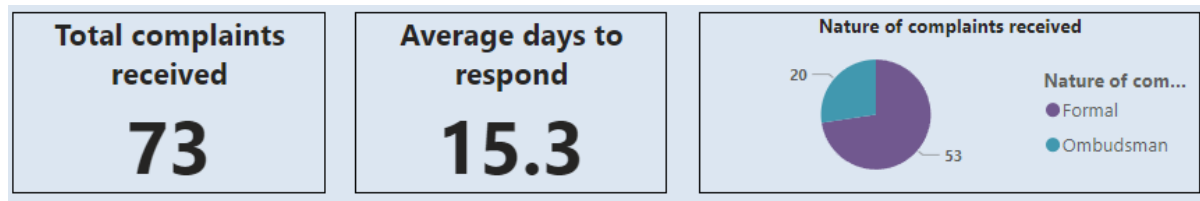
The figures to date for this year are noted below -

- 24 Valid Formal Complaints between 01/04/24 and 30/09/24
- 19 Ombudsman Complaints between 01/04/24 and 30/09/24
(13 No Investigation; 4 No Investigation – Premature; 2 Enquiry)

5. Quantative Data

Number of Complaints :

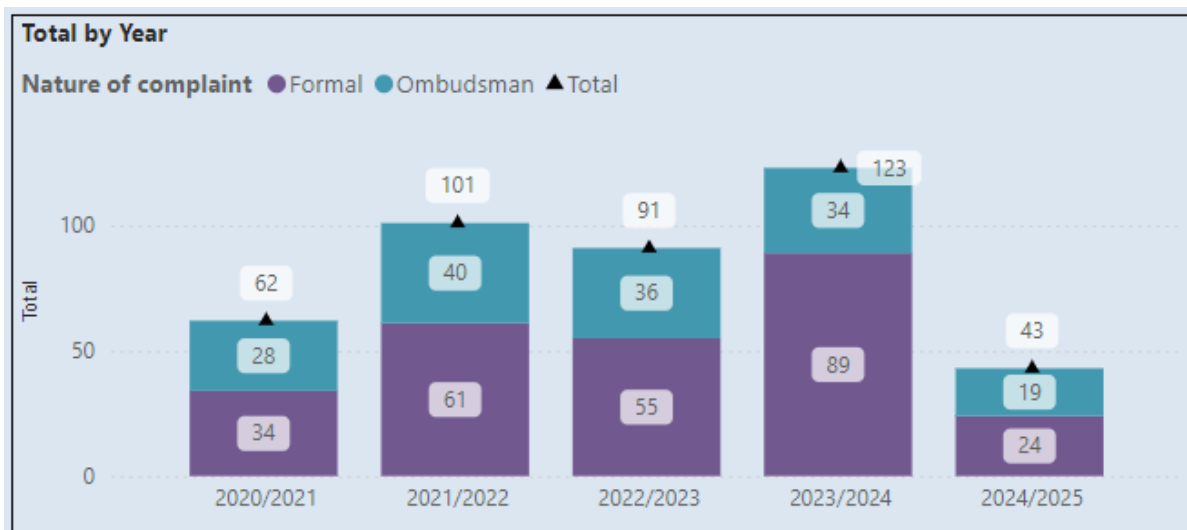
2023/24 Quarter 1-2



2024/25 Quarter 1-2

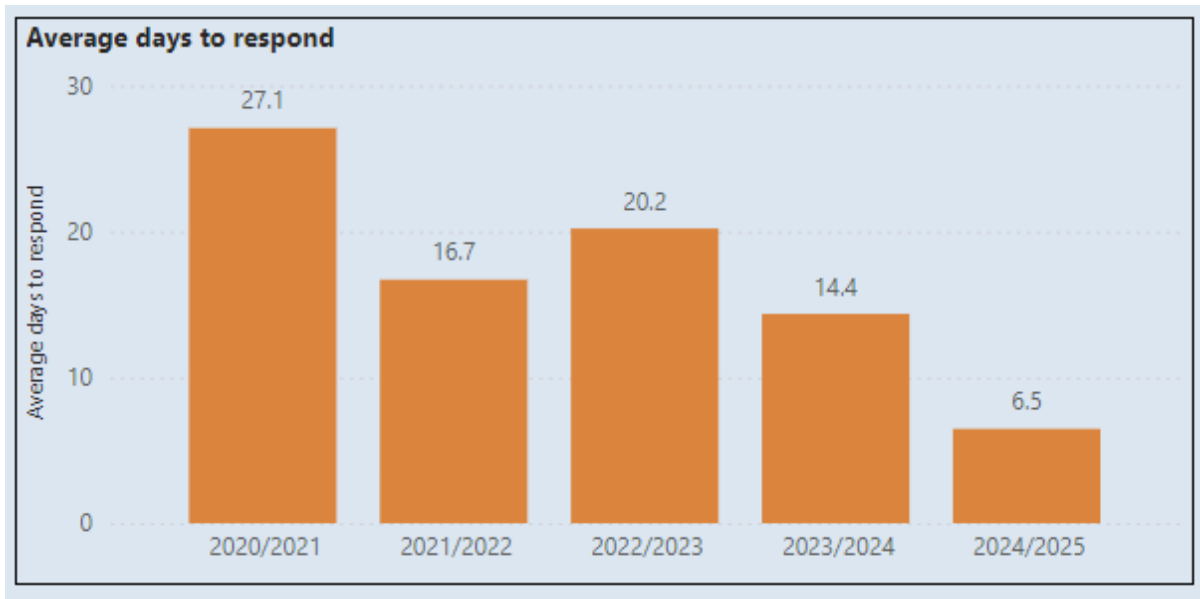


5.2 Number of complaints: Situation over a period since 2020-21



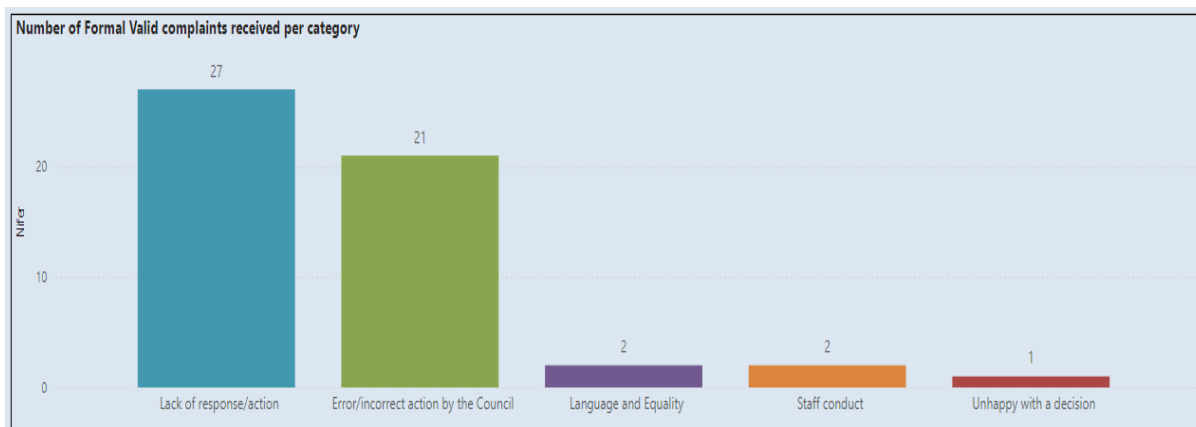
**Data Q1 and Q2 only for 2024/25*

5.3 Response Time over a Period Since 2018-19

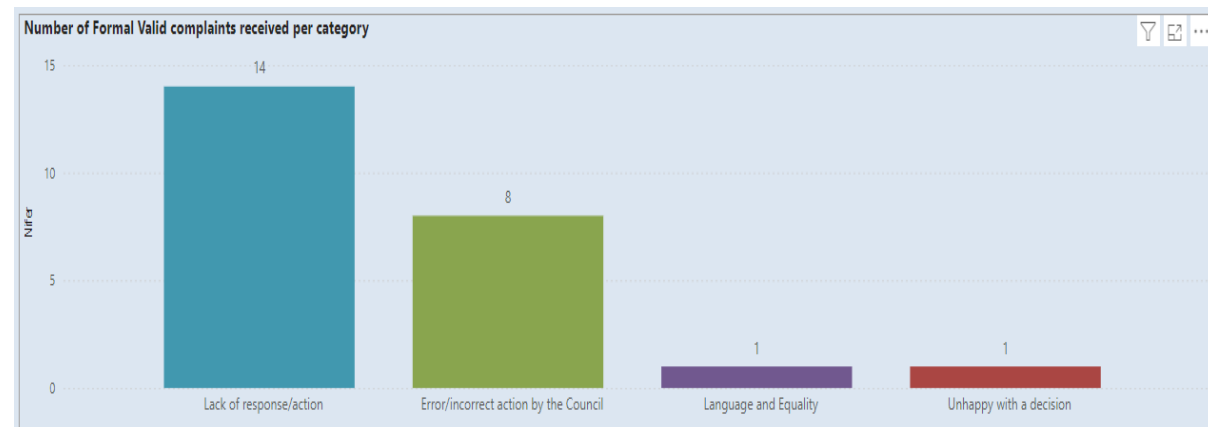


6. Analysis of the Complaints (General)

Per Category for 2023/24 Year Quarter 1-2



Per Category for 2024/25 Year Quarter 1-2



Analysis per Department – See Appendix 1

Detailed information can be provided about specific Complaints if needed.

7. Main Messages

- There have been fewer Formal Complaints and Ombudsman's complaints this year for Quarter 1-2 compared to last year.
- The pattern / trend over a longer period shows that the number of Formal Complaints reduced gradually between 2018/19 and 2021/22 when it increased significantly.
- Again, a change in culture can be seen, with most Services accepting complaints in a more positive and constructive way, in order to learn from them, with the response time reducing.

8. Next Steps

We intend to continue to work with Departmental Management Teams and Officers within the Services to ensure an understanding of the Complaints procedure and their commitment to adhering to it. In light of this, we hope to reduce the time we take to respond to Complaints and continue to Improve Services.

As part of the Contact with customers workstream within the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan is underway to develop a new Customer Charter. When the new Charter is in place, guidance notes will be prepared for staff which will include information on different response periods :- responding to Members, responding to General Correspondence, and responding to Complaints. It is hoped that this will avoid a number of complaints about, Non-Response/Action into the future, as staff will have been equipped with the information they need to adhere to the response requirements.

The Successes Wall is still growing, and it is very good to see that a large number of Thanks/Compliments, have come in from the public 1338 since being established in 2015. Seeing the public's appreciation as well as colleague's appreciation is a great help in raising staff morale, especially front-line staff.

9. The comments of the Statutory Officers

Head of Finance Department:

Nothing to add from the perspective of financial propriety."

Monitoring Officer:

The complaints process includes provision that the Cabinet receives reports on the Councils complaints arrangements from the perspective of maintaining quality services. I note that the Governance and Audit Committee have considered the effectiveness of the arrangements in accordance with their statutory duties.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1 Table Showing Analysis of Complaints

APPENDIX 1

	DEPARTMENT	SERVICE	PERIOD	CATEGORY OF COMPLAINT	NATURE OF THE COMPLAINT / OBSTACLE	RESPONSE TO THE COMPLAINANT	LESSONS LEARN/ SERVICE IMPROVEMENT STEPS	OBSERVATIONS Please note that the Complaints have been noted under a "Category", not necessarily because their nature are all exactly the same
1	Housing and Property	Housing	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Unhappy with a decision	Complaint received as a Premature one from the Ombudsman. Customer complaining that she and her child were allocated an unsuitable property. (She is on the top floor with a child and is also pregnant).	Complaint still open.	Complaint still open.	1
2	Housing and Property	Housing	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Lack of response/action	Customer complained that she felt they were not given support by the Homeless Service. They had clients in their property who were refusing to leave. They had asked the Service for support, but they were not given timely support.	The Manager phoned the customer to explain the procedure etc. Customer really appreciated this contact. However, the customer had to make contact again to enquire about a response as it had not been given. Manager then responded and apologised for the delay in making a timely payment.	It is important to make any payment that is due to a customer as soon as is practically possible. A customer should not have to contact the Service to chase the matter.	1
3	Housing and Property	Property	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Language/Equality Issues	Customer complaining that she was treated differently due to her disabilities. She had been visiting a client in a local Hostel at the time. The client too had suffered similar issues, which were not being able to access the Hostel in a wheelchair. The client did not wish to make a complaint herself. Customer had already discussed the matter in the Equality Group meeting. She had noted that this was not good enough and that no improvements had been made even though the matter had been raised several times.	Assistant Head of Service acknowledged the complaint and noted that a separate investigation was underway, therefore he was unable to give the customer a full response at present unfortunately. He would however ensure that he would report back once the investigation had been completed. Complaint still open.	Complaint not closed until the customer receives an update.	1
4	Finance	Revenue	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Error/incorrect action by the Council	Complaint by a customer about the lack of response and the	The Head of Service arranged to respond to the customer. He	The importance of ensuring that all data held is up to date on all the systems and	1

APPENDIX 1

					errors made by the Service. He had noted that they had been given details, but they had not acted on them. The Manager had sent an apology and promised that the situation would be rectified, but another problem has arisen now.	apologised for the problems that had occurred, Customer has responded back and the Head of Service had duly responded to him again.	that officers respond to customers in a timely manner. Officers should not be defensive and should apologise if there is a need to do so.	
5	Finance	Revenue	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Lack of response/action	Customer sent a complaint in noting that the Council Tax Service had not acted on his request regarding Council Tax Premium.	The Manager had responded straight away, apologising for the delay, and explaining the current situation, and he had confirmed that the changes had been made.	Remember to respond to customers in a timely manner, to both enquiries and complaints.	1
6	Corporate Services	Registration Service	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Error/incorrect action by the Council	Customer complained that an error was made by the Registrar recording their child's birth. The child had been noted as Female instead of Male. Customer admitted that she and her partner had not noticed this when they were asked to check the document, they only noticed the error when they got home. Customer had phoned in to explain about the error and was told she would have to pay for a new certificate. She did not feel this was fair as she was not the one responsible for the error.	The Team Leader for the Service apologised to the customer for the error and arranged for a new certificate to be prepared through the Registration Office. The customer would not have to pay for the new Certificate.	Very important to check and ensure all details are correct, at all times.	1
7	Finance	Support Service	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Error/incorrect action by the Council	The customer, who was previously a member of staff complained that he had a bill from the Council for £9,000 without any explanation that he had been overpaid his wages for the last 3 months after he had left.	The Head of Service responded to the Complaint by apologising for the situation. He explained what had happened and apologised further that nobody had explained this previously. The customer should have been contacted about the matter so that he was aware of what was happening.	If such an incident occurs again, remember that staff should always be given clear information about the situation. Staff should not be expected to enquire about the situation.	1
8	Environment	Building Regulations	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Lack of response/action	Complaint from a customer that he had not been given an update as promised by the Service. He had previously complained about the matter and at the time it was noted that the Service would arrange to update him on the situation this hasn't happened.	The Assistant Head of Service responded in full to the customer and apologised for the delay in sending him an update. He also explained that he could not give further information as that would mean breaking Data Security. He could however confirm that an application was in place and would soon be addressed.	Always important to keep to promises made to update customers and to keep them in the loop on matters they had previously raised with the Service.	2
9	Environment	Planning	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Lack of response/action	Customer complaining about the lack of response from the Service, 5 months have passed, and he	A Team member acknowledged the complaint, and apologised for the lack of previous timely response,	Always try and ensure that a customer receives an acknowledgement/response as soon as possible and certainly in	7

APPENDIX 1

					hasn't had any response from them.	and gave an update of the situation.	accordance with the Council's response policy.	
10	Environment	Waste and Recycling	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Lack of response/action	Customer complained that it had been over 50 days since she ordered recycling equipment. She had phoned several times and even though she left messages, nobody phoned her back. Even though the person on the phone assured her somebody would respond within 48 hours.	An Officer contacted the customer by phone and arranged for the equipment to be delivered to her.	It is always important to be honest with customers and manage their expectations. Always important to give customers updates if it's not possible to respond fully or to deliver equipment within the given timescale.	1
11	Environment	Waste and Recycling	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Error/incorrect action by the Council	Customer complained about continuous missed business waste collections. She had not received the correct equipment and had suffered several missed collections, since starting the contract. She noted that the business next door kept putting their bins out next to their's but they did not have a contract. The other company's bin was emptied but theirs wasn't.	The Commercial Waste Collection Team has responded to the customer, but she had asked to make a formal complaint. The complaint had been passed on to the Assistant Head of Service for attention.	It is always important that the Service understands and accepts that complaints they receive directly in the Service should be dealt with as complaints. A Complaint doesn't have to come through the Complaints Inbox in order to be considered as a complaint. The Service should be open to receiving complaints and not be defensive towards them.	1
12	Environment	Finance Environment	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Lack of response/action	Complaint about a lack of a timely response to communications by the customer. He is not happy to have now received a Final Demand. He had previously asked that the total be shared between himself and the new owner.	The Service Manager investigated the matter and responded to the customer by apologising for the situation and she confirmed that the bill had now been corrected.	Always important that notes, information and facts are kept current and that the Service always acknowledge customer contact in a timely manner.	1
13	Education	Education	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Lack of response/action	Customer complained about the lack of response by the Services to her correspondence relating to Safeguarding issues.	Complaint still open.	Complaint still open.	1
14	Education	Education	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Error/incorrect action by the Council	Customer complaining that he had not been informed about an assessment/report that had been prepared, on his daughter. He noted that the Service had not mentioned this in discussions with himself and his partner. He heard of it afterwards. He also complained about data security issues and mentioned that he would take those up with the Commissioner.	The relevant Assistant Head of Service was assigned to investigate the complaint but due to the customer's request a new Assistant Head of Service was appointed to investigate the matter. Complaint remains open.	It is good to see the Service being open to the customer's request and on receiving his concerns they have arranged for a different investigator to look into and respond to the complaint.	1
15	Highways	Municipal Services	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Error/incorrect action by the Council	Complaint by customer that Council staff went to her home to erect a new lamp post on her	Service Manager contacted the customer and apologised for the situation and explained he would	It was good to note that the Service Manager wanted to ensure the process was correct, and that he had asked the	1

APPENDIX 1

					land, this was without her consent. Nobody had contacted her about this beforehand. Council staff were assisting an Energy Company with the work. Customer wanted an apology and also wanted to see a Wayleave form etc.	get back to her after he had investigated the matter. As a result, an Officer from the Legal Service arranged to respond to the customer explaining the situation and offering a chat with herself if she wanted one, or advising her to contact her own Solicitor.	Legal Service to look at the situation too so as to ensure the customer was given the correct information in the response.	
16	Social Services	Children's Services	01/04/2024 – 30/09/2024	Unhappy with a decision	Customer unhappy with the response given by the Service, the response did not have a name on it, and it was not sent out on headed notepaper. She felt that her complaint had not been taken seriously, as a response was given within a few days, she felt it had not been investigated properly.	The initial complaint had been responded to by the Service, but the SIO had noted at the time that she did not consider the response, which was not on official headed notepaper and did not have an officer's name on it, adequate as a formal response. She had brought this to the attention of the Monitoring Officer who referred both services to consider the Ombudsman's Guidance on responding to complaints and attributing responses. The Head of Service was asked to intervene. Complaint remains open.	Complaint still open.	2



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Ask for: Communications



01656 641150



Caseinfo@ombudsman.wales

Date: 9 September 2024

Councillor Dyfrig L. Siencyn
Cyngor Gwynedd

By email only

cynghorydd.dyfrigsiencyn@gwynedd.llyw.cymru
dafyddgibbard@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Annual Letter 2023/24

Dear Councillor Siencyn

Role of PSOW

As you know, the role of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is to consider complaints about public services, to investigate alleged breaches of the councillor Code of Conduct, to set standards for complaints handling by public bodies and to drive improvement in complaints handling and learning from complaints. I also undertake investigations into public services on my own initiative.

Purpose of letter

This letter is intended to provide an update on the work of my office, to share key issues for local government in Wales and to highlight any particular issues for your organisation, together with actions I would like your organisation to take.

Overview of 2023/24

This letter, as always, coincides with my Annual Report – “A New Chapter Unfolds” – and comes at a time when public services continue to be in the spotlight, and under considerable pressures. My office has seen another increase in the number of people asking for our help – a 17% increase in overall contacts compared to the previous year, with nearly 10,000 enquiries and complaints received. Our caseload has increased substantially - by 37% - since 2019.

Page 1 of 12

ombwdsmon.cymru
holwch@ombwdsmon.cymru
0300 790 0203
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ
Rydym yn hapus i dderbyn ac
ymateb i ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg.

ombudsman.wales
ask@ombudsman.wales
0300 790 0203
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ
We are happy to accept and respond
to correspondence in Welsh.

Page 55

During 2023/24 we considered and closed more enquiries and complaints than we ever have done before, and we reduced the average cost for each case and investigation. We started the year with a focus on reducing our aging cases, those over 12 months old, by 50% by the end of the year. These cases are often the most complex and distressing for the people making the complaint. I am extremely pleased to say we exceeded this target, reducing our aged investigations by over 70%. We are now well on track to meeting our objective to complete investigation of complaints within 12 months.

Public Services Complaints and compliance with recommendations

In total 1,108 complaints about local authorities were made to us last year – broadly the same number as the previous year. During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) 14% of local authority complaints – a similar proportion to recent years.

We received 38 complaints about Cyngor Gwynedd in 2023/24 and closed 39 – some were carried over from the previous year. Cyngor Gwynedd's intervention rate was 15%. Further information on complaints about your organisation can be found in the appendices.

We made 12 recommendations to your council during the year. To ensure that our investigations and reports drive improvement, we follow up compliance with the recommendations agreed with your organisation. In 2023/24, 19 recommendations were due (some recommendations were made in the previous year) and 74% were complied with in the timescale agreed. The remainder were complied with, but outside the timescales agreed, or remain outstanding as at 9 April 2024.

Recommendations and timescales for complying with recommendations are always agreed with the public body concerned before being finalised, and we therefore expect organisations to comply within the timescales agreed.

Our Code of Conduct work

My role is to investigate allegations that councillors have breached their Code of Conduct. Where an investigation finds evidence to support the complaint on a matter which is serious enough to require a referral in the public interest, these cases are referred either to the local Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales for consideration.

In 2023/24, we received 16% more Code of Conduct complaints than the previous year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils. My office made 21 referrals – to Standards Committees or the Adjudication Panel for Wales, an increase from 12 the previous year.

I am grateful to your Monitoring Officer for their positive engagement with my office over the last year. We will continue to engage with them on matters relating to the ethical standards framework, including Local Resolution Procedures this year.

Independent Review

As you will be aware, I became aware of inappropriate comments, of a political nature, made by a member of my staff via social media. These comments were widely reported in the media. The member of staff in question was suspended and subsequently resigned. However, the comments prompted questions about my office's work on councillor Code of Conduct cases.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, I commissioned Dr Melissa McCullough to conduct an independent review of our Code of Conduct work, and I have published the full [Terms of Reference](#) for that review. I and my staff are engaging closely with the Monitoring Officer Group and the National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs in relation to this matter. I will be publishing Dr McCullough's final report on completion of the review and sharing it with the Senedd's Finance Committee this Autumn.

Supporting improvement of public services

We continued our work on supporting improvement in public services last year and worked on our second wider Own Initiative investigation. The investigation includes four local authorities and considers carers' needs assessments. I am grateful to the investigated authorities for their co-operation and candour throughout the year, and we look forward to sharing our finalised report this Autumn. This will make recommendations to the investigated authorities and will ask all local authorities across Wales to make similar improvements.

We have continued our work on complaints handling standards for public bodies in Wales and now have 56 public bodies following our model complaints handling policy. These public bodies account for around 85% of the complaints we receive. We have continued our work to publish complaints statistics, gathered from public bodies, with data published twice a year.

We continued our work to publish complaints statistics into a third year, with data now published twice a year. This data allows us to see information with greater context – for example, last year 8% of complaints made to Cyngor Gwynedd's went on to be referred to PSOW.

Action we would like your organisation to take

Further to this letter can I ask that your Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee at the next available opportunity and notify me of when these meetings will take place.
- Consider the data in this letter, alongside your own data, to understand more about your performance on complaints, including any patterns or trends and your organisation's compliance with recommendations made by my office.

- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters at the earliest opportunity.

I would like to thank you, and your officers, for your continued openness and engagement with my office. Our information shows that local authorities are looking into more complaints than ever before and are using information from complaints to deliver better outcomes for the people of Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Michelle Morris in black ink.

Michelle Morris
Public Services Ombudsman

Cc. Dafydd Gibbard, Chief Executive, Cyngor Gwynedd



Factsheet

Appendix A - Complaints Received

Local Authority	Complaints Received	Received per 1,000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	15	0.22
Bridgend County Borough Council	59	0.41
Caerphilly County Borough Council	56	0.32
Cardiff Council*	149	0.41
Carmarthenshire County Council	69	0.37
Ceredigion County Council	32	0.45
Conwy County Borough Council	36	0.31
Denbighshire County Council**	31	0.32
Flintshire County Council	51	0.33
Cyngor Gwynedd	38	0.32
Isle of Anglesey County Council	38	0.55
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	12	0.20
Monmouthshire County Council	29	0.31
Neath Port Talbot Council	35	0.25
Newport City Council	52	0.33
Pembrokeshire County Council	40	0.32
Powys County Council	54	0.41
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	64	0.27
Swansea Council	81	0.34
Torfaen County Borough Council	14	0.15
Vale of Glamorgan Council	77	0.58
Wrexham County Borough Council	76	0.56
Total	1108	0.36
* inc 2 Rent Smart Wales		
** inc 1 Wales Penalty Processing Partnership		



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Appendix B - Received by Subject

Cyngor Gwynedd	Complaints Received	% share
Adult Social Services	1	3%
Benefits Administration	0	0%
Children's Social Services	3	8%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	0	0%
Complaints Handling	7	18%
Covid-19	0	0%
Education	1	3%
Environment and Environmental Health	7	18%
Finance and Taxation	8	21%
Housing	5	13%
Licensing	0	0%
Planning and Building Control	4	11%
Roads and Transport	2	5%
Various Other	0	0%
Total	38	



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Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes (* denotes intervention)

Cyngor Gwynedd		% Share
Out of Jurisdiction	9	23%
Premature	13	33%
Other cases closed after initial consideration	11	28%
Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	5	13%
Discontinued	0	0%
Other Reports - Not Upheld	0	0%
Other Reports Upheld*	1	2%
Public Interest Reports*	0	0%
Special Interest Reports*	0	0%
Total	39	



Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	16	6%
Bridgend County Borough Council	8	59	14%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	3	48	6%
Cardiff Council	28	144	19%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	0	3	0%
Carmarthenshire County Council	8	60	13%
Ceredigion County Council	7	32	22%
Conwy County Borough Council	0	37	0%
Denbighshire County Council	2	32	6%
Denbighshire County Council - Wales Penalty Processing Partnership	0	1	0%
Flintshire County Council	8	57	14%
Cyngor Gwynedd	6	39	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	10	41	24%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	3	14	21%
Monmouthshire County Council	3	32	9%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	34	15%
Newport City Council	5	51	10%
Pembrokeshire County Council	7	38	18%
Powys County Council	7	53	13%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	11	63	17%
Swansea Council	12	77	16%
Torfaen County Borough Council	2	14	14%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	71	21%
Wrexham County Borough Council	7	79	9%
Total	158	1095	14%



Appendix E – Compliance performance comparison

Local Authority	Number of recommendations made in 2023-24	Number of recommendations falling due in 2023-24	% of recommendations, complied with on time
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	1	100%
Bridgend County Borough Council	18	20	35%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	9	9	11%
Cardiff Council	74	75	92%
Carmarthenshire County Council	25	25	52%
Ceredigion County Council	23	23	78%
Swansea Council	29	32	63%
Conwy County Borough Council	0	1	0%
Denbighshire County Council	5	6	67%
Flintshire County Council	17	17	59%
Cyngor Gwynedd	12	19	74%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	26	24	92%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	11	9	56%
Monmouthshire County Council	4	4	25%
Neath Port Talbot Council	14	14	29%
Newport City Council	10	7	43%
Pembrokeshire County Council	24	23	96%
Powys County Council	18	16	31%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	26	26	77%
Torfaen County Borough Council	3	3	67%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	50	48	92%
Wrexham County Borough Council	16	19	42%



Appendix F - Code of Conduct Complaints

Cyngor Gwynedd

Investigations

Decision not to investigate	5
Discontinued	0
No evidence of breach	0
No action necessary	0
Refer to Adjudication Panel	0
Refer to Standards Committee	0
Total	5



Appendix G - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

Town/Community Council	Decision not to investigate	Investigations				Refer to Adjudication Panel	Refer to Standards Committee	Total
		Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary				
Bangor City Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Bethesda Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Caernarfon (Royal Town) Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Corris Community Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Ffestiniog Town Council	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	
Llanbedrog Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Penrhyndeudraeth Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Porthmadog Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Tywyn Town Council	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	



Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2023/24. These complaints are contextualised by the population of each authority.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2023/24. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix D shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2023/24. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix E shows the compliance performance of each Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2023/24. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix G shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area in 2023/24. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.