



Complete Agenda

Democracy Service
Council Offices
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Cymraeg

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Meeting

THE COUNCIL

Date and Time

1.30 pm, THURSDAY, 4TH DECEMBER, 2025

*** NOTE ***

This meeting will be webcast

https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core//en_GB/portal/home

Location

**Hybrid - Siambr Dafydd Orwig, Swyddfeydd y Cyngor, Caernarfon LL55 1SH
and Zoom**

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(DISTRIBUTED 27/11/25)

**Ian Jones
Head of Democracy Service**

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WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2025

Dear Councillor,

MEETING OF CYNGOR GWYNEDD – THURSDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2025

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to attend a multi-location meeting of **CYNGOR GWYNEDD** which will be held at **1.30 pm** on **THURSDAY, 4TH DECEMBER, 2025** in **SIAMBR DAFYDD ORWIG, SWYDDFEYDD Y CYNGOR, CAERNARFON LL55 1SH / VIRTUALLY ON ZOOM**, to consider the matters mentioned in the following agenda.

Yours faithfully,



Head of Democracy Services

The following rooms will be available for the political groups during the morning: -

Plaid Cymru - Siambr Dafydd Orwig
Independent – Siambr Hywel Dda
Lib / Lab – Ystafell Ogwen

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

7 - 26

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on 2nd of October 2025 be signed as a true record.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declarations of personal interest.

4. THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive any Chair's announcements.

5. URGENT ITEMS

To note any items which are urgent business in the opinion of the Chair so they may be considered.

6. QUESTIONS

To consider any questions the appropriate notice for which have been given under Section 4.18 of the Constitution.

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

27 - 188

To submit the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance.

8. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2026/27

189 - 194

To submit the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance.

9. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AND SELF ASSESSMENT 2024/25

195 - 280

To submit the report of the Council Leader.

10. LOCAL RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

281 - 285

To submit the report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

(A) NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR BECA BROWN

In accordance with the Notice of Motion received under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, Councillor Beca Brown will propose as follows:-

We would like to welcome the publication of the Child Practice Review on 4 November, noting our deep thanks to chair, Jan Pickles, for her careful work, and so too to the panel and to the North Wales Safeguarding Board.

We would like to note the title of the report, which is Our Bravery Brought Justice. It is important that we always acknowledge the title when discussing this report, as it pays a well-deserved tribute to the bravery of children – children who were supposed to be safe in their schools, and children who ended years of horrific offending by one of the most powerful men in this county. We owe them a great deal. Our thoughts are with them, and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts for their remarkable determination and resilience.

We as a council are committed to learning all the lessons that come from the report, but beyond that, we are committed to looking at any relevant issues that have fallen outside the remit of the CPR, which looked at the case of this offender in the period from 2017 to September 2023.

We therefore call on the Cabinet to consider what further independent investigations are needed to address matters outside the boundaries of the CPR. We are fully alert to the fact that further work needs to be done and ask the Cabinet to work tirelessly to identify what is yet to be achieved.

We once again express our sincere apologies to the children who have suffered harm, and we pledge to leave no stone unturned to ensure, to the best of our ability, that 'never again' means 'never again'

(B) NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR NIA JEFFREYS

In accordance with the Notice of Motion received under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, Councillor Nia Jeffreys will propose as follows:-

Propose **that** **the** **Council**

1. Notes: that suicide figures in Wales registered in 2024 were 15.7 per 100,000 people which was an increase on the figure for 2023, which was 14.0 per 100,000.

There are several factors associated with suicide, including: poverty, unemployment, mental and physical health problems, grief, abuse,

loneliness, relationship problems, alcohol and substance misuse etc.

We also note that suicide is the leading cause of death of young people up to the age of 35 according to the Papyrus charity, because young people rarely die from other causes.

Middle-aged men between the ages of 30-44 in Wales are most likely to commit suicide. 76% of deaths by suicide were men. There is a correlation between poverty and suicide, with 15.8 in 100,000 suicides occurring in deprived areas, and 8.6 in 100,000 in the least deprived areas.

126.7 in 100,000 are unemployed.

Suicide is preventable, and support is available.

2. Believes: That the people of Wales have a right to live in communities that are free of the fear and stigma that are associated with suicide and self-harm. We believe that the people of Wales have a right to be empowered and supported to access and offer support wherever they are needed (Welsh Government, 2025).

We all have a role, as individuals and organisations, to support those affected by suicide. We believe that the Council has a role to work with other stakeholders, to take action to prevent suicide, reduce stigma, and offer support. We believe that the Council has a role to play in taking concrete steps to protect our young people, empowering them to look after themselves and others.

Principles- Welsh Government's Suicide Prevention Strategy ([Understanding: suicide and self-harm prevention strategy](#)):

- 1. Self-harm and suicide are everyone's business, and everyone can make a difference with the right training and support.*
- 2. It must be clear who leads on and is responsible for every action in the strategy.*
- 3. The focus is on prevention, identifying risks early on and offering appropriate support to keep people safe.*
- 4. Services should be fair and accessible to all, removing barriers that affect different groups.*
- 5. There is a need to focus on groups that are higher risk, providing proportionate and appropriate support.*
- 6. Anyone should be able to get help immediately ('no wrong door') without having to repeat their story.*
- 7. The voices of people with lived experiences must be listened to and individual-centred services must be co-planned.*
- 8. The strategy should support the Welsh language, ensuring that people are cared for in their own language without having to ask.*
- 9. The actions must be evidence-based and their consequences clear.*
- 10. The work should be trauma-informed, providing compassionate and empathetic care.*

11. *It is important to address stigma, promoting understanding and compassion.*
12. *A rights-based approach should be adopted, protecting the rights of all individuals.*
13. *The strategy must cover all ages, ensuring that support is available to everyone from babies to older people.*
14. *The social and economic factors that influence health and well-being should be recognised.*
15. *The role of digital technology should be considered, where it can improve outcomes or sustainability.*
16. *Funding and resources must be made available, testing what steps are realistic within the existing resources.*

3. I call on my fellow Members to support the motion.

- (a) **That this Council declares firm support for the principles of the Welsh Government's Suicide Prevention Strategy and supports the work of the Cabinet to establish a strategy for Cyngor Gwynedd**
- (b) **That members should do all they can to ensure that the Council implements policies that support individuals, prevent suicide, empowering the Council's structures**
- (c) **It supports opportunities in schools to discuss suicide as an aspect of mental health discussions, in the context of personal and social education, equipping our pupils to look after themselves and others in a sensitive way, by teachers who are given the appropriate support, supervision and training to provide such education.**

12. RESPONSES / UPDATES TO PREVIOUS NOTICE OF MOTION

286 - 288

1. Letter from the Welsh Government in response to Cllr. Gwynfor Owen' Notice of Motion to the 3 July 2025 Council meeting regarding devolution of the Welsh Rail Network.
2. Letter from the Welsh Government in response to Cllr. Rhys Tudur' Notice of Motion to the 3 July 2025 Council meeting regarding the language shift seen in Gwynedd.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 2/10/2025

Attendance: Ioan Thomas (Chair)

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

Officers:

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dylan Owen (Corporate Director), Catrin Thomas (Corporate Director), Carys Fôn Williams (Head of Housing and Property), Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education Department), Dewi A Morgan (Head of Finance), Aled Gibbard (Interim Head of Children's Department), Sharron Carter Williams (Interim Head of Children's Department), Sion Huws (Propriety and Elections Manager), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Gareth A Roberts.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 3 July 2025 as a true record.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

4. THE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences were extended to the family of the late William Tudor Owen - former Member and Chair of this Council, and Cllr Dewi Jones paid tribute to him.

Condolences were extended to the family of the late Ieuan Roberts, Porthmadog, who had been a Member of this Council. A tribute was paid to him by Cllr June Jones.

Also noted was the recent death of the famous minister, Reverend Marcus Robinson, and condolences were extended to his family also.

It was further noted that the Council wished to express condolences to everyone within the county's communities who had lost loved ones recently. The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect and remembrance.

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

Councillor Wendy Cleaver was welcomed to her first meeting after she had been elected Councillor for Barmouth during the summer, and she was wished well in her role.

Catrin Thomas was welcomed back to the Council on her commencement in post as Corporate Director.

The following were congratulated:

- Everyone from Gwynedd who had recently been successful at this year's National Eisteddfod in Wrexham was congratulated, especially Owain Rhys from Cardiff, but originally from Llandwrog, the son of former Councillor Richard Morris Jones, on winning the Crown.
- The Sir Gaernarfon Organising Committee who had been sponsoring the Royal Welsh Show this year.
- Chris Williams from Bethesda, who had been running the Cefn y Ddraig Race to thank the North Wales Society of the Blind for their support to his wife, Councillor Einir Williams.
- To the swimmer, Ela Letton-Jones from Felinheli, on winning a silver medal for Britain in the World Para-Swimming Championships in Singapore.
- Cedron Dafydd from Pentir, on winning a Silver Medal in the World Rowing Competition.
- Richard Eirig Rowlands on winning the Wales Darts Championships 2025.
- Nick Thomas on winning a gold medal in the World Para-Archery Championships.
- Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy on winning the ICE Cymru Diversity awards for the Hiraef Bangor flood prevention project.

Attention was drawn to the fact that it had been 60 years since Llyn Celyn was officially opened, contrary to the wishes of local politicians and the community. It was expressed that it was integral to remember, and remind the nation, of the travesty of drowning Cwm Celyn, and many other valleys, to supply water to cities in England. It was noted that we will remember Tryweryn.

The Chair invited the Chief Executive to provide an update to the Full Council on the Child Practice Review. The Chief Executive expressed that it was not customary to make this kind of statement, but that it was essential for him to address the matter. A week ago, he explained, that arrangements were in place to publish this essentially important report, with a briefing session for Councillors arranged. But, at 16:30 the night before, a message was received to delay the publication. It was emphasised that the Council was not a part of this decision or any consultation on the matter.

He expressed that he felt the same disappointment and frustration that two years had now passed, and that staff saw this as a conclusion and felt relief as it would now give them the opportunity to discuss this openly. It was emphasised that it was going to be a painful and difficult report, but that the Council was ready to apologise to the brave individuals and was committed to improve its systems.

It was explained that there was no further information available at present, but once there was, it would be shared.

It was emphasised that the impact of deferring had been much greater on the victims, who continued to be supported.

None to note.

6. QUESTIONS

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

It was expressed that the questions had been late arriving the members today and they asked for an explanation regarding why they were received so late. Apologies were expressed for this, noting that a large number of questions had been submitted and that responding to them took time. It was noted that they would arrive earlier for the next meeting.

1. Question from Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones

I am aware that a full review was initiated on Derwen services back in 2024 due to concerns about the increasing number of children waiting for access to or for the services of Derwen. I wonder if the cabinet member can give an update on the results of the review by now, and indeed, on Derwen's situation.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families, Councillor Menna Trenholme

The decision to hold a review of the Derwen Service was made at the Management Board on 7 November 2024. As it was a joint Management Board with Anglesey, and as the Health Board was an integrated part of the services in both authorities, the review run concurrently across both counties.

Following the decision to carry out the review, a request was made for regional money to commission external support to lead on this. Money had been attracted for the purpose and a tendering process was followed in order to commission the work. An external adviser was appointed at the end of February 2025, with a work programme to run from May until September 2025. For reasons beyond the control of both services, the work programme had slipped and it was now expected for the review to be completed by the end of December 2025.

The scope of the review included considering the existing access criteria, analysing the service's current arrangements, understanding the needs of children and their parents, understanding the expectations of stakeholders and considering the design of the service for the future.

The final report will be submitted to the Management Board initially, and the work will be included on the agenda of the Care Scrutiny Committee.

It should also be noted that internal research was being carried out to look at Gwynedd population trends, including the number of births, the existing child population, as well as the number of disabled and neurodiverse children. The purpose of this work will be to discover whether the number of disabled children and young people is increasing, even as the number of births in Gwynedd reduced since 2012, and understand the reasons for this.

The work will also consider the ability of social services and the Education Department (Additional Learning Needs), to meet the needs over the coming twenty years. The work will follow the pattern of the Llechen Lân report on older people's social services in the future, which was published in autumn 2024.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones

She gave thanks for the response and for the reference to the Derwen service in Social Service's annual report, and that she was aware that the schedule had slipped. Is it possible to obtain clarity on the service's criteria and how the various needs of the children in the county can be evaluated against the increasing demands on services, how can we secure robust criteria which are flexible enough to ensure a service for every child who needs it, but also protect this scarce resource?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families, Councillor Menna Trenholme

Thank you for the supplementary question. These questions are ones raising from the review, and she will share the report with the Member as it is released.

2. Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur

Given that during this year the Council has abandoned the procedure of numbering areas on waiting list application forms which has resulted in the loss of important data, to what extent were consultations, impact assessments, notices to councillors and public reports carried out to justify the decision so that it is transparent, balanced and democratic?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, Councillor Paul Rowlinson

I would like to refer you to the responses I gave to the similar questions asked at the Full Council meetings in July and March, when I explained that we have not lost any important data whatsoever. On the old application form, applicants for social housing were asked to note the areas they would like to live, noting them in priority order. As many applicants filled in the form without prioritising the areas, and as this prioritisation did not take any part in the housing allocation process, it was decided that there was no point continuing to ask people to prioritise areas. The application form was amended in line with that. This was an operational issue only, it was not political, and the public had not been affected in any way, except for the process being simplified for them.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur

Considering that the Council should operate in a transparent and fair way, and based on robust evidence when making changes, and considering that the Council should have consulted appropriately in line with the requirements of good Governance, and that there was not, it seemed, any single public report to justify the decision. And considering the change disrupting the quality of data and making it less detailed and useful to assess local need and to give clear evidence for planning purposes. Isn't it obvious that the change is undemocratic, unfavourable to vulnerable individuals who need to note where they wish to live and cause housing developers to profiteer hugely, by enabling them to use vague data, with no detail, to support the construction of a high number of housing in unsuitable places.

Answer - Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, Councillor Paul Rowlinson

Initially, there was robust evidence that people were not filling the form correctly, and so there was no need to consult as there was no change to the housing process. The change did not disrupt data at all. Changes to forms were not something that required political input, and so there was no need for all the consultation you refer to. In terms of planning processes, the processes being used are recognised processes on a national level, and those ones seen in Councils across Wales.

3. Question from Councillor Gruffydd Williams

Following the housing department receiving advice via Cyfeillion Llŷn from the Welsh Language Commissioner noting the ability to use the Welsh language as an allocations policy consideration and following recent attempts to build a large number of social housing in Welsh-speaking areas such as Nefyn, how enthusiastically and quickly will this Council be including the Welsh language as one of the considerations of the allocations policy?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, Councillor Paul Rowlinson

Cyngor Gwynedd's Common Housing Allocations Policy and our Housing Action Plan plays a key part in the battle to keep the Welsh language alive in our communities. Both the influx of non-Welsh speakers and the outward migration of Welsh speakers threaten its prosperity as a community language. The strong emphasis given to a local connection in the Allocations Policy ensures that the vast majority of homes are allocated to local people.

But the outward migration of Welsh-speakers is much more of a threat to the language. It is a sad fact that over half of us here in Gwynedd cannot afford to purchase a home, and even higher in some areas. Private rent levels are also high, therefore there is a need for social housing for those who cannot purchase or rent on the market. I strongly believe that we have a right to live at home. This is a core matter to us. Some choose to move away, but no-one should be forced to leave as a result of not being able to afford to live in their habitat. And there are over 4,400 people and families (over 2,200 applications) on the waiting list.

Therefore, as we are all aware, more social housing need to be built in all parts of Gwynedd. The Housing Action Plan sets the aim of building 700 by 2029, through collaboration with our housing partners, and I'm pleased to say that we are on track to achieve this goal.

The Allocations Policy places a strong emphasis (the strongest in Wales) on a local connection, with two levels –a Gwynedd level and a community level. As a result, 97% of homes are allocated to local people with a Gwynedd connection and 60% to people in the same community. The criteria in the policy safeguards individuals who are local to Gwynedd as far as reasonably possible.

You are correct to note that the allocations policy does not specifically include the language as one of the considerations. You refer to the legal advice commissioned by the Welsh Language Commissioner. But the Council and its partners must attend to wider legal matters in regards to practical execution of the provision in a way which meets other requirements and duties.

The Housing Act 1996 places a legal duty on the Council to give reasonable priority to the applicants in most need and it defines these. We must also give "due regard" to Welsh ministers' guidance. One part of the Guidance (3.69) allows "sustaining Welsh-speaking communities by giving priority to those in housing need with a local connection to the area." That is exactly what we are doing, and the emphasis we place on the local connection is one of strongest that can be seen in Wales and goes as far as possible in what can be included.

The Allocations Policy places social housing applicants in bands and then within that band a priority is given to applicants (or family members) who have lived for five years or more in the Community Council area in question. This means that an applicant who has the same level of housing need but also has a community connection would be given higher priority than an applicant without a community connection. Should any priority be

given to an applicant's ability to speak Welsh, this would have to be given after these priorities, namely the level of need, Gwynedd connection and community connection. Because of this, it is unlikely that it would make much of a difference.

The percentage of Welsh-speakers who live on social housing estates is high. Recently, we have asked housing associations to conduct language surveys on their new social housing developments. They found that 90% of residents could speak Welsh, in wards where the average percentage of Welsh-speakers is 76%, which is 14% higher. Social housing can help to strengthen the language by providing affordable homes to local people, a high percentage of whom speak Welsh, and help them stay in their area.

Furthermore, there are a number of good reasons for not changing our current policy.

As a Council we have a duty to serve everyone in Gwynedd, the non-Welsh speaking minority as well as the Welsh-speaking majority. Giving preference to Welsh speakers would risk alienating residents who have lived all their lives in Gwynedd but cannot speak Welsh, and in doing so, creating a 'second class of residents based on language only.

We have consulted with our partners, the housing associations, those who build and manage the homes. And the answer is clear: all support the policy as it is, a policy which prioritises the people of Gwynedd and opposes the principle of discrimination on the basis of the language people speak. If we were to follow that path, there is a risk that some would refuse to operate in Gwynedd anymore.

The Council must execute the policy fairly and consistently and the legal advice we received stated that the practicality of its introduction would be extremely complex. Certainly, it would create difficulties in terms of how to define and objectively assess an applicant's and their families' language ability and conduct a review every year as is needed.

Those are the reasons why I believe the Common Housing Allocations Policy is fit for purpose and does not need to be changed for now. That being said, the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill is currently making its way through the Senedd. If it becomes law, Welsh Government will publish new guidance and we will certainly be reviewing our policy at that time.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Gruffydd Williams

Considering my experience in Nefyn and nearby villages, and having spoken with my fellow members in Dwyfor, the numbers who speak Welsh in new and old social housing has seen a marked decline, as there is a high and regular turnover in the tenancy of social housing and as no allocation consideration is given to Welsh than adequate local demand. Isn't it obvious that we need to stop being so unwise and surrender to the power we have according to the Welsh Language Commissioner to use the Welsh language as an allocation policy consideration in those areas.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, Councillor Paul Rowlinson

I have provided an extensive report and I have covered the points. Any such change would have to be in parallel with the 1996 Housing Act considerations, and there are also practical problems as well as a matter of principle, and this is why there will be no reform at present.

4. Question by Councillor Huw Llwyd Rowlands

Does Cyngor Gwynedd consider that the culture of Ffordd Gwynedd, which is to provide the best possible service to the residents of Gwynedd, is operating efficiently and successfully in all parts of the Council? My experiences suggest that it is not.

Reply – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Llio Elenid Owen

The annual report presented to the Cabinet meeting on 8 July 2025 shows that Gwynedd Council recognises that the Ffordd Gwynedd culture and the “way of working” are moving in the right direction, with several examples where departments are taking proactive steps to promote the plan’s objectives.

However, the report is also honest about the fact that progress and efforts to embed the culture remain mixed, and there are variations between individual departments and across the Council as a whole.

The report emphasises that the role of technology, training, and continuous evaluation is key to the success of this culture, but there are some areas where best practices have not yet been fully embedded. For example, there is a need to extend basic training on the “way of working”, embed the practice of continuous evaluation, and promote ownership of performance among all Council staff.

There is a specific plan within the work programme regarding customer care, and the Cabinet also approved a new Customer Service Strategy at its meeting on 8 July 2025. The work programme of this strategy will place particular emphasis on responding to enquiries and correspondence from residents and members, with the aim of seeing improvement in the Council’s performance.

If anyone receives a substandard service, they are encouraged to bring it to our attention through the relevant processes so that we can identify exactly where those weaknesses are and address them.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Huw Llwyd Rowlands

Bearing in mind that the Ffordd Gwynedd culture had been in progress for over 10 years, are you confident that Cyngor Gwynedd is sufficiently prioritising this matter, in order to ensure improvement and a marked change in the Council's culture within a specific period, e.g., 12 months?

Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Llio Elenid Owen

Ffordd Gwynedd's principles are to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything, listening to their needs, and establishing the best possible way to respond and ensuring that this happens well and in a timely way. Committing to this culture in the Council is a priority for me and the Cabinet, and they are tireless in their commitment. Culture changes take time, and over the last 10 years, I believe that the vast majority of the Council's staff are buying into the culture.

It is unfortunate that those 10 years have been 10 years of financial cuts, and that this has affected the progress. However, we cannot merely hide behind financial cuts, and there is no doubt that some aspects of the culture still need to be improved, and responding to member enquiries is one of those. I am aware that the Chief Executive and Members of the Management Team share this view and that plans are already afoot to improve that aspect specifically, and that there are plans for members to scrutinise and

assist with the work and that they are in contact with you and ready to start that conversation.

5. Question by Councillor Linda Morgan

In view of the decision of the North Wales Safeguarding Boards to delay the publication of the CPR report last week, can the Leader give an update on the current situation with regard to the CPR please.

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Nia Jeffreys

Thank you to the Councillor for the timely question and for giving me the opportunity to share the available information with the Council.

I was disappointed that the Regional Safeguarding Board was unable to proceed with publishing the report on 24 September, as we had hoped and expected. Of course, the disappointment and pain were even greater for the victims and survivors. I cannot imagine how challenging the wait for publication must have been for them, and I am truly sorry that this delay has prolonged their pain and anxiety.

We have formally contacted the Safeguarding Board to request an explanation, but unfortunately, we still have no information regarding the reasons for the delay. I can assure the Council that Cyngor Gwynedd had no role in the decision and we are eager to see the report published as soon as possible.

I anticipate that the report will highlight failures to prevent the paedophile, Neil Foden, and that many of these failures will fall under the responsibility of this Council. It breaks my heart to think that our safeguarding systems at the time failed to protect children who should have been safe in their school.

Receiving the report will give us the opportunity to fully understand what happened, what lessons need to be learned and which systems need to be strengthened to ensure our children are as safe as possible in Gwynedd and across Wales. It will give us the chance to acknowledge our shortcomings and to apologise again to the victims, to the many others affected, and to the people of Gwynedd for letting them down.

Following the adoption of the Response Plan earlier this year, a Response Plan Programme Board was established to monitor and measure the progress of the Plan and to implement the recommendations. There are now seven main objectives for this Plan: 'Acknowledge', 'Apologise', 'Support', 'Establish', 'Learn', 'Improve', and 'Accountability'.

The Response Plan Board is chaired by Professor Sally Holland, with representatives from several external agencies acting as observers to ensure independent challenge of the Board's work. Four Cabinet Members sit on the Board, along with Council officers and representation from Ysgol Friars and the Secondary sector in Gwynedd.

I must emphasise that the adoption of the Response Plan and the establishment of the Response Plan Programme Board were not the beginning of the work. Several actions had already taken place beforehand, and much more remains to be done.

In her quarterly report to the Cabinet in July, Professor Sally Holland noted that positive progress was being made across the workstreams. That being said, there is still much more to do, and further recommendations are expected following the publication of the Child Practice Review (CPR) – we will accept all of them and implement them immediately. We will not shy away from our responsibility; everything must be done to safeguard the children of Gwynedd.

My thoughts remain with the victims, their families, and the entire community who have waited a long time to see this vitally important report.

6. Question by Councillor Louise Hughes

Following the announcement last week that the report into Foden's repulsive, predatory behaviour will not yet be released, it raises the question of how effective this Council's whistleblowing procedures are. We are all tainted by this appalling state of affairs. Parents sending their children to our schools place their trust in Cyngor Gwynedd to make sure they are safe. Withholding the findings of the report shuts down the rights of the victims, their parents and ordinary people who are justifiably angry at how this was allowed to happen over such a long period of time.

Why weren't the concerns raised in the past followed up and investigated under the Education Act 2002 for Safeguarding Children in Education - what reassurances can Cyngor Gwynedd give that future safeguarding concerns will be treated seriously and actioned robustly?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

Thank you for raising this serious matter. First of all, I would like to apologise sincerely to all those who have suffered as a result of the horrific acts of paedophile, Neil Foden, and emphasise that the safety and well-being of every child in Gwynedd are always our main priority.

You specifically ask why concerns raised in the past were not followed up under the Education Act 2002. An independent investigation was commissioned by the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Board to examine not only why systems that should have protected children did not work as they should but also the culture and arrangements that allowed such behaviour to continue unchallenged. Like many, I am also disappointed with the Regional Safeguarding Board's decision to delay the publication of the report. According to the Board, they need to consider their "legal obligations". I'm sure this has been a terrible experience for the children who suffered at the hands of the offender. I have not received any further information since being informed of this at the end of the day last Tuesday.

In terms of ensuring confidence for the future:

- Gwynedd school staff receive regular training on safeguarding, with clear routes to share concerns as a key part of it. The Education Department has established a new Safeguarding and Well-being Team which has enhanced our ability to respond in a timely manner to safeguarding concerns.
- The Education Department has new arrangements in place to log and trace cases that are brought to its attention. Our Whistleblowing policy has been updated and procedures strengthened so that staff, parents and pupils themselves can raise concerns in confidence.
- Governors and heads are accountable through annual safeguarding audits, despite the national practice being every three years. These visits include: checking safeguarding policies, checking dates and levels of training, checking practical safeguarding arrangements, questioning the designated safeguarding person, staff and pupils about confidence levels and knowledge relating to safeguarding, checking the contents of the school's Safeguarding Arrangements Annual Audit and offering general support and guidance.

As Cabinet Member for Education, and a member of the Response Board, my role is to ensure that Cyngor Gwynedd acts appropriately and responds positively to any recommendations made during this process, and that lessons are learned so that safeguarding arrangements are strengthened. The Response Plan Board is chaired by

Professor Sally Holland, and representatives from various external agencies attend as observers. In addition, four Cabinet Members, Council officers, and representatives from Ysgol Friars and the secondary sector in Gwynedd take part in the Board. In a report in July, Professor Holland said positive progress had been made so far with 32 of the 63 work tasks completed and a clear desire by the Council to deliver the remainder.

I would like to assure parents and carers that any safeguarding concerns raised today are treated with the utmost seriousness, promptly investigated, and robust action taken thereafter. We will tolerate nothing less.

The lessons of the past must shape the culture of the present. It is only by facing those lessons honestly, and by relentlessly strengthening our systems, that we can honour the trust that families place in us every day.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Louise Hughes

Thank you for your response, although we are ignoring the fact that Foden is a bully, that workplace bullying is unacceptable, and this should have been flagged earlier. Therefore, the complete silence on this issue means that we as Elected Members have not received any explanation on procedural departmental failings, and it raises many further questions. How often did the Ysgol Friars governing body meet? And what was the input of the safeguarding children governor? Many people have asked me whether Foden will receive his pension?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

As noted in the original response, culture is something that the Independent Investigation are looking into; I agree with you that workplace bullying is unacceptable and is something that Cyngor Gwynedd, in all departments, is trying to eradicate. But obviously, Foden displayed bullying tendencies and the Judge in Court also referred to him as a bully.

There are suggestions in your address which suggest that Gwynedd in some way is trying to silence people, but this is not true. It was not Cyngor Gwynedd's decision to not publish the report last week; this was the decision of the regional safeguarding board. It is not us who is investigating the Council's failings; this is done by the Regional Safeguarding Board, which is stand-alone. Therefore, hopefully what this will provide moving forward is confidence for people that the investigations have been carried out independently, thoroughly and will strengthen our systems. I am very proud to be able to say that we welcome any recommendations and are already implementing several of the recommendations; we have learnt lessons and we continue to do so. Everyone in this room has a responsibility for this. Yes, we have a Cabinet which leads the Council, but all of us in our roles as Governors, as members of the Scrutiny Committee are to ensure that lessons are learnt, and that our systems are strengthened. Because we can see what can go wrong when systems are not robust enough. I cannot say that this will never happen again, but we can do our best to ensure that we have the best possible arrangements.

This is why I am a member of this Council, and that is why I take an interest in education, as it is the future of our children that is on the line. I will do everything within my ability to enable this to happen. I speak passionately about this because this has affected me deeply, and I cannot begin to imagine how the parents, the families of the abused children feel, let alone the children themselves.

The comments about the pension; Cyngor Gwynedd do not implement the Headteacher's pension - this is an issue for the British Government. I understand that the Local Member of Parliament has raised this with the Minister in Westminster.

7. Question by Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts

Considering:

1. That the cabinet member for finance, earlier this year, stated that the Finance Department was working on a policy on the use of discretionary powers to reduce council tax liability in relation to the premium (in the case of property used for self-catering accommodation which is not subject to a planning condition restricting its use for the purpose of an ordinary dwelling) and that it is therefore recognised that there are self-catering accommodation businesses in Gwynedd which would merit consideration under such a policy;
2. That the authority continues to operate without an exemption policy, contrary to Welsh Government guidance; and
3. That the delay in introducing an exemption policy is attributable, it is said, to concern about creating *loopholes* and that implicit in that suggestion that continuing to raise a premium on property that merit being exempt is somehow better than the *possibility* that some might take advantage of an exclusion policy to avoid payment;

How does the Finance Department, in the absence of policy, deal with each case on its own merits (in line with Welsh Government guidance) and strive to act fairly and consistently and with the due measure of proportionality lest the Authority have to face a legal challenge in this matter in due course?

Response - Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Huw Wyn Jones

Thank you for the question.

First, I think a misconception needs to be corrected. There is no guidance from the Welsh Government requiring the Council to have an exemption policy – what it does say is that there is encouragement to consider whether there is room for councils to *use their discretionary powers to tailor a decision or to reduce council tax liability*. The legislation itself sets out statutory exemptions, and no Council is required to have an additional exemption policy.

Having said that, discussions have started over the summer regarding whether it is necessary to create a Council Tax Premium exemptions policy for Cyngor Gwynedd, and under what circumstances exemptions would be appropriate. There are several complex and technical considerations to be discussed, and we also need to fully understand what the impact of any policy would be to ensure that we do not create any undesired outcomes.

The real unfairness here is that our young people are unable to get a roof over their heads in large parts of the County. It is not clear from the question which properties "deserve" an exemption, or on what grounds.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts

Given

1. That the Cabinet Member for Finance maintains that the Welsh Government guidance demand that Local Authorities have an exception policy in this matter.
2. That the Welsh Government guidance on council tax on empty homes and second homes March 2023 version, clearly states "for fairness and transparency, every Local Authority should have a policy", noting the potential circumstances where a property can be considered for an exemption from the premium.
3. That there are local Welsh people who have visitor lets, who are hit with a £15,000 Council Tax bill out of the blue, with no obvious process for an exemption.

The decision-makers with this matter should be more familiar with the exact wording of the guidance; I can send you a copy?

Response - Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Huw Wyn Jones

The use of "must" on page 18 of the guidance, and what I would note is that the Council's interpretation, from the beginning of the paragraph, is that it is an optional issue for Authorities as to whether they use powers in 13A to reduce the tax, or impose an exemption policy. I am not a solicitor and so I am following the advice I get on this matter. Discussions have been held over the summer to identify a way to obtain an optional policy which ensures fairness and transparency and not being held open to allegations of discrimination or being left in a situation where an exemption has to be given to every empty property and second home in the county. We will introduce a section 13a policy over the summer months, but this will be broader than premium issues alone.

8. Question from Councillor Beca Brown

It was International Day of Peace on September 21st – a day that gives the people of the world the opportunity to commit to creating a peaceful world and to reflect on how we could all contribute towards creating a culture of peace.

With that in mind, I note that drone testing and development has been taking place at Llanbedr airfield in Gwynedd for over a decade, for a variety of purposes. Given the horrific effects of drones on civilians in wars, and given that we live in a world that feels increasingly unstable, can we be certain that the drones being developed at Llanbedr are not being used for military purposes?

Response - Cabinet Member for the Economy, Councillor Medwyn Hughes

Cyngor Gwynedd has been working with the leaseholders of the Snowdonia Aerospace Centre since the Site became part of the Snowdonia Enterprise Zone in 2011. The Centre offers a development space for different companies in the field of unmanned vehicles, satellites, and wider space technology. The Council has assisted them with projects that could lead to safeguarding and creating new employment opportunities in Llanbedr. They have recently received an £820,000 grant from the UK Space Agency to extend their research and testing facilities. Cyngor Gwynedd is not supporting any projects or activities on site at present.

The Council has contacted Snowdonia Aerospace LLP, the leaseholders of the Site, to obtain assurances that their customers are not developing drones for military purposes. Confirmation has been received from the Company that the site is only used by commercial companies, but as they have agreed to a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with their customers, they are not in a position to provide details of the operations of these companies. Nevertheless, the Company has confirmed that they have no planned military drone operations with the Ministry of Defence at the site in Llanbedr.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Beca Brown

Thank you, I note from the response that there are no plans at the moment to develop or test drones for military purposes but bearing in mind that drones are easy to transfer from one use to another, how can Gwynedd residents be certain that the drones being developed in Llanbedr will never be used for war purposes?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community, Councillor Medwyn Hughes

Although this is not the company's vision at present, there are no restrictions that would prevent military drones from operating from the site in the future. The company has a certificate of lawful use, which allows un-piloted vehicle operations on the estate, but this does not differentiate between technology which can be used for commercial or military purposes. Security licences or planning consent does not differentiate between what type of drone can operate on the site. And we can clearly state to the company that there are

concerns about contracts with companies that may develop drones for military purposes in the future.

7. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 2024-25

The Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee gave a presentation, noting that it was a summary of the work done in 2024/25. It was explained that the report not only met the statutory requirements but also added value to the Council's governance arrangements, ensuring resilience in difficult periods.

It was reiterated that the financial challenges continued, and that they were scrutinising budgets to make sure that they made the best use of money. The staff and committee members were thanked for their priceless collaboration. Tribute was paid to the late Sharron Warnes and Cllr Rob Triggs, who had both passed away in recent months.

The Chair and members were thanked for their work, and gratitude was expressed for the special tributes to the two former members.

RESOLVED

To accept the report.

8. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2024/25

The report was submitted, noting that it had been some year for Social Services in Gwynedd, with the workforce facing challenges. It was highlighted that two years had passed since Foden's arrest, and that the work had been heavy on everyone, including Councillors.

It was explained that this report was statutory in order to report on the work being done and all staff were thanked for their work. It was emphasised that the work of the Child Practice Review had been very challenging over the last year, with both departments completely shook. Despite the awful things, it must be emphasised that good work is being done and take pride in the workforce who work so hard. It was expressed that the celebration is mitigated by the impact of what has happened and this needed to be acknowledged.

Six original principles were highlighted which safeguards the Council, i.e., empower, prevent, safeguarding, balance, protect, work in partnership and accountability.

It was emphasised that there was no "us" and "them" when talking about social care as anyone could need the service. It was explained that a huge increase had been seen in the demand and this was highlighted in the data and the most prominent was the number of referrals to the children's department. When looking at safeguarding, it was noted that the magnitude of the work was almost 8,000 referrals, which highlighted the additional pressures on staff to respond to the need required. It was emphasised that only one miscreant was needed to make a mess of the whole system.

Attention was drawn to the progress made in direct payments, noting that it was hoped that further progress would be seen over the coming years. Through this progress, it was noted that more people would be living in their community, but the flip side of that, people were constantly waiting for domiciliary care.

The incredible plans that had been achieved over the years were highlighted, which had endless new projects. It was noted that the Council had received a Gwynedd Age Friendly Accreditation and that they had received money to continue with the work. It was expressed that a New Care Academy had been launched, with success seen with recruitment and some

tens of people taking advantage of the training. It was explained that the Llechen Lân research was looking at Gwynedd's demography, looking at how this could respond to future challenges. It was emphasised that a work programme would be discussed soon. It was noted that the number of people with disabilities in work had doubled, which enabled people to earn a wage and dignity, and hopefully this would double again. It was explained that progress had been made in the use of technology (Technology Enabled Care/TEC). As a result, it was noted that there were many things to be proud of.

It was expressed that problems continued with the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), as waiting lists were lengthy. Nevertheless, following the recommendation of the Care Scrutiny Committee, it was noted that the department had employed new staff and it was hoped that this would lead to improving the situation. It was explained that recruiting carers continued to be challenging, with 11% of care home posts currently vacant.

He emphasised that he had hoped that the Child Protection report would have been published by this meeting, but this had not been possible. Nevertheless, it was explained that the work was continuing and had started addressing the issues they anticipated would be in the report, but he expressed that there would obviously be more to do.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

Gratitude was expressed for the report and the work being done in the care field, but a question was asked about the impact on staff when other staff left the care field or fell ill. He replied by stating that it depended on the situation, but that it could be challenging because of the lack of carers and specifically if the case was in a rural location. It was expressed that Llechen Lân had highlighted that steps were being taken to improve the situation in order to make a difference, such as extra care housing.

It was asked and agreed that a Falls Protocol would be discussed next year.

Staff were thanked for their work in such a difficult year, and for their commitment to Gwynedd services. The unpaid carers were thanked for their work and it was asked whether further attention was needed to support them and what plans were available to provide for the future. It was stressed that unpaid carers were essential to our communities and that approximately 10% of Gwynedd people were unpaid carers. Nevertheless, it was noted that the service, despite it being of high standard, was not good enough as they did not come close to seeing 10% of the population. It was highlighted that the number of carer assessments had doubled, and that there was better support for young people. It was noted that back-up plans were needed for unpaid carers, so that it was possible to identify what individuals needed if a carer was admitted to hospital, for example. It was emphasised that he was happy to come to the Care Scrutiny Committee to have a further discussion.

It was emphasised that safeguarding children is the root of the work of social services, and it was asked whether our systems are the best they can be. He replied by noting that it was impossible to be certain that every system was guaranteed, but the department was living in a system where there was room to improve, and lessons to learn which develop regularly. It was emphasised that changes have been made to the system and that there is a need to ensure that the child's voice is central to this. It was highlighted that a new safeguarding policy had been adopted and it was highlighted that further steps were in place to cross-reference cases specifically when more than one referral came in to see whether there were any patterns or reasons. Pride was expressed that a very low number had more than one referral and fewer still with live police investigations. It was explained that a procedure was in place to ensure that the decision was not made by one person, but that it was jointly or multi-agency with a discussion with the police on each case. The importance of staff and Councillors attending training was emphasised, as everyone needed awareness on the highest level.

An enquiry was made about the number of empty beds in Gwynedd Residential Homes at present, as it affected individuals being discharged from hospital. The report noted that there were many empty spaces in the County's Homes, so an enquiry was made as to whether this was because of staff shortages. As a result, individuals stayed in hospital and beds were being blocked. It was noted that there was a long waiting list for domiciliary care, and that Dyfed Edwards had announced that £30m in additional funding would be available for local authorities to provide domiciliary care - had Cyngor Gwynedd received this, as we needed to do what we could to support the Health Board to reduce waiting times in the Emergency Unit? The questions were answered by stating that the care homes were approximately 84% full - and that the department was aiming for around 90% in order to be viable. It was explained that there were reasons for the low numbers - such as work being carried out and subsequently having to close some rooms for a period of time. It was highlighted that 11% of jobs in care homes were currently vacant, and therefore it was difficult to provide the care required. As a result, it was noted that Hospitals would be impacted as implementing the care pathways could be challenging, but the additional money would assist with this work. It was expressed that domiciliary care and direct payments needed to be used to reduce the need to be admitted to hospital, to ensure that Gwynedd is an age-friendly county where people can continue to live in their homes for as long as possible.

It was asked, considering that safeguarding systems had failed over the years, and that an increase had been seen in violence towards women, it was asked whether roles such as an IPVA or Young People Violence Advocacy Officer were needed within the Council. He replied by noting that these jobs were seen by the Police, and that the Council tended to buy-in such services to ensure high standards, but it was certainly a suggestion to consider.

A concern that was raised annually about the lack of nursing homes in Dwyfor, and the need to pursue the Government to get the work started at the location in Penrhos, was highlighted. Concern was expressed about DoLS and it was asked whether it was possible to obtain training for Councillors again. He replied by noting that he agreed 100% that the lack of nursing beds was not good enough. It was explained that Penrhos was the obvious answer and that he was confident that it would happen, but that it would take 3 years to be developed after receiving Government approval. Therefore, although there was a plan there, it would not be sorted overnight. In terms of DoLS, it was expressed that it was a challenging situation, but that this was the case nationally. It was explained that an annual assessment was needed, and this and individuals requiring assessments led to resource problems.

It was expressed in terms of the Child Practice Review, the need to ask for a Public Inquiry was noted, as they felt that the report, as it stood, did not have enough teeth. He replied by noting that the report was thorough and that a high number of individuals had been a part of it. It was expressed that it would make for uncomfortable reading and that it was quite challenging, and that this highlighted how thorough they had been, but that there was a need to look at it first, and then make a decision.

Pride was expressed that work was being done to look at staff recruitment and retention, specifically as care work could be difficult and challenging on such a low wage. In respect of direct payments, it was highlighted that not many people understood them and maybe there was a need to better show how it worked. The drop in numbers receiving Telecare was highlighted - a question was asked about whether this was due to the switch to digital systems. He replied by noting that a reduction had occurred due to the impact of digitisation as they found that individuals did not use it. It was reported that an increase had occurred since April.

An enquiry was made about the plans for the Fron Deg Home in Caernarfon, as there had been plans years ago to demolish and build extra care homes there, and the member asked whether there was any update. It was noted that this plan was one which was still being discussed, but that the work was taking time and that obtaining grants was not easy. He expressed that he would be happy to get back to the Councillor with further information.

RESOLVED

The content of the report presented by the authority's Statutory Director for Social Services was noted.

9. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING PANEL 2024/25

The report was submitted by Councillor Menna Trenholme, the Chair of the Safeguarding Strategic Panel during 2024/25.

She expressed thanks for the opportunity to share the report which highlighted how the Council was achieving its statutory safeguarding duties, which included children, vulnerable adults, serious violence and counter-terrorism. It was explained that the Operational Group, as well as an external inspection, ensured that safeguarding arrangements were robust across the Council.

It was noted that during 2024/25, there had been a substantial increase in the referrals of children with complex needs, which had placed substantial pressure on the workforce.

It was expressed that there had been a serious incident at Ysgol Friars in September 2023 and this had led to urgent action with a desktop review and the commissioning of a Child Practice Review by the North Wales Safeguarding Board. A specialist barrister in the child protection field had been commissioned to look specifically at what had been raised in the court case.

In the Adults field, it was explained that the number of referrals was increasing gradually, with the complexity of cases intensifying. It was highlighted that the DoLS work continued to be challenging but that further investment and resources were now in progress.

It was explained that substantial steps had been taken to strengthen safeguarding in Schools, with every school now receiving a visit within 18 months. It was added that high percentages among staff and governors had now completed specific and basic training. Attention was drawn to an increasing number of children who were home educated.

It was explained that the Council continued to raise awareness and acted pro-actively by means of training, multi-agency partnerships and case reviews. It was noted that there had been an increase in cases of stalking and harassment which had led on partnership work with the Police. It was highlighted that a reduction had been seen in anti-social behaviour, but that modern slavery continued to be a matter of concern.

Looking ahead, it was noted that the Panel's priority was for the workforce to understand safeguarding systems, and completing the necessary training, and learning continuously. It was reiterated that safeguarding arrangements continued to develop in response to legislation, regional partnerships and experiences, and thus ensure the safety of the residents of Gwynedd.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

Gratitude was expressed for the report and a request was made for confirmation as to whether the reviews within schools were carried out by staff outside the school. It was confirmed that a team within the Education Department went to the schools to carry out the safety inspections.

It was highlighted in the Terms of Reference that Health and Safety staff were not a part of the monitoring group.

Attention was drawn to the increase in the number of children being home educated, enquiring how the department would safeguard these children. It was noted that the department sought to get to the root of the reasons, as they were eager to get the children into school in order to monitor their safety. Nevertheless, it was noted that there were specific steps to keep an eye on the children's safety.

It was expressed with two years having passed since the Headteacher of Ysgol Friars was arrested, and the delay of the publication of the Child Practice Review, it was asked whether the Council could take development and improvement steps without the report being published. It was expressed that work had commenced, and they were presuming what would be in the report and were trying to act on this already.

Concern was expressed about the welfare of children on School buses, as well as who made decisions regarding school buses. The point regarding safety was accepted, and it was agreed to look at the matter and have a further conversation about this issue.

RESOLVED

To accept the report presented on the work of the Strategic Safeguarding Panel for the 2024/25 year.

10. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Councillor Beth Lawton, Chair of the Scrutiny Forum during 2024/25, presented the report.

It was noted that the report gave an overview of the scrutiny work done in 2024-25, highlighting the reason for scrutinising and the impact of the scrutiny work. It was highlighted that 41 items had been scrutinised. Attention was drawn to several pieces of work done, which included the establishment of the Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools Scrutiny Investigation, which would report on the work in 2025/26. Another example where the Care Scrutiny Committee had invited external partners on three occasions, and the Communities Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the proposal to introduce an Article 4 Direction to control the use of second homes and holiday accommodation.

It was expressed that practical adjustments had been made to scrutiny arrangements to make effective use of time by holding informal meetings. It was noted that briefing meetings would be held to give focus on the questioning strategy at the meeting. It was noted that making clear and purposeful recommendations was critical to good scrutiny, and it was explained that they were continuing to develop this element, which, in turn, would enable them to identify the impact of scrutiny.

The officers and members were thanked for their work, as well as the Forum members for the collaboration and the discussions which had contributed to improving scrutiny arrangements.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

It was expressed that in terms of the report, it was difficult to see what the end of the journey would be and that the actual impact of scrutiny was not obvious. A response was given by noting that this had been identified, but some were expressing that they were moving in the right direction in order to get a system that worked better.

Cabinet Members expressed gratitude for the work of the Scrutiny Committee, and that it was reassuring that recommendations were proposed, and that they were highlighting whether the work was going in the right direction.

RESOLVED

To accept the Report.

11. REVIEW OF THE DELEGATION SCHEME

The report was submitted, noting that reports sometimes came with a change in the constitution. This was one of them. It was expressed that this work was the fruits of the labour of collaboration between the Legal Department and the Housing and Property Department to adapt the thresholds for buying, selling and letting land. It was explained that this was because of a change in land costs over the past year. As a result, there was a need to revisit the delegation scheme.

It was detailed that the current procedure was difficult to understand and its wording was vague, and that it had been the subject of some confusion in terms of officer rights. It was explained that the new delegation scheme had higher values, as the vast majority of decisions were made almost without exception by means of a Cabinet Member decision notice. It was expressed that the new arrangements facilitated the department's efficiency. It was emphasised, obviously as with other Delegation Schemes, conditions would be subject to aspects such as Council policies, standing orders and consultation with local members when disposing of land. It was noted that the latest Scheme provided more flexibility but ensured regular communication with the Cabinet Member.

It was noted that the Scheme had been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee, who had supported it. It was emphasised that this scheme was moving from an unclear position to a modern procedure. It was explained that the Legal Department had looked at similar schemes across North Wales, and that the Council was going for a middle-ground scheme in comparison.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

One member expressed their objection to the Scheme as there were cases where the Council was buying houses with a 106 condition on them, and thus reduced the stock of scarce affordable housing available in the county. Attention was drawn to a case where the Council had offered a price that was much higher than the asking price, which prevented a local person from buying the house. It was expressed that this was the risk posed by delegating the decision to officers and the need for Cabinet Members to continue to make the decision was noted, as the Members believed that a democratic body should make the decision.

Officers responded by noting that the Scheme did not change rights, but rather changed the financial threshold. It was explained that almost twenty years had passed since they had been set, and that they did not reflect today's rights. It was expressed in this case and it was noted that this had happened at the start of the house purchase and that a solution had been found immediately. It was noted that the Council did not want to compete with individuals when buying houses, but rather wanted to buy houses that did not sell or where there was a risk that they would be bought by someone from outside the county. It was emphasised that such decisions were only submitted before the Cabinet in very specific circumstances, and mainly it was a Cabinet Member decision.

RESOLVED

To adopt the amendments to the Delegation Scheme for Officers, about procuring and disposing of property.

12. COMMUNITY REVIEWS UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DEMOCRACY) (WALES) ACT 2013

The report was submitted by Councillor Llio Elenid Owen, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Legal.

It was noted that the purpose of the report was to submit the final proposals of the Community Reviews for approval. It was explained that two types of reviews had been held. The first of community boundary surveys where matters had been brought to our attention, and the second survey of electoral arrangements in every community, looking at whether communities should be split into wards for the purposes of community council elections.

Back in March 2024, the Council agreed to conduct the reviews and a statutory consultation was held on the proposal and terms of reference. Subsequently, draft plans were developed and submitted to the Council in March, and then a statutory consultation was held on the draft proposals.

The responses received were considered and modifications were made where appropriate to create the final proposals. It was explained that if approved, those involved with boundary changes would be presented to the Boundaries Commission for decision on whether to create an order to implement them. It was emphasised that the Council has the right to make an order to bring changes to community wards into force, however, initially, a report would need to be published, including the Final Proposals, and for it to be sent to the bodies and persons prescribed in the Act. When creating the order, consideration must be given to any representations being received from the Council during the six week period after publication.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

A request was made for confirmation of when the second statutory consultation was carried out. It was confirmed that it was undertaken from March to May.

RESOLVED

To approve:

- 1. the Final Proposals under sections 25 and 31 of the Local Government (Democracy)(Wales) Act 2013 and publish the Final Reports**
- 2. To authorise the Head of Legal Services to make and seal the Order for Revision under Section 31**
- 3. To present the recommendations for change under Section 25 for submission to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales**

13. NOTICE OF MOTION

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

1. Recognising that the Pensions Committee has and intends to address these issues as part of a review of the Responsible Investment Policy that Cyngor Gwynedd requests the Committee and the Wales Pension Partnership, to consider the extent it can move as soon as possible to disinvest in fossil fuels as part of the desire to be net zero carbon, in a transparent and accountable manner and in line with its legal duties to the fund.
2. That Cyngor Gwynedd calls on the UK Government to establish an annual conference on ethical and sustainable investment with a view to promoting the best use of the funds available.

The member set out the context to her motion, noting:-

- That Wales is a unique nation where vows are included in the law, by means of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to consider the next generation.
- A duty to invest responsibly in the financial future and environmental future of the county was highlighted.
- It was noted that looking after pensions involved securing robust investments that looked towards the future.
- It was highlighted that there was no long-term sense or guarantee in investing in fossil fuels as the world moved towards renewable energy.
- Investing in renewable energy, affordable homes and local infrastructure would offer a more prosperous, safe and reliable future.
- She expressed that only 2.5% of the Pension Fund was invested in fossil fuels, but what about investing in things that would bring direct benefits to communities, such as affordable housing, regenerative agriculture and funds for Social Enterprises.
- If Gwynedd showed leadership in this arena, it would provide a clear example of good practice in relation to the application of the Well-being of Future Generations Act to secure the best outcomes.

Support was expressed to the amendment.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

1. **Recognising that the Pensions Committee has and intends to address these issues as part of a review of the Responsible Investment Policy that Cyngor Gwynedd requests the Committee and the Wales Pension Partnership, to consider the extent it can move as soon as possible to disinvest in fossil fuels as part of the desire to be net zero carbon, in a transparent and accountable manner and in line with its legal duties to the fund.**
2. **That Cyngor Gwynedd calls on the UK Government to establish an annual conference on ethical and sustainable investment with a view to promoting the best use of the funds available.**

The meeting commenced at 1.30pm and concluded at 5.30pm.

CHAIR

Agenda Item 7

MEETING:	Full Council
DATE:	4 December 2025
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Huw Wyn Jones Cabinet Member for Finance
TITLE:	COUNCIL TAX: DISCRETIONARY POWERS TO ALLOW DISCOUNTS AND/OR RAISE A PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY DWELLINGS
CONTACT OFFICER:	Dewi Morgan, Head of Finance

DECISION SOUGHT:

For the 2026/27 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 RAISES A PREMIUM OF 150% on homes that have been empty for 12 months or more, under Section 12A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992) (i.e. increase the premium from 100% to 150%).**

1. THE REASON WHY COUNCIL NEEDS TO MAKE THE DECISION:

- 1.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council must make an annual decision if it wishes to levy a Council Tax Premium on long-term vacant properties and second homes ("periodically occupied dwellings"). Without a decision, a 50% discount on Council Tax on such properties would have to be offered.
- 1.2 For the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years, the Council has charged a Council Tax Premium of 150% on second homes and 100% on long-term empty properties, but legislation allows the Council to charge a Premium of up to 300%.
- 1.3 However, if the Council were to increase the Premium rate, it will have to consider whether such a decision would be reasonable having regard to the statutory guidance, the outcome of research and legal advice that the authority has obtained.
- 1.4 A copy of the latest Statutory Guidance can be found at Appendix 2.

2. INTRODUCTION AND LOGIC

Background/ Introduction

- 2.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 allows the Council discretion to levy full Council Tax, allow a discount of up to 50%, or charge an additional Premium on Council Tax on certain classes of second homes and long-term empty properties.
- 2.2 The Council has adopted annually, since 1998, to allow NO discount for second homes.
- 2.3 The Council has adopted annually, since 2009, to allow NO discount for properties that have been vacant for 6 months or more.
- 2.4 Section 139 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 added Sections 12A and 12B to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to include a discretionary right for Councils to raise an additional "Premium" of no more than 100% on dwellings that have been empty for 12 months or more (Section 12A) and relevant second homes (Section 12B).
- 2.5 On 8 December 2016, the Council resolved to charge a 50% Premium on Council Tax on second homes and long-term empty properties, with effect from 1 April 2018. On 4 March 2021, the Council resolved to increase the Premium to 100%, which was the highest possible level under the legislation, for the 2021/22 financial year, and on 2 December 2021 decided to maintain the level of the Premium at 100% for 2022/23.

- 2.6 *The Council Tax (Long-term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022 (SI 2022/370 W.90)* have amended Sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act giving billing authorities the power to raise a Premium of up to 300% on the Council Tax of second homes and long-term empty dwellings for the 2023/24 and subsequent financial years.
- 2.7 In response to this legislative change, on 1 December 2022 the Council decided to increase the Premium on second homes to 150% and keep the Premium on long-term empty properties at 100% for the 2023/24 financial year. This followed a comprehensive public consultation being carried out during autumn 2022. On 7 December 2023 the Council decided to keep the Premium at the same level in 2024/25 and on the 5 December 2024 the Council decided to keep the Premium at the same level in 2025/26.
- 2.8 The Council's report on 1 December 2022, when the current level of the Premium was first set, is included in Appendix 1. This report explains all the rationale for setting those levels.**
- 2.9 In 2022 it was concluded:
- "12.6. The Cabinet has made its recommendation concluding that a similar justification cannot be established to increase the premium above the rate of 150%. Many of these further steps such as changes to the planning regime or business tax have not yet become operational and therefore we have not had the opportunity to assess the impact of these policies in the face of a very significant change in the Premium, or the practical implications."*
- 2.10 This followed an extensive consultation process considering the range of open increases of up to 300%. By now, several changes have come into effect and started to have an impact on the market. The business rates system has changed since 1 April 2023 increasing the requirements to allow the transfer of holiday properties to business tax to let for 182 days and an availability of 282 days.
- 2.11 In order to be able to defend a decision to raise a Premium at a higher rate than it currently is, a basis and rationale is needed for review.
- 2.12 The decision sought in this report would build on and be a development of the 2022 decision using the findings from the consultation to provide information and understanding of the impacts.

2.13 According to the statutory guidance:

Any decision to vary or revoke a determination to apply a premium must be made before the beginning of the financial year to which it applies.

Local authorities are also strongly encouraged to consult before making a determination to increase a premium to a level above 100% and to do so at least 6 months before the beginning of the financial year to which the proposed premium increase relates.

This will enable the premium to be taken into account when setting council tax levels for the forthcoming year and allow taxpayers sufficient time to consider the impact of a higher premium on their own personal financial circumstances and make choices regarding their property

- 2.14 Whilst the new Guidance therefore gives the impression that Councils should carry out consultation before deciding to raise a premium and in particular before deciding to raise a premium above 100%, there is no requirement to do this every time a Council decides to raise the premium higher. The proposed resolution proposes to keep the premium rate on second homes as it is and raise the premium rate on empty properties.
- 2.15 As Cabinet considered amending the rates, particular attention was paid to the results of the consultation in 2022. The consultation was broad, received a significant response and was based on seeking views on an increase of up to 300% (the 2022 decision report is attached). But, appropriately and reflecting on the December 2022 decision, the findings of the research together with the wider information and assessments should be considered when considering the context and justification for a decision. The recommendation regarding long term empty properties is based on statistics and information which highlights the impact of the premium on the property of this particular type. It is noted that the level of long-term empty properties has remained effectively unchanged since the decision in 2022. The assumption taken at the time as a result of the consultation was to set a particular level to achieve the intention of the premium. The current statistics leads to the conclusion that the level needs to be revised. In consequence there is basis to continue to rely on the consultation and outcome when considering the latest information to review the long-term empty property premium level.

- 2.16 It is considered that this decision-making pathway is appropriate. The Research Work presented in the remainder of this report and in Appendix 3 can support this position and the basis for proceeding in this way. There is always a risk of challenge to decisions of this nature and complexity but it is believed that the report addresses this.

3. RESEARCH WORK

- 3.1 Specific research was commissioned in 2024 by the full Council in order to analyse the impact that the Premium was having on the communities of Gwynedd.
- 3.2 The result of that research was published in November 2024, and they were used to make a premium rate decision for 2025/26.
- 3.3 That research shows that, (although it must be remembered that other factors may also be influencing the situation) the premium has made a contribution to bringing second homes back into use as primary residences.
- 3.4 The change in holiday accommodation regulations also appears to have influenced and continues to influence – resulting in a flow of properties from holiday accommodation to second homes, somewhat offsetting the impact of the trend (above) for second homes to switch to primary residences.
- 3.5 As for the impact of the premium on long-term vacant properties, it is difficult to find any definite pattern. A higher number had transferred after a premium increase in 2021, but subsequently the numbers have been very variable. It states that "there is no obvious long-lasting effect", over a period where the rate has remained at 100% since 2021.
- 3.6 Since that in-depth research, we have updated the data and analysed any further patterns or changes since November 2024. The result of the update to the Research is in Appendices 3(a) and 3(b).
- 3.7 As in the previous Research Work, no definite pattern is to be seen. The numbers of long-term vacant properties remain unchanged.

Other considerations

- 3.8 The research shows that the number of second homes has increased since 2024/25 after several years of decline, with the change more pronounced than it was in the November 2024 research. This change is the result of a legislative change whereby a property must now be let for 182 days a year to qualify for inclusion on the non-domestic rates list (see paragraph 3.10 above).

- 3.9 As a result of this change the Valuation Office Agency has transferred a number of properties within Gwynedd from the non-domestic rates regime to a Council Tax band and as there is no resident in the property these dwellings are also subject to a Premium.
- 3.10 Nevertheless, we understand that a large number of appeals have been lodged with the Valuation Office against the decision to transfer properties from one regime to another which means that the situation in terms of the number of second homes remains volatile at present. That is to say, although the trend of reduction in the number of second homes has ceased, that is as a result of a legislative change and this is not seen as a justification for changing the Premium rate on second homes (Section 12B of the 1992 Act) for 2026/27.
- 3.11 The Welsh Government is currently consulting on refining the classification of self-catering properties for local tax purposes, which may lead to changes to the "182 day" rules and this may change the situation in the coming year. This uncertainty is also an issue to consider and suggests that it would be premature to switch the premium rate to second homes at this time.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Statistics and research over several years suggest that the Premium on second homes is realising its intention, and that the recent increase in numbers is the result of other legislative factors as highlighted above. Taking into account all the issues highlighted above, it is not seen that there is justification for increasing the Premium on second homes for 2026/27.
- 4.2 On the other hand, the research has shown that keeping the Premium rate for long-term empty properties at a lower level than the Premium on second homes has not had an impact on reducing the number of empty properties. The Council has a Empty Homes Scheme in place which aims to bring long-term empty properties back into use, but nevertheless the number of dwellings that have been vacant for a number of years remains a concern and as the research work notes (Part 4 above) a 100% Premium level is not to be seen to have had an impact on this.
- 4.3 It is appropriate, therefore, that the level of the Premium on long-term empty properties be reviewed.

4.4 The Statutory Guidance states:

There are a range of factors which could help inform local authorities in deciding whether to charge a premium. Whilst some factors will be specific to either longterm empty properties or second homes, others will be common to both. A list of these factors is set out below to assist local authorities. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

- Numbers and percentages of long-term empty properties and/or second homes in the local area.
- Distribution of long-term empty properties and/or second homes and other housing throughout the authority and an assessment of their impact on property values in particular areas.
- Potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry.
- Patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes.
- Potential impact on local public services.
- Potential impact on the local Community
- Potential impact on the Welsh language.
- Other measures that are available to authorities to increase housing supply and the availability of affordable housing.
- Other measures that are available to authorities to help bring empty properties back into use

4.5 Any increase in the rate of the Premium may be subject to a legal challenge and in that respect, consideration must be given to what has changed in the last year since the Council resolved in December 2024 that the Premium is 100% appropriate level for the Premium on long-term empty properties.

4.6 As of June 2025 there were 1,121 long-term vacant properties in the county as follows:

vacant for between 1 and 3 years	vacant for between 3 and 5 years	has been vacant for more than 5 years.
574	231	316

- 4.7 It can be seen that over 500 dwellings have been vacant in Gwynedd for over 3 years, in the context of a situation where a housing crisis has been identified. The Empty Homes Team within the Housing and Property Department is addressing the situation in the face of limited resources, and this was the subject of a report to the Care Scrutiny Committee on 25 September 2025: [Report](#) . The Committee was keen to be assured that suitable plans were in place to bring empty properties back into use. Further to that, a group of officers from a range of departments are considering action to be taken with problematic vacant properties. Against this backdrop, therefore, the latest research and scrutiny highlights that it is increasingly difficult to justify different ratings for a long-term empty property premium compared to second homes.
- 4.8 Should there be a desire to increase the level of the Premium on long-term empty properties beyond 150%, a new public consultation would need to be carried out.

5. USE OF THE PREMIUM

- 5.1 Since the introduction of the Premium at the start of the 2018/19 financial year, money raised through the Premium has contributed to funding the Housing Action Plan. Since the 2023/24 financial year £3m has been used in the revenue budget towards funding services for homeless people.
- 5.2 The Housing Action Plan aims to build, purchase or refurbish over 2,000 units that will help over 15,000 people in Gwynedd over the life of the Scheme.
- 5.3 Following changes to the housing situation, the needs of the people of Gwynedd and financial sources in recent years, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit, we recently took the opportunity to review the Plan and extend it to 2028/29, taking advantage of new opportunities to expand and help even more residents of the county with their housing situation.
- 5.4 The Housing Action Plan will invest over £190m over the period of the Scheme, drawing on a number of financial sources, such as the Welsh Government's Housing Support Grant and Social Housing Grant, the Council's Asset Management Plan and of course the Council Tax Premium on Second Homes and Empty Houses.

- 5.5 The funding received from the Council Tax Premium fund (approximately 26% of the total value of the Scheme) is fully earmarked against several projects in the Housing Action Plan, such as supported accommodation schemes, building our own houses, contributing to residential elements in community schemes, bringing the county's empty houses back into use, and ensuring disabled people can continue to live in their current homes.
- 5.6 Being able to include the Premium as a financial source has enabled the Department to attract several additional grants. We prioritised spending those grants first because they had a time limit, which in turn has allowed us to prioritise premium spending and ensure that that benefits the people of Gwynedd the most.
- 5.7 Of all the Scheme's financial expenditure/commitments to date, around £15.5m has come from the Premium fund (up to the end of the 24/25 financial year).
- 5.8 This funding has been spent on several schemes in several areas, which has led to helping 11,385 of Gwynedd people. Some of the highlights over the past year includes:
- **Supported Housing Schemes (Scheme 1a):** Work is ongoing on preparing and adapting the former Crown Buildings, Penrallt, Caernarfon, to be transformed into supported accommodation for those in housing need. Recently the purchase of Tŷ Glyn, Bangor was completed in order to address the housing need in Bangor.
 - **Buy to Let Scheme (Scheme 2c):** 51 homes were purchased under the banner of the Buy to Let Scheme to date, and 20 of those have been let to locals in housing need, with another 6 expected to be let in the next few weeks, and renovation work is expected to complete on another 13 before the end of December. Through this Scheme, the Council offers a suitable home for our residents, residents like Ffion and Rhodri who moved into their new home in Porthmadog recently – more on their story here: [Cyngor Gwynedd's Buy to Let Scheme offers a key to the future for a young couple](#)
 - **Tŷ Gwynedd (Scheme 3a):** Work on the Llanberis and Coed Mawr sites are making good progress. The construction work at Llanberis is expected to complete in the next few months, and the process of marketing the homes for prospective residents has begun. We expect the handover to be completed in November, soon after which they will be sold. Good progress is being made on the Coed Mawr site too, with structural work almost complete.
 - **Engaging and communicating with communities (Scheme 3c):** During April, May and June this year, the second set of events in the Tai ar Daith

series were held. Tai ar Daith takes officers in the housing and connected fields out to the community to speak to the residents of Gwynedd. This time, visits were held at Bethesda (where 43 members of the public and Members came to see us), Porthmadog (40), Tywyn (38) and Nefyn (37). We intend to hold a third series in 2026, and discussions on locations and arrangements are already underway.

- **Gwynedd Empty Homes Grant (Scheme 3dd):** in August this year, the Council announced a change to the Empty Homes Grant criteria, which now means even more people can be eligible. The income threshold was raised to £60,000, and a maximum grant of £25,000 is now available. The eligibility criteria for the property has also changed, where Council tax bands are now used. More information can be found here: [More Gwynedd residents now eligible for empty home renovation grant](#). To date, a total of 331 empty homes have been restored as a result of the Council's Support, with 136 of those being brought back into use as a result of the Gwynedd Empty Homes Grant.
- **Council Tax Exemption on Empty homes (Cynllun 3e):** Scheme 3e offers an exemption of up to a year on Council Tax on empty homes for owners who need to complete essential renovation works on their homes. To date 142 households have benefitted from this support, which has therefore contributed to bringing 142 empty homes back into use in Gwynedd.
- **Siop un Stop for housing matters (Scheme 6):** On 15 September, 2025, the One Stop Shop launched, which offers one front door for all Gwynedd housing enquiries. The service's aim is to make access to information and advice on housing matters simpler and easier for the county's residents, and the feedback so far is positive, which 83 people (between 15-30 September) having been helped. In the period leading up to the launch date, drop-in sessions were held for Elected Members, and the new arrangements were promoted on our social media channels and through the media ([click here to read the press release](#)).

- 5.9 If the Full Council decides to increase the level of the Premium on long-term empty properties from 100% to 150% for 2026/27 a formal decision on the use of the additional income will be made when setting the 2026/27 Budget on 5 March 2026, taking into account the requirements of the Statutory Guidance (Appendix 2).

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The Equality Impact Assessment contained in the Appendix 1c reflects recent requirements and developments, changing circumstances, and the results of the comprehensive consultation carried out in 2022.
- 6.2 The outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment completed in 2022 in setting the current level of the Premium is that there is little evidence that increasing the premium on second homes would discriminate against a protected group, with data suggesting that second home owners tend to be older people and identify themselves as English. The policy from a Council Tax Premium perspective is intended to recognise that long-term empty properties and second homes increase some of Gwynedd's social problems, and owners should make a financial contribution to mitigate some of the disadvantages they cause.
- 6.3 The 2022 assessment also concluded that the Premium would have an overall positive impact on the Welsh language and the balance of communities as the premium product funds the Housing Action Plan which supports local families to buy an affordable home. However, it is noted that this is the result of a number of positive and negative factors affecting the Language, which are covered in a number of places in this report and the appendices.
- 6.4 The assessment has been updated in October 2025, and comes to the same conclusions set out in the previous one.

7. THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 7.1 There is a duty to act in accordance with the principle of sustainable development, which is to seek to ensure that the needs of the present are met without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In acting in accordance with this general duty the Council needs to take into account the importance of long-term impact, being integrated, inclusive, collaborative and preventive in the development and implementation of the proposal before it.
- 7.2 In accordance with the requirements of the Act, Cyngor Gwynedd has adopted well-being objectives. Particular attention is drawn to the following objectives:
- Communities that thrive and thrive for the long term
 - Healthy and Independent Residents with a Good Quality of Life
- 7.3 The current Premium funds the Council's Housing Action Plan, which is a proactive attempt to strengthen the sustainability of those communities within Gwynedd that have a high number of second homes and long-term empty homes.
- 7.4 The Council's Housing Strategy sets out the vision of "Ensuring that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable and high-quality, affordable home that improves their quality of life".
- 7.5 The Strategy identifies five objectives that had to be met if the Council was to achieve this vision:
1. Nobody is homeless in Gwynedd
 2. Social housing available to everyone who needs one
 3. Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable for them
 4. Tai Gwynedd is environmentally friendly
 5. Homes have a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd.
- 7.6 The Housing Action Plan includes a number of projects which, taken together, deliver on these objectives.

8. THE CABINET'S RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1. Having considered the above options in the context of the information in this report, appendices and studies referred to, the Council needs to reach a decision on the Premium level to be set for 2026/27. The Council's Cabinet, at its meeting on 11 November, resolved:

Recommend to the full Council on 4 December 2025 that the following is the favoured option of the Cabinet with regards to the level of Premium on the Council Tax of Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Dwellings for the 2026/27 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 RAISES A PREMIUM OF 150% on homes that have been empty for 12 months or more, under Section 12A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992) (i.e. increase the premium from 100% to 150%).**

THE VIEWS OF STATUTORY OFFICERS:

Monitoring Officer:

I have had the opportunity to advise on the report. The procedure for the decision and the steps to make a recommendation are in line with the legal guidance that has been provided.

Head of Finance:

I have collaborated with the Cabinet Member in the preparation of this report, and I confirm the content.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

APPENDIX 1A

MEETING:	Full Council
DATE:	1 December 2022
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Ioan Thomas Cabinet Member for Finance
TITLE:	COUNCIL TAX: DISCRETIONARY POWERS TO ALLOW DISCOUNTS AND/OR RAISE A PREMIUM
OBJECTIVE:	Formal ratification for 2022/23 of previous decisions not to allow any discounts for second homes and to disallow discount on empty properties, and to raise a Premium of 150% or 100% on relevant properties.
CONTACT OFFICER:	Dewi Morgan, Head of Finance

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides the Council with the discretion to charge full Council Tax, allow a discount of up to 50%, or to charge a Premium of up to an additional 100% on the Council Tax of certain classes of second homes and long-term empty properties.
- 1.2. The Council has resolved annually since 1998 to allow NO discounts to second homes.
- 1.3. The Council has resolved annually since 2009 to allow NO discounts in respect of properties that have been empty for 6 months or more.
- 1.4. Section 139 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 added Sections 12A and 12B to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to include a discretionary right for Councils to raise an additional “Premium” of no more than 100% on dwellings that have been empty for 12 months or more (Section 12A) and relevant second homes (Section 12B).
- 1.5. On 8 December 2016, the Council resolved to raise a Premium of 50% on the Council Tax of relevant second homes and long-term empty dwellings, to be implemented from 1 April 2018. On 4 March 2021, the Council resolved to increase the Premium 100%, which is the maximum level allowed by legislation, for the 2021/22 financial year.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that for the financial year 2023/24 Gwynedd Council:

- **Allows NO discount on class A second homes, under Section 12 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. no change from 2022/23).**
- **Allows NO discount and RAISES A PREMIUM OF 100% on class B second homes, under Section 12B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. increase from 100% to 150%).**
- **Allows NO discount on homes that have been empty for 6 months or more and RAISES A PREMIUM OF 100% on homes that have been empty for 12 months or more, under Section 12A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. no change from 2022/23).**

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides the Council with the discretion to charge full Council Tax, allow a discount of up to 50%, or to charge a Premium of up to an additional 100% on the Council Tax of certain classes of second homes and long-term empty properties.
- 2.2. The Council has resolved annually since 1998 to allow NO discounts to second homes.
- 2.3. The Council has resolved annually since 2009 to allow NO discounts in respect of properties that have been empty for 6 months or more.
- 2.4. Section 139 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 added Sections 12A and 12B to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to include a discretionary right for Councils to raise an additional “Premium” of no more than 100% on dwellings that have been empty for 12 months or more (Section 12A) and relevant second homes (Section 12B).
- 2.5. On 8 December 2016, the Council resolved to raise a Premium of 50% on the Council Tax of relevant second homes and long-term empty dwellings, to be implemented from 1 April 2018. On 4 March 2021, the Council resolved to increase the Premium 100%, which is the maximum level allowed by legislation, for the 2021/22 financial year, and on 2 December 2021 it resolved to maintain the Premium level at 100% for 2022/23.
- 2.6. The *Council Tax (Long-term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022 (SI 2022/370 W.90)* have amended Sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act giving billing authorities the power to raise a Premium of up to 300% on the Council Tax of second homes and long-term empty dwellings for the 2023/24 and subsequent financial years.

- 2.7. To enable it to make a recommendation at its meeting on 22 November 2022, Cabinet resolved on 27 September 2022 that it would hold a public consultation in order to obtain public opinion on how the change in the Act should be responded to. The consultation period has concluded, and the purpose of this report is to present the results of the consultation, as well as other relevant considerations, so that Cabinet can weigh up the feedback that has been received before deciding on a recommendation to be presented to the full Council.
- 2.8. The results of the public consultation are included in Part 4 of this report.

3. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Context

- 3.1. The terminology used in Section 12B is not “second homes” or “holiday homes” but rather “dwellings occupied periodically”. The Act states that the conditions for a property to be subject to a “second home” Council Tax premium is, **“there is no resident of the dwelling, and the dwelling is substantially furnished”**. That is, the property is not anyone’s main home, but it has been furnished. The Act does not include any provision to be able to distinguish on the basis of where the owner lives, or if it is used for the purposes of holidays.
- 3.2. For the purposes of collecting Council Tax, *The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (Wales) Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/105)* have categorised 'second homes' into two classes, namely classes A and B. Class C refers to empty properties:
- **Class A** – Second homes which are unoccupied and furnished, with a restriction on occupancy for a period of at least 28 consecutive days in any 12-month period.
 - **Class B** – Second homes which are unoccupied and furnished.
 - **Class C** – empty and unfurnished properties, and have been such for a period of over 6 months.
- 3.3. A “resident” in relation to any dwelling means an individual who has attained the age of 18 years and has his sole or main residence in the dwelling (Section 6(5)) Local Government Finance Act 1992).
- 3.4. As a result of the changes that came into force as a result of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the matter was considered by the Full Council on 8 December 2016, which resolved to raise a Premium of 50% on class B second homes and on class C long-term empty properties (empty for 12 months or more) in 2018/19.
- 3.5. All background papers in relation to the first determination to raise a Premium are to be found on the Gwynedd Council website:

<https://democracy.cyngor.gwynedd.gov.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?cid=130&mid=1656&ver=4>

3.6. On 4 March 2021 the Council decided that it would increase the level of premium to 100% on relevant properties. All background papers in relation to this decision can be found on Gwynedd Council's website:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/ielistdocuments.aspx?cid=130&mid=4215&ver=4>

3.7. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 states that any determination with regards to Section 12, 12A and 12B must be made annually, by the full Council.

3.8. The financial strategy for 2022/23, and the Council's grant settlement from the Welsh Government, is based on continuation of the policy to allow NO discounts, and any change to that policy would need to be funded by the Council in 2022/23.

3.9. The regulations for setting the tax base have been written so that a decision to raise a Premium does not affect the Council's grant settlement from the Welsh Government.

3.10. On 9 November 2022 there were:

- **4,564** dwellings subject to the Premium on second homes (Class B)
- **229** of further second homes in Class B but not paying the Premium as they were subject to one of the exemptions outlined in Part 8 below.
- **753** properties within Class A where occupation is prohibited for a consecutive period of at least 28 days in the relevant year.

3.11. At the same time, **1,099** properties were subject to the Premium on a long-term empty dwelling.

3.12. Changes over time can be seen in the table below:

	July 2016	November 2020	November 2022
Class B Second Homes	4,841	4,718	4,564
Annedd gwag hirdymor	1,115	1,130	1,099

* exemption not applicable

Statutory Requirements

- 3.13. When giving councils powers to raise a Premium (originally up to 100% and then up to 300%) on the Council Tax of second homes and long-term empty dwellings, the Welsh Government published statutory guidance, *Guidance on the Implementation of the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes in Wales*. A copy of the Statutory Guidance is found in Appendix 1.
- 3.14. Paragraphs 20 to 22 of the Guidance outline what a local authority needs to consider when planning to introduce a Premium. These were considered in detail in 2016 when Gwynedd Council decided to introduce a 50% Premium on second homes and long-term empty dwellings, and then every year when coming to a decision on the Premium for the following year. If Cabinet decides to recommend an increase in the level of premium it will need to consider the following again, and how the evidence collected achieves the following.

20. The discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help local authorities to:

- bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and
- support local authorities in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.

21. In considering whether or not to charge a premium, regard should be given to these aims. Authorities should take into account the particular housing need and circumstances in their area.

22. There are a range of factors which could help inform local authorities in deciding whether to charge a premium. Whilst some factors will be specific to either long-term empty homes or second homes, others will be common to both. A list of these factors is set out below to assist local authorities. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

- Numbers and percentages of long-term empty homes or second homes in the area;
- Distribution of long-term empty homes or second homes and other housing throughout the authority and an assessment of their impact on property values in particular areas;
- Potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry;
- Patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes
- Potential impact on local public services;
- Potential impact on the local community;

- **Other measures that are available to authorities to increase housing supply;**
- **Other measures that are available to authorities to help bring empty properties back into use.**

3.15. When introducing of the 50% Premium, particular attention was paid to two studies. Firstly, a detailed analysis undertaken in 2013 supported the introduction of a premium, whilst also noting a need for action to control / block the transfer of second homes to being commercial holiday lets subject to non-domestic rates. The document included a detailed analysis supporting the Council's position that it should be given the right to raise a Premium on second homes. The outcome of this analysis was shared with members at the time, and was a key consideration in making the decision to raise a Premium on second homes.

3.16. Similarly, the Housing Strategy 2013-17 addressed empty properties within Gwynedd, and the Empty Homes Strategy's mission statement was: "Gwynedd Council will endeavour to bring empty properties back into use. Our aim is to contribute to the well-being of neighbourhoods, increase the supply of housing, reduce homelessness or the possibility of homelessness, while at the same time reducing the pressure on the Housing Waiting List".

3.17. The Council has now adopted a new Housing Strategy (full Council, 18 July 2019), and three key reports have been addressed by Cabinet in December 2020 and June 2021:

15 December 2020

Holiday Homes Research Work

Housing Action Plan

15 June 2021

Second Homes – Developing New Policies in Wales

3.18. The above is key evidence when considering if there is justification for changing the current level of the Premium.

Second Homes

Holiday Homes Research Work

- 3.19. The outcome of the Holiday Homes Research Work provides a background of the current situation in Gwynedd in terms of "holiday homes", and the combined effect of second homes and self-catering holiday units on Gwynedd society:

Cabinet Report:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s27960/Item%208%20-%20Report%20Holiday%20Homes.pdf>

Appendix – Research:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s27959/Item%208%20-%20Appendix%20-%20Holiday%20Homes%20Research%20Work.pdf>

- 3.20. This research was approved by Cabinet for submission to the Welsh Government. The decision was made "in light of the need to obtain better control of houses being taken out of the supply available for local people, and thus benefit local residents first".
- 3.21. The research considered "holiday homes" as a combination of second homes and self-catering holiday units. The study highlighted the high number of dwellings used within Gwynedd for holiday purposes, with over 4,800 re-homes and around 2,000 self-catering holiday units (November 2020):

	Gwynedd	Cymru
Number of residential units	61,645	988,418
Number of second homes	4,873	18,547
Total holiday accommodation (nondomestic business units)	1,976	6,906
Combined total	6,849	25453
Combined percentage of holiday homes	10.76%	2.56%

Source: Holiday Homes Research Work, December 2020

- 3.22. The conclusion of this report was that research work recognised there are some regions in the UK and countries/cities on the continent that have implemented, or are in the process of implementing, measures in order to attempt to control short-term holiday accommodation. The control methods vary and often depend on contextual factors in terms of the impact of holiday accommodation on the local area and beyond. The research shows without any doubt that high rates of holiday accommodation have a detrimental impact on communities economically, socially and culturally.
- 3.23. Over 1 in 10 residential units in Gwynedd are holiday accommodation with 8% being second homes. Self-catering holiday units are not subject to the Council Tax regime as they have transferred to the non-domestic rating list, and more attention is given to these properties in Part 8 of this report.
- 3.24. As the Holiday Homes Research notes, since the introduction of a council tax premium on second homes in 2018 and the introduction of the rates relief scheme for eligible self-catering holiday accommodation units paying the non-domestic rates, the number of second homes has gradually decreased with the number of properties paying non-domestic rates gradually increasing.
- 3.25. However, legislative changes that will take effect in April 2023 are expected to likely slow this transition. More details on this can be found in Part 6 below.

Second Homes: Developing new policies in Wales

- 3.26. In March 2021 a comprehensive report titled "Second Homes – Developing New Policies in Wales" (author Dr Simon Brooks) was published in response to a commission by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and the Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and the Welsh Language in the Welsh Government. A copy of the report can be found here:

[Second Homes: Developing new policies in Wales](#)

- 3.27. The report is comprehensive, but one of the points raised within it is that *“much current discourse surrounding second homes and their impact on the sustainability of Welsh communities and the Welsh language is anecdotal and not based on detailed research. It is 19 years since the publication of the last comprehensive study of the field. As a result, many assumptions and claims made in public debate in Wales today about second homes require further consideration.”* The report goes on to list four common assumptions:
- Assumption 1: Second homes are responsible for the increase in house prices in specific communities
 - Assumption 2: If there were fewer second homes, local people would move to these communities to live
 - Assumption 3: Reducing house prices is desirable
 - Assumption 4: Second homes harm the Welsh language
- 3.28. The report goes on to consider these four assumptions in turn, and comes to the following conclusion.
- 3.29. *“The complete elimination of second homes would not be the best solution for communities where they form a significant part of the housing stock. For the reasons noted, it is probable that suddenly reverting second homes to use as principal residences would lead to a significant increase in permanent population movement to rural Wales which could have a harmful effect on the Welsh language.*
- 3.30. *“In Welsh-speaking coastal communities in an area such as Dwyfor where 20% and more of the housing stock are second homes, converting second homes into principal residences in an uncontrolled manner could be catastrophic.*
- 3.31. *“However increasing the percentage of second homes in these communities would also be detrimental as it would reduce the absolute numbers of Welsh speakers locally. The cruelty of the situation facing the Welsh-speaking community is that converting more dwelling houses into second homes is detrimental to the Welsh language, but a large or sudden reduction in the number of second homes would also be detrimental. Both things are true as they are associated with the same phenomenon, which is the inability of local people to compete in the housing market against buyers from outside the community.*
- 3.32. *“There is an argument therefore for drafting public policy which aims to ensure stability in the number of second homes in affected communities, or which aims to reduce the number of second homes gradually over a number of years”.*

- 3.33. Dr Brooks' report contains 12 recommendations and on 15 June 2021 Cabinet discussed the Council's response to the report:

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Response to the report "Second Homes: Developing new policies in Wales"](#)

- 3.34. The Cabinet's decision was as follows:

"To agree the Council's response to the report "Second Homes - Developing New Policies in Wales" as set out in part 9 of this report and in particular highlighting the need to modify recommendation number 7 - Short-term Holiday Accommodation and Business Rates.

The Leader agreed to formally communicate the response to the Welsh Government and call on them to adopt and implement the most effective recommendations as a matter of urgency in order to respond to the housing crisis facing the communities of Gwynedd".

Empty Dwellings

- 3.35. Since the Premium was first introduced in 2018 Gwynedd Council has raised the same meeting on second homes and long-term empty properties. One of the reasons for this was the practicality of keeping an overview of the properties that are furnished and those that are not (which is the practical difference between the two types of properties).
- 3.36. However, some billing authorities in Wales charge a different rate of Premium on long-term empty properties and second homes, and this is also an option in Gwynedd.
- 3.37. It should also be noted that a total of 1,099 long-term empty properties, while relatively low compared to the number of second homes within Gwynedd, is a high figure when considering the demand for affordable homes within the county and this is recognised in the Housing Strategy. According to Stats Wales, estimates suggest that Gwynedd is 5th out of the 22 local authorities in Wales in terms of a number of long-term empty properties.
- 3.38. In comparison with the second homes and properties that have transferred, it is seen that the long-term empty properties within Gwynedd tend to be in lower Council Tax bands than Gwynedd properties as a whole; it is particularly seen that over 20% of them are in Band A, compared to less than 15% of the overall stock.

- 3.39. The Council adopted its Housing Strategy 2019-2024, "Homes for People in Gwynedd" in July 2019:

<https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Council/Documents---Council/Strategies-and-policies/Housing/Strategaeth-Tai-v29-Terf-English.pdf>

- 3.40. The Strategy notes the vision of “Ensure that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable Home of a high standard that is affordable and improves their quality of life.”. The Strategy notes the following on empty homes: *“We have identified approximately 1,300 empty houses across the County. These are houses that have been empty for some time and their condition can be very poor. This is a waste of a Resource when you consider that nearly 2,000 people are on the Council's waiting list. We believe that the list of empty houses is not complete, and efforts need to be increased to find them and return them into use as homes for our residents”.*

4. HOUSING ACTION PLAN

- 4.1. The Housing Action Plan translates the Strategy into specific projects to address the situation.
- 4.2. In 2019 the Council established the new Housing and Property Department as it had identified the need to achieve more in the field of housing. Gwynedd residents were facing a number of challenges at the time, which means that it was extremely challenging to gain access to suitable housing within our communities. The Council has clearly stated that this is not a sustainable situation, and that we need to respond in every way possible.

Cabinet Report:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s27956/Item%206%20-%20Housing%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

A link to the Housing Action Plan is here:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s27957/Item%206%20-%20Appendix%20A%20-%20Housing%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

- 4.3. When adopting the Plan, the Council knew that a number of measures would be needed, many of which were beyond the direct control of the Council, if we are to be able to achieve genuine fairness for local residents in the field of housing. This Housing Action Plan is one of these measures and allows us to aim to directly act to the best of our abilities in order to attempt to reconcile the current situation.

4.4. In order to ensure that the Council takes every opportunity within its direct control in the field of housing, the Housing Action Plan includes 33 various projects tailored in an attempt to respond to each of our objectives in this field, which are:

- No one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Social housing available to all who need one
- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd Housing are environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd.

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

5.1. It was explained to the Cabinet in September 2022 that the statutory guidance, *Guidance on the Implementation of the Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Homes and Second Homes in Wales*, also notes:

23. The determination by a local authority to charge a premium under section 12A or 12B of the 1992 Act must be made by full Council. Prior to doing so, a local authority must give due consideration to its statutory duties to carry out equality impact assessments under the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Public Sector Equality Duties 2011 and to all other relevant considerations. A local authority should also give consideration to engagement and consultation with key stakeholders, including the local electorate, before taking a decision as to whether or not to charge one or both of the premiums.

5.2. The *LimeSurvey* software usually used by the Council was used to produce a questionnaire. The public consultation was launched on 30 September 2022 and it was open until 28 October 2022. Press releases resulted in a number of press and media articles and items. Messages started to be published on social media at the same time to promote the consultation. A second press release was issued in October in good time before the deadline, and there have been several reminders on the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Social Media and Mailing

5.3. To ensure that awareness of the consultation was as wide as possible, on 29 September a letter was sent to owners of all second home and long-term empty properties informing them of the consultation; where there was a correspondence address on the Council Tax system that differed from the address of the property in question, the correspondence address was used.

- 5.4. We are therefore confident that reasonable efforts have been made to raise awareness amongst the people of Gwynedd and owners of second homes and long-term empty properties to inform them of the consultation so that they can respond, and that this is evidence that a clear effort has been made to engage with key stakeholders.
- 5.5. It is not possible to include a checking facility that would ensure that an individual could only express an opinion once. It is important to note that this exercise is not a public vote or referendum but rather a consultation exercise designed to gather the views of the full-time residents of Gwynedd as well as owners of dwellings occupied periodically and long-term empty dwellings on ongoing issues. That is, a crude account of the solutions for and against increasing the Premium will not be the main factor that will need to be considered, but nevertheless the figures below give Cabinet members a sense of the number and direction of responses.
- 5.6. It is a fundamental principle that any consultation is carried out when the proposals are formulated and that the results of the consultation are taken into account conscientiously in reaching a position. Therefore, in making its recommendation, Cabinet will need to give due consideration to the issues and concerns contained in the consultation responses, so that there is a full picture of the issues that have been drawn to its attention.
- 5.7. The Research and Information Team has made considerable efforts since the consultation closing date on 28 October to analyse the results. The full outcome of their work can be found in Appendix 2.

The Number of Responses

- 5.8. A total of **7,330** responses were received to the questionnaire. There were 7,277 online questionnaire responses and 53 paper responses. This is the largest number of responses the Council has seen to any consultation in recent years.
- 5.9. Of the respondents, 3,518 (48.0%) stated their main home was in Gwynedd, and 2,690 (36.7%) stated their main home was outside Gwynedd.

5.10. Of the respondents:

- 3,646 (49.7%) said that they did not own a second home or a long-term empty dwelling
- 3,447 (47.0%) said they owned a second home
- 201 (2.7%) said they owned a long-term empty dwelling
- 36 (0.5%) said they owned a second home and a long-term empty dwelling

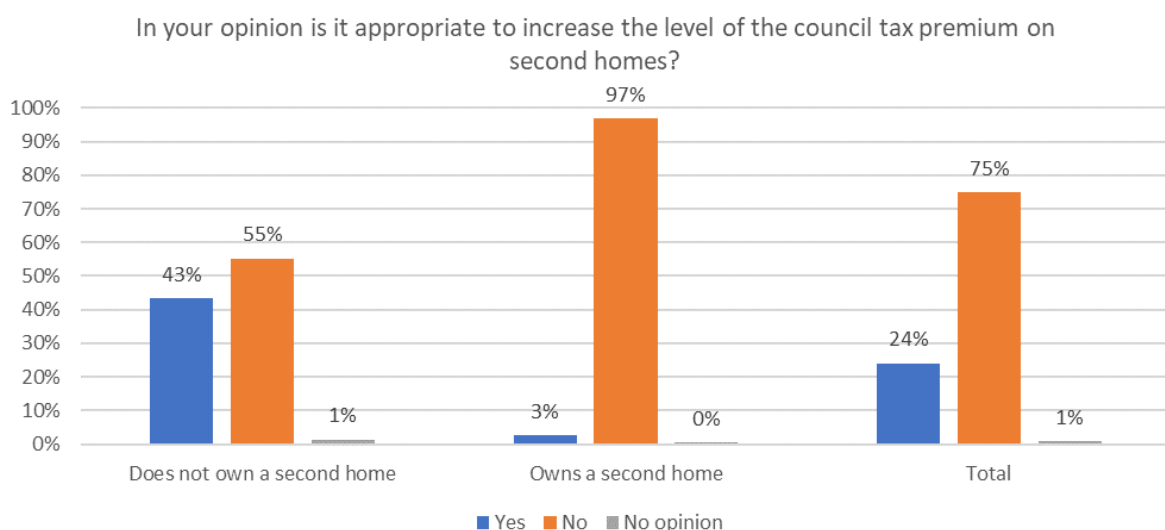
5.11. Just over half of respondents, therefore, (50.3%) owned either a second home or a long-term empty dwelling in Gwynedd (or both).

Analysing the Results – Second Homes

5.12. In total, over half of respondents (58.7%, N=4,304) thought that second homes were currently having a positive impact on local communities, while 27.7% thought they were having a negative impact, with 8.2% thinking they were having no impact. 5.4% of respondents had no opinion on this.

5.13. However, by looking at differences between respondents who own a second home and those who do not, a significant difference in opinion is seen, with 80.5% of respondents who own a second home thinking that second homes currently have a positive effect on local communities, while around 40% of respondents who do not own a second home or long-term vacant property are of this opinion.

5.14. A key question in the consultation was ***Currently the Council Tax Premium on second homes is 100%. The Council is considering whether to increase the level of the Council Tax Premium. Do you think this is appropriate?***



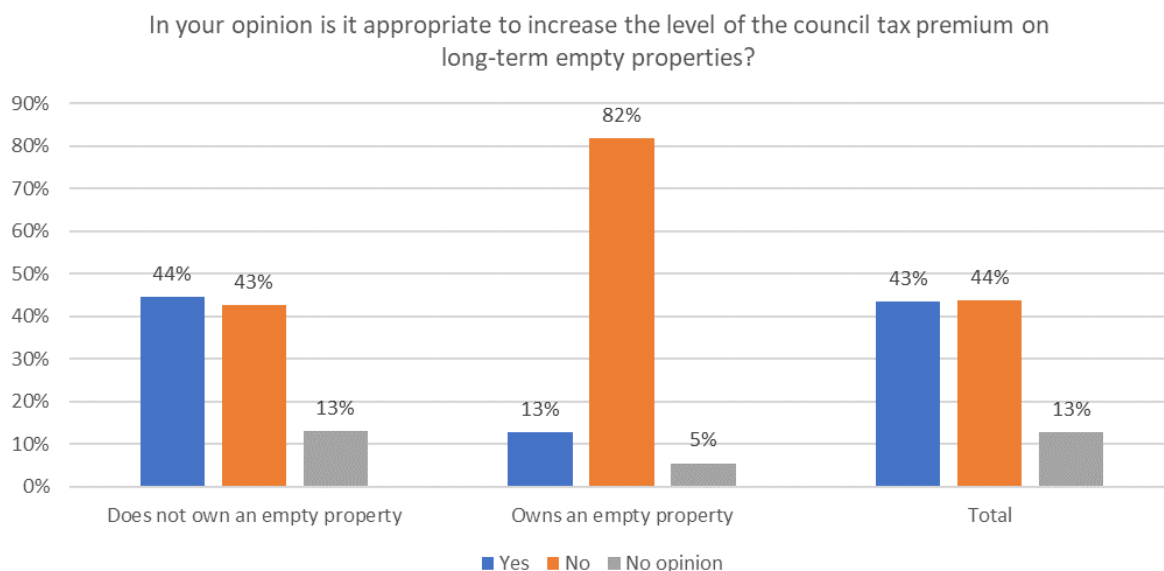
5.15. In total, 75% of respondents considered it not appropriate to increase the level of Council Tax Premium on second homes. 24.1% thought it appropriate to increase it, with 0.9% not having an opinion.

- 5.16. However, by separating the answers between respondents who own a second home and those who do not there is some difference of opinion, with the overwhelming majority of respondents who own a second home opposing increasing the premium level. Among respondents who do not own a second home the view was more divided, but with a majority here also (54.1%) of the view that it would not be appropriate to increase the premium.
- 5.17. Of the 24% who supported increasing the Premium, 66% wanted to increase it to 300%, and to do so immediately.
- 5.18. While emphasising again that the process was not a referendum, but a consultation seeking views and comments to assist the authority in reaching a decision, the responses give a sense of public opinion on the proposal.
- 5.19. In total over half of respondents (59.0%,) felt that the level of premium on second homes would have no impact on the Welsh language. 73.9% of respondents who own a second home believe that increasing the level of premium would have no impact on the Welsh language, with 18.7% believing that increasing the premium would have a negative impact. Among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property, opinion is somewhat more divided with 45.6% believing it would not have an impact on the Welsh language, 36.4% believing it would have a positive impact and 13.8% believing it would have a negative impact.
- 5.20. In total a majority of respondents (62.3%) thought that increasing the council tax premium on second homes would have a negative impact on the local community. 23.0% thought increasing the premium would have a positive impact on the local community and 12.3% thought it would not have an impact.
- 5.21. However, the vast majority (81.4%) of respondents who own a second home believe increasing the premium level would have a negative impact on the local community. 13.7% thought increasing the premium would have no impact.
- 5.22. Among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property, opinion is very divided with 44.8% believing increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local community, 42.4% believing it would have a positive impact and 10.6% believing there would be no impact.

- 5.23. One of the very common arguments in the comments by second home owners was the economic benefit they said they were contributing to Gwynedd, giving work to other local builders and traders, as well as the support given to local shops. In total a majority of respondents (70.9%) thought that increasing the level of the council tax premium on second homes would have a negative impact on the local economy. 16.4% thought increasing the premium would have a positive impact on the local economy and 9.6% thought it would not have an impact.
- 5.24. The vast majority (90.8%) of respondents who own a second home believe increasing the premium level would have a negative impact on the local economy. Among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property, 52.6% believed increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local economy, 30.7% believed it would have a positive impact and 12.9% believed there would be no impact.

Analysing the Results – Long-term empty dwellings

- 5.25. In total 72.9% of respondents thought that long-term vacant properties were currently having a negative impact on local communities, while 16.2% thought they were not having an impact and 1.3% thought they had a positive effect. 9.6% of respondents had no opinion on the matter. Respondents who own a long-term empty property are more likely than other respondents to think it has no impact on local communities
- 5.26. Overall the views of respondents were very divided on whether it would be appropriate to increase the Premium on long-term empty dwellings, with 43.8% thinking that increasing the premium on long-term empty properties would not be appropriate, and 43.4% thinking it would be appropriate. 12.8% of respondents had no opinion on this. The vast majority (84.1%) of respondents who own long-term empty properties oppose increasing the level of premium on these properties, while among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term vacant property, the majority (55.8%) were in favour of increasing the Premium.



- 5.27. Just over half of respondents (55.1%) thought that increasing the level of premium on long-term empty properties would not have any effect on the Welsh language. 21.7% thought there would be a positive effect and 10.2% thought there would be a negative effect.
- 5.28. In terms of the effect on the local community, opinion was quite divided with 40.0% of respondents thinking that increasing the level of premium on long term empty property would have a positive impact on the local community, 26.0% believing there would be no impact and 22.1% thought there would be a negative impact. 11.9% of respondents had no opinion on this.
- 5.29. Overall there was also considerable difference of opinion on the effect that increasing the Premium on long-term empty properties would have on the local economy. 37.5% of all respondents believe that increasing the premium on long-term vacant properties would have a positive impact on the local economy. 26.8% thought there would be no impact, and 23.7% thought there would be a negative impact. 11.9% (N=874) of respondents had no opinion on this.
- 5.30. However, by looking at differences between respondents who own long-term empty properties and those who do not, a significant difference in opinion is seen. 48.3% of respondents who own long-term empty properties believe increasing the premium level would have a negative impact on the local economy.

Other correspondence

- 5.31. In addition to the 7,330 responses to the formal questionnaire, the Council's officers and members have received several letters from members of the public expressing their views on the Council Tax Premium. The table below is a summary of the points raised in the letters and which are appropriate to consider when as part of this process.

Properties in an estate that have been purpose-built as holiday homes and unsuitable as homes	25
"Natives" / locally bred / Welsh people / Welsh people / Inherited / Property that has been in the family for years should be excluded	11
The property would have to be sold	8
Oppose Premium in general	8
The local economy will be negatively impacted	7
Owners targeted due to years of lack of suitable housing	2
Those who have purchased the property prior to the entry of the Premium should be excluded	2
It will not be possible to continue to come to the area (some have come for over 60 years)	2
Requests for exemption due to personal circumstances	1
Houses worth less than £200,000 should be excluded	1
There will be a reduction in tourism	1
The Council steals the pensions of the elderly	1
Oppose consultation questions	1
Had to leave the property to give care	1
Wealthier people would buy the property if they had to sell	1
Companion buried in the area	1
The Council is targeting the wrong people	1
Why target people who have come to the area for years?	1
Fairbourne should be excluded because of the circumstances there	1

5.32. It should be noted that holiday home owners in one development in particular have worked together to correspond to express that properties in an estate originally built and marketed as holiday units should not be charged a Premium; the owners say properties like this are not suitable as homes.

5.33. It will also be seen that individuals have corresponded to identify the Premium targeting Welsh people who have moved to live outside Gwynedd due to work but keep properties within the county as they want to return to visit their area in which they were raised as often as possible. They have indicated that forcing them to sell would mean a decline in Welsh in these villages, not strengthen it.

6. TRANSFER OF SELF-CATERING HOLIDAY UNITS

- 6.1. When the original decision to charge a Premium was made, the risk was identified of an increase in the number of properties transferring to being self-catering holiday units, which are subject to non-domestic rates. This would happen because the Valuation Office Agency had ruled that they met the threshold to be able to do so.
- 6.2. The Council has for several years been pressing the Welsh Government to change Section 66 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to control the transfer of domestic homes to self-catering holiday units subject to non-domestic rates, with the vast majority avoiding any local taxation because they receive small business rates relief. The Council's Plan states that the Council intends to continue to maintain our pressure in this area over the next few years, using evidence we are continually gathering, in order to get Welsh Ministers to understand the scale of the problem that exists in Gwynedd.
- 6.3. The Welsh Government has introduced a legislative change that will have an impact on April 1 on self-catering holiday units. The effect of *The Non-Domestic Rating (Amendment of Definition of Domestic Property) (Wales) Order 2022 (W. 129)* is that Section 66 of the 1988 Act has been modified so that a dwelling will need to have been available for let for 252 days in the last year, that it is intended to be let for 252 days in the next year, and that property has been truly let for 182 days in the last year (compared to 70 days currently).
- 6.4. In reaching a decision on the Premium in previous years, consideration was given to the risk that increasing the Premium would incentivise more second home owners to let their property and transfer it to the non-domestic rate list. While this risk remains, the significant increase in the number of days in which properties must be let is likely to result in a significant slowdown in the rate of transfer.
- 6.5. The latest figures (to the end of October 2022) show that a total of 2,908 properties in Gwynedd have transferred from the Council Tax list to the Non-Domestic Rating list, after the Valuation Office Agency designated the property as self-catering holiday units, in accordance with Section 66(2BB) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Approximately 90% of the transferring properties receive full Small Business Rates Relief, which means that no local taxation is payable on them:

Financial Year	Number of transfers
2022-23 (to 31/10/2022)	246
2021-22	469
2020-21	506

2019-20	397
2018-19	454
2017-18	282
2016-17	199
2015-16	167
2014-15	188
Total	2,908

- 6.6. Experiences over the last three years, e.g. in administering Government Covid-19 business grants, have shown that a number of individuals and companies are now buying properties in Gwynedd specifically with the intention of converting them into self-catering holiday units, rather than using them as a second home. As part of this investment they are striving to keep the property within the Council Tax regime for as little as possible before being able to transfer.

7. EXEMPTIONS

7.1. The 1992 Act also contains a provision giving the Welsh Ministers the right to impose certain exceptions (in classes) where a Council Tax premium cannot be imposed. This was done through the [Council Tax \(Exceptions to Higher Amounts\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2015 \(SI 2015/2068\)](#) which came into force on 31 January 2016. The table below outlines the exemptions where a Premium cannot be raised:

Classes of Dwellings	Definition	Type of property that is eligible for an exemption from paying the premium
Class 1	Dwellings being marketed for sale – time-limited for one year	Long-term Empty Properties and Second Homes
Class 2	Dwellings being marketed for let – time-limited for one year	
Class 3	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling	
Class 4	Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation	
Class 5	Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings	Second Homes
Class 6	Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited	
Class 7	Job-related dwellings	

7.2. Cabinet attention is drawn to two issues in particular when dealing with exceptions. First, the Welsh Government launched a consultation on 11 November 2022 on changes to the 2015 Regulations. The draft regulations recommend amending Class 6 in the above table so that the following properties are exempt from being subject to the Premium where planning restrictions:

- (a) prevent occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in any one-year period;
- (b) specify that the dwelling may be used for short term holiday let only; or
- (c) prevent occupancy as a person's sole or main residence.

- 7.3. Details of the public consultation, which will close on 22 December 2022, are found here: [Draft council tax \(exceptions to higher amounts\) \(Wales\) \(amendment\) Regulations 2023 | GOV.WALES](#)
- 7.4. The second issue that needs to be considered is that Section 13A of the 1992 Act would need to be used to introduce any local, discretionary exemptions. The use of Section 13A is a matter for the Cabinet, it is not a matter that requires the decision of a full Council.
- 7.5. Therefore, exceptions can be dealt with as in a separate Cabinet report before the end of March 2023.

8. USE OF THE PREMIUM

- 8.1. Since the introduction of the Premium at the start of the 2018/19 financial year, the money collected through the Premium has been placed in a dedicated fund, to fund specific projects that have been outlined in the Housing Action Plan.
- 8.2. The Housing Action Plan clearly sets out which individual schemes are to be funded with Premium money.
- 8.3. This is consistent with the aspiration of Council members and the Welsh Government, who set out a watch, but not enforcement, that the money be used in housing.
- 8.4. Many of the projects in the Housing Action Plan are scalable if more resources were available to them. On the other hand, inflation means that construction project costs have increased significantly since the adoption of the Housing Action Plan in 2020.
- 8.5. In recent years, following the Covid-19 pandemic, the end of the Welsh Government's Hardship Grant, the pressure on families as a result of the cost of living crisis and landlords' decision to end tenancies, the pressure on the Council's Homelessness Service has increased dramatically.
- 8.6. Every 50% premium increase would contribute around £3m to the Council Tax Premium Fund.
- 8.7. It was reported to Cabinet on 25 October that spending in dealing with Homelessness is expected to exceed the budget by around £3.2 million this year. This was a net figure, having transferred some budgets for the year. The gross overspend is around £4.7m in 2022/23, and is estimated to be £6m in 2023/24. We believe that temporary factors are responsible for a portion of the overspending, but there is also a long-term budget gap of around £3m.

- 8.8. In considering the level of Premium for 2023/24, members will be asked to consider the possibility of using any additional Premium yield to assist in addressing the significant cost overruns in the homelessness area, or to divert some of the existing product to these purposes. Some of the Premium money could be diverted for this purpose, as it is clearly within the Housing area, but that would be money that would not then be available to fund the Housing Action Plan.
- 8.9. The significant increase in the costs of homelessness is not entirely down to the number of second homes in Gwynedd of course, but they are one contributing factor. If local people are unable to buy houses, they are unable to leave tenancies and that in turn causes pressure on homelessness services when demand for new tenancies rises but housing stock is not available to meet demand.
- 8.10. Second homes do not have to be set at the same Premium rate as long-term empty properties, and although Gwynedd has charged the same rate since the Premium was introduced in 2018, we recognise that the arguments differ between the two, particularly when it comes to properties that are empty and unfit to let without further renovation. There is currently a 100% premium on long-term empty properties, and the purpose of this Premium is to apply pressure to renovate the property when the period of tax relief for renovation has come to an end. There is a risk that raising it higher would likely force a sale and the property then become a second home rather than coming back into the local housing stock.
- 8.11. At the time of its adoption in 2020, the total estimated cost of all schemes in the Housing Action Plan (for the period 2020/21 – 2026/27) was £77.1m, with £22.9m of this funded out of the Council Tax Premium. Since the approval of the Plan, high inflation has increased the approximation of many of these projects.
- 8.12. By November 2022, the Council has spent £15m since the start of the Housing Action Plan, from a variety of sources including the Council Tax Premium and grants.
- Council Tax Premium - £1.5m
 - Grants – £6.8m
 - Asset Management Plan – £6.5m
- 8.13. The Housing Action Plan is a 6 year plan and the Council has been successful in attracting a number of grants that have provided protection for the Premium which will enable us to achieve more in the long run.

8.14. It is therefore noted that spending of the premium has been relatively low do date because the Council has had to prioritise spending these grants which have a deadline to spend. Also note that 2021/22 was the first full financial year of the Housing Action Plan, and research and scoping was taking place at that time, so spending will increase during 2022/23.

8.15. Since the start of the Housing Action Plan:

- At least 350 units have either been purchased, developed, or converted to give people a suitable home
- At least 2700 people have been helped through the schemes.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1. As with all far-reaching decisions, the Council must give due consideration to its statutory duties to carry out equality impact assessments under the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Public Sector Equality Duties 2011 and to all other relevant considerations.

9.2. The initial decision to introduce a Premium was made in December 2016, following consideration of an Equality Impact Assessment that had been carried out in accordance with the statutory requirements on the Council.

9.3. A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment was completed when considering the increase of the Premium in March 2021. Since then, the Public sector duty regarding socio-economic inequalities came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021, which is relevant to Gwynedd Council. The means that the Council, when making “strategic decisions” such as deciding priorities and setting objectives, must consider how its decisions might help to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. It would appear that the Premium rate on second homes and long-term empty dwellings is a “strategic decision” in accordance with these duties.

9.4. As noted in “Legislative Background” above, the powers to raise a premium was introduced by the Housing Act, with the fundamental expectation that those who can afford more than one property should assist local authorities financially to deal with housing problems in their areas, in particular the most vulnerable in society who cannot find a home.

9.5. When resolving in February 2021 to recommend to the full Council that the Premium level should be increased to 100%, members of the Cabinet noted that there was a housing crisis within the county. The principle that the Council was eager for residents to have homes in their own communities was emphasised, in order to ensure thriving communities. It was added that housing was a priority and that it was a requirement to ensure additional resources in order to implement the Housing Strategy.

- 9.6. We believe, therefore, that the core aim of the Premium is to reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.
- 9.7. The Equality Impact Assessment has been updated to reflect recent requirements and developments, changing circumstances and the results of the recent consultation. The revised assessment is included in the Appendix.
- 9.8. The result of the Equality Impact Assessment is that there is some evidence that increasing the premium on second homes would be discriminate against a protected group, with data suggesting that second home owners tend to be older people and identify themselves as English. The policy in relation to Council Tax Premium is intended to recognise that long-term empty properties and second homes increase some of Gwynedd's social problems, and the owners should make a financial contribution to alleviate some of the disadvantages they cause.
- 9.9. There is a claim that the policy of raising the Premium is racist because of where second home owners live, but a number of those who have answered the consultation note that Welsh people own a property in Gwynedd while their main home is outside Wales. The Premium will be charged based on the characteristics of the property, not the characteristics of the owner and there is a positive impact if local families can afford to buy a property in their local area rather than having to move away to get a home. There is recognition that there is a negative financial impact on people living outside Gwynedd, with a large number of them identifying themselves as English. In line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, increasing the level of the Premium is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, which is to fund a Housing Action Plan that addresses some of the damage that second homes and empty dwellings cause to the communities of Gwynedd.
- 9.10. The assessment also concludes that there will be a positive impact on the balance of communities as the premium yield funds the Housing Action Plan which supports local families to buy an affordable home. However, it is noted that this is the result of a number of positive and negative factors which affect the Language, which receive attention in several places in the report and appendices.

10. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

- 10.1. There is a duty to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle, which is to try to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. When acting in accordance with this general duty the Council needs to consider the importance of the long-term impact, being integrated and inclusive, collaboration and prevention in developing and implementing the proposal.

- 10.2. In accordance with the requirement of the Act, Gwynedd Council (in collaboration with Isle of Anglesey County Council) has developed well-being objectives. These are:
- Communities which thrive and are prosperous in the long-term
 - Healthy and independent residents with a good quality of life
- 10.3. The current Premium funds the Council's Housing Action Plan, which is a proactive attempt to strengthen the sustainability of those communities within Gwynedd with a high number of second and long-term empty homes.
- 10.4. The Council's Housing Strategy sets out the vision of “Ensuring that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable Home of a high standard that is affordable and improves their quality of life”.
- 10.5. The Strategy identifies five objectives that had to be sought if the Council was to achieve this vision:
1. No one is homeless in Gwynedd
 2. Social housing available to all who need one
 3. Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
 4. Gwynedd Housing are environmentally friendly
 5. Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd
- 10.6. The Housing Action Plan includes a number of projects that together set out to deliver these objectives.

11. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

11.1. The report describes the results of the public consultation.

11.2. This matter has been pre-scrutinised by the Governance and Audit Committee on 17 November before it was considered by the Cabinet on 22 November. The role of the Governance and Audit Committee was not to give an opinion on the Premium level for 2023/24 but rather to take into account the evidence that has gathered and to come to a conclusion if it is sufficient to enable the Cabinet to make a recommendation and the full Council to reach a reasoned decision.

11.3. The decision of the Governance and Audit Committee was to accept that the information in the report and appendices complies with statutory guidance and legislative requirements.

11.4. It also resolved to propose the following comments for Cabinet to consider when deciding on a recommendation for the Full Council to make a final decision on the premium levels:

- That a comprehensive language assessment needs to be completed in accordance with the Council's Language Policy
- That the impact of the premium on the ability of 'natives' to make a living needs to be considered
- That statistics showing the impact of the premium on restoring empty houses need to be seen
- That evidence is needed for the success of the premium. What has been achieved so far?
- That further consultation is needed on the use of the premium.
- What is the justification of using a second home premium to fund homelessness? Accept that the principle is acceptable, but what is the evidence behind the decision?
- That premium considerations need to be intertwined with Welsh Government legislation and measures of managing second houses

11.5. These points were reported verbally to the Cabinet at its meeting on 22 November. The comments have also been considered when preparing this report to the Full Council.

12. OPTIONS

- 12.1. The Council needs to give specific consideration to local factors affecting the housing market and the availability of homes, and in particular the studies and findings referred to in Part 4 of this report. Attention should also be given to the results of the public consultation and the Equality Impact Assessment and the information and conclusions deriving from these elements of the report.
- 12.2. The main conclusions can be summarised as follows.
- 12.3. In keeping the premium at its current level, it will be possible to continue to earmark an annual sum of around £6m to the fund which finances the wide range of projects in the Council's Housing Action Plan. Since that scheme was established, inflation has had an impact on the viability of the business case of several individual projects with construction costs having increased significantly over the past two years. In addition to that, house prices have of course increased in the same way as well. But, as our Scheme's costs are based on when the premium was at a rate of 50%, the additional income from 100% premium should be sufficient to cope with the price increase.
- 12.4. However, as this report outlines, the second home situation (among other factors) is also now having an impact on homelessness creating likely financial pressures in the region of £6m a year. We cannot avoid meeting this cost and we do not have resources available within the Council's basic budgets for it. Keeping the premium at a 100% rate would offer no help towards coping with those financial pressures without us reducing the funding available to greet the other elements of our Housing Action Plan, and therefore delivering fewer schemes.
- 12.5. On the other hand, increasing the premium to a rate of 150% would add around £3m of extra annual income and that would be a contribution towards funding the financial pressures we face in the area of homelessness. That means that it would be possible to continue to earmark the income currently collected for the funding of the Housing Action Plan and achieve all that is in it without having to curtail the Council's ambition in this area.
- 12.6. Currently, there is no way of establishing equivalent justification for increasing the premium above a 150% rate. A number of these further steps such as changes to the planning regime and to business rates have not yet become operational and therefore we have not had an opportunity to assess the impact of these policies in the face of a very significant change in the Premium, or the practical implications.
- 12.7. It is stated in paragraph 8.10 above that a rational justification exists for keeping the tax on long-term vacant properties unchanged (i.e. at 100%) to enable owners to repair their property if necessary and bring the property back into use.

12.8. Having considered the above options in the context of the information in this report, appendices and studies referred to, the Council needs to reach a decision at the Premium level to be set for 2023/24. The Council's Cabinet, at its meeting on 22 November, resolved:

Recommend to the full Council on 1 December 2022 that the following is the favoured option of the Cabinet with regards to the level of Premium on the Council Tax of Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Dwellings for the 2023/24 financial year:

- That Gwynedd Council allows NO discount on class A second homes, under Section 12 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. no change).
- That Gwynedd Council allows NO discount and RAISES A PREMIUM OF 100% on class B second homes, under Section 12B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. increase from 100% to 150%).
- That Gwynedd Council allows NO discount on homes that have been empty for 6 months or more and RAISES A PREMIUM OF 100% on homes that have been empty for 12 months or more, under Section 12A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (i.e. no change).

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. Holiday Homes Research Work (December 2020)
2. Housing Strategy
3. Housing Action Plan
4. Second Homes – Developing New Policies in Wales (Dr Simon Brooks)
5. Council's response to the Brooks report.
6. Responses to the Consultation (except documents that contain exempted information about individuals).

OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

As explained and highlighted in the report there are arrange of factors which need to be assessed in coming to the Cabinet's recommendation. The report correctly notes that the statutory power to set a council tax premium on "second homes" and long term empty properties was increased to maximum of 300% by amendments to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 which came into force on the 1st of April 2022. In considering a review of the premium and possible increases from the previous statutory maximum of 100% it is important that the Council gives full consideration to the context and challenges in Gwynedd, the results of the consultation and the information and views gathered which were received and the results of the Equalities Impact Assessment. The report explains the matters which are relevant to the decision and the results of the processes and the Cabinet's recommendation is based on its assessment and weighing up of these factors.

Head of Finance:

I have collaborated with the Cabinet Member in the preparation of this report and I confirm the content.

Results of Council Tax Premium Consultation on Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Properties – October 2022

Submission Date: 2022-11-04

Authors: Research and Analytics Team

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1. Introduction

The public consultation was launched on 30th September and was open until 28th October. The questionnaire was posted on the Council's website with letters sent to all owners of second homes and long-term empty properties, and reminders posted on the Council's social media pages.

7,330 responses were received to the questionnaire. There were 7,277 online questionnaire responses and 53 paper responses. This is the largest number of responses the Council has seen to any consultation in recent years.

The consultation was split into two sections, one for second homes and the other for long-term empty properties.

2. Consultation responses

There were 7,330 responses to the consultation.

2.1 Your situation?

The first question of the questionnaire asked respondents to select one or more statements describing their situation. Here are the number, and percentage, of respondents who chose the different statements:

Situation	Number	%age
My main home is in Gwynedd	3,518	48.0%
My main home is outside Gwynedd	2,690	36.7%
I have a second home in Gwynedd	3,483	47.5%
I have a long-term empty property in Gwynedd	237	3.2%

Since individual respondents could be in more than one of the above situations, it is easier to categorize the respondents as follows:

Category	Number	%age
With no second home or empty property in Gwynedd*	3,646	49.7%
Own a second home in Gwynedd (but no long-term empty properties)	3,447	47.0%
Owning a long-term empty property in Gwynedd (but no second home)	201	2.7%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property in Gwynedd	36	0.5%
Total respondents	7,330	100.0%

**This category can include respondents who live in and outside Gwynedd, who do not have a second home or long-term empty property in Gwynedd*

Just over half of respondents therefore (50.3%, N=3,684) owned either a second home or a long-term empty dwelling in Gwynedd (or both).

Within this figure 47.0% owned a second home, 2.7% owned a long-term empty dwelling, and 0.5% owned both (i.e. a long-term empty dwelling and a second home in Gwynedd).

49.7% of respondents did not own a second home or long-term empty dwelling in Gwynedd. Within this figure, 8.5% (N=625) also indicated that their main home was outside Gwynedd.

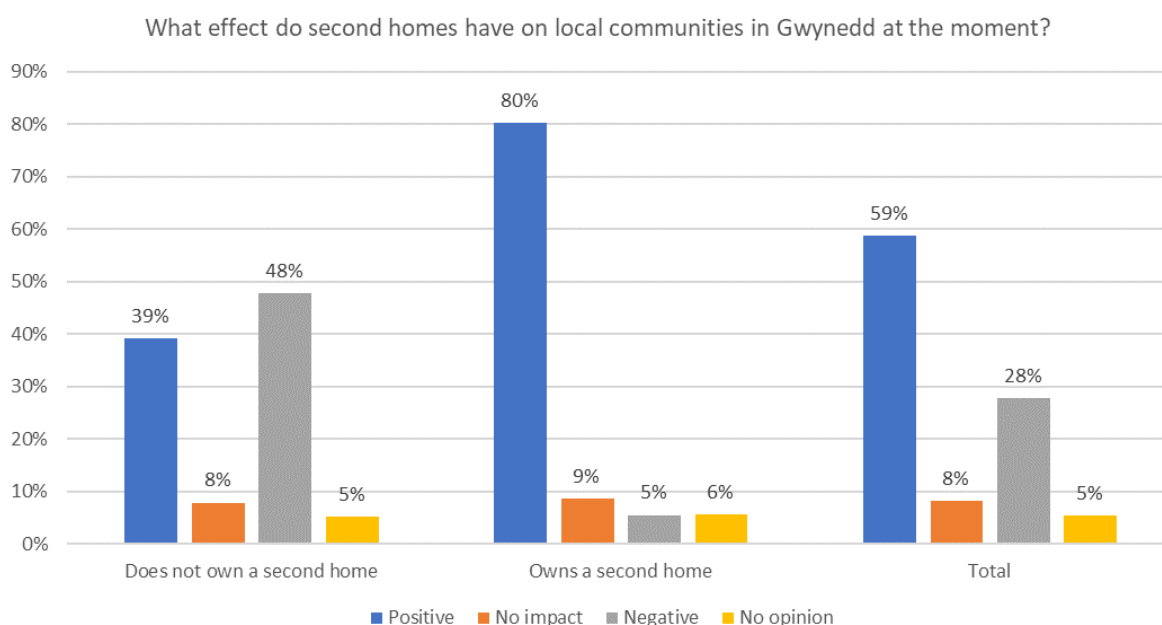
3. Results for Second Homes

This part looks specifically at the consequences of the questions about second homes.

3.1 What effect do second homes have on local communities in Gwynedd at the moment?

In total, over half of respondents (58.7%, N=4,304) thought that second homes were currently having a positive impact on local communities, while 27.7% (N=2,030) thought they were having a negative impact, with 8.2% (N=603) thinking they were having no impact. 5.4% (N=393) of respondents had no opinion on this.

However, by looking at differences between respondents who own a second home and those who do not, a significant difference in opinion is seen as shown in the chart below.



"Do not own a second home" in the chart includes respondents who owned a long-term empty dwelling (but not a second home), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a second home" includes all respondents who owned a second home, whether or not they also owned a long-term empty property

The table below details the responses by category, and shows that 80.5% of respondents who own a second home think second homes currently have a positive effect on local communities, while less than half (39.4%) of respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property are of

this opinion. 48.7% of respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property think second homes are currently having a negative impact on local communities, while only 5.3% of respondents who own a second home are of this opinion.

The responses of those who own long-term empty properties are found to be quite equal, with slightly more (35.3%) feeling that second homes are currently having a positive impact on local communities.

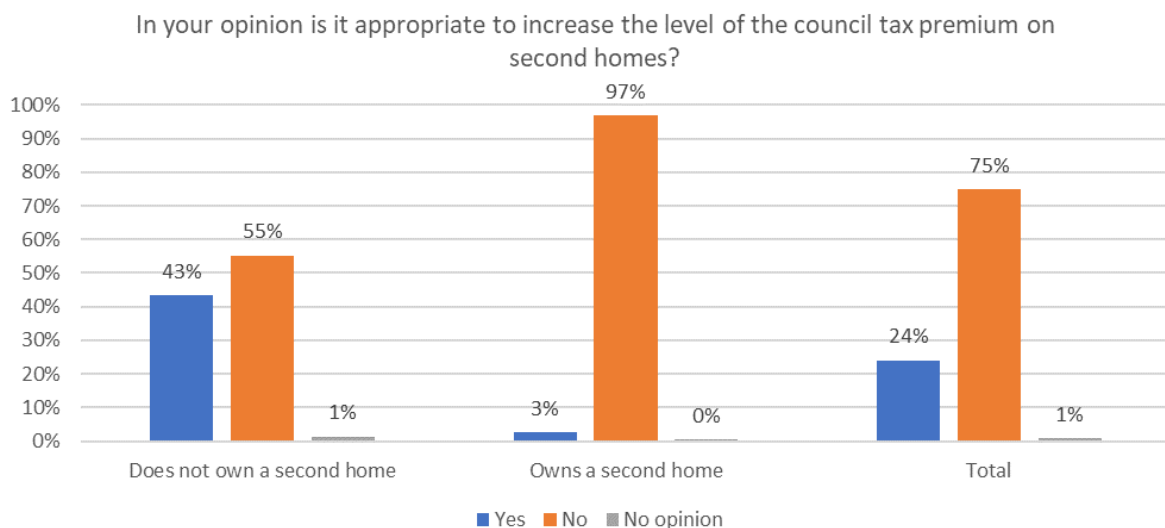
Among the small number of respondents who own long-term empty properties and second homes the view is again more divided but with the majority (55.6%) believing second homes are currently having a positive impact.

	Positive effect		No effect		Negative effect		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,437	39.4%	275	7.5%	1,776	48.7%	158	4.3%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	2,776	80.5%	298	8.6%	184	5.3%	189	5.5%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	71	35.3%	27	13.4%	64	31.8%	39	19.4%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	20	55.6%	3	8.3%	6	16.7%	7	19.4%	36	100.0%
Total	4,304	58.7%	603	8.2%	2,030	27.7%	393	5.4%	7,330	100.0%

3.2 Currently the Council Tax Premium on second homes is 100%. The Council is considering whether to increase the level of the Council Tax Premium. Do you think this is appropriate?

In total, three-quarters of respondents (75.0%, N=5,497) considered it not appropriate to increase the level of Council Tax Premium on second homes. 24.1% (N=1,764) thought it appropriate to increase it, with 0.9% (N=69) not having an opinion.

However, by separating the answers between respondents who own a second home and those who do not (chart below), there is some difference of opinion with the overwhelming majority of respondents who own a second home opposing increasing the premium level. Among respondents who do not own a second home the view was more divided, but with a majority here also of the view that it would not be appropriate to increase the premium.



"Do not own a second home" in the chart includes respondents who owned a long-term empty dwelling (but not a second home), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a second home" includes all respondents who owned a second home, whether or not they also owned a long-term empty property

The table below details the responses by category, and shows that an overwhelming majority (96.9%) of respondents who own a second home oppose increasing the level of premium on second homes, with a smaller majority (54.1%) of respondents not owning a second home nor a long-term empty property sharing the same view. 44.6% of respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property thought increasing the level of premium on second homes would be appropriate, but only 2.7% of second home owners we of this opinion.

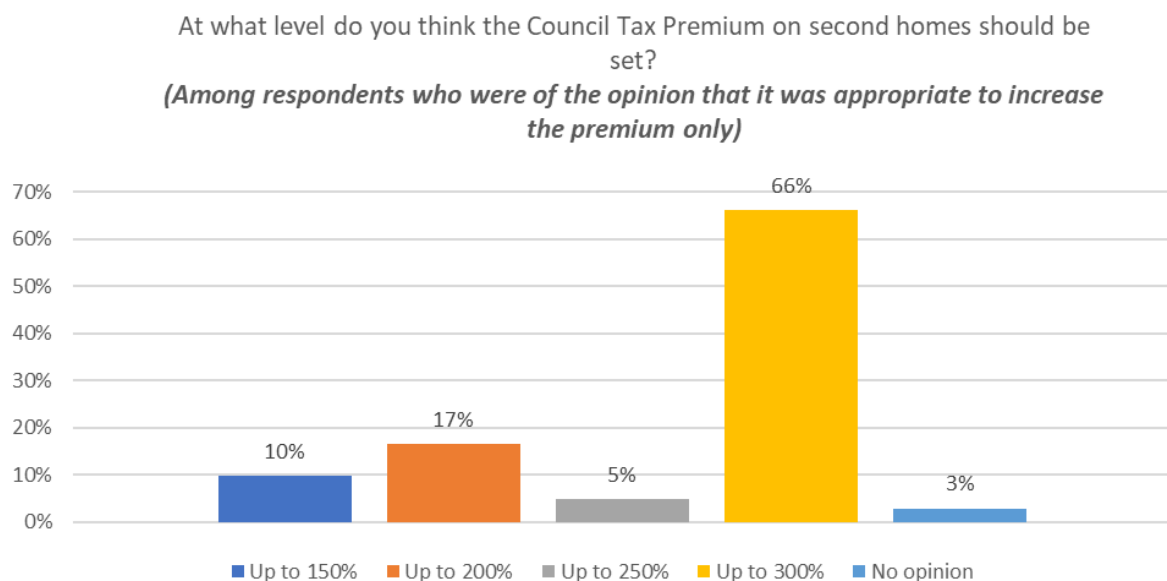
A majority (76.1%) of respondents who own long-term empty properties also opposed increasing the premium on second homes. Among the small number of respondents who own long-term empty properties and second homes, 88.9% opposed increasing the premium on second homes.

	Yes		No		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,626	44.6%	1,973	54.1%	47	1.3%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	94	2.7%	3,339	96.9%	14	0.4%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	42	20.9%	153	76.1%	6	3.0%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	2	5.6%	32	88.9%	2	5.6%	36	100.0%
Total	1,764	24.1%	5,497	75.0%	69	0.9%	7,330	100.0%

3.3 At what level do you think the Council Tax Premium on second homes should be set?

There was an opportunity for the 1,764 respondents who thought it would be appropriate to increase the council tax premium level on second homes to then give their views on the level at which it should be set.

Among these respondents, about two-thirds (66.1%, N=1,166) believed the premium should be increased by up to 300% with a further 16.6% (N=292) believing it should be set up to 200% (chart below).



The full results by respondent category are shown in the table below but it should be noted that as many respondents who own a second home / long-term empty property were not in favour of increasing the premium at all, the percentages in these categories were based on small numbers.

	Up to 150%		Up to 200%		Up to 250%		Up to 300%		No opinion		Total
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	124	7.6%	268	16.5%	82	5.0%	1,119	68.8%	33	2.0%	1,626
Own a second home	44	46.8%	19	20.2%	1	1.1%	20	21.3%	10	10.6%	94
Own a long-term empty property	3	7.1%	5	11.9%	2	4.8%	26	61.9%	6	14.3%	42
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	50.0%	1	50.0%	2
Total	171	9.7%	292	16.6%	85	4.8%	1,166	66.1%	50	2.8%	1,764

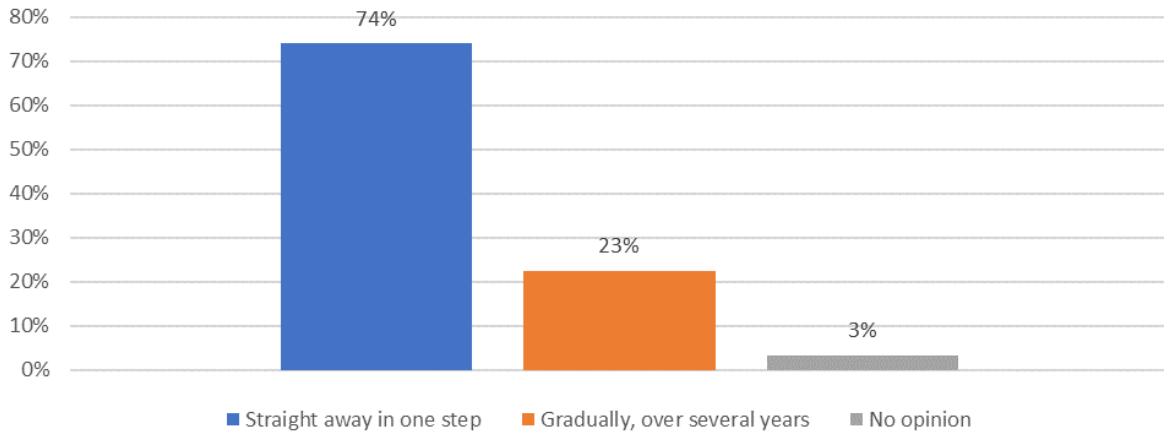
Question only relevant to respondents who supported increasing the premium on second homes

3.4 How should the Council Tax Premium increase for second homes be introduced?

There was also an opportunity for the 1,764 respondents who were in favour of increasing the council tax increase on second homes to give their views on how the increase should be introduced.

Among these respondents, around three-quarters (74.1%, N=1,308) believed the premium should be increased immediately in a single step, with 22.5% (N=397) believing it should be phased in over several years (chart below).

How should the Council Tax Premium on second homes be introduced?
(Among respondents who were of the opinion that it was appropriate to increase the premium only)



Again, the full results by respondent category are shown below but noting again that since many respondents who own a second home / long-term empty property were not in favour of increasing the premium at all, the percentages within these categories were based on small numbers.

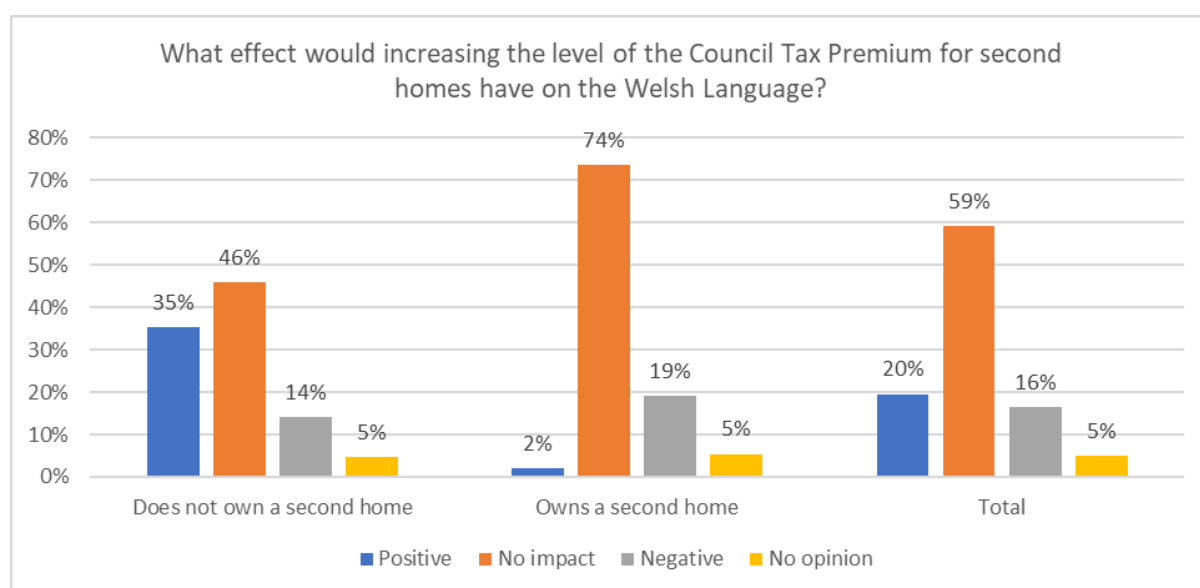
	Immediately, in one step		Gradually, over several year		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,256	77.2%	320	19.7%	50	3.1%	1,626	100.0%
Own a second home	26	27.7%	61	64.9%	7	7.4%	94	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	25	59.5%	15	35.7%	2	4.8%	42	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	1	50.0%	1	50.0%	-	-	2	100.0%
Total	1,308	74.1%	397	22.5%	59	3.3%	1,764	100.0%

Question only relevant to respondents who were in favour of increasing the premium on second homes

3.5 What impact would increasing the level of Council Tax Premium for second homes have on the Welsh language?

In total over half of respondents (59.0%, N=4,327) felt that the level of premium on second homes would have no impact on the Welsh language. The remaining responses were pretty even with 19.5% (N=1,432) thinking it would have a positive impact on the Welsh language and 16.5% (N=1,207) thinking it would have a negative impact.

However, looking at differences between respondents who own a second home and those who do not, there is some difference in opinion as shown in the chart below.



"Do not own a second home" in the chart includes respondents who owned a long-term empty dwelling (but not a second home), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a second home" includes all respondents who owned a second home, whether or not they also owned a long-term empty property

The table below details the response by category, and shows that 73.9% of respondents who own a second home believe that increasing the level of premium would have no impact on the Welsh language, with 18.7% believing that increasing the premium would have a negative impact.

Among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property opinion is somewhat more divided with 45.6% believing it would not have an impact on the Welsh language, 36.4% believing it would have a positive impact and 13.8% believing it would have a negative impact.

Among those who own long-term empty properties the majority (52.2%) felt that increasing the premium would not have an impact on the Welsh language.

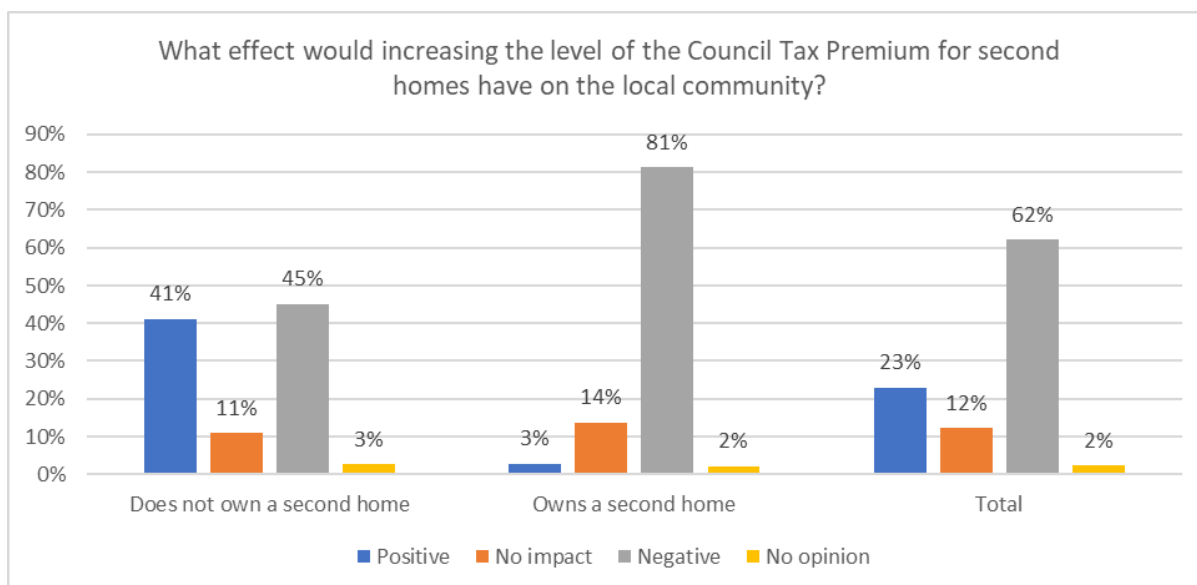
Among the small number of respondents who own long-term empty properties and a second home, half (50.0%) believed increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the Welsh language and a third (33.3%) believed it would have no impact.

	Positive effect		No effect		Negative effect		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Own neither a second home nor empty property	1,328	36.4%	1,661	45.6%	502	13.8%	155	4.3%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	68	2.0%	2,549	73.9%	646	18.7%	184	5.3%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	33	16.4%	105	52.2%	41	20.4%	22	10.9%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	3	8.3%	12	33.3%	18	50.0%	3	8.3%	36	100.0%
Total	1,432	19.5%	4,327	59.0%	1,207	16.5%	364	5.0%	7,330	100.0%

3.6 What effect would increasing the level of the Council Tax Premium for second homes have on the local community?

In total a majority of respondents (62.3%, N=4,566) thought that increasing the council tax premium on second homes would have a negative impact on the local community. 23.0% (N=1,685) thought increasing the premium would have a positive impact on the local community and 12.3% (N=902) thought it would not have an impact.

However, by looking at differences between respondents who own a second home and those who do not, some difference in opinion is seen as shown in the chart below.



"Do not own a second home" in the chart includes respondents who owned a long-term empty dwelling (but not a second home), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a second home" includes all respondents who owned a second home, whether or not they also owned a long-term empty property

The table below details the response by category, and shows that the vast majority (81.4%) of respondents who own a second home believe increasing the premium level would have a negative impact on the local community. 13.7% thought increasing the premium would have no impact.

Among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property opinion is very divided with 44.8% believing increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local community, 42.4% believing it would have a positive impact and 10.6% believing there would be no impact.

Among those owning long-term empty properties, the majority (51.2%) felt increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local community.

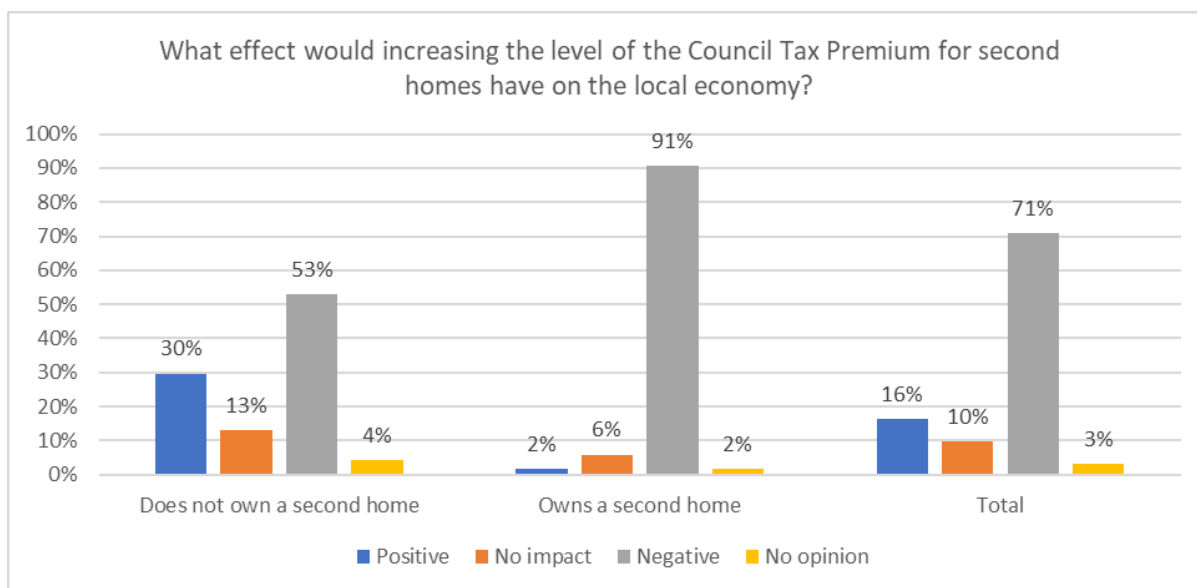
Among the small number of respondents who own long-term empty properties and a second home, the majority (63.9%) believed that increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local community.

	Positive effect		No effect		Negative effect		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,547	42.4%	386	10.6%	1,634	44.8%	79	2.2%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	96	2.8%	472	13.7%	2,806	81.4%	73	2.1%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	39	19.4%	37	18.4%	103	51.2%	22	10.9%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	3	8.3%	7	19.4%	23	63.9%	3	8.3%	36	100.0%
Total	1,685	23.0%	902	12.3%	4,566	62.3%	177	2.4%	7,330	100.0%

3.7 What effect would increasing the level of the Council Tax Premium for second homes have on the local economy?

In total a majority of respondents (70.9%, N=5,200) thought that increasing the level of increasing the council tax premium on second homes would have a negative impact on the local economy. 16.4% (N=1,203) thought increasing the premium would have a positive impact on the local economy and 9.6% (N=703) thought it would not have an impact.

By looking at differences between respondents who own a second home and those who do not, some difference is seen in the opinion as shown in the chart below.



"Do not own a second home" in the chart includes respondents who owned a long-term empty dwelling (but not a second home), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a second home" includes all respondents who owned a second home, whether or not they also owned a long-term empty property

The table below details the response by category, and shows that the vast majority (90.8%) of respondents who own a second home believe increasing the premium level would have a negative impact on the local economy. 5.8% believed increasing the premium would have no impact.

Among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property, 52.6% believed increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local economy, 30.7% believed it would have a positive impact and 12.9% believed there would be no impact.

Among those owning long-term empty properties the majority (61.7%) felt increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local economy.

Among the small number of respondents who own long-term empty properties and a second home, the majority (75.0%) believed that increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local economy.

	Positive effect		No effect		Negative effect		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,119	30.7%	469	12.9%	1,918	52.6%	140	3.8%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	59	1.7%	201	5.8%	3,131	90.8%	56	1.6%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	24	11.9%	29	14.4%	124	61.7%	24	11.9%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	1	2.8%	4	11.1%	27	75.0%	4	11.1%	36	100.0%
Total	1,203	16.4%	703	9.6%	5,200	70.9%	224	3.1%	7,330	100.0%

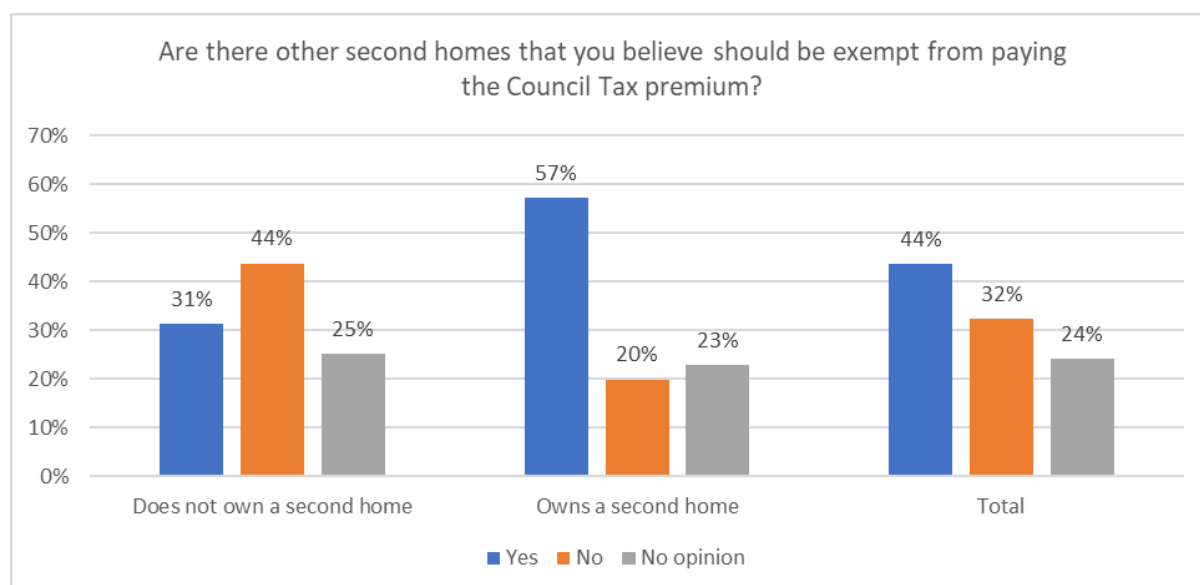
3.8 Are there other second homes that you believe should be exempt from paying the Council Tax Premium?

The following second homes are statutorily exempt from being subject to the Premium:

- Dwellings being marketed for sale – time-limited for one year
- Dwellings being marketed for let – time-limited for one year
- Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling
- Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation
- Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings
- Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited
- Job-related dwellings

Respondents had an opportunity to consider whether any other type of second home needed to be added to the list. 43.6% (N=3,195) of respondents rated this as necessary, with 32.4% (N=2,375) indicating no need to add to the list and 24.0% (N=1,760) not having an opinion.

As shown in the chart below second home owners were more likely than other respondents to suggest premium exemptions, with 57.2% (N=1,994) of all second home owners reporting this compared to 31.2% (N=1,201) of all other respondents.



"Do not own a second home" in the chart includes respondents who owned a long-term empty dwelling (but not a second home), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a second home" includes all respondents who owned a second home, whether or not they also owned a long-term empty property

3.9 Note any other second homes that you believe should be exempt from paying the Council Tax Premium

Those who identified the need to add to the exemption list had a chance to detail this. Of the 3,195 who reported "Yes" 97.7% (N=3,122) detailed that in comments.

Comments	Number of comments	% of thoes who gave comments
Second homes let for holidays or businesses or for tourism purposes	523	16.8%
Frequently used second homes	373	11.9%
All second homes	366	11.7%
Homes inherited and now used as second homes / inherited and intend to keep / homes that have been 'in the family' for a period	268	8.6%
Second homes that have been owned for a certain period of time or purchased before a specified date	191	6.1%

Properties built as Holiday Homes or where permanent residence is prohibited	152	4.9%
Second homes of individuals with a local connection (e.g. family, have lived in Gwynedd or Wales etc) or whose main home is local	146	4.7%
Dwellings on the same site as permanent residence e.g. annex, farm buildings	108	3.5%
Undesirable location / Remote dwellings / Limited access / Limited facilities / Limited use of Council facilities	105	3.4%
Personal use only or not generating income	101	3.2%
Being renovated or awaiting planning permission	92	2.9%
A property that is not suitable for year-round living due to the size or condition of the house, or is a seasonal home, caravan, holiday cabins etc	88	2.8%
Depending on the owner's circumstances e.g. pensioners, illness, where the owner is in a care home or single person	85	2.7%
Related to a job or university - working elsewhere or living elsewhere and working in Gwynedd	76	2.4%
Properties purchased before premium	70	2.2%
Unsuitable homes for locals or first-time buyers	63	2.0%
Properties that have or to be let for long-term rent	59	1.9%
The second home will become the main residence in the future	58	1.9%
A time to consider after a bereavement and inheriting a home	55	1.8%
Charitable, socially useful or enabling charity work e.g. Ukraine, volunteering while there, carting key workers etc	53	1.7%
Holiday homes	42	1.3%
Properties for sale or will be sold	41	1.3%
A second home that has or will be built, developed or improved by the owner	25	0.8%
Second homes under a lease that prohibits letting or subletting property or restricting for personal use only	22	0.7%
Location - Homes in areas of high demand or in areas with few second homes	22	0.7%
Buildings in poor condition	18	0.6%
Second housing that benefits the economy or local (excluding tourism or other category) e.g. employing staff	17	0.5%
Listed buildings	12	0.4%
Second home which is part of another business (not related to tourism) e.g. farm	9	0.3%
High value homes	7	0.2%
Rarely used second homes	7	0.2%
Low value homes	6	0.2%
Empty property	6	0.2%
Registered to vote in their second houses	5	0.2%

Second houses at their only property in the UK	2	0.1%
Lease property	1	0.0%
Owned by an individual not a property company	1	0.0%
Where one of the two homes is rented by the individual	1	0.0%
Properties that are not empty for a long time	1	0.0%

As multiple respondents have made more than one comment the numbers add up to more than 100%

3.10 Any other comments you have about second homes

7 2.7% (N=5,329) of respondents commented further on second homes.

Comments	Number of comments	% of those who gave comments
Second home owners contribute to the local economy / local community. Restricting second homes would damage the economy	2731	51.2%
A higher CT premium would target people with a second home, unfairly / unreasonably	892	16.7%
Second homes are a barrier to an affordable housing market for local people / viable communities	548	10.3%
Unfair on families who have inherited a home (including local people) / Unfair on families who have invested in Gwynedd for decades / Unfair on all those who have saved for years to buy a second house	508	9.5%
Local people don't want to buy the houses / The house unsuitable for a family (condition/location) / The house had been on the market for a while before they bought it / Spent thousands renovating an unsuitable house	459	8.6%
The Council should do more to provide and promote affordable housing	426	8.0%
I / people I know would sell their second home if the premium increased	384	7.2%
A premium increase would not help make housing affordable	371	7.0%
Local people also own a second house / Punishment of local people who have invested due to tourism	235	4.4%
Creating jobs / a viable economy is the answer rather than charging a premium	216	4.1%
Need to increase CT premium on second homes as soon as possible	206	3.9%
Second homeowners with their main house outside Gwynedd / North Wales / Wales only charge a premium - no penalising Gwynedd residents	160	3.0%

Need to close any loopholes in terms of taxation (including holiday accommodation taxation)	157	2.9%
The problem of affordable housing should be dealt with in other ways, e.g. planning regulations / restrictions on purchases	156	2.9%
A premium increase would target English people / racially / against human rights	131	2.5%
Council Tax changes should only be introduced in certain areas, depending on local circumstances	122	2.3%
Not fair to pay more tax, when using fewer services than local residents	121	2.3%
Need restrictions on, and better manage the short-term holiday accommodation market	118	2.2%
The '182 day' rule for holiday accommodation to be counted as a business is unrealistic / unfair and means more will have to pay the premium	110	2.1%
An increase in premium would cause an increase in the number of holiday accommodation	98	1.8%
Not clear how the money from any increase (and/or the previous increase) would be used	77	1.4%
Increasing the premium would lead to a change in the nature of second home ownership, with only investors and wealthy people able to afford them	71	1.3%
Any premium should be limited to new purchases, not to people who had previously bought houses	57	1.1%
Increasing premium would cause a collapse in house prices locally, with significant / harmful consequences	44	0.8%
Second homes have no impact on the Welsh language (or are less harmful than if they went to non-Welsh speaking permanent residents)	27	0.5%
Second homes are a complex problem, and any action needs to be taken with care / based on detailed evidence	26	0.5%
Houses that are in the process of being repaired should be exempt / Houses that are not in condition to be sold or rented	23	0.4%
Some houses have been built specifically as second homes and/or restrictions on the amount of time there can be	19	0.4%
It wouldn't 'look good' for Gwynedd to be increasing CT premiums - unsupportive / introspective image	18	0.3%
Not a good time to make any change, due to the state of the economy	8	0.2%
Increasing the premium would only move the problem to another part of Wales	7	0.1%
Not-for-profit social enterprises that run holiday units should be excluded	1	0.0%

As multiple respondents have made more than one comment the numbers add up to more than 100%

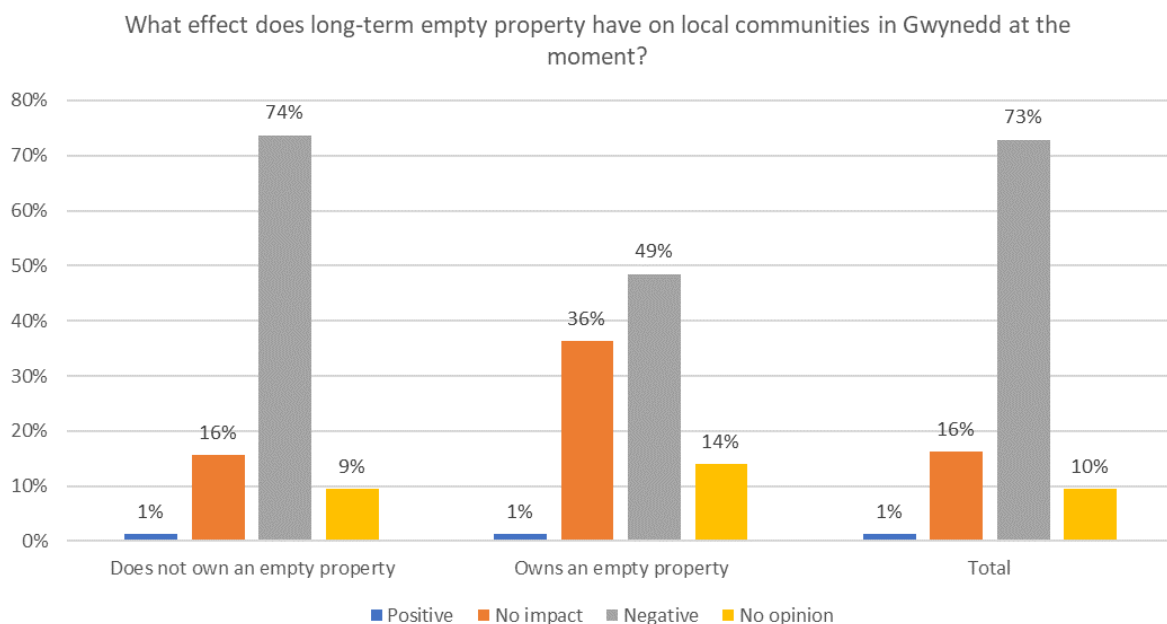
4. Results for Long-Term Empty Properties

This section looks specifically at the results of the questions regarding long-term empty properties.

4.1 What effect does long-term empty property have on local communities in Gwynedd at the moment?

In total the majority of respondents (72.9%, N=5,342) thought long-term empty properties were currently having a negative impact on local communities, while 16.2% (N=1,191) thought they were not having an impact and 1.3% (N=96) thought they had a positive impact. 9.6% (N=701) of respondents had no opinion on this.

However, by looking at differences between respondents who own long-term empty properties and those who do not, there is some difference in the opinion as shown in the chart below.



"Do not own long-term empty property" includes respondents who owned a second home (but not a long-term empty property), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a long-term empty property" includes all respondents who owned long-term empty properties, whether or not they also owned a second home.

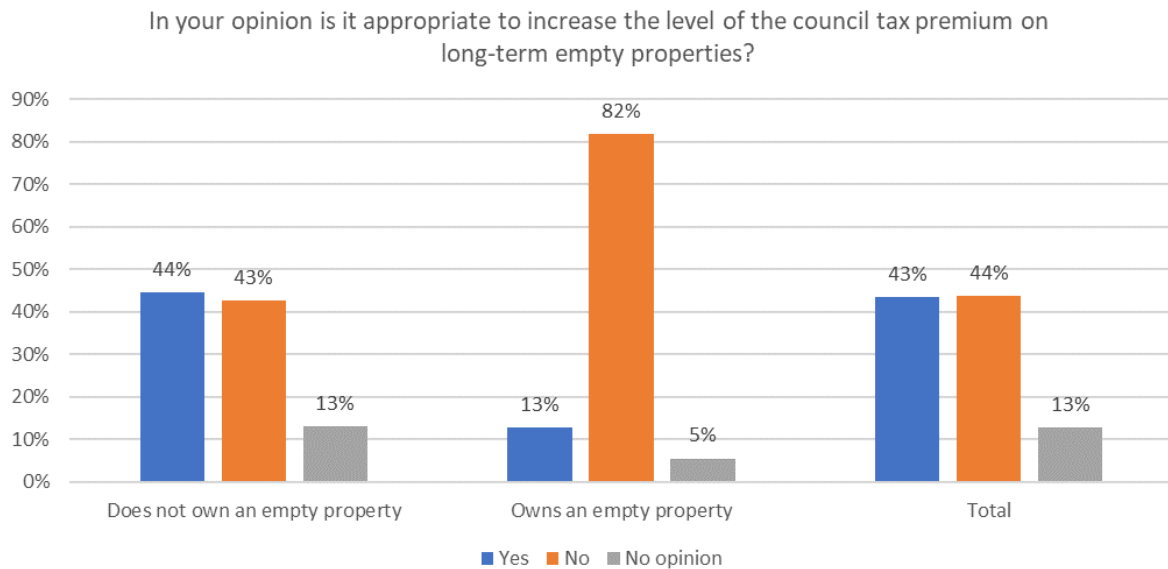
The table below details the responses by category of respondents. The main clear difference is that respondents who own a long-term empty property are more likely than other respondents to think it has no impact on local communities: 37.3% of those with long-term empty properties, and 30.6% of those with long-term empty properties and a second home thought there is no impact. This compares to 13.4% of respondents who did not have a long-term empty property or a second home, and 17.9% of respondents who have a second home.

	Positive effect		No effect		Negative effect		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	45	1.2%	487	13.4%	2,886	79.2%	228	6.3%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	48	1.4%	618	17.9%	2,341	67.9%	440	12.8%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	3	1.5%	75	37.3%	95	47.3%	28	13.9%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	-	-	11	30.6%	20	55.6%	5	13.9%	36	100.0%
Total	96	1.3%	1,191	16.2%	5,342	72.9%	701	9.6%	7,330	100.0%

4.2 Currently the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties is 100%. The Council is considering whether to increase the level of the Council Tax Premium. Do you think this is appropriate?

Overall the views of respondents were very divided with 43.8% (N=3,210) thinking that increasing the premium on long-term empty properties would not be appropriate, and 43.4% (N=3,181) thinking it would be appropriate. 12.8% (N=939) of respondents had no opinion on this.

However, looking at differences between respondents who own long-term empty properties and those who do not, a significant difference in opinion is seen as shown in the chart below.



"Do not own long-term empty property" includes respondents who owned a second home (but not a long-term empty property), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a long-term empty property" includes all respondents who owned long-term empty properties, whether or not they also owned a second home.

The table below details the responses by category, and shows that the vast majority (84.1%) of respondents who own long-term empty properties oppose increasing the level of premium on these properties, while among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property, the majority (55.8%) were in favour of increasing the premium.

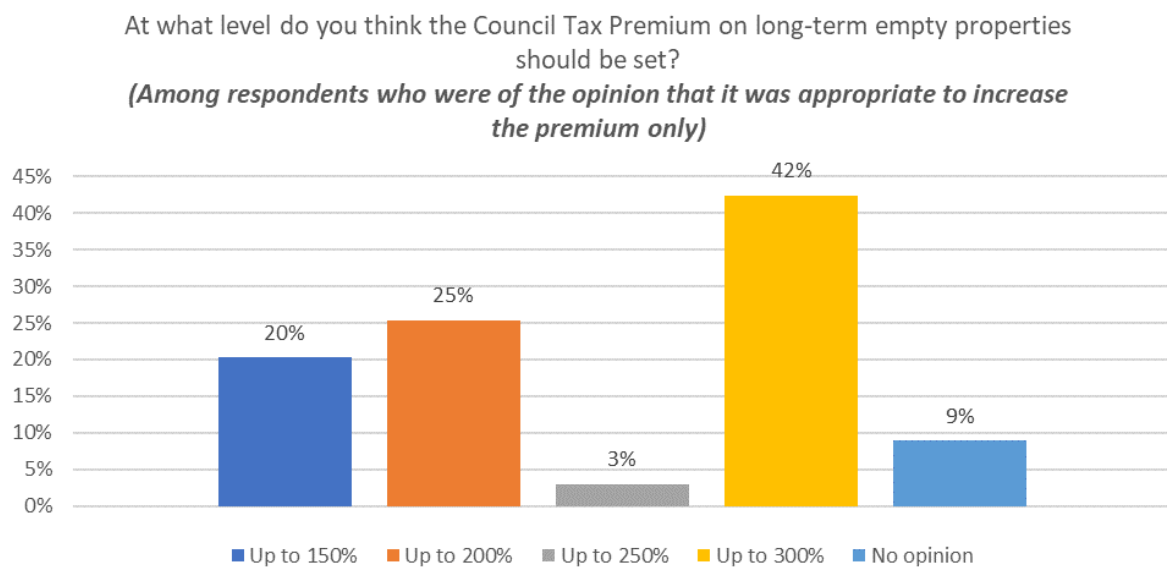
Among second home owners the response was more mixed with 48.9% opposed to increasing the premium on long-term empty properties and 32.4% in favour of increasing it. For the small number of respondents who own long-term empty and second homes, 69.4% opposed increasing the premium on long-term empty properties.

	Yes		No		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	2,035	55.8%	1,330	36.5%	281	7.7%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	1,116	32.4%	1,686	48.9%	645	18.7%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	23	11.4%	169	84.1%	9	4.5%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	7	19.4%	25	69.4%	4	11.1%	36	100.0%
Total	3,181	43.4%	3,210	43.8%	939	12.8%	7,330	100.0%

4.3 At what level do you think the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties should be set?

The 3,181 respondents who thought increasing the council tax premium level on long-term empty properties was appropriate, had the opportunity to then give their views on the level that should be set.

Among these respondents, 42.4% (N=1,350) believed the premium should be increased by up to 300%, with a further 25.4% (N=808) believing it should be increased by up to 200% and 20.3% (N=645) for increasing it up to 150% (chart below).



The full results by respondent category are shown in the table below but noting that since many respondents who own long-term empty properties were not in favour of increasing the premium at all, the percentages in these categories were based on small numbers.

	Up to 150%		Up to 200%		Up to 250%		Up to 300%		No opinion		Total
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	320	15.7%	462	22.7%	70	3.44%	1,083	53.2%	100	4.9%	2,035
Own a second home	317	28.4%	338	30.3%	25	2.2%	259	23.2%	177	15.9%	1,116
Own a long-term empty property	6	26.1%	8	34.8%	-	-	7	30.4%	2	8.7%	23
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	2	28.6%	-	-	-	-	1	14.3%	4	57.1%	7
Total	645	20.3%	808	25.4%	95	3.0%	1,350	42.4%	283	8.9%	3,181

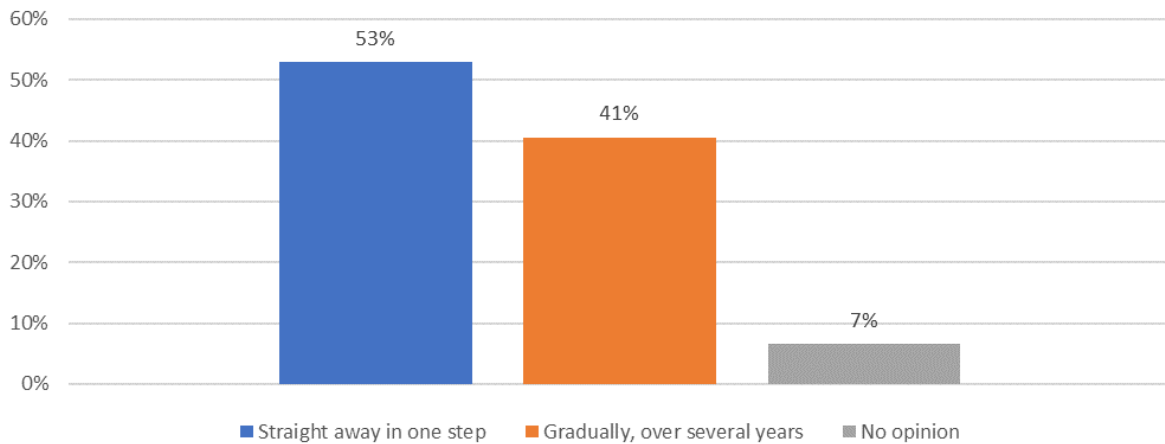
A question only relevant to the respondents who were in favour of increasing the premium on long-term empty properties

4.4 How should the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties be introduced?

There was also an opportunity for the 3,181 respondents who thought increasing the council tax premium level on long-term empty properties was appropriate, to give their views on how the increase should be delivered.

Among these respondents, about half (52.9%, N=1,684) believed the premium should be increased immediately in a single step, with 40.6% (N=1,290) believing it should be phased in over several years (chart below).

How should the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties be introduced?
(Among respondents who were of the opinion that it was appropriate to increase the premium only)



Again, the full results by respondent category are shown below but noting again that as many respondents who own long-term empty properties were not in favour of increasing the premium at all, the percentages within these categories were based on small numbers.

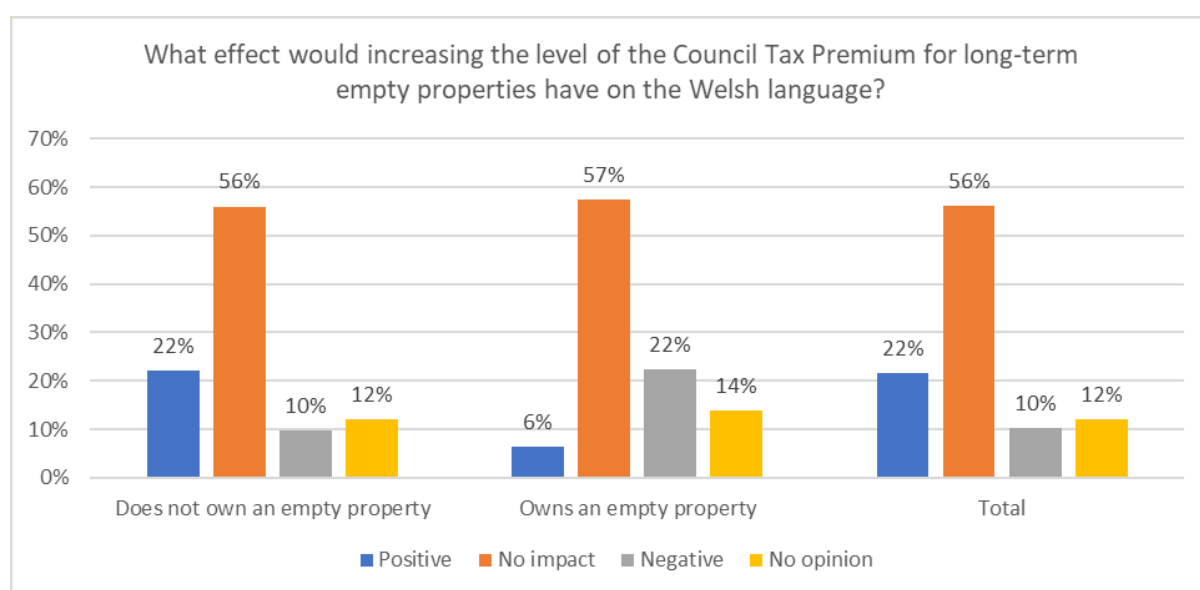
	Immediately, in one step		Gradually, over several years		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,313	64.5%	645	31.7%	77	3.8%	2,035	100.0%
Own a second home	365	32.7%	623	55.8%	128	11.5%	1,116	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	5	21.7%	17	73.9%	1	4.3%	23	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	1	14.3%	5	71.4%	1	14.2%	7	100.0%
Total	1,684	52.9%	1,290	40.6%	207	6.5%	3,181	100.0%

A question only relevant to the respondents who were in favour of increasing the premium on long-term empty properties

4.5 What effect would increasing the level of the Council Tax Premium for long-term empty properties have on the Welsh language?

In total just over half of respondents (55.1%, N=3,433) thought that increasing the level of premium on long-term empty properties would not have any effect on the Welsh language. 21.7% (N=1,588) thought there would be a positive effect and 10.2% (N=748) thought there would be a negative effect.

Looking at differences between respondents who own long-term empty properties and those who do not, it is seen (chart below) that owners of long-term empty properties are somewhat more inclined to believe that the Welsh language would be negatively impacted if the premium was increased (and less inclined to believe that there would be a positive impact).



"Do not own long-term empty property" includes respondents who owned a second home (but not a long-term empty property), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a long-term empty property" includes all respondents who owned long-term empty properties, whether or not they also owned a second home.

The table below details the response by category, and shows that 58.7% of respondents who own long-term empty properties believe that increasing the level of premium would have no impact on the Welsh language, with 21.4% believing that increasing the premium would have a negative impact.

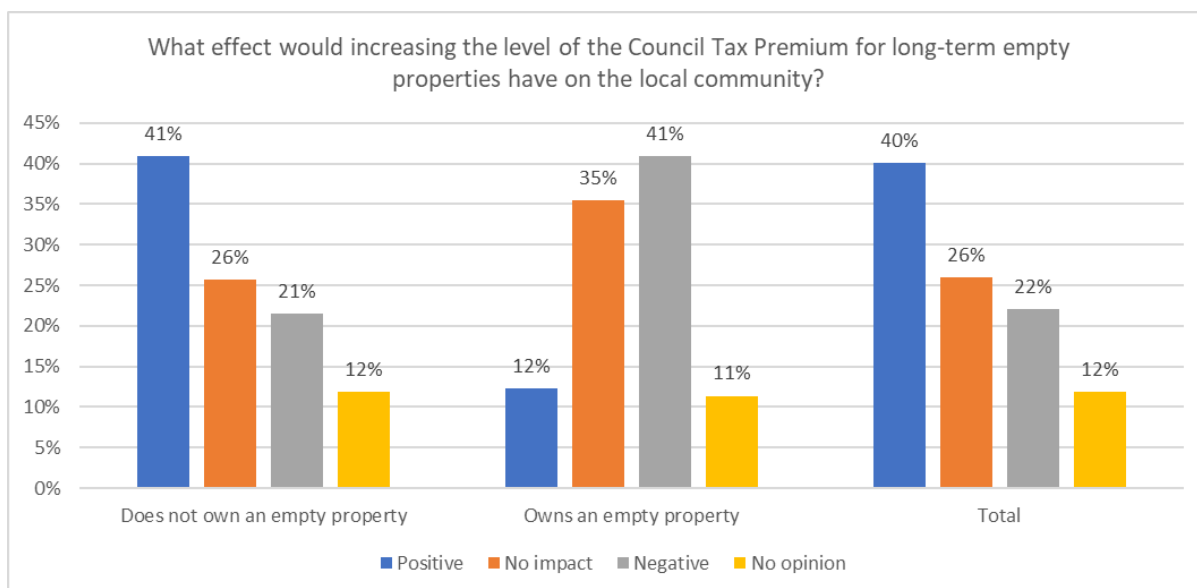
The majority of second home owners (67.3%) felt that increasing the premium on long-term empty properties would have no impact on the Welsh language. But among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property, opinion was somewhat more divided with 45.3% believing it would not have an impact on the Welsh language, 36.7% believing it would have a positive impact and 9.5% believing it would have a negative impact.

	Positive effect		No effect		Negative effect		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,339	36.7%	1,650	45.3%	346	9.5%	311	8.5%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	234	6.8%	2,321	67.3%	349	10.1%	543	15.8%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	14	7.0%	118	58.7%	43	21.4%	26	12.9%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	1	2.8%	18	50.0%	10	27.8%	7	19.4%	36	100.0%
Total	1,588	21.7%	4,107	56.0%	748	10.2%	887	12.1%	7,330	100.0%

4.6 What effect would increasing the level of the Council Tax Premium for long-term empty properties have on the local community?

In total opinion on this question was quite divided with 40.0% (N=2,935) of respondents thinking that increasing the level of premium on long term empty property would have a positive impact on the local community, 26.0% (N=1,905) believing there would be no impact and 22.1% (N=1,619) thought there would be a negative impact. 11.9% (N=871) of respondents had no opinion on this.

However looking separately at the responses of those who own long-term empty properties and those who do not, a significant difference in opinion is seen as shown in the chart below.



"Do not own long-term empty property" includes respondents who owned a second home (but not a long-term empty property), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a long-term empty property" includes all respondents who owned long-term empty properties, whether or not they also owned a second home

The table below details the response by category, and shows that 42.3% of respondents who own long-term empty properties believe that increasing the level of premium would have a negative impact on the local community, with 34.8% believing it would have no impact.

Among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property, the majority (53.6%) believed increasing the premium would have a positive impact on the local community, 21.5% believed there would be no impact, and 17.7% believed there would be a negative impact.

Among those owning a second home, opinion was sharply divided with 30.1% believing there would be no impact, 27.6% thought there would be a positive impact and 25.4% thought there would be a negative impact.

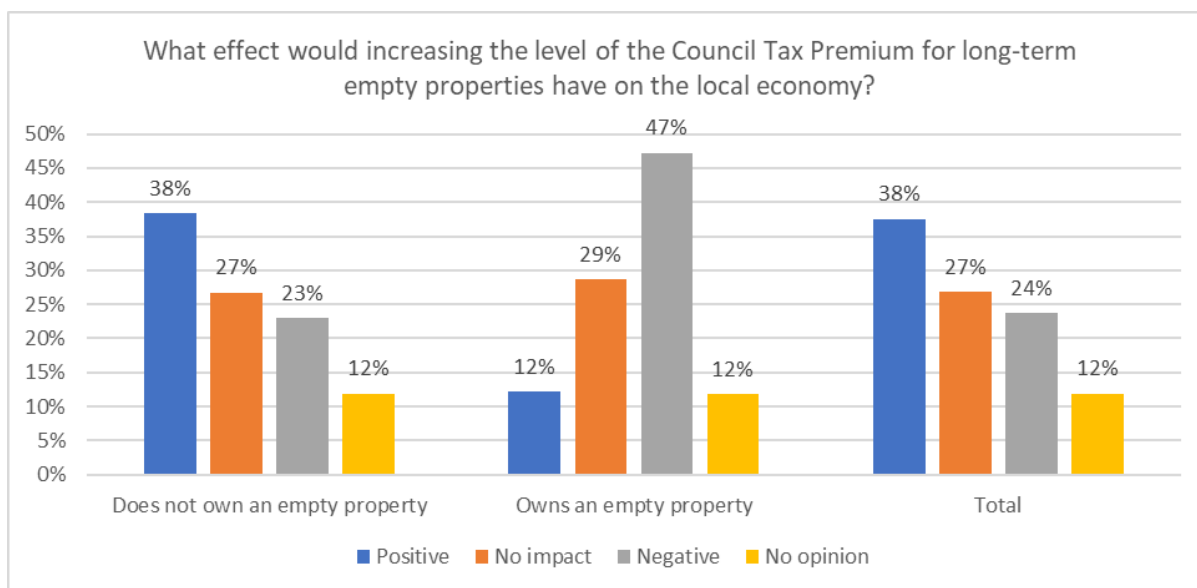
Among the small number of respondents who own long-term empty properties and a second home, 38.9% thought there would be no impact on the local community, and 33.3% thought there would be a negative impact.

	Positive effect		No effect		Negative effect		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,954	53.6%	783	21.5%	645	17.7%	264	7.2%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	952	27.6%	1,038	30.1%	877	25.4%	580	16.8%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	27	13.4%	70	34.8%	85	42.3%	19	9.5%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	2	5.6%	14	38.9%	12	33.3%	8	22.2%	36	100.0%
Total	2,935	40.0%	1,905	26.0%	1,619	22.1%	871	11.9%	7,330	100.0%

4.7 What effect would increasing the level of the Council Tax Premium for long-term empty properties have on the local economy?

Overall there was also considerable difference of opinion on this question with 37.5% (N=2,752) of all respondents believing that increasing the premium on long-term empty properties would have a positive impact on the local economy. 26.8% (N=1,964) thought there would be no impact, and 23.7% (N=1,740) thought there would be a negative impact. 11.9% (N=874) of respondents had no opinion on this.

However, by looking at differences between respondents who own long-term empty properties and those who do not, a significant difference in opinion is seen as shown in the chart below.



"Do not own long-term empty property" includes respondents who owned a second home (but not a long-term empty property), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a long-term empty property" includes all respondents who owned long-term empty properties, whether or not they also owned a second home

The table below details the response by category, and shows that 48.3% of respondents who own long-term empty properties believe increasing the premium level would have a negative impact on the local economy. 29.4% thought increasing the premium would have no effect.

Among respondents who do not own a second home or long-term empty property, 49.3% believed increasing the premium would have a positive impact on the local economy, 23.4% believed it would have no impact and 19.6% believed it would have a negative impact.

Among those owning a second home, opinion was split with 30.2% feeling that increasing the premium on long-term empty properties would have no impact on the local economy, 26.8% thinking there would be a positive impact and 26.5% believing there would be a negative impact .

Among the small number of respondents who own long-term empty properties and a second home, 41.7% believed that increasing the premium would have a negative impact on the local economy, while 25.0% believed it would have no impact.

	Positive effect		No effect		Negative effect		No opinion		Total	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Owning neither a second home nor empty property	1,799	49.3%	854	23.4%	714	19.6%	279	7.7%	3,646	100.0%
Own a second home	924	26.8%	1,042	30.2%	914	26.5%	567	16.4%	3,447	100.0%
Own a long-term empty property	24	11.9%	59	29.4%	97	48.3%	21	10.4%	201	100.0%
Owning a second home and long-term empty property	5	13.9%	9	25.0%	15	41.7%	7	19.4%	36	100.0%
Total	2,752	37.5%	1,964	26.8%	1,740	23.7%	874	11.9%	7,330	100.0%

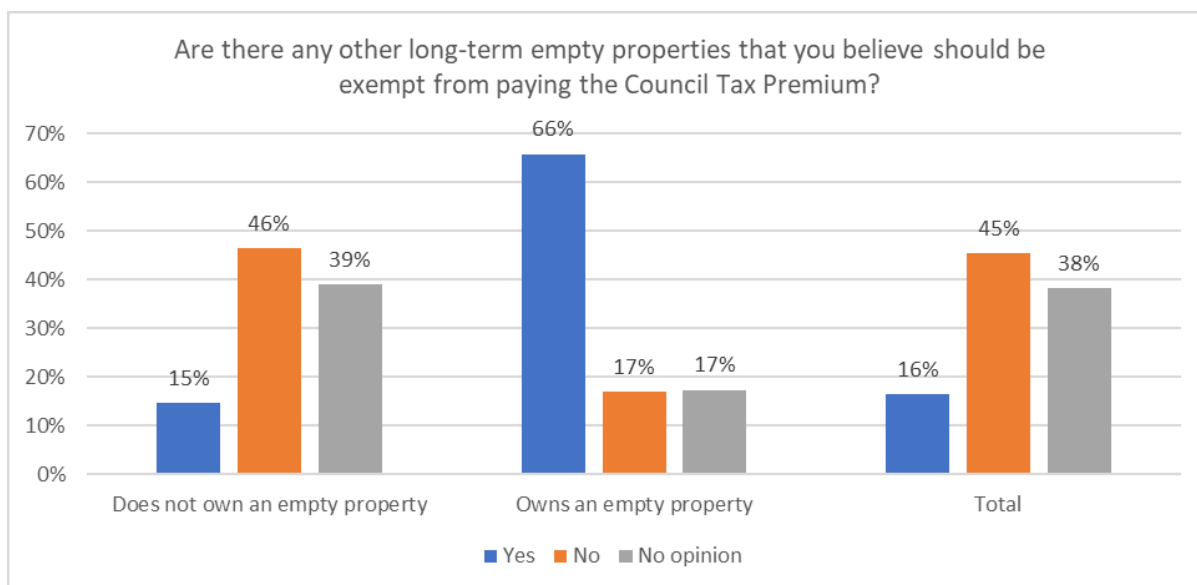
4.8 Are there other long-term empty properties that you believe should be exempt from paying the Council Tax Premium?

The following long-term empty properties are statutorily exempt from being subject to the Premium:

- Dwellings being marketed for sale – time-limited for one year
- Dwellings being marketed for let – time-limited for one year
- Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling
- Dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation

Respondents had an opportunity to consider whether any type of other long-term empty property needed to be added to the list. 16.3% (N=1,196) of respondents rated this as necessary, with 45.4% (N=3,329) indicating no need to add to the list and 38.3% (N=2,805) not having an opinion.

As shown in the chart below respondents owning long-term empty properties were more likely than other respondents to suggest premium exemptions, with 65.8% (N=156) of all long-term empty property owners reporting this compared to 14.7% (N=1,040) of all other respondents.



"Do not own long-term empty property" includes respondents who owned a second home (but not a long-term empty property), as well as respondents who did not own either

"Owning a long-term empty property" includes all respondents who owned long-term empty properties, whether or not they also owned a second home

4.9 Note any other long-term empty properties that you believe should be exempt from paying the Council Tax Premium

Those who identified the need to add to the exemption list had a chance to detail this. Of the 1,196 who reported "Yes", 92.7% (N=1,109) detailed that in comments.

Comment	Number of comments	% of number who gave comments
Properties undergoing major renovations (difficult to get workers)	230	20.7%
Inherited/"probate" properties	188	17.0%
Empty due to having to go to care/hospital	111	10.0%
Properties that have been for sale/for rent for a long time	95	8.6%
Need to increase the exemption period to more than 12months	89	8.0%
Properties that are not fit for habitation	79	7.1%
All long-term empty properties	78	7.0%
Holiday accommodation	49	4.4%
Second homes in use	48	4.3%
Agree with list	39	3.5%

Empty properties that are part of the main home and difficult to separate for sale/rent e.g. farm properties	36	3.2%
Property has been owned by the family for generations	34	3.1%
Property awaiting planning permission/change of use / through the courts	32	2.9%
Welsh owned property/local person	30	2.7%
Properties where the owner has had to go away to work but plans to return in the future	26	2.3%
Properties with historic/listed value	26	2.3%
Empty property with business involved	16	1.4%
Properties not receiving services from the Council	15	1.4%
No more tax should be levied on any property whether empty or not	14	1.3%
Need better definition of "long term"	12	1.1%
Eto it void where the owner intends to come to live permanently in the future	12	1.1%
Empty property owned by charity/community	10	0.9%
Powers for the Council to compel someone to sell the property to them if it has been empty for a certain period	9	0.8%
Property with restrictions or deeds of covenant	9	0.8%
Empty property owned by pensioners	8	0.7%
Property where a holiday home was the original purpose	7	0.6%
Static caravans / chalet/annex	5	0.5%
Empty property because the owner is in jail	3	0.3%
Empty houses in multiple occupation (HMO)	3	0.3%
Need to look at each request individually	3	0.3%
Properties that have been empty for less than 5 years	2	0.2%
Properties where people have owned them for years e.g. 10 years	2	0.2%
Property owner with disability or long-term illness	1	0.1%
Commercial properties	1	0.1%
Need to charge premium on empty commercial buildings	1	0.1%
Don't agree with the list - annex shouldn't be excluded	1	0.1%

4.10 Please provide any other comments you have about long-term empty properties

Of the respondents, 32.9% (N=2,415) gave further comments about long term empty dwellings.

Comment	Number of comments	% of number who gave comments
With such a shortage of housing in the area needing to encourage/motivate owners of long-term empty properties to sell/rent to local people	477	19.8%
Compulsory Purchase by the Council after a certain period of property being empty - developing into homes for local people	306	12.7%
Has the Council spoken to owners of empty properties to understand why it is empty rather than raising the premium - need to decide the premium level case by case	274	11.3%
Long term empty properties can be messy and have an impact on neighbouring properties/image of the area/vandalism	260	10.8%
Long-term empty properties much more of a problem for communities than second homes	259	10.7%
Premium is a good idea but there must be exceptions e.g. when someone has to go into a care home/go through "probate"/major renovations	238	9.9%
Long-term empty properties no help to local economy	200	8.3%
The premium should force owners to do something with them	152	6.3%
Need to increase the exemption period - more than 12 months	127	5.3%
Grants for local people to develop empty properties	122	5.1%
Council's lazy way to raise money instead of looking at their spending	98	4.1%
Need a better definition of "long term" and the difference between a second home/holiday accommodation and an empty property	97	4.0%
Long-term empty properties have impact on local community and Welsh language	93	3.9%
Figures on the number of empty properties in Gwynedd would have been useful in answering the consultation	80	3.3%
This will lead to more empty properties being put on the market	78	3.2%
Now is not the time to raise council tax - the cost of living high enough already	77	3.2%
Empty properties become harder to sell/rent due to economic situation	71	2.9%
It will have a negative impact on tourism	69	2.9%
Raising the premium may have the opposite effect to what it intends to have	64	2.7%
Premium would be a barrier to investment/expenditure in the area	59	2.4%

Many of these empty properties are not going to be suitable for housing needs in the community, including young families	56	2.3%
Need to ensure that some do not take advantage of the exemptions to avoid paying extra tax	49	2.0%
Gwynedd Council needs to focus on creating more jobs in the area	46	1.9%
Long-term empty properties where there are no improvement or sale plans should pay the premium	45	1.9%
The Council should have built far more affordable homes than they have done	42	1.7%
Is there evidence that the 100% premium is invested in the communities?	41	1.7%
Need to look at planning rules - making it easier to bring empty properties back into use / regulations that only allow local people	40	1.7%
The premium should remain 100%	39	1.6%
Questionnaire biased and narrow and not unbiased	34	1.4%
Further legislations are needed to protect property for the benefit of local communities and individuals and not punish them	33	1.4%
Some empty properties have been in family ownership for centuries	31	1.3%
Premium goes against human rights /racist	31	1.3%
People should be helped to renovate ruins	29	1.2%
Need to focus on empty commercial properties first	27	1.1%
Some empty properties bought for future living	26	1.1%
Empty properties should pay less council tax and not more - receive no services	20	0.8%
The Council should help owners bring properties into use rather than penalise them: co-operation	20	0.8%
Empty properties could not be faulted for a decline in the Welsh language	17	0.7%
Premium not fair if it's not used the same throughout the country	16	0.7%
Need to make clear/sufficient notice when the changes will happen	15	0.6%
Premium should be payable by locals identically	13	0.5%
Strict rules for landlords stop them renting the houses to people	12	0.5%
Properties furnished despite being uninhabited should not be included	11	0.5%
Raising the premium would have a negative impact on the economy	10	0.4%
Council tax should be levied on caravans that are re-homes	7	0.3%
This will lead to more empty properties turning into holiday accommodation	7	0.3%
Raising the premium would not have much impact in itself on the use of empty properties	6	0.2%
Raising the premium will create more work for Council staff e.g. going after non-paying	4	0.2%

Empty properties not a huge problem in the area	4	0.2%
Offer a different premium percentage	2	0.1%
No one from outside Gwynedd should be allowed to consult on Council Tax policy	1	0.0%
Changing property names to English names should not be allowed	1	0.0%
The premium should be dependent on income testing	1	0.0%

Appendix: Equality Questions

1. Sex

Category	Number	Percentage
Woman / Female	3,162	43.1%
Man / Male	3,491	47.6%
I identify in a different way:	25	0.3%
I prefer not to say	652	8.9%
Total Responses	7,330	100.0%

2. Age

Category	Number	Percentage
15 years old or younger	1	0.0%
16 - 24 years old	106	1.4%
25 - 34 years old	428	5.8%
35 - 44 years old	772	10.5%
45 - 54 years old	1,474	20.1%
55 - 64 years old	1,806	24.6%
65 - 74 years old	1,405	19.2%
75 - 84 years old	626	8.5%
85+ years old	101	1.4%
I prefer not to say	611	8.3%
Total Responses	7,330	100.0%

3. Nationality or national identity

Category	Number	Percentage
Scottish	41	0.6%
Welsh	2,556	34.9%
Northern Irish	20	0.3%
British	2,111	28.8%
English	1,702	23.2%
Other	249	3.4%
I prefer not to say	651	8.9%
Total Responses	7,330	100.0%

4. Race

Category	Number	Percentage
Asian	15	0.2%
Mixed / several ethnic groups	50	0.7%
Black / African Caribbean	7	0.1%
White	6,319	86.2%
Gypsy / Irish Traveller	1	0.0%
Other	52	0.7%
I prefer not to say	886	12.1%
Total Responses	7,330	100.0%

5. Religion

Category	Number	Percentage
Buddhist	15	0.2%
Christian	3,744	51.1%
Hindu	3	0.0%
Jewish	9	0.1%
Muslim	8	0.1%
Sikh	2	0.0%
No religion	2,249	30.7%
Other	115	1.6%
I prefer not to say	1,185	16.2%
Total Responses	7,330	100.0%

6. Sexuality

Category	Number	Percentage
Bisexual	49	0.7%
Gay man	61	0.8%
Gay woman / lesbian	28	0.4%
Heterosexual / Straight	5,660	77.2%
Other	109	1.5%
I prefer not to say	1,377	18.8%
Did not answer	46	0.6%
Total Responses	7,330	100.0%

7. Has your gender identification changed from that assigned to you at birth?

Category	Number	Percentage
No	6,086	83.0%
Yes	89	1.2%
I prefer not to say	1,076	14.7%
Did not answer	79	1.1%
Total Responses	7,330	100.0%

8. Disability

Category	Number	Percentage
No	5,989	81.7%
Yes	366	5.0%
I prefer not to say	975	13.3%
Total Responses	7,330	100.0%

9. Welsh Language skills

Category*	Number	Percentage
Speak Welsh	2,593	35.4%
Understand spoken Welsh	2,591	35.3%
Read Welsh	2,024	27.6%
Write in Welsh	1,670	22.8%
I can't understand Welsh	1,741	23.8%
I prefer not to say	1,580	21.6%
Other	229	3.1%

**could choose more than one category*

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Assessing the Impact on Protected Characteristics, the Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Disadvantage

For help to complete this form see the *How to Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment* leaflet. You are also welcome to contact Delyth Gadlys Williams, Policy and Equality Officer on ext. 32708 or DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru for further assistance.

The Council's is required (under the Equality Act 2010) to consider the effect any change in policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), has on people with protected equality characteristics. The Council also has a general duty to ensure fairness and foster good relations. A timely Equality Impact Assessment must be undertaken before making any decision on any relevant change (i.e. which has an effect on people with protected characteristics).

The Council is also required, under the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011) to consider the effect of a change in any policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), in its 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 the Welsh language.

From April 1st 2021 the Council has a duty to have due regard to tackling socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decisions.

I) Details

I.1. What is the name of the policy / service in question?

Council Tax Premium on Long-term Empty Dwellings and Second Homes

I.2 What is the purpose of the policy / service that is being created or amended? What changes are being considered?

Between April 2018 and March 2021 the Council charged a premium of 50% on the Council Tax of second homes and long-term empty dwellings, and since 1 April 2021 the Premium level has increased to 100%. From 1 April 2023 the legislation will change and the Council will have the right to increase the Premium to 300%.

The full Council will need to make its decision at the Premium level for the 2023/24 financial year at its meeting on 1 December 2022 based on a recommendation to be decided by Cabinet at its meeting on 22 November.

At its meeting on 27 September 2022, Cabinet agreed to hold a public consultation on how it should respond to the change of legislation enabling the Council to increase the level of Premium beyond the current 100%.

The purpose of the policy is for a discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium to be a vehicle to assist local authorities to:

1. restore the use of long-term empty homes in order to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and
2. assist local authorities in increasing the supply of affordable housing and improving the sustainability of local communities.

At its December 2024 meeting the Council decided to raise a premium of 150% on second homes and 100% on long-term empty properties.

The Council at its meeting on 4 December 2025 will be required to decide on the premium rate for 2026/27. The Connaught is considering keeping the second home premium at 150% but increasing the premium on long-term empty properties.

I.3 Who is responsible for this assessment?

Dewi Morgan, Head of Finance

I.4 When did you commence the assessment? Which version is this?

15 December 2020. This assessment began after Cabinet decided that it would undertake a public consultation to ascertain public opinion on the proposal to change the Premium rate.

The assessment has been reviewed and updated in November 2021 to take account of the duty to have due regard to tackling socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decisions.

It has been modified and updated again in October / November 2022 to take into account the results of the public consultation launched in September 2022.

The assessment was updated in October 2025

2) Action

2.1 Who are the stakeholders or partners you need to work with to undertake this assessment?

The Council has the power under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) to adjust the Level of Premium by up to 300% from 1 April 2023 onwards, after the Act was amended by *The Council Tax (Long-term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022 (SI 2022/370 W.90)*. The previous maximum was 100%. However, it is an explicit expectation that we should consult with the public and key stakeholders. A public consultation was held, with attention given in the local press and on social websites, and the Council wrote to owners of properties subject to the Premium.

The partners and key stakeholders were:

Gwynedd Residents

Taxpayers on empty properties and second homes

There was collaboration with several internal partners, e.g.:

Finance Department

Corporate Support Department

Gwynedd Council Cabinet Members

Full Council

Housing and Property Department

2.2 What measures have you taken to engage with people with equality characteristics, regarding the Welsh language or with communities (either of place or of need) that live with socio-economic disadvantage?

We have endeavoured to identify individuals with protected characteristics as the public consultation asks respondents to inform us of any protected characteristics so that these can be taken into account in the development of the policy.

The consultation was public and the questionnaire was available to anyone to complete online. Two press releases raising awareness of it were issued, and social media was used to raise awareness.

The Council wrote to all households subject to the Premium with a letter drawing their attention to the consultation. Where the different correspondence address was recorded in the Council Tax system, this was used. The letter referred to the Council's website and the opportunity to complete the questionnaire there, but the Council's website stated that anyone could contact the Council if they wished to receive a paper copy of the consultation.

2.3 What was the result of the engagement?

A public consultation was held between 30 September and 28 October 2022. 7,330 responses were received on the formal questionnaire, as well as around 100 separate letters and messages expressing dissatisfaction with the proposal. 7,330 responses were received to the questionnaire. There were 7,277 online questionnaire responses and 53 paper responses. This is the largest number of responses the Council has seen to any consultation in recent years.

Just over half of respondents (50.3%, N=3,684) owned either a second home or a long-term empty dwelling in Gwynedd (or both).

In total, three-quarters of respondents (75.0%, N=5,497) considered it not appropriate to increase the level of Council Tax Premium on second homes. 24.1% (N=1,764) thought it appropriate to increase it, with 0.9% (N=69) not having an opinion. However by separating the answers between respondents who own a second home and those who do not, there is some difference of opinion with the overwhelming majority of respondents who own a second home opposing increasing the premium level. Among respondents who do not own a second home the view was more divided, but with this majority also of the opinion that it would not be appropriate to increase the premium.

Respondents' comments were sought on the impact of the Premium on a number of aspects of social issues. A number of those who opposed the increase indicated that they had owned their property in Gwynedd for several years, and were very fond of the area. On the other hand, some of those responding claimed that there was a racist motive behind the intention to increase the Premium as the Council is against people from outside Gwynedd and that it is racist. No evidence was submitted to support this view.

There are two different categories of properties subject to the Premium, namely second homes and long-term empty properties.

Very few people want to pay more tax, and there was vehement opposition from second home owners in particular. It stands to reason that increasing the level of premium would have a financial impact on these individuals, but there was no evidence that any protected group would be affected. However, a number of those who have responded to the enquiry claim that the policy of raising the Premium is racist, anti-English, although no discrimination exists when setting the premium.

The consultation included an equality questionnaire. This suggested that a higher proportion of second home owners than the general population are older people.

In total the majority of respondents (72.9%, N=5,342) thought that long-term empty properties were currently having a negative impact on local communities, while 16.2% (N=1,191) thought they were not having an impact and 1.3% (N=96) thought they were having a positive impact. 9.6% (N=701) of respondents had no opinion on this.

2.4 On the basis of what other evidence are you operating?

The Equality Act 2010 allows the Council to act positively towards some cohorts if there is evidence of need ("take action to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these differ from the needs of others"). Several studies by the Council have identified that there is a problem with the availability of housing for young families in Gwynedd, so we have identified a problem and are taking steps to deal with that. Young people have been priced out of the local housing market.

On 9 November 2022 there were

- **4,564** dwellings subject to the Premium on second homes (Class B)
- **229** of further second homes in Class B but not paying the Premium as they were subject to one of the exemptions outlined in Part 8 below.
- **753** properties within Class A where occupation is prohibited for a consecutive period of at least 28 days in the relevant year.

At the same time, **1,099** properties were subject to the Premium on a long-term empty dwelling.

In June 2025 there were 1,121 long-term vacant properties (vacant for over 12 months) in the county as follows:

vacant for between 1 and 3 years	vacant for between 3 and 5 years	has been vacant for more than 5 years.
574	231	316

Study on the Effect of Holiday Homes

A key consideration by the Council when setting the Premium for 2023/24 will be the detailed report Holiday Homes Research Work that was submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 15 December 2020:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s27960/Item%208%20-%20Report%20Holiday%20Homes.pdf>

This follows a similar study carried out in 2013.

This report shows that the total number of holiday homes (second homes and self-catering holiday units) within Gwynedd continues to increase, and asks for the Cabinet's commitment to take decisive action to address the situation.

The study is the result of detailed research that has been undertaken over recent months, and highlights that there are a number of factors that influence Gwynedd's housing stock. It builds on studies that have been undertaken in the past and highlights that there are pressing issues

that continue to need attention, and that the situation within Gwynedd communities, particularly those that attract visitors, is intensifying.

Whilst the scope of the study also extends to planning issues, leading attention is given to the financial incentive that exists of owning a holiday home as well as the taxation advantage that exists of meeting the legal thresholds for transferring property to the non-domestic rates regime (these properties are not subject to the premium).

Property Values

Second home Council Tax bands are generally higher than Gwynedd properties as a whole. In October 2022, 32.1% of Gwynedd's second homes were in Council Tax Band E or above, compared with 22.1% of Gwynedd properties overall. On the other hand, long-term empty property bands are lower. Only 17.6% of these properties are in band E or above.

One of the themes emerging from the consultation was that a number of second homes were a family home that had been inherited and retained by the family, or that the property had been owned by the family as a second home for a number of years.

2.5 Are there any gaps in the evidence that needs to be collected?

Apart from the sense of some respondents that Gwynedd Council is generally racist by considering raising the Premium and then increasing it, no evidence has been received to support that as studies have been undertaken suggesting that action is needed to address housing problems in rural areas of Gwynedd.

3) Identifying the Impact

3.1 The Council must give due regard to the effect any changes will have on people with the equality characteristics noted below. What impact will the new policy/service or the proposed changes in the policy or service have on people with these characteristics?

Characteristics	What type of impact?*	In what way? What is the evidence?
Race (including nationality)	Positive	The policy of charging a premium is intended to address the situation that housing is not available to local people, and the impact is positive on this cohort.
	Negative	<p>The policy will affect people from outside Gwynedd and some respondents to the public consultation claim that the Policy would be racist as it targets people from outside Wales. However, there is no consideration of the race of the property owners when a premium is charged on second homes and long-term empty properties.</p> <p>The Premium is charged on all second homes and long-term empty properties without in any way discriminating on where the owners live or what their race or nationality is. However, we recognise that the public consultation shows that a significant proportion of second home owners identify themselves as English and therefore it is likely that the policy will have a negative financial impact on this cohort. However, the money will be used to develop the housing market for local People, which is a positive outcome.</p>
Disability	Insignificant	There is a small possibility of differentiation indirectly on the grounds of disability if a disabled person keeps an

		adapted property in Gwynedd as they cannot have a holiday elsewhere.
Sex	None	No impact has been identified
Age	Positive	<p>A 2013 study showed that the demographic makeup of communities with high proportions of second homes was different; in general, the resident population is 'older'. This affects the balance of communities and will have an impact on the future resilience and sustainability of these areas.</p> <p>It went on to note that the profiles of second home owners themselves suggested that they were generally middle-aged or retired, and richer than the national average. Shelter (2011) (<i>Taking Stock, an assessment of under-utilisation of housing stock in England</i>) estimated that 60% of second home owners nationally were aged between 45 and 60 compared with 40% across all owner-occupied in this age group. The responses from the current public consultation have suggested the same.</p> <p>Therefore, there is evidence that the financial losers are older, but it is expected that older people living in the relevant areas throughout the year will benefit as local society will be more resilient and sustainable.</p> <p>However, there is strong evidence that care providers face serious recruitment difficulties. Achieving community balance is vital to getting enough younger people to protect and care for older people, and the policy of raising a Premium is intended to help young people stay in the local area by being able to provide them with homes locally. Overall, therefore, the policy will have a positive impact as it helps young families to have a home. This will then have a more positive than negative impact on community balance.</p>
Sexual orientation	None	No impact has been identified
Religion or belief (or non-belief)	None	No impact has been identified
Gender reassignment	None	No impact has been identified
Pregnancy and maternity	None	No impact has been identified

Marriage and civil partnership	None	No impact has been identified
The Welsh language	Positive	<p>There will be an indirect impact on the language as the purpose of charging a premium is to encourage owners of long-term empty properties and second homes to return the property to the local housing stock, or to pay additional Council Tax. Premium yield to date has been used to meet local housing needs. Supporting the Welsh language is, therefore, a core part of this policy.</p> <p>In particular, there will be a positive impact on the balance of communities as premium products fund the Housing Action Plan which supports local families to buy an affordable home.</p>
Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Positive	<p>When resolving in February 2021 to recommend to the full Council that the Premium level should be increased to 100%, members of the Cabinet noted that there was a housing crisis within the county. The principle that the Council was eager for residents to have homes in their own communities was emphasised, in order to ensure thriving communities. It was added that housing was a priority and that it was a requirement to ensure additional resources in order to implement the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>The powers to raise a premium was introduced through the Housing (Wales) Act and the statutory guidelines note:</p> <p><i>The discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help local authorities to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and</i> • <i>support local authorities in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.</i>

3.2 The Council has a duty under the 2010 Equality Act to contribute positively to a fairer society by promoting equality and good relations in its activities regarding the following characteristics – age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, gender reassignment, disability and pregnancy and maternity. The Council must give due attention to the way any change affects these duties.

General Duties of the Equality Act	Does it have an impact?*	In what way? What is the evidence?
Abolishing illegal discrimination, harassment and victimisation	No	
Promoting equal opportunities	Yes	This will provide equal opportunity for local people who are currently unable to afford a home. The current housing situation is unequal and the decision is intended to stabilise and rectify this situation.
Encouraging good relationships	Yes	<p>The policy of charging a Premium can promote good relationships with people within the communities of Gwynedd if the Policy gives them the opportunity to have a better home, or a first home, as the number of holiday homes and empty dwellings is found to have a detrimental effect on the ability of local people to have a place to live. A policy of charging a Council Tax Premium on second homes and empty dwellings can improve relationships if Gwynedd residents feel that the policy helps them to have a better chance of having a home in their local area.</p> <p>Some second home owners have claimed in their consultation response that increasing the level of the Premium will cause community ill feeling, but there is no evidence to support this claim. The current disparity is more likely to create resentment.</p>

3.3 How does your proposal ensure that you work in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011), to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English and that you seize every opportunity to promote the Welsh language (beyond providing services bilingually) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?

As noted in 3.1 above, there will be a positive impact on the balance of communities as the premium yield funds the Housing Action Plan which supports local families to buy an affordable home.

3.4 What other measures or changes could you include to strengthen or change the policy / practice in order to have a positive impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language, and to reduce or prevent any adverse effects that the policy / practice may have on the Welsh language?

This is a taxation policy, and we believe that the current policy goes to the best of our legal and statutory ability in that regard in terms of a positive impact on the language.

3.5 How does the proposal show that you have had due regard to the need to address inequality caused by socio-economic disadvantage? (Note that this is about closing inequality gaps rather than just improving outcomes for everyone)?

The Council has adopted a Housing Action Plan in December 2020 which includes a range of projects in place to make use of Premium products to tackle socio-economic disadvantage. The underlying principle is that those who can afford several properties help the most vulnerable in society who cannot get homes at all. The projects in the Housing Action Plan that make use of Premium funding are:

- Supported housing for the homeless schemes
- Supported housing for homeless young people
- Self-contained units for individuals with intensive social needs
- Support packages for private landlords
- Accommodation and extra support in Arfon
- Build more social housing than what can be funded through the social housing grant
- Develop our own housing in order to increase the opportunities for Gwynedd residents to compete in the housing market.
- Consult with communities to establish their housing needs
- Self-build plots

- First Time Buyers' Grants to renovate empty houses
- Council Tax Exemption on empty houses for first time buyers
- Homebuy scheme
- Finding and purchasing land for building in the future
- Residential element in community regeneration schemes
- Set up a new Energy Conservation service for home-owners in order to contribute towards our aspiration to address the climate crisis.
- Innovative Housing Pilot Scheme
- Funding the financial deficit in business cases for innovative housing
- Supported housing – youth
- Extra care housing for the elderly
- Supported Housing – adults with profound needs
- Suitable homes for children with severe physical needs
- Frondeg, Caernarfon
- Interest-free loans to improve housing conditions
- One-stop shop for Housing matters

3.6 What other measures or changes might you include to strengthen or change the policy / practice to show that you have had due regard to the need to reduce disproportionate outcomes as a result of socio-economic disadvantage, in accordance with the Socio-Economic Act?

We believe that the policy already shows a total commitment to giving due regard to the need to reduce unequal outcomes as a result of socio-economic disadvantage and that other measures or changes are not needed.

4) Analysing the Results

4.1 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, positive impact on any of the above and what is the reason for this?

One of the main outcomes of the Premium is the funding of the Housing Action Plan. This scheme will address social disparity within Gwynedd. The Equality Impact Assessment completed during the preparation of the Housing Action Plan sets out the very positive steps that will result from the implementation of the Scheme, with the financial support of the Premium:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s27958/Item%206%20-%20Appendix%20B%20-%20Equality%20Impact%20Reprt.pdf>

The Premium is intended to aim to reduce inequality within the communities of Gwynedd, and contributes to that by funding specific projects.

Details of an assessment of the Well-being of Future Generations Act can be found in the body of the Cabinet report.

4.2 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, negative impact on any of the above and what is the reason for this?

Two specific cohorts of the population will be subject to the Premium, namely second home owners, and owners of long-term empty homes.

It should be noted that consultation responses, together with national studies strongly suggest that second home owners tend to be older people. A number of the consultation responses suggest that some of these older owners are "asset rich / cash poor". That is, they have bought the property for several years or inherited it, but their income is not necessarily high. This ultimately raises a very small amount of doubt if the Council is fulfilling its statutory duties, but that must be weighed against the poverty, unemployment and homelessness in rural Gwynedd. According to the Housing Action Plan, 59% of Gwynedd residents have been priced out of the market in Gwynedd.

A number of the responses to the public consultation have stated that this Policy is racist as it targets individuals living outside Wales. However, the Premium is charged to all properties that are second or long-term empty properties without considering ownership. A significant proportion of second home owners identify themselves as English, and increasing the Premium would have a negative financial impact on this cohort.

Case law has established that indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons of a racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

In making a decision on the Premium, therefore, one must be aware of the possibility that indirect discrimination exists. Although it is property use that means if a Premium is payable on it or not, not its ownership, the outcome of the consultation suggests that owners of such properties tend to be English and older people and it is necessary to be aware of the risk of indirect discrimination against these cohorts. However, the Equality Act 2010 states that this is legal if the policy is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, and in this case it is a means of realising a positive action, namely tackling the housing crisis for local people.

4.3 What should be done?

Choose one of the following:

Continue with the policy / service as it is robust	
Adapt the policy to delete any barriers	
Suspend and delete the policy as the detrimental impacts are too big	
Continue with the policy as any detrimental impact can be justified	✓
No further action at this time because it is too soon to decide, or there is insufficient evidence	

4.4 If continuing with the project, what steps will you take to reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?

There is some evidence that increasing the premium on second homes would be discriminate against a protected group, with data suggesting that second home owners tend to be older people and identify themselves as English. The policy in relation to Council Tax Premium is intended to recognise that long-term empty properties and second homes increase some of Gwynedd's social problems, and the owners should make a financial contribution to alleviate some of the disadvantages they cause.

There is a claim that the policy of raising the Premium is racist because of where second home owners live, but a number of those who have answered the consultation note that Welsh people own a property in Gwynedd while their main home is outside Wales. The Premium will be charged based on the characteristics of the property, not the characteristics of the owner and there is a positive impact if local families can afford to buy a property in their local area rather than having to move away to get a home. There is recognition that there is a negative financial impact on people living outside Gwynedd, with a large number of them identifying themselves as English. In line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, increasing the level of the Premium is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, which is to fund a Housing Action Plan that addresses some of the damage that second homes and empty dwellings cause to the communities of Gwynedd.

4.5 If you are not taking any further action to delete or reduce the negative impacts, explain why here.

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The level of premium is ultimately a political issue, taken on the basis of the evidence available. Elected members will reach a decision on the appropriate balance between the additional cost to owners of second homes and long-term empty properties and the associated incentive of bringing properties back into use, against the social well-being that would result from the ability to realise specific schemes to address social disparity.

5) Monitoring

5.1 What steps will you take to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the policy or service (action plan)?

The setting of the Premium level will require an annual decision by the full Council. The Finance Department will continue to keep track of changes to the status of long-term empty properties and second homes, and act as necessary to assess if there are equality issues behind transfer to non-domestic rating.



GUIDANCE

Council Tax on empty and second homes

Guidance for local authorities on council tax premiums on long-term empty properties and second homes.

First published: 9 March 2023

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Introduction

Since 1 April 2017, local authorities in Wales have been able to charge a premium of up to 100% of the standard rate of council tax on long-term empty dwellings and dwellings occupied periodically (more commonly referred to as second homes) in their areas. From 1 April 2023, the maximum level at which local authorities can set council tax premiums will increase to 300%. The powers given to local authorities are discretionary so whether to charge a premium on long-term empty properties or second homes (or both) is, therefore a decision to be made by each local authority.

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure a fair and consistent approach is applied across Wales and assist local authorities:

- in their decisions to charge or amend a premium in their local area
- with the administration and enforcement of premiums
- the application of the exceptions
- monitoring and reporting the use of premiums

All local authorities in Wales must have regard to any guidance issued by Welsh Ministers when determining a premium on the standard rate of council tax as set out in sections 12A (3) and 12B (4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ('the 1992 Act') as inserted by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act').

This guidance should not be treated as an interpretation of the legislation. The interpretation of legislation is in the first instance a matter for the local authority, with definitive interpretation being the responsibility of the courts.

Part 1: implementation of the council tax premium on long term empty dwellings and

dwelling periodically occupied in Wales

Legal framework for the council tax premiums

This section sets out the legal framework which is common to both the premium on long-term empty dwellings and on dwellings periodically occupied. Specific requirements for long-term empty properties are set out in Section 12A, and those specific to dwellings periodically occupied are detailed Section 12B.

Sections 12A and 12B to enable a billing authority (a county council or county borough council) in Wales to disapply any discount granted to long-term empty dwellings and dwellings occupied periodically and apply a higher amount of council tax (a premium).

The Council Tax (Long-term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022 ('the 2022 Regulations') amended sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act increasing the higher amount of council tax a billing authority (a county council or county borough council) in Wales can apply to long-term empty dwellings and dwellings occupied periodically to 300% for the 2023 to 2024 financial year and for subsequent years.

Where a determination to charge a premium is made, a local authority must publish a notice of the determination in at least 1 newspaper circulating in its area within 21 days of the date of the determination.

A determination by a billing authority to charge a premium will also disapply any discount that is granted under section 11(2)(a) of the 1992 Act for dwellings in which there are no residents.

A billing authority can make, vary, or revoke a determination made under sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act, but only before the beginning of the financial year to which the determination applies. In using these powers, a billing

authority can also determine the types or classes of properties within the categories of long-term empty dwellings or second homes to which they will apply a premium. This enables each authority to tailor its determination to local circumstances.

The Welsh Ministers also have powers under section 12A(4) and 12A(5), and 12B(5) and 12B(6) of the 1992 Act to prescribe through regulations certain classes of dwelling which may not be subject to a premium. The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts Wales) Regulations 2015 prescribe the exceptions and are detailed later in this guidance.

The council tax system already provides several specific exemptions from council tax. The exempt groups are set out in the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 (as amended). There are several exemptions in place for unoccupied dwellings, for example:

- where the resident is in long-term residential care or hospital
- where a dwelling is being structurally repaired (for up to 1 year)
- where the resident has died (for up to 6 months after the grant of probate or letters of administration)

A dwelling that is exempt from council tax is not liable for a premium. However, where a dwelling is no longer eligible for an exemption, but remains unoccupied, it will become liable for the premium where 1 is applied. In the case of an empty dwelling, it will become liable for a premium after it has been empty for a continuous period of 1 year, and this will include the period that any exemption has been applied.

Section 12A: higher amount for long-term empty dwellings

A long-term empty dwelling is defined for the purpose of this section as a

dwelling which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least 1 year.

The furnishing or occupation of a dwelling for 1 or more periods of 6 weeks or less during the year will not affect its status as a long-term empty dwelling. In other words, a person cannot alter a dwelling's status as a long-term empty dwelling by taking up residence or installing furniture for a short period.

Where a local authority makes a determination to charge a premium on long-term empty dwellings, it may specify different percentages for different dwellings based on the length of time for which they have been empty. This enables local authorities to take a stepped approach, with incremental increases applying over time.

Section 12B: higher amount for dwellings periodically occupied

A second home is defined for the purpose of this section as a dwelling which is not a person's sole or main home and is substantially furnished. These dwellings are referred to in the 1992 Act as dwellings occupied periodically but they are commonly referred to as 'second homes'.

For a premium to apply to dwellings occupied periodically, a billing authority must make its first determination under section 12B at least 1 year before the beginning of the financial year to which the premium relates.

From here on the guidance will refer to long-term empty properties and second homes.

Making a determination to charge the council tax premiums on long-term empty properties and/or second

homes

The discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help:

- bring long-term empty properties back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes
- support local authorities in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities

Local authorities can apply premiums to long-term empty properties or second homes or both and can set different levels of premium for each class.

The powers were deliberately designed as discretionary powers to allow local authorities to tailor their use to address local priorities and reflect the different patterns of housing availability and need across Wales.

There are a range of factors which could help inform local authorities in deciding whether to charge a premium. Whilst some factors will be specific to either long-term empty properties or second homes, others will be common to both. A list of these factors is set out below to assist local authorities. It is not intended to be exhaustive.

- Numbers and percentages of long-term empty properties and/or second homes in the local area.
- Distribution of long-term empty properties and/or second homes and other housing throughout the authority and an assessment of their impact on property values in particular areas.
- Potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry.
- Patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes.
- Potential impact on local public services.
- Potential impact on the local community.

- Potential impact on the Welsh language.
- Other measures that are available to authorities to increase housing supply and the availability of affordable housing.
- Other measures that are available to authorities to help bring empty properties back into use.

The determination by a local authority to charge a premium under section 12A or 12B of the 1992 Act will usually be part of the budget-setting process as it is likely to affect tax-setting and spending decisions. It will therefore normally be a decision made by full Council. Prior to doing so, a local authority must give due consideration to its statutory duties to carry out equality impact assessments under the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh public sector equality Duty which came into force in 2011 and to all other relevant considerations. This will include consideration of how its policy meets the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and contribute specifically to the objectives of a prosperous Wales; a more equal Wales; and a Wales of cohesive communities.

Local authorities should also be mindful of the timing of any decisions to introduce or vary a premium for a financial year. Any change to a premium will alter an authority's revenue plans and should be taken into account in its budget-setting. A local authority is normally expected to reflect its proposed tax-base, including all discounts and premiums, by the end of December for the forthcoming financial year, so any decisions made after this point pose risks to the credibility of published data and could lead to criticism.

A local authority should consider how it engages and consults with key stakeholders, including the local electorate and second homeowners, before taking a decision to charge a premium.

Local authorities are strongly encouraged to consult before making a first determination to charge a premium. For second homes, the first determination to charge a premium must be made at least 12 months before the beginning of the

financial year to which the proposed premium relates. The same does not apply to empty properties but as a dwelling must be empty for at least 12 months before a premium can apply, the Welsh Government recommends that a first determination to apply a premium to long-term empty dwellings should be made at least 6 months before the beginning of the financial year to which the premium relates. A local authority should make a full assessment of possible impacts, including on the local population, its communities, and the local economy.

Any decision to vary or revoke a determination to apply a premium must be made before the beginning of the financial year to which it applies. Local authorities are also strongly encouraged to consult before making a determination to increase a premium to a level above 100% and to do so at least 6 months before the beginning of the financial year to which the proposed premium increase relates. This will enable the premium to be taken into account when setting council tax levels for the forthcoming year and allow taxpayers sufficient time to consider the impact of a higher premium on their own personal financial circumstances and make choices regarding their property.

Having decided to introduce or vary a premium, in addition to the requirement to publish a notice in a local newspaper within 21 days, a local authority should consider how its decision is communicated more widely, particularly to those who might be affected. This may be through the publication of press notices, providing information on website pages or via other avenues to raise awareness such as, for example, direct communication with council taxpayers who are likely to be liable for the premium. A local authority should also give consideration as to how they advise or inform those who may be affected but may reside outside the local area.

Exceptions to the council tax premiums on long-term empty properties and second homes

Sections 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act provide Welsh Ministers with powers to make regulations to prescribe 1 or more classes of dwellings in relation to which a billing authority may not make a determination to apply a premium. The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regulations 2015 are made under these powers a premium may not be charged on a dwelling that falls within an exception. A local authority must have regard to these exceptions before deciding to implement a premium.

The regulations prescribe 7 classes of exempt dwellings. Classes 1, 2, 3 and 4 apply to both long-term empty properties and second homes. Classes 5, 6, and 7 apply only to second homes. The classes of dwelling are outlined below.

Class 1: dwellings being marketed for sale or where an offer to buy the dwelling has been accepted, time-limited for 1 year

Application

Long-term empty properties and second homes.

Class 2: dwellings being marketed for let or where an offer to rent has been accepted, time-limited for 1 year

Application

Long-term empty properties and second homes.

Class 3: annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling

Application

Long-term empty properties and second homes.

Class 4: dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation

Application

Long-term empty properties and second homes.

Class 5: occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings

Application

Second homes.

Class 6: dwellings where by virtue of a planning condition, year-round or permanent occupation is prohibited or has been specified for use as holiday accommodation only or prevents occupancy as a person's sole or main residence

Application

Second homes.

Class 7: job-related dwellings

Application

Second homes.

Class 1: dwellings being marketed for sale

This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty properties and

on second homes. It excepts dwellings that are being marketed for sale. It also covers dwellings where an offer to buy the dwelling has been accepted but the sale has not yet been completed.

To qualify for this exception a dwelling must be on the market for sale at a reasonable price for that dwelling. In considering whether a price is reasonable, regard should be given to the sale price of comparable dwellings in the area. Additional guidance is provided in Part 2 Administration and Enforcement to assist local authorities in the application of this exception.

The exception period runs for up to 1 year from the granting of the exception. After an exception has ended, a dwelling being marketed for sale will not be eligible for a further exception period unless it has been sold.

Class 2: dwellings being marketed for let

This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty properties and second homes. It excepts dwellings that are being marketed for let. It also covers dwellings where an offer to rent has been accepted but the tenant is not yet entitled to occupy the property because the tenancy has not yet started.

To be eligible for this exception, a dwelling must be on the market for let at a reasonable rent, that is, the rent the property would be expected to fetch having regard to the rent raised on comparable dwellings. Additional guidance is provided in Part 2 Administration and Enforcement to assist local authorities in the application of this exception.

The exception period runs for up to 1 year from the granting of the exception. After the end of the exception period, a dwelling being marketed for let will not be eligible for a further exception period unless it has been subject to a tenancy that was granted for a term of 6 months or more.

Class 3: annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling

This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty properties and on second homes.

This exception applies where an owner has adapted their dwelling to provide an annexe and the annexe is now being used as part of the main dwelling.

Class 4: dwellings which would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation

This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty properties and on second homes.

This exception applies to dwellings that would be a person's sole or main residence but which is unoccupied because that person resides in armed forces accommodation.

This exception is also intended to cover armed forces personnel whose homes are unoccupied because they are living in armed forces accommodation overseas.

Class 5: occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings

This exception applies to the second home premium. It covers dwellings that consist of a pitch occupied by a caravan or a mooring occupied by a boat where the caravan or boat currently has no resident, but when next in use will be a

person's sole or main residence.

Class 6: seasonal homes or holiday lets where year-round or permanent occupation is prohibited

This exception applies to the second home premium. It is applicable to dwellings that are subject to planning conditions that prevent occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in any 12 month period.

This exception is often applied to purpose-built holiday homes or chalets which are subject to planning conditions restricting year-round occupancy or to protect local features, for example where the site is near a fragile habitat which requires protection at particular times of year. The exception is based on the definition of the existing discretionary discount for seasonal homes (Class A) in The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (Wales) Regulations 1998.

From 1 April 2023, Class 6 is extended to include every dwelling restricted by a planning condition which:

- prevents occupancy for a continuous period of at least 28 days in any 1 year period
- specifies its use as a holiday let only
- prevents occupancy as a person's sole or main residence

Class 7: job-related dwellings

This exception applies only in relation to the second home premium and applies to dwellings occupied by a person who is:

- a qualifying person in relation to the dwelling, but who is resident in another dwelling which is job-related (as defined in Schedule 1 to the Regulations)

- a qualifying person in relation to a job-related dwelling

A qualifying person is defined as:

- a person who is liable for council tax in respect of a dwelling on a particular day, whether or not jointly with another person
- a person who would be liable for the council tax in respect of a dwelling on a particular day, whether or not jointly with another person if that dwelling did not fall within Class O of the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 or Class E of the Council Tax (Liability for Owners) Regulations 1992

This exception applies where a person is required to reside in a job-related dwelling. It applies to a second home that is occupied periodically because a person is required to live in job-related accommodation elsewhere. It also applies where the job-related accommodation is a person's second home.

The definition of a job-related dwelling is given in the Schedule to the Regulations. Although this exception is similar to the job-related discount under the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (Wales) Regulations 1998, it differs because the discount only applies if the job-related dwelling is a person's sole or main residence.

Another difference from the job-related dwelling discount is that there is no requirement for the taxpayer to be liable for council tax in respect of 2 dwellings, meaning that a person who has either a main home abroad or a job-related dwelling abroad can also benefit from the exception.

Additional guidance is provided in Part 2 Administration and Enforcement to assist local authorities in the application of this exception.

Reducing liability for the council tax premiums on long-term empty properties and second homes

In exercising the power under section 12A and 12B of the 1992 Act, a billing authority may determine the particular types or classes of properties within the categories of long-term empty properties or second homes to which it will or will not apply a premium. In addition, under section 13A of the 1992 Act, billing authorities have discretionary powers to reduce council tax liability to such extent as the billing authority thinks fit. The power can be exercised in particular cases or by determining a class of cases. The power may be used to reduce council tax liability by any amount, including in circumstances where a local authority may otherwise charge a premium. Local authorities may use these powers for example to reduce or disapply a premium, and potentially as a means to target the use of premiums.

Some illustrative examples of where a local authority might consider using its powers include:

- where there are reasons why the dwelling could not be lived in as a permanent residence
- where there are reasons why a dwelling could not be sold or let
- where an offer has been accepted on a property but the sale has not yet been completed and the exception period has run out
- where the owner's use of a property is restricted by circumstances not covered by an exception from the premium
- where charging a premium might cause hardship

The above list is not exhaustive and billing authorities will want to consider all factors they think are relevant when deciding to reduce the council tax liability for a particular property or class of properties and to make an assessment of the potential impact.

Self-catering accommodation

From 1 April 2023, if a self-catering property does not meet the new letting thresholds established by the Non-Domestic Rating (Amendment of Definition of Domestic Property) (Wales) Order 2022, it will be classified as a domestic property and will be liable for council tax. Where the local authority has determined to apply a premium to second homes, the owner will also be liable to pay the additional charge unless their property falls within an exception, or the local authority has determined not to charge a premium for the type or class of property.

There may be instances where some self-catering properties that would be considered unsuitable for permanent living will become subject to council tax and a premium because they do not fall within an exception. In such instances, local authorities are encouraged to consider using their discretionary powers to tailor a determination or to reduce council tax liability to moderate the impact, in effect, reducing the premium. Retaining liability for standard rate council tax, for properties which do not meet the letting criteria, would be consistent with the aim of ensuring all property owners 'make a fair contribution' to their local communities. Some illustrative examples of where a local authority might consider using these powers include:

- outbuildings or barns converted to holiday lets as part of farm diversification
- annexes or garage conversions that form part of an owner's primary residence
- lodges, caravans or chalets

It is a matter for a local authority as to whether it uses the discretionary powers in sections 12A, 12B or 13A to reduce council tax liability in respect of a premium or to reduce the standard council tax liability, or both, as appropriate. This policy should cover a range of situations in which a local authority would consider using its discretionary powers, including properties which do not meet

the criteria to be classed as non-domestic. In the interest of fairness and transparency, a local authority should have a clear policy on whether, and how, these powers will be used. The authority should, however, consider each case on its merits having considered the circumstances of the case.

It should be noted that deliberations around the use of the discretionary section 13A powers are likely to be different when they are considered to reduce council tax liability resulting from a premium compared to reducing liability from the standard rate of council tax. This is because dwellings liable to a premium are already liable for the standard rate of council tax.

Use of additional revenue generated from the council tax premiums

A local authority will be able to retain any additional funds generated by implementing the premiums and amendments to the calculation of the council tax tax-base have been made to facilitate this. Adjustments will be made to allow for the increase in the maximum premium which may be applied from 1 April 2023. Authorities may use the additional revenue for any purpose, but they are encouraged to use it to help to meet local housing needs, in line with the policy intentions for the premiums.

Specific requirements in relation to reporting on any additional revenue generated and its subsequent use are set out in Part 3 Monitoring and Evaluation.

Part 2: administration and enforcement

Determining liability for the council tax premiums and eligibility for exceptions

In deciding to charge a premium, a local authority will need to identify whether a dwelling is a long-term empty property or a second home and whether it would therefore be liable for a premium.

It is reasonable for a local authority to request evidence such as utility bills showing use of services, a driving licence as proof of address, or receipts or other evidence of moving costs if a property is said to be occupied (not empty) or occupied as a sole or main home (not a second home). The process will be similar to existing practices used to assess eligibility for council tax exemptions and discounts.

The Welsh Ministers have prescribed certain exceptions to the council tax premiums and it will be a liable person's responsibility to apply to a local authority for an exception if they believe they are eligible, and to provide evidence in support of their application. Each local authority should clearly set out and explain the evidence required in the interests of transparency and fairness.

As with the monitoring and enforcement of existing council tax exemptions and discounts, it is expected that local authorities will take steps to verify the evidence provided in support of an application for an exception. A local authority may also conduct regular inspections or site visits to verify continued eligibility.

Local authorities will be aware that under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, civil penalties can be applied to a person who deliberately supplies false information.

The following sections provide additional information to assist local authorities in applying the exceptions specifically for:

- dwellings being marketed for sale
- dwellings being marketed for let
- job-related dwellings

Class 1: dwellings being marketed for sale

This exception applies to both the premium on long-term empty properties and second homes. It excepts dwellings that are being marketed for sale. It also covers dwellings where an offer to buy the dwelling has been accepted but the sale has not yet been completed.

To qualify for this exception a dwelling must be on the market for sale at a reasonable price for that dwelling. A liable owner must demonstrate to the satisfaction of a local authority that they are actively marketing their property for sale at a reasonable price, ie what it would reasonably be expected to fetch on the open market.

In considering an application for an exception, a local authority may wish to consider a range of factors relating to the sale of dwellings, such as the following:

- how long properties in the area have been available for sale
- the average price and time on the market of similar properties in the local area
- whether unduly restrictive conditions, such as the price, are being placed on the dwelling to impede its sale
- any other reasonable factors

To determine whether a dwelling is genuinely on the market for sale a local

authority may wish to consider different types of evidence which could include the following:

- listing on advertised websites, for example estate agent websites, Rightmove and Zoopla, or evidence of other ways in which the property is being marketed
- a contract with an estate agent
- estate agent listings or sales particulars if privately marketed
- an Energy Performance Certificate (required when a property is built or sold)

The exception period runs for up to 1 year from the granting of the exception but can be extended should the property sale have been agreed but not completed beyond the 1 year anniversary of the exception period commencing. The exception would end on the date of the sale of the property. After an exception has ended, a dwelling being marketed for sale will not be eligible for a further exception period unless it has been sold.

Class 2: dwellings being marketed for let

This exception also applies to both the premium on long-term empty properties and second homes. It excepts dwellings that are being marketed for let. It also covers dwellings where an offer to rent has been accepted but the tenant is not yet entitled to occupy the property because the tenancy has not yet started.

To be eligible for this exception, a liable owner must demonstrate to the satisfaction of a local authority that they are actively marketing the property for let at a reasonable price, ie the rent the property would reasonably be expected to fetch having regard to the rent raised on comparable dwellings.

In considering whether the exception applies, a local authority may wish to consider a range of factors relating to the letting of dwellings, such as the following:

- how long properties in their area have been available for rent
- the average rent and time on the market for similar rental properties in the local area
- whether unduly restrictive conditions such as the rent is being placed on the property to impede its letting
- any other reasonable factors

For a local authority to determine whether a liable owner is actively or genuinely marketing their property for let, a local authority may wish to consider different types of evidence which could include the following:

- a contract with a letting agency
- estate agent listings or letting agent brochures
- registration and licensing of a landlord and agent for a dwelling being marketed for let, via Rent Smart Wales
- housing lists of properties being offered for rent provided by Registered Social Landlords
- an Energy Performance Certificate (required when a property is built or let)
- a valid gas safety certificate required for homes being let

The exception period runs for up to 1 year from the granting of the exception. After the end of the exception period, a dwelling being marketed for let will not be eligible for a further exception period unless it has been subject to a tenancy that was granted for a term of 6 months or more.

Exceptions 3 to 6 are more specific classes and are not covered further in this part of the guidance.

Class 7: job-related dwellings

This exception applies only in relation to the second home premium and applies to dwellings occupied by a qualifying person. The criteria for a qualifying person

are set out under Class 7 in Part 1.

In considering eligibility for this exception, a local authority may request certain types of evidence, to prove that a liable person is required to live in a job-related dwelling. This could include the following:

- a contract of employment
- a council tax demand notice (to show liability in respect of another property if the main or second home is in the UK)
- tax returns or pay statements
- Denomination Letter (in respect of a Minister of Religion)
- Ministry of Defence letter or written contract (in respect of the Armed Forces)

Part 3: monitoring and reporting council tax premiums

During the summer of 2021, the Welsh Government consulted on local taxes for second homes and self-catering accommodation. This considered the effectiveness of the discretionary powers given to local authorities to apply council tax premiums to second homes and long-term empty properties. Many responses called for local authorities to be more transparent about how they spend the funds raised from the premium.

To assess the effectiveness of the premiums and ensure information on their use is clearly made available to local council taxpayers, the Welsh Government expects local authorities to report on the implementation of the premiums and the additional revenue generated.

In having regard to this guidance, local authorities should also give due consideration to publishing information to assist members of the public and must provide information to the Welsh Ministers when requested.

Local authorities already report through the existing statutory CT1 (Council Tax Dwellings) Return the following information relating to premiums. This informs the annual statistical releases on council tax collection:

- number of properties liable for the premiums
- percentage of premium applied to long-term empty homes
- percentage of premium applied to second homes

From 1 April 2023, local authorities will be encouraged to publish on their websites, details relating to the income generated from charging a premium for the previous financial year.

As a minimum this should include the following:

- the total numbers of (i) long-term empty properties and (ii) second homes
- the numbers of properties liable for each premium (i) long-term empty properties and (ii) second homes
- the amount of income generated from charging a premium on long-term empty properties
- the amount of income generated from charging a premium on second homes
- how the additional income raised has been used to tackle the problems caused by long-term empty properties and second homes, or to address other local housing issues

Part 4: appeals

If a person is dissatisfied with their local authority due to a decision made regarding the calculation of their council tax liability, including their liability to pay a premium, they should, in the first instance, contact their local authority to discuss the decision.

If a person remains dissatisfied after a discussion with their local authority, they may make an appeal to their local authority.

If a person disagrees with the outcome of the local authority appeals process or if the local authority does not provide a decision within the required timescales, the person may instigate an appeal to the Valuation Tribunal for Wales. A person may only do this only after they have exhausted the local authority's appeals process and complied with any processes required by the VTW before an appeal may be instigated.

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Evidence of the impact of the council tax premium on second homes and long-term empty properties in Gwynedd

Update November 2025

Produced by the Research and Information Service, Cyngor Gwynedd

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the report

Since April 2018 the Council has charged a council tax premium on the majority of second homes and long-term empty properties in the county. Over subsequent years, the premium level has been increased (see 'Key dates' below for details of relevant decisions / dates).

In discussions about the premium, the need to gather evidence about its impact was raised and as part of this we were commissioned by the Leadership Team to research the information that is available as part of the evidence base to help the Council in determining the appropriate level of premium on second homes and on empty long-term properties in the future.

Our previous [research report](#)¹ on this subject was published in November 2024 (which looked at the period October 2019 – April 2024). This report updates the findings of that report, including data up to October 2025.

In the same vein as the previous report therefore, this report will aim to answer the following questions:

- Has increasing the premium led to fewer second homes in Gwynedd?
- What happened to the properties that were formerly second homes – i.e. have they gone from paying council tax with a premium (second home), to paying basic council tax (main residence), or transferred to the business rates system (holiday accommodation), or any other category?
- Has the premium increase led to long-term empty houses being brought back into use?

This update does not include another element from the previous report, which attempted to find out more about the people living in houses that were formerly second homes but now main homes, by analysing the results of questionnaires sent to the residents of those houses. Due to the timing of the publication of this update, the amount of work that would be required and a question about how useful the previous results for this element were (due to low response rate) it was not possible to update this element but it is possible to refer to the results of the previous exercise in the last report.

¹ 'Evidence of the impact of the council tax premium on second homes and long-term empty properties in Gwynedd', Cyngor Gwynedd Research and Information Service, November 2024

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1.2 Key dates

It is useful to summarise the key dates relating to the introduction, and increasing the level of, the premium in Gwynedd over the years (the three dates when the premium, or increases to it, came into force are indicated in bold).

Table 1: Key dates for introducing and increasing the premium level in Gwynedd over the years

Date	Event
October 2013	Welsh Government consults on right for authorities to charge a premium
September 2014	The Housing Act (Wales) allows a premium of up to 100% to be charged from April 2017
October 2016	Council consults on the principle of charging a premium, and its level
December 2016	Council decides to charge a 50% premium on second homes and long-term empty properties from April 2018
April 2018	50% premium on second homes and long-term empty properties operational in Gwynedd
December 2020	Council consults on the possibility of increasing the premium to 100%
March 2021	Council decides to increase the premium to 100%
April 2021	Increase to 100% operational in Gwynedd, for second homes and long-term empty properties
August 2021	Welsh Government consults on expanding powers to charge a premium
March 2022	Regulations allowing a premium of up to 300% to be charged on second homes and long-term empty properties from April 2023
September 2022	Council initiates consultation on how to respond to the change in regulations
December 2022	Council decides to increase premium on second homes to 150% (but keeps the premium on long-term empty properties at 100%)
April 2023	Increase to 150% for second homes operational in Gwynedd (retain at 100% for long-term empty properties)
December 2023, December 2024	Council decides to keep the premium at the same level but notes the intention to continue to look at evidence on the impact of the premium

In addition to the above, April 2023 is also significant as this is when the change to the criterion for defining self-catering accommodation (for taxation as a business rather than through council tax) became effective across Wales – namely, in general, that they need to be let for a minimum of 182 days rather than 70, and available for letting for 252 days, rather than 140 days. The timetable for implementing this was similar to the timetable for extending the power to charge a premium of up to 300% (i.e. Welsh Government commences consultation in August 2021, announced its intention to tighten the definition in March 2022, effective from April 2023).

In interpreting the results of the research below, it will be necessary to remember that any effect could have occurred over a period on either side of these dates, rather than at that exact time. For example – should an increase in the premium have prompted some second homeowners to sell their property, they might have sold as discussions began on the increase or when it was decided to increase it, rather than waiting until the change took effect. On the other hand, they might not

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decide to sell until after the premium came into effect and a sale could also take a few months to complete, so this effect might not be noticeable for some time after the premium increase.

Of course, there are also a host of other factors – outside the local taxation system – that could have affected this area in the period under review, for example:

- The Covid period and the subsequent impact of it on the local housing market;
- Changes in the scale and nature of demand for holiday accommodation in Gwynedd (again, including impacts following from the Covid period);
- Devolution, and changes to the rates, of taxation on house purchases resulting in a change in the tax payable on the purchase of a second home, and differences in this respect between England and Wales;
- The nature of the economy and employment in Gwynedd and in general, including the cost of living crisis;
- Discussions on the Article 4 Direction, and its introduction in 2024.

Inevitably, therefore, the research findings need to be interpreted with care, bearing in mind that changes that occurred at the time the premium was raised, cannot always be assumed to have necessarily occurred because of the premium.

1.3 Scope of report

This research focuses on property use (houses changing to/from being a second home or long-term empty, and any different trends in this pattern around the time or following the increase to the premium). To this end, we analysed the details of property categories in the council tax system, and looked for patterns in this, particularly around the times of increasing the premium. More details on this can be found in the Methodology below.

Of course, there are other possible aspects of the 'premium impact' that this report is unable to consider (economic, linguistic, wider community, etc.); there may be other sources of information available that would help with this.

2.0 Methodology

As explained above, this research is based on tracking individual property movements in Gwynedd from one category to another, and from one period to the next. This means that comprehensive datasets, in a fully consistent and comparable form to each other, are needed to be able to accurately track the changes over time.

The council tax premium has existed in Gwynedd since April 2018; however we have been unable to find detailed, complete and consistent data going back that far (the need to preserve such information for research purposes was probably not identified at that time either). It was not possible, therefore, for us to use a time before the premium came into effect (or, ideally, a time before any discussion on introducing a premium at all) as the starting point of the research.

Having discussed potential data sources with the Finance department, the best source identified was data in the format reported to the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise. This includes details of the council tax category of each individual property in Gwynedd.

This data is available for different dates, going back to October 2019. This is a sensible starting point in any case as it allows us to compare the "normal" pattern (over about a year before there was mention of increasing the premium) with any different patterns around:

- the increase to 100% for second homes and long-term empty properties (April 2021); and
- the increase to 150% for second homes (April 2023).

This also keeps the analysis within practically feasible boundaries, as it gives us 14 sets of data on different dates between 1 October 2019 and 1 October 2025. As there are over 60,000 properties in Gwynedd this involves comparing data and tracking changes across a total of over 800,000 data items.

Since NFI data is reported based on specific dates and the gaps between these dates can vary, the analysis we can conduct for the years up to 2024 is based on specific periods, with some longer than others. However following the research work carried out last year, the Finance department and ourselves have now established arrangements whereby the relevant data is extracted regularly, quarterly (i.e. whether or not the data is required for NFI purposes at that time) which provides a more consistent basis for analysing changes over time. This is shown in the diagram below:

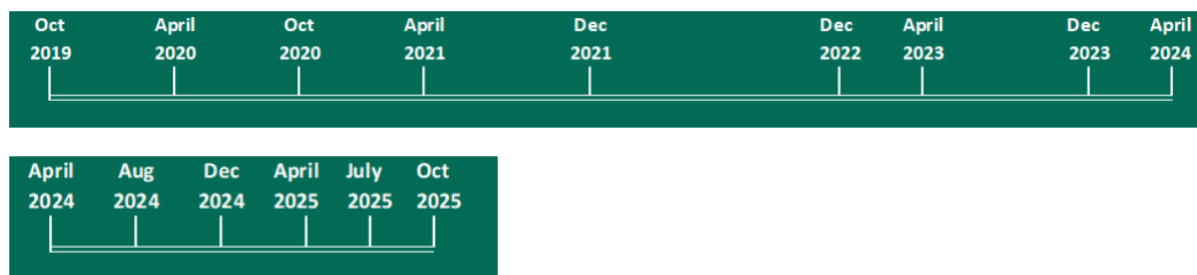


Figure 1: Dates/ periods where we have data for tracking category changes (exact date was 1st of the relevant months except October 2020 (2/10/20), December 2023 (18/12/23), August 2024 (7/8/24) and December 2024 (3/12/25)).

3.0 Definitions

In the remainder of this report, unless otherwise stated:

- **'Second home'** means property within the council tax system that is furnished, is not a main residence and does not have a planning restriction preventing it from being occupied on a full-time basis. The majority of these pay the council tax premium but there are some exceptions, e.g. (for a period) properties marketed for sale / to let, or work-related properties;
- **'Long-term empty properties'** means properties within the council tax system, which have been empty and unfurnished for more than 12 months and therefore the council tax premium is payable on them;
- **'Other housing'** means all properties within the council tax system except for the above 2 categories also excluding properties with a planning restriction preventing full-time occupation. The vast majority of these, therefore, are main residences (but also include properties that have been empty for less than 12 months);
- **'Holiday unit'** means a self-serviced holiday accommodation unit, which is taxed through the business rates system rather than through council tax;
- **'Total housing'** is the total of the above 4 categories, i.e. all properties in the council tax system except for second homes with a planning restriction preventing full-time occupation, also adding self-catering serviced holiday units that are in the business rates system.

For clarity, we do not include in this exercise second homes that have a planning restriction preventing full-time occupancy ('chalets' etc., known as 'Class A' in council tax regulations). These are considered to be effectively outside the 'normal' usable housing stock, and we will therefore not include them in this analysis.

4.0 Numbers and distribution of second homes, holiday units and long-term empty properties

- In October 2025 there were 4,847 second homes in Gwynedd (in line with this category in the council tax system). This represents 7.6% of total housing in Gwynedd. Out of the 4,847 second homes, 4,442 (91.6%) paid the premium.
- The map below shows the proportion of second homes per ward and shows that the distribution of second homes across the county is very uneven, ranging from no second homes in Hendre ward to 46.6% in Abersoch and Llanengan ward. The highest percentages are generally in the coastal areas of Llŷn, Eifionydd and Meirionnydd.

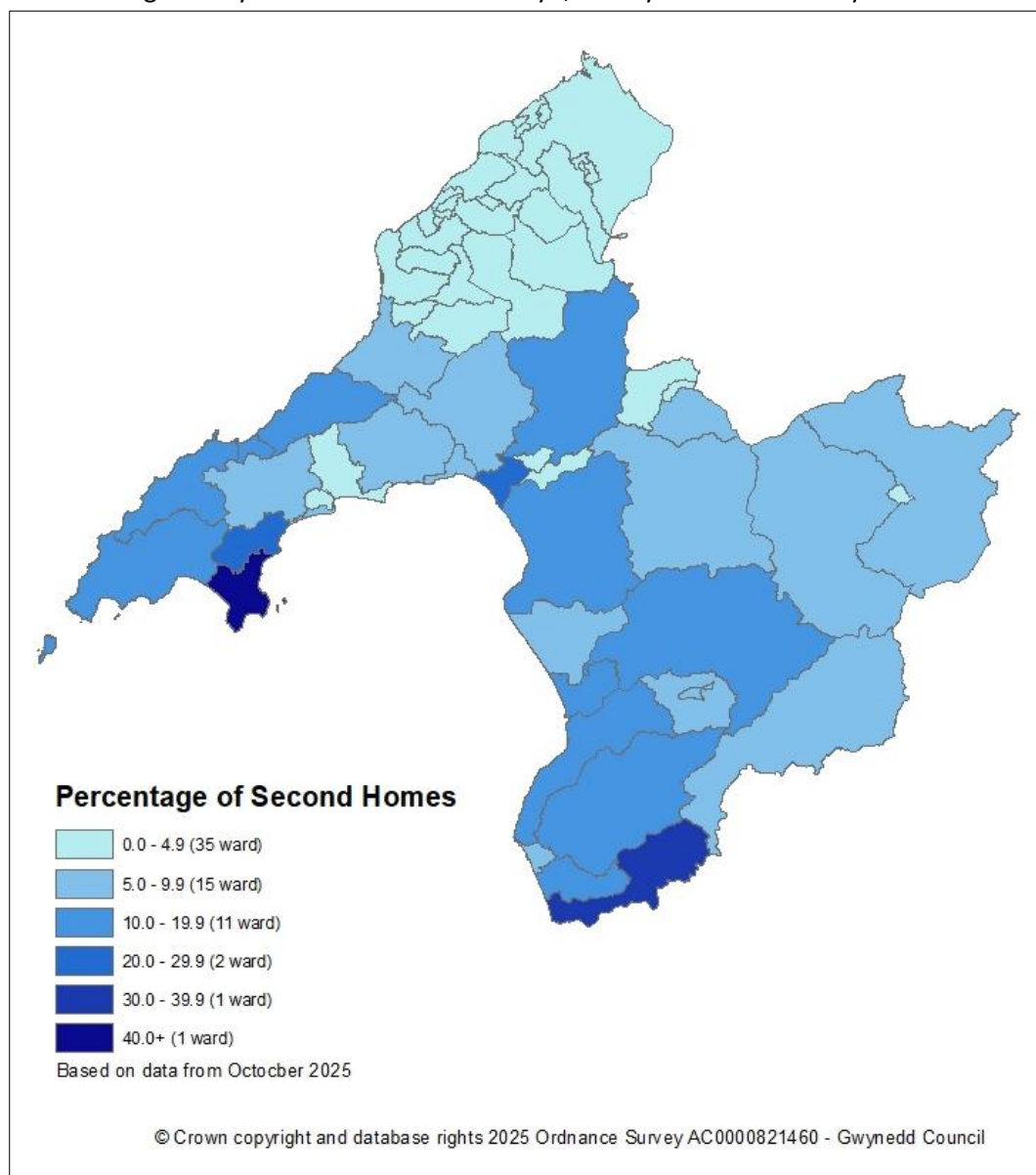


Figure 2: Map of the proportion of second homes by ward, October 2025

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- Although this research is not directly related to them – holiday units (taxed as a business) are also a relevant consideration as a number of properties have been moving between the council tax system (as a second home) and the business rates system (as holiday accommodation), and these patterns and numbers can vary at different times. In October 2025 there were 1,900 holiday units in the business rates system in Gwynedd; this represents 3.0% of total housing. The distribution of these across Gwynedd is again uneven, as shown in the map below (ranging no holiday units in Hendre ward to 8.6% in Abersoch gyda Llanengan ward).

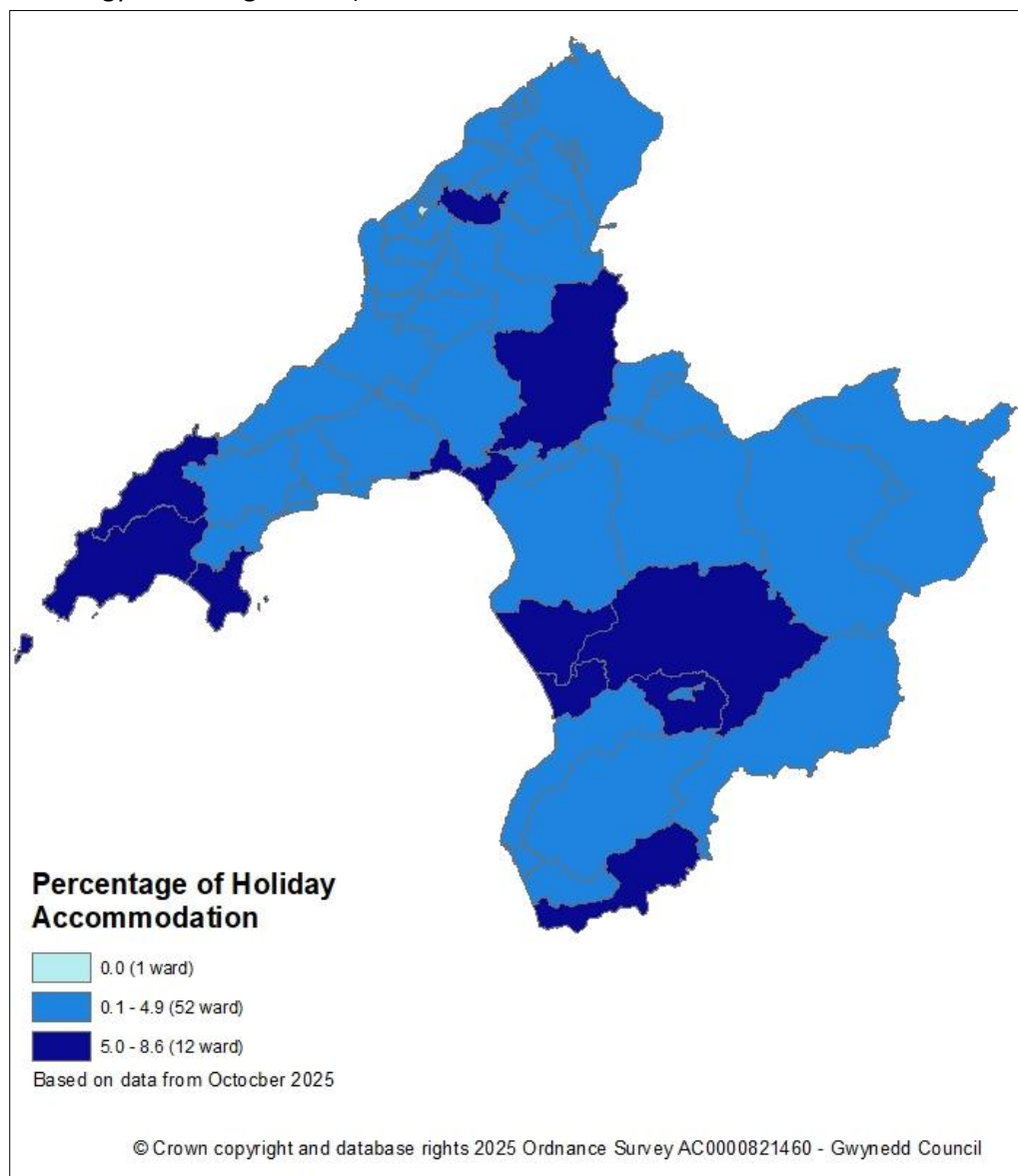


Figure 3: Map of the proportion of holiday accommodation by ward, October 2025

- In October 2025, there were 1,070 long-term empty properties in the council tax system in Gwynedd, representing 1.7% of total housing. The map below shows the proportion of these per ward and shows that the distribution of long-term empty properties across the county is very uneven, ranging from 0.2% in Hendre ward to 5.7% in Llanbedrog and Mynytho ward. By its nature, this pattern is also likely to vary over time (e.g. the former

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Polish Home in Penrhos accounts for the majority of current empty units in the Llanbedrog and Mynytho ward).

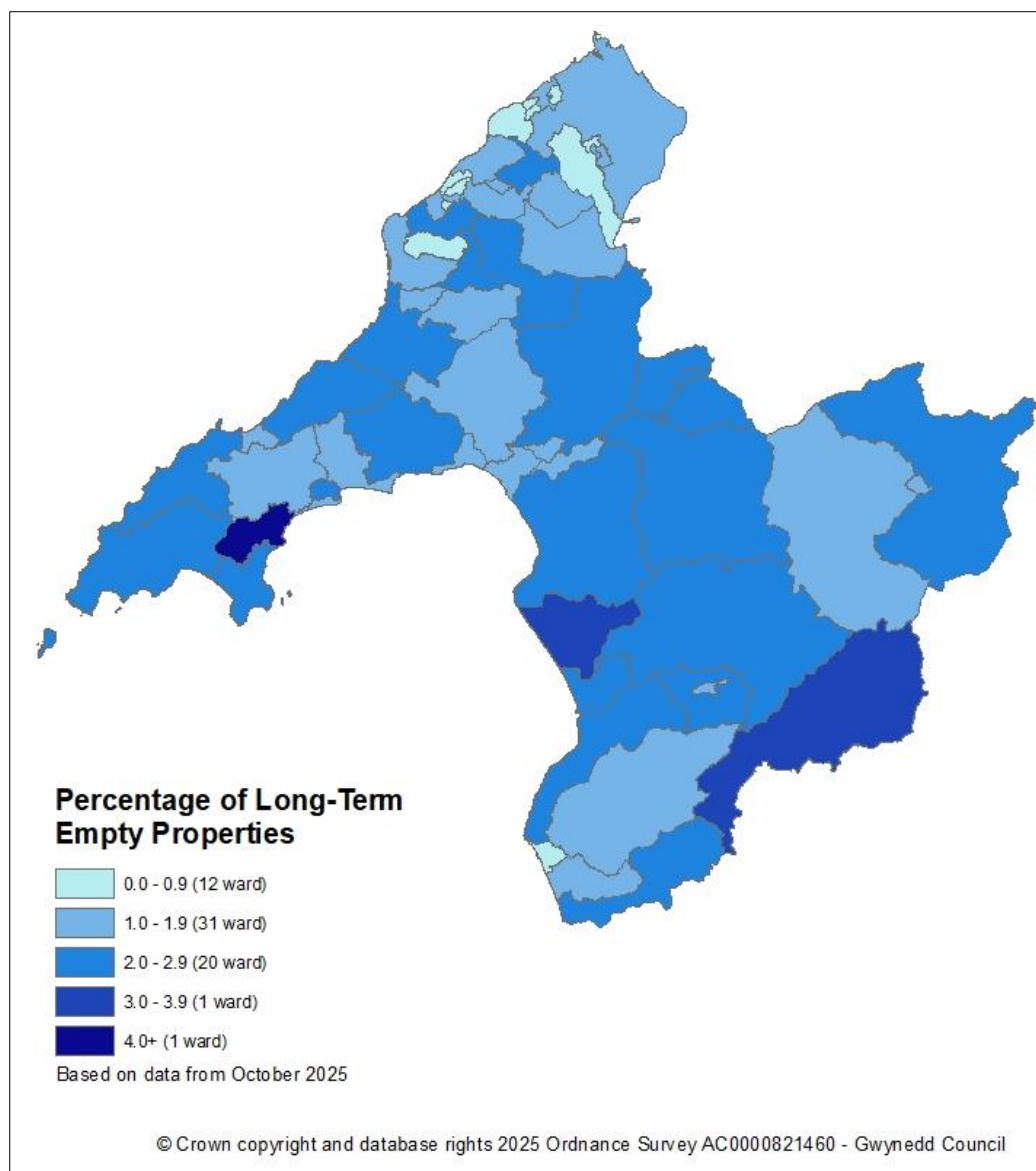


Figure 4: Map of proportion of long-term empty property by ward, October 2025

- The map below shows the composite percentage (total second homes, long-term empty properties and holiday units, as a percentage of total housing) per ward; Abersoch with Llanengan (57.8%), Aberdyfi (42.0%) and Llanbedrog gyda Mynytho (32.8%) wards are highest under this measure.

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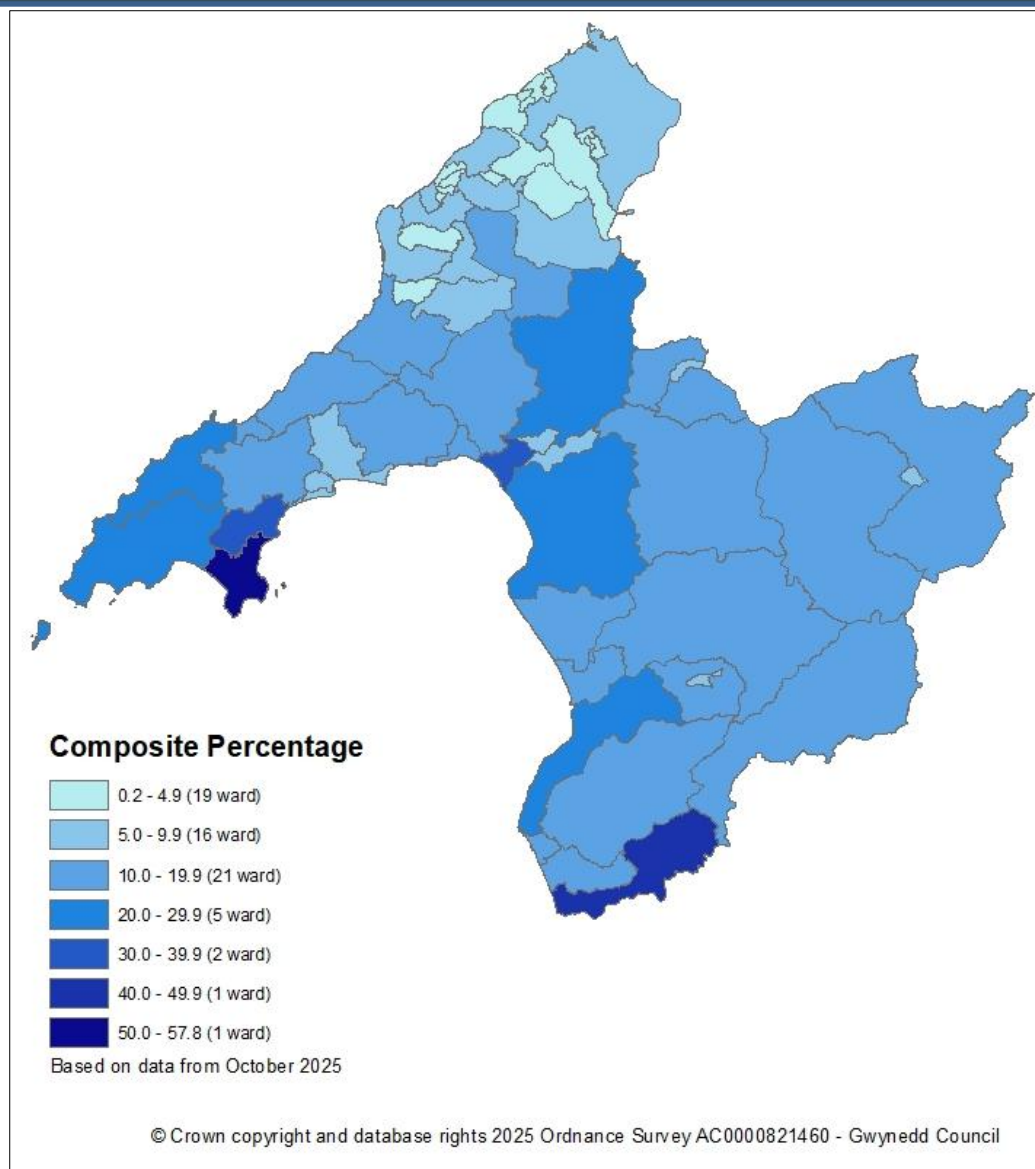


Figure 5: Map of composite proportion (total second homes, long-term empty properties and holiday units) by ward, October 2025

The detailed percentages per ward underpinning the above maps are shown in **Appendix 1** .

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5.0 Overview of numbers by category from October 2019

The chart below shows the numbers of second homes and long-term empty properties (in the council tax system) and holiday units (in the business rates system) on different dates from October 2019.

(NFI data, but also since this shows the total figure across Gwynedd rather than detailed data, we have been able to find other data so that the analysis can include more dates)

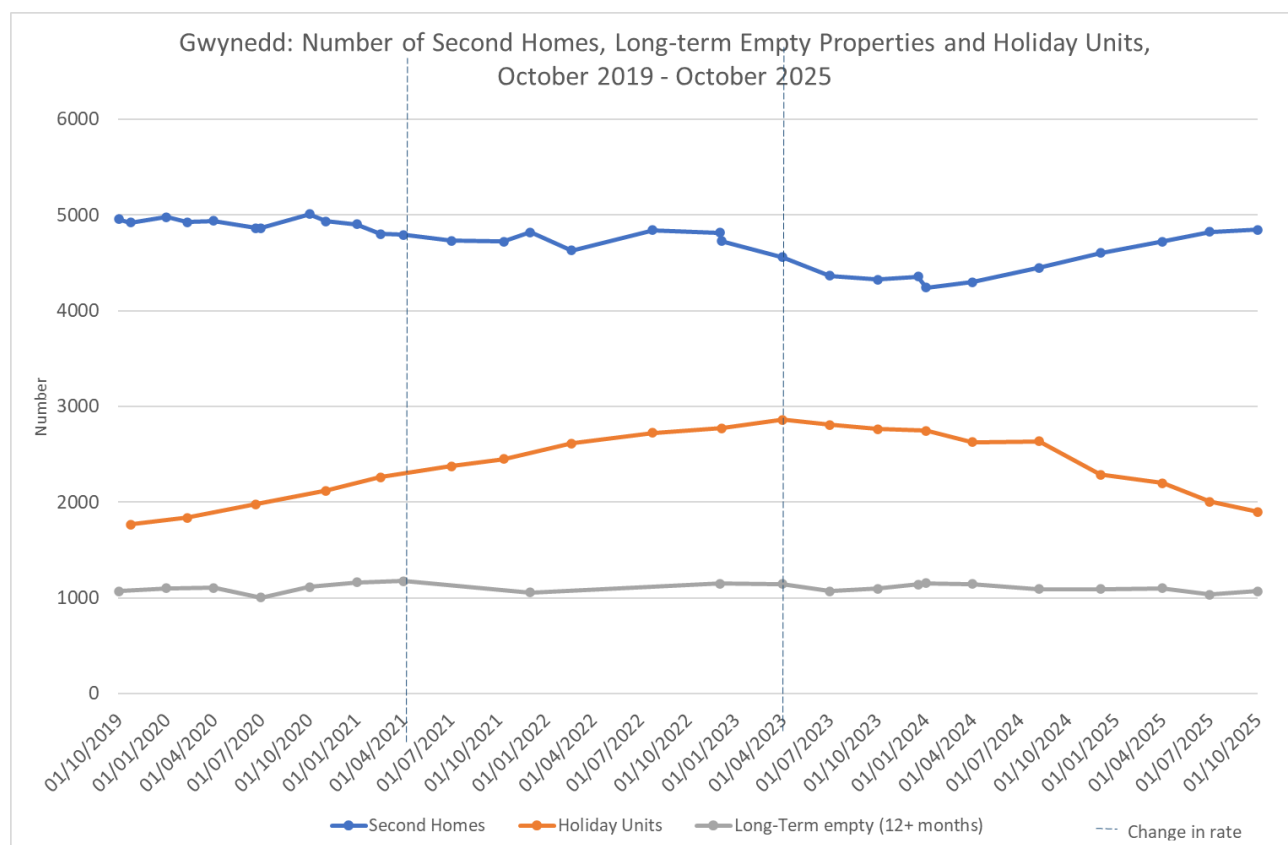


Figure 6: Number of second homes, long-term empty property and holiday units in Gwynedd, October 2019 – October 2025

From this chart, we can see some general patterns:

- **Until around January 2024, the number of second homes in Gwynedd was falling.** In 2019 and 2020 the number was quite stable, at around 4,900 to 5,000, but it then fell to about 4,200 by January 2024, with **most of this reduction occurring in two specific periods** (between around January 2021 and October 2021, and then a sharper reduction between December 2022 and January 2024).
- **From January 2024 however, the number of second homes** (in that category in the council tax system) **has been increasing rapidly** and has now reached close to the level which existed at around early 2021 (around 4,850). There is a suggestion in the latest data that the increase may be slowing slightly but the increase is continuing to some extent.

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- **Until around April 2023 the number of holiday units had been increasing**, going from around 1,800 (October 2019) to around 2,900 (April 2023). But since then, **and especially from August 2024 onwards, the number of holiday units has been constantly reducing**, reverting to around 1,900 at the current time.
- **Long-term empty property numbers have fluctuated slightly** (between around 1,000 and 1,200 across Gwynedd); on the surface there **is no obvious pattern** in these variations.

Even though these overall figures provide some idea as to the main trends over the period in question, they do not give much information about what happened to the properties in the various categories (e.g. what is the use of the houses that were previously second homes?). To get a better idea of what is going on therefore, we have tracked the status of individual properties throughout the period as shown in the next parts of the report.

6.0 Second homes: Tracking property movements over the period

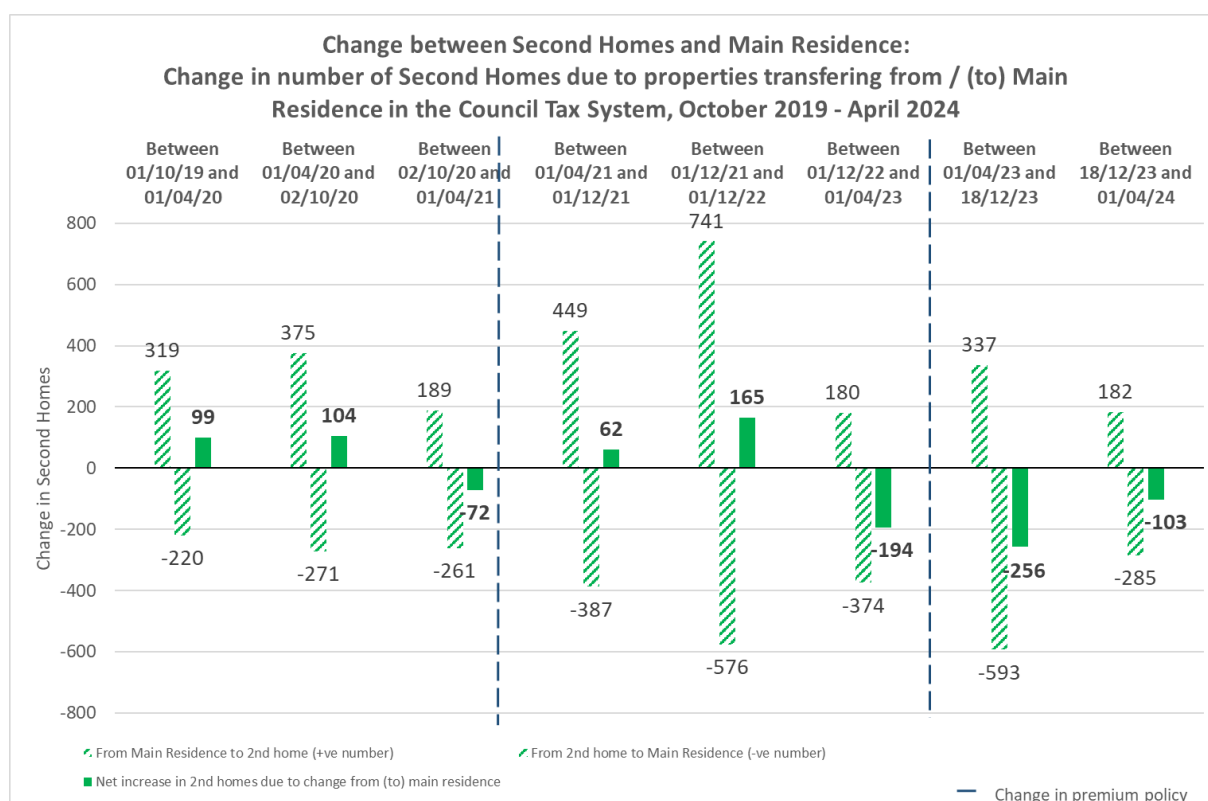
By tracking and analysing individual property categories in the council tax administration system (NFI data on 14 specific dates between October 2019 – October 2025, as explained in the Methodology above), we can take a closer look at the pattern of movements between categories and look for patterns in this, particularly around the times of premium increases.

The following charts analyse property movements to, and from, the Second Homes category in the council tax system by 3 different types of movements, namely (i) moving between a second home and a main residence (ii) moving between a second home and a holiday unit (iii) switching between a second home and other categories.

In all charts below, the 'gross' movements (number of properties moving to be a second home, and number of properties moving from being a second home), and then the 'net' movement (i.e. the difference between the above two figures), are shown in each of the periods. This also shows that the net position may be masking significant turnover (in and out of the second homes category) within the figures and highlights the need to take care in interpreting the net position, i.e. even in 'normal', stable conditions there are still significant shifts of property to, and from, second homes.

In all cases the chart from the previous report (analysing October 2019 – April 2024) is reproduced, and then the new chart (analysing April 2024 – October 2025) is included. The full data behind the latest charts (including more detailed analysis within the 'other categories') is in **Appendix 2**.

Change between Second Homes and Main Residence



EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN GWYNEDD – NOVEMBER 2025

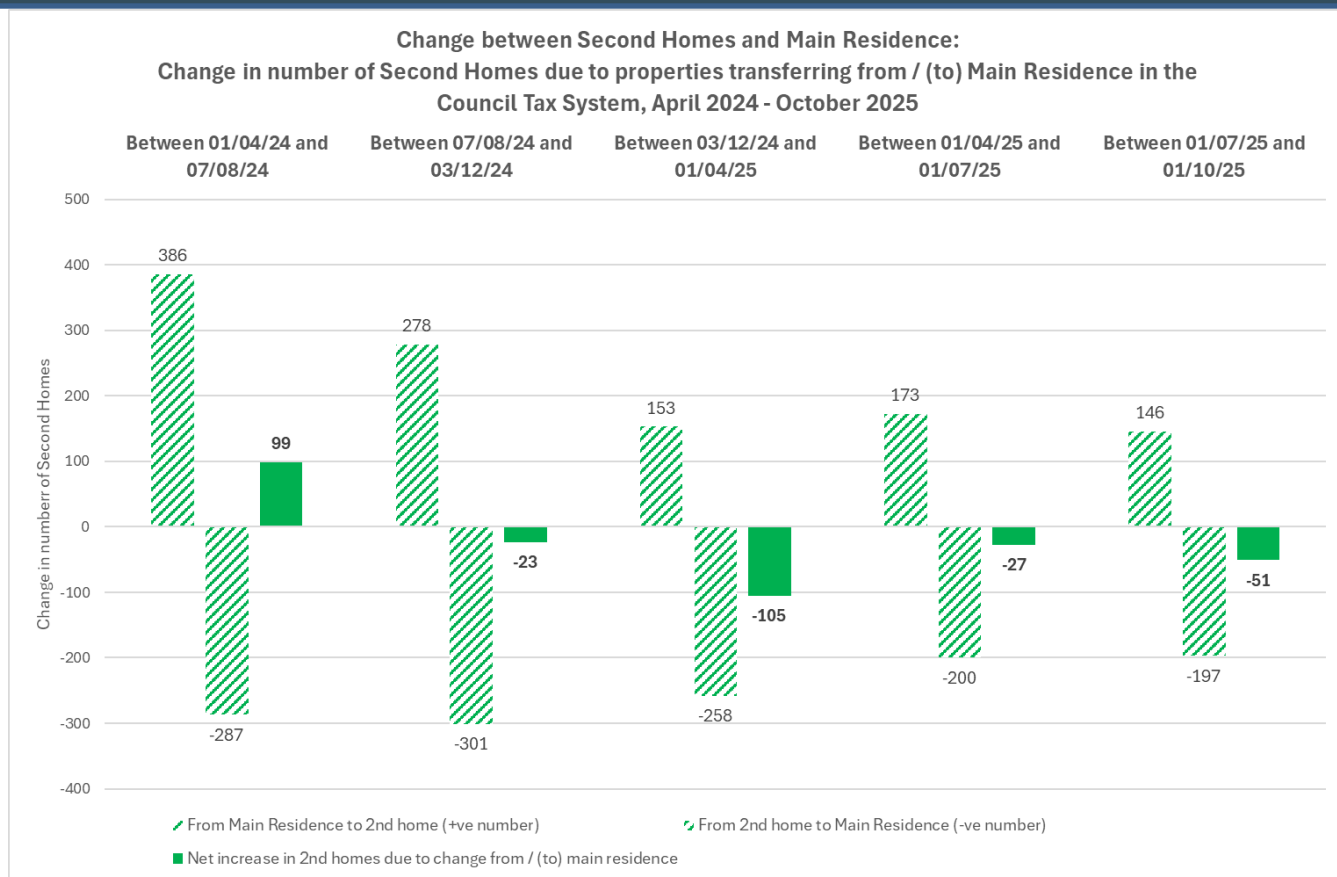


Figure 7: Change in number of second homes due to properties transferring from being or to being a main residence or second home in the Council Tax system by each period between October 2019 and October 2025, showing movements from main residence to second home, from second home to main residence and total net movement.

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Change between Second Homes and Holiday Units

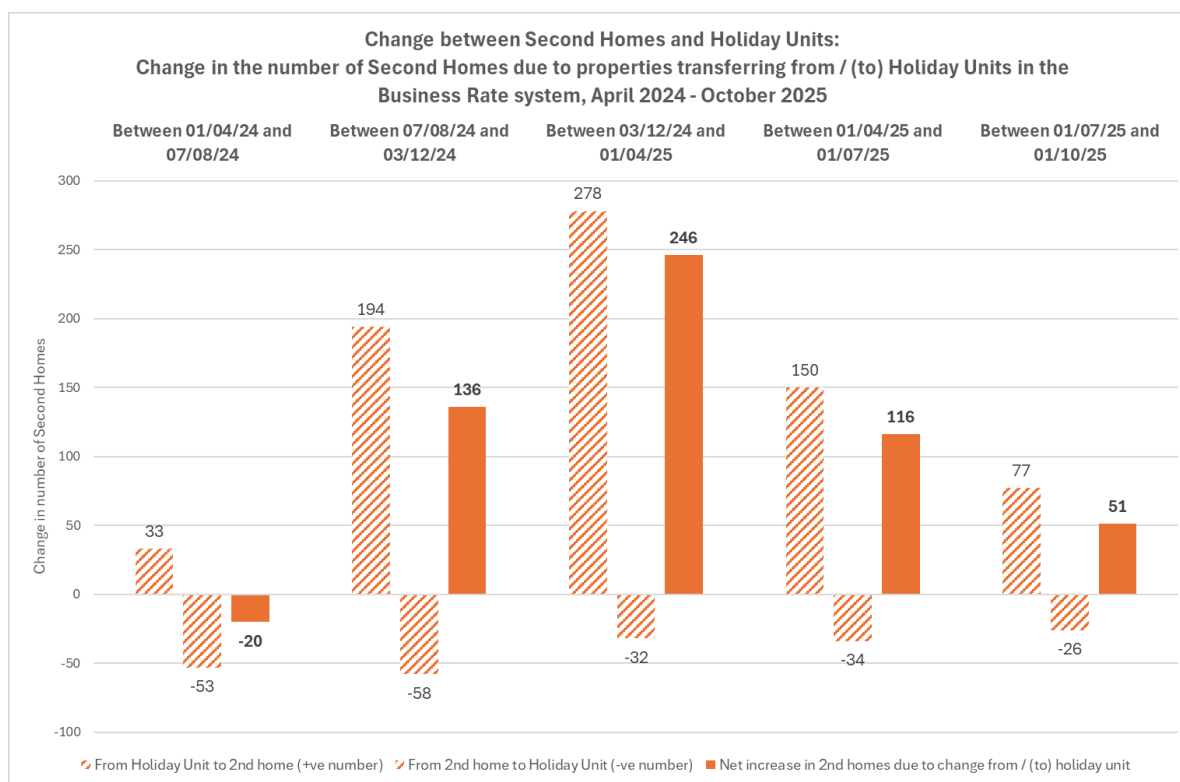
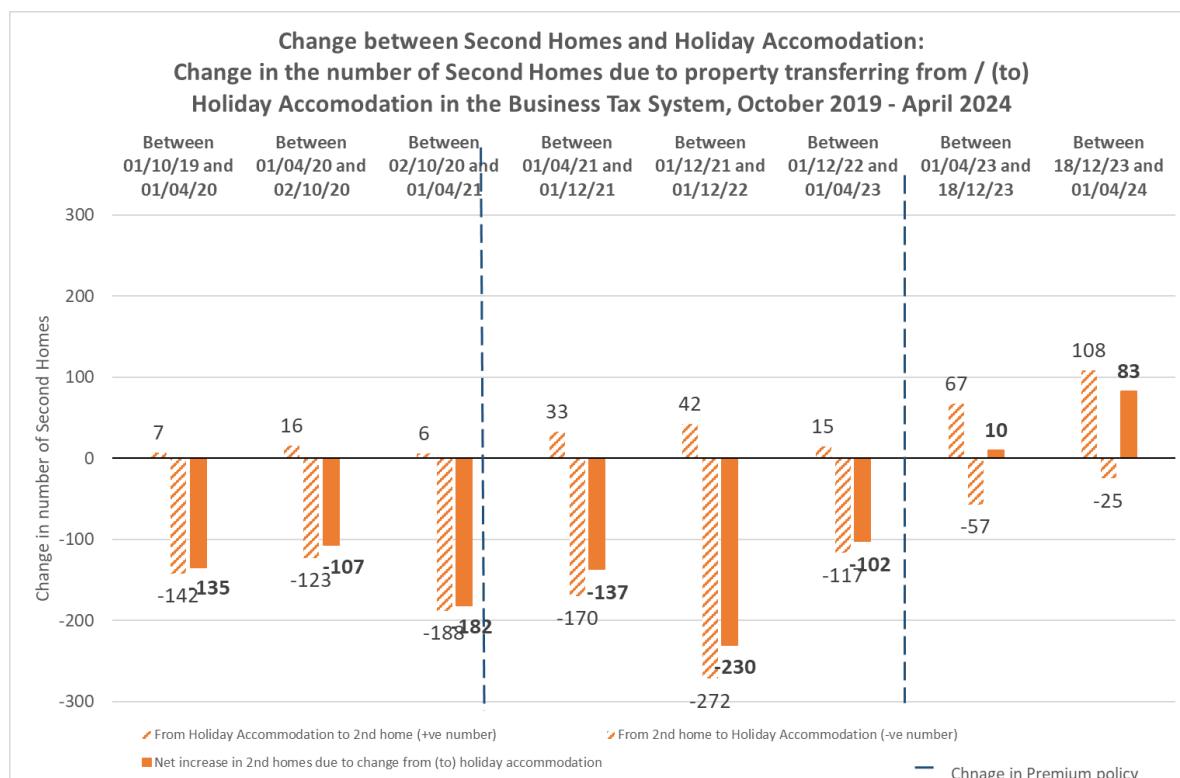
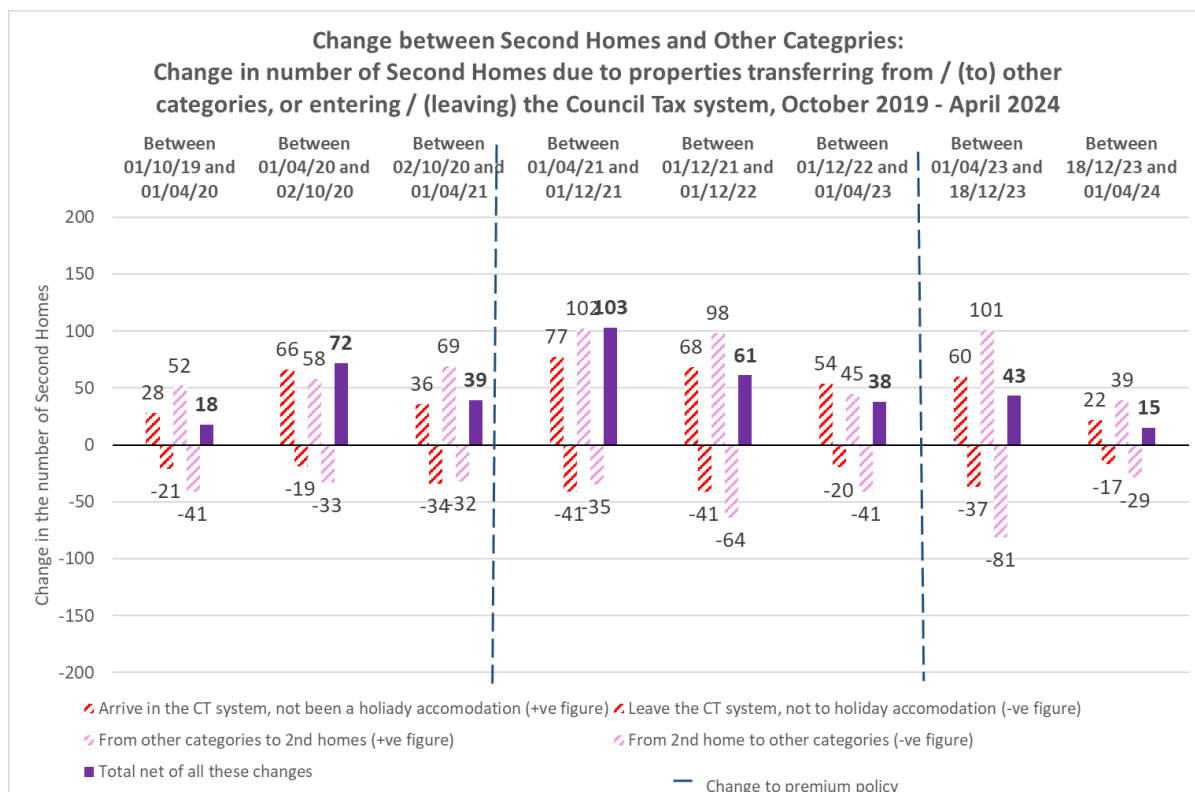


Figure 8: Change in number of second homes due to properties transferring from being or to being holiday units or second homes in the Council Tax system by each period between October 2019 and October 2025, showing movements from holiday units to second home, from second home to holiday units and total net movement.

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Change between Second Homes and Other Categories



EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN GWYNEDD – NOVEMBER 2025

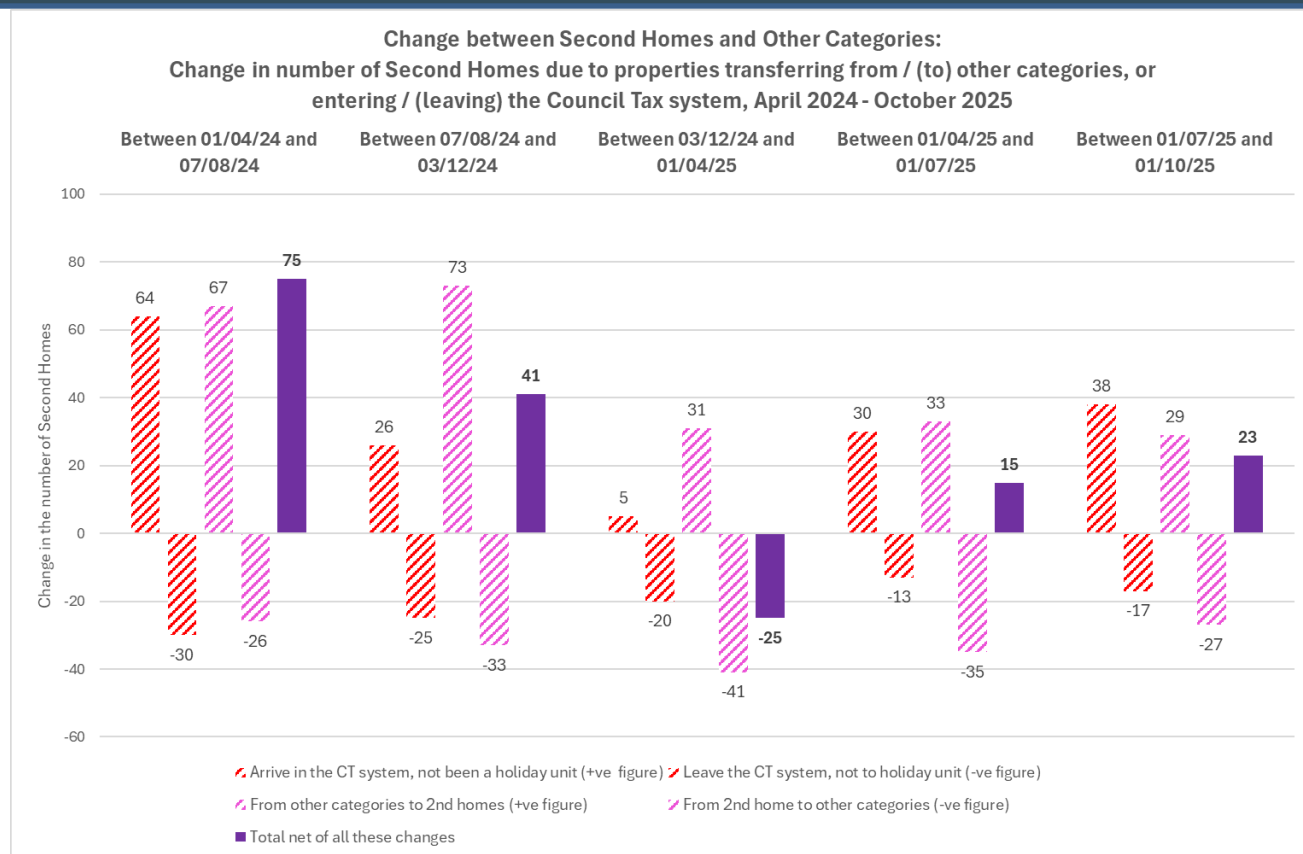


Figure 9: Change in number of second homes due to properties transferring from or into other categories in the Council Tax system by each period between October 2019 and October 2025, showing movements from other categories to second homes, from second home to other categories and total net movement.

Summarising the net movements

We can then pull together the headline figures from the 3 sets of charts above to show the net movement in each period per the three main categories, in the charts below. This clearly shows the main net trends at the different times during the period.

EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN GWYNEDD – NOVEMBER 2025

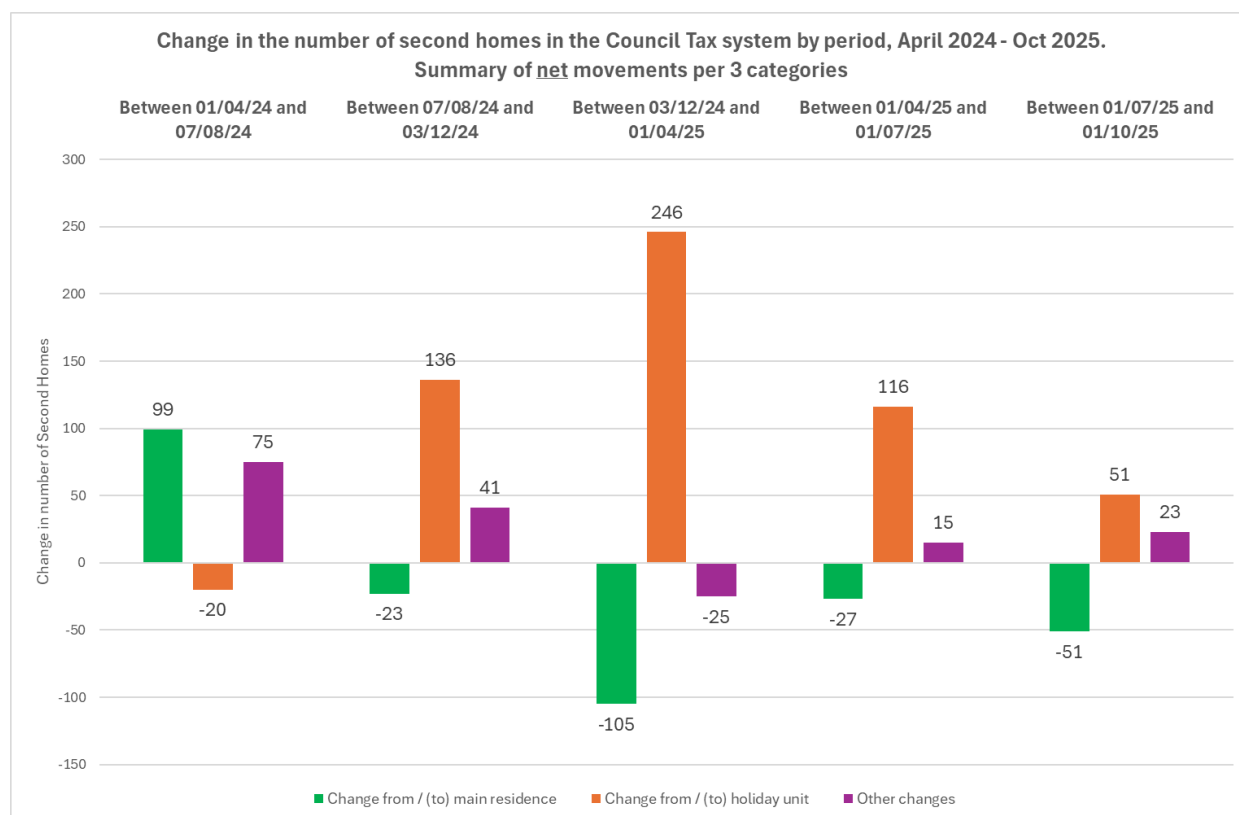
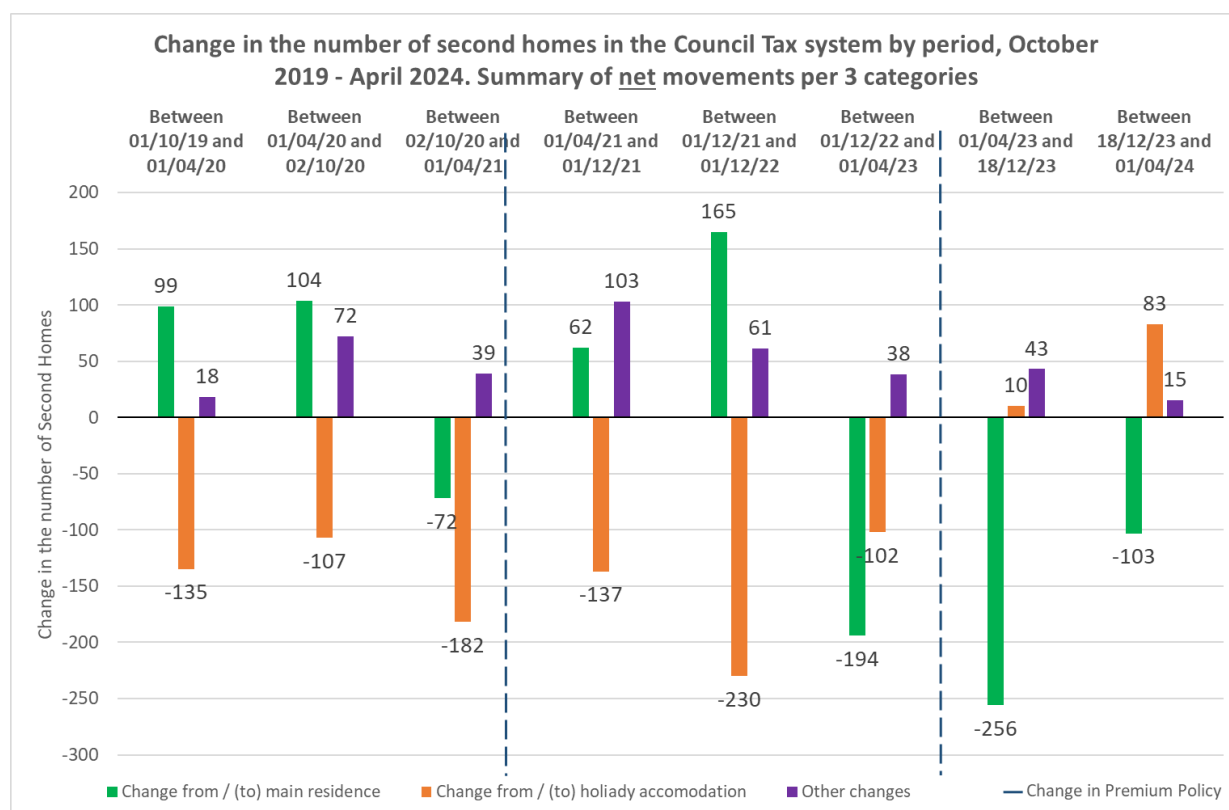
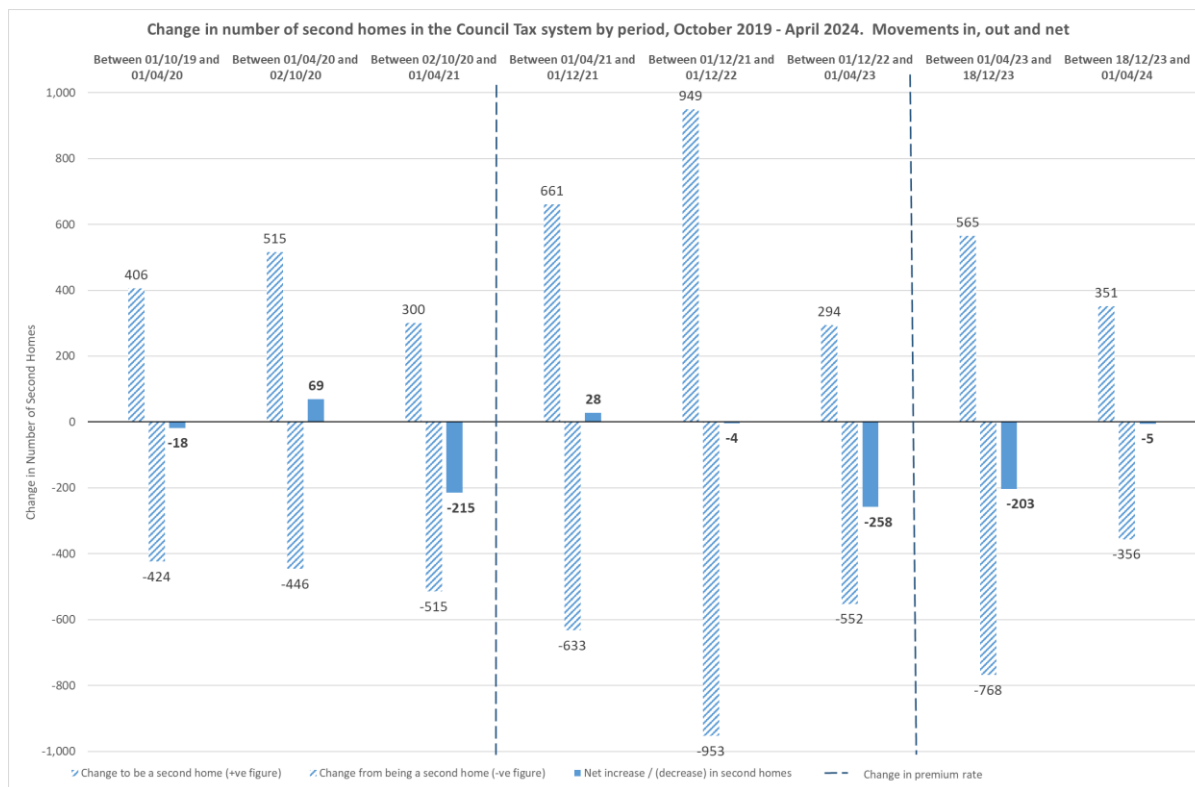


Figure 10: Change in number of second homes in the Council Tax system by period between October 2019 and October 2025 as total net movement per category (change from/to main residence, change from/to holiday units, other changes).

EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN GWYNEDD – NOVEMBER 2025

The charts below bring all of the above together to show the total movements into, and out of, the category of second homes in each period. They show the gross movements (in/out of the second home category) as well as the net change (the difference between the in and out movements), highlighting again that there is significant turnover in terms of individual property situations even at times where the total figure is fairly stable.



EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN GWYNEDD – NOVEMBER 2025

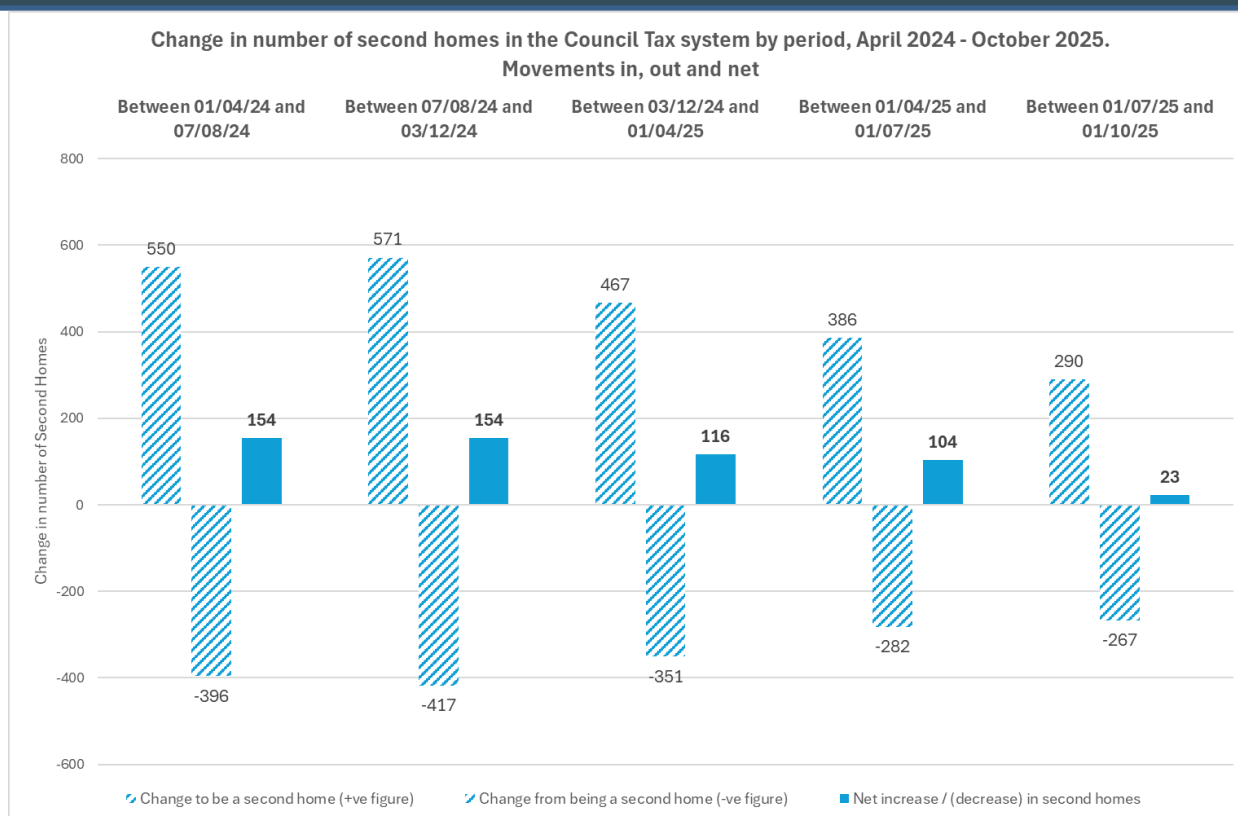


Figure 11: Change in number of second homes in the Council Tax system by periods between October 2019 and October 2025 showing movements in and out of second home category and total net movement.

6.1 Summarising the results - tracking second homes

When looking at property flows **between second homes and main residences** (which are the green bars in the charts in Figure 10 above):

- **Historically** (i.e. before October 2020; before there was discussion of increasing the premium level to 100%) it appears that the "natural" trend was a steady (net) flow of properties from primary residences to second homes.
- **At the time of the premium increase to 100%** in April 2021, this flow was reversed in the period immediately preceding the increase (net flow from second home to main residence, between October 2020 and April 2021). But any impact appears to have been small and short-lived, with the flow having returned to the historical pattern (i.e. from primary residences to second homes) after April 2021.
- **At the time of the premium increase to 150%** in April 2023, we saw the pattern reverse once again, with a net move from second homes to main residences from December 2022 onwards (which is around the time the premium increase was discussed/consulted on before it came into force).
- Unlike the previous time, however, this **change has proven much more long-lasting** with the net shift from second homes to main residences having continued in each period since then (with one exception being the period April 2024 – August 2024).

When looking at property flows **between second homes and holiday units** (which are the orange bars in the charts in Figure 10 above):

- **Historically** (i.e. before April 2023) the clear trend was for properties to move from being second homes to being holiday units.
- **From April 2023** however (coinciding with the time the criteria for taxation of self-catering accommodation were changed) this pattern has reversed, with now a net movement of holiday units (in the business tax regime) to being taxed as a second home (in the council tax regime). This has happened in all periods from April 2023 onwards, except one namely April 2024 – August 2024.
- This is **particularly true in the most recent period**, with around 550 properties (net) transitioning from a holiday unit to a second home between August 2024 and October 2025.

In terms of the impact on the total number of second homes in the council tax regime, therefore:

- **Historically**, the two main movements appear to effectively offset each other, so that the total number of second homes remained fairly constant (i.e. the flow from primary residences to second homes was about the same as the flow from second homes to holiday units).

EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN GWYNEDD – NOVEMBER 2025

- **For periods around the two premium increases** (i.e. before the increase to 100% in April 2021, and then more definitively before and after the increase to 150% in April 2023) the change in the direction of flow between second homes and main residences has been sufficient to cause the total number of second homes to fall in these periods.
- **From August 2024** onwards however, the flow of properties from holiday units to second homes has been much higher than the flow (which has continued to an extent) from second homes to primary residences. This means that the total number of second homes (taxed through the council tax regime) is now increasing.

7.0 Long-term empty properties

The chart below shows the number of long-term empty properties (i.e. vacant over 12 months and therefore paying a premium) in the council tax administration system between October 2019 and October 2025. This includes the time the premium last increased (from 50% to 100%, in April 2021).

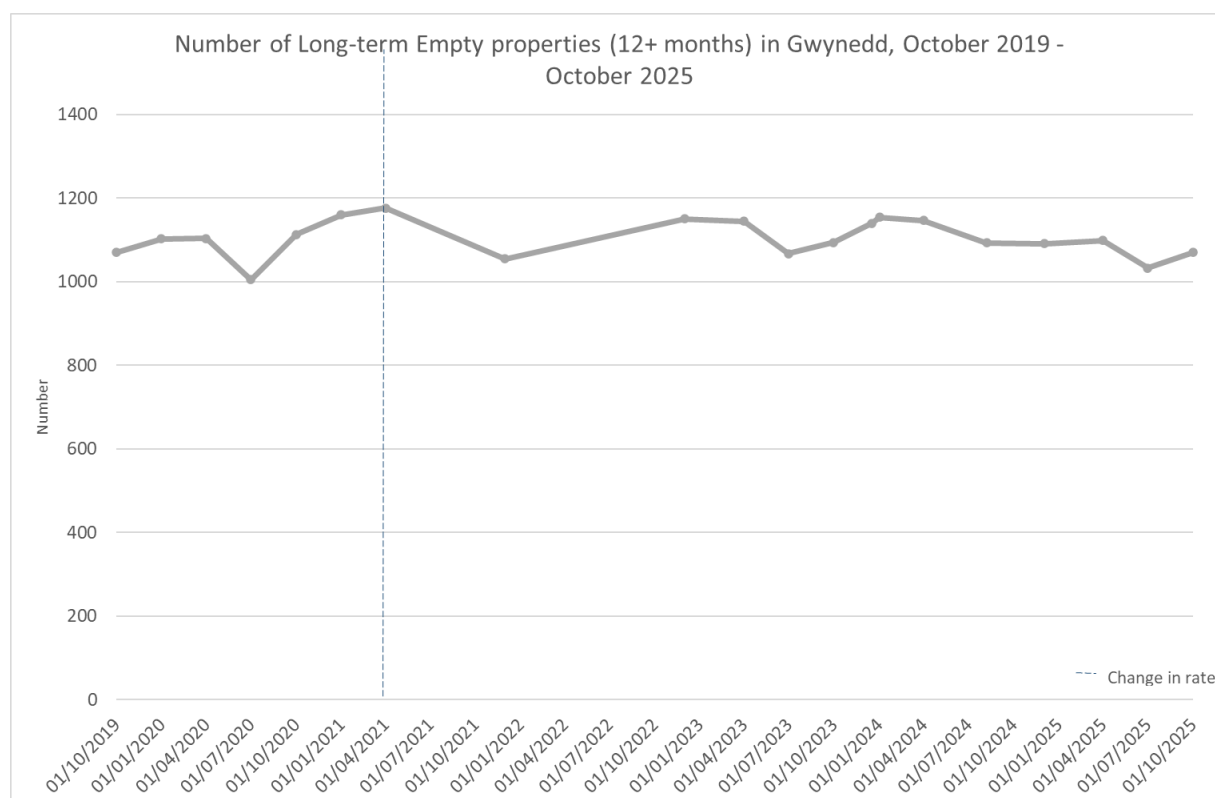


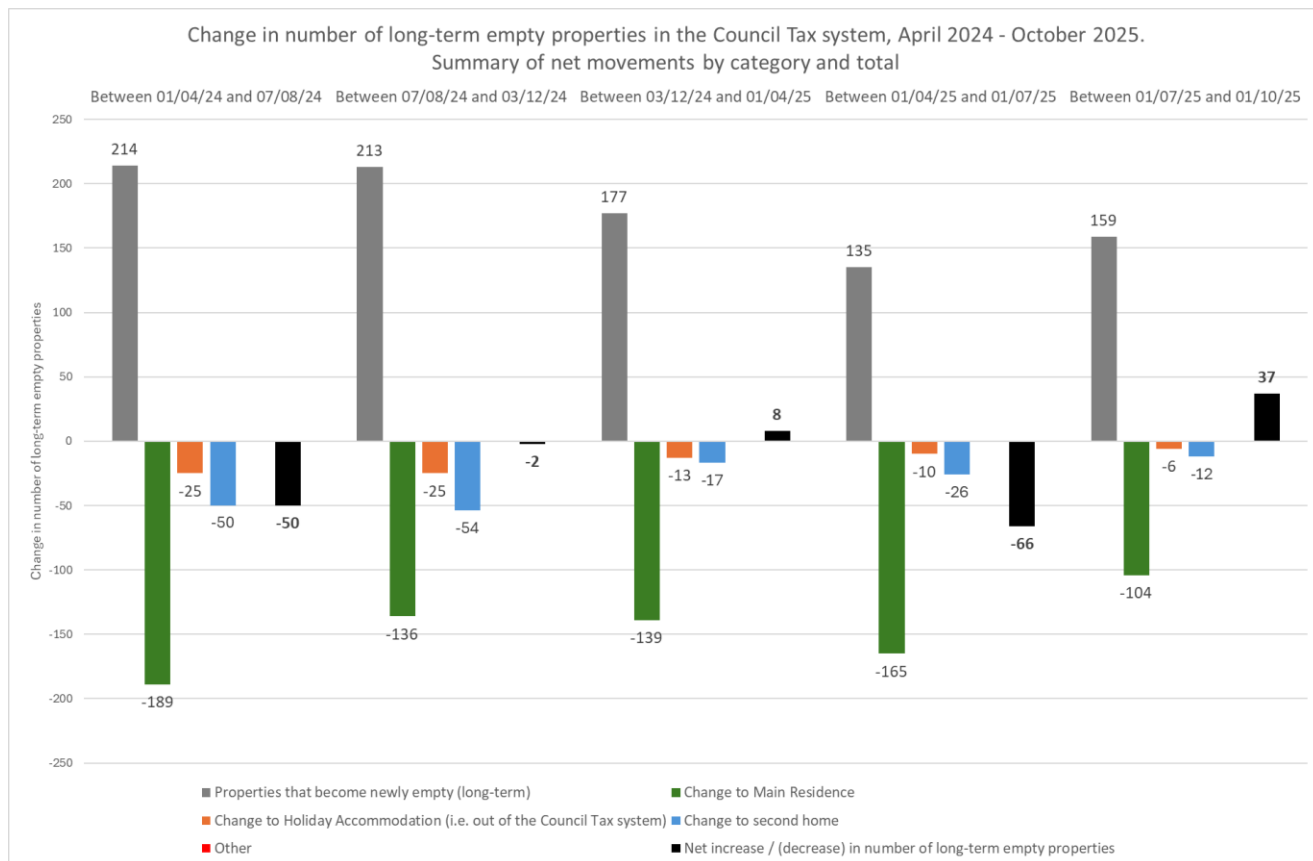
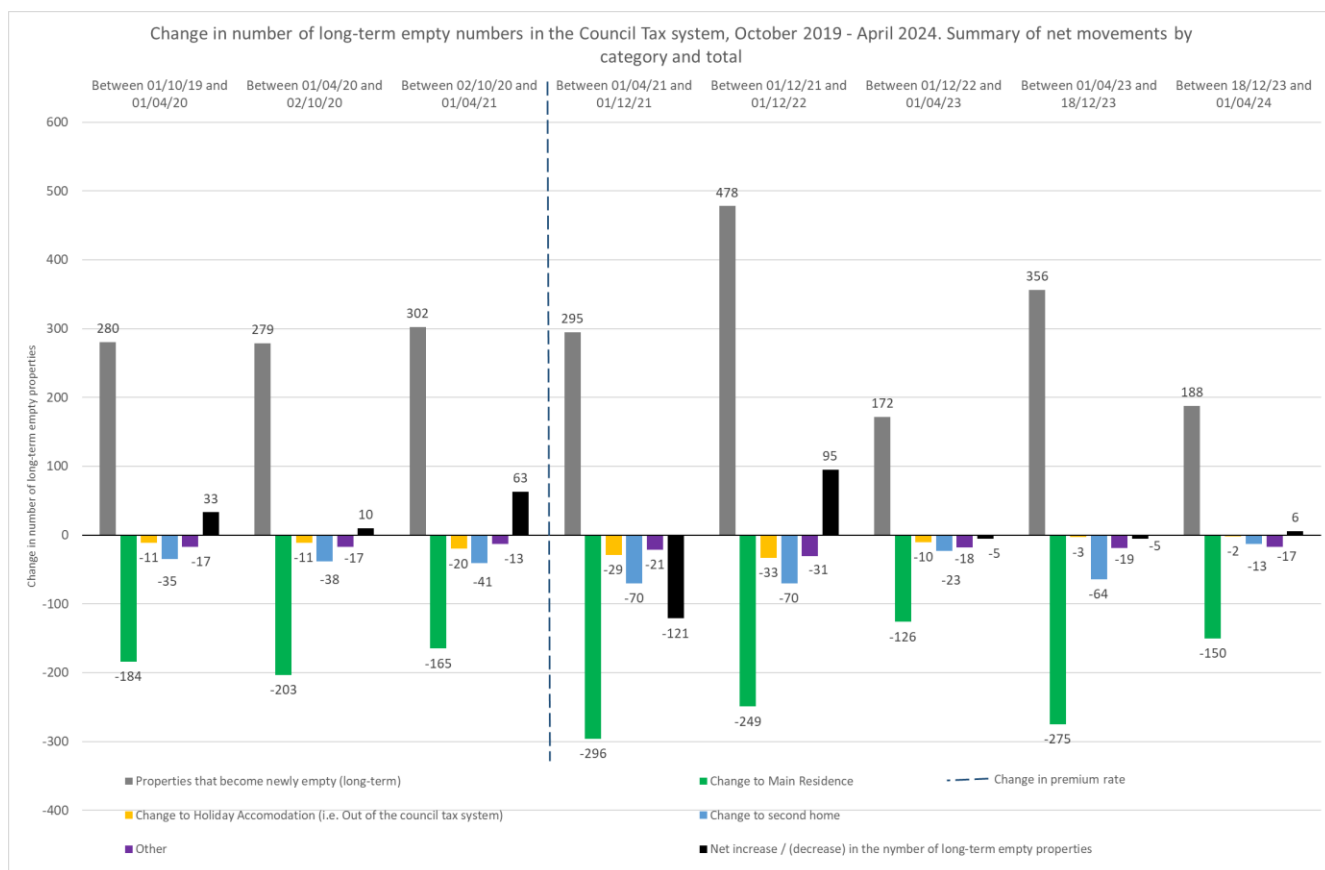
Figure 12: Number of long-term empty properties (12+ months) in Gwynedd between October 2019 – October 2025.

It can therefore be seen that the total has fluctuated somewhat (between about 1,000 and 1,200) over the period but with little apparent pattern to the change, except perhaps for:

- A net decrease of -121 in April – December 2021 (following the last premium increase, and after a period of slowly increasing numbers). But this was then more or less offset by a net increase of +95 in the subsequent period December 2021 – December 2022.
- Some reduction recently (from 1,154 in January 2024 to 1,033 in July 2025) but the number has then increased somewhat (to 1,070) by October 2025.

In the same way as was done with second homes (above), we have tracked and analysed changes to individual property categories to, and from, the long-term empty property category (in order to ascertain to where, and from where, the properties reached that category in the council tax administration system) and the results are summarised in the charts below (full data in **Appendix 3**).

EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN GWYNEDD – NOVEMBER 2025



EVIDENCE OF THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN GWYNEDD – NOVEMBER 2025

Figure 13: Change in long-term empty property numbers in the Council Tax system by period between October 2019 and October 2025 as a summary of net movements per category and in total.

Looking more specifically at property changing from long-term empty properties to main residences, the following pattern can be seen:

Table 2: Change from long-term empty property to main residence

Period	Number of months	Number of properties transferring from long-term empty properties to main residences	Average number of properties transferring per month
1/10/19 – 1/4/20	6	184	31
1/4/20 – 2/10/20	6	203	34
2/10/20 – 1/4/21	6	165	28
1/4/21 – 1/12/21	8	296	37
1/12/21 – 1/12/22	12	249	21
1/12/22 – 1/4/23	4	126	32
1/4/23 – 18/12/23	9	275	31
18/12/23 – 1/4/24	3	150	50
1/4/24 – 7/8/24	4	189	47
7/8/24 – 3/12/24	4	136	34
3/12/24 – 1/4/25	4	139	35
1/4/25 – 1/7/25	3	165	55
1/7/25 – 1/10/25	3	104	35

It's difficult to see a definite pattern in these figures – a slightly higher than usual number transferred in the period immediately following the premium increase in April 2021, but the figures then went back down. There is also a hint of higher numbers transferring at some points (e.g. around early 2024 and between April-June 2025) but otherwise there is no obvious pattern to be seen here.

Overall, therefore, it is difficult to see that the last increase in the council tax premium on long-term empty properties (to 100%, in April 2021) resulted in any long-lasting change in the patterns / numbers of these properties.

In subsequent years, while there have been a number of empty properties that have moved out of that category – mainly reverting to primary residences (much of this is likely to stem from projects to bring empty homes back into use) there have also been a number of properties that have newly become long-term vacant. In terms of numbers, the effect of these two elements have more or less cancelled each other out – so that there has not been much change in the total number of long-term vacant properties across the county in recent years.

8.0 Conclusions

Second homes

There was a net flow of property from second homes to main residences before the premium increase to 100% in April 2021, and (more pronouncedly) before and after the increase to 150% in April 2023. This is contrary to the previous usual pattern where the flow was in the other direction, from main residences to second homes. It appears that the effect of this latest change is more long-lasting, in that a net flow of properties from second homes to main residences continues to exist, two and a half years after the latest change to the premium rate.

It appears therefore (although the limitations of the information, and the other factors which could have impacted upon the situation, need to be borne in mind) that the premium has made a contribution towards returning second homes to use as main residences.

The other important flow, however, is the movement between second homes and holiday units, and it appears that the direction of this flow has completely reversed from April 2023 onwards – which is the date the change in the criteria for taxation of self-catering holiday accommodation came into force. By now this flow consists of a (net) movement from holiday units (in the business rate system) to second homes (in the council tax system).

In the more recent period since August 2024, this flow (from holiday units to second homes) has quickened – to the extent that it is now larger than the other flow (from second homes to main residences) with the result that the total number of properties taxed as second homes is increasing.

Long-term empty properties

It does not appear that the latest increase in the council tax premium on long-term empty property (to 100%, in April 2021) has led to any long-lasting change in the patterns / numbers of these properties in Gwynedd.

In the years since 2021, although numbers of empty properties have transferred out of that category – mainly reverting to being main residences (with a number of these transfers likely to be a result of schemes to bring empty homes back into use) – there have also been numbers of properties becoming long-term empty for the first time. In terms of overall numbers, both these elements have been on a similar scale, and therefore as a consequence there has not been much change in the total number of long-term empty properties across the county in recent years.

Continued monitoring of the situation

The Research team has been cooperating with other teams in the Council to ensure that reports are run, and data kept, regularly to facilitate analysis and reporting on these trends in future. We are also collaborating on a means of matching properties across both systems so that data on properties transferring between the different categories is more easily available without laborious analysis work; this will enable an analysis to be available quarterly, in dashboard form, to the different relevant Council departments.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Percentages of second homes, long-term empty properties, and holiday units of total housing per electoral ward, October 2025

(arranged from highest to lowest by proportion of second homes)

Ward	Second Homes as a percentage of Total Housing	Rank (1=highest, 65=lowest)	Long Term Empty Properties as a percentage of Total Housing	Rank (1=highest, 65=lowest)	Holiday Units as a percentage of Total Housing	Rank (1=highest, 65=lowest)	Composite Percentage (Second Homes + Long Term Empty Properties + Holiday Units as a percentage of Total Housing)	Rank (1=highest, 65=lowest)
Abersoch gyda Llanengan	46.6	1	2.6	5	8.6	1	57.8	1
Aberdyfi	32.3	2	2.1	18	7.6	3	42.0	2
Llanbedrog gyda Mynytho	23.6	3	5.7	1	3.5	25	32.8	3
Gorllewin Porthmadog	20.9	4	1.4	39	8.4	2	30.7	4
Morfa Nefyn a Thudweiliog	18.3	5	2.4	6	5.2	9	25.9	5
Pen draw Llyn	14.5	6	2.4	7	7.3	6	24.2	6
Harlech a Llanbedr	14.2	7	2.2	14	4.4	18	20.8	7
Nefyn	13.7	8	1.5	37	4.3	19	19.5	12
Arthog a Llangelynnin	13.3	9	2.3	11	4.8	16	20.4	8
Brithdir and Llanfachreth/Ganllwyd/Llanelltyd	12.6	10	1.9	25	5.3	8	19.8	10
Abermaw	11.9	11	1.9	26	5.8	7	19.6	11
Glaslyn	10.7	12	2.1	17	7.4	5	20.2	9
Gorllewin Tywyn	10.7	13	1.6	36	1.1	48	13.3	21
Yr Eifl	10.2	14	2.3	9	2.7	30	15.2	17
Bro Dysynni	10.1	15	1.7	31	3.3	29	15.1	18
Morfa Tywyn	9.8	16	0.7	62	2.4	36	12.8	23
Criccieth	9.5	17	1.2	48	7.5	4	18.2	13
Gogledd Dolgellau	8.6	18	1.9	24	5.1	12	15.6	15
Trawsfynydd	8.5	19	2.1	15	4.9	13	15.5	16
Llandderfel	8.0	20	2.2	12	3.8	23	14.0	20
Dyffryn Ardudwy	7.9	21	2.9	3	5.1	10	16.0	14
Efailnewydd a Buan	7.8	22	1.4	42	2.5	34	11.7	28
Corris a Mawddwy	7.7	23	3.1	2	4.1	21	15.0	19
Llanuwchllyn	7.3	24	1.6	34	3.5	26	12.4	24
Teigl	7.0	25	2.0	20	3.3	28	12.4	25
Dolbenmaen	6.4	26	1.8	30	4.8	14	13.0	22
Clynnog	5.9	27	2.0	22	4.4	17	12.2	26
Llanystumdwy	5.8	28	2.1	16	3.9	22	11.8	27
De Pwllheli	5.3	29	1.4	41	1.2	42	8.0	35
De Dolgellau	5.0	30	1.7	33	2.5	33	9.1	33
Waunfawr	4.9	31	2.4	8	3.4	27	10.6	30
Bowydd a'r Rhiw	4.7	32	2.3	10	3.8	24	10.7	29
Llanberis	4.6	33	1.1	50	4.1	20	9.8	31
Penrhyndeudraeth	4.3	34	1.7	32	0.6	55	3.5	54
Llanllfni	4.1	35	1.5	38	1.2	45	6.9	41
Bethel a'r Felinheli	3.7	36	1.0	53	2.3	37	7.0	39
Diffwys a Maenofferen	3.6	37	2.8	4	2.6	32	9.0	34
Canol Tref Caernarfon	3.5	38	1.9	28	1.7	41	7.1	38
Y Groeslon	3.4	39	1.8	29	2.4	35	7.6	37
Abererch	3.0	40	1.1	49	2.2	38	6.3	44
Arllechwedd	2.9	41	1.6	35	0.9	52	5.4	46
Y Bala	2.9	42	1.9	27	2.1	39	6.9	42
Tryfan	2.9	43	1.9	23	0.8	53	5.7	45
Gogledd Pwllheli	2.9	44	2.0	21	1.7	40	6.6	43
Y Bontnewydd	2.5	45	2.2	13	4.8	15	9.5	32
Dwyrain Porthmadog	2.5	46	1.2	47	1.2	44	4.9	47
Gerlan	2.4	47	1.0	52	1.0	49	4.5	50
Tre-garth a Mynydd Llandygai	2.3	48	0.5	63	1.2	43	4.0	52
Deiniolen	2.2	49	1.2	46	0.9	50	4.4	51
Y Faenol	2.0	50	0.8	58	0.8	54	3.7	53
Canol Bangor	2.0	51	1.1	51	0.3	60	3.3	55
Cwm-y-glo	1.5	52	1.4	45	5.1	11	7.9	36
Llanwnda	1.4	53	0.8	60	2.7	31	4.8	48
Penisa'r-waun	1.4	54	1.4	40	1.2	46	6.9	40
Canol Bethesda	1.4	55	1.4	43	0.4	59	3.1	56
Dwyrain Bangor	1.3	56	0.9	55	0.2	63	2.4	59
Pen-y-groes	1.2	57	2.0	19	1.1	47	4.5	49
Rachub	1.0	58	0.9	57	0.9	51	2.8	57
Menai	1.0	59	0.9	56	0.4	58	2.3	60
Glyder	1.0	60	0.8	59	0.3	61	2.0	61
Llanrug	0.9	61	1.4	44	0.5	57	2.7	58
Peblig	0.5	62	0.9	54	0.2	64	1.6	63
Cadnant	0.5	63	0.8	61	0.5	56	1.8	62
Dewi	0.4	64	0.4	64	0.2	62	0.9	64
Hendre	0.0	65	0.2	65	0.0	65	0.2	65

Source: Research and Information Service calculations based on data from council tax system, dated 1/10/25

Appendix 2: Movement numbers to and from the Second Homes category from April 2024

Movements in Second Home numbers - Gwynedd					
	Between 01/04/24 and 07/08/24	Between 07/08/24 and 03/12/24	Between 03/12/24 and 01/04/25	Between 01/04/25 and 01/07/25	Between 01/07/25 and 01/10/25
Initial number	4,296	4,450	4,604	4,720	4,824
<u>Change between Main Residence and 2nd home:</u>					
From Main Residence to 2nd home	386	278	153	173	146
From 2nd home to Main Residence	-287	-301	-258	-200	-197
Net increase in 2nd homes due to change from / (to) main residence	99	-23	-105	-27	-51
<u>Change between Holiday Units and Second Home:</u>					
From Holiday Units to 2nd home (i.e. arriving in CT system, as 2nd home)	33	194	278	150	77
From 2nd home to Holiday Units (i.e. leaving the CT system)	-53	-58	-32	-34	-26
Net increase in 2nd homes due to change from / (to) holiday units	-20	136	246	116	51
<u>Other changes:</u>					
Arrive in the CT system, as 2nd home (including e.g. new houses)	64	26	5	30	38
Leave the CT system, and don't move to business tax as holiday units	-30	-25	-20	-13	-17
From Long term empty property (12+ months) to 2nd home	50	54	17	26	12
From 2nd home to Long-term empty property (12+ months)	-11	-13	-11	-11	-6
From empty property 6-12 months to 2nd home	17	19	13	4	15
From 2nd home to Empty property 6-12 months	-13	-15	-25	-18	-15
Others Miscellaneous: Arriving as 2nd home category	0	0	1	3	2
Others Miscellaneous: Leaving 2nd home category	-2	-5	-5	-6	-6
Net increase in 2nd homes due to other changes	75	41	-25	15	23
Total of all above changes	154	154	116	104	23
Number at end of period	4,450	4,604	4,720	4,824	4,847

Appendix 3: Movement numbers to and from the Long-term Empty Properties category from April 2024

Movement in long-term empty property numbers - Gwynedd					
	Between 01/04/24 and 07/08/24	Between 07/08/24 and 03/12/24	Between 03/12/24 and 01/04/25	Between 01/04/25 and 01/07/25	Between 01/07/25 and 01/10/25
Number at the start of the period	1,143	1,093	1,091	1,099	1,033
Properties that become newly empty (long-term)	214	213	177	135	159
Properties ceasing to be long-term empty:					
Change to Main Residence	-189	-136	-139	-165	-104
Transfer out of council tax system (including change to Holiday Units)	-25	-25	-13	-10	-6
Change to Second Home	-50	-54	-17	-26	-12
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Total	-264	-215	-169	-201	-122
Net increase / (decrease) in number of long-term empty properties	-50	-2	8	-66	37
Number at the end of the period	1,093	1,091	1,099	1,033	1,070
Change between Main Residence and Long-term Empty Property:					
From Main Residence to Long-term Empty Property	90	67	55	50	54
From Long-term Empty Property to Main Residence	-189	-136	-139	-165	-104
Net increase in Long-term empty properties due to change from / (to) main residence	-99	-69	-84	-115	-50
In /out of Council Tax system:					
<i>Out of Council Tax system:</i>					
Total	-25	-25	-13	-10	-6
	-25	-25	-13	-10	-6
<i>Arriving in Council Tax system:</i>					
Total	3	7	3	2	
	3	7	3	2	0
Net increase in Long-term empty properties due to properties arriving / (leaving) the council tax system	-22	-18	-10	-8	-6
Other changes:					
Properties that were empty (6+ months) now empty for 12+ months	110	126	108	72	99
Change between long-term empty properties and second homes:					
From Empty property to 2nd home	-50	-54	-17	-26	-12
From 2nd home to Empty property	11	13	11	11	6
Net increase in Long-term empty properties due to change from / (to) second homes	-39	-41	-6	-15	-6
Other miscellaneous					
Arriving in Long-term empty property category					
Leaving Long-term empty category					
	0	0	0	0	0
Net increase in Long-term empty properties because of other changes	71	85	102	57	93
Total of all above changes	-50	-2	8	-66	37
Number at end of period	1,093	1,091	1,099	1,033	1,070

MEETING:	Full Council
DATE:	4 December 2025
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Huw Wyn Jones, Cabinet Member for Finance
TITLE:	COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2026/27
OBJECTIVE:	Confirm the continuation of the current Local Scheme for providing assistance towards paying Council Tax for the year beginning 1 April 2026
CONTACT OFFICER:	Dewi Morgan, Head of Finance

DECISION SOUGHT

- 1. That Cyngor Gwynedd's Local Scheme for the year commencing 1 April 2026 continues as it was during 2025/26. Therefore, the following conditions (a – c below) regarding the discretionary elements will continue:**
 - a) To apply a 100% disregard for war disablement pensions, war widows' pensions and war widowers' pensions, for both pensioners and working age claimants.**
 - b) Not to increase the extended reduction periods for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard four weeks in the Prescribed Scheme.**
 - c) Not to increase the backdate period for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard three months contained within the Prescribed Scheme.**
- 2. Where appropriate, to delegate powers to the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to make minor amendments to the scheme for 2026/27, on condition that it will not change the substance of the scheme.**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present arrangements for the implementation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to approve it for 2026/27.
- 1.2 There is a statutory requirement for this report to be presented to a Full Council meeting on an annual basis, even if there has been no change in the scheme since the previous year. That is the case this year – no change is recommended to the scheme approved by full Council on 5 December 2024.
- 1.3 **Members are asked to note that this report is relevant to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme ONLY, a means-tested support scheme that must be formally claimed from the Benefit Service. THIS SCHEME, AND THIS REPORT, DO NOT Apply to any other Council Tax discount or exemption scheme (e.g. single person discount, empty property renovation exemption, student housing).**

2. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 In accordance with the *Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 (2013/3029)*, every local authority must make a scheme in order to determine which reductions will be available as support towards paying the Council Tax. Cyngor Gwynedd's current local scheme (i.e. for 2025/26) was adopted by the Full Council on 5 December 2024.
- 2.2 The Regulations insist that the Full Council must adopt the local Scheme every year, and must do so by 31 January before the start of the relevant financial year.
- 2.3 Under the local scheme, qualifying taxpayers may continue to receive a reduction up to 100% of their Council Tax bill (where in receipt of certain benefits).
- 2.4 The Cyngor Gwynedd Local Scheme for 2025/26 was approved by the Full Council on 5 December 2024. The Regulations control the implementation of reduction schemes across the whole of Wales and are designed to ensure that each local authority consistently provides support for Welsh taxpayers.

3. REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2026/27

- 3.1 The Regulations (Regulation 18) state that **for each financial year, an authority must consider whether to revise its scheme** or to replace it with another scheme; the authority must make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, **no later than 31 January** in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.
- 3.2 The Regulations (Regulation 12) state that the function of making the scheme cannot be delegated to the Cabinet, and it **must be decided by the full Council**.
- 3.3 Therefore, the purpose of this report is to satisfy the requirement for the Council to consider whether to revise its local scheme.
- 3.4 There is limited discretion under the Prescribed Scheme for councils to consider the following 3 specific discretionary elements. Discretion can be used to make these elements more generous than the national scheme, but not less generous.

War disablement pensions, war widows' pensions and war widowers' pensions (*recommendation 2.1(a) above*)

- 3.5 There is discretion to increase the disregard for war disablement pensions, war widows' pensions and war widowers' pensions, for both pensioners and working age.

Presently, regulations provide that the first £10 of a weekly war disablement pension, war widows' pension and war widowers' pension are disregarded. However, local authorities have discretion to disregard up to 100% of the actual amount above the first £10. Since 1 April 1996 Cyngor Gwynedd, as have the majority of other Welsh Authorities, has resolved to disregard 100% of the war pensions above the £10. As a result, this sum has already been included within the base budget for 2025/26. In November 2025, there were 11 claimants benefitting from this discretion (there were 15 in November 2023).

It is recommended that this local discretion in Gwynedd continues.

Extended payment period for working age persons
(*recommendation 2.1(b) above*)

- 3.6 There is discretion to increase the standard extended payment period of 4 weeks given to people after they return to work, when they have been in receipt of a relevant qualifying benefit for at least 26 weeks.

There is no limit on the maximum period they may be extended to, but to extend this period would have financial implications. In 2025/26 up to mid-November, there have been no cases where “extended payments” had been awarded pursuant to the Prescribed Scheme (there were 6 cases in the same period in 2024/25).

It is recommended that the standard four week extended payment period contained within the Prescribed Scheme remains unaltered.

Backdating late applications
(*recommendation 2.1(c) above*)

- 3.7 There is discretion to increase backdates for late applications beyond the standard three months. There is no limit on the maximum period they may be extended to. The cost of granting backdated claims (3 months) for 2025/26 is estimated at £10,075, and up to mid-November 215 claims have been backdated to some extent in 2025/26. For the same period in 2024/25 there were 71 such claims with a cost of £13,126.

The current Council Tax Reduction Scheme only allows backdating for a maximum period of 3 months. Extending this period would increase the cost of the Scheme.

It is recommended that there should be no increase in the backdate period from the standard 3 months contained within the Prescribed Scheme.

- 3.8 The recommendations above for 2026/27 are in line with current arrangements in 2025/26.**

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Should the Council wish to revise its local scheme – in effect to amend the 3 areas of discretion described in paragraphs 3.5 to 3.7 – it would need to consult with “any persons who would have an interest”.
- 4.2 In accordance with Regulation 18(6), further consultation is not necessary as there is no intention to change the Local Scheme this year.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 As noted in Part 4 of this report, in the context of the Prescribed Scheme that is in place for Council Tax Reduction across the whole of Wales, the local discretion available to local authorities is very limited apart from three very specific areas.
- 5.2 The Welsh Government has undertaken a detailed regulatory impact assessment, which includes equality impact assessment. A local Equalities Impact Assessment study was conducted in 2013, when the arrangements changed from Council Tax Benefit to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and at that time the decision to introduce the local scheme was taken whilst recognising that this is a prescribed scheme with the burden being borne by all groups.
- 5.3 The Council needs to consider, is if the decisions sought in 2.1 a) – c) effect anyone with one or more of the protected equality characteristics in a way that is different to the general population. Other than funding at Council level, the scheme proposed for 2025/26 does not contain any significant changes from the scheme which is operational since 2013. An assessment undertaken when preparing this report suggests that the conclusions of the 2013 assessment remain valid and that these limited decisions that are sought will not effect any of the protected groups in a way that is different to the general population.

6. RESOURCES

- 6.1 On the basis of the end of August 2025 review, it is expected that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme will cost approximately £11.8m during 2025/26. This is approximately £258,000 above the budget set.
- 6.2 There is no choice other than to face the continuing cost of the Scheme, and the matter will be considered appropriately when drawing up the budget for 2026/27.

Local member's views

Not relevant

Opinion of the Statutory Officers

Monitoring Officer:

No observations to add from a propriety perspective.

Head of Finance:

I have collaborated with the Cabinet Member in the preparation of this report and I confirm the content.

MEETING	Full Council
DATE	4 December 2025
TITLE	Annual Performance Report and Self Assessment 2024/25
PURPOSE	Approval and adoption of Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2024/25
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Nia Jeffreys
CONTACT OFFICER	Dewi W. Jones, Council Business Support Service Manager

1 Background / Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides information about the progress made against the content of the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 during 2024/25. The intention is to provide a balanced report, which addresses the aspects that failed to be achieved as well as those aspects that have been successful. It is noted that the self-assessment is a statutory requirement under the **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**.
- 1.2 Regular reporting is an essential monitoring requirement within the Council's performance management arrangements. We monitor our performance regularly at Departmental performance challenge and support meetings and in the past have submitted the performance reports of individual Cabinet Members to Cabinet meetings on a cycle during the year, as well as preparing this report to evaluate the progress made. Since June 2025, performance reports have been presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committee in order to increase transparency and provide independent public challenge to performance.
- 1.3 Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2024/25 (**Appendix 1**) has been structured to reflect the format of the 2023-28 Cyngor Gwynedd Plan. In the first part the focus is on the performance of the Council Plan's projects and the day-to-day work while the second part includes the Self-Assessment.
- 1.4 As in 2023/24 the report is much more concise than in the past and the intention was to make it a document that is easier to read while continuing to give the reader reassurance that the Council reports meaningfully on its performance.
- 1.5 This year, we have also prepared a summary (**Appendix 3**) outlining progress on the Council Plan's main projects and day-to-day work. The summary also highlights the key issues that require attention, as identified in the self-assessment. The aim is to present the information by area in a clear and easy-to-read format, and it will be designed before publication.
- 1.6 The arrangements for reviewing, reporting and assessing the Council's performance have been subject to legislative change through the

arrangements of Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This requires the Council to measure its performance against three aspects, namely;

(a) That it delivers its functions effectively

(b) That it uses resources economically, effectively, efficiently and

(c) That its governing arrangements are efficient when delivering this.

- 1.7 This report responds to these new requirements and there is a duty to publish a report noting the conclusions of the self-assessment once in relation to each financial year, and to complete the work "as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year it relates to."
- 1.8 It also notes the duty to consult with local people, local businesses, the Council's staff and trade unions at least once in a financial year. These consultations should be used to get feedback on the extent to which the authority delivers the performance requirements. It is a statutory requirement that attention is given to the consultation's results when preparing the self-assessment and it is confirmed that this has been undertaken and highlighted in the document.
- 1.9 Over the past year, the Council has conducted surveys with staff and residents of the county and consulted with trade unions regarding its performance. A summary of the responses received through the various consultations held during the year can be found on pages 52-54.
- 1.10 The Governance Group (that includes officers such as the Chief Executive, Head of Finance Department, Head of Corporate Support Department and the Head of Legal Services amongst others) has led/taken an overview of this process within the Council to ensure that the work is owned and led at a strategic level.
- 1.11 It was noted that, according to the Act, a draft of the self-assessment report must be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee before it is finally adopted to give them an opportunity to present any observations and recommendations. These will need to be considered when the document is formally presented to the Cabinet and the Council. If there are recommendations to change that are not adopted, the reasons for this must be reported formally.
- 1.12 Following a previous request by Committee members to be included earlier in the process, the main issues to be included in the 2024/25 Self-Assessment were presented at the meeting on 22 May. As a result, five points were raised for consideration: the development of care services in Penrhos, consideration of the A499 in the Flood Strategy, continuation of the ARFOR Scheme, the effects of Article 4, and safeguarding arrangements in schools.

- 1.13 A draft of the Self-Assessment document was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at their meeting on 9 October, where it was agreed to accept the draft report while offering the following comments:
- Consider the impact of a decline in the number of young people and an increase in the county's older population on Council services.
 - Refer to work being done to increase staff survey responses.
 - Include examples and evidence to give substance to certain statements in the report.

All the above comments have been addressed within the draft version of the Self-Assessment.

- 1.14 In accordance with the requirements of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, Appendix 2 outlines how the Council has complied with the Social Partnership duty.
- 1.15 In order to meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, we need to report on our contribution to the principles of the Act and specifically the well-being objectives that we have adopted. This report has been drawn up on the basis of our well-being objectives (the seven priority areas) outlining what has been achieved in the period in question. For convenience there is also a table at the end of the first part of the report identifying the objectives to which the projects contribute.
- 1.16 As part of the preparation of the Council Plan 2023-28 an Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared. The assessment on the Plan in its entirety does not identify any impact that would justify a departure from the recommendation, and there are elements for which a positive impact is anticipated. It is the Project Leaders' responsibility to undertake a full Equality Impact Assessment on individual projects.
- 1.17 Not publishing a self-assessment would likely lead to statutory recommendations by Audit Wales, which would have implications on the Council's reputation.

2 Reasons for Recommending the Decision

- 2.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Council's Governance and Audit Committee have discussed Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2024/25 and have had the opportunity to present observations and recommendations. The Council Cabinet has discussed the report seen in **Appendices 1, 2 and 3** at its meeting on 11 November, and recommended that the Council adopts it.

3. Next steps and timetable

- 3.1 In accordance with what is required under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the document will be circulated to the following list of recipients within the four-week period following this meeting:
- i. Auditor General for Wales
 - ii. His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
 - iii. Welsh Ministers.
- 3.2 Arrangements will be made to inform the public of the report by communicating the report and the main successes visually via social media, as well as by printing and sharing copies with the media and at the Council's usual locations e.g., libraries.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Council is requested to approve and adopt Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2024/25

5. Statutory Officers' Views

5.1 Views of the Monitoring Officer

As noted undertaking a self-assessment is part of statutory duties placed on the Council in relation to assessing and reporting on its performance. There are a number of statutory steps which relate to reaching this point and these are specifically referenced in the head report and the Performance Report and Self- Assessment as well as how the Council is to have regard to them. These are specifically around consultation and the views of the Governance and Audit Committee. I am satisfied with the propriety of the recommendation.

5.2 Views of the Head of Finance Department

The Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment is a key document that is now a core part of demonstrating the appropriateness of the Council's governance and performance arrangements. I am satisfied that the contents of the document are a fair and accurate reflection of Gwynedd Council's position.

Appendices

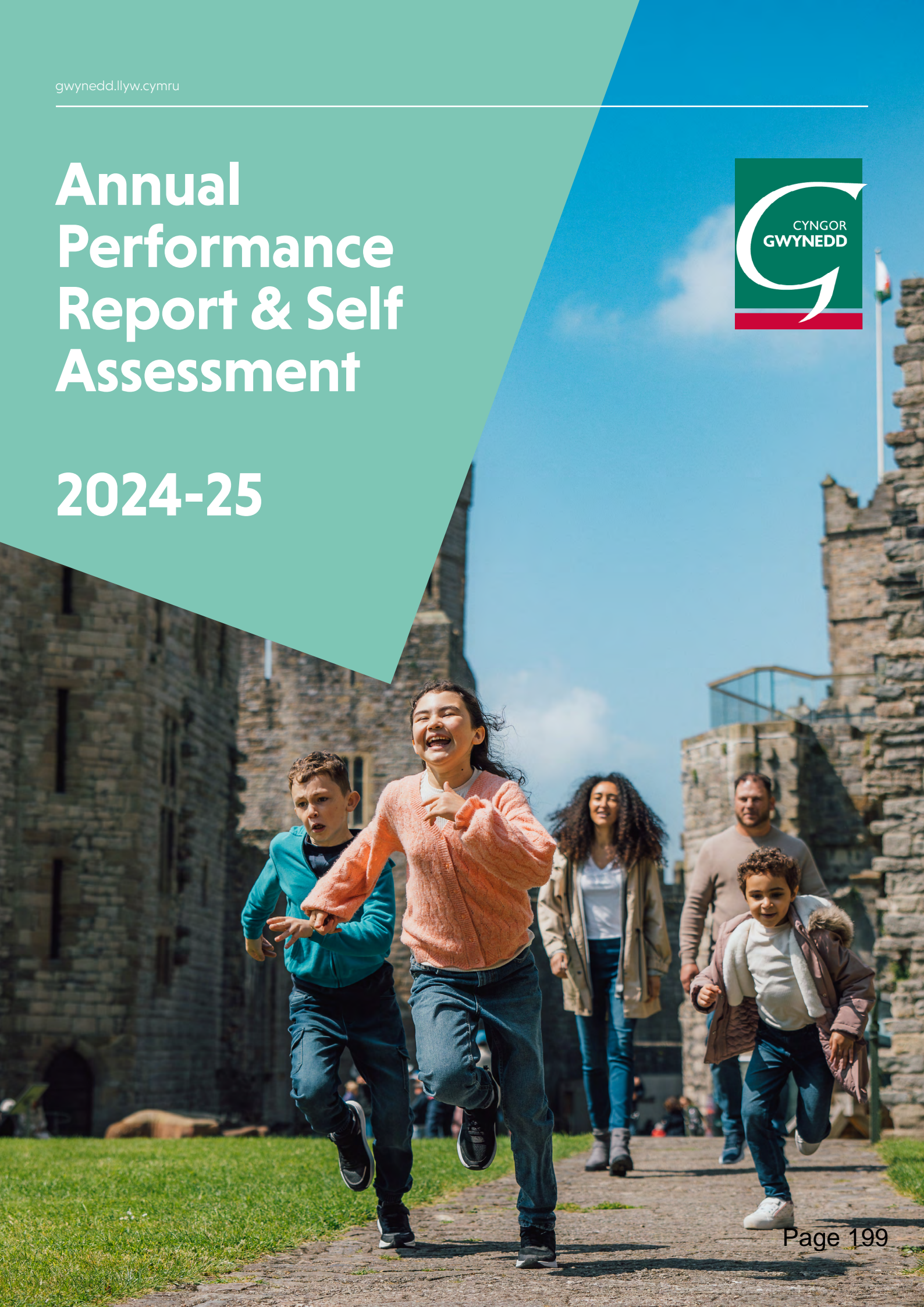
Appendix 1 - Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2024/25 (Draft)

Appendix 2 – Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Social Partnership Report for 2024/25 (Draft)

Appendix 3 - Easy read summary of Gwynedd Council Annual Performance Report 2024/25 (Draft)

Annual Performance Report & Self Assessment

2024-25





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Leader's Foreword



I am pleased to present the Annual Performance Report 2024-25 which looks at the Council's work over the past year. This is the second performance report of the 2023-28 Council Plan.

It is miraculous that we have been able to achieve so much as a Council given the huge funding gap we were facing as a result of the inadequate settlement by the Welsh Government, which has been the case for many years. I'm extremely pleased that we committed to protecting the most vulnerable among us when setting the budget for this year. I can't help but think of all the extra things that we would have been able to achieve for the people of Gwynedd if they had received an adequate and fair budget.

Reflecting on what has been achieved in the past year there are so many highlights that I could refer to. A priority programme for me is the cross-departmental Supporting People programme which helps those facing permanent hardship. It's nice to be able to report on the progress of this work over the past year. The programme has progressed considerably since it was established in order to tackle poverty and the cost of living crisis and continues to do great work in funding and supporting community hubs, supporting the county's food banks and work to reduce the impact of fuel poverty on the residents of Gwynedd.

Our Housing Action Plan is going from strength to strength with so many county residents having benefited from new homes and practical support. This scheme has brought several empty houses back into use, ensuring that social houses are built, developing Tŷ Gwynedd housing as well as work to mitigate the effects of homelessness.

The past year has seen the opening of the new Ysgol Treferthyr in Cricieth, an eco-friendly school that will provide a first-class learning environment for the children of Cricieth and the surrounding area. Significant investments have also been made to two primary schools in Bangor to ensure a wealth of learning experiences for local children in the area.

We have been able to attract and benefit from several grants here in Gwynedd over the year, one that stands out is the £2 million to Gwynedd's slate communities to fund the innovative LleCHI LleNI project over a five-year period. This funding will raise awareness of the slate heritage of the World Heritage Site areas and celebrate the importance of the Welsh language.

Another source of pride is our investment in young people. I was delighted with the launch of Academi Gofal which tackles staff shortages in the Care sector by attracting and developing individuals to pursue a career in a Welsh environment in this vital field. Increasing the use of the Welsh language is very important to me and the great work of promoting the prosperity of the language continues through significant projects.

Further challenges lie ahead, with the financial situation forcing us to make difficult decisions. Yet I have every faith that we as a Council will continue to do our best for the people of Gwynedd. I, as Leader, will continue to voice my dissatisfaction and lobby the Welsh Government and Westminster about the lack of investment in Local Government, particularly rural areas such as Gwynedd, trying to secure adequate funding for the future.

Councillor Nia Jeffreys
Cyngor Gwynedd Leader

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Introduction

The 'Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28' includes a series of ambitious projects which will enable us to develop and improve our services for the residents of the county over a period of five years. The projects are covered under seven priority fields:

- **Tomorrow's Gwynedd**
Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life
- **A Prosperous Gwynedd**
Strengthening the economy and supporting the people of Gwynedd to earn a decent salary
- **A Homely Gwynedd**
Supporting the people of Gwynedd to live in suitable and affordable homes in their communities
- **A Caring Gwynedd**
Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities
- **A Welsh Gwynedd**
Ensuring that we give our residents every possible opportunity to use the Welsh language in the community
- **A Green Gwynedd**
Protecting the county's natural beauty, and responding positively to the climate change crisis
- **An Efficient Gwynedd**
Putting the residents of Gwynedd first and treating them fairly and ensuring that the Council performs effectively and efficiently

This report looks back at what was achieved during the second year of the Council's Plan. It is customary to undertake an annual review of the Plan to ensure that the projects remain suitable, and to give the Council the opportunity to adapt them in light of local and national developments over the period of the Plan. This annual report covers the plan as agreed by the Council on the 7 March 2024.

Like last year, the report is divided into chapters that reflect the seven priority areas, describing the progress made during the year along with the main achievements in the day-to-day work of our departments, for example child and adult care, the economy, and housing.

The Priority Areas within this document are our Well-being Objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Objectives will directly contribute to achieving the seven national well-being goals. As we take action, we will also give appropriate consideration to the five ways of working within the Act by considering the long term, prevention, integration, collaborative working and being inclusive of people of all ages. We will do this by adopting a way of working which focuses on putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. The table at the end of this report outlines the contribution of each priority project towards the five ways of working.

The second part of the performance report is our self-assessment for the year. This is our fourth self-assessment. The Council is expected to submit this annually under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Also, this year an additional section is appended that outlines how the Council is complying with the Social Partnership Duty which is a new reporting requirement under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

The need to make financial savings is more or less an annual challenge for Local Government by now, and last year was no different. A total of £43 million of savings have been realised since 2015/16, with £5.6 million of this total coming from the 2024/25 financial year. Despite these financial challenges, the Council is constantly innovating and trying to find better and more efficient ways of providing services.

As part of our performance arrangements, a series of departmental performance challenge and support meetings are held on a regular basis to see how the departments are making progress with their day-to-day work as well as Council Plan projects. This Annual Performance Report is based on the findings of these performance challenge and support meetings. The aim of the report is not just to highlight the good things, but to give a fair and honest picture of our performance during the year. In doing so, we can celebrate our successes and see which aspects of our work needs further attention, in order to assist us in providing the best possible service for the residents of the county within the resources we have.

This annual Report is submitted to the Council Cabinet and to the meeting of the Full Council for approval.



Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Our ambition is to ensure that every child educated in Gwynedd gets:

- Treated equally, is encouraged to treat others equally and is assured that we give priority to their happiness and well-being.
- Education of the best possible standard including access to a broad range of academic and vocational subjects to fulfil the requirements of the new 'Curriculum for Wales'.
- Access to Welsh-medium education throughout their time in education.
- Educated in buildings that are in a good state of repair, are safe and fit for purpose to the best of our ability.
- The opportunity to develop into rounded citizens, who are content and confident in the world.
- Tailored support from professional services to meet their additional learning needs.
- The opportunity to have a nutritious meal in school, free of charge to as many pupils as possible.
- Access to equipment and technology that promote modern and effective learning.
- An assurance of suitable facilities and playing fields that are available for children and young people in their leisure time.

Projects

Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Transforming education for children in their early years

Modernising buildings and the learning environment

Promoting the well-being of children and young people
and reducing the cost of sending children to school

Extending opportunities for play and socialising for the
county's children and young people

Review and improve the range of inclusion
provisions in Gwynedd.

Formulate and implement a 10-year strategic direction
for education in Gwynedd

Project Updates

Transforming education for children in their early years

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A new strategy for the early years is being implemented which includes work to provide support to fathers, provide perinatal mental health support, a toileting scheme, and develop speech and language.
- The two-year-olds childcare provision has been extended to a number of new areas in the county, including Abermaw, Bala, Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Bangor.

Modernising buildings and the learning environment

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The construction work commenced on the site of the Bangor Byw'n lach car park to upgrade the area and create parking spaces for Ysgol Hiraël staff, which will make the school a car-free site. The building work on the improvements to Ysgol Hiraël itself will begin in 2025-26.
- The former Ysgol Glanadda building has been demolished and the construction work for the new Our Lady's School has begun. The frame for the new school is already in place, and work will continue over the next few months.
- An Outline Strategic Case has been produced and submitted to the Welsh Government to improve the condition of the buildings and the learning environment at Ysgol Tryfan, Bangor. Discussions are ongoing to ensure that the project can be delivered within the available budget.
- The construction of Ysgol Treforthyr in Cricieth has been completed, and a new school for 150 learners opened its doors in early September 2024.
- An Outline Business Case for a new school in Bontnewydd was approved in July 2024. Work on the creation of a temporary school, which will allow space for the new school to be built, is progressing with the intention of being operational by September 2025.



Promoting the well-being of children and young people and reducing the cost of sending children to school

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Research findings about the financial cost of attending school were shared with schools.
- A work programme was drawn up to respond to the findings of the questionnaires, and as part of this actions will be drawn up, which are unique to each school, which will lead to a reduction in the cost of sending children to school.

Extending opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Young people's views on all the available youth provisions were gathered. The gaps will be addressed in the Youth Service's new strategy.
- We will review the facilities available in the high image playing fields and make improvements within the available funding.

Review and improve the range of inclusion provisions in Gwynedd.

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Following the establishment of a Project Board in March 2024, work was undertaken to map needs and research provisions in other counties to identify good practice. As a result of this work, Cabinet agreed in April 2025 to create a (multi-site) Unit for the provision of support to children with significant behavioural and engagement difficulties. A funding plan was agreed delegating the timetable for implementation and delivery of the plan to the Head of Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education. The main location of the provision is in Llanwnda on the former site of the school, with an investment from the ALN Capital Grant to ensure the building is fit for purpose.

Formulate and implement a 10-year strategic direction for education in Gwynedd

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A draft of the new Education Strategy has been prepared, and we aim to introduce it early in 2025-26.



Some of our key achievements

- There is a Project Boards arrangement in place to ensure that education capital project management is robust. Significant work has been carried out during the year to meet the expenditure requirements of one-off capital grants during the year such as the Additional Learning Needs grant and community schools and Rolling Programme capital projects are now progressing as expected.
- For admission to Primary and Secondary schools in September 2024, 99.5% of parents' first choices were offered.
- We have been successful in offering training and follow-up workshops to EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) designated persons and support staff in several secondary schools during 2024/25. Thirteen secondary schools attended the initial presentation, and 10 secondary schools were able to attend the following 3 workshops. We will be offering the training to more secondary schools during 2025/26. We will be offering seasonal supervision sessions to these schools, and we hope to train more staff in the following educational year.
- Free school meals are available to all children from reception to year 6 in all primary schools in Gwynedd.
- We provide professional and efficient education transport for eligible learners in line with the Welsh Government's statutory requirements to facilitate access to all educational sites in the county.
- By reducing the number of pupils in the ABC Centres and also ensuring that all pupils have a shared placement with their Mainstream schools, we have improved the quality of the service. The plan allows us to focus more effectively on individual targets and respond appropriately to the needs at the Centres. In addition, the shared placement arrangement ensures that schools have the opportunity to get to know the pupils, enabling them to plan and prepare an appropriate provision for the Reception year. As a result, there are improvements in developmental progress sooner, and the willingness of the intensive pupils to transition to full-time education.
- 97% of school safeguarding designated persons have completed designated person training in the last two years. While the national guidance states that a period of more than three years should not be left between training, we encourage refresher training every two years as a good practice. The figure is not 100% as three new members of staff have started in their roles and have not yet completed the training but have registered to do so.
- The Inclusion Service has been focusing on strengthening the support available to pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). This has included developing more systematic approaches to identifying needs early, ensuring that interventions are provided in a timely and effective manner. We worked closely with schools and other services to co-design a new strategy, with the aim of ensuring that the support offered is inclusive, sustainable and evidence based. As part of the strategy, we will be establishing a new centre which will be operational from September 2025, offering a range of targeted services to support pupils.



A Prosperous Gwynedd

The foundation for enabling the people of Gwynedd to prosper is ensuring that there are suitable jobs available in the county paying salaries that enable them to support themselves and their families. Our ambition is to ensure:

- High-quality jobs.
- Support for businesses to thrive.
- Sustainable tourism for the benefit of communities.
- Strong and resilient communities.
- Prosperous and vibrant town centres.

Projects

A Prosperous Gwynedd

Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy

Regenerating communities and town centres

Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work

Keeping the Benefit Local

Project Updates

Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A Sustainable Visitor Economy summit was held with over 100 attendees.
- We reviewed our arrangements to support events in Gwynedd.
- Four 'Aros-fan' (stopping places) have been opened across Gwynedd for visitors travelling in motorhomes. We are monitoring the use made of them and will prepare an evaluation report in due course.
- A structure has been established to implement the Gwynedd and Eryri Visitor Economy Plan 2035, and funding has been earmarked to implement the scheme.
- Communities and businesses in Gwynedd were supported to promote and celebrate culture locally through the 'Diwylliesiant' project. £715,553 was invested to support 109 organisations and businesses to carry out various activities, which attracted an additional investment of £5.8m for the County. A lot of activity took place through Storiell, Byw'n Iach, Archives, Libraries and Parc Glynllifon.
- The communities of Gwynedd were supported to take advantage of the slate industry's world heritage designation by securing Heritage Lottery funding for the LleCHI LleNi projects, and funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Levelling-up Fund. Several major projects are underway including the redevelopment of the Slate Museum and Parc Padarn in Llanberis, and town centre improvements and the installation of public art in six towns. In addition, the Aelwyd yr Urdd was upgraded, and works were completed on a connecting route in Blaenau Ffestiniog.



Regenerating communities and town centres

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The Local Regeneration Plans for each of the 13 regeneration areas in the county were published on the Council's website, and a review of the local co-ordination arrangements was undertaken.
- Grants worth £1.8m were offered through the Community Support Key Fund to a range of local regeneration projects.
- Place Making Schemes have been completed for Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Bala and Dolgellau.
- £1.8m of Shared Prosperity Fund grant funding has been invested to upgrade Gwynedd's town centres.
- A number of town centre improvement projects were awarded a Transforming Towns 2024/5 grant, including College Park, Bangor; the vacant property of Galeri Cyf; Menter y Tŵr Pwllheli; Canolfan Bro Tegid, Y Bala; and Bangor Health and Well-being Centre.



Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work

This is what we achieved during the year:

- 600 businesses and social enterprises received support from the Council through the ARFOR programme and the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The Gwynedd Business Week was held in October, with a series of events organised for businesses in Dolgellau, Pwllheli and Bangor. A campaign by the Council to encourage residents and visitors to support local businesses managed to reach 50,000 other accounts.
- We continue to support the North Wales Growth Bid schemes, paying particular attention to the schemes that offer the greatest benefit to Gwynedd, including the approved Bryn Cegin Park Scheme, and arrangements are in place to start operating on the redesigned Glynllifon Innovation Hub Project and site.
- 221 people were supported to return to work in 2024/25 and 251 people were assisted to increase their ability to earn a good salary.

Keeping the Benefit Local

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A new procurement strategy has been drawn up which will soon be presented to the Cabinet.
- Our procurement procedure rules were reviewed to ensure compliance with the new Procurement Act.
- We have updated our website and intranet to raise awareness of the new regulations, procurement techniques and the aim of keeping the benefit local in due course.

Some of our key achievements

Developing the economy and regenerating communities

Cyngor Gwynedd provided a wide range of support to sustain and support businesses to thrive during the past year:

- Support was provided to 176 different businesses through Council-led business support schemes. The support was a combination of financial help in the form of a grant to enable businesses to invest in order to reduce costs or take advantage of new opportunities, practical support to help businesses review their activities and plan for the future, and support for businesses to make better use of technology and digital media.
- Following support from the Gwaith Gwynedd team, 221 residents were successful in getting a job. This was an increase of one third on last year's result.
- As a result of being offered financial support from the Council during 2024/25, 54 businesses have committed to paying their employees a real living wage and using more Welsh.
- Completion and publication of Place Making Schemes to improve six towns within the county - Bangor, Caernarfon, Pwllheli, Porthmadog, Dolgellau and Bala.
- Cist Gwynedd, the community grants portal, has allocated over £1.6million of grants to various groups and organisations in the county.
- The Regeneration Programme Service has secured an investment of £8.5m for town centre projects.
- To improve the towns of the county, financial support was given to bring 10 empty properties in town centres back into use, and to renovate and improve a further 26 buildings.

Culture and Leisure

- A new website was launched for Parc Glynllifon www.parcglynllifon.cymru to promote what is available there.
- A bid worth £300,000 for financial support from the Welsh Government was successful. As a result of this, work will take place in 2025-26 to resurface the car park, install charging points for cars and bicycles, solar panels and interpretation/signage works.
- There have been improvements to the infrastructure of leisure centres including the resurfacing of the indoor tennis courts, the installation of a new Padel court – the first public court in North Wales – at Arfon Tennis Centre, and the conversion of the MUGA into a 2G 7v7 pitch at Glan Wnion, Dolgellau.
- A new 3G pitch was opened in Caernarfon by former Wales and Liverpool footballer, Ian Rush.
- Improvements have been made to Porthmadog harbour which included replacing the harbour mooring chains to ensure the safety of boats, and the improvement of the harbour's outer enclosure to provide a more practical and safer site. The CCTV system at Barmouth harbour was upgraded to improve security and improvements to the Compound Road were completed.
- Following a £450,000 upgrade to the car park, a new charging system for parking in Dinas Dinlle was trialled.
- £280,000 has been invested to modernise the exhibitions at the Lloyd George Museum in Llanystumdwy after obtaining a grant from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The Warm Welcome campaign is active in all of Gwynedd's Libraries with the opportunity to join in activities such as playing chess, making jigsaw puzzles and a dementia choir. Caernarfon Library's Thursday afternoon chess session is growing from strength to strength, with children, young people and older people playing together regularly.

Some of our key achievements

- Our Library system (LMS) was upgraded in December 2024. The LMS Cymru team, led by Cyngor Gwynedd, is working on launching a new app and All Wales book catalogue.
- A varied programme has been developed at Neuadd Dwyfor, with an emphasis on live music evenings by individuals and bands in Welsh, in addition to the usual film and theatre show offerings. As part of this, the 'Gigs Town Hôl' brand was introduced which is going from strength to strength.
- Financial support worth £77,000 was provided to hold 33 different events in the county. 154,000 people attended the events, and it was estimated that this benefited £4,069,561 to the local economy as a result.

A Homely Gwynedd

Our ambition is to ensure that the people of Gwynedd can access a suitable home of a high standard, that is affordable and improves their quality of life. We will try to achieve this by setting an ambition to:

- Ensure that no-one is homeless in Gwynedd.
- Help the residents of Gwynedd to own an affordable home in their community.
- Ensure that houses in Gwynedd are environmentally friendly.
- Ensure that houses in Gwynedd have a positive influence on the health and well-being of the county's residents.



Projects

A Homely Gwynedd

Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty

Increasing the supply of housing for local people

Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd

Managing second homes and short-term
holiday accommodation

Project Updates

Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty

This is what we have achieved during the year:

- The county's residents were supported to make the most of schemes to reduce energy costs such as ECO4, with 216 applications having been approved.
- Ensuring that the residents of Gwynedd are aware of all the benefits available to them by working with internal and external partners.
- We have distributed 656 energy vouchers to residents in need who are on a prepayment meter in Gwynedd with expenditure of £24,719. Since the beginning we have distributed 5,671 vouchers worth £236,055 – money that has gone directly to the county's most vulnerable residents.
- We have referred residents to get additional support from organisations such as the Food Banks, Canllaw, Telecare, the Council's Empty Homes Grants and Council Loans, Gwaith Gwynedd, the Priority Services Register, Welsh Water, Community Hubs and we have also referred to the Smart Energy Meters service.
- Expertise and useful information were shared on Cyngor Gwynedd's Costs of Living website which is available to everyone.
- Community clinics were held to refer people to the services and support available.



Increasing the supply of housing for local people

This is what we have achieved during the year:

- 386 social housing units have now been erected since the start of the Housing Action Plan, and these will help almost 1,300 individuals.
- Construction work has begun on sites in Llanberis and Bangor to create affordable housing under the Tŷ Gwynedd scheme.
- 23 houses were purchased through the Buy to Let Scheme (bringing the total to 46 houses), and these will be let at affordable rent levels.
- 108 vacant properties have been brought back into use through grant aid to renovate empty homes since the start of the Housing Action Plan.
- 62 households have now bought their home through the Homebuy Scheme.

Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Developments to accommodate homeless people have been completed in Bangor and Pwllheli, and construction work is ongoing on another development in Bangor.
- The purchase of the former Government offices, Penrallt, Caernarfon, has been completed and substantial background work has taken place, such as structural assessments, feasibility assessments etc, prior to submitting a planning application for conversion into units for local people in need of a home.
- An additional 12 properties were attracted to the Leasing Wales Scheme which enables more people to rent privately in Gwynedd, making it a more affordable option. We will continue to engage with landlords and the Government to look at options to increase opportunities over the life of the scheme. To date 28 properties have been let, helping 65 individuals.
- Our 'One Stop Shop' is almost ready to launch. The 'One Stop Shop' is a new resource to respond to the needs of residents as they submit applications relating to housing in one central location.

Managing second homes and short-term holiday accommodation

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Following a period of public consultation, it was decided to introduce an Article 4 Direction for the Gwynedd planning authority area, to manage the use of homes as second homes and holiday accommodation. This has been implemented and is now in place across the county.
- Research was carried out into the effect of the Council Tax Premium with respect to any change of use of a property. It was found that there had been a decrease in the number of second homes and self-catering holiday units, but there was not enough data available at the time to prove that this was a direct result of the Premium. Following this, the Council decided to keep the Premium at the same level for 2025-26.



Some of our key achievements

- We have set an ambition to create 83 supported accommodation units for our county's homeless people by the end of the Housing Action Plan, to meet the growing demand for the service. Since 2021, 20 units have been created, with a further 62 on the work programme. To date, at least 30 people have received support in the new units, and we will continue to support individuals and families over the next few years.
- In October 2024, Dôl Sadler – a brand-new building for providing supported accommodation to our county's residents – opened on the site of the former Ysgol Glan Wnion in Dolgellau. The development was shortlisted for the Inside Housing Development Awards in the Best Supported Housing Development category: Rural/Suburban.
- There are two Tŷ Gwynedd sites in the construction process – the Llanberis and Coed Mawr, Bangor sites. Another two will start in 2025/26, with more to follow in the coming years. Other sites are being considered across the county to address local needs.
- Through the Buy-to-Let Scheme, the Council buys homes on the open market to let them to residents in housing need. The Council has already purchased 46 houses (exceeding the ambition set for the end of the 2024/25 financial year, which was 43). The Council has let 16 houses and is completing necessary repairs and upgrades on a further 20 houses.
- To bring more empty homes back into use, there are several interventions available to the people of Gwynedd. Through the Housing Action Plan, the Department can offer an additional year's exemption from council tax on empty homes, so that a family or individual can complete key restoration work to bring the house to an acceptable standard of living. To date, 123 exemptions totalling £165,061 have been granted to empty homeowners.
- Grants are available for owners to carry out necessary upgrade work to a house that used to be empty, and to date 108 of these grants have been allocated. The total number of empty homes that have come back into use because of the Council's support is 284. This means, of course, that 284 empty houses have also come back into use for local residents. This meets and exceeds the ambition set to bring 250 empty homes back into use.
- The Housing and Property department is working closely with its housing partners on social and intermediate housing developments to meet the huge demand for housing in Gwynedd. During 2024/25, 90 affordable homes were built across Gwynedd bringing the total number of new homes since the start of the Housing Action Plan to 386.
- The Department has been successful in attracting additional funding from the Welsh Government to deliver more affordable housing developments. In 2024/25, an additional £8m was attracted which will enable our housing partners to build at least an additional 50 units.
- Work on developing the Penrhos, Pwllheli site is underway, after the Council, in partnership with Clwyd Alyn housing association, secured an additional grant of around £7.7m from the Welsh Government to enable the start of phase 1 of the development which will create 44 new homes.
- The Homebuy Scheme has managed to help 62 households to buy a home on the open market in Gwynedd. Another 25 are currently in the process. The Council, in partnership with the Dwyfor Pilot, has succeeded in extending the maximum value of eligible properties in certain areas of Dwyfor to respond to the local situation, meaning that more people can benefit from the Scheme.

Some of our key achievements

- Since October 2022, 753 homes have received grant support to improve their energy performance. This has helped many residents of Gwynedd to live in more cosy homes and to avoid or get out of fuel poverty by providing support to insulate houses, receive effective heating equipment and eco-friendly upgrades such as solar panels and air-source heat pumps.
- During April and May 2024, Taith ar Daith was held, which was the first series of drop-in events for helping the public with housing issues. Three locations were visited – Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau, and positive feedback was received at each site from the 158 people who called in. The Department has received several invitations to visit other locations, and these will be visited in the coming years.



A Caring Gwynedd

Looking after vulnerable individuals is one of our main responsibilities, and our ambition is to support the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities by:

- Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Supporting residents to participate and engage with their communities, and to reduce poverty and its effects.
- Ensuring that children, young people and their families live happy lives and reach their potential in terms of their education, health and well-being.
- Ensuring there is information available for the residents of Gwynedd to assist them in making informed decisions about their health and physical and mental well-being.
- Enabling the residents of Gwynedd to live independently in suitable accommodation with dignity for as long as possible in their community.
- Supporting unpaid carers.
- Providing high-quality care and support in the right place at the right time.
- Supporting our communities to ensure accessibility and to develop into an Age-Friendly Gwynedd.

Projects

A Caring Gwynedd

Modernising our care resources to meet future needs

Using technology more effectively to improve the ability of Gwynedd residents to access support and care

Working with Health Services to enable people to live their best life in the community

Developing training and employment opportunities for individuals in need of support

Autism Plan

Llechen Lân

Developing a residential provision for looked-after children in small group homes

Supporting People's Well-being

Project Updates

Modernising our care resources to meet future needs

This is what we achieved during the year:

- We have finished upgrading Hafod Mawddach and Cefn Rodyn.
- Dementia units in Bryn Blodau have opened.
- Discussions have begun on the development of Extra Care Housing in Caernarfon.
- We are investigating whether there is a need for additional provision of Care Housing at the Penyberth site, Pwllheli.

Using technology more effectively to improve the ability of Gwynedd residents to access support and care

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The Dewis search tool and AskSara occupational therapy system have been integrated into the social services website pages. This means that people can obtain suitable and timely information and advice to help them remain independent and reduce pressures on traditional services.
- A menu of telecare devices has been created and is being promoted on the website, in the media and through the social work teams to help people remain independent. It will also reduce the pressure on traditional services.

**A Caring
Gwynedd**



Working with Health Services to enable people to live their best life in the community

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Arrangements for regular communication and meetings were established in order to promote collaboration and enable the adult teams to feel more like one. This reduces duplication and improves communication which in turn provides a better service to the individual.
- New joint-working arrangements were developed for the mental health teams, and a review of the arrangements was carried out to ensure they were robust.

Developing training and employment opportunities for individuals in need of support

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A Job Opportunities Co-ordinator and additional Employment Support Officers were appointed, and work was undertaken to identify the type and number of opportunities needed. This meant that individuals with a learning disability were given paid employment (real living wage) and that both the individual and the employer received support from Council officers.

Autism Plan

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A preventative worker has been appointed to the family support team to work with children who are on the diagnosis pathway or who have been diagnosed. The worker works very closely with the autism team and is involved in providing group-based intervention.
- The team is developing parent/carer support programmes to ensure that the support provided at home is effective and appropriate.
- A range of training was provided to professionals and parents/carers including training on awareness and understanding of autism, and training on worrying behaviour.
- The team continues to work on the Llwybrau Ni project, which will provide social opportunities for young people and a break for parents and carers.

Llechen Lân

This is what we achieved during the year:

- An analysis of Gwynedd's demographics, the demand for service, and adult social services best practice was completed in order to understand and highlight the demand for service and the associated resources that will be required for the next twenty years.



Developing a residential provision for looked-after children in small group homes

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A small group home was opened in Morfa Bychan, and two children were welcomed into the home. In addition, two other properties have been purchased and preparatory work is underway for registration.
- A meeting was attended in the area to discuss the plan.
- A 'Statement of Purpose' and policies have been developed for the development as they will be required to register the unit with Care Inspectorate Wales.

Supporting People's Well-being

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Well-being Champions were appointed, and cost-of-living events and various drop-in sessions were held.
- Two Supporting People Hubs have been established in two new areas.
- We worked with Citizens Advice to provide numeracy and budgeting support to residents.
- Practical support was provided for people to learn how to go on-line, and IT equipment was distributed as part of the Digital Inclusion Project.
- The pilot of the Gafael Llaw scheme has been set up which is a scheme across social services and Galw Gwynedd, which proactively reaches out to residents to make sure everyone knows where to go for help and what help is available.
- A Capital and Revenue Fund was established to support community feeding projects, and cookery courses were provided at the hubs in collaboration with Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board.
- Food and Fun sessions were run during the summer holidays where activities were provided for children which included educational sessions, physical activity and food and nutrition education. Four schools signed up to participate.
- Kits were provided to support children's toileting which included real reusable nappies, potties and information packs.
- Hundreds of free period products were distributed through libraries during 2024/25.
- 5,575 food packages were distributed by community food schemes throughout the county and 11,601 meals were provided.
- 3,478 people attended Croeso Cynnes sessions across 25 schemes across the county where wellbeing workshops such as weekly games and creative sessions were provided as well as drop-in sessions on various issues e.g. finance or health.

Some of our key achievements

- The Care Academy, a unique scheme for people to develop a career in the Care sector, has been launched. Practical experiences and opportunities will be provided for staff to build and develop their skills to ensure a long and successful career within Cyngor Gwynedd's Care services.
- Almost two-thirds (about 1000) of Gwynedd's telecare devices have now been transferred to new digital devices.
- Despite the increase in demand, we managed to reduce the waiting lists for assessment. The '50 Day Challenge' funding has enabled us to fund the work of an Occupational Therapist to address waiting lists, as well as up-skilling Practitioners to carry out assessments for equipment.
- Following changes that involve staff working part of the week in hospitals, we saw that individuals have been receiving a timely assessment and response, which has led to a reduction in the number of individuals waiting to return home safely from hospital.
- The waiting list for domiciliary care has reduced significantly over the year.
- The Council's residential homes occupancy rate has increased and reached its highest level for years which means fewer people are staying unnecessarily in hospitals or are at high risk in the community.
- The 'Learning Disability Job Opportunities Scheme' is going from strength to strength. The specialist chair transport scheme has commenced, which employs individuals with a learning disability, and several individuals have completed training on testing electrical equipment with the aim of providing a testing service for Council departments.
- 1183 nights of short break care for children were offered over the year (April 2024 – March 2025). This allows the child to receive care and support and have opportunities and experiences to encourage their development and wellbeing, while parents are able to enjoy periods of respite from their caring role.
- A new information page has been published on the Council's website to promote the 12.5 hours of free childcare available for children after their 2nd birthday.



A Welsh Gwynedd

As a national leader we will promote the growth of the Welsh language in all parts of the county. Our ambition is to:

- Ensure that every child in Gwynedd can use Welsh confidently in school and in their social life.
- Promote the growth of the Welsh language in all parts of the county and ensuring there are sufficient opportunities for everyone to be able to use the Welsh language naturally in their communities.
- Work jointly with our partners to facilitate the ability for Gwynedd residents to have access to all public services through the medium of Welsh.
- Ensure that promoting the Welsh language is a key part of all the Council's work, and any plans that impact the people of Gwynedd.
- Support efforts to create new Welsh-speakers of all ages.
- Ensure access to facilities and information of a good quality in relation to leisure, culture and the arts.

Projects

A Welsh Gwynedd

Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children

Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd

Review Gwynedd's Education Language Policy and conduct an evaluation of the Immersion System to ensure that all the education policies and services provided to children and young people in Gwynedd set a firm foundation for the Welsh language

Project Updates

Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The construction of a Language Unit on the site of Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn has been completed and the unit opened to learners in January 2025.
- Work to modernise the three Primary immersion units has been completed with improvements made to the Cymerau, Dolgellau and Maesincla units.
- Following a further grant from the Welsh Government, work on the creation of the virtual Aberwla village for Welsh learners has been completed.

Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Several different projects were developed as part of the Language Strategy 2023-33 including some to promote clear communication and the Welsh language in business.
- An evaluation of the project to Protect Place Names was conducted, and a work programme was established for 2025-26 to ensure that Welsh names are protected and continue to be used.
- 'Project 15' has been further developed to increase the use of the Welsh language by children and young people. The project creates digital content in Welsh for various audiences and in different styles and creates new opportunities for people to use Welsh. A company was commissioned to create content and activities for 2025/2026 as well as produce a report on options for the future.
- We contributed to the work of the Services Board's Welsh Language sub-group which tries to respond to the challenges of recruiting a workforce with Welsh language skills.
- We worked with Bangor University to research the attitudes and language use of residents.



Review Gwynedd's Education Language Policy and conduct an evaluation of the Immersion System to ensure that all the education policies and services provided to children and young people in Gwynedd set a firm foundation for the Welsh language

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Following a period of engagement, a draft Language Policy was submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 10 April 2025. It will receive further consideration by the Cabinet later in the year.
- An Impact Study of the Immersion System was commissioned and the report, which will include recommendations from the main findings and potential improvements for the future, will be presented to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in the autumn.

Some of our key achievements

- Support has been given to Menter Iaith Gwynedd to establish itself as a sustainable language initiative that will promote the Welsh language in communities across Gwynedd. We managed to keep to the original timetable and completed the work before the end of the financial year, and transfer staff to the independent entity by 1 April 2025.
- The Gwynedd Language Forum was co-ordinated, including an engagement project with young people to understand more about their attitude and use of the Welsh language.
- A pilot was carried out to measure the use of the Welsh language by Gwynedd residents when using some of Cyngor Gwynedd's frontline services including libraries, leisure centres, receptions and the call centre.

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A Green Gwynedd

Cyngor Gwynedd has declared a climate emergency, and our aim is to be a net zero carbon Council and ecologically positive by 2030. Our ambition is to ensure:

- Significant reduction in carbon emissions.
- Response to the effects of climate change.
- An increase in biodiversity and nature habitats.
- An excellent network of routes for residents to have the choice of active travel to their place of work, education or leisure.
- A public transport network that meets the needs of Gwynedd's communities.

Projects

A Green Gwynedd

Acting on flood risks

Waste and Recycling

Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

Active Travel

Public Transport

Clean and Tidy Communities

New Local Development Plan

Project Updates

Acting on flood risks

This is what we achieved this year:

- A new Floods Strategy was adopted for the county.
- A project worth nearly £6 million was completed which will protect the Hiracl area of Bangor from the effects of coastal flooding and improve local recreational resources.
- In Barmouth, the detailed design work for the North Promenade is still on the right track and progressing in line with the programme. A physical model of the scheme has been built at Imperial College London and will be used to assess any potential changes to flood risk as a result of our work. The detailed design phase is expected to take about two years to complete.



Waste and Recycling

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A draft Waste and Recycling Strategy has been drawn up which will set a direction for the coming years with the aim of maximising recycling levels and specific actions to transform the waste and recycling services. This will be the subject of public consultation during 2025.
- We have been working with Wrap Cymru to prepare initial plans for modern and purpose-built waste treatment and processing facilities for the Caergyllu (Caernarfon) and Ffridd Rasus (Harlech) sites.
- A scheme to promote the use of certain recycling services was trialled in the Tanygrisiau and Bangor areas, with the intention of extending it to other areas later in the year.
- Additional focus was given to expenditure management, taking into account the savings schemes as well as aiming to avoid overspending.

Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

This is what we achieved during the year:

- 31% of fleet cars and vans are now electric vehicles.
- 60 charging points were installed in 13 locations for the fleet
- The Gwynedd Nature Partnership has attracted £2.3 million to Gwynedd for conservation work in the last two years and has received a further £511,000 for the next two years, contributing significantly to national nature and biodiversity targets.
- We managed to attract the following grants in the field of buildings and energy: £300,000 from Energy Wales for installing batteries at Plas Silyn and Plas Ffrancon Leisure Centres, and £1.7M from the Welsh Government through the Low Carbon Heat Grant for Plas Ogwen Bethesda. This is an exciting scheme with the challenge of bringing such a building up to Passivhaus standard.

Active Travel

This is what we achieved during the year:

- After submitting detailed plans to the Welsh Government for Active Travel schemes and Safe Routes in Communities, successful schemes were developed at Penrhos Road Bangor (second phase), Ysgol Rhostryfan and Ysgol Trefferthyr, Cricieth. All the projects will be completed soon in 2025-26.
- Walking and cycling routes were promoted to residents and visitors to the county, drawing particular attention to Gwynedd's active travel network.

Public Transport

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Following a review, a new public buses network was introduced in Meirionnydd and Arfon which will improve provision in the area. A further review will need to be carried out in Dwyfor following the results of a recent tender.



Clean and Tidy Communities

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The Ardal Ni tidying up team has dealt with a significant increase in requests for work which has included cutting urban weed and overgrowth, street washing and removal of gum, cleaning road signs/street names, and cleaning street furniture. They continue to receive very positive feedback from Members, community and town councils and residents.
- There was a 21% reduction in fly-tipping incidents brought to the Council's attention during the year.
- A campaign was undertaken to raise people's awareness to clean up after their dogs, and there has been a reduction in the number of complaints from the public about the problem.

New Local Development Plan

This is what we achieved during the year:

- We have begun implementing the Delivery Agreement to facilitate the arrangements for preparing a new Local Development Plan for Gwynedd. The Delivery Agreement received approval from the Welsh Government.
- The first steps of gathering evidence and calling for development sites have begun. This work will continue during 2025-26.

Some of our key achievements

- Trading Standards successfully met the target of inspecting 100% of high-risk businesses during the year. These include properties licensed to sell explosives and fireworks as well as those related to animal health.
- 82% of local bus journeys managed to arrive on time.
- 38% of the Council's cars or vans are now green (electric or hybrid).
- There was an increase of 0.98% in the number of litres of fuel used by the Council compared to the previous year.
- The vast majority (99%) of food businesses inspected continue to achieve a score of 3+, and a revisit is arranged within 3 months for those with a lower score. However, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has stated that the Council is not meeting its statutory duties in terms of the frequency of food standards and food hygiene inspections. The service is in the process of addressing the FSA's recommendations to improve the situation.
- Our recycling levels over the last four years have been a consistent 64%. However, because of the increase in the national target to 70%, we are no longer meeting the statutory target. The Waste Strategy will detail plans to address this.
- There was a significant decrease of 44% in the number of complaints about missed waste and recycling collections during the year.

An Efficient Gwynedd

In order to ensure that the residents of Gwynedd receive the best possible services, we have a responsibility to ensure that our internal operational arrangements are always of the highest standard. Our ambition is:

- To promote a culture of open and inclusive working which always puts the needs of the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do.
- To provide adequate and suitable staffing resources for delivering services.
- To be an organisation that looks after our workforce's well-being and embeds the principles of equality naturally in all parts of the organisation.
- To make the best use of all financial resources.

Projects

An Efficient Gwynedd

Workforce Planning

Strategic review of Health and Safety management

Adopting the Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for future working.

Developing the Council's culture

Ensuring fairness for all

Women in leadership

Managing the impact of national budgetary cuts

Digital Scheme

Project Updates

Workforce Planning

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Establish a work experiences scheme, as another stream to try and attract people to come and work for the Council in the future.
- A dashboard has been produced which provides information on mandatory staff training.
- A dedicated workforce training scheme for general staff has been set up, to compliment and support plans that are already in place for the wider management and leadership of the Council.
- The Council was successful in achieving Level 2 accreditation in the 'Disability Confident' scheme.
- Establishing a staff forum(s) on equality matters.
- More apprentices and professional trainees were appointed. For 2025, a total of 21 new jobs are available, namely 13 apprentice jobs and 8 graduate jobs.

Strategic review of Health and Safety Management

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Commenced the work of introducing a new Health and Safety IT system across the Council.
- Drew up an action plan for the Council's Management Team on how to achieve an integrated model of health and safety management.

**An Efficient
Gwynedd**



Adopted a Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for working in the future

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Work on reviewing policies has been carried out and discussions have taken place with most of the Departments.
- The work of adapting the departmental spaces within the Main Offices has been completed to enable the relocation of staff from the peripheral offices.
- Initial work has been undertaken to identify our need for office space in Ffordd y Cob and Penarlâg, and options were considered for optimising the use of the sites by combining alternative uses.

Developing the Council's culture

This is what we achieved during the year:

- "Ffordd Gwynedd" is the name given to the way of working that we have adopted to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. Changing culture, behaviours and mindsets are at the heart of this, and it happens across all parts of the Council's activity.
- The Practitioners Group was re-established as the Experiment and Improve Group, with the intention of encouraging greater sharing of best practice and lessons learned.
- Reviews of systems and processes were carried out in service units in all departments in the Council.
- Two series of the Managers and Team Leaders Network were held to deal with items such as cross-departmental joint-working, the well-being strategy, celebrating success, understanding and improving performance, managing absences and the practice of conducting reviews of work systems.
- A Forum for Assistant Heads of Services was established for the first time within the Council, as a result of identifying a gap in the opportunities for this cohort of senior managers to share experiences and contribute to the development of the organisation.
- A new Learning and Development Framework has been launched with the programme for the first year focusing on basic training such as financial management, well-being and digital skills.
- A new Well-being Strategy was introduced. The Strategy is based on three pillars, namely leadership and management, sustainable support and a work environment with mental, physical, social and financial well-being at the heart of what we seek to achieve.



Ensuring fairness for all

This is what we achieved during the year:

- We have gathered, analysed and acted on data relating to schools. In particular, cases of bullying and hate crime, the true financial and emotional cost of attending school along with the attendance, punctuality and attainment of various groups of pupils. Work has begun on identifying training needs for school staff and working with welfare officers, the youth service, the police and agencies to be able to act on the data.
- Reviewed the information that is available in the national data dashboard by Data Cymru and decided to create a similar dashboard internally that looks specifically at Gwynedd.
- Continued with the training framework, ensuring that it covers a range of equality characteristics / diverse topics, to give our staff at all levels within the Council the resources and confidence to respect diversity and deal with a range of needs appropriately. The LGBTQ+ training course is up and running and available to all staff since the start of 2025.
- Following the introduction of the new impact assessment system, we have had a chance to improve it through a pilot period. We have also looked at raising staff awareness of the new system and providing support, information and training to ensure the quality of work.
- Establish a staff forum(s) to discuss equality issues, so that our employees can contribute to the area within the Council.

Women in leadership

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Further activities were held that form a foundation for the project's work, such as the Developing Potential Programme and the Sgyrsiau dros Baned.
- Promoted and raised awareness of matters of unconscious bias and self-awareness amongst managers and staff.
- Held events to raise awareness amongst men.
- Continued to consider what Services across the Council are doing to encourage women to apply for senior positions in order to identify and share good practice.
- Continued to pay attention to the constitution of committees and groups to ensure a balance in terms of female and male representation.



Managing the impact of national budgetary cuts

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Total savings of £43 million have been realised since 2015/16, representing 93% of the £46.6m required over the period. £5.6 million of the total savings applies to the savings for the 2024/25 financial year.
- Monitored that the Departments are prioritising the realisation of savings that have slipped from previous financial years.
- Worked with the Chief Executive and Directors and Heads of Department on the 2025/26 savings schemes and cuts, looking at alternative ways of providing services.

Digital Scheme

This is what we achieved during the year:

- We are following a detailed work programme to realise the Digital Plan, and governance arrangements are in place to oversee our progress.
- To support the Council's new "Working for the Future" procedure, a new computer system has been developed to enable staff to book desks.
- Work is underway to redesign the Council's website. It will be tested with the public during 2025-26.
- Improvements are taking place to the Council's telephone provision, with almost 1000 staff now on the new system, including the Contact Centre and some schools, and a comprehensive programme has been prepared for completing the provision.
- Work has been undertaken to reach a conclusion on our options for the organisation's future management systems.

Some of our key achievements

- During 2024-25, 89 proactive press releases were issued by the Communications Service which led to 469 news items, which compares favourably with the previous year. Over the same period, the Service also dealt with 510 queries from the press and media.
- There were 2,790,297 visits to the Council's website during the year.
- 261,549 requests for a service were submitted on-line during 2024-25 which is 4,472 more requests than in 2023-24.
- A new account was launched by the Council on the Bluesky social platform.
- On average, the translation team has translated nearly 400,000 words each month, along with providing simultaneous translation in nearly 60 meetings each month.
- A Staff Voice Survey was carried out during the year, and the results are being used to identify the needs of our employees and how the Council can improve further.
- A review was introduced to improve the collection rate of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates.
- A review of polling places in the county was carried out in order to assess the suitability of our stations and consider whether more suitable locations are available.

Contribution to the 5 Ways of Working in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

	<i>Long-term</i>	<i>Prevention</i>	<i>Integration</i>	<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Involvement</i>
TOMORROW'S GWYNEDD					
<i>Transforming education for children in their early years</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Modernising buildings and the learning environment</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Promoting the well-being of children and young people and reducing the cost of sending children to school</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Extending opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Review and improve the range of inclusion provisions in Gwynedd</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Formulate and implement a 10-year strategic direction for education in Gwynedd</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A PROSPEROUS GWYNEDD					
<i>Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Regenerating communities and town centres</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Keeping the Benefit Local</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A HOMELY GWYNEDD					
<i>Increasing the supply of housing for local people</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty</i>	✓	✓		✓	
<i>Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd</i>	✓	✓		✓	
<i>Managing second homes and short-term holiday accommodation</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

A CARING GWYNEDD					
<i>Modernising our care resources to meet future needs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Using technology more effectively to improve the ability of Gwynedd residents to access support and care</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Working with Health Services to enable people to live their best life in the community</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Developing training and employment opportunities for individuals in need of support</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Autism Plan</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
<i>Llechen Lân</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Developing a residential provision for looked-after children in small group homes</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Supporting People's Well-being</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
A WELSH GWYNEDD					
<i>Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children</i>	✓	✓			
<i>Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Review Gwynedd's Education Language Policy and conduct an evaluation of the Immersion System to ensure that all the education policies and services provided to children and young people in Gwynedd set a firm foundation for the Welsh language</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

A GREEN GWYNEDD					
<i>Acting on flood risks</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Waste and Recycling</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Climate and Nature Emergency Plan</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Active Travel</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Public Transport</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>New Local Development Plan</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Clean and Tidy Communities</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AN EFFICIENT GWYNEDD					
<i>Workforce Planning</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Developing the Council's Culture</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Ensuring fairness for all</i>	✓	✓		✓	
<i>Women in Leadership</i>				✓	
<i>Managing the impact of national budgetary cuts</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Digital Scheme</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Strategic review of Health and Safety management</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Adopting a Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for future working</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Acknowledgements

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Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Cyngor Gwynedd Self-assessment 2024/25

Background and Introduction

This is the fourth self-assessment that Cyngor Gwynedd has undertaken under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Act requires all Councils in Wales to continually review the extent to which it meets the 'performance requirements', i.e. the extent to which:-

- i. it is exercising its functions effectively;
- ii. it is using its resources prudently, efficiently and effectively;
- iii. the Council has robust governance arrangements in place to ensure performance requirements i. and ii.

This year, for the first time, we are considering these three questions in the context of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the priorities in the Council's Plan. The purpose of this 5-year Plan is to set out the Council's vision and priorities for the period from April 2023 to the end of March 2028, so considering the above three questions when detailing our main strengths and weaknesses is a suitable and effective approach to shining a light on the Council's performance.

As part of the development of the Plan we considered a wide range of issues to prioritise and engaged and consulted with local people, elected members, Town and Community Councils and partners. One part of the work that was instrumental in the development of the Council's Plan was the work of *Ardal Ni* which outlines what is good about the area, what is not as good as what needs to be done to create a better area by 2035.

The self-assessment process is intended to encourage honesty, objectivity and transparency about the Council's performance and governance. Although this duty is quite new, the Council is already preparing several documents containing the type of information that we are expected to include within the self-assessment. This includes documents such as Performance, Equality, Director of Social Services' annual reports, Annual Statement of Accounts and the Governance Statement. The Governance Group, which includes officers such as the Corporate Director, Head of Finance, Head of Corporate Services and Head of Legal Service amongst others, has led/taken an overview of this work within the Council. In doing so, the intention is for the work to be owned and led on a strategic level.

It is the Council's intention to undertake a Panel Performance Assessment, which will be made up of independent members. This was originally planned to be done in November last year, but due to the political changes in the Council this was changed to March 2026. A Panel Assessment needs to be carried out at least once within an electoral cycle and is linked to the duty to be carrying out annual self-assessments on performance with these documents forming part of the evidence base.

Our performance challenge and support arrangements have been in place for several years now. These performance challenge and support meetings are held at Departmental level every other month, and focus on the progress of Council Plan projects, service performance (namely the 'day to day' work), and the response to key risks within the Corporate Risk Register. The information then feeds into regular performance reports submitted by each Cabinet Member during the year together with the Annual Performance Report at the end of the financial year. A copy of the Council's Annual Performance Reports can be found on the Council's website here: [Performance Measuring](#). To further strengthen this in the future, there will be adjustments to the performance challenge and support arrangements from April 2025 onwards with an arrangement to report directly to the Scrutiny Committees, which will result in more input into the process from members.

The document includes an assessment of our governance arrangements responding to the 3 performance requirements that Councils are expected to respond to as part of the self-assessment. We have also considered the draft methodology published by the Welsh Local Government Association for Panel Assessments in preparing the self-assessment for 2024/25 and responded to the following questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know that?
- What can we do to improve, and how?

The self-assessment for 2021-22 was our first assessment and steps have been put in place to act on the improvements that had been identified. Some of those improvements were seen to continue in the 2022-23 assessment and in 2023-24 as they are long-term issues, but several additional points were also added. This year, we see the pattern continuing, with the long-term matters re-appearing but with new considerations also being added.

This document is therefore a high-level summary of the Council's performance during 2024/25, categorised as a series of Strengths and Risks under each priority area that align with the priorities set out in the Annual Report and the Council's Plan.

The Strengths are based on:

- highlights of the annual performance report
- feedback received from external audit bodies (e.g. Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, Estyn etc.)
- issues arising from the internal performance challenge and support process

The Risks are based on:

- our main risks as noted in the corporate risk register
- issues identified by external audit bodies
- other matters we have identified and included in the Council Plan.
- issues arising from the internal performance challenge and support process

It is important to note that many of our strengths are included in the other parts of the annual report, particularly where they relate to the Council's Plan projects and our day-to-day work. To avoid repetition, we (mostly) do not list them in the Self-assessment as well. For the reader, considering the two documents (the Annual Report and the Self-

Assessment) together will give a fuller picture of the Council's performance over the period in question.

While many of the priorities involve cross-departmental responsibilities, it should be noted that 'Efficient Gwynedd' is much more corporate in nature as many of the strengths and weaknesses found here are institutional. This priority is a little different from the rest therefore, which is more inclined to reflect departmental strengths and weaknesses.

An Efficient Gwynedd

Strengths

- The Council has been able to effectively cope with periods of austerity/lack of funding, but the situation is becoming increasingly difficult as the funding provided by the Government has dwindled. The Council is very concerned about the pressure this is putting on the residents of the county to meet the increase in Council Tax, as well as the Council's ability to provide adequate services to the population of Gwynedd within our budget.
- Good corporate Governance Arrangements. To ensure that we deliver our functions effectively, we put performance measures in place to challenge performance across all services. Occasionally, we review these measures to ensure that they continue to be relevant, and we are aware of the need to continuously challenge ourselves and set meaningful measures to allow us to improve consistently. We recognise that there is room for improvement in terms of detailed workflow forward planning over the period of the Council's Plan 2023-28, and as a result we have introduced a series of annual milestones for each of the projects to allow us to measure progress as well as plan work for the future. Work to further improve this continues.
- The Council's Constitution is a public document that sets out the governance arrangements and a Guide to the Constitution is provided to reinforce this. The Governance Group maintains an overview of governance issues within the Council. The Group comprises the Corporate Director, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Head of Corporate Support, Assistant Head of Corporate Support, the Risk and Insurance Manager and the Council's Business Support Service Manager.
- The Council publishes an annual Governance Statement outlining our governance arrangements and their effectiveness following the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.
- The Council has a process to manage risks by having a Corporate Risk Register in place.
- An annual workshop on assurance and risks will be held with external auditors (Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn).
- When recommendations are issued by external audit bodies, an institutional response will be prepared on behalf of the Council and the Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for reviewing and assessing the response along with progress against the recommendations.
- Also, there are appropriate arrangements in place to respond to any reports from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

- Principal governance risks are scored corporately and on a Departmental level, since the risk level varies. There is an in-house Governance Group with an overview and responsibility for quality assurance within Cyngor Gwynedd.
- The Council has commissioned *Local Partnerships* to undertake a review of our governance arrangements, with a view to providing the Council with an independent and objective challenge as well as offering any recommendations for improvement. It will pay particular attention to:
 - i. Undertake a rigorous review of our existing arrangements including our governance and financial arrangements.
 - ii. Review our governance arrangements in the context of the current Constitution to assess whether it is fit for purpose.
 - iii. Assess whether the Annual Governance Statement fulfils its purpose.
 - iv. Identify how we meet the full range of statutory requirements in decision-making, e.g. Equality, the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the Welsh language.
 - v. Evaluate how we identify and assess risks and review and monitor them.
 - vi. Evaluate how we monitor and deliver recommendations for improvement from external and internal regulators and learn lessons across the organisation.
 - vii. Identify what we can do to strengthen our governance arrangements for the future.
- We are aware that there is a need to continue reviewing the procedure of identifying and scoring risks, particularly to ensure consistency across the organisation in terms of the assessment and scoring process. As part of this work, we will improve the training offered to managers on risk management. In addition, we are going to review the extent to which specific measures are being introduced to address the risk manage to effectively reduce the risks. We will also consider whether we should add a record of the score that considers any mitigation, as well as the current risk score (which is only a result of the *effect x likelihood*). The work of Audit Wales to undertake a Review of the Council's Risk Management Arrangements during 2025 will feed into this work, along with recommendations from the *Local Partnerships* review.
- The Head of Finance will prepare and promote the authority's risk management policy statement and strategy. The risk management strategy is owned at a corporate level through the Governance Group referred to above and the Governance and Audit Committee which is responsible for challenging the governance risk scores.
- As a part of its service continuity arrangements, the Council has categorised Services from 1 to 4 on the grounds of post-disaster recovery priorities. This enabled the organisation to prioritise during the Covid-19 period and ensured the continuity of 'essential' services. Lessons learned from dealing with the Covid-19 crisis has been valuable in subsequent crises, e.g. the war in Ukraine.
- While the risk management arrangements and strategies for the future are generally improving and strengthening, new arrangements have been put in place to try to standardise and seek to reconcile the scores for very high risks. These are presented to the Corporate Management Team every 3 months. During 2025/26, we will also

report on these risks to the Governance and Audit Committee and the Leadership Team twice a year (in September and February)

- Based on the work of Internal Audit completed during 2024/25, it was considered that Cyngor Gwynedd's internal control framework during that financial year was operating at a level of reasonable assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's governance, risk management and internal control framework.
- Gwynedd is a host authority for several different partnerships and provides effective support for them.
- There are robust arrangements in place for supporting Elected Members in Gwynedd, with 97% of Gwynedd Councillors reporting that the service provided by the Democracy Team is good/very good. We will continue to build on these solid foundations in the year ahead.
- The Head of Finance has undertaken a self-assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code and updates it at least once a year and the current assessment shows high compliance across all standards. In 2025, we have commissioned CIPFA to undertake an independent check of the self-assessment, and the results of this work will be considered when designing financial support services for the future.
- The Apprenticeship Scheme has provided an opportunity for **81** apprentices since 2019 (which is one of the highest numbers in Wales compared to the population and size of other Councils). There are numerous examples of the success of the Scheme, with several individuals who have embarked on the Apprenticeship Scheme receiving promotions and permanent positions within the Council. Similarly, the Graduate Scheme ('Cynllun Yfory') has provided an opportunity for **37** professional trainees since 2017 with many of them having been offered a job with the Council. For 2025, a total of 21 new jobs are available, namely 13 apprentice jobs and 8 graduate jobs. The job areas range – from new areas such as Energy and working with Councillors, to established ones such as Software Engineering, Finance and Pensions and Mechanics, to name but a few.
- The 2024 Staff Voice Survey was conducted during a challenging period that included fiscal uncertainty, political changes in the Council, and a period of further changes to our 'working for the future' working arrangements following the pandemic. As a result, there has been a slight decrease in the level of staff satisfaction in response to most of the questions, but the level of satisfaction remains high for some of the key indicators e.g. the score for the statement 'the Council is a good place to work' is 80%, and 87% for "I've been motivated to do my best in my job for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd." As in last year's survey, this year's survey consisted of 4 parts – Me and my Well-being, Me and my job, Me and my service and Me and my Employer.

Some of the themes that emerged last year are repeated, particularly issues around receiving appreciation and recognition, and these remain points for improvement. More staff are also expressing concern about work pressures, which may be a result of the financial squeeze that has faced the council over recent years, and this will also receive further attention.

1,330 staff completed the Staff Voice questionnaire, which is approximately 21.8% of staff who had the opportunity to answer the survey. **50.6%** noted that they agreed or strongly agreed that **the Council is carrying out its duties effectively.**

40.9% agreed or strongly agreed **that the Council made the best use of the resources at its disposal**, and **48.6%** agreed or strongly agreed **that the Council has arrangements in place to ensure that it performs effectively.**

Going forward, awareness-raising meetings for the Staff Voice Survey will be held with representatives from each department, with the main aim of increasing the number of staff participating. We will also work closely with Heads of Department to encourage engagement through regular communication and weekly updates on the number of staff who have completed the survey.

- Trade Unions were consulted and asked for feedback on the following areas:
 - Comments on the authority's performance and areas for improvement
 - Is the Council carrying out its duties effectively?
 - Is the Council making the best use of the resources at its disposal?
 - Does the Council have arrangements in place to ensure it performs effectively?
 - Tips for improving staff engagement and wellbeing

Among the responses, it was noted that there was room for improvement in communication with unions regarding staffing issues in some departments, and there was a recognition that we had some way to go in terms of Social Partnership (when groups such as local government, businesses and trade unions work together to make decisions) because this is a learning process.

- The Council gathers the views of the people of the county in many ways to improve services and to meet the legal requirement for councils to engage with residents under various acts such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This year, Gwynedd was part of the National Resident Survey, the first of its kind to be conducted in Wales. While we are aware of the limitations of such a survey, it is an additional means of gathering opinions and we will triangulate the findings with other data and information we collect to ensure that we respond appropriately. One particular advantage of this survey is that it allows us to compare our results with other councils, something that has not been possible with internal surveys alone. There were 3,094 responses to the survey and the results include:
 - i. Percentage of respondents who are fairly or very satisfied with how the Council is running things:
Gwynedd: 31% (3rd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)
 - ii. Percentage of respondents who generally believe that the council provides high quality services (to some extent or to a large extent):
Gwynedd: 55% (3rd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)
 - iii. Percentage of respondents who generally believe that the council provides services that represent good value for money (to some extent or to a large extent):
Gwynedd: 43% (3rd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)

Other results seen in the survey include:

- iv. Percentage of respondents who generally believe that the council takes residents' views into account when making a decision (to some extent or to a large extent):

Gwynedd: 27% (2nd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)

- v. Percentage of respondents who generally believe that the council is acting on the concerns of local residents (to some extent or to a large extent):

Gwynedd: 30% (2nd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)

- vi. The percentage of respondents who agree somewhat or strongly that contacting the council is simple:

Gwynedd: 50% (1st in Wales of the 9 councils that took part in the survey)

- vii. Percentage of respondents who agree little or strongly that up-to-date information about council services is easy

Gwynedd: 45% (1st in Wales of the 9 councils that took part in the survey)

- viii. Percentage of respondents who trust the council to a large or very large extent

Gwynedd: 37% (joint 3rd of the 9 councils that took part in the survey)

- We also prepare an annual report on complaints and continuously adjust our services when observations or complaints suggest improvements.
The number of Valid Formal Complaints has decreased this year compared to last year, but those that have gone to the Ombudsman have increased. We are still working on reducing the time taken to respond to complaints and aim for the new Customer Contact Charter being developed to have a positive impact on this.
- We are aware of the need to be vigilant to avoid 'consultation fatigue' as we are already seeking the views of our residents on many various topics and schemes, and as a result we have a cross-departmental Engagement Group which meets to gather information on proposed consultations, and to share results and good practice. This helps to ensure that there is sufficient time to plan consultations and avoid duplication.
- The Procurement Team provides advice and support to services, and ensures that the organisation adheres to regulations and best practice in the procurement field. The team's aim is to enable the Council to achieve value for money, strengthen and develop procurement expertise, adopt best practice in the field and support the local market. There are also Category Management arrangements in place, where three Category Teams (Environmental, Corporate and People) are responsible for procurement in specific areas looking at procurement strategically, placing an emphasis on collaboration and carrying out a thorough analysis of the market to try and ensure we get value for money.
- The Council has already adopted the Sustainable Procurement Policy which complies with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By adopting the Policy, the intention is to consider the possible social, economic and environmental impact that our procurement decisions can have and what steps can be taken to make the best possible use of the Council's expenditure, for the benefit of the county.

- In 2024/25 the Council was shortlisted for the Welsh procurement award (GO Awards). The nomination is for our efforts to seek to gain social value in the procurement of our food provision across the County.
- The Council has also been preparing for the New National Procurement Regulations, known as the Procurement Act 2023. The Corporate Procurement Team and the Category Team have been busy preparing for the new arrangements and work systems. It is expected that the new Procurement Legislation will encourage public institutions to share what they intend to procure soon while also following simpler and more transparent procurement arrangements.
- Ongoing work is underway to support businesses to respond to requirements in tenders as a result of any developments in the field, such as gaining accreditations or responding to the requirements of the new Legislation. We continue to work with the supply chain to assess the environmental impact and seek to reduce the carbon footprint, helping businesses with the new procurement arrangements will be a priority next year.
- Considerable work has been done during the year to ensure/confirm an understanding among our management that the nine work streams within the Ffordd Gwynedd scheme are in fact our organisation development plan. This is the scheme that works towards ensuring that we have a satisfied and healthy workforce, who are given the necessary support and training to enable us to develop the culture to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do.
- We have been working on courses/e-modules that managers can use with their teams to ensure their understanding of the culture being sought, and to support them through the process of conducting Ffordd Gwynedd service reviews. We have already started trialling some of the courses with small groups of staff and have received positive feedback.
- In a nutshell, this is the most obvious increase during the second year of the Ffordd Gwynedd Scheme.

Learn, Experiment and Act to Improve - The emphasis in the current Plan on carrying out reviews on smaller pieces of work systems, as well as carrying out reviews on whole systems, has borne fruit and all Departments in the Council are able to provide examples of reviews that have led to improvements during the year.

Leadership - The new Ffordd Gwynedd training programme has been reintroduced for managers during the year while the Manager Development Programme goes from strength to strength with the positive feedback from attendees.

Support and Develop - A new Learning and Development Framework has been launched with the programme for the first year focusing on basic training such as finance management, well-being and digital skills. The Senior Leadership Programme, the Manager Development Programme and the Women in Leadership Programme continue to demonstrate their value with a large number of officers eager to sign up on each occasion when a new series is announced.

Workforce Planning and Talent Development - seven work streams have been identified for driving this work forward. They range from conducting a

"Ffordd Gwynedd" exercise on the whole process of attracting staff to work for the Council, to the need to establish specific training plans that address rare skills and expertise, as well as the appropriate behaviours, that are necessary to the future continuity of service.

A Satisfied and Healthy Workforce - A new Well-being Strategy was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 17 December 2024. The Strategy is based on three pillars, namely leadership and management, sustainable support, and a work environment with mental, physical, social and financial well-being at the heart of what is sought to be achieved.

Customer Contact - A cross-departmental Group has been established to draw up a Customer Contact Charter. That Charter, in its final draft form, will be submitted to Cabinet for adoption on 8 July 2025. There has been comprehensive consultation on the content of the Charter across Council services, and this is a good example of seeking views on developments with staff.

- From the point of view of the Council's internal activities, we have good engagement and communication arrangements in place and a space with important messages centrally shared with staff in a variety of ways including a weekly staff bulletin, a staff Facebook group, the intranet, staff self-service, the Gair o Gyngor magazine, front-line staff visits and Q&A sessions with the Chief Executive. In addition to this, departmental and managerial communication activities take place on a regular basis.
- An extensive training programme for Elected Members was provided during 2024/25 which included core training in seven specific areas:
 - i. Safe Leadership and Personal Safety
 - ii. Code of Conduct
 - iii. The Well-being of Future Generations Act
 - iv. Safeguarding Children and Adults
 - v. Your Responsibility for Equality
 - vi. Your Responsibility as a Corporate Parent
 - vii. Information about People: Your Responsibility
- In addition to this, training was offered in several other areas as well as the opportunity for each Councillor to receive a personal development interview to identify specific areas of development. There is an offer for councillors to have specific sessions before they undertake roles on different committees, e.g. Cabinet Members, and several other committees such as Planning, Licensing and Governance and Audit. Furthermore, briefings will also be held for members, which are an opportunity to present an update on important issues e.g. when there are changes in legislation etc.
- We as a Council take advantage of opportunities to innovate and embed digital technology to improve the lives of our residents, to work better with partners, and to strengthen and improve the responsiveness of our services to the needs and expectations of our customers. To assist us with this, in 2023 Cyngor Gwynedd's new Digital Plan for the five years from 2023-28 was approved. The period of this Plan coincides with the period of the Council Plan (in the same way as the period of the

Ffordd Gwynedd Plan). Funding has been secured to drive the Digital Plan's first two-year work programme and several further priorities are in place.

- The cyber team was strengthened by the promotion of an apprentice to a permanent role with the Council, two data science degree apprentices were supported, and extensive advances were made on the integrated telephone system, organisation management system and analogue to digital line upgrades projects during 2024/25. Many of these projects will be completed during 2025/26, with the integrated telephone system in full development and already rolled out in various locations. Another project that will see significant growth this year is the organisation management system, and it is expected that a new system for salary payment and the administration of Human Resources matters will be in place during 2026/27. There is constant and ongoing development with the upgrade of our analogue lines, and this will continue until the end of 2026, and we hope to welcome a new Digital Transformation Trainee to the Council during the summer through the Council's trainee and apprenticeship programme.

Risks

- Setting a balanced budget for 25/26 is a challenge, particularly given the need to ensure that departmental budgets are adequate to provide the necessary level of services for the people of Gwynedd, and to avoid overspending as seen in 2024/25. At that time there was a departmental overspend of £6.6m with significant overspend in the Departments of Adults, Health and Well-being, Children and Families, Highways, Engineering and YGC and Environment.
- A new savings programme was introduced as one of the Council's top priorities in responding to the latest financial situation, and the Council agreed a £650,000 savings programme in setting the 2025/26 budget in addition to savings of £6.4million in setting the 2023/24 budget, and a further savings of £5.2million in setting the 2024/25 budget. Cabinet approved a 'Medium Term Financial Plan' for Cyngor Gwynedd up to the 2027/28 financial year in May 2024. As part of this Plan, a range of measures and work packages have been established to prepare for the significant gap in the Council's budget over the next three years, under the guidance of the Chief Executive. An updated version of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (until the end of the 2028/29 financial year) was presented to the Cabinet on the 16th of September 2025.
- During 2024, Audit Wales undertook a review of the Council's financial sustainability including a focus on the actions, plans and arrangements to bridge funding gaps and address financial pressures over the medium term. It found that there had been a significant increase in the number of departments in the Council that overspent in the last two financial years, and that the Council had developed arrangements to review its budgets.
- An internal review is underway to improve our Council Tax collection arrangements, and actions have been introduced to increase collection rates in the future. This work will continue to receive attention over the coming year. We are also eager to ensure that issues such as this receive early attention in the future, and we will look to review our arrangements to ensure that this happens.

- Over the past year, there have been changes in the Council's political leadership, with several new Cabinet Members taking on responsibilities across a range of areas. In addition, appointments to senior officer positions are expected over the coming months. These changes may pose challenges to consistent leadership and cause delays in strategic decision-making, but we recognise this and intend to address the issue appropriately.
- Difficulties in recruiting for jobs in some key areas such as social care and education can jeopardise the continuity of service. The concern about this has led to the creation of a special project in the Council's Plan - 'Workforce Planning' - which will address the challenge and offer a range of solutions. The Governance and Audit Committee has indicated in the past that workforce planning, succession planning and managerial succession should be considered as possible areas for the Panel Performance Assessment. Having rescheduled the date for the Panel Assessment, it is likely that this will be further considered ahead of their March 2026 visit. In addition, Audit Wales will conduct a study on 'Responding to workforce pressures in local government' during 2025/26.
- The Council is part of several local and regional partnerships such as the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. It would be fair to note that the effectiveness of these partnerships varies at the moment, and we will continue to work to try to ensure that we benefit from these arrangements. Similarly, our relationship with the third sector continues to evolve and we, with the support of the Third Sector Liaison Group, will be looking at this again during 2025/26.
- The work of ensuring that equality is deeply rooted within the Council's work to improve our services for all the people of Gwynedd continues. A Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-28 was developed to provide a framework to improve fairness within the Council, and to ensure that we treat people according to their needs, and this work continues.
- As has already been noted, the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 was adopted during 2023. The Plan is ambitious in an extremely challenging financial climate. Although consideration has been given to the resources required to deliver what is within the Plan as it is developed, the financial situation has changed significantly since then, and if the financial squeeze continues, it may mean that the Council will have to adjust or reduce our ambitions and as a result the number of projects that we will be able to fully complete within the period.
- The Finance Department, in close contact with the Chief Executive and Directors, undertakes ongoing reviews of the Council's financial forecasts over the next three years, updating the model regularly when new information is received and reporting regularly to Cabinet members and to the Corporate Management Team (Chief Executive, Directors and Department Heads). The corporate planning cycle coincides with the statutory cycle of budget planning, and we aim to present the annual update of the Council Plan to the same meeting of the Full Council as the budget.
- Every year, the Council prepares a Financial Strategy and sets a balanced Budget to ensure continuity of service. The Council also publishes a Statement of Accounts at the end of every financial year, which shows its annual expenditure. The review of expenditure against budgets and monitoring that savings have been achieved by all Council departments, ensures that the services are operating efficiently. However,

as noted earlier, the increasing pressures on the Council's budget are making it harder for departments to maintain the same level of services within the budget provided, which leads to a risk of overspending.

- The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has created new duties for Political Group Leaders to take an element of responsibility over promoting good conduct and collaboration with the Standards Committee. Agreement was reached on a protocol and criteria to assess the discharge of the duty at a workshop between members of the Committee and Leaders. These were adopted by the Standards Committee, and they will contribute towards preparing the Committee's annual report. This work has been supported by meetings and regular communication with the Monitoring Officer.

A Caring Gwynedd

Strengths

- Timely and good quality Statutory Reviews are carried out to ensure that care and support plans remain appropriate.
- An improvement in outcomes for people who receive domiciliary care because of the use of technology and alternative methods of service provision. Almost two-thirds of Gwynedd's telecare devices have now been transferred to new digital devices.
- Strategic planning developments - Llechen Lân has been published and i-Lechen is being implemented.
- As part of the Home Care Work Programme there is particular attention to developing suitable and appropriate information and data systems and ensuring ownership and control of the most relevant and operational roles in the domiciliary care field/system.
- Following the Improvement Check Visit undertaken by Care Inspectorate Wales in October 2024, it was noted that: "The entire professional workforce of the service in terms of social workers and occupational therapists has been employed by the local authority. This means it doesn't rely on agency staff and offers people a more consistent service. People also benefit from a professional workforce that can offer a service through the medium of Welsh."
- We employ a dedicated practitioner to support and train people to set up micro businesses, and Care Inspectorate Wales identifies this as good practice, adding: "The local authority should continue its work to promote the care and support options available including the number of micro-carers available, in line with its duty to provide information, advice and support and preventive services."
- Care Inspectorate Wales stated in their Improvement Check Visit (October 2024):
 - The leaders are experienced and provide stable leadership, and the practitioners say they are visible and easy to approach.
 - The leaders appreciate the dedication of the practitioners. The practitioners are committed and exceed expectations when it comes to supporting people. They obviously know the people they support very well.
 - Positively, as noted in the last performance evaluation inspection, practitioners continue to feel that they are well supported. 94% of practitioners who completed our survey indicated that they 'agreed' or

'strongly agreed' that they were well supported by their colleagues and leaders.

- Departmental budgets were reviewed to consider the additional resources needed to complete any action plans, and to deal with historic budget shortfalls in some departments (e.g. social services). This is intended to ensure that the services provided can be provided within the base budget to support the financial sustainability of the Council. Revision of provisions in budgets will continue over the next year in the preparation of the 2026/27 budget.

Risks

- If there is an insufficient and inefficient provision of domiciliary care, residential homes and nursing, it could lead to harm, increasing needs and additional costs. Among the steps we are taking to deal with this is a new project in the Council's Plan – Llechen Lân – which has analysed the demographics of Gwynedd; the demand for service; and adult social services best practices to understand and highlight the demand for service and associated resources that will be needed for the next twenty years.
- To ensure the highest quality services and effectively manage costs, the teams need to collaborate on a multi-disciplinary level with partners such as health, police, the third sector, and care providers. Steps have already been taken to strengthen these partnerships although there is further work to be done, for example to further develop the collaborative relationship with the Health Board.
- If enough staff cannot be recruited, there is a risk that the best services cannot be provided to the people of Gwynedd. We have therefore recently reviewed salaries and introduced the Llechen Lân project, as well as introducing a Care Academy to try and improve the situation and we intend to take additional steps shortly as well.
- If Business and Care Commissioning services are not effective and efficient, there is a risk to the safety of individuals and staff, as well as a risk that we do not provide quality services to the residents of Gwynedd. Several steps have been taken to respond to this, including the introduction of a new social services recording system. However, even though we are introducing a new system, we will have to work with the existing system without support for a period of several months. This is a very high risk, but it is a national issue, and work is underway to mitigate the risk.
- In certain specific circumstances, the Council can make a DoLS (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards) authorisation in order to protect a person who lacks the mental capacity to accept care or treatment to keep them safe from harm. The Council has a waiting list for DoLS assessments because a qualified officer is needed to complete them, and they need to be reviewed regularly. There is a legal and financial risk associated with failing to carry out the assessments in a timely manner, and the Council is aware of this and is taking steps to improve the situation.
- A weak relationship with institutional stakeholders could lead to a failure to provide quality services to the people of Gwynedd. Steps are being taken to ensure a good relationship between organisations, as well as to try to simplify the working relationship which can be overly complex due to legislative barriers.
- Failure to have mental health assessments outside of working hours would leave individuals at risk and face mental health distress without proper support.

- An increase in demand for services coupled with an increase in the complexity of needs, leads to budgetary pressures and risk of overspending.
- It is projected that Cyngor Gwynedd's population will increase by 5% between 2024 and 2043 from 125,900 to 132,200, including a projected 3% increase in the number of children, a 1% increase in the number of working age population and a 16% increase in the number of people aged 65 and over.
- The data collected on assessments and support for unpaid carers needs to be improved, as set out by Care Inspectorate Wales in their Improvement Check Visit (October 2024): "This is essential to ensure that it fulfils its statutory duty to assess whether a carer needs care and support (or is likely to need care and support in the future) and if so, what needs they are likely to have."

Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Strengths

- The outcomes of primary and secondary school inspections are generally strong.
- Support to meet the needs of learners/Welsh-language provision - including the Immersion Education system.
- During an inspection in 2023, Estyn found that the authority firmly promotes and supports pupils' well-being. This was further confirmed at Assurance and Risk Assessment meetings in 2024 and 2025.
- We continue to make improvements to schools across the county, and in particular the Bangor, Cricieth and Bontnewydd area and have taken every opportunity to apply for grant aid to enable us to modernise existing buildings and develop new buildings. A new building and campus for Ysgol Trefarthyr in Cricieth has opened its doors to learners in early September 2024. This follows years of work, and an investment of over £8m to secure the highest quality learning environment and resources for up to 150 learners in the area. In addition, there is childcare provision on the site, as well as an ABC Unit.

Risks

- Changes in the county's demographics affect the viability of the current school system and increase the lack of equity that exists due to the significant variation in cost per capita per pupil.
- Arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and promoting pupil attendance need to be improved. Attendance levels remain a concern following the pandemic-induced slump. Attendance is also a priority for the Government and Estyn. We will be introducing an Attendance Strategy in 2025, and we have strengthened our processes by improving the systems for targeting attendance. We have also made use of Welsh Government grants to improve capacity and a campaign to improve attendance.
- We will strengthen provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and ensure arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of

that provision. We have created a new plan for September 2025, which is to create a multi-site Pupil Referral Unit to provide high level support for some pupils and strengthen support for these learners in our schools.

- A fundamental change in school improvement support following the end of GwE. With such a significant change, it is inevitable that it may affect the quality of support in terms of improving schools and standards.
- To provide quality support to schools that are in a follow-up category following Estyn audits.
- During the year, there were serious cases of offences against children, including a high-profile case where the former headteacher of Ysgol Friars, Neil Foden, was arrested and sentenced to 17 years in prison for sexual offences against pupils. This case has highlighted significant failures in the council's safeguarding systems over a number of years.
- In response, the Council has reviewed its safeguarding policies and procedures, commissioned independent reviews, and contributed to a regional Child Practice Review led by an independent chair. The Education Scrutiny Committee has also launched a review of safeguarding arrangements in schools across Gwynedd, with the aim of improving standards and ensuring the safety of children. The formal review is expected to present lessons and recommendations in the autumn of 2025.
- There is a significant risk that failure to ensure safeguarding arrangements in schools meet the highest standards, or failure to implement the lessons from the review, could lead to continued safeguarding failures, harm to children and young people, loss of public trust, legal consequences, and pressure on the Council's resources.

A Prosperous Gwynedd

Strengths

- As part of a new Regeneration Framework, a Local Regeneration Plan has been prepared for each of the 13 regeneration areas in the County. The plans reflect local priorities highlighted during the 'Ardal Ni' consultation with Gwynedd residents. The Local Regeneration Plans incorporate projects that are being developed by a wide range of organisations and groups active in the area and contribute to the economically, environmentally, socially or culturally improvement of areas to create healthy, thriving, dynamic and sustainable communities with a prominent and central place for the Welsh language.
- The 'Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035' has been jointly developed by Cyngor Gwynedd and the Eryri National Park Authority. This is a groundbreaking scheme and introduces a new way of operating, supporting and measuring the impact of the entire visitor economy on the area.
- We have been successful in securing significant funding from sources such as the Shared Prosperity Fund and ARFOR to strengthen Gwynedd's economy. Together with our partners we have allocated £24.4 million from the Shared Prosperity Fund to schemes that have contributed towards strengthening Gwynedd's economy, improving skills and creating pride in our communities. Over 960 businesses,

enterprises and organisations have received support creating or safeguarding almost 300 jobs, and over 700 people have gained a new qualification.

- Town Centre Schemes have been created for several towns in Gwynedd. The purpose of these is to identify and agree action plans and set priorities for individual towns. The Town Centre Schemes give particular attention to high street areas, with the intention of making them more attractive places to visit and work, and to encourage people to spend their time and money there.
- A Cross Departmental Vacant Properties Group has been established to co-ordinate the efforts of the various Council Services dealing with vacant properties. The Group has adopted a range of interventions – including the provision of information, technical advice, financial assistance, as well as enforcement arrangements. We intend to develop this work further over the next year.
- Since gaining UNESCO World Heritage Site status for the North West Wales Slate Landscape in 2021, the Council and its partners have been trying to make the most of the designation. This includes the Llewyrch o'r Llechi and LleCHI LleNI project – schemes worth over £30m and supported through Cyngor Gwynedd, UK Government, Welsh Government, Heritage Lottery Fund, Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales and several other partners – which are already underway to improve understanding, pride and economic and social opportunities in our slate valleys and across the area.

Risks

- The ARFOR programme ended at the end of March 2025 and although the SPF programme has been extended for the 2025-26 year, that is on a smaller scale than what has been seen in the past. Significant uncertainty exists regarding the finances and administration of any future economic development programs.
- There is a risk that we may miss an opportunity to secure the best economic benefit for Gwynedd through the Growth Plan (North Wales Ambition).

A Homely Gwynedd

Strengths

- The Housing and Property department is working closely with its housing partners on social and intermediate housing developments to meet the huge demand for housing in Gwynedd.
- Through the Buy-to-Let Scheme, the Council buys homes off the open market to let them to residents in need of housing.
- In order to bring more empty homes back into use, there are a number of interventions available for the people of Gwynedd to take advantage of.
- The Department has been successful in attracting additional funding from the Welsh Government to deliver more affordable housing developments.
- The development of the Penrhos site, Pwllheli, is underway, after the Council, in partnership with Clwyd Alyn housing association, secured an additional grant of

around £7.7m from the Welsh Government to enable the start of phase 1 of the development.

- The Council helps many county residents avoid or get out of fuel poverty by providing support to insulate houses, receive effective heating equipment and eco-friendly upgrades such as solar panels and air source heat pumps.

Risks

- Homelessness remains a challenge even though several new interventions have recently been introduced. We will continue to implement many ambitious schemes including the development of several additional sites across the county.
- Although there is much to welcome in the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill, it may require a lot of additional resources to implement.
- There is concern that the public don't have easy and clear access to an enquiry and advice service on housing matters. As part of the Housing Action Plan, we will soon be launching a Housing 'One Stop Shop' to support residents with their queries.
- Support for planning applications to build social housing.

A Green Gwynedd

Strengths

- Consistently managed to meet statutory recycling targets in the past.
- Have set an ambition of being net zero carbon by 2030 and adopted a 'Climate and Nature Emergency Plan' to meet the ambition.
- A Flood Strategy has been adopted which highlights the current and future risks of flooding and coastal erosion in the county and how the risks will be managed.
- The percentage of respondents to the National Residents' Survey who find it fairly or very easy to book the recycling and waste centre in Gwynedd is 89% (1st in Wales of the 9 councils that took part in the survey).
- A scheme which provides grant support to improve the energy use performance of housing in the county is having a positive impact.
- Attracted significant grants from the Government to fund renewable energy schemes, an electric vehicle fleet and public and fleet charging points.
- Willingness to experiment and innovate – Welsh Government grants and capital from the Council will fund a pilot project to convert a care home to the Passivhaus standard, aiming to reduce carbon emissions by 94%.
- Working with external partners – the Council leads the Gwynedd Nature Partnership.
- In line with the Council's Green Fleet Plan, when vehicles need to be replaced, we have been converting to electric vehicles where possible. 48% of the Council's cars and vans are now electric vehicles.

Risks

- To meet the national recycling target of 70% and avoid a financial penalty, residents' behaviours need to change so that they recycle more and reduce the residual waste that needs to be collected.
- Waste treatment sites need to be modernised as well as improvements made to our recycling centres.
- There is a significant risk of coastal flooding which could have a detrimental impact on many communities such as Fairbourne.
- Failure to meet frequency targets in relation to food hygiene inspections and food standards.
- The Council's 'Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022/23 - 2029/30' sets an ambition which notes that "Cyngor Gwynedd will be carbon net zero and ecologically positive by 2030." The Plan includes a broad range of projects to reduce carbon emissions and absorb carbon across many fields: buildings and energy, movement and transportation, waste, procurement, governance, land use, ecology. __ We acknowledge that reaching net zero is a long-term task, but this plan sets several specific milestones for us to measure our annual progress up to 2030. There are so many policy, legislative and budgetary factors that are beyond the Council's control and are having a huge impact on the Council's ability to deliver many of our projects, such as electricity grid network supplies or investment in energy and heating buildings. Nevertheless, the Council has chosen to spend substantial funding from our coffers to deliver many of our projects in our Climate and Nature Emergency Plan, and £3m was earmarked for the work. Despite the investment however, the uncertainty from the perspective of external factors means that meeting the ambition to be ...'net zero carbon and ecologically positive by 2030' remains a practical and financial risk for the Council.
- Although the Council has invested £3M of its own funding since 2022, which is a continuation of significant investment in carbon saving schemes since 2010, there is a real risk to not having the funding or human resources to deliver the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan as a whole.
- Work is ongoing to ensure that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other statutory requirements are fully integrated within our corporate planning frameworks, rather than in a way that is responsive and fragmented in nature. To assist with this, a new template was introduced to plan reports to the Cabinet, which leads officers to refer to the various statutory requirements, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, when preparing their reports.

A Welsh Gwynedd

Strengths

- The Welsh language is a key part of all the Council's work, and any plans that affect the people of Gwynedd. Welsh is the Council's main administrative language, which means that we are one of the largest employers in the country who use Welsh on a day-to-day basis in the workplace.

- We offer opportunities for staff to develop their language skills including training to learn Welsh and to further develop Welsh language skills across all levels.
- The Council has modernised and expanded the immersion provision for learning Welsh to children and intends to further increase the provision of Welsh-medium education in the county.

Risks

- There may be a perception by some that a 'University standard' Welsh is needed to work for the Council, and while that is not accurate, it may affect recruitment to some posts.
- Welsh-speaking young people are migrating.

Additional improvements identified for 2025-26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to the recommendations of a study by Audit Wales we will be looking to improve our service commissioning arrangements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the impact of the significant changes that have recently taken place in the Council's political leadership and among Heads of Department.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve training on risk identification and management.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To act on the relevant recommendations in the Local Partnerships report.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how we can build on the resident survey organised by the Welsh Local Government Association/Data Cymru and obtain more information/evidence to enable us to improve services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement further steps to improve compliance with the Social Partnership Duty.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act on the findings of the Staff Voice Survey, including staff appreciation and well-being.

Improvements that have been identified within past Self Assessments and will continue into 2025/26.

Improvement	
We will:	Our progress to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the procedure of identifying and scoring risks, particularly to ensure consistency across the organisation in terms of the assessment and scoring process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the past few months, the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors have been looking specifically at the very high risks. The intention is to ensure that the right risks are included in the list and to try to ensure consistency in how they are scored.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the work to strengthen our internal arrangements to ensure that statutory requirements/guidance or legislation is a core element and better integrated with our corporate planning work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2024/25 it was planned to hold a session with the Leadership Team on the Future Generations Act led by the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner as well as holding further training sessions for the remaining members. The member training sessions were held in the Autumn. It was originally planned to hold a session with the Leadership Team in November, but due to the political changes that have taken place in the Council it has not been possible to hold the session. During June/July 2025 Local Partnerships will be looking at governance arrangements within the Council and as part of this work they will be looking at how we are operating in this area and making recommendations for improvement (if necessary).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue work on reviewing the Council's Asset Plan to ensure that priorities remain current in light of the experiences and developments of recent years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawing up a new Asset Management Plan is a project in the Council Plan for 2023-28. Policy review work has been carried out and discussions have taken place with a significant number of Departments. A draft Asset Plan is in place but requires modifications and resolution to be adopted. When the Corporate Property Management Strategy is approved, it will be possible to proceed to prepare a Property Asset Action Plan (the timetable of which will be subject to the Corporate Strategy).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking to develop a way to measure value for money (efficiency) at service level as part of our performance challenge arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will collaborate with peers in other councils and professional bodies such as CIPFA to develop a framework to be able to identify value for money. This work commenced in 2023/24 and has continued

	during 2024/25. During 2025/26 we will consider the options available to establish cost-effective benchmarking arrangements with other authorities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement a project to address the existing staff recruitment problems that the Council is experiencing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 'Workforce Planning' Project, which is a part of the Council Plan for 2023-28, is addressing this. Work to create a matrix of key, risk-assessed posts for the continuity of the Council's key services (particularly in the areas of care and education) has begun but further work remains to be done. There is an intention to carry out a review of the whole process of attracting staff to work for the Council, with the aim of continuing to improve the process for all involved - particularly job applicants.

Completed improvements from 2024/25

Improvement	
We will:	Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve our forward planning over the period of the Council Plan 2023-28, by setting a series of annual milestones for the various projects in the Council Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the start of 2024/25, milestones were provided by the Project Leaders for every project within the Council Plan. The progress was assessed against these milestones at the performance challenge and support meetings during the year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in a national survey arranged by the WLGA to obtain useful information by the County's residents on our performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council participated in the national citizens survey arranged by the WLGA and Data Cymru in February/March 2025, with over 3,000 residents responding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the actions to improve scrutiny effectiveness in response to the recommendations of the Audit Wales report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All actions have been completed after the arrangements for reporting on performance were presented to the Scrutiny Committees at the start of 2025/26.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate information about service performance, and the Council generally, more effectively to residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the past year we have been working on a new performance reporting regime whereby reports will be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committees rather than Cabinet meetings. These arrangements are in place from June 2025 and all Council performance measures will now be published rather than a summary of the main ones as in the past.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve understanding and raise awareness of the Council's areas of work amongst County residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial communication work is being done on raising awareness of the Council's activities, including press statements, items on our website and social media. In addition, detailed responses are provided to enquiries from the media about the work of the Council and/or committee reports. A response to the national resident survey shows that these works need to be continued. This is ongoing work that will continue to receive the Council's attention.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a staff voice survey (as has been the case in the past) to engage in constant discussion with the workforce and provide them with the opportunity to say what is working well and the barriers they face. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Staff Voice Survey was conducted during November/December 2024, comparing the results with the previous year. The key findings will be shared with members of the Corporate Management Team, and with each Department's management teams individually. The corporate work plan for action on the main findings will be monitored as part of the work of the Ffordd Gwynedd Officers group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an appraisal of the work of the Governance and Audit Committee to establish whether it is effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee has carried out a self-assessment in April 2024 and actions have been identified and acted upon.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to act on the actions already put in place in response to an audit of performance challenge arrangements undertaken by Audit Wales and continue to review the success of those arrangements and review if necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of 2024/25 we will have acted on all the recommendations made by Audit Wales in their audit of performance challenge arrangements. The final step in this response will be to submit performance reports to the scrutiny committees rather than the cabinet. This will be operational from the June 2025 round of scrutiny committees.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan Work Programme 2023-28 to continue to improve performance and provide the best possible services for the County's residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ffordd Gwynedd Plan annual report for 2024/25 shows that the Council is moving in the right direction in terms of culture and working methods. It is also noted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> some departments are showing good leadership, but progress is inconsistent across the organisation. technology and artificial intelligence are key to improving services. need to expand training and strengthen ongoing evaluation. reducing absences and increasing

	<p>ownership of performance are priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talent development plans are positive, but workforce planning is still a challenge. • the vision for quality services is clear – the priority now is to speed up work in all departments. <p>Work on the 5-year Plan will continue.</p>
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Further evidence for our findings:

[Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd Diversity Statement](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2023-24](#)

[Annual Report of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board 2023-24](#)

[Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2024-25](#)

[Participation Strategy 2023](#)

[Ffordd Gwynedd Plan 2023-28](#)

Corporate Risk Register

Annual Workshop with the Regulators and Cabinet Members

Performance Reports of individual Cabinet Members

[Statement of the Accounts 2024-25](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Assets Plan 2019/20 - 2028/29](#)

[Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary 2024](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Constitution](#)

Staff surveys

Surveys of residents

[Annual Report Cyngor Gwynedd Standards Committee 2024-25](#)

[Final Accounts 2024/25 – Revenue Out-turn](#)

[Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit 2024-25](#)

Reports by Audit Wales

Reports by Care Inspectorate Wales

Reports by Estyn

[2024/2025 Governance Statement](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Equality Performance Report 2024-25](#)

Cyngor Gwynedd Social Partnership Duty Annual Report 2024-25

1. Introduction

The aim of the report is to show how Cyngor Gwynedd has complied with the Social Partnership Duty.

The **Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023** (the "SPPP Act"), which came into force on 1 April 2024, requires public bodies, including **Cyngor Gwynedd**, to produce an annual report to show how they have complied with the **Social Partnership Duty** established by the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act.

The Social Partnership Duty requires local authorities to seek a **consensus or compromise** with their recognised trade unions, when they:

- i. determine their **well-being objectives**; and
- ii. make **strategic decisions** about the reasonable steps they intend to take to achieve those objectives.

Section 16(2) of the Act sets out a number of specific requirements relating to the Duty, which a public body must comply with when "seeking a consensus or compromise".

To seek a consensus or compromise, a public body must involve its recognised trade unions or other representatives of its staff in the process of setting objectives or making decisions, by (specifically):

- a) consulting with them in the **early stage** of the process, and
- b) include them throughout the process by:
 - i. providing **sufficient information** for them to be able to give due consideration to what is proposed, and
 - ii. providing **sufficient time** for them to consider what is proposed and respond appropriately.

According to **Section 18** of the Act:

1. A public body must prepare, for each financial year, a report of what it has done to comply with the duty.
2. The report must be **agreed with recognised trade unions** or include a statement explaining why it was not agreed.
3. The public body must **publish the report**, and submit it to the **Social Partnership Council**, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year.

2. Background

In addition to duties under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act, there are requirements within other Acts such as the Future Generations Act and the Local Government and Elections Act to consult with different cohorts (including staff).

Cyngor Gwynedd has established a Liaison Group between the Council and the trade unions for a number of years, to reinforce the healthy relationship that has largely existed for more than a decade. This forum meets approximately every 6 weeks. The aim of this group is to place emphasis on maintaining good working relationships between the Council and the Trade Unions, proactively discussing and resolving constituent employment issues, as well as handling and discussing the development of local working conditions and other employment initiatives. The meetings are chaired by the Human Resources Service Manager and include representation from the Council (HR Service Manager, Health, Safety and Well-being Service Manager, human resources officers) and representatives from the Trade Unions (GMB, UNISON and Unite).

The trade unions recognised by Cyngor Gwynedd are:

- GMB
- UNISON
- Unite

3. How we met/complied with the Social Partnership Duty

While we normally undertake an annual review of the Council's Plan, only a light review was carried out during 2024/25, with only one new project being added to the Plan. There was no wider consultation by the Council beyond Elected Members (through Cabinet and Full Council meetings) in making this decision.

As part of the process of producing the Council's Self-Assessment for 2024/25, a consultation was carried out with the recognised trade unions, seeking their feedback and comments on the authority's performance and potential areas for improvement. Specifically, it was asked:

- Is the Council carrying out its duties effectively?
- Is the Council making the best use of available resources?
- Does the Council have robust arrangements in place to ensure effective performance?
- What suggestions do they have for improving staff engagement and well-being?

Among the responses, it was noted that there was room to improve communication with the unions on staffing issues in some departments. It was also recognised that our approach to the Social Partnership needs to be further developed as it remains a process of learning and evolving. While the corporate relationship is generally healthy, and there are also positive links within some departments of the Council, it is recognised that the next step is to go further and establish a constructive relationship between the trade unions and each of the Council's departments. This will be a further proactive and positive development.

As mentioned above, the corporate Liaison Group between the Council and the trade unions meets approximately every 6 weeks to discuss employment issues. While some attention has been given to the Social Partnership Duty in the past, we will ensure that it is included as a standard item on the agenda of all future meetings.

During 2024/25, the corporate liaison group met approximately every 6 weeks. Here are some of the issues that received attention during the year:

1. Introduction of a new alcohol and drug testing policy.
2. Develop and introduce a new staff sickness absence management policy and system.
3. The possibility of adopting the TUC's Welsh language charter
4. Dealing with change within services/departments, in a sympathetic manner that provides support to staff.

One example of the partnership working constructively is the development of the new policy on conducting drug and alcohol testing among the workforce, and the introduction of a new sickness absence management policy and system. The success of these two examples has been based on inclusion and collaboration with the unions from the very beginning – from identifying the 'problem' to formulating solutions. Both topics can be contentious and have involved considerable change in policy, but by working together from the outset we have been able to reach a solution that is acceptable to both sides.

From April 2025, the Council will take decisive steps to facilitate the participation of local representatives in their union duties, including identifying and allocating a specific budget to support this process and releasing representatives from their permanent roles.

Historically, we have not specifically sought to achieve a consensus with the trade unions in making strategic decisions or in setting our well-being objectives. This shortcoming has been recognised as a weakness in the process, and looking to the future, we will take decisive steps to ensure that sufficient time is earmarked in the planning process, to enable meaningful and productive collaboration with the unions.


Our goal is to embed the principle of social partnership in everything we do. As part of this commitment over the next year we will put steps in place to strengthen our contribution, including:


- Raising awareness of the requirements arising from the Welsh Local Government Act and the Social Partnerships Act and to provide a suggestion as to how to meet the requirement.
- Submit a draft of Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2024/25 so that unions have an opportunity to submit any recommendations or comments before the document is considered by the Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and Full Council. (July 2025)
- Arrange a face-to-face meeting with the unions to discuss the current well-being objectives and priority projects within the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023–28. This will provide a proactive opportunity for unions to share their views directly, ensuring their input is considered as part of the review process. (December 2025)
- Actively involve the unions in the drafting process of the review of the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023–28 by sharing a draft and allowing them to submit recommendations and comments for consideration by the Cabinet/Full Council prior to adoption. (January 2026)


Executive Summary - Annual Performance Report 2024-25


Gwynedd Yfory (Tomorrow's Gwynedd) - *Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life*


✓ What have we achieved?


 **Support for families and young children** - A new strategy for the early years has led to more support for parents, particularly fathers, and better access to childcare in areas such as Barmouth, Bala, Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Bangor. This helps the children of the County to have the best possible start to their time in education.


 **School Improvement** - Ysgol Treferthyr opened in Cricieth in September 2024. Improvements are underway at other schools including Ysgol Hirael, Our Lady's School and Ysgol Tryfan in Bangor, and Ysgol Bontnewydd. This provides a learning environment that is more modern, safe and suitable for the children of Gwynedd.

 **Fewer costs for families** - Work done to understand school costs for families, with plans developed to reduce the financial burden, including free school meals for every primary school child. This reduces the financial pressures on families.


 **More social opportunities** - The views of young people were gathered about the youth services and the Council will use this information to improve the provision and play facilities where possible.


 **Forward-looking education** - A 10-year strategy in progress to ensure that Gwynedd education continues to improve and meets the needs of residents.


 **Support for children with additional needs** - We have strengthened the support for pupils with social and emotional difficulties by working with schools, identifying needs early on, and planning a new centre that will offer tailored support from September 2025, ensuring fair opportunities for every child to succeed.


 **School staff trained** - Staff have received training on safeguarding matters and emotional needs, improving the care and support for children.

⚠ Matters requiring attention

 **Low pupil attendance** - Many children are absent from school since the pandemic, which can affect their learning and development.


 **Concerns about safeguarding children** - There was a serious case relating to pupil safety. There is a need to ensure that school safeguarding arrangements are robust and are continuously improved.


 **Lack of equity between schools** - There are substantial variances in the costs per pupil across schools, which can lead to inequalities.


 **More support needed for pupils with emotional needs** - Need to strengthen the provision for pupils with social and behavioural problems, ensuring that the support is effective and is available promptly.


Gwynedd Lewyrchus (A Prosperous Gwynedd) - Strengthening the economy and supporting the residents of Gwynedd to earn a worthy wage


What have we achieved?


 **Promoting Culture and the Visitor Economy** - A summit was held to discuss sustainable tourism, with over 100 people present. Four new overnight stopovers for motorhomes were opened. 109 cultural support projects were discussed, and investment was made in heritage sites such as the Slate Museum and Parc Padarn.


 **Community and Town Regeneration** - Local Regeneration Plans were published for 13 areas, with an investment of £1.8 million in local projects. Placemaking Plans were completed for Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Bala and Dolgellau, and Transforming Towns grants were given to key projects such as Parc y Coleg and Galeri Cyf.

 **Supporting Businesses and Work** - Over 600 businesses received support through programmes such as ARFOR and the Shared Prosperity Fund, and Gwynedd Business Week was held. Support was given to 221 people to find work, and 251 to improve their skills, with support also given to strategic projects such as Parc Bryn Cegin and Hwb Arloesi Glynllifon.


 **Keeping the Benefits Local** - A new procurement strategy was drawn up to keep more money local and we have done work to raise awareness about the new rules among staff and suppliers.


 **Supporting Businesses and the Economy** - 176 businesses were supported with grants and practical advice, and 54 of them have committed to pay a real living wage and to use more Welsh.

 **Supporting Communities** - Over £1.6 million in funding has been allocated to community groups via Cist Gwynedd. £8.5 million was invested to improve town centres, refurbishing 26 buildings and bringing 10 empty properties back into use.

 **Culture, Leisure and Learning** - Substantial investments were made to improve facilities across Gwynedd including Glynllifon, leisure centres, harbours, Dinas Dinlle, and the Lloyd George Museum. Popular events were held across the county, attracting thousands of people and increasing the benefit for the local economy.


Matters requiring attention


 **Less funding available** - Important funding programmes have ended, and less support is now available. This raises questions about how we can continue to support economic development in the future.


 **Risk of missing opportunities** - There is a risk that Gwynedd will miss out on an opportunity to fully benefit from regional plans, if the arrangements do not work well.


Gwynedd Glyd (A Homely Gwynedd) - Ensure suitable, affordable and sustainable homes for the people of Gwynedd

What have we achieved?


 **Increasing the supply of housing for local people** - Since the start of the Housing Action Plan, 386 social houses have been built, helping around 1,300 people. In 2024/25, 23 houses were bought to let at an affordable rent, 108 empty homes were restored, and 90 affordable houses were built. An additional £8 million was received from the Welsh Government to support further developments, with new sites in the pipeline in Llanberis and Bangor.


 **Fuel poverty and the cost-of-living** - Gwynedd residents received support to reduce energy costs, with over 5,600 vouchers distributed and support being available through the Cost-of-living website and community surgeries. Also, 753 received housing support to improve their energy performance, and people were referred to services such as food banks and housing grants to assist them further.


 **Homelessness** - New accommodation for homeless people was completed in Bangor and Pwllheli, and more are in the pipeline. 65 people have been housed by means of affordable rent schemes, and the Council is preparing to open a 'One Stop Shop' to help people with housing issues.

 **Second homes and holiday accommodation** - The Council has implemented an Article 4 Direction to control second homes and holiday accommodation. Despite a reduction in the number of these properties, there is insufficient evidence yet to prove the direct impact.

Matters requiring attention


 **Homelessness continues to be a challenge** - Homelessness is still a big challenge in Gwynedd, with a high demand for accommodation. More sites need to be developed across the county to respond to this demand.


 **Challenges when implementing new legislation** - Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill required more resources in order to implement it in full.


 **Access to housing services** - There is concern that people are not freely accessing advice on housing matters, but a 'One Stop Shop' is underway to help with this.


Gwynedd Ofalgar (Caring Gwynedd) - Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities


What have we achieved?


 **Modernising care** - We have improved two care homes - Hafod Mawddach and Cefn Rodyn - and have opened new dementia units in Bryn Blodau. Discussions are ongoing to create extra care accommodation in Caernarfon and in Penyberth, Pwllheli.


 **Technology** - Information and advice for further care is available on-line via the Dewis and AskSara search engines, and we have also created a list of telecare devices (such as a personal alarm or sensors). This helps people to live independently and alleviates the pressure on care services.


 **Collaboration with Health** - Communication arrangements and regular meetings have been established to improve the collaboration between the Council and Health Service, reducing duplication and improving the service for individuals.


 **Work Opportunities** - Additional staff were appointed to support people with learning disabilities to obtain paid employment with a real living wage. The Council offers support to individuals and employers to ensure that the arrangements are successful.


 **Llechen Lân** - An analysis of Gwynedd's population was undertaken, along with the demand for services, and the best practice in order to understand what will be needed over the next 20 years. This will help us better plan resources and services for the future.

 **Supporting People's Well-being** - Well-being Champions were appointed, and cost-of-living events and drop-in sessions were held to support residents. We worked with Citizens Advice to provide numeracy and budgeting support, and practical support was available for people to learn to use technology, including the provision of IT equipment. A fund was established to support community feeding projects, with cookery courses arranged in partnership with the Health Board.


 **Autism Plan** - A preventative worker was appointed to support children on the diagnosis pathway. The team also develops programmes to support parents and carers and has offered training on autism and concerning behaviours. We are continuing to work on the Llwybrau Ni project, which offers social opportunities for young people and respite for parents.


 **Residential provision for children** - A small group home opened its doors in Morfa Bychan with staff appointed and two children welcomed to the home. Two additional properties have been bought, and preparation work is underway to register them.


 **Innovation and New Opportunities** - A Care Academy has been launched to help people start a career in care. Almost 1,000 telecare devices have been upgraded to digital ones, helping people to live more independently and safely in their homes.


 **Better Care for the People of Gwynedd** - Despite the increasing demand for services, the Council has managed to reduce the waiting lists for assessments and domiciliary care. Locating staff in hospital has also reduced the delay for patients who are waiting to return home from the hospital.

Matters requiring attention

 **Lack of Sufficient Care Provision** - A lack of care provision may lead to harm to individuals and additional costs for the Council, increasing the demand for services. The Llechen Lân project helps understand the demand and resources required, to better plan for the future and reduce the risks.


 **Staff Recruitment and Retention Challenges** - Staff shortages can affect the quality of the care provided. The Council has taken steps such as establishing the Care Academy and is reviewing salaries to improve the situation.


 **Collaboration with External Partners** - A lack of collaboration with organisations such as the Health Board, the police and third sector may lead to lower-quality services. The Council is already taking steps to strengthen the relationship and simplify the way that organisations work together.

 **Increasing pressure on Budgets and Services** - Increasing demand and more needs placing pressure on budgets with the older population growing at a scale that is much higher than the working-age population.


Gwynedd Gymraeg (A Welsh Gwynedd) - *Ensuring that we give every possible opportunity for our residents to use the Welsh language in the community*


What have we achieved?

 **Modernised and extended the immersion provision** - A new unit was opened at Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn to help children learn Welsh and improvements were made to three other sites - Cymerau, Dolgellau and Maesincla. Also, a virtual village called Aberwla was created to provide on-line help for Welsh learners.

 **Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd** - Projects were developed to encourage people to use Welsh in their work and in their communities, including digital content for young people. In addition, work was carried out to protect Welsh place names and to address the shortages of staff who speak Welsh in some organisations.


Matters requiring attention


 Some believe that high-level Welsh language skills are needed to work for the Council, and although this is not the case, this misconception can make recruitment more difficult.


 Young people who speak Welsh are leaving Gwynedd, which can reduce the use of Welsh in the community.


Gwynedd Werdd (A Green Gwynedd) - Protecting the natural beauty of the county, and responding positively to the climate change crisis


What have we achieved?

 **Flooding** - A new Floods Strategy was adopted for the county, and a project to the value of almost £6 million was completed in Hiracl, Bangor, to reduce flood risk and improve recreation. Good progress was also made with the detailed design for the North Promenade in Barmouth.


 **Waste and Recycling** - A new Waste and Recycling Strategy was drawn up for public consultation in 2025, and plans are underway to modernise the waste treatment facilities in Harlech and Caernarfon.


 **Climate and Nature Emergency** - 60 charging points were installed in 13 locations for the Council fleet, with 31% of the fleet now electric vehicles.


 **Active Travel** – successful plans were developed for Penrhos Road, Bangor; Ysgol Rhostryfan; Ysgol Treferythyr, Cricieth.

 **Clean and Tidy Communities** - the Ardal Ni team has responded to a substantial increase in requests for cleaning work, and they are being praised for their work across the county.

Matters requiring attention

 **Increase Recycling** – our recycling levels are consistent at 64%, which is now below the new national target of 70%. The Waste Strategy will detail plans to address this.


 **Fuel** - there was an increase of 0.98% in the number of litres of fuel used by the Council compared to the previous year.


 **Food standards and food hygiene inspections** - the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has stated that the Council is not meeting its statutory duties in terms of the frequency of food standards and food hygiene inspections. The service is in the process of addressing the FSA's recommendations to improve the situation.


Gwynedd Effeithlon (An Efficient Gwynedd)


Putting the people of Gwynedd first and treating them fairly and ensuring that the Council performs effectively and efficiently

✓ What have we achieved?


 **Staff Learning and Development** - a new Learning and Development Framework was launched with the training programme for the first year focusing on matters such as financial management, well-being and digital skills. In addition, a new Well-being Strategy was introduced with a focus on mental, physical, social and financial well-being.


 **Women in Leadership Programme** - Further activities were held that underpin the project's work, such as the Developing Potential Programme, encouraging women to apply for senior posts and addressing a balanced representation at committees and groups.


 **Managing the Impact of Financial Cuts** - total savings of £43 million have been realised since 2015/16 (93% of the target).

 **Digital Plan** - a detailed programme has been created to improve our services via our Digital Plan. This includes improvements to the Council's telephone system.

⚠ Matters requiring attention

 **Savings** - need to ensure that departments are realising the financial savings identified.

 **Tax collection** - a review is underway to improve our rates of collecting Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates.

 **Polling stations** - a review of polling places has been carried out to assess the suitability of the stations and consider whether more suitable locations are available.

Meeting:	Council
Date:	4 December 2025
Title:	Local Resolution Procedure
Author:	Iwan G D Evans – Head of Legal Services – Monitoring Officer
Purpose:	To recommend a revised Local Resolution Procedure for adoption by the Council

Background

1. In around 2013 all principal councils in Wales adopted a local resolution procedure ("LRP"). The intention was to create an informal process for dealing with low-level complaints without the need for a formal complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. A couple of different models were created for at the time and Gwynedd adopted it's own procedure. The LRP has been refined subsequently but remains broadly the same.

3. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales reviewed all local resolution protocols in Wales last year. She took advice from counsel on perceived problems with one or more of those protocols. It was noted that Gwynedd LRP was among those that were highlighted as including examples of good practice. However, given the legal opinion, the resolution arrangements needed to be reviewed. This was around two specific issues in the case of the Gwynedd procedure.

- (a) There is no clear legal basis for the role of the Standards Committee in the procedure. The first issue is absence of the legal power of the Standards Committee to impose a resolution through locally adopted processes. Secondly, at no time does the procedure exclude a possible complaint to the Ombudsman. In that scenario the Standards Committee would have already been involved in the matter and could not sit as an independent tribunal.
- (b) Arrangements are informal and should be about low-level complaints relating to "internal" matters.

The first was of particular significance and was common to a majority of the LRP's. The 2nd was a point of clarification as to the boundaries of the process. I would add that we have no recorded instance of any resolution procedure proceeding to the third Standards Committee stage.

4. In response to this the LRP has been reviewed and proposed amendments presented to the Standards Committee for consideration (Appendix 1). They considered the report on the 3rd of November and recommended that Full Council adopts the changes .

Decision Sought

That the Council approves the amendments to the Local Resolution Procedure set out in Appendix 1.

Monitoring Officer

Report author

Chief Finance Officer

I support the decision sought and have no comments from the perspective of financial propriety."

APPENDIX 1

GWYNEDD COUNCIL LOCAL RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

A PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS THAT A MEMBER HAS BREACHED THE MEMBER-OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL OR THE GWYNEDD STANDARD

INTRODUCTION

1. The Protocol for Member-Officer Relations is an important tool to promote good co-operation between members and officers within the Council and thereby allow the council to fulfil its duties effectively and professionally. In the same vein the Council has adopted the Gwynedd Standard in order to promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst members. It is therefore important that any allegations against a member that he/she has breached the protocol or the Standard can be dealt with quickly and effectively. The purpose of this procedure is to introduce a simple and easy to understand method of dealing with such allegations.
 - 1.1 The aim of this procedure is to try and resolve complaints regarding members quickly and effectively reaching a resolution to low level complaints through consensus. Nothing in this procedure prevents anyone from submitting a complaint to the public services ombudsman for Wales that a member has breached the members code of conduct. The ombudsman could, if he is of the opinion that there is a case to answer, refer the matter to the standards committee or the adjudication panel for Wales which has the power to disqualify members for up to 5 years.
 - 1.2 This procedure is not suitable for allegations which in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer allege a serious breach of the Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer will advise on the suitability of this process based on the facts/circumstances of each case. Examples of what might be regarded as serious breaches include (but are not limited to);
 - whether the member deliberately sought personal gain for themselves or another person at the public expense
 - whether the circumstances of the breach are such that a member has misused a position of trust or authority and caused harm to a person
 - whether the breach was motivated by any form of discrimination against the victim's ethnic or national origin, gender, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity
 - alleging repeated breaches of the code of conduct
2. The process is confidential, and information will only be shared outside of those involved in the process, by agreement, aside from statistical data that is provided to the Standards Committee for its Annual Report. At each stage there will be a confidential outcome letter that will record in summary what was discussed and any agreed actions.
3. The process is consensual and all parties must agree to its use, and to progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

STAGE 1 OF THE PROCEDURE

4. Anyone who wishes to submit an allegation under this procedure should send the complaint (in the case of an officer following consultation with the Head of

Department) to the Monitoring Officer. Following receipt of the complaint the Monitoring Officer will act as follows:-

5. In the first place a brief preliminary investigation will be held to establish the facts (where possible) and the areas of dispute. A copy of the complaint will be sent to the member within 7 working days of receipt of the full complaint. In the case of a complaint by members against members the Monitoring Officer will send a copy of the complaint to the Group Leader of the member complained about if they are a Group Member. Possible resolution will be explored with the complainant and the member about whom the complaint is made to establish whether the complaint can be resolved quickly. With the agreement of the complaining member and the member complained against the relevant Group Leaders may be brought into the process at this point to support the process. At this stage the complainant will also be advised whether another course of action (e.g. referral to the Ombudsman) is more appropriate. This stage may be undertaken by the Monitoring Officer personally or by another officer appointed by him.
6. If following the first stage the complainant wishes to proceed with the allegation under this procedure the matter may be referred either to a conciliation meeting under Stage 2 or to a hearing by the Standards Committee under Stage 3.

STAGE 2 OF THE PROCEDURE.

7. At Stage 2 a meeting will be held between the person making the complaint, the member against whom the complaint is made, the Monitoring Officer and (if deemed appropriate) other persons invited by the Monitoring Officer. Such persons could include, but are not limited to, the Chief Executive and the Group Leader of the relevant political group(s). It is possible for an officer to have a colleague or senior officer from the department with him/her. It is also possible for the matter to be dealt with in the officer's absence in exceptional cases. The purpose of this meeting will be to try and resolve the matter without it going further.

STAGE 3 OF THE PROCEDURE.

8. ~~The third Stage is a hearing before the Standard Committee. The person making the complaint will be asked to submit the substance of the complaint in writing and the member concerned will be asked for a written response. These papers, together with any additional written evidence that is submitted by either side will be distributed to the members of the Standards Committee.~~
9. ~~Both the person making the complaint and the member who is the subject of the complaint have the right to appear before the Standards Committee and to submit evidence from witnesses. Written witness evidence alone will not be accepted without the consent of the other side. Both sides will have the right to representation or to have a colleague present. The Council will not meet the costs of representations.~~
10. ~~If either side wishes not to be present or fails to attend, the hearing may be held in their absence.~~
11. ~~After the evidence has been heard, both sides and their representatives will be asked to leave the chamber and the Standards Committee will come to a conclusion on the allegation. The Monitoring Officer or his representative will be available to advise the Committee.~~
12. ~~The Committee can come to one of three conclusions, namely :-~~

- a) ~~That there is basis to the complaint~~
- b) ~~That there is a basis to the complaint but that no further action is required.~~
- c) ~~That there is a basis to the complaint and that the member should be censured.~~

~~In addition the Committee can make recommendations to the Council regarding changing any procedures or taking any further action.~~

SUPPLEMENTARY MATTERS.

- 13. ~~Publicity will not be given to the names of the parties unless it is decided to uphold the complaint. The hearing before the Standards Committee will be exempt.~~
- 14. ~~Stages 2 and 3 do not have to be following sequentially. Although it is possible for a complainant who remains dissatisfied after the conciliation meeting to ask for the matter to be referred to a hearing before the Standards Committee, it is also possible for a matter to proceed directly to the Standards Committee without going first to a conciliation meeting. The member may offer an apology at any time up to the hearing but if a hearing has been arranged and the complainant decides that he/she does not wish to proceed with the complaint the consent of the Chair of the Standards Committee is required to cancel the hearing.~~
- 15. ~~The aim of this procedure is to try and resolve complaints regarding members quickly and effectively. Nothing in this procedure prevents anyone from submitting a complaint to the public services ombudsman for Wales that a member has breached the members code of conduct. The ombudsman could, if he is of the opinion that there is a case to answer, refer the matter to the standards committee or the adjudication panel for Wales which has the power to disqualify members for up to 5 years.~~



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ken Skates AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

Eich cyf/Your ref AS
Ein cyf/Our ref KSNWT/01683/25

Cynghorydd Ioan Thomas
Cadeirydd y Cyngor
Cyngor Gwynedd

annession@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

23 October 2025

Dear Cllr Thomas,

Thank you for your letter of 09 October regarding Cyngor Gwynedd's motion to call on the Welsh Government to insist that the Welsh Rail Network is fully devolved.

In response to your comments about the East West Rail (the Oxford to Cambridge railway line), I can confirm that every rail scheme in England and Wales is developed as part of the Railway Network Enhancement Pipeline. To date, East West Rail been identified as comparable in the Statement of Funding Policy.

In the period since 2 June, the Treasury (HMT) identified the classification of East West Rail as a potential mistake and are in discussion with the Department for Transport on this matter. HMT will consider how all this impacts on overall comparability but have confirmed that we have the same comparability factors as were used in the Autumn Budget at the Spending Review.

This example illustrates the challenges and vagaries of the existing Barnett system and why we are seeking fundamental reform of Wales' rail operating model, including establishing an empowered Wales and Borders Business Unit within Great British Railways that is properly accountable to the Welsh Ministers, alongside a greater voice on rail services operating to and from Wales.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

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CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Full devolution of rail infrastructure alongside a fair funding settlement remains our longer-term ambition but we recognise that this is a process to be achieved through working in partnership with the UK Government to deliver much needed reform to the rail industry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Skates', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Ken Skates AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth a Gogledd Cymru
Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

Mark Drakeford AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language

Eich cyf/Your ref AS
Ein cyf/Our ref MDFWL/00468/25



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Councillor Ioan Thomas Council Chair

AnnesSion@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

24 October 2025

Dear Councillor Ioan Thomas,

Thank you for your letter of 10 October regarding the Welsh Government's response to the report and recommendations of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities.

We have accepted a great number of the Commission's recommendations and are working across Government to implement those recommendations. We have also accepted in principle the recommendations to designate areas of higher density linguistic significance and I recognise the key role of local authorities in this work. I recently attended a meeting with Welsh Language Cabinet members, Local Authorities to discuss the recommendations which specifically related to the designation of areas of higher density linguistic significance and how that can work in practice.

During the meeting Welsh Local Government Association officials agreed to co-ordinate a response on behalf of the local authorities and I will address the response when I have received it.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Drakeford AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid a'r Gymraeg
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.