

THE CABINET, 10 FEBRUARY 2026

Present -

Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, R. Medwyn Hughes, Craig ab Iago, Huw Wyn Jones, June Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Dewi Jones and Paul Rowlinson.

Also present -

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Catrin Thomas (Corporate Director), Dylan Owen (Corporate Director), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education), Debbie Jones (Assistant Head of Education Services), Cllr Cai Larsen (Chair of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee), Ffion Madog Evans (Assistant Head of Finance – Accounting and Pensions), Dafydd Wyn Williams (Head of Environment), Gerwyn Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department), Ceri Hughes Thomas (Parking and Street Works Manager), Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community), Llyr B Jones (Assistant Head of Economy and Community), Nia Bowden (Business Support Programme Manager), Cllr Elfed Powell Roberts (Trawsfynydd Ward Local Member).

1. APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Cllr Menna Trenholme and Cllr Llio Elenid Owen.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was received from Cllr June Jones in relation to Item 6 as she was a Governor at the School. Cllr June Jones sat as a Local Member for Item 6, therefore, she did not have a vote on the matter.

The Chief Executive declared a personal interest in relation to Item 6, and he left the meeting.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent matters.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January were accepted as a true record.

6. PROPOSAL PAPER - YSGOL Y GARREG

The report was presented by Cllr Dewi Jones

DECISION

To approve the publication of a statutory notice, allowing a statutory objection period of 28 days in accordance with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the guidance of the School Organisation Code 011/2018: on the proposal as follows -

“To close Ysgol Y Garreg on 31 August 2026 and denote Ysgol Cefn Coch as the alternative school from 1 September 2026.”

The Ysgol Cefn Coch catchment area would be extended to include the existing Ysgol Y Garreg catchment area.

DISCUSSION

Sadness was expressed at this item being presented and it was highlighted that Ysgol y Garreg had been serving the village of Llanfrothen and the wider community for a long period.

It was noted that school closures were a result of the changes in the County's demographics. Referring to the impact of these changes, it was revealed that there were just over 1,500 fewer children aged 0-15 in the County in 2021 compared to 2011. The importance of discussing the situation of Ysgol y Garreg in a wider context was emphasised, as the situation of this School was not unique to Gwynedd or Wales – reference was made to fewer children living in our communities.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the 2 pupils currently attending Ysgol Y Garreg were in year 6. It was added that no pupils had registered to start at the School in September either, meaning that there would be no pupils at the School and noting that the future of Ysgol y Garreg was no longer sustainable.

All the staff and governors of the School were thanked for their service over the years.

The sadness of the situation was echoed by the Glaslyn Ward Local Member, noting that the School had been serving the community for approximately 143 years. This change in demographics and the fall in the number of children in our

society was emphasised, and reference was made to parents' right to send their children to a school of their choice. The Local Member encouraged the Council to consider restructuring the School building as a specialist centre for pupils who have trouble settling in mainstream schools, but are not eligible for a Special Learning Needs School.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- The views of the local community were sought on the current and future situation should a decision be made to close the School. In response, it was noted that the procedure for closing a school with fewer than 10 pupils differed to that required for a larger school. It was confirmed that discussions had taken place with the School and the governors. It was highlighted that 92% of the children in the catchment area were already being educated in other catchment areas, which showed that a number of parents had already made the decision to send their children to another school.
- The difference in the procedure for closing a school with fewer than 10 children was explained - it was noted that no consultation was held as part of the procedure to close a school with fewer than 10 pupils but that engagement sessions were still held, following which the procedure moved immediately to issue the statutory notice to close the school. It was confirmed that there would be an opportunity for people to object, and that the objections presented would be taken into consideration before reaching a final decision.
- There were concerns about the staff at Ysgol y Garreg and it was asked whether there would be alternative posts for them. It was highlighted that a number of staff were on short-term or temporary contracts so those would come to an end. It was explained that discussions had taken place with the catering and cleaning staff as to the next steps.
- Concern was expressed about how fast pupil numbers had fallen. An impact assessment had been carried out, which was noted as something to be proud of, despite the low number of pupils in the School.
- Officers from the Education Department echoed the surprise that pupil numbers had fallen, noting that there were 17 pupils at the school a year ago. It was explained that small schools did not have the resilience to cope with changes in numbers to the same extent as larger schools, so this was a frequent emerging issue in Gwynedd.
- In terms of the impact of closing Ysgol y Garreg on nearby schools, it was explained that no impact was foreseen as most parents were already choosing to send their children to schools in other catchment areas. It was acknowledged that it was not possible to provide a definitive answer about the long-term impact at present.
- It was discussed that considerations had been given to a possible after-use for the building. It was highlighted that no decision had been made as yet as it was subject to the Education Department's resources and the demand for provision.

7. SCHOOLS STRATEGY 2026 - 2036

The report was presented by Cllr Dewi Jones.

DECISION

The Gwynedd Schools Strategy 2026 - 2036 (Appendix 1) was approved, and authority was delegated to the Cabinet Member for Education, in consultation with the Head of Education, to make insignificant and editorial changes to the Strategy prior to its formal publication, provided that those changes do not materially affect the content, strategic direction, priorities or financial implications of the Strategy.

DISCUSSION

It was explained that the previous Strategy had ended and that it was crucial that another strategy was put in place for the next decade.

It was highlighted that lengthy discussions had been held in relation to the Strategy, and that the views of the sector, the education workforce and the County Children and Young People's Forum had also been sought.

The importance of this Strategy was emphasised to highlight the Council's vision and ambition for the next decade. The document outlined the challenges facing the County, and the importance of the Authority and the public being aware and alert to those challenges was noted.

The Chair of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee was welcomed to the meeting to present the Committee's recommendations. The Strategy was identified as being a key document to inform the direction of education in the County and it was explained that the Committee believed that some elements of the Strategy needed to be reinforced before moving forward. It was reported that the well-being and safeguarding of children and young people needed to be more clearly incorporated into the document, and that there was a call to ensure that the child's voice was central to planning. Amendments had been made to the document in light of these recommendations, which were welcomed. In reference to inequality, it was noted that there was a lack of clear measures to assess the impact of strategic decisions on the most vulnerable learners. It was also explained that the Committee had discussed the persistent difficulties with recruiting and retaining the workforce, adding that more emphasis was needed on workforce planning to ensure long-term sustainability.

The further recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, as noted in the report, were then explained.

It was confirmed that all recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee had been addressed in the report.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- When referring to the change in the area's demographics, it was asked whether this Strategy provided a solution to the challenge of recruiting and planning the workforce. In response, it was noted that this Strategy did not cover all aspects of the area and that several other strategies

and procedures covered those aspects. References were made to other challenges such as language medium, the need for teachers to teach several subjects, and a number of young people in the County moving away. There was acknowledgement that these challenges were not unique to Gwynedd, and that they received ongoing attention in the Strategy.

- There was disappointment and disbelief that a total of only 19 responses had been received to the electronic questionnaire, despite having been open for 8 weeks. Officers shared this disappointment, noting perhaps that it reflected the fact that it had already been discussed widely with schools. It was revealed that a number had started but had not submitted the questionnaire.
- It was noted that it was good that the Department had engaged with the Children and Young People's Forum and the discussion that had taken place at the session was explained. It was emphasised that there was a strong opinion that the Welsh language should be a fundamental part and a priority in all the Council's procedures.
- It was asked whether there was an intention to conduct further consultation and engagement, following the lack of response to the electronic questionnaire. It was pointed out that people had been given a fair opportunity to voice their opinions and that no further engagement was planned.
- It was asked how the success of this Strategy would be measured, and how it would be reviewed over time. Reference was made to realising the aim for children in the County to reach their full potential, and that pupils received the best education and support. It was added that schools would not be identical but it was confirmed that there would be no difference in the standards and opportunities young people received.
- A question was asked about how the improvement in pupils' emotional well-being and general well-being would be measured. In response, it was noted that a number of schools did this in the form of several questionnaires. It was added that pupils' attendance and attainment were also being used as indicators.
- It was noted that discussions were ongoing regarding measuring pupils' well-being, and the role of governors in schools to discuss this was mentioned. The importance of discussing and measuring well-being at both an individual school level and at a county level was highlighted.
- Reference was made to the discussion at the Children and Young People's Forum, stating that the intention was to convene the local forums in one county forum. The importance of this being sustainable and embedded into the Council's work was identified.

8. 2026/27 BUDGET

The report was presented by Cllr Huw Wyn Jones.

DECISION

To recommend to the Council (at its meeting on 5 March 2026) that:

1. A budget of £379,701,110 should be set for 2026/27, to be funded by £264,009,390 of Government Grant and £115,691,720 of Council Tax income (which is a base increase of 4.75% plus a further 0.42% to meet the levy from the Fire Authority, which gives a total of 5.17%).
2. A capital programme of £40,179,430 in 2026/27 should be established, to be funded from the sources set out in Appendix 4 of the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented noting the financial forecasts from the current financial year. It was noted that there was approximately a £5.3 million overspend across the Council, where departments' budgets did not meet the demand for service.

Reference was made to the increase in the settlement received by the Council from the Welsh Government to 4.1%. It was noted that despite being a better increase than expected, it was still amongst the lowest in Wales.

As part of the budget setting process, a possible salary increase of 4% for teachers, and 3.4% for all other Council staff was anticipated.

An overview was provided of the revenue bids for next year, and the cross-section for every department.

It was seen that there was the usual increase in levies, including £458,000 to the Fire Authority, and then smaller amounts to Natural Resources Wales, Eryri National Park and the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

It was estimated that an additional £23.3 million would need to be spent in the next financial year to maintain the Council's services. Salary inflation, general inflation and the increased demand for services were highlighted as being the main pressures.

Spending requirements for the 2026/27 financial year were confirmed to be around £380 million. It was highlighted that the settlement from the Welsh Government was approximately £264 million, leaving a void in excess of £116 million to be covered by Council Tax and savings.

It was noted that a total of £644k in savings had already been approved for the 2026/27 Budget - with around a quarter of a million pounds of these savings being available to cover the funding gap during the next financial year.

Since the report was published, attention was drawn to the fact that the Council had received confirmation that it would receive a subsidy towards its contribution to the Fire Authority costs, which was approximately an additional £50,000. It was revealed that the Council had also seized the opportunity to repay a capital loan very recently, which decreased the annual amount that needed to be earmarked for paying off these loans.

It was noted that this allowed for the increase in Council Tax for next year to be lowered from 4.9%, as noted in the report, to 4.75%. It was added that the fire element would be additional to this.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- An observation was made regarding the obstacles that a year-by-year budget created for councils, asking once again for a multi-year budget from the Government to enable forward planning.
- Members were glad that additional money had been budgeted to support Special Schools and Additional Learning Needs services within mainstream schools. It was pointed out that this merely touched the sides, and that a national investment in this area was needed.
- Further details were sought about the repayment of a loan. In response, it was disclosed that an opportunity had arisen for early repayment without incurring extra charges. It was confirmed that the Council had accepted, and that the early repayment meant savings for the Council. It was added that this did not happen often.
- Support was declared in the investment in the Council's buildings, including schools and homes for the elderly, following years of austerity.
- The permanent bids that go towards the overall lack of budget was welcomed, which showed that the Council was eager to do right by the County's residents by meeting the increased demand for services.
- It was appreciated that any Council Tax increase would have an impact on the County's people. Support was said to be available, and that the information could be found on the Council's website or by contacting Galw Gwynedd.

9. PARKING SCHEMES AND FEES

The report was presented by Cllr Craig ab Iago.

DECISION

To approve and enable the Parking Service to proceed with the realisation of two savings plans which required further consideration before a final decision is reached, namely:

Short stay car park enforcement hours extended from 10:00 to 16:30 to 9:00 to 17:00.

Adjustment to Band 2 Long Stay Fee Structure.

A new parking order that reconciled current arrangements and included the above changes was approved.

DISCUSSION

The background to the item was given, noting that this scheme was part of plans to meet the deficit between the parking income target and what was being achieved. The item was said to have been presented to Cabinet in 2024, and it was confirmed that what had been approved then was now up and running and performing as anticipated.

It was noted that the income target had increased since the report was presented in 2024/25, necessitating further action for it to be met.

It was revealed that the changes introduced in 2025 had been fairly well received, with minimal reaction. Attention was drawn to the season tickets that offered good value for money compared to paying per visit.

It was explained that the Department had reviewed the parking order, concluding that a new order needed to be introduced which brought more consistency in terms of maps of the car parks for example.

It was highlighted that the service was currently introducing 32 new pay and display machines, intended to give customers a better standard of service as well as securing income.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- It was noted that it was extremely difficult to compare Gwynedd's parking structure situation with other counties, as structures varied from one county to the other. However, it was noted that it was possible to make a comparison between some aspects such as the costs of annual season tickets - adding that these tickets were very reasonable in Gwynedd. It was reported that feedback from visitors also supported the fact that parking in Gwynedd was reasonable compared to their own local areas. It was explained that it was felt that a balance had been struck here between providing for local needs and generating income where possible.
- Reference was made to the cost of both local and season parking tickets, with an explanation given of what was available to residents. All information regarding this provision was said to be on the Council's website.
- A question was asked as to whether consideration had been given to the impact of extended enforcement hours on local businesses. Assurance was given that there was an on-street parking strategy, enabling people to park on the street for periods of 30 minutes-1 hour for quick visits to shops.
- It was asked how this change would be communicated to the public, to avoid people being caught out. In response, it was proposed that there was an opportunity to go further than the statutory requirement by warning about this change to raise residents' awareness in general.
- It was proposed that a grace period be granted for the initial stage of the extended enforcement period, but assurance was given that there would be plenty of time between the proposal being approved and enforced in order to raise sufficient awareness of the change. The challenges that introducing a grace period would cause in terms of county-wide consistency were echoed, as were the challenges for the officers enforcing the orders.
- Reference was made to the equality impact assessment, with

members pleased that there would be no change for blue badge holders. The challenge encountered by older people using these parking machines was recognised, and it was proposed that attention should be given to making car parks more age-friendly in moving forwards. In response, the new machines introduced to car parks were said to hopefully provide more consistency for residents and that there was an attempt to make the service more accessible.

- Attention was drawn to the fact that there was no mobile coverage in several areas, meaning that some people could not pay.

10. PRIDE IN PLACE IMPACT FUND

The report was presented by Cllr R Medwyn Hughes.

DECISION

To agree to direct the £1.5 million coming to Gwynedd from the UK Government's Pride in Place Impact Fund to the Schemes listed in Appendix 2 of the report.

The Head of Economy and Community Department, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for the Economy and the Head of Finance, was authorised to confirm details of the proposed package of schemes to be supported, ensuring operational arrangements in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Fund.

DISCUSSION

It was confirmed in September of last year that £1.5 million had been earmarked for Gwynedd from the UK Government's Pride in Place Impact Fund. It was explained that this was a capital fund programmed for the period 2025/26 to 2026/27.

The 3 main objectives of the Fund were explained, namely refurbishing community spaces, enhancing public spaces, and regenerating high streets and town centres.

The objectives of the Fund were said to align with the Community and Town Centre Regeneration Plan, which was within the Council's Plan 2023-28. Reference was made to the regeneration framework within the plan, and the local regeneration schemes that had been developed for 13 catchment areas across the County.

It was noted that Appendix 1 contained a summary of grant-funded regeneration projects through the Regeneration Programmes Service or Community Support Service during the period 2022/3 - 2025/6. It was highlighted that the total grants administered were £32m, supporting £53m worth of projects across the County. It was added that a package of proposals for the Fund was included as Appendix 2.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- It was confirmed that fairness across the County was a priority, and that this money was for Gwynedd.
- It was asked why some counties received a bigger amount than others. In response, it was highlighted that this was not due to an application process and that it was up to the Government to decide which counties received the higher share of funding. It was proposed that the Leader could write to the First Minister to seek clarification about this allocation.
- Examples of where this money would be spent were requested. It was noted that this was reflected in the report and that several factors were considered when reaching a decision. Reference was made to the projects listed in Appendix 2, noting that there was an attempt to spread the investment across the County. It was acknowledged that it was not a very significant amount, and that caution must be exercised in spending it.

11. EXEMPTION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The report was presented by Cllr Nia Jeffreys.

DECISION

It was resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item.

12. TRAWSFYNYDD SCIENCE PARK

The report was presented by Cllr R Medwyn Hughes.

DECISION

It was supported that Cyngor Gwynedd should:

- Lead on an application for North Wales Growth Deal funding to establish the Trawsfynydd Science Park and develop an on-site Innovation, Skills and Business Centre.
- Take ownership of the new building when completed and agree a lease with a third party to run the centre, when appropriate.
- Commit £1m of Cyngor Gwynedd's capital funding in the scheme and commit to targeting £1m of additional funding for the area as a contribution.
- Use up to £545,000 of funding from the NDA, Welsh Government and funding

already committed by the Department to deliver the next phases up to design and construction.

- Negotiate the required use of the land at the Trawsfynydd Site with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (Site owners).

DISCUSSION

The report was discussed.

The meeting began at 1:00 p.m. and ended at 2:55 p.m.

CHAIRMAN