THE COUNCIL 2/07/26

Present: Elin Walker Jones (Chair)
Delyth Lloyd Griffiths (Vice-Chair)

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

Also present:

Apologies: Menna Baines, Dafydd Meurig, Gareth Coj Parry and Gareth A Roberts

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Gareth A Roberts, Menna Baines, Dafydd Meurig and Gareth Coj Parry.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on 14 May 2026 as a true record.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

4. THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences were noted with the family of Robin Evans from Caernarfon, originally from Eifionydd, who had recently passed away. He made a significant contribution to the television industry, being one of the founders of Ffilmiau'r Nant and Rondo here in Gwynedd, as well as an original member of the band Mynediad am Ddim. Condolences were extended to families in Gwynedd who

had recently lost loved ones.

Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones was congratulated on winning the Police Commissioner's Community award. Congratulations were expressed to Lois Medi from Bangor for winning the Chair at the Urdd Eisteddfod, Dafydd Llŷr Hughes from Llanbedrog on winning the Urdd Eisteddfod's Young Artist Scholarship and Katie Baddiley who is a Police Community Support Officer in Dyffryn Nantlle for winning the Bobi Jones Medal. All the children and young people of the county who competed and were successful in the Eisteddfod were also congratulated.

Congratulations were noted to Leisa Gwenllian and the entire cast and production team of the film 'Effi o Blaenau'. Good luck wishes were given to all the athletes in the county who would be representing Wales at the Commonwealth Games this summer.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. QUESTIONS

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

1. Question by Councillor Huw Rowlands

Is the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being aware of the growing public frustration at the significant delay by Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and Grŵp Cynefin in establishing a health centre in Penygroes, namely Canolfan Lleu, and also the significant delay by Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board in establishing a new Health Centre in Waunfawr?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan

The Councillor was thanked for the question and the opportunity to raise awareness about issues affecting the public. As a result of the important messages contained in the written response, he stated that he would read it as follows.

In my role as Chair of the North Wales Regional Partnership Board, I work closely with the Health Board and receive regular reports on the situation. These reports are relevant to the plans identified but also to wider plans to improve health provision across the region. I therefore confirm that I am aware of the situation and understand the frustrations.

However, I would like to offer reassurance to the member of the positive work and strong collaboration that is taking place between our social and health services in Dyffryn Nantlle and Waunfawr. Professionals from both organisations

hold regular meetings, joint visits, collaborative assessments and multidisciplinary discussions to ensure that individuals receive the right support at the right time. A strong culture of collaborative problem-solving has developed, and this is true across the county – not just for the areas involved, with staff working creatively and flexibly to find practical solutions to complex needs.

There are good examples of collaboration between health and social care teams to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions, facilitate timely discharge when individuals are ready to leave hospital, and ensure that appropriate support is in place in the community. Close collaboration is also taking place with Tuag Adref services to ensure a proportionate and seamless continuity of care for individuals during the transition from hospital back to their homes and communities. These arrangements are proof of the collaboration between local partners with the aim of improving outcomes for local people and to provide more integrated and effective services.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Huw Rowlands

What can Cyngor Gwynedd do to ensure the realisation of Canolfan Iechyd Waunfawr and Canolfan Lleu in the foreseeable future?

Answer from Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan

The Councillor was thanked for the question. Upon receiving the original question, he stated that he had contacted the Chair of the Health Board in person and had now received from him a full timetable of what the plans were at both locations. He noted that he would share this with the Member who had asked the question along with the local members for those areas.

2. Question by Councillor Gruffydd Williams

Following the Supreme Court's unanimous ruling in the case of For Women Scotland v Scotland Ministers (April 2025) that 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 means biological sex (birth sex), and the latest EHRC guidance confirming that (including the Code of Practice updated in 2026), it follows under the law that allowing "trans women" to enter women-only spaces means that the space can no longer be legally protected as a space for women only. What specific steps has the Council therefore taken, or intends to take, to review and update its policies, procedures and services (e.g. toilets, changing rooms, schools, single sex services, sports, recruitment) in order to fully incorporate this guidance and when will a report or action plan on this matter be submitted to Cabinet or the Council?

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

She answered by stressing the importance of noting that the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Guidance was currently in draft form and was still undergoing further consultation, consideration and development before any final decision was made. It was explained that the Council, in moving forward, would

carefully consider its duties under the equality and human rights legislation, and seek to ensure that any future changes were lawful, balanced and proportionate.

One of the key principles of the review moving forward was highlighted, namely to maintain the dignity, safety and respect of all individuals, recognising the need to consider and balance a range of protected rights in practice. It was noted that Lord Justice Hodge had noted that the ruling should not be seen as a victory for one side over the other. Also, that trans people were protected under the Equality Act 2010 in the same way as any other characteristic.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Gruffydd Williams

As the Council has already begun to look at the implications of the Supreme Court ruling and the draft EHRC guidance and "sex" as biological sex, can you give specific details on what policies or services have been reviewed so far for example toilets, changing rooms, single sex services in schools or sports, what is the timetable for completing the reviews and when will a report or action plan be submitted to the Cabinet or Full Council?

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

It was highlighted once again that the Guidance was still currently in draft form and that the Council would continue to monitor developments and take any necessary action once the final version had been published. She expressed that it was the subject of constant discussion with officers and that they would consider a report to Cabinet if necessary.

The opportunity was taken to reiterate the response to the same question that was received last year – namely that the Council was committed to support the rights of women and trans people and that fighting for women's rights meant fighting for the rights of working-class women, disabled women, women from ethnic minority backgrounds, and LGBTQ women including trans women. It was emphasised that everyone should have the freedom to choose their own gender identity and that this should be respected and that they certainly should not be excluded from society. It was noted that everyone was welcome in Gwynedd and that everyone's rights needed to be supported and respected. It was expressed that protecting everyone's rights underpinned Plaid Cymru's position.

It was noted that it was heartbreaking to think that some people in Gwynedd could misuse this ruling to make lives and fringe communities more difficult, and that they as Councillors were here to support all the residents of Gwynedd to live together and to live their lives with dignity and respect.

7. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2025/26

The Chair of the Standards Committee presented the Committee's Annual Report. The Chair noted that it had been a quiet year with not a single hearing held. Members were thanked for their work in upholding the Council's high standards and for their support to the Town and Community Councils when the

need arose. The Monitoring Officer and his team were thanked for their support and also the Group Leaders for prioritising the matter.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make observations.

A question was asked about the complaints' framework and the timescale. A response was given which assumed that the question was about complaints to the Ombudsman as the Standards Committee did not receive complaints. It was explained that, in regard to the Standards Committee, if a complaint was received by the Ombudsman that it would be dealt with in a matter of weeks. Looking at the Ombudsman, it was expressed that the timescale could be up to a year for a full inquiry.

It was RESOLVED to accept the report.

8. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

The report was presented by the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee during 2025/26. It was expressed that this was the fourth time that the report had been presented in line with the Welsh Government's expectations and guidance. It was explained that the report provided a summary of the Committee's work along with evidence of its impact.

It was noted that all Local Authorities were facing a number of challenges and there were ongoing pressures on statutory service budgets particularly in care. It was explained that she believed that the Council's governance arrangements had continued to show resilience. In the face of these financial challenges, it was reiterated that the Committee's role in terms of financial scrutiny had been central and had played a prominent role in scrutinising the budget, monitoring overspending and assessing risks to the Council's financial sustainability in the medium and long term.

All officers, Elected Members and Lay Members were thanked for their commitment and contribution throughout the year. It was added that 2025/26 had been a year of strengthening and stabilising the membership of the Committee. It was expressed that the year had followed a period of significant loss with the deaths of the late Sharon Warnes and Councillor Rob Triggs, but that their contribution to the work of the Committee and their dedication to public service continued to inspire them to continue with the work.

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

It was pointed out that CIPFA guidelines emphasised the need to demonstrate the impact of the work, and it was asked whether this element could be strengthened by perhaps showing clearer examples of changes as a result of the committee.

More information was requested about the two members of staff who recently had press coverage for being on full pay for a period of over 9 years while investigations were ongoing. It was asked on what pay scale they were and if

there were more people on full pay over a long period of time while investigations were ongoing. The response given was that individual staff could not be discussed in an open meeting, but that they understood the Councillor's frustration but was not relevant to this report. It was added that a review was underway and that conclusions would be drawn in due course.

It was RESOLVED to accept the report.

9. SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

The report was presented by the Corporate Director for Social Services.

To start his presentation, a video was shown about the electronic cats being offered to help people experiencing loneliness and isolation.

The report was presented by firstly thanking the staff that the Director had to assist him with the work. It was expressed that the video shown was one of many that promoted and explained the work that Social Services did, and celebrated the good work being done. However, it was noted that it was difficult to stand there and boast after such a turbulent year.

The importance of the Our Bravery Brought Justice report was highlighted despite how difficult it was to acknowledge what had happened along with the long-term implications for the Council and Social Services. Pride was expressed in the positive and constructive work that had been done to ensure that the Council's safeguarding and protection arrangements were optimised. It was noted that it was a tragedy for the individuals along with the staff and pupils of Ysgol Friars who had been affected. Further details were given on the safeguarding work that had been done which extended beyond Social Services and that work was being done in conjunction with Corporate Services to highlight that it was everyone's responsibility. It was added that a website highlighting the steps to report any concerns, support and information would be launched soon.

It was noted that the department was incredibly big in size with expenditure of almost £150 million, with 1500 in-house staff and almost 3000 staff when looking at commissioned work. As a result, it was reiterated that the size and vastness of the services made it challenging for Councillors to challenge the services on their work. It was emphasised that failures were inevitable and that they had been very evident through the Our Bravery Brought Justice report and more recently the Bryn Ffynnon case, despite the department's efforts to improve services. It was explained that it was a significantly important system but one that was under pressure and that children and adults needed to be better protected and safeguarded, and that they were under pressure to improve which required an investment. It was highlighted that a lot of money had been invested over the last few months to be able to respond to challenges sooner.

It was emphasised that money was a challenge. It was explained that internal money was being spent transparently but that external costs such as the costs of specialist children's homes were extremely high and that the demand for services was increasing. It was highlighted that children's referrals had almost doubled

since Covid with almost 8,000 cases over the past year. It was highlighted that the work of Llechen Lân had been published which highlighted that the demography of Gwynedd was challenging with fewer young people and more older people, resulting in a challenge of delivering services for the future. It was elaborated that the report provided some answers but also called on the Welsh Government for more support.

It was noted that there had been an investment in early intervention so that people could live independently and be able to stay in their communities. Particular attention was drawn to schemes such as the Trobwynt Team which had worked with 77 children about to enter the care system but that 64 had managed to stay at home.

With technology advancing so rapidly with Artificial Intelligence, the need to work with this technology was expressed, using the cat in the video as an example. It was expressed that there was a sense of belittling individuals in using such things, but that in reality it showed how real this one small scheme was and how it changed lives.
It was explained that the report attempted to show the real situation and be proportionate. It was reiterated that last year's report indicated hopes of reducing numbers waiting for domiciliary care, but that this had not happened. It was noted that this was because its delivery needed to be examined to ensure its effectiveness. It was emphasised once again that the whole intention was for people to live in their communities and live their best life, which was a growing challenge for the department.

It was highlighted that good work was being done working with Council departments such as housing and education and beyond with the police and the health service but that there was work to be done to improve across departments and strategically with Health. To conclude, it was noted that although the situation had been challenging there was a need to acknowledge the work that had been done, and thanks were given to the workforce which was under constant pressure but committed to children, vulnerable people and the elderly to provide the best care and support.

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

Staff were thanked for their work in a very challenging situation, and a report highlighting the work and recommendations arising from the Our Bravery Brought Justice report was welcomed. The bravery of the individuals, all those who have supported them and the individuals who had come forward following the case was highlighted. It was expressed that the report gave the Council an exceptional privilege to start over. It was asked what the main indicators would be to highlight the work that had been done to improve the safety of children and how the department could ensure capacity, a change in culture and arrangements when responding to any further learning. The response given was that the measures were very obvious in the work of the Response Board which was on the web, but what had worried him was that the voice of the child had not been heard but that this had been an opportunity to check that. It was highlighted that an investment had been made this year to ensure that the voice of the child was central to the department's work. It was reiterated that there was much to be learned from the

incoming complaints as quarterly and annual reports highlighted themes and that steps were being taken to look at procedures and policies.

Thanks were given for highlighting the "Message in a Bottle" procedure and that Councillors had a responsibility to encourage them in their communities. With regard to Telecare, attention was drawn to a national problem that had emerged following the digitisation of telephone lines, and whether there were steps to ensure that the system worked during a power failure. The response given was that issues had arisen as a result of this last year, and when risks were highlighted that actions were in place to ensure the system continued to work.

It was asked why the Domestic Violence service was based in the Housing and Property Department - shouldn't it be based in the Adults, Health and Well-being Department where experience of assessment and care was held. It was explained that the budget for housing support, where the service was funded, came directly to the Housing and Property Department from the Welsh Government. It was added that this was under review to bring all the services together to create a single service rather than pockets in more than one place. It was reiterated that there was also work to be done with the money received through the Police Commissioner, as the post was coming to an end.

It was noted that the word "fail" had come up frequently in today's presentation which was not a word he liked using. It was highlighted that work was done by frontline workers where small things made a real difference. It was expressed that recruitment was a problem especially to frontline staff and it was asked if something was being done to ensure it did not continue to "fail". The number of people receiving domiciliary care was highlighted - 811 - and it was asked if this was a number across the county. It was added that the report noted 129 people with disabilities on a pathway to work and it was asked how many had now had jobs. The response given was that good work was being done by frontline staff and that services were working well with one another. It was highlighted that it was difficult to get staff but pride was taken in the work of the care academy and the numbers who had applied for the role. In terms of domiciliary care, it was confirmed that the number was for the whole county, with individuals receiving an average of around 10 hours a week but did not include the other 20% who received care through direct payments. It was explained that around 50 disabled people out of the 129 were now in employment.

One Member highlighted financial resources drawing attention to the fact that some activities such as "Summer of Fun" for children with autism had come to an end. It was highlighted that the actual impact of withdrawing such activities must be known before any decisions were made. It was expressed that the Derwen Team for integrated services for children with disabilities did not support all disabled children. With regard to unpaid carers, it was asked if work was being done to highlight their rights. And finally, the complaints procedure was highlighted citing concerns that individuals caring for vulnerable adults were unable to make a complaint when they saw risks, as only the service user was allowed to lodge the complaint. The response was that Summer of Fun was a series of events funded by the Government, but that work was being done to look at what could be held in the future. In relation to unpaid carers it was noted that events were held across the county on a semi-regular basis in order to promote

carers' rights. It was reiterated that there were discussions about creating unpaid carers champions in all schools and GP surgeries so that constant support was available. It was explained, in regard to Derwen, that it was not possible to reach every single child due to obstacles such as waiting lists. In regard to the observations about complaints, the response given was that the complaints procedure was set by the Welsh Government, and therefore a carer could only make a complaint about the service with the consent of service users, unless it was a safeguarding matter.

It was highlighted that the report described this year as one of the most challenging years the department had experienced. In response to this, it was asked if it was possible to highlight the challenges that existed as well as to highlight which challenges and risks remained, and to highlight the lessons learned and those that had led to a real change. In response, it was expressed that a number of lessons had been learned but that it was difficult to choose one, and an individual meeting was offered to discuss them in detail. In terms of lessons to be learned, the main one was listening to the voice of the child, which extended beyond the Social Services department, and that there was a need to reach a point where young people's voices were being heard in all aspects of the Council's work. It was expressed that an officer had been appointed to listen to the voice of the child from the Young People's Forums, for Looked After Children and those in receipt of support from Youth Justice. Through this, it was hoped that a holistic voice would be heard. When looking at risks it was noted that day-to-day risks were specific to those receiving support, but that policies and procedures were in place to keep people safe.

When asked about the falls policy last year, it was noted that work had begun but it was asked whether it had continued. The response given was that specific work was currently in hand, and although not fully adopted work was underway.

Thanks were expressed for the video showing the work with the cats as it highlighted the good work that was being done. The importance of receiving complaints was emphasised, as there would be more of an issue if no complaints were received. It was expressed that the main issue was a lack of staff - not only carers but doctors, ambulance service staff - Dyfed Edwards along with the Ambulance Service were asked to come and meet with the Health Board in order to have a further discussion. Her view was noted that Ysbyty Gwynedd was now a care home with the number of older people being unable to leave, and that there was a real need for more care beds. Hopes were expressed with Plaid Cymru leading in the Senedd that it would be possible to move forward with the Penrhos site. The response given was that there was a real need to look wider and that there would be a discussion to see if it was possible to arrange this meeting with the Health Board and Ambulance Service. The Penrhos site was highlighted noting that aspect 1 had gone well, and sooner than expected with tenants being able to move there in a few weeks' time. It was added that extra care homes would be available soon and that they were currently in the process of consulting for the Full Business Plan for the Care Home, with a full planning application due to be submitted next March.

Thanks were given for the report stating his feeling that the tone used for the presentation, the video and the structure of the report was not suitable, and that it

was too close to being entertainment. However, it was clarified that this was a cosmetic criticism and not about the content. A further question was asked in relation to Telecare and whether work had been done to address the lack of a mobile phone network that could possibly accompany the problem of digitising telephone lines in relation to telecare. The comments were appreciated, explaining that the report was for everyone and not just for Councillors, and following a consultation in 2024 it had been adapted to ensure that it was clear for everyone. Responding to the question about Telecare, he stated that he was not entirely sure of the answer and would come back and respond further.

The report was appreciated and clearly highlighted the Council's response to the Our Bravery Brought Justice Report along with the work of the Response Plan. It was asked how it could be ensured that responding to failures was not dependent on temporary structures and when the Council would take ownership, what had changed in the Council's culture and accountability to ensure that external intervention was not needed again and whether there were measures in place to quantify this, and if important aspects of the department's work had slipped in the wake of the Our Bravery Brought Justice Report. The response noted that ownership along with the Response Board stepping back had been a topic of discussion recently. It was explained that the next meeting of the Response Board would look specifically at this, but in terms of structures there were expectations to be meeting certain standards before considering for the Response Board to step back. It was emphasised that a balance needed to be obtained between moving forward ourselves and to keep safe from the external challenge. In terms of accountability and quantifying the culture and accountability, it was expressed that these were to be found in the Response Board papers and that he was happy to go through it further with the member. It was expressed that important aspects had of course slipped, but that the safeguarding of children and adults was essential.

It was highlighted that a page highlighting the challenges over the year had noted financial pressures, vacancies and recruitment as key challenges. It was asked how confident the service was in being able to recruit and retain staff for the next five years. The response noted that the Llechen Lân report highlighted the need for thousands more staff if things did not change, with numbers of a working age decreasing. It was emphasised that a lot of work was underway to try to get young people to stay in Gwynedd and to attract young people to the county.

It was expressed that this report as a performance report did not fully measure performance and that the statistics were superficial and did not clearly show how to improve, which was fundamental to a performance report. It was noted that a page reporting on last year's progress did not have any data, only traffic lights, but that it did not give the full picture in terms of targets. It was reiterated that the use of cartoons might make it too simplistic, and that the feeling of the presentation, in particular the video, was something that would not be seen in Senedd Cymru and the need was noted to highlight that the Full Council was high-level politics, and that more time was needed to challenge and less time for cats. The response given noted that this report did not measure performance but that there was a statutory role to be providing the information to the Government and the public on the work being done. The desire to scrutinise the work further was welcomed and that there was more to the situation than this report.

Thanks were given for the report highlighting the wide-ranging work being done in the face of major challenges. There was disagreement with the previous member, noting that the pictures and cartoons gave a clearer picture of individuals' stories. It was emphasised that the last two years had been difficult but that there had been excellent developments and it was expressed that she was looking forward to working together over the coming year in order to highlight and underline the work that needed to be done to support children and young people.

Pride was noted in giving time today to discuss the item as it showed interest in care. It was emphasised that the Cabinet Members or the Director could be contacted throughout the year. There was disagreement with the comments about the format of the report as plenty of academic reports were produced and that this was one was available to everyone. It was also emphasised that this was an annual report and not a performance report - but that individuals were welcome to come to the Performance Challenge Meetings to see the data and scrutiny being done. More importantly, it was expressed that the report was honest and did not hide failures and the Corporate Director was thanked for his contribution and work to the Council and the wider region.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

10. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY SERVICES 2025/26

The report by the Head of Democracy Services was presented stating that it was a requirement to present a report outlining the work undertaken over the past year. The Former Chair was thanked for her work, and congratulations were noted to Cllr. Dewi Owen for being elected as Chair. Thanks were expressed to the Democracy Service Committee for their input and to the team for their professionalism throughout the year.

Attention was drawn to the highlights of the year with reference to the start of preparations for the 2027 Election along with plans to improve the digital provision in the Chambers. Attention was drawn to the eighth core area added to the members' training area and members were asked to complete the available training. This year's priorities were noted which followed on from last year's work with the forthcoming Election.

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

Attention was drawn to the core training areas highlighting that numbers reported to have completed training were still low and emphasising figures such as 3 members not having completed any of the eight areas. The importance of the training and the fact that it was available on-line at any time was highlighted.

It was asked if there was a discussion about councillors facing a by-election if changing political group during a democratic term. The response was that there were no steps at a Local Government level to impose such a requirement.

It was asked where the information was available about members' training. It was explained that it was public information on the website and available on the Members' Self-Service, but Councillors were asked to get in touch if they needed assistance.

Thanks were noted for all the training available which was very beneficial. Cara, the former Members' Training Officer, was thanked for her work over the years.

It was RESOLVED to accept the report.

11. CYNGOR GWYNEDD'S STATEMENT REGARDING PROMOTING DIVERSITY

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services noting that the Council had adopted a Diversity Statement back in October 2021 in line with the Local Government Act 2021. It was explained that the statement highlighted the Council's commitment to encouraging and promoting greater diversity ahead of the 2027 Local Government election.

With the forthcoming Local Election, it was noted that it was timely to review the statement. It was highlighted that it was not a statutory requirement but that it was believed that Members were keen to ensure a fair representation of society, and to encourage individuals from all backgrounds to stand as a Councillor.

It was noted that there had been no significant change to the statement since 2021, only a few updates. Attention was drawn to the work programme which would accompany the statement which highlighted the steps that would be taken by the Democracy Team and the Elections Team.

It was highlighted that the statement had been supported by the Democracy Services Committee at their meeting a fortnight ago.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make observations.

Thanks were noted for the report, and the statement of having Councillors who reflect the communities served and to remove barriers that ensure people of all backgrounds and ages are involved in local politics was welcomed.
Support was expressed highlighting that it was easy to say that more diversity was needed but that the Political Groups had a role to play in promoting and encouraging this diversity. It was noted that a single transferrable voting system would make it easier. The response given was that working with the Political Groups was part of the work programme, and that it was through Plaid Cymru's encouragement to get more young women into politics that the Cabinet Member had become a Councillor.

It was asked what barriers had been identified as the main ones that prevented people from standing. A conversation beyond the meeting with the member was welcomed to give fair consideration to the matter.

It was RESOLVED to adopt the revised Diversity in Democracy Declaration along with the work programme to support the declaration.

12. MEMBERS CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY ("WHISTLEBLOWING")

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

It was expressed back in January that the Cabinet had adopted a revised Whistleblowing Policy for Cyngor Gwynedd staff which represented an important step in strengthening the Council's arrangements in response to the Our Bravery Brought Justice report. It was explained that there was a call for a policy that would allow elected and co-opted members to have a pathway to bring concerns about serious misconduct to light.

It was explained that there was a need to prepare a Policy that would be suitable and appropriate for elected members, as staff procedure relating to employment legislation had legal protection within the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. It was noted that this policy offered guidance and a clear pathway for members on how to raise concerns in a safe space, and coexisted with other arrangements for specific types of concerns such as the Code of Conduct. It was reiterated that what was being presented was a system where members could bring issues to light, obtain guidance and feedback on the response steps.

The steps involved in the formulation of the Policy were highlighted which included input from the Member Enquiries Task Group as well as engagement with all Members. Consultations with the Standards Committee, the Education and Economy Committee along with the Protect organisation - a charitable body specialising in whistleblowing matters - were highlighted. It was emphasised that amendments submitted by the Scrutiny Committee had been incorporated into the Policy.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make observations.

Support for the policy was noted and the Cabinet Member and the officers were thanked for their work. It was expressed that it gave members an element of protection and demonstrated a commitment to a culture of honesty and accountability along with confidence that concerns are handled appropriately and confidentially. It was asked how members would know when this policy should be used rather than other procedures. The response noted by stating that the essence of the policy was to report any concern and that the Monitoring Officer would identify the pathway upon receipt.

It was asked how the policy struck a balance between protecting those who raise the concern and preventing the process from being used in political disputes. It was expressed that there was a serious purpose to this policy and that there was an expectation for it to be used for serious conduct, as officers were not allowed to engage in political matters.

It was RESOLVED to adopt a Members' Confidential Reporting Policy (Whistleblowing) to be included in the constitution.

13. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION - SECTION 22 - STAFF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

The Monitoring Officer's report was presented stating that it was an organisational report. It was clarified in April that there had been a change in Employment Legislation where the categories of unacceptable behaviour had been extended to include sexual harassment within the definition of protected disclosures. It was clarified that the Monitoring Officer had the right to amend the Constitution accordingly, as a result it was noted that it was a formal report to note the change.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make observations.

It was asked whether the word "whistleblowing" could be changed in English, as it was an unhealthy way of raising concerns. It was explained that it was a recognised term that was used consistently across all sectors.

It was RESOLVED to adopt a Members' Confidential Reporting Policy (Whistleblowing) to be incorporated in the constitution.

14. PROCUREMENT THRESHOLDS AND MODIFICATIONS TO THE CONTRACTS PROCEDURE RULES

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

It was noted that it was timely to review the Council's tender thresholds and procurement quotations following a significant change in contracting and procurement legislation as well as a change to the Council's internal Contracts Procedure Rules following this Council's decision in March of last year. It was explained that the current thresholds had been in place since 1996, and that inflation and prices had risen dramatically over the years.

It was highlighted that further changes had been introduced to ensure that the Council complied with the Act as well as fine tuning internal arrangements and providing clarity of the appropriate arrangements. It was noted that the recommendation was to double the thresholds. It was explained that in setting the thresholds there was a need to weigh and measure the provision of open opportunities, encourage competition and the participation of local businesses. It was emphasised that today's recommendation supported keeping the benefit local, as higher thresholds were an opportunity to support local businesses by providing flexibility in the procedures to invite local companies to submit quotations.

It was expressed that the report had received support from the Governance and Audit Committee and was being recommended to the Full Council.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make observations.

It was expressed that there was no issue with increasing the thresholds as it provided a better capacity to fund projects by local companies, but it was pointed out that Anglesey Council's thresholds were much higher.

A question was asked about the proportion of Welsh meat and vegetables bought by the Council to which it was replied that the response would be provided by the Education Department.

It was asked what consideration had been given to using a higher threshold to keep the work local and to what extent small pieces of work for the same company can be carried out. The response given was that it was a balance of having a practical system in terms of values, and on the other hand ensuring propriety under regulations.

RESOLVED

1. **To increase the procurement thresholds as follows:**
   - **Procurements up to £10,000 single quotation**
   - **Procurements between £10,000 and £100,000 request three quotations**
   - **Procurements of over £100,000 open request for quotations or tenders**
2. **Make minor amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules as set out in Appendix 1.**

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

The notice of motion was presented by Councillor Huw Rowlands under Section 4.19 of the Constitution and was seconded.

The member set out the context of the motion, noting:-

- That it stemmed from the frustration at the Board's failures over a number of years.
- Special measures for over 11 years and that not a single state establishment in the entire history of the Health Board had been in special measures for so long.
- It was highlighted that the Audit had drawn attention last week that the Board had not made it clear how an investment worth £461 million had been spent or its impact as a result of a lack of reliable evidence.
- It was emphasised that this showed that throwing more money was not successful.
- It was noted that all efforts to improve had failed.
- Looking at Ysbyty Gwynedd - that the shortcomings were clear without entering buildings with no parking spaces, full bins and that this kind of neglect for this amount of money was a greater negligence.
- Pride was expressed to see that the Welsh Government had given the Board one last chance this week.

Members expressed enthusiastic support for the proposal, noting:

- Confidence in the Welsh Government seeing the importance of moving

forward on the matter.

- Attention was drawn to the 16 empty beds in Tywyn.
- It was stressed that everyone was aware of the nightmare stories and that the Government had left it too long to do something about the matter.
- Frontline staff were thanked for all their work and for doing a fantastic job in such a difficult situation and that this was a structural problem.

It was RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

Cyngor Gwynedd is asked to contact the Welsh Government to:

1. **Express concern that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has been in special measures for 11 years.**
2. **Ask what steps and what efforts the Welsh Government would be taking to improve the health provision in North Wales for the people of Gwynedd.**

The meeting commenced at 1.30 pm and concluded at 5.20 pm

CHAIRMAN