



Complete Agenda

Democracy Service
Council Offices
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Cymraeg

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This document is also available in Welsh.

Meeting

THE COUNCIL

Date and Time

1.30 pm, THURSDAY, 2ND JULY, 2026

*** 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

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(DISTRIBUTED 24/06/26)

Ian Jones
Head of Democracy Service

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WEDNESDAY, 24 JUNE 2026

Dear Councillor,

MEETING OF CYNGOR GWYNEDD – THURSDAY, 2 JULY 2026

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to attend a multi-location meeting of **CYNGOR GWYNEDD** which will be held at **1.30 pm** on **THURSDAY, 2ND JULY, 2026** 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

5 – 16

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on 14 May 2026 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. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2025/26 17 – 45

To submit the report of the Chair of the Standards Committee.

8. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 46 – 66

To submit the report of the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee.

9. SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26 67 – 114

To submit the report of the Statutory Director of Social Services.

10. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY SERVICES 2025/26 115 – 128

To submit the report of the Head of Democracy Services.

11. CYNGOR GWYNEDD'S STATEMENT REGARDING PROMOTING DIVERSITY 129 - 134

To submit the Cyngor Gwynedd Diversity Statement, together with the Work Programme.

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| 12. MEMBERS CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICY ("WHISTLEBLOWING") | 135
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To submit the report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Legal and Welsh Language

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| 13. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION - SECTION 22 - STAFF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY | 146
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To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer.

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| 14. PROCUREMENT THRESHOLDS AND MODIFICATIONS TO THE CONTRACTS PROCEDURE RULES | 148
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To submit the report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language

15. NOTICES OF MOTION

NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR HUW ROWLANDS

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

Cyngor Gwynedd is asked to contact the Welsh Government in order 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 that the Welsh Government will take to improve the health provision in North Wales for the people of Gwynedd.**

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 14/05/2026

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

Councillors:

Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Stephen Churchman, Wendy Cleaver, Dafydd Owen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Gwilym Evans, Dylan Fernley, Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Jina Gwyrfai, Anwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, R. Medwyn Hughes, Elin Hywel, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Dewi 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, Llio Elenid Owen, 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, Ioan Thomas, 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), Catrin Thomas (Corporate Director), Dylan Owen (Corporate Director), Ffion Madog Evans (Assistant Head of Finance), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services), Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department), Nia Grisdale (Legal Service Manager), Sion Huws (Propriety and Elections Manager), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader).

1. CHAIR

Two names were proposed and seconded for the chairpersonship, namely Councillor Elin Walker Jones and Councillor Beth Lawton.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Elin Walker Jones as Chair for 2026/27.

Councillor Elin Walker Jones read and signed the declaration accepting the post of Chair of Cyngor Gwynedd for 2026/27, in the presence of the Chief Executive.

2. VICE-CHAIR

Two names were proposed and seconded for the post of Vice-chair, namely Councillor Elfed P Roberts and Councillor Delyth Lloyd Griffiths.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Delyth Lloyd Griffiths as Vice-Chair for 2026/27.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Anwen Davies, Alan Jones Evans, Gareth Coj Parry, Glyn Daniels and Gwion Emyr.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on 5 March 2026 as a true record.

5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of interest was received from the following Councillors: Anne Lloyd Jones, Beth Lawton, Annwen Hughes, Dafydd Davies, Wendy Cleaver, Elwyn Edwards, Elwyn Jones, Linda Morgan, Elfed Williams and John Pughe Roberts for item 11 – Tourism Levy. It was a prejudicial interest, and they withdrew from the meeting for this item.

6. THE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillors Louise Hughes and Arwyn Herald Roberts were welcomed following a period of ill-health.

All elected Members of the Senedd were congratulated, and specifically Beca Brown, who had stepped down from her role as the Councillor for Llanrug, as well as former members of this Council – Sian Gwenllian and Mair Rowlands. It was noted that a by-election would take place in Llanrug in the next few weeks.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the Council had signed and launched Twf – a Welsh Language at Work Charter jointly with TUC Cymru, GMB and Unite. It was explained that the Council was the first Council in Wales to do so. Congratulations were expressed on this pioneering plan that evidenced the successful joint working between the Council and the trade unions in Gwynedd.

Congratulations were also noted to:

- Caernarfon Football Club who had recently won the Welsh Cup.
- Ysgol Glan y Môr and Ysgol y Moelwyn pupils for coming first and second in a Tasty Careers competition following some mentoring by Tom from Swig Smoothies.

The best of luck was wished to all children and young people from across the county who would be competing in the Urdd National Eisteddfod at the end of the month.

7. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

8. QUESTIONS

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

(1) Question by Councillor Jina Gwyrfa

Something which is a matter of concern to many of us is the marked increase in the number of learners in our schools who are being excluded due to unacceptable, dangerous or threatening behaviour. Nevertheless, it is a statutory duty for all children to receive education up to the age of 16. Exclusion is therefore meant to be temporary, and the Education Department – in conjunction with other Agencies – has a range of strategies to deal with these learners, with the aim of enabling the learners to return to school and continue to receive an education that will equip them into the future.

Could you outline all the strategies available in Gwynedd to deal with these young people; and provide data to show a) the scale of the problem, and b) how effective the current provision is?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

He responded by noting that he shared the concerns and that there was unacceptable and concerning behaviour across the county. It was expressed that support needed to be given to the children who are unable to cope at school for various reasons, but it was emphasised

that these are a small number. He highlighted that there was some positivity, with the numbers being excluded decreasing and that the department's new way of looking at inclusion had contributed to this. He drew attention to the two centres which are in Llanwnda and in Dyffryn Nantlle to support the young people. It was explained that 220 young people were open to services, and that more cases had been closed this year than had been opened. It was noted that the problem was far from being resolved but that it was going in the right direction.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfa

She thanked the member for the answer, but she had one minor thing to raise, the children who are on a part-time timetable – she asked what happened during the rest of the time and who was responsible for their care while a parent had to work.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

It was noted that a number of services were available and that each case was treated individually. It was reiterated that workers were working with children and families to find the appropriate solution to the individual case. It was reiterated that cases sometimes took time to ensure the children were back in school full time.

(2) Question by Councillor Rhys Tudur

Housing Associations have recently obtained or are seeking permission for the erection of an unprecedented number of houses in individual applications in the villages of Dwyfor, Botwnnog (18), Trefor (20), Nefyn (20), Chwillog (25), Yy Ffôr (27), Abererch (24), in the face of local opposition of developments that are beyond a scale that is suitable for the size of the villages and which double the number of social housing there overnight and challenge the viability of the Welsh language. Is there any evidence to show that the Council is now listening and that it is not completely deaf to those local voices, particularly when the community councils have opposed the applications and when petitions with over 150 names have been collected?

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

The planning committee is required to make decisions within a legal framework. This means determining applications in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. It must also be ensured that these findings are reasonable and have a clear evidence base.

The number or origin of support or opposition is not in itself a relevant planning consideration.

However, full consideration will be given to relevant planning considerations that emerge from comments received in response to consultations on planning applications, including observations from the public, the Community Council and other consultees.

Affordable housing developments are a key part of the Council's Housing Action Plan which has been approved by the Cabinet, with the aim of developing 700 affordable homes by the end of the 2020/21-2028/29 Plan's life. Gwynedd was in a housing crisis, and affordable housing developments were responding to the significant need that had been identified across the county, with 4,107 individuals currently on the housing register.

The Council is successful in attracting around £13m of grant funding each year, which enables the Council to provide housing options to those in need of a home by working closely with the Housing Associations as part of the Council's successful Housing Partnership.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur

Given that Welsh is a minority language which is under pressure from the most powerful language in the world and that building estates of 15 - 20 houses at a time in small villages is too much of a challenge to the viability of the Welsh language, on the ability to linguistically scrutinise, and that the percentage of Welsh speakers in the county has fallen at the same time as the Local Development Plan and that Community Council petitions unanimously oppose and voice the linguistic concern. Are we saying that the views of the petitioners, Community Councils and local Councillors are all completely wrong and irrelevant, or will the Council ensure that we obtain language data for waiting lists and that we want to change the Development Plan so that 15 - 20 houses can be built in small villages only in extremely exceptional circumstances.

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

He replied by emphasising that the council's actions were based on facts and evidence, and that Councillors had a role to show leadership to express the facts to the public so that public opinion was based on firm foundations. It was expressed that many people do not want to have social housing in their areas but the Council had a duty to meet the need, and there are over 4 thousand people on social housing waiting lists. It was noted that the Local Development Plan identifies the number of people staying in each area, and that there has been a positive linguistic impact to date because of the Housing Development Plan. It was added that a report that went to the Language Committee showed that there was a higher percentage of Welsh speakers in the new estates compared to surrounding communities. It was noted that questions about language cannot be asked as part of the process of allocating housing in accordance with regulations. Pride was expressed to see new leadership in the Welsh Government who will hopefully legislate to have a home for all and build thousands of new social housing to tackle the housing crisis.

(3) Question by Councillor Gruffydd Williams

Following the fact that article 4 was quashed by a court because of what was ruled as misleading content from this Council, I previously asked whether this Council was going to apologise to campaigners who fought so hard to get article 4 in force, and there was no apology. The Council's right of appeal has now been refused. Therefore, is the Council finally going to apologise to the campaigners for article 4, patriots, linguists and taxpayers, following the fact that it is now clear that a shortcoming in the key paperwork caused Article 4 to be quashed and that a sum of money of over half a million has been wasted.

Response from the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Craig ab Iago

He thanked him for the question and noted that he had not changed his mind. He guided the members along the journey in terms of Article 4 from the first stages of creating a report from internal work looking at the impact of second homes and empty properties, to a public campaign that had highlighted the problem further, to the Article coming into force, to a legal challenge, to losing the legal challenge and to losing the appeal. It was highlighted that the Judge had noted that the documents submitted were not sufficiently clear and explicit and therefore the decision was quashed. It was reiterated that the decision was not due to a lack of evidence or the local need for action but was rather the definition and use of words that gave rise to the decision.

He expressed that he would not apologise and that he did not understand who would help him.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Gruffydd Williams

Given the response and the continuing inability to apologise and also the significant financial waste that arose as a result of the papers being judged as misleading, the Council's failure to formally state exactly where the failure in the oversight process had occurred and what level of organisational oversight should have ensured the accuracy of the papers in order to prevent this waste from occurring and as the court of appeal and the high court had ruled against the Council in this matter, and that the cabinet member's reply was reluctant to focus on the Council's facts. Does he believe that the courts' ruling was wrong, that the Council knows better than the judge, if he doesn't believe this, then when will he apologise?

Response from the Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Craig ab Iago

It was expressed that it was not part of his job to disagree with the Judge, but his job was to help local people to live in their communities. As a Cabinet member at the time, he was aware of the decision but the Judge's opinion disagreed. He stated that apologising did not assist anyone and believed that it was not a waste of time as he was here to assist people to live in their communities, to be innovative and to prioritise local needs.

9. CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLAN 2023-2028 – 2026/27 REVIEW

The Leader of the Council presented the report stating that the plan was a map that will guide the way to where the Council wishes it to be. It was emphasised that the priorities included an equal, prosperous, caring, and efficient Gwynedd. Particular attention was drawn to the new priority of An Equal Gwynedd. It was highlighted that exercising the principle of treating everyone fairly was at the heart of everything and that projects such as Women in Leadership would address the barriers that limit people's opportunities.

It was explained that the Plan had been adopted five years ago, and with the world changing so rapidly it was natural to review and update the Plan. It was noted that workshops had been held at the beginning of the year with Cabinet Members to agree on alterations before sharing with all the members to receive their comments. It was added that many of the comments and suggestions had been incorporated into the plan.

The priority area of Tomorrow's Gwynedd was highlighted, emphasising its importance to ensuring the best start for the children and young people of Gwynedd. Along with that it was added that it was very important that Gwynedd was a child friendly and trauma informed county and the Deputy Leader was thanked for his leadership in this area.

A new project was highlighted in the priority of A Welsh Gwynedd, namely 'Returning to Gwynedd' (*Nôl i Wynedd*) which aimed to strengthen the population of Gwynedd to contribute to vibrant communities and growth in the use of the Welsh language.

It was noted that the Response Plan: Our Bravery Brought Justice had been included at the beginning of the Plan to underline the fact that this work was an ongoing commitment. All the members, the Council's workforce, partners and communities were thanked for working hard for the county and the residents.

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

A member was pleased with the introduction of the new priority, and that it was a step forward to do things differently, to listen to the voices of residents and that decisions were made with everyone in mind and not always the majority. Attention was drawn to the work being done to create a child friendly county with trauma awareness and that this was having a positive impact on the children of Gwynedd. It was stressed that work had been done but that there was more to be done. It was expressed that Llechen Lân's vision highlighted the Council's

desire to think and invest in the future, with one ambition being to ensure the best service for the people of Gwynedd.

The priority of a Caring Gwynedd was highlighted which has the focus of improving care services and promoting independence for vulnerable people within their communities. It was reiterated that the investment and developments to create modern services were paramount, which happened through continued collaboration with partners to provide the best care. All care staff and carers in the county were thanked.

It was expressed that services such as adult and children's care and education were expensive to run, and that most of the Council's budget was spent on these. A review of Youth Services, which had received a huge cut in recent years, was welcomed, highlighting that it was extremely important preventive work, and it was hoped that it would be possible to re-invest following the review.

The work of being a trauma informed county, and the Autism Plan specifically, were supported, as trauma affected children beyond the field of care alone. It was added that in relation to the Autism plan, it was difficult to get a diagnosis but afterwards support was needed to get the right specialist support as the spectrum was so broad.

It was emphasised that the plan should be more than just words and that an action plan needed to be seen and to ensure that there is enough money to support all the plans.

It was noted that there was a lot of good material to be found in this Plan, however, Article 4 needed to be included, as the matter had cost the Council so much and we needed to outline what went wrong. Similarly, it was added that making space for the child safeguarding practice review at the start of the report was rather tasteless and that the Council's weaknesses were conveyed as strengths.

RESOLVED to adopt the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 – 2026/27 Review

10. ADOPTION OF NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR GWYNEDD

The report was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community, noting that the strategy had been developed as the Cabinet had identified a gap of not having one single document that identified the wishes of the county's residents for the economy and to set a direction for developing the economy. It was reiterated that funding for economic development was increasingly uncertain and that the Welsh Government's emphasis had been on regional collaboration, and that investment had been seen across north Wales but no corresponding plans for Gwynedd. It was noted that there was ongoing uncertainty about the global economy and there was a tempestuous atmosphere especially in Wales.

It was highlighted that there were positive and strong aspects to Gwynedd's economy such as potential within existing enterprises, low unemployment and high levels of workforce qualifications. It was expressed that the purpose of the strategy was to identify where there was room for improvement, highlighting areas such as fewer working-age people working, low wages, too much part-time and seasonal work and a lack of diversity of industries.

It was detailed that the process of developing the strategy had been quantitative and involved significant desktop research with input from a range of stakeholders from the private, public and third sectors. It was highlighted that input had been received from Councillors through the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

The desire to have an economy that gives everyone the opportunity to realise their full potential was noted, with an economy that strengthens the natural and cultural wealth of the county. It was emphasised that it was an exciting opportunity to make Gwynedd a destination of excellence in industries while continuing to nurture and complement traditional sectors

such as agriculture and tourism. The vision of having an innovative, productive and low carbon economy that strengthens the Welsh language, creates new opportunities and contributes to well-being was expressed. The members were guided through the three identified themes of Enterprise, People and Well-being.

It was explained that to implement the strategy, they were eager to set up an Economic Forum that would be based on the successful advisory group that navigated the work of the Shared Prosperity Fund. It was expanded that this will ensure a voice for different parts of Gwynedd to ensure awareness of the county's diversity. It was noted that the Forum would produce the annual Delivery Plan, and a monitoring and evaluation framework would be a means of measuring success against activities.

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

The strategy was supported – they welcomed a good strategy to attract investment to the county, it was noted that it was an excellent start and they were looking forward to seeing the targets to see what comes of it.

The strategy was welcomed, and they looked forward to seeing the Delivery Plan. Disappointment was expressed to hear of North Wales Ambition pulling out of the Glynllifon scheme, but the need for development in the south of the County was highlighted.

It was asked how much power the Forum would have and what the monitoring system would be to ensure an even allocation across the county, and whether Councillors would be involved in the monitoring. It was noted that monitoring will be proactive for project development and work will be directed to scrutiny. It was explained that the Forum would provide guidance across the county. It was requested that an annual report be submitted to show cross-county allocation.

The Trawsfynydd Hub was highlighted, and thanks were given for the work that went on behind the scenes. All members were invited to see the demolition work in progress and to see the new plans for the site.

A member asked about the situation in Llanbedr and whether the lease was now in the hands of local people. It was explained that the Government had given it to a private company, but that discussions were ongoing regarding the long-term lease.

The need to ensure that the Planning department supported the economy, and the need to work across departments, were emphasised.

RESOLVED to adopt 'Gwynedd 2035: An Economy that Works for All' as an economic development strategy for Gwynedd.

11. VISITOR LEVY

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community, setting out the reason for considering the Visitor Levy i.e. to ensure that the tourism sector contributes fairly towards the cost of the pressure this placed on local services, the environment, the Welsh language and the county's communities. It was added that the levy was a means of reinvesting in the visitor economy for the benefit of residents and businesses.

The current situation was highlighted, namely that millions of visits to Gwynedd each year created increasing pressure on local services at a time when budgets were under pressure. According to the Welsh Government, the levy was identified as a potential solution as it requested a small contribution from overnight visitors to be reinvested locally, with local control and transparency. It was stressed that the proposal was not an anti-tourism development but rather sought to manage and strengthen the economy in a sustainable way

in the long term. It was reiterated that there were several ways of measuring the visitor economy, and that these were reflected in the impact assessments, gave a different dimension to the economy of Gwynedd and therefore the affected impact assessments.

Attention was drawn to the comments received from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee which included the need for a thorough consultation to be carried out and a firm commitment on spending the money.

It was expressed that a detailed process would be adopted if the levy was desired, and it was noted that the national rate was 75p excluding VAT for the lowest scale (which included campsites and hostels) and £1.30 excluding VAT on the highest scale. It was noted that all persons staying overnight would be expected to pay the levy but that exceptions existed. It was explained that the Council had considered the potential of introducing a levy for several years, with Benefiting from Tourism research from 2018 highlighting the levy as the source that would bring the most income to Gwynedd to invest in the visitor economy.

It was explained that the question today was to determine whether a public consultation process should be implemented, and the results would be considered when a final decision was made by the Full Council. It was highlighted that the Council was working closely with Conwy and Anglesey on carrying out impact assessment research, and that discussions had taken place with Cardiff Council who had decided to adopt a levy following a consultation process.

It was noted that the impact assessments had been developed under the guidance of the Welsh Government, and it was noted that the assessment indicated that the levy could lead to losing 50 jobs at worst or creating 21 jobs at best. In terms of revenue, it was expressed that this ranged from £2.4m when using one dataset to over £12m if another was used. It was therefore anticipated that the amount would be higher than that stated in the Levy Proposal.

It was explained that the consultation procedure was set out in the act and clearly set out where the levy income can be invested, along with the need to establish a Levy Partnership Forum at local authority level. It was highlighted that the proposal highlighted that income should be invested in projects and activities that aligned with the Gwynedd and Eryri 2035 Plan's sustainable visitor economy principles such as improving toilets, public transport and supporting events.

It was expressed that if there was support, they intended to hold a consultation process on 20 May for a period of eight weeks before returning to the Full Council on 24 September. It was stressed that no final decision on the adoption of the Levy would be made until after the consultation process.

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

An understanding of the benefits of having a levy was noted, and there was agreement with the idea in principle but there were also concerns such as how to enforce it. It was noted that while the report highlighted how it would bring in money, the report did not demonstrate how it could work without having a negative impact on tourism in the county. It was expressed that tourism and the hospitality sector affected a lot of businesses and that the introduction of the levy may be a risk of a reduction in business. It was emphasised that we should pause to see what the impact was on other counties and gather data before making a decision.

Members were reminded that today's report was to determine whether to go to consultation to ensure that voices are heard, from residents, people working in the tourism sector and business owners. It was expressed that tourism had an impact on areas such as the language and that this would provide input to the costs locally, but it was highlighted that this was not part of today's decision.

It was emphasised that many consultations were carried out by the Council. It was added that the room tax was already 20% for businesses and hence was there a need to charge more. It was expressed that the economy was already fragile and therefore they had to be careful that no anti-tourism messages were shared.

It was pointed out that tourism was currently decreasing in the county because of decisions such as raising business tax and article 4, and that there was a need to hold back and have time to stabilise. It was pointed out that hospitality tax was around 7% in overseas countries, therefore much lower than Gwynedd, and that further data was needed.

It was expressed that it was the right time to consult, and it was pointed out that Edinburgh had the highest levy in Europe. It was highlighted that the number of visitors had risen because money had been invested to improve the city. It was declared that this was an opportunity to improve the experience of both visitors and residents.

The consultation was welcomed but it was pointed out that the report did not highlight overtourism in the county. It was elaborated that the benefits of the money were being used to mitigate the negative impact on communities and that there was a need to invest in tourism without encouraging more tourism. The need to word the consultation well was expressed and it was asked who would scrutinise the wording itself. The Monitoring Officer responded by stating that the process was in accordance with the act.

It was highlighted that there were obvious challenges with tourism but there were positive elements through the vibrancy it creates, and we must be proud that visitors from all over the world are visiting the county. It was expressed that the levy provided the potential to invest the money to support businesses and that it was an exciting opportunity to spend it in a sustainable way and to ensure that residents can enjoy living in the area.

The decision was supported and the member stated that people of his ward would be happy to see the money invested in improving facilities and that advantage should be taken from this to raise standards and to police individuals who disrespect the area.

In terms of the data, it was noted that there was no data available locally to see what the effect of the levy was but that data from other countries could be used. It was highlighted that if we wait to see the results in neighbouring counties, this could become a lengthy process due to the law's processes. It was expressed that the consultation would generate data from the views of local people and businesses which would be used to make the decision in September.

The people of Gwynedd, if agreed today, were asked to respond to ensure that their voices are heard.

The idea was supported in principle but needed to be absolutely clear to taxpayers. The importance of coupling this decision together with Article Four and the Premium was expressed, ensuring that unforeseen side effects do not negatively hit local people. The need to be careful when introducing this was emphasised, but it may be a fairer way of raising income than the premium.

It was asked what the risk of delaying this for a year was, and the response noted that a delay would not change the situation in terms of data as there was a preparation period of one year before being implemented therefore no additional data would be available.

It was asked whether this tax would be imposed on locals as well, should they be staying in another part of the county on their holiday. The response was that the levy would be imposed on anyone staying overnight in Gwynedd.

It was proposed to defer the item as there may be a gap in the consultation, and it would be possible to analyse the Conwy and Anglesey data for more information. It was explained that

time could be taken to ensure that Gwynedd's consultation was accurate. The motion was voted on, and the motion fell so the original motion was voted on.

RESOLVED

1. To publish the Gwynedd Visitor Levy Proposal Report.
2. To agree to hold a consultation on the Proposal to introduce a Levy in accordance with the list of consultees in paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5 of this report.
3. To inform the Welsh Revenue Authority, in accordance with the statute, of the intention to consult on the introduction of a Levy in Gwynedd.

12. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL BALANCE

The Head of Democracy's report was presented stating that it was a requirement to present a report at the Council's annual meeting. It was highlighted that no significant change had been made in terms of the political balance, therefore only minor changes were to be determined in terms of committee arrangements.

RESOLVED to agree to:

- adopt the list of committees and sub-committees to be established for the municipal year as set out in Appendix A, together with the adoption of the seat allocation and senior salaries set out in the appendix.
- delegate authority to the Head of Democracy Services to make appointments to the committees based on political balance, and in accordance with the wishes of the political groups.
- adopt the chairpersonships of scrutiny committees based on political balance as follows:

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee – Plaid Cymru Group

Communities Scrutiny Committee – Independent Group

Care Scrutiny Committee – Independent Group

13. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF THE DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE 2026/27

The Council was invited to appoint a chair for the Democracy Services Committee for 2026/27.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Dewi Owen as Chair of the Democracy Services Committee for 2026/27.

14. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE – INTERVIEW PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Monitoring Officer's report was submitted, recommending that the Council appoint Carys Edwards and Neil Hawkins as Independent Members of the Standards Committee for a period of 6 years.

RESOLVED to appoint Carys Edwards and Neil Hawkins as Independent Members of the Standards Committee for a period of 6 years.

15. NOTICE OF MOTION

- (A) A notice of motion was submitted by Councillor Einir Williams under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded.

Members expressed enthusiastic support for the proposal, noting that:

- The matter was close to the heart of several Members.
- Examples of historical names with strong roots in Welsh legends, geography and history. The need to retain them on the maps was noted.

- It was highlighted that house names were also disappearing and a commitment was needed from the Council to not be hypocritical and to use Welsh addresses in correspondence.
- A tribute was paid to a man who had fought hard for this issue, the late Eilian Williams, Dyffryn Peris, and he was thanked for his work.
- It was emphasised that these names were a part of Welsh culture, and there was a real need for them to be preserved.
- It was agreed to add a clause to call on other authorities across Wales to follow this proposal.
- It was highlighted that the Council had been doing work for years to try to influence the Welsh Government and that work had been done to preserve Welsh place names.
- It was expressed that the Welsh Government did not have direct power on this issue, but it was hoped that they would look seriously at the matter and put pressure on the OS to ensure that the Welsh names are on maps.
- An amendment was proposed – that this Council calls on a Monitoring Officer to send a memorandum to use Welsh names only. It was stated in response that street names were official and therefore there were legal boundaries, but the Council will when possible, preserve the Welsh name and to push the legal boundaries as much as possible.
- It was promised that the Council, in writing to the Ordnance Survey, would request an official meeting to discuss the matter.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

I want to express deep and passionate concern about the current Ordnance Survey (OS) policy, which is leading to the deletion, undermining and ignoring of Welsh place names that have been part of our landscape for centuries.

Ordnance Survey maps currently:

- **Replace historical Welsh names with English forms that have no basis or tradition, e.g. *The Mushroom Garden* for Coed Cerrig y Frân, *Heather Terrace Path* for Llwybr Gwregys.**
- **Place English names alongside Welsh names, creating the impression that the Welsh names are optional or secondary, e.g. *Cwm Cneifion / Nameless Cwm, Bala Lake / Llyn Tegid. 'Snowdon/Yr Wyddfa (despite the fact that Eryri National Park Authority no longer uses the name Snowdon.)'***

This Council criticises these practices, as they contribute directly to the loss of Welsh names, and therefore undermine our language, history and national identity. When the Ordnance Survey adopts an English name, it appears on websites, signs, publications, and media and as a result, the Welsh name is pushed aside.

This happens even among young Welsh speakers, who are often led to believe that the English name is the "standard". This is how language is weakened, not in a single strike, but in a thousand small steps.

Welsh place names are part of our cultural DNA. They tell the story of the land, the people, the legends, the work, the life. No one has the right to delete or replace them.

Therefore, I want to propose to this Council today that we:

- 1. Write to the Ordnance Survey to call on them to put an end to the current harmful policy, and to adopt a clear and simple principle and to use only Welsh language landscape place names on maps in Wales.**
- 2. Call on the Welsh Government to intervene formally and to ensure that the Ordnance Survey respects and protects historic Welsh names.**
- 3. Call on the other Welsh Authorities to follow this proposal.**

This is not just a matter of maps. It is a matter of identity, respect and cultural justice.

(B) Submitted – the following notice of motion by the Council Leader under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded. No observations were received.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

The Council marks the murder of Member of Parliament, Jo Cox on 16/06/2016, ten years ago this year. (David Amess MP was also murdered on 15/10/2021).

In a world that is increasingly violent and aggressive, it is sad that elected members, of all parties and at all levels of government, are increasingly exposed to insults and abuse. Recent research shows that 72% of Councillors have experienced some form of threat – whether verbal or worse – in the last 12 months.

This Council believes that threatening or violent behaviour has no place in politics. Cyngor Gwynedd Councillors are committed to modelling the highest standards of respect and courtesy when dealing with each other and with the public, and we want the same respect to be shown towards us.

We call on members of this Council and members of Community and Town Councils throughout Gwynedd to support the One Voice Wales, NALC and SLCC "Pledge of Respect and Courtesy" campaign.

The meeting commenced at 1.30 p.m. and concluded at 5.20 p.m.

CHAIR

Meeting	The Full Council
Date	02 July 2026
Subject	Annual Report of the Standards Committee 2025/26
Author	Mr Hywel Eifion Jones, Chair of the Standards Committee
Relevant Officer	Siôn Huws, Propriety & Elections Manager

Background

- 1.** The Standards Committee is a statutory committee, which has been established to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the councillors and co-opted members of Gwynedd Council, and community and town councils in Gwynedd.
- 2.** For several years now the Committee has been publishing an annual report to explain what it does and to promote its work, and presents it formally to a meeting of the Full Council. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has now introduced a statutory duty on the committee to publish an annual report and on the authority to consider it
- 3.** The Committee therefore presents this report for the Council's attention. The report will also be published on the committee's page on the Council's website and circulated to Gwynedd community and town councils.

Recommendation

- 4.** To accept the report

Statutory Officers' Observations

Monitoring Officer

Responsible Officer

Chief Finance Officer

Nothing to add to the report from the perspective of financial propriety

CYNGOR GWYNEDD
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

2025 - 2026

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR

Standards in public life is a topic that is receiving a lot of attention at the moment, emphasising the importance of individuals' behaviour in maintaining public confidence in the manner in which decisions are made on their behalf by their elected representatives. I am confident that this committee can continue to provide support and guidance to the members of Gwynedd Council and the members of the community, town and city councils within the county.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Aled Jones and Sonal Khade. Their memberships came to an end during the year, and in Aled's case, this was after ten years of service to the Committee, including a period as Vice-chair. At the same time, it is a pleasure to welcome two new members, Carys Edwards and Neil Hawkins, who have recently been appointed as Independent Members.

Hywel Eifion Jones

Chair of the Standards Committee

FOREWORD BY THE MONITORING OFFICER

Supporting and promoting high standards of behaviour is a core part of this work. This is achieved through a combination of being available to advise advice, proactive advice and training. In my opinion, training and understanding of the Code of Conduct gives members a foundation to be familiar with the fundamentals of the Code. This is particularly around the personal interest provisions, where they arise and how to respond. Not only from the point of view of propriety but also from the point of view of supporting proper preparation for meetings and undertaking your day-to-day functions. However, it is disappointing to note again that a number of members remain without attending the full courses that have been held. The Code of Conduct training regime will need to be given consideration in preparation for the 2027 election.

Ultimately, it is a consensus about the type of Council we want to see and work in that best represents the foundation. A culture of propriety does not predispose to healthy and forceful political debate. But, it does give the public confidence about the kind of quality of governance that exists in Gwynedd. This supports the focus of our work on interventions, guidance and support that develop and maintain the expected standards.

Iwan Evans
Monitoring Officer,
Cyngor Gwynedd

INTRODUCTION

The Committee was established in 2001 under the Local Government Act 2000. The main role of the Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the councillors and co-opted members of Gwynedd Council, and community and town councils in Gwynedd. It does this in many ways:

- Assisting the councillors and co-opted members to follow the Members' Code of Conduct
- Advising the authority regarding adopting or amending the Members' Code of Conduct
- Monitoring the implementation of the Members' Code of Conduct
- Advising, training or arranging training for councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Code of Conduct
- Determining complaints referred to it by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that members have breached the Code of Conduct
- Considering applications made by members for dispensation to allow them to participate in discussions despite them having a prejudicial interest under the Code.
- Considering matters referred to it under the Gwynedd Council local complaints resolution procedure.
- Overseeing the Gwynedd Council Members' Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

The Annual Report

The Local Government Act 2000 was amended by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, making it now a statutory duty for standards committees to report to their authority. This must be done as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year, in relation to that year (i.e., the 12 month period ending on 31 March).

The report must describe how the committee's functions have been implemented during the year. In particular the report must include a summary of:

- What has been done to carry out the general and specific functions given to the committee by the 2000 Act?
- Reports and recommendations made or referred to the committee by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- Actions taken by the committee after it has considered such reports and recommendations.
- Notices given to the committee by the Adjudication Panel for Wales

A report by a county council's standards committee must also include:

- The committee's assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the council have complied with their new statutory duties in relation to standards of conduct.

The report may include:

- Recommendations to the authority about any matter in respect of which the committee has functions.

The authority must consider every annual report made by its standards committee before the end of 3 months which starts on the day the authority receives the report.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Though the Standards Committee is a Gwynedd Council committee, the majority of its membership does not have any connection with the Council or local government ('Independent Members'). It also has a member who represents the interests of the community councils ('Community Committee Member'), as well as three elected members from Gwynedd Council. The Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee must be Independent Members.

Independent Members

Hywel Eifion Jones (member since 2019, Chair)

Born and educated in Dyffryn Clwyd, Eifion was a senior manager with Barclays Bank and served for 34 years in a number of branches across North and Mid Wales. He has undertaken many public services roles including a County Councillor with Isle of Anglesey County Council and a member of the North Wales Police Authority. Currently, he is a Magistrate on the North West Wales bench and is a member of the Gwynedd Pensions Board, Gwynedd Council's Governance and Audit Committee and is the Chair of Adra . He is also a member of the Adjudication Panel for Wales which determines allegations of County and Community elected members breaching the code of conduct.

Mark Jones (member since December 2022, Vice-chair)

Mark lives in Bangor and is a former police officer with 30 years experience in a variety roles, including as Head of Professional Standards for North Wales Police. He served as a Community Governor and Vice Chair at Ysgol Glanadda for 20 years. He is also a former Chair of Adra, where he continues to serve as a Board member

Non Gibson (member since 2025)

Non lives in Bethel, Arfon with over 23 years' experience as a Police officer completing her career as a sergeant. She has worked on a range of issues and Chaired the Early Intervention Team along with working on multi-agency issues and of course experience working within the justice system.

Aled Jones (member from 2016 - 2026)

Aled is originally from Lampeter in Ceredigion. He read Welsh and Geography at Aberystwyth University. After graduating in 1999, he moved to Caernarfon to work with Cymen (Welsh translation company) and became a joint owner of the company in 2007. He now employs a team of almost 30 employees and over 20 freelance translators. He lives in Bangor with Tegwen and their children, Cai and Beca. He recently completed a post-graduate qualification in Leadership and Management ILM Level 5. The programmes create an environment where leaders are stimulated to exceed their potential, drive innovation, embed learning and to continue their development. His work as an interpreter has also given him an unique insight to the workings of government from the European Union to local community councils and is therefore in a privileged position to observe best practice in terms of conduct and standards.

Sonal Khade (member May – November 2025)

Sonal lives in Pwllheli and has a background in finance and contract management in the public sector. Now self-employed. She has worked at a high level within local government and health leading on audit projects and issues.

Appointment of New Independent Members

Aled Jones' second term of office came to an end after a period of 10 years of service to the Committee. Furthermore, Sonal Khade stepped down from the Committee during the year. The vacancies were therefore advertised in accordance with the statutory provisions and three applications were received.

An Appointments Panel was established, which comprised Mr Eifion Jones, Chair of the Standards Committee, Community Councillor Richard Parry Hughes (Community Member of the Standards Committee), Gwynedd Councillors Ioan Thomas, Chair of the Council and Anne Lloyd Jones Chair of the Democratic Services Committee and Mr Griffith Jones as the statutory lay member.

The Panel, supported and advised by the Monitoring Officer, interviewed the candidates, and having regard to the criteria set out in the person specification for the role,

the Panel recommended the appointment of Carys Edwards and Neil Hawkins. The appointments were confirmed by a meeting of the Full Council on 14 May 2026

Carys Edwards

Carys who lives in Parc, Bala has held senior officer positions in the Isle of Anglesey County Council and the Welsh Government. She already serves as a lay member on the Governance and Audit Committee and the Governance and Audit Committee of Wrexham County Borough Council. She has also spent time on the management board of Grŵp Cynefin and the Management Board of Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board as an independent adviser.

Neil Hawkins

Neil lives in Bangor and has a background in education and charity. Until 2021 he was Principal of Concord College, an international school. He chaired the charity "Humanists UK" until 2025 and serves as Chair of the charities "Befrienders Worldwide" and "Tough to Talk", suicide prevention charities.

Community Committee Member

Councillor Richard Parry Hughes (member since 2017)

Richard was brought up on a farm in Llanaelhaearn and attended Pwllheli Grammar School, Glynllifon Agriculture College and Seale Hayne College (Plymouth University). He has a post-graduate degree in Farm Management. He worked for a veterinary partnership in Chwillog for three years and as a part-time lecturer in Coleg Glynllifon before purchasing Penfras Uchaf farm in Llwyndyrys where his family had been tenants for over three hundred years. He is married to Eleri and they have three sons. The former leader of Gwynedd Council, he continues to farm. He has extensive experience of committees and has held roles such as the chairman of the Wales Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs before being elected as member of public bodies. He was a member of Gwynedd County Council from 1992 to 1996 and a member of Gwynedd Council from 1996 to 2008. He led Gwynedd Council from 2003 to 2008 and was also a spokesperson for the Wales Local Government Association on the Environment and

Planning during this time. He is a keen member of Cwmni Drama Llwyndyrys and supports many other local organisations such as Antur Aelhaearn and Friends of Carnguwch Church. He volunteers as a case worker for the Farm Community Network. He has been a member of Llannor Community Council since 1992.

Gwynedd Council Members

Councillor Beth Lawton (member since 2017)

Beth lives in Brynchrug and is the owner of a local factory. She is a County Councillor for the Dro Dysynni area which includes the villages of Brynchrug, Abergynolwyn and Llanegryn. She is also a Community Councillor and the chair of the Ysgol Craig y Deryn Governing Body. She is active on several committees in the community including Abergynolwyn Carnival, Brynchrug Rural Fair, Tywyn Hospital Appeal Committee and many others. She is a member of Merched y Wawr and leads at Abergynolwyn Eisteddfod. She is a member of Cyngor Gwynedd's Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee and Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and has been Chair of both committees since becoming a member. She is also a director and Chair of the Byw'n Iach Leisure Company.

Councillor Anne Lloyd Jones (member since 2017)

Anne lives and runs a farm tourism business in Tywyn, and she has represented Tywyn on Gwynedd Council since 1995 and was previously a member of the Meirionnydd District Council for eight years.

She was first elected member of Tywyn Town Council in 1985 and was Mayor in 1991, and again in 2004 and was Chairman of Gwynedd Council in 2009. She is former Chairman of Gwynedd Council Planning committee and the Democracy Services Committee and founder member of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd.

She was a member of the Meirionnydd Community Health Council and is currently Chair of the Tywyn and District Hospital Appeal Fund. She is also the Treasurer of the local NSPCC branch since 1989.

She is a member and a former chair of Ysgol Penybryn Governing Body and is also a member of the Governing Body of Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn. Anne was the Chair of Mid

Wales Tourism between 2001 and 2016, a founding member and former president and treasurer for the Tywyn Inner Wheel Club.

Anne is married to John and they have three daughters and twin granddaughters.

Councillor Dewi Owen (member since 2022)

Dewi farms in Aberdyfi and has been a County Councillor for Aberdyfi and Pennal for fifteen years, and on Aberdyfi Community Council for twenty-five years. He was elected Chair of Gwynedd Council in 2014. Dewi has been Chair of several scrutiny committees and is currently Chair of the Democracy Services Committee on Cyngor Gwynedd, and has joined the Standards Committee since 2022.

Dewi is Chair of Governors of Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn, and a member of several local committees, such as the Meirion County Show, the Farmers' Union of Wales and 'Aberdyfi Advertising & Improvements Committee.

The Monitoring Officer

The Council's Monitoring Officer, Iwan Evans, along with officers from the Legal Service and the Democratic Service support the Standards Committee in its work. The Monitoring Officer has a statutory role to ensure that the Council, its members and its officers act appropriately and lawfully.

Contact Details

- Iwan Evans, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer.
E-mail: IwanGDEvans@gwynedd.llyw.cymru Tel: (01286) 679015
- Sion Huws, Propriety and Elections Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer.
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THE COMMITTEE'S WORK DURING 2025 - 2026

The Committee's work over the year has included the following (the Committee's full work programme can be seen in **Appendix 1**):

Cases which appeared before the Standards Committee

No complaints of a breach of the Code of Conduct were referred to the Committee by the Ombudsman during the year.

Other complaints

The Committee is also notified of the Ombudsman's decisions on complaints that were not referred to the Committee for a decision, and a summary of these is provided in **Appendix 2**.

Dispensations

The Code of Conduct for Members provides that a councillor cannot participate in a discussion if he/she has a 'prejudicial interest'. However, a member has the right to apply to the Committee for permission to participate despite having this interest, i.e. dispensation.

No applications were received during the year.

The National Standards Committees Forum for Wales

The National Forum of Welsh Standards Committees has now been established, in order to share good practice co-ordinate events and create a support network for committee chairs. The meetings are attended by the chairs of all Welsh standards committees along with representation from the authorities' Monitoring Officers to provide professional advice. The secretariat is provided by the Welsh Local Government Association.

Support for Community, Town and City Council Members

There are 3 elements of support that can be offered to members and clerks of community councils on matters relating to the Code of Conduct:

1. Advice on specific issues –by contacting the Monitoring Officer or the Deputy Monitoring Officer.
2. Gwynedd Council website - Standards Committee includes information and guidelines as well as links to other useful websites.
3. Training – the intention is to hold a virtual training session in the form of a webinar. This would create a resource that members could watch when it suits them rather than having to rely on sessions held in specific places and times.

The Duty of Political Group Leaders

Section 52A(1)(a) of the 2000 Act (as emended by the 2021 Act) requires that a leader of a political group consisting of members of a county council or county borough council in Wales, must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group. A “group” for this purpose is defined as 2 or more members who give notice to the Proper Officer that they wish to be treated as a group for the purposes of political balance requirements and the allocation of seats on Council Committees

The guidance makes it clear that this duty does not make leaders of a political group accountable for the behaviour of their members, as conduct is a matter of individual responsibility. However, they do have a role in taking reasonable steps in maintaining standards, setting an example, using their influence to promote a positive culture, being proactive in promoting high standards of conduct in their group and addressing issues as soon as they arise. A leader of a political group who fails to comply with the new duty in a meaningful way, may potentially be regarded as bringing their office into disrepute, and likely to be in breach of the Code.

Section 62(3) of the 2021 Act amends section 54 of the 2000 Act to extend the specific functions of a Standards Committee to include monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups with the new duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group. Political group leaders and Standards Committee should agree on the form and frequency of a report from each group leader to the Committee, which would then consider each report and provide feedback to the group leaders. Standards Committee must also provide advice and training or arrange to train group leaders on the new duty. At the start of each Council term this should take place within six months of the election and be reviewed at least annually. The guidance also suggests that the Standards Committee may wish to meet with group leaders periodically to review arrangements.

In November 2023, the Standards Committee met with the leaders of the three political groups on the Council – Plaid Cymry, the Independents and Liberals/Labour Group to agree how this duty should be monitored and the nature and frequency of information that should be submitted to the Committee. This is now the basis for maintaining and monitoring the system.

During this year a meeting was held between the Group Leaders and the Monitoring Officer. The has been held again this year. The working relationship with each Leader is positive and supportive. While the situation regarding attendance at training is disappointing, we can be confident that the Leaders appreciate and have supported efforts to address this issue. This positive relationship gives confidence that the benefits of the new regime can be further built upon.

THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026

9 June 2025

- Self Assessment of the Committee's work during 2024/25
- Community Council Training
- Approval of the Standards Committee's Annual Report 2024/25
- Report on Declaration of Personal Interests at Meetings
- Regular report on allegations against members
- Consideration of the Ombudsman's decision on a complaint against a Community Councillor

3 November 2025

- Report on the Gift and Hospitality Register
- Review of the Internal Resolution Procedure
- Consideration of the Ombudsman's Annual Report 2024/25
- Minutes of the National Forum of Standards Committees
- Regular report on allegations against members

23 February 2026

- Report on the Membership of the Standards Committee
- Proposed Work Programme 2026 -2027
- Regular report on allegations against members
- Reforms to the Principles and Code of Conduct for Members
- Report on Members' Gift and Hospitality Register

DECISIONS BY THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Summary of a report issued under section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000 Case Number: 202501611

The Ombudsman received a complaint that a Former Member (“the Former Member”) of a community council (“the Council”) had breached the Code of Conduct (“the Code”). It was alleged that the Former Member had failed to declare an interest at a Council meeting in March 2025, regarding her association with a school (“the School”) and a charity (“the Charity”).

The Ombudsman’s Office started an investigation to consider paragraphs 11(1) and 12(1) (personal and prejudicial interests) of the Code. Information was obtained from the Council and the Charity. Comments were provided by the Clerk, the Complainant and the Former Member. The Former Member resigned from the Council during the investigation.

The investigation found that the Council made annual donations to the Charity (which supported the School) in 2024 and 2025, and the Former Member had been an employee of the School and a trustee of the Charity at the time. It was found that whilst the Former Member had declared an interest regarding the matter in 2024, she failed to do so for the same matter in 2025 and therefore, may have breached paragraphs 11(1) and 12(1) of the Code. It was also found, however, that her presence did not impact the outcome of the decisions made, and there was no evidence of direct financial or other gain to the Former Member and no evidence of harm to another because of her involvement in the meetings.

The Ombudsman found that given the facts around the business being considered, the breaches appeared technical in nature. Therefore, on balance, taking into account the limited nature of the matter, a lack of training or intent, incorrect advice and the Former Member’s resignation, the Ombudsman was satisfied that any suggested breaches were not Page 1 of 2 sufficiently serious to warrant a referral to the Standards Committee in the public interest.

The Ombudsman found that no action needed to be taken in respect of the matters investigated.

Decision issued under paragraph 69(2) of the Local Government Act 2000 Case Number: 202506877

Summary of complaint

It was alleged by a member of the public (“the Complainant”) that the Member had breached the Code by posting hateful and fear-mongering statements on social media relating to immigration.

How we decide whether to investigate

To decide whether to investigate a breach of the Code of Conduct (“the Code”), we apply a 2-stage test. First, we consider whether there is evidence to suggest that a breach of the Code may have occurred. Second, we consider whether it is in the public interest to investigate the matters complained about. We take into account a number of public interest factors such as:

- the seriousness of the alleged behaviour
- whether the member misused a position of trust or has sought to gain, for themselves or others, at public expense
- whether an investigation is required to maintain public confidence in elected members
- whether an investigation is proportionate in the circumstances or whether, if proven, a referral to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales would be appropriate.

My Decision

(1) Whether there is evidence to suggest that there may have been breaches of the Code of Conduct.

The Complainant provided supporting documentation comprising of screenshots of 2 social media posts made by the Member. The nature and content of the posts relate to illegal immigration and are clearly aimed at the Council and the Police.

When assessing Code complaints, it is necessary to consider the nature of the allegations made against the Member complained about, in the context of the duties and obligations placed on them under the Code for elected/co-opted members. The Code usually only applies when a member of a council is performing functions as a councillor or seeking in some way to rely upon their status as a councillor. This is relevant because, based on the information presented and the context of the comments made, it appears the Member was acting in an official capacity in at least one of the social media posts.

It is acknowledged that the Complainant considers the Member's comments to be hateful and fear-mongering. However, the posts appear to represent the Member's views and opinion. The comments are not directed at a specific individual and focus mainly on what he believes, the Council and the Police should be doing about illegal immigration. The Member is entitled to hold and share his views, even if others do not agree, or indeed, are offended by them.

Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights ("ECHR") (as incorporated in the Human Rights Act 1998) concerns freedom of expression. It states:

"1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.

2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society...for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others".

Article 10 is a qualified right and as such the right to freedom of expression may be limited by imposition of sanctions in respect of provisions prescribed by law, such as ones contained in the Code, provided the restrictions are necessary and proportionate and are in pursuance of a legitimate aim.

This means that even if a breach of the Code were to be proven in relation to anything that the Member is alleged to have said, in order for a sanction to be justified, it would need to be a proportionate interference with the Member's right to freedom of expression. Caselaw on this issue has found that such interference is only likely to be proportionate if the language used was extremely serious.

That said, a Member's right to freedom of expression is not absolute and must be balanced against the need to protect the rights and interests of others. The legal principles on this issue do not provide clear boundaries for what is, and what is not, acceptable, and each case must be considered on its own merits. Freedom of expression is not limitless and the more egregious the conduct concerned, the more justified it becomes to restrict expression using the provisions of the Code.

The Member's comments relate to a political matter and therefore it is likely the Member would have enhanced protection under Article 10. In this case it is unlikely the Member's

posts, would be considered sufficiently serious that an investigation and/or sanction would be considered a proportionate interference with the Member's right to freedom of expression.

High standards of behaviour are expected of local councillors in Wales. Councillors must balance their right to freedom of expression with their responsibilities to maintain respect and integrity. Councillors must treat others with respect and avoid personal attacks, harassment, or discriminatory comments. While the comments the Member made have caused some concern to the Complainant, the evidence provided is not indicative of outrageous or offensive behaviour which would be suggestive of a breach of the Code and/or warrant interference with the Member's right to political speech on this occasion.

(2) Whether an investigation is required in the public interest

The conduct complained about does not meet the first stage of the test, as set out above, therefore, there is no need to consider the second stage of the test.

Outcome

The complaint should not be investigated.

Decision issued under paragraph 69(2) of the Local Government Act 2000 Case Number: 202508404

Summary of complaint

It was alleged that during a Council meeting, when discussing an update on a local business and its Trust Committee, the Member made misleading and upsetting comments about a Trustee ("the Complainant").

How we decide whether to investigate

To decide whether to investigate a breach of the Code of Conduct ("the Code"), we apply a 2-stage test. First, we consider whether there is evidence to suggest that a breach of the Code may have occurred. Second, we consider whether it is in the public interest to investigate the matters complained about. We take into account a number of public interest factors such as:

- the seriousness of the alleged behaviour
- whether the member misused a position of trust or has sought to gain, for themselves or others, at public expense
- whether an investigation is required to maintain public confidence in elected members
- whether an investigation is proportionate in the circumstances or whether, if proven, a referral to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales would be appropriate.

My Decision

(1) Whether there is evidence to suggest that there may have been breaches of the Code of Conduct

The Complainant alleges that the comments made by the Member during the Council meeting on 10 December 2025 are misleading and humiliating. In particular, the Complainant raised concerns that the Member had said ‘a letter has been sent to [the trustees] explaining the issues in simple terms, that every person would understand’. The Complainant’s view however was that the letter the Member referred to is highly technical, legal and requires expert interpretation. The Member further expressed the view that the Complainant had cost the Council thousands of pounds in legal fees. The Complainant said this was untrue and malicious.

Everyone has the right to the freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is incorporated into UK law by the Human Rights Act 1998. It may be helpful to explain that, when acting as an elected member and expressing political views or conducting political business, a member’s freedom of expression is afforded enhanced protection, more so than an ordinary member of the public. Further, as politicians, members are likely to be afforded protection even where the language used by them may be inflammatory, provided the focus of it is political. Political comments are not confined to the Council chamber and can include comments members may make generally about their authority’s policies or government policies. Political expression extends to all matters of public administration. However, a member’s right to freedom of expression is not absolute and must be balanced against the need to protect the rights and interests of others. The legal principles on this issue do not provide clear boundaries for what is, and what is not, acceptable, and each case must be considered on its own merits. Freedom of expression is not limitless and the more egregious the conduct concerned, the more justified it becomes to restrict expression using the provisions of the Code.

I am not persuaded that the comments unfairly discredit the Complainant, it appears to me that they represent an opinion rather than a statement of fact. I am of the view that such comments can reasonably be regarded as political expression and would therefore benefit from enhanced freedom of expression.

Appreciating that the Complainant disagrees with the comments made, they are not sufficiently egregious or disproportionate that a restriction is necessary for the protection of the rights and interests of others. Criticism and disagreement of views forms part of democratic discourse and does not, in itself, amount to a failure to treat someone with respect. The Member is entitled to hold and share his views, even if others do not agree, or indeed, are offended by them. It is not uncommon for elected members to say things which others may consider to be rude or offensive however it is not the purpose of the Code to inhibit free speech and the robust expression of political differences. The Complainant said he considered the Member's comment to be slanderous, this however is a legal issue and the Complainant would need to seek legal advice regarding allegations of slander.

Evidence has not been provided to substantiate the complaint, and the Ombudsman will not investigate unless there is reasonably strong evidence to suggest that the member concerned may have breached the Code.

(2) Whether an investigation is required in the public interest

The conduct complained about does not meet the first stage of the test, as set out above, therefore, there is no need to consider the second stage of the test.

Outcome

The complaint should not be investigated.

Complaint 202407933

That a member of a town council had made a false report to the Police about the Complainant.

Decision

Not to investigate. The member was not acting as a member at the time. It was further considered whether it might have brought the authority or member into disrepute. The police

concluded that there was insufficient evidence and they did not want to pursue the matter. There was therefore no suggestion or conclusion that the report made was false or a waste of Police time.

Complaint 202408934

That a town council member falsified records when acting in her employment. It was also alleged that she had failed to declare an interest when the funding of a local scheme was discussed.

Decision

Not to investigate. The member was not acting in her capacity as a member and no evidence had been presented to suggest that the alleged conduct, which had not been proven, brought the council into disrepute. No evidence was also presented to support the claim that the member failed to disclose an interest.

Complaint 202409315

A complaint by a member of the public, that a member of a town council behaved in an aggressive manner at a meeting with the staff of a local business and also failed to disclose that another member had a personal interest in connection with the business at the annual meeting of the council. It was also alleged that, at a separate meeting, he had made vexatious complaints to HMRC about the company. It was finally alleged that the member had been shouting and yelling at the council clerk.

Decision

Not to investigate. No evidence had been presented to support the allegations.

Complaint 202409316

That a town council member is trying to harm a local company by abusing his position as a councillor. The Complainant alleged that the Member harassed staff and tried to get them to

leave their jobs. It was also alleged that the Member had made malicious and vexatious complaints about the company to Natural Resources Wales and that he had given negative reports about the business at Council meetings, while failing to report positive news.

Decision

No investigation. No evidence was presented to support the complaint, and the Ombudsman will not investigate unless there is reasonably strong evidence to suggest that the member concerned may have breached the Code. It is the responsibility of the Complainant to provide direct evidence in support of their complaint.

Complaint 202307896 and 202310159

That a former member of a town council had failed to declare an interest in respect of a series of council meetings that considered a Trust

Decision

The investigation found that in respect of a number of Council meetings, the Former Member did not declare an interest and took part in discussions and voting in matters in which he had a prejudicial interest. The investigation found, however, that there was mitigation on the part of the Former Member given the complexities of the situation. Significantly, the Member had been voted by his fellow councillors to act as the Council's representative for the Trust and had done so for a number of years without any concerns being raised. The Former Member resigned during the course of the investigation.

When weighing up these factors, the Ombudsman considered that making a referral was not proportionate. However, she noted that the decision would be held on record and should the Former Member return to office, it will be taken into account in any future cases which the Ombudsman may consider, should future complaints be received.

Complaint 202310160

That a member of a town council had failed to declare an interest in respect of a series of council meetings that considered a Trust.

Decision

The investigation found that in respect of a number of Council meetings, the Member did not declare an interest and took part in discussions and voting in matters to which she had a

prejudicial interest. The Ombudsman considered that the Member showed contrition and expressed remorse if she was wrong not to have declared an interest which showed reflection and learning on the part of the Member. The Ombudsman considered, on balance, that a referral was not proportionate. However, the Ombudsman considered that the Member should undertake training on the Code with particular attention to personal and prejudicial interests. The Ombudsman recommended that the Member undertakes such training within 3 months.

Complaint 202501037 & 202501067

It was alleged that the Member failed to appropriately declare an interest in relation to her involvement with a subsidiary of a Trust. It was also alleged that the Member is the Chair of the Trust and took part in a vote to appoint herself as Director. It was also alleged that the Member has, on several occasions, misused her position on the Trust to interfere with the Complainant's duties and another town council's duties to scrutinise the accounts of the subsidiary.

Decision

The Member confirmed that she had been appointed to the Trust as a member of the public, that her appointment as Trustee was unrelated to her roles as a Councillor, and that she has never referred to her position as Councillor in communication or in her role as Trustee. It appears that the Member therefore was acting in her personal and private capacity.

No evidence had been presented to suggest that the Member had misused her position.

Complaint 202502340

It was alleged that the Member breached the Code of Conduct ("the Code") by:

- Failing to declare an interest during Council meetings and providing false and misleading information about an alleged interest during a Council meeting
- Failing to provide a response to 6 questions provided by the Complainant.
- Social media comments.

Decision

Insufficient evidence was presented in respect of the Member's alleged failure to declare an interest appropriately, and the allegation had not been substantiated. The Ombudsman will not investigate unless there is reasonably strong evidence that the member concerned may have breached the Code. In addition, the Former Member had resigned from the Council and

accordingly, the Ombudsman did not consider that any investigation would be proportionate in the public interest.

The Clerk, in her correspondence to the Complainant, outlined that the members of the Council felt that the correspondence had been dealt with during the Council meetings. In any event, the failure to respond to questions is not serious enough to amount to a breach of the Code. The alleged failure to respond may be considered rude or discourteous, but the Ombudsman was not persuaded that such conduct is so egregious to amount to a breach of the Code or warrant investigation in the public interest.

The comments on social media were dated following the Former Member's resignation and therefore were not made at a time when the Former Member was a councillor. Accordingly, this falls outside the scope of the Code.

Complaint 202502339

It was alleged that the Member breached the Code of Conduct by:

- Failing to declare an interest during Council meetings and providing false and misleading information about the alleged interest during a Council meeting.
- Failing to provide a response to 6 questions provided by the Complainant.
- Recording a meeting of the Council secretly and without permission.
- Posting comments on social media

Decision

No evidence had been provided to demonstrate that the Member disclosed information in relation to the matter in question and the Ombudsman will not investigate unless there is reasonably strong evidence that the Member may have breached the Code.

Screenshots provided show that the Member interacted on social media with the Member of the Public and her husband. The Member confirmed that he lives in a small village in which everyone knows each other. Without information regarding the closeness of the friendship, the Ombudsman could not robustly determine whether there is evidence suggestive of a breach of the Code by the Member. Furthermore, while the Member of the Public is documented as speaking during a Council meeting, there is no evidence that the Member subsequently took part in any vote or discussion

The Clerk, in her correspondence to the Complainant, outlined that the members of the Council felt that the correspondence had been dealt with during the Council meetings. In any event, the failure to respond to questions is not serious enough to amount to a breach of the

Code. The alleged failure to respond may be considered rude or discourteous, but the Ombudsman was not persuaded that such conduct is so egregious to amount to a breach of the Code or warrant investigation in the public interest. Any agreement or disagreement with the way in which the Member deals with local issues is a matter for the local electorate to determine through the democratic process.

Minutes of the Council meeting, document that the matter of recording was discussed by Full Council and it was agreed that the Member would not record meetings going forward without the whole Council's consent and that they would "start afresh with a clean slate". In view of the minutes demonstrating that the matter was brought to the attention of the Member and considering that the issue was dealt with and resolved by the Council, the Ombudsman was not persuaded that an investigation would be proportionate or in the public interest. The Ombudsman was not persuaded that an isolated incident which has been dealt with by the Council represents sufficiently serious conduct to be suggestive of a breach of the Code by the Member.

The screenshot provided showed that the post was made by the Member on Facebook using his personal name and the Ombudsman could not see that there was any reference to his role as an elected member or to the Council.

The Ombudsman was not persuaded that the Member's comment was suggestive of a disreputable conduct under the Code, particularly considering the Member's right to freedom of expression. Under Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of expression. While the Member's post on social media and accompanying comment may have been crass or distasteful and may have caused offense to the Complainant, the Ombudsman was not persuaded that the Member's comments were sufficiently offensive or outrageous to be suggestive of a breach of the Code

MEETING: **FULL COUNCIL**

DATE: **2 JULY 2026**

SUBJECT: **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 2025-26**

REPORT AUTHOR: **CARYS EDWARDS, CHAIR OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 2024-26**

CONTACT OFFICER: **DEWI MORGAN, HEAD OF FINANCE**

1. The Governance and Audit Committee is a statutory committee. Presented to the full Council is an annual report covering the work of the Committee over the year 2025/26, highlighting how the Committee has carried out its statutory duties, and how it adds value to the governance arrangements of Cyngor Gwynedd.
2. This is the fourth time such an annual report has been prepared, pursuant to CIPFA's strong recommendation. Further, the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 sets an expectation on the Committee to report on its findings in specific areas (as outlined in paragraph 8 of the annual report), and it is considered that this report fulfils this requirement.
3. The CIPFA guidelines note:

“The committee should prepare an annual report that provides assurance to all those charged with governance that it fulfils its purpose and can demonstrate its impact.”
4. The Governance and Audit Committee has considered the draft report in its meeting on 21 of May and presents this report for the attention of the Council. The comments of the Committee members in the meeting have been incorporated in the version that is presented to the Council.

Recommendation

5. Accept the report.

Appendix:

Annual Report of the Governance and Audit Committee 2025/26

Statutory Officers Observations

Monitoring Officer

I welcome the report on the Committee's work.

Chief Finance Officer

Responsible Officer

**ANNUAL REPORT
GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
CYNGOR GWYNEDD
2025–26**

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR

The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the work of the Governance and Audit Committee during 2025/26, and to provide possible evidence of the impact of the Committee's work on Cyngor Gwynedd's governance, risk management, and accountability arrangements.

It is a privilege to present another annual report on behalf of the Committee. While the report meets statutory requirements, I hope that it goes beyond being a mere "tick-box" exercise and instead provides the reader with a clear and honest picture of the Committee's role, and the difference that a strong Governance and Audit Committee can make in improving the Council's arrangements and strengthening public confidence.

Like all local authorities and public bodies, Cyngor Gwynedd continues to face significant challenges. During 2025/26, there has been ongoing pressure on the budgets of statutory services, particularly in the care sector, together with wider uncertainty regarding the national funding situation. Within this challenging context, I believe that the Council's governance arrangements, which are subject to ongoing scrutiny by the Governance and Audit Committee, have continued to demonstrate resilience. The Committee has provided appropriate challenge where required, while also offering constructive support to the Executive and senior management as they make difficult decisions on behalf of the people of Gwynedd

These financial pressures have meant that the Committee's role in financial scrutiny has been particularly central during the year. I am pleased that the Committee has continued to play a leading role in scrutinising the budget, monitoring overspends, challenging the use of reserves, and assessing risks to the Council's financial sustainability in the medium and long term, always with the interests of the taxpayer in mind.

I would like to sincerely thank all officers, elected Members, and lay Members for their commitment and contribution throughout the year. This work relies on effective collaboration and open, constructive working relationships. 2025/26 has been a year of strengthening and stabilising the Committee's membership, and I welcome the valuable contributions of both existing and new Members.

This report relates to the period between May 2025 and May 2026. In closing my foreword, I would also like to acknowledge that the year followed a period of significant loss for the Committee. The deaths of the late Sharon Warnes and Councillor Rob Triggs in the previous year remained very much in the Committee's thoughts. Their contribution to the Committee's work was considerable, and their dedication to public service continues to inspire us as we carry on our work.

Mrs Carys Edwards

Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee

INTRODUCTION

1. The Governance and Audit Committee plays an ongoing key role in ensuring effective arrangements for good governance. The Committee's main purpose is to provide independent assurance regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the risk management framework and associated control environments; to undertake independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance insofar as it affects its exposure to risk or may undermine the control environment; and to oversee arrangements for the financial reporting process.
2. In carrying out its functions, the Committee considers and gives due regard to guidance and standards issued by various relevant external bodies and organisations, including CIPFA.
3. According to the CIPFA Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police (2022), the purpose of the Governance and Audit Committee is:

To provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements. The Committee's role ensures that there is sufficient assurance regarding risk and governance control, thereby increasing confidence among all those responsible for governance that these arrangements are effective.

REPORTING PERIOD

4. This report covers the work of the Committee for the period between the Council's annual meeting on 22 May 2025 and the annual meeting on 1 May 2026. Six Committee meetings were held during the period under review:
 - [22 May 2025](#)
 - [11 September 2025](#)
 - [9 October 2025](#)
 - [13 November 2025](#)
 - [15 January 2026](#)
 - [3 February 2026](#)

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

5. The Governance and Audit Committee consists of 12 Councillors appointed on the basis of political balance, together with six "lay members" (non-local authority members). However, several vacancies existed on the Committee during the year.
6. The attendance of members at the meetings was as follows:

Chair (Lay Member)

	22/05/2025	11/09/2025	09/10/2025	13/11/2025	15/01/2026	03/02/2026
Carys Edwards	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓

Vice-Chair (Lay Member)

	22/05/2025	11/09/2025	09/10/2025	13/11/2025	15/01/2026	03/02/2026
Rhys Parry	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Councillors

	22/05/2025	11/09/2025	09/10/2025	13/11/2025	15/01/2026	03/02/2026
Cllr. Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Cllr. Menna Baines	x	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Cllr. Meryl Roberts	✓	x	x	✓	✓	x
Cllr. Huw Rowlands	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr. Elwyn Jones	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr. Edgar Owen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr. Arwyn Herald Roberts	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Cllr. Richard Glyn Roberts	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x
Cllr. Angela Russell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Cllr. Rob Triggs ¹	x					
Cllr. Dafydd Meurig	x	✓	x	x		
Cllr. Ioan Thomas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cllr. Wendy Cleaver			x	x	x	x
Cllr. Geraint Wyn Parry					✓	✓

¹ Cllr Rob Triggs passed away in May, 2025

Lay Membership

	22/05/2025	11/09/2025	09/10/2025	13/11/2025	15/01/2026	03/02/2026
Hywel Eifion Jones	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
Dr Peter Barnes ²		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dewi E Lewis ²		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Paul Millar Mills ²		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

² Appointed on 3 July 2025.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

7. In accordance with Part 6, Chapter 2 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Cyngor Gwynedd must establish a Governance and Audit Committee with certain mandatory functions, and it may also undertake other appropriate functions.
8. The Council's Constitution defines the Committee's functions as follows:

Functions that cannot be delegated to the Executive

The duty to approve the authority's statement of accounts, income and expenditure, and balance sheet (or receipts and payments account where applicable), in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014.

Mandatory functions under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

The Committee is responsible for carrying out the following statutory functions under Section 81 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (as amended):

- (a) to review and scrutinise the authority's financial affairs,
- (b) to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's financial affairs,
- (c) to review and assess the authority's arrangements for risk management, internal control, performance assessment and corporate governance,
- (d) to make reports and recommendations to the authority on the adequacy and effectiveness of those arrangements,
- (e) to review and assess the authority's ability to deal with complaints effectively,
- (f) to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to deal with complaints effectively,
- (g) to oversee the authority's internal and external audit arrangements, and
- (h) to review the financial statements prepared by the authority.

(i) to exercise the functions of a Governance and Audit Committee under Chapter 1 of Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (performance of principal councils and their governance).

Other Functions

The Committee will also be responsible for carrying out the following functions:

(i) promoting internal control by establishing a programme for reviewing controls, developing a culture that militates against fraud, and reviewing financial procedures;

(ii) focusing the Council's audit resources by agreeing audit plans and monitoring audit provision;

(iii) monitoring audit performance by ensuring officers' work is completed within agreed timescales, ensuring that audit reports are issued promptly and responded to in a timely manner, monitoring completion of the accounts, and ensuring that audit recommendations are implemented;

(iv) considering comments and concerns about individual services at county level, based on reports from Council officers or Audit Wales, and monitoring the response to and implementation of recommendations or findings arising from those reports.

WORK OF THE COMMITTEE DURING 2025/26

Reviewing and approving the financial statements prepared by the authority

9. At its meeting on 22 May 2025, the Committee approved the final accounts of Gwynedd Harbours for the year ended 31 March 2025, which covered the 2024/25 Revenue Income and Expenditure Account as well as the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2025 (subject to audit by Audit Wales).
10. The draft Statement of Accounts of Cyngor Gwynedd for 2024/25, subject to audit, was presented to the Committee at its meeting on 11 September 2025. There is no statutory requirement for elected Members to approve the draft version of the Statement of Accounts. However, presenting the draft statement to the Governance and Audit Committee for information is regarded as good practice, and provides an opportunity for Members to question finance officers on the content and to equip themselves with relevant information in order to consider relevant risks, and other matters that will be subject to audit, in context. During the discussion, the Committee challenged Finance officers on various aspects of the accounts, particularly in relation to the position on service overspends, the sustainability of reserves, and the robustness of the financial arrangements.
11. The Final Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025, together with the relevant audit, were presented to the Committee at its meeting on 13 November 2025. After considering Audit Wales's report on the accounts (the "ISA 260" report), the Committee resolved to:
 - Receive and approve the 'ISA 260' report from Audit Wales for Cyngor Gwynedd
 - Receive and approve the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts (post-audit)
 - Authorise the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Committee, together with the Head of Finance Service, to certify the Letter of Representation electronically
 - Congratulate officers on their work in securing an unqualified audit conclusion
 - Thank Audit Wales for their cooperation and professional support

Reviewing and scrutinising the authority's financial affairs, and making reports and recommendations

Medium Term Financial Plan

12. A report by the Cabinet Member for Finance on the Medium-Term Financial Plan was presented to the Committee on 9 October 2025, in response to the ongoing financial challenges facing the Council. The purpose of the Plan is to set out projections for the Council's financial position over the next three financial years, presenting key assumptions together with proposals to address the significant financial gap facing the Council. It was highlighted that the Plan is a live document that is updated regularly as new information becomes available, and that any changes are presented to the Cabinet for consideration.
13. It was reported that the Cabinet had decided to continue to commission the Chief Executive to lead on a series of measures and workstreams in order to prepare to address the significant financial gap over the coming years. This work included considering options for funding services, identifying opportunities for savings and efficiencies, and providing a clearer picture

of the Council's medium-term financial sustainability, in order to support strategic decision-making during a challenging financial period.

14. After challenging officers and the Cabinet Member on the content of the Plan, particularly in relation to funding assumptions, the level of financial risks, and the implications for statutory services, the Committee resolved to accept the report, note the relevant risks arising from the Medium Term Financial Plan, and support the governance arrangements and the approach adopted by the Cabinet.

Revenue Expenditure

15. The Committee received regular reports on the authority's financial position during 2025/26. A Revenue Outturn report on the 2024/25 Final Accounts was presented to a meeting of the Committee on 22 May 2025 to enable the Committee to receive information, consider any risks arising from actual expenditure and income against the 2024/25 budget, and scrutinise Cabinet decisions in relation to the management of the Council's and its departments' budgets. The report detailed the Council's expenditure in 2024/25, the outturn position of underspend or overspend in individual departments, and the reasons for this. Thanks were expressed for the report and it was acknowledged that the period had been very challenging for services. A wide-ranging discussion took place in which particular concern was expressed about the continued level of overspending in statutory services, especially in the field of care, and the long-term implications for the Council's financial sustainability. The Committee noted that receiving ongoing reports on the situation was beneficial, but concern was expressed that there was a significant risk of the overspend worsening in the medium to longer term, particularly as a result of demographic pressures and increasing demand.
16. In addition to considering the outturn position at the end of the financial year, formal reviews of the revenue budget position were carried out during 2025/26, including a review at the end of August 2025 and a review at the end of November 2025. These reports were presented to the Committee at the relevant meetings to outline the latest position, the relevant financial risks, and the projections to the end of the year. On these occasions, the Committee resolved to accept the reports, note the position and the risks in relation to the Council's and its departments' budgets, and the Committee concurred with the recommendations presented by the Cabinet for addressing the forecast overspend by the end of the financial year, emphasising the need for ongoing monitoring and realistic mitigation measures.
17. Among the issues raised during these discussions was the need for the Cabinet to continue to challenge the timetable and progress of the work commissioned by the Chief Executive in order to gain a better understanding of the ongoing and exceptional overspend in the Adults, Health and Wellbeing Department. The Committee highlighted the importance of ensuring that this work is in place and sufficiently robust to support the setting of realistic budgets by the Cabinet. During 2025/26, the Statutory Director of Social Services and the Head of the Adults, Health and Wellbeing Department attended Committee meetings to provide further context and explanation on the main budget headings, detailing the significant financial pressures facing the service and the steps in place to mitigate those risks.

18. It was also noted that the continued use of reserves remains a concern for the Committee. It was emphasised that, while reserves play an important role in managing short-term pressures and responding to exceptional situations, it is necessary to ensure that any use of them is appropriate, targeted, and focused on addressing a specific need, rather than masking long-term structural problems within service budgets.

Capital Programme

19. On 22 May 2025, the Year-End Review (position as of 31 March 2025) of the 2024/25 Capital Programme was presented to the Committee. The main purpose of the report was to present the revised capital programme at the end of the financial year, together with the approval of the relevant funding sources. The Committee resolved to accept the report, noting the position and the risks in relation to the Council's Capital Programme, particularly in respect of timetable slippages, reliance on external grants, and the sustainability of the programme in the medium term.
20. Reports on the end of August 2025 review of the Capital Programme were presented to the Committee on 9 October 2025, and the end of November 2025 review to the meeting on 15 January 2026, in order to receive up-to-date information, consider the risks associated with the Capital Programme, and scrutinise Cabinet decisions. On these occasions, the Committee resolved to accept the reports, noting the position and supporting the governance arrangements for managing and monitoring the Council's capital expenditure.

Savings Programme

21. Alongside the review of the revenue budget position, the Committee also received specific reports during 2025/26 on the Council's ability to deliver its savings plans. Progress reports on the delivery of savings plans were presented to the Committee at meetings on 9 October 2025 and 15 January 2026, to enable the Committee to consider the progress made, identify general risks arising from any slippages, and scrutinise Cabinet decisions in relation to the Savings Overview.
22. The Committee suggested continuing to develop clearer and more useful ways of presenting information on savings, emphasising the value of clearly distinguishing between the historical position and the latest position, in order to identify risks to the current situation more effectively. The Committee recognised that most of the "easier" savings had already been achieved, and therefore that the savings still to be delivered in the near future would be more challenging. As a result, the need to ensure realistic implementation timescales was highlighted, as well as ensuring that departments have the opportunity to plan more strategically for the medium and long term. Despite these challenges, it was acknowledged that the information presented was detailed and set out in a clear and understandable manner, assisting the Committee in its governance role.
23. Due to the significant financial gap that the Council continues to face over the coming years, it was necessary to develop further savings plans for the 2026/27 financial year onwards. A report by the Leader of the Council was presented to a meeting of the Committee on 3 February 2026, setting out a range of proposed savings to support the setting of a balanced budget for the next financial year. The Committee was asked to consider the appropriateness

of the process for identifying the savings, and to submit comments for the Cabinet to consider before reaching a decision at its meeting on 10 February 2026. The Committee was clear that its role was not to express a view on the scale of the savings or the merits of individual proposals, but rather to ensure that the Cabinet was clear on the facts, risks, and implications associated with the proposals, so that any decision would be based on sound information. The Committee resolved:

- Those reasonable steps, in challenging financial circumstances, had been taken to develop the Savings Plan
 - That the proposed savings were reasonable and, overall, achievable
 - That the risks and implications arising from the decisions were clear
 - That the report was sufficient to enable the Cabinet to make an informed decision
 - To submit the comments from the discussion to the Cabinet for consideration when discussing and approving the Savings Plan at its meeting on 10 February 2026
 - To welcome the opportunity to attend information-sharing workshops as part of the scrutiny process
24. In addition, the Committee asked the Cabinet to consider reviewing public consultation arrangements in the future, to provide residents with an opportunity to express views on tax levels and the financial pressures facing the Council, as well as encouraging further efforts to rationalise services and identify additional opportunities for efficiency, where appropriate.

Treasury Management

25. In line with good governance arrangements and statutory requirements, the Committee received regular updates on the Council's Treasury Management activities during 2025/26. Following a quarterly update on 22 May 2025, a report was presented to the Committee meeting on 11 September 2025 on the actual Treasury Management results for 2024/25, against the Treasury Management Strategy approved by the Full Council in March 2024. Subsequently, a quarterly Treasury Management update was presented to the Committee at the meeting on 9 October 2025, together with a mid-year Treasury Management review for 2025/26 at the meeting on 13 November 2025. The purpose of these reports was to update the Committee on the Council's actual Treasury Management activity during the current financial year, and to provide assurance that arrangements continue to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice.

Budget Setting

26. As the end of the 2025/26 financial year approached, the Committee considered a report on the 2026/27 Budget at its meeting on 3 February 2026, in order to scrutinise the information before the Cabinet recommended the 2026/27 budget to the Full Council. The Committee's role in this context was to scrutinise the information presented, ensuring that the Cabinet and the Full Council were clear on the facts, the financial assumptions, and the associated risks, so that any decision would be based on sound information. To support this work, Elected Members and Lay Members of the Committee were given the opportunity to attend a briefing

session on the financial position by the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance towards the end of January 2026.

27. Having considered the report and its appendices, the Committee resolved to accept the report, note its contents, accept the financial robustness of the proposals and the relevant risks, and submit comments from the discussion for the Cabinet to consider when discussing and approving the 2026/27 Budget at its meeting on 10 February 2026.
28. Also at the meeting on 3 February 2026, the Committee considered the 2026/27 Capital Strategy (including the Investment and Borrowing Strategies), in order to identify and consider any risks arising from the strategy before its submission to the Full Council. It was noted that the presentation received by Committee members from Arlingclose, the Council’s Treasury Management advisers, was extremely useful in supporting Members’ understanding of the strategy. The Committee resolved to accept the report, note the information and the relevant risks, and support the intention of the Cabinet Member for Finance to present the Capital Strategy to the Full Council for approval in March 2026.

Promoting Internal Control; Reviewing and Assessing the Authority’s Arrangements for Risk Management, Internal Control, Performance Assessment and Corporate Governance, and Producing Reports and Making Recommendations

Internal Audit Reports

29. The purpose of the Council’s Internal Audit Service is “to provide assurance to the citizen and the Council regarding the Council’s control environment and governance arrangements through independent and objective reporting to the Head of Finance and the Governance and Audit Committee.”
30. Internal audit reports are therefore an important tool to enable the Committee to fulfil its function of reviewing and assessing the authority’s arrangements for risk management and internal control.
31. The majority of Internal Audit reports assign the outcome of the work to one of four assurance levels, as shown in the table below:

ASSURANCE LEVEL	HIGH	It is possible to provide assurance of appropriateness as the internal controls in place can be relied upon to achieve objectives.
	ADEQUATE	Controls are in place to achieve objectives, but there are aspects where arrangements could be strengthened to further mitigate risks.
	LIMITED	Although controls are in place, compliance with those controls needs to be improved and/or new controls

		introduced to reduce the risks to which the service is exposed.
	NO ASSURANCE	The controls in place are considered inadequate, with a failure to achieve objectives.

32. The Head of Internal Audit’s Annual Report for 2024/25 was presented to the Committee meeting on 22 May 2025. Based on the Internal Audit work completed during 2024/25, the Audit Manager was of the opinion that Cyngor Gwynedd’s internal control framework operated at a reasonable assurance level in terms of the adequacy and overall effectiveness of the Authority’s governance arrangements, risk management and internal control.
33. The Committee received regular updates on Internal Audit work during 2025/26. A report was presented to the Committee on 11 September 2025, providing an update on Internal Audit work for the early part of the financial year. It was highlighted that a significant number of audits had been completed under the 2025/26 Operational Plan, with the results showing a mixture of assurance levels.
34. A further report was presented to the Committee on 9 October 2025 updating Members on Internal Audit work up to the end of September 2025. It was noted that good progress had been made in completing audits, with some receiving “high assurance” and “adequate assurance” ratings, but also a number of cases where “limited assurance” was identified, particularly in sensitive service areas such as residential care and support services.
35. An additional report was presented to the Committee meeting on 3 February 2026, covering Internal Audit work up to 25 January 2026. It was highlighted that a significant number of audits within the 2025/26 operational plan had been completed, with the results reflecting ongoing challenges in compliance with processes, rather than an absence of formal control arrangements.
36. All these reports were given detailed consideration by the Committee. Where a limited assurance level was identified, requests were made for follow-up information, further clarification, and appropriate implementation timescales, in order to enable the Committee to fulfil its governance duties and ensure that appropriate improvement actions were being taken by the relevant departments.
37. The Committee resolved to accept the contents of the Internal Audit reports, note the information presented, and emphasise the need for measurable progress in areas where continuing weaknesses were identified. Attention was drawn to the value of referring specific issues to the Controls Improvement Working Group where appropriate.
38. During the meeting on 3 February 2026, a detailed discussion was held on the position of residential care services, with input from relevant officers, including the Head of Service and Corporate Directors. Among the issues raised by Members were:
- The need to ensure adequate budgets and better control over expenditure.
 - Concerns regarding administrative weaknesses and management compliance issues within some provisions.

- The need for reliable management data to monitor performance and expenditure.
 - Ensuring that improvement success is measured and visible over time.
 - The requirement for clear follow-up reports on progress and outcomes.
39. It was resolved to accept and note the progress to date, support the actions agreed by the relevant services, and confirm the need for a further update during the following year to provide assurance that improvements are being embedded and that the risks identified by Internal Audit are being effectively mitigated.

External Auditors' Reports

40. A review of the Scheme of Delegation was presented to the Committee at its meeting on 11 September 2025, with the aim of considering and supporting proposed amendments to delegation arrangements to officers in relation to property acquisition and disposal. The Committee discussed the proposed changes, considering the governance implications and the need for an appropriate balance between operational flexibility and oversight arrangements. The Committee was content to support the amendments and agreed to recommend them to the Full Council for approval, noting that the changes would strengthen clarity and compliance within the Scheme of Delegation.
41. On 22 May 2025, Audit Wales presented reports to the Committee as part of its external audit work. These reports included national reports relating to the effective use of resources and governance arrangements, as well as reports specific to Cyngor Gwynedd. Management responses were presented outlining the actions the Council intended to take in response to the recommendations, and the Committee was satisfied with the content of these responses.
42. An update on the National Fraud Initiative 2024–25 was presented to the Committee at its meeting on 13 November 2025, outlining the scope of the exercise and the arrangements in place to identify and prevent fraud. The Committee considered the information presented, provided comments on the approach and initial findings, and was content to accept the report. It was noted that the Initiative played an important role in strengthening governance arrangements, financial management, and assurance within the Council, and the Committee agreed to maintain appropriate oversight of any follow-up actions arising from the work.
43. During 2025/26, the Governance and Audit Committee considered a number of matters relating to Council Tax as part of its assurance role over the Council's financial management and revenue. At the meeting on 13 November 2025, a report on Council Tax Collection Rates was presented, providing an overview of the current performance of collection arrangements and the factors influencing them. The Committee considered the report, noting the relevant challenges and risks, and provided comments where appropriate, highlighting its support for the operational arrangements and the actions in place by the department.
44. In addition, at the Committee meeting on 15 January 2026, the Council Tax Reduction Policy under Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 was presented, providing an overview of the current position and the associated risks arising from the Policy. The Committee considered the decision made by the Cabinet, discussing the financial and

governance implications, and noted the appropriateness of the arrangements, providing appropriate oversight as part of its assurance role in relation to the Council's budgetary decisions.

45. The findings of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) audit of the Council's arrangements for responding to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations were presented to the Committee at its meeting on 22 May 2025, providing an overview of the findings and areas for improvement. The Committee considered the report, noting the governance implications and the need for robust arrangements to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. The Committee was satisfied to accept the report and recognised the importance of implementing appropriate actions to strengthen the Council's response arrangements, transparency, and information management.
46. During the year, the Committee also received specific reports from Audit Wales in relation to the Council's discharge of its statutory duties and governance arrangements, including reports examining how the Council plans and assesses the sustainability of its activities and strategic priorities. The Committee considered the reports alongside the organisational responses, and it was noted that the proposed actions were appropriate and aligned with the Council's priorities.
47. On 11 September 2025, a report on relevant external inspections, including inspections of specific services, was presented to the Committee. The Committee resolved to accept the report on the inspection findings and recommendations, noting the positive work carried out by the relevant services. Where appropriate, it was suggested that the data presented in future be further developed to strengthen the performance evidence, including consideration of areas such as Welsh-language provision.
48. Further reports from Audit Wales were presented to the Committee during 2025/26 relating to care, partnership working, and health and social services, including joint work at a regional level. It was noted that the Council plays an active role in regional arrangements and that many of the findings align with Cyngor Gwynedd's corporate priorities. The Committee resolved to accept the contents of the reports and requested further updates on progress against recommendations where appropriate.
49. At the Governance and Audit Committee meeting on 3 February 2026, the Committee considered the issue of capacity and quality within Internal Audit as part of its role in providing independent assurance. Concerns were raised regarding the Internal Audit Unit's ability to meet the Council's expectations, and a report by the Head of Finance outlining the situation and potential risks was considered. The Committee emphasised the need to ensure that Internal Audit work continues to be of a high standard and agreed to keep the situation under continuous review to ensure that the Council's governance and risk management arrangements remain robust.
50. At the meeting on 15 January 2026, the Committee considered Audit Wales reports on financial sustainability, including national and local reports assessing local authorities' ability to respond to medium- and long-term financial pressures. The Council's response to the

recommendations, including an action plan, was presented. During the discussion, it was noted, among other matters:

- The need to further develop the action plan over time, recognising that the initial steps were the beginning of the process.
- The possibility of piloting new budgeting approaches, such as zero-based budgeting, to support service transformation.
- That the reports considered the broader strategic picture of local government financial sustainability.
- That the position on the Council's reserves was accepted, but that they should be used for specific purposes and not to mask structural problems.

51. The Committee resolved to accept the national and local reports and to note the Council's response to the recommendations presented, emphasising the need to monitor progress and ensure that actions are implemented effectively.

52. At the meeting on 15 January 2026, the Committee considered the Response Plan to the report "Justice Through Our Courage". The Committee scrutinised the proposed arrangements for responding to the findings and recommendations of the report, considering the governance, accountability, and equality implications. Assurance was provided that appropriate actions had been identified, with monitoring mechanisms in place, and the Committee agreed to maintain ongoing oversight of the implementation of the response plan as part of its independent assurance role.

53. An Annual Audit Summary was presented to the Committee during 2025/26, outlining the work completed by Audit Wales since the previous Annual Audit Summary. It was noted that this summary formed part of the statutory duties of the Auditor General for Wales, and the Committee was satisfied that the report provided a clear and useful overview of external audit work relevant to Cyngor Gwynedd.

54. The Audit Wales report "Temporary accommodation – a long-term crisis?" was presented to the Committee at the meeting on 3 February 2026, providing an overview of findings and the increasing challenges facing local authorities in relation to temporary accommodation provision. It was noted that the report formed part of Audit Wales' national audit work, and the Committee recognised its relevance to the Council's governance and risk management arrangements. The Committee was satisfied that the report highlighted important long-term financial and strategic implications and noted the importance of maintaining appropriate oversight of the Council's response to the issues identified.

55. At the meeting on 15 January 2026, a report on inspections by Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales was presented, providing an overview of recent inspection findings and their implications for Council services. It was noted that the report supported the Committee's assurance role by highlighting areas of strength and areas for improvement, and the Committee was satisfied that the information presented was relevant and useful in informing governance and oversight arrangements. The Committee accepted the report, noting the findings and the appropriate actions identified in response to the inspections.

Annual Governance Statement

56. One of the annual responsibilities of the Governance and Audit Committee is to review and approve the draft Annual Governance Statement. Although the Statement is not part of the formal accounts, it is a statutory document that must be published alongside the accounts. In accordance with the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations and the CIPFA Code of Practice, every Local Authority must ensure that an appropriate statement on internal control is in place. The Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council sign the Statement, but it requires approval by the Governance and Audit Committee, which has a key role in challenging and verifying its content.
57. Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 was presented to the Committee on 11 September 2025. The Committee considered and challenged the content of the Statement, making observations on specific risk levels and scores, particularly in areas that continued to be identified as high or medium risks. Following the discussion, and after considering the explanations provided by officers, the Committee resolved to approve the Statement and recommend that it be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.
58. Looking ahead, the Committee noted the need to continue to develop the Annual Governance Statement as a document that is more accessible and clearer for residents. While the Statement complies with CIPFA guidance, it was suggested that consideration be given to reviewing the questions and structure, and also the potential to strengthen the link between the Statement and Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Self-Assessment, in order to avoid duplication of work and ensure a more coherent narrative regarding governance, risk and continuous improvement.

Controls Improvement Working Group

59. A meeting of the Controls Improvement Working Group was held during 2025/26, with a focus on strengthening control and compliance arrangements in high-risk service areas. The Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, Carys Edwards, and the Vice-Chair, Rhys Parry, together with relevant Elected Members, Internal Audit officers, and officers from the Adults, Health and Wellbeing Department, were in attendance. The matters were referred to the Working Group following decisions by the Governance and Audit Committee to seek further assurance regarding the implementation of internal audit recommendations, particularly in relation to residential care provision.
60. It was reported back to the Governance and Audit Committee that the discussions had been beneficial, providing an opportunity for officers and service managers to respond openly and constructively to the audit findings. Ongoing concern was noted regarding the reliance on agency staff and the associated cost implications, and it was agreed that further exploration of options to strengthen recruitment and retention within the Council's employment arrangements was required, in order to reduce costs and improve stability. The Committee considered that the role of the Controls Improvement Working Group remains valuable, and it was suggested that relevant matters continue to be referred to the

Care Scrutiny Committee, as well as ensuring that Working Group reports include a clear summary of key issues and agreed actions, in order to facilitate effective oversight in the future.

North Wales Corporate Joint Committee – Establishment of a Governance and Audit Sub-Committee

61. On 9 October 2025, a report by the Head of Democratic Services was presented to the Committee, recommending that the Committee nominate one Councillor to serve on the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's Governance and Audit Sub-Committee, and one Councillor to act as a substitute for that member. The Committee was also asked to decide whether it wished to nominate a Lay Member to serve on the relevant Sub-Committee.
62. The Committee resolved to nominate Councillor Ioan Thomas to serve on the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's Governance and Audit Sub-Committee, and Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts as the substitute. In addition, it was resolved to nominate Carys Edwards, Chair of Cyngor Gwynedd's Governance and Audit Committee, to be considered to serve on the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee's Governance and Audit Sub-Committee as a Lay Member.

Reviewing and Assessing the Authority's Ability to Deal with Complaints Effectively, Producing Reports and Making Recommendations

63. The Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report for 2024/25 was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 11 September 2025, in order to update the Committee on the Council's arrangements for dealing with complaints, together with the content of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Letter.
64. Members were reminded that the Committee has a statutory duty to ensure that the Council has effective arrangements in place for handling complaints, and that these arrangements are reviewed regularly. It was noted that no fundamental changes had been made to the Concerns and Complaints Policy during the year, and therefore the arrangements continue to operate within the framework adopted by the Council.
65. Reference was made to the Ombudsman's Annual Letter, and to the comments and recommendations it contained regarding the Council's performance in handling complaints. In particular, attention was drawn to the encouragement for the Council, and the Governance and Audit Committee, to make more effective use of complaints data in order to understand trends, identify patterns, and evaluate how well complaint-handling approaches are embedded across the Authority's services.
66. Following discussion of the report, the Committee resolved to accept the Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report, noting the information presented and recognising the importance of continuing to monitor arrangements, in order to ensure that learning from complaints is used to improve Council services and strengthen public confidence.

Reviewing and Monitoring the Authority's Internal and External Audit Arrangements

Internal Audit Work Programme

67. A revised version of the Internal Audit Charter was presented to the Committee meeting on 22 May 2025. In accordance with the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards, which came into force in the public sector from 1 April 2025, an Internal Audit Charter must be prepared that reflects the new standards and the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit Governance. It is the responsibility of the Governance and Audit Committee to review and approve the Charter annually as part of its oversight role.
68. Attention was drawn to the significant changes made to the Internal Audit Charter to ensure full compliance with the Global Internal Audit Standards, including clarifying the service's mandate, strengthening independence and accountability arrangements, and ensuring that the Internal Audit Service aligns more clearly with the Council's strategic priorities and corporate risks. It was also noted that the purpose of the Internal Audit Service has continued to evolve, with increasing emphasis on assurance, advisory work and supporting improvement.
69. Having considered the report and the governance implications, the Committee resolved to accept the report and approve the revised Internal Audit Charter. The contents of the Mandate and Internal Audit Charter were accepted and approved, formally adopted, and the Committee expressed its support for Internal Audit in delivering its functions at its meeting on 3 February 2026.
70. At the same meeting, the Committee approved the Internal Audit Strategy and the Annual Audit Plan for 2025/26, which had been prepared based on the Council's corporate risk assessment, strategic priorities, and the internal audit resources available, in order to ensure effective and efficient use of those resources.
71. The Committee received regular updates on progress against the 2025/26 Annual Audit Plan during the year, including at meetings on 9 October 2025 and February 2026. Reference was made to the status of audit work, the level of completion of the plan, and the time spent on each audit. The Committee approved appropriate revisions to the Audit Plan to reflect the resources available to the service and to ensure that work continued to focus on the areas of highest risk to the Council.

Audit Wales Work Programme

72. Audit Wales' Detailed Audit Plan 2025 was presented to the Committee at its meeting on 11 September 2025. The Plan outlined the work the auditors intended to undertake in order to fulfil their statutory responsibilities as the Council's external auditors, in line with their role under the Audit Wales Code of Practice. It was noted that the audit of the financial statements would focus on the Council's key risks and specific priority areas, while performance audit work would consider assurance arrangements, risk management, and

appropriate local areas of work reflecting the current challenges facing the Council

73. The Detailed Audit Plan referred to significant risks to the financial statements that are common to all Local Authorities, including the risk of management override of controls, as well as specific areas where the audit would focus, such as the valuation of land and buildings and the valuation of the Council's Pension Fund net liabilities. It was noted that these areas remain high-risk and require particular attention by external auditors.
74. During 2025/26, Audit Wales provided regular quarterly updates to the Committee on the progress of audit work and the status of delivery of the Detailed Audit Plan. These updates provided assurance to the Committee regarding progress, any changes to scope or timetable, and that external audit arrangements were being implemented in accordance with statutory and professional expectations

Functions under the 2021 Act – Council Performance

75. It is a new statutory requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 that the Council produces a "self-assessment report" setting out its conclusions on the extent to which it has met the performance requirements established under the Act during the relevant financial year. The same legislation requires the Council to ensure that a draft version of its self-assessment report is made available to its Governance and Audit Committee (Section 91(6)).
76. Cyngor Gwynedd's draft Self-Assessment Report for 2024/25 was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 9 October 2025, and a detailed discussion was held on its content. Having considered the document, the Committee resolved to accept the draft self-assessment, noting that it met the statutory requirements, but made a number of comments and suggestions with the aim of strengthening the presentation, clarity, and future value of the document.
77. Among the comments noted by the Committee was the desire to be involved earlier in the process of preparing the self-assessment, in order to ensure more meaningful input and a better opportunity to influence the content before it is finalised. It was suggested that holding a workshop with Members would be an appropriate way of facilitating deeper discussion and gathering clearer recommendations from the Committee.
78. The Committee also suggested that appropriate consultation arrangements should be considered in the future to ensure input from Gwynedd residents into the self-assessment process. In addition, it was emphasised that when presenting data and performance measures, full clarity is needed regarding context and impact. In particular, in relation to work on Increasing the Supply of Housing for Local People, the Committee suggested that the report should highlight not only numbers, but also the impact of actions on communities and the long-term sustainability of the County.

Monitoring Response and Implementation of External Audit and Regulator Recommendations

79. The Committee received an update on Recommendations and Improvement Proposals arising from External Audit and Regulator Reports at its meeting on 9 October 2025. In line with its statutory role, it is considered essential that the Committee is satisfied that appropriate and robust arrangements are in place to ensure that all relevant recommendations and improvement proposals are implemented in a timely and effective manner.
80. Based on the reports presented to the Committee, together with the challenge work and discussions undertaken during the year, the Committee was satisfied that the Council's arrangements for responding to external audit and regulator recommendations are robust, with clear departmental ownership, established reporting processes, and appropriate corporate-level oversight.
81. The Committee resolved to accept and note that appropriate arrangements and processes are in place to ensure that improvement proposals from external audit and regulator reports are implemented and monitored. The arrangements to report progress every six months to the Committee were welcomed, as was the revised approach of presenting departmental responses at Performance Challenge and Support meetings, strengthening accountability and ensuring that progress against recommendations is monitored in a more systematic and transparent manner.

Committee Effectiveness

82. During 2025/26, the Committee received regular updates on the actions taken to implement its decisions at each of its meetings, where practical. The Committee believed that this arrangement continues to be an important step in ensuring accountability, transparency, and the effective implementation of its decisions.
83. As part of its commitment to continuous improvement, the Committee continued to build on the findings of previous self-assessments, considering its effectiveness, composition, and ways of working. The Committee continued to use CIPFA guidance and standards for Audit Committees as a framework to evaluate its work, ensuring that its arrangements align with the best practices set out in the CIPFA Position Statement.
84. During the year, the Committee reviewed progress against actions arising from the self-assessment, agreeing to continue supporting measures that strengthen the Committee's effectiveness, particularly in relation to working relationships with external regulators and Internal Audit, and the Committee's role in providing challenge and adding value.
85. As part of arrangements to support ongoing effectiveness, a rolling forward work programme was presented to Committee meetings, enabling proactive planning, prioritisation of statutory and thematic items, and ensuring sufficient time is available to scrutinise key matters. The Committee considered that this approach contributed positively to the overall effectiveness of its work during 2025/26.

MEETING	The Council
DATE	2 July 2026
TITLE	SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26
PURPOSE	To submit the report for the attention of Council Members
AUTHOR	Dylan Owen, Statutory Director of Social Services

1. Background

- 1.1. At the end of every fiscal year, all Statutory Directors of Social Services are required to provide and publish a report regarding the performance of Social Services within the local authority during the previous year.
- 1.2. The purpose of the annual report is to note the local authority's journey towards improvement in providing services to residents, to those who receive information, advice and assistance, the individuals and the carers who receive care and support.
- 1.3. Under the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act, I as Director am asked to consider the range of information and experiences that affect the ability of the Council's Social Services to provide reliable, sustainable services of the highest quality, and to express my opinion in the report and present it to the Council. The report draws attention to any lessons learnt and outlines the priorities for the year to come. It also explains how we assessed people's needs and included them at the centre as we shaped our services and care provision.
- 1.4. The format follows national guidelines and a template, and we assess our performance according to four main headings: **People**, **Prevention**, **Partnership** and **Well-being**.
- 1.5. As noted in the foreword to this report, this has been one of the most challenging years in the 30-year history of Cyngor Gwynedd. Social Services, and particularly the Children and Family Support Department, faced a period of significant change and challenge following the findings of the Child Practice Review, *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, which highlighted serious weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements. As a result, there has been a clear focus on learning, rebuilding trust, and ensuring that the necessary improvements are delivered.
- 1.6. The year has therefore seen a significant focus on responding to the recommendations of *Our Bravery Brought Justice*. Work has progressed to strengthen arrangements that ensure children's voices are at the heart of decision-making, to develop and strengthen the quality assurance framework, and to raise the profile of safeguarding across the Council. The independent scrutiny provided through the Response Plan Programme Board has been an important element of the improvement work, and the constructive challenge and

support provided have been welcomed in helping the Council ensure that lessons learned are translated into practical and sustainable change.

- 1.7. While this work has understandably taken priority and occupied a significant proportion of the Director's time during the year, it is also important to recognise the progress and achievements delivered across a wide range of services. The Learning Disability Service has continued to expand employment opportunities for individuals, increasing the number of people on a pathway towards fairly paid employment. Successful collaboration with Mantell Gwynedd and other partners has strengthened community support, while the innovative work of the Autism Team and the continued growth of Active Dementia Gwynedd demonstrate the value of investing in creative and preventative approaches that improve people's lives.
- 1.8. The year has also seen increasing use of technology and innovation to support people and improve the way services are delivered. From telecare, the robotic cat and the *Helpu'n Hun* self-assessment tool to the use of artificial intelligence through Beam Notes and developments such as the Niwro App, technology is providing new ways of promoting independence and improving efficiency. Virtual reality headsets have been used to support staff training, while new approaches to communication and awareness-raising through the *Gwynedd yn Gwenu* Tik-Toks account are helping us reach new audiences and share positive stories about care and wellbeing.
- 1.9. The greatest strength of our services, however, remains our workforce. The stories and quotations throughout this report demonstrate the direct impact of their work on people's lives. During the Director's visits to teams across the county, the same message has emerged time and again: this is a challenging period, with heavy workloads, recruitment difficulties and increasingly complex needs. Despite this, the commitment, compassion and professionalism of the workforce remain evident. From those who have dedicated decades to the sector to those just beginning their careers through the Academi Gofal, the same pride and determination to make a difference in people's lives can be seen. Sincere thanks are extended to them for their invaluable contribution.
- 1.10. This report seeks to present a balanced picture. Alongside the successes, we have sought to be open about the areas where more needs to be done. As a result, each section includes "**How can we do things better?**" boxes highlighting the key areas for improvement and further development.
- 1.11. These include developing more local provision for children through the small homes programme and not-for-profit fostering, expanding the use of direct payments, strengthening support for unpaid carers, and improving collaboration within the Council and with external partners. The *Llechen Lan* research has also highlighted the need to strengthen strategic planning and develop more sustainable services for the future. These areas will remain key priorities over the coming year.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Council is requested to note the content of the report submitted by the authority's Statutory Director for Social Services.

3. Views of the Statutory Officers

The Monitoring Officer:

Presenting the report to the full Council provides an opportunity to consider the work and challenges which faces "Social Services" from the perspective of the statutory director. I am satisfied with the propriety of the report.

Head of Finance Department:

I believe that the financial information contained in the annual report is a fair reflection of the situation of the Social Services for 2025/26. I am satisfied that the approval of this annual report will not involve any additional financial commitment from the Council.



SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



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- *Os ydych chi angen yr adroddiad yma mewn iaith neu fformat arall, ffoniwch ni ar 01766 771000 neu e-bostiwch Cydraddoldeb@gwynedd.llyw.cymru*
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Equality@gwynedd.llyw.cymru*
- *إذا أردت هذا التقرير بلغة أو تنسيق (شكل) بديل، فيرجى الاتصال بنا على ٠١٧٦٦ ٧٧١٠٠٠ أو البريد الإلكتروني Equality@gwynedd.llyw.cymru*

** In order to protect the privacy of individuals, we have changed names in the stories that appear in this report **

FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR

This year has been one of the toughest that Cyngor Gwynedd has faced in its 30-year history. Social services, and in particular the Children's Services, have been through a period of significant challenge and change, following serious failures in the service and the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* Child Practice Review, which highlighted weaknesses in safeguarding.

There has been a major change in leadership across adult and children's services. It is important to recognise that people have suffered and have been seriously hurt, and on behalf of Cyngor Gwynedd, I apologise.

At the same time, I want to recognise the strength, dedication, and resilience of the workforce. Despite difficult publicity and negative narratives about their work, staff have continued to do their best to keep children and vulnerable adults safe, and to help people live fulfilling lives in their communities.














This report presents a balanced picture: it is honest about the failures and the work that still needs to be done, but it also recognises the positive outcomes and successes achieved for individuals across Gwynedd. I would like to thank the workforce for their hard work and commitment, and for helping the social services to continue to improve, strengthen and develop.



Dylan Owen

Statutory Director of Social Services

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR ...

<p>4,278 \Downarrow 225</p> <p>ADULT CONTACTS</p> 	<p>8,069 \Uparrow 284</p> <p>CHILD REFERRALS</p> 	<p>540 \Uparrow 163</p> <p>MENTAL HEALTH REFERRALS</p> 
<p>NUMBER RECEIVING A TELECARE SERVICE (31.03.26)</p>  <p>1,600 \Uparrow 72</p>	<p>% RECEIVING SERVICE THROUGH DIRECT PAYMENTS (MARCH 2026)</p>  <p>20% \Uparrow 3%</p>	<p>293 \Uparrow 12</p> <p>CHILDREN IN CARE</p> 
<p>THE NUMBER OF HOURS OF HOME CARE THAT IS PROVIDED PER WEEK ...</p>  <p>8,754 \Uparrow 421</p>	<p>... HOWEVER</p> <p>62 \Uparrow 12</p>  <p>INDIVIDUALS ARE STILL WAITING OVER 28 DAYS FOR HOME CARE</p>	<p>NUMBER OF ADULTS IN A RESIDENTIAL OR NURSING HOME (31.03.26)</p>  <p>833 \Uparrow 47</p>
<p>96% \Downarrow 1%</p> <p>OF CASE CONFERENCES WHERE THE CHILD'S VOICE / OPINION WAS HEARD (Aged 5+)</p> 	<p>94% \Uparrow 2%</p> <p>OF ADULT SAFEGUARDING REFERRALS RESPONDED TO WITHIN 7 DAYS</p>	<p>292 \Uparrow 29*</p> <p>NUMBER OF CARERS ASSESSED</p>  <p><i>*Incorrectly stated in the 2024/25 Report</i></p>
<p>143 \Downarrow 20</p> <p>YOUNG CARERS RECEIVING SUPPORT (Provided by Action for Children)</p> 	<p>84% \Uparrow 2%</p> <p>OF CHILD PROTECTION REFERRALS THAT WERE RESPONDED TO WITHIN THE STATUTORY PERIOD</p>	<p>NUMBER OF ADULTS WHO HAVE A CARE PLAN (31.03.26)</p>  <p>2,296 \Downarrow 27</p>

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR ...

This year has been a busy one, and it is good to recognise the hard work of the workforce...

MAY
2025

APPOINTMENT OF A NEW HEAD OF ADULTS

A new Head of Department, Mari Wynne Jones, was appointed to the Adults Department following the retirement of the previous Head.

JULY
2025

EVENT TO PROMOTE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

We collaborated with Men at Work to support education for young men about healthy relationships, including a multi-agency event for field workers.

FREE CHILDCARE OFFER EXTENDED

The *Flying Start* provision was successfully extended across Gwynedd.

AUGUST
2025

SOCIAL SERVICES ON TIKS-TOKS

Over the summer, we launched our new TikToks account - Gwynedd yn Gwenu. Scroll, like and follow!

OCTOBER
2025

A STEP CLOSER TO A NURSING HOME IN PENRHOS

Further funding was secured from the Welsh Government to move forward with plans for a new nursing home and dementia home at the Penrhos site.

DEMENTIA ACTIF WINS AN AWARD

Dementia Actif Gwynedd were proud to receive the Community Safety Partner Award from North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, recognising the value of their collaboration in improving the safety and wellbeing of residents.

JANUARY
2026

LAUNCH OF THE NIWRO APP

A new mobile phone app focusing on neurodivergence was launched, with the aim of improving support for individuals and parents.

MARCH
2026

CONSTRUCTION OF CANOLFAN DOLFEURIG

Good progress was made on the redevelopment of a learning disability services centre in Dolgellau, and it is expected to open in the coming year.



Promoting the Niwro App



Dementia Actif receiving an award

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR ...

OUR BRAVERY BROUGHT JUSTICE

Following the publication of the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Board's report, *Our Bravery Brought Justice*, in the autumn, Cyngor Gwynedd drew up a comprehensive response plan to address the recommendations, along with wider issues identified in inspections and associated investigations. This was a challenging and damning report, and the Council acknowledged that there were important lessons to learn.

A Response Board was established to supervise the work, chaired by Professor Sally Holland, the former Children's Commissioner for Wales. The aim of the Board is to ensure firm progress and give assurances to the Council, elected members and stakeholders that definitive steps are being taken to strengthen safeguarding arrangements and to improve the experiences of children and vulnerable adults in Gwynedd.

Since then, the board has met regularly and have benefited from the input and guidance from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Estyn, Children's Commissioner and Welsh Government. Also considered was the learning from the CIW and Estyn joint-inspection in November 2025. Professor Sally Holland reports every quarter to the Council Cabinet, whilst the Welsh Government's Ministerial Assurance Group also monitors progress against the recommendation.

By March 2026, positive progress was achieved on several of the steps noted. However, work is still to be done, and the Council remains committed to act on the learning and ensure continuous improvements. Rather than repeating what has already been done and what is in the pipeline, a website that provides a simple version and summary of the Board's work programme by theme is available: [Response Plan Programme Board](#)

OTHER CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL SERVICES

In general, it was recognised that the focus on the Our Bravery Brought Justice report and the follow-up had taken up most of the time and resources available over the past year, making it difficult to give equal attention to all areas of social services.

Parhaodd nifer o heriau sylweddol drwy gydol y cyfnod, gan gynnwys:

- Ongoing **financial pressures** (due to rising costs and inflation)
- High number of **vacant posts** and **difficulty recruiting** appropriate staff
- **Negative attitudes** towards the workforce
- **Leadership challenges** within children's services
- **Demographic** changes.

This report will provide a more detailed analysis of those challenges. Moving forward, a better balance of prioritisation and support will need to be achieved in the year ahead.

CONTEXT: LEADERSHIP

Leadership

The past year has been challenging, but also constructive, for the leadership of social services in Gwynedd. The director has now been in his role for three years, giving the service some stability. The leadership and support from Cllr Menna Trenholme and Cllr Dilwyn Morgan, the Cabinet Members with responsibility for children and adult services, has remained stable and positive throughout the year.

In the adult services, a new head of service, Mari Wynne Jones, has been appointed. She is an experienced social worker who has spent her career in Gwynedd and knows the area and its people very well. She has exciting and constructive plans for the Adults Department.



Mari Wynne Jones

Y In the children's services, following the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report, two senior officers took on the role of Head of Department for nearly a year. They successfully fulfilled this role, and the Council and Director are very grateful for their contribution. By the end of the year, it was agreed that this arrangement was not sustainable, and an interim head of service was initially appointed in April 2026.

Towards the end of the year, a meeting was held with the Heads of Department and the Assistant Head of the service responsible for commissioning a business to consider longer-term plans for social services. The focus was on ensuring that the service structure was accurate, appropriate and viable for the future. It was agreed that further discussion was needed over the coming months and years.

Scrutiny and Challenge Arrangements

Governance, scrutiny and challenge arrangements are a key part of ensuring accountability and quality of services. The Leader and Cabinet set the strategic direction of the Council, with progress regularly monitored through performance meetings with Cabinet Members and senior management.

Democratic scrutiny plays a central role in providing a constructive challenge and ensuring transparency. The Care Scrutiny Committee monitors the performance of services, questions progress and ensures that risks, challenges and opportunities for improvement are properly addressed.

During the year, performance reports and data dashboards were regularly presented to the Scrutiny Committee to enable members to bring services to account for and monitor key trends. The Committee's work programme is planned in advance to ensure that important strategic issues and priorities are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.

CONTEXT: THE WORKFORCE

The Workforce: Strength at the Heart of the Service

Cyngor Gwynedd continues to maintain a strong social care workforce, **with around 1,500 directly employed staff** including social workers, domiciliary and residential care staff, team managers and administrative support functions. Through partnerships with independent providers and the third sector, **the total workforce supporting social care provision increases to around 3,000 people.**

The significant dedication, professionalism and resilience of the workforce over the year is seen despite increasing external pressures. Feedback from service users and their families continues to reflect an appreciation of the commitment and kindness of staff across the service.

Gwynedd remains the only authority in North Wales that does not use agency social workers, a situation that has been maintained for over a decade. All other authorities in the region, along with the vast majority of councils across Wales, now rely on agency staff to some extent. While this is something to celebrate, it becomes an increasingly significant challenge every year.

During the director's visits to the workforce throughout the year, the challenging context is reflected, particularly in terms of recruitment, increased workloads and more complex cases. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the strength of the service lies in its people: from individuals who have been committed to the sector for over 40 years to those who have just finished school and are starting their career through the Care Academy. The same level of enthusiasm, dedication and pride in the work can be seen, and sincere thanks are extended to them for their continued contribution.

Words of Appreciation

Every day, the dedication and care of the workforce has a positive impact on people's lives. The following quotes provide an insight into that difference:



"I wanted to put in writing how much I have appreciated my Support Worker after my mental breakdown. I have met him every Friday since coming out of hospital and he has worked with me for 18 months on my long road to recovery. He has been the kindest, most compassionate person I have ever worked with in such a position.

He has been patient and understanding ... after a long stay in hospital many like me feel vulnerable and anxious just doing the most basic of tasks. He has understood in many ways about my age factor and I am not able to do things younger people can do. My working relationship with him has been like a brother and I will never forget his compassion and caring nature which is so needed in a job such as this."

Thanks to a Support Worker, Mental Health Team

CONTEXT: THE WORKFORCE



“Your belief in us and your willingness to give us the opportunity has made a life changing difference to us all. Knowing that you listened to us, supported us and treated us with respect helped us stay strong during moment that felt overwhelming.

Your dedication to your work and to our family did not go unnoticed, and I will always be thankful for the role you played during this time. Thank you again for everything you have done. Your support has truly meant the world to us.”

Thanks to a Social Worker, Children's Services



“We would like to thank, as a family, from the bottom of our hearts, all the staff at Plas Maesincla for their gentle and tireless care of Mum since she came to you. We are extremely proud that she spent her final years at Plas Maesincla, where she was treated with respect and dignity. She received the best possible care. The family and homely atmosphere, together with the warm welcome given to families, is a special feature of the home.”

Thanks to the care workers at the residential home, Plas Maesincla



“I just want to thank you for everything you have done for my children they have the best carers and they are thriving”

Thanks to the Children's Services

Workforce Well-being

Staff well-being has been a growing area of concern over the past year, with negative trends emerging on social media particularly towards front-line staff working under increasing pressure. Staff well-being has been a growing area of concern over the past year, with negative trends emerging on social media particularly towards front-line staff working under increasing pressure.

However, these measures also reflect a wider pattern of an increase in negative reactions by some members of the public towards services. During the year, there were incidents of personally targeting individuals within the workforce on social media platforms, particularly Facebook. This type of behaviour has had a significant impact on individuals and their families and has raised serious concerns about the emotional well-being of staff.

As a result of this, the Council is developing specific policy and guidance to support staff and managers to respond consistently and appropriately to such incidents, including clarity on reporting processes, provision of support to individuals, and safeguarding measures.

CONTEXT: THE WORKFORCE



Academi Gofal (Care Academy) Gwynedd

The Academi Gofal Gwynedd offers a wide range of development opportunities, including work experience, site visits, trainee roles, and developmental pathways for existing staff. The first cohort of trainees have now been on the scheme for a year and the feedback on their work has been consistently positive. One individual left the scheme to start a nursing course but still works occasionally within the Learning Disabilities day service. The other five are well settled in their long-term placements.

During the year, six new trainees were recruited, one to Hafan y Sêr, two to Plas Pawb, and three to the Adult Services. A new recruitment approach was used this year with a greater emphasis on practical experience and the specific needs of services. Interviews were conducted in real work settings, including a nursery, residential homes and care units, to give applicants a better understanding of the nature of the work. Following the interview process, an additional recruitment event and one-to-one conversations were held to support unsuccessful applicants to take advantage of other opportunities in the sector.

We have also been able to develop retainer schemes in conjunction with Anglesey Council and Bangor University for MA Social Work students, as well as offering a retainer to an Occupational Therapy student in Cardiff. It is intended to build on this approach in the future as a way to strengthen the workforce and increase numbers within the sector.

The Academy in numbers...

150 career events to promote the Academy

110 work experience placements arranged

51 Applied for the 2025/26 Care Academy

11 Trainees now part of the Care Academy

44 declared interest through SOS Carers website

4 Staff members supported to follow a degree course

CONTEXT: MORE THAN JUST WORDS

The Council continues to take a strong lead in its use of Welsh, with services operating internally through the medium of Welsh and the active offer being implemented with everyone who comes into contact with the service. The offer is strengthened further through the work of the Gwynedd More than Just Words Group to **develop and publish videos** that highlight the positive impact of using Welsh on individuals.

Although there are challenges in recruiting Welsh-speaking staff in some fields, such as occupational therapy, the Council is investing significantly in developing the language skills of existing staff. **62 staff members attended language courses during the year, including new learners, increasing skills and language refresher courses.**

Gwynedd continues to be innovative in the field of digital change, ensuring that the Welsh language is central to systems developments. An example of this is the transition from WCCIS to Mosaic. Although Mosaic was originally an English language system, Cyngor Gwynedd took the lead to ensure that it was available in Welsh before its adoption, setting a national standard that other counties can follow.

A range of other projects contribute to the promotion of the natural and daily use of Welsh, including improvements in Telecare, support for people with Dementia, the development of children's small group homes, as well as initiatives such as the Niwro App, podcasts and the Trelar Chwarae (activities for children).

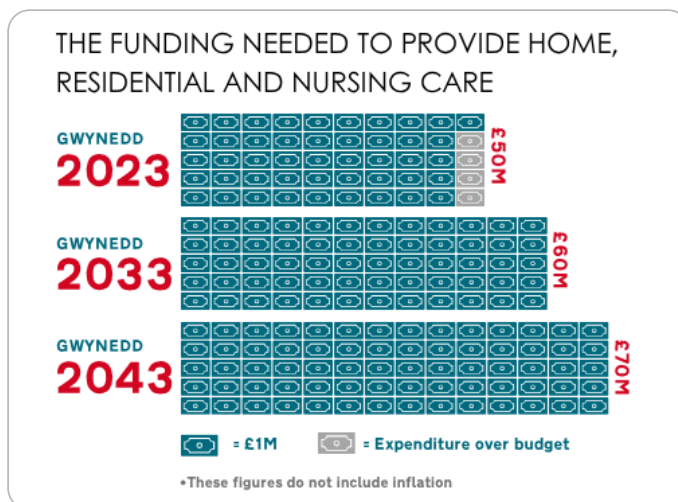
The Council is ready to challenge partners to ensure that they also fully implement the Active Offer. Recently, a concern was raised with Care Inspectorate Wales about the lack of Welsh language inspectors in some care home inspections. Some inspectors were unable to communicate in Welsh with residents or staff, and in some cases they asked for feedback and comments in English only. The matter has been formally raised with the Inspectorate and the Commissioner, as this practice does not reflect the Active Offer or support effective inspections that ensure a full and equal voice for residents and the workforce.



CONTEXT: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The 2025/26 revenue budget shows that Gwynedd Social Services manages a gross budget of **£148m** (£112m for Adult Services and £36m in Children's Services), reflecting the size and importance of these services within the local economy of the county.

The **Llechen Lân research** was published, which was conducted to plan for the long-term needs of social services. The research shows that demographic changes will place significant pressure on services, with forecasts indicating a substantial increase in demand and cost by 2043. The need for additional investment was identified in September 2024, and additional corporate funding was successfully secured during 2025/26 to help respond to these increasing pressures.



In March 2025, the national population forecasts were received, and the research will be further updated based on new population data. It is suggested that it will show even higher demand levels than previously predicted.

This year, permanent additional funding of over £600k was provided to support additional posts in the Children's Department, to respond to the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report and strengthen child protection arrangements. Opportunities were taken to develop services through national and regional grants, including the Regional Integration Fund (RIF), which has enabled new and innovative schemes. These grants are short term in nature and as the RIF comes to an end, early planning for the future is required, which adds further challenges to financial planning and ensures the sustainability of services.

Extra Costs

By the end of the year, the Adults Department and the Children's Department had both spent above their budgets. This did not stem from unnecessary spending, but rather from the need to meet the needs of individuals in complex, urgent and often very costly situations.

The most pronounced financial pressures were within the Children's Services, with an overspend of £3.4M. The main factor was the high cost of specialist out-of-county placements, which often arise unexpectedly and are difficult to plan in advance, and which in some cases are unavoidable. This pressure prompted the Council to accelerate work on the development of small group homes, as part of the aim to strengthen local provision. A dedicated role was created to support and accelerate this programme during 2026/27.

Similarly, the Adults Department is overspending by £1.4M as a result of increased demand for care in private residential homes. This is partly linked to staffing challenges in the Council's residential homes, which have reduced capacity and led to costly external provision. There has also been an unusual increase in the number of individuals with mental health needs requiring residential care, alongside ongoing pressures on home care services, particularly in rural and hard-to-serve areas.

CONTEXT: COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK

The Council continues to develop and strengthen its commissioning arrangements to ensure sustainable, high-quality care and support services that meet the needs of the people of Gwynedd. During the year, there was a particular focus on implementing the requirements of the National Commissioning Framework, responding to changes in the procurement landscape, and strengthening our relationships with care providers.

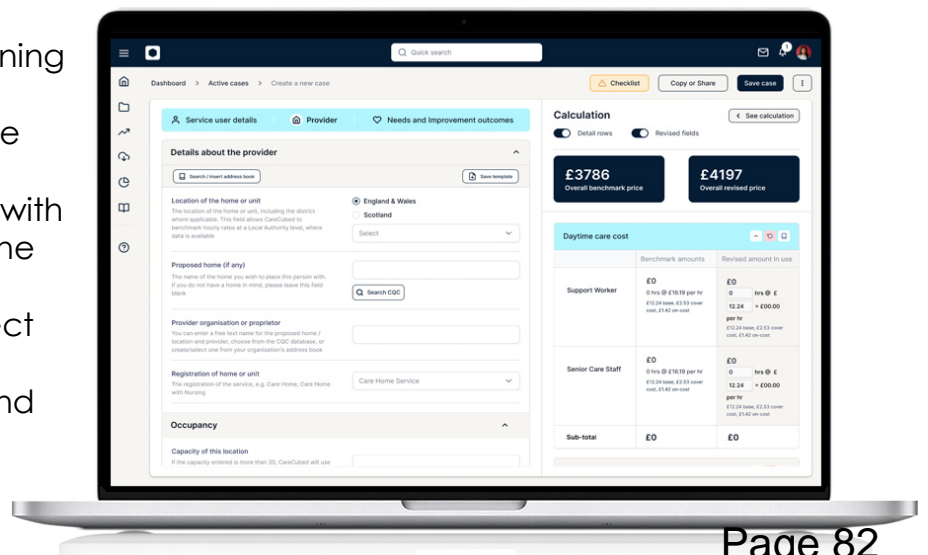
National resources are used to support the implementation of the Commissioning Framework, including the national self-assessment tool. This work has identified areas where our arrangements are strong, as well as highlighting areas where there are further opportunities for development in implementing the requirements of the Code of Practice. During the year, there was a need to respond to legislative changes in the procurement field to ensure that our commissioning approaches remain consistent and compliant with requirements.

One of the most significant developments has been the work to strengthen the relationship between the Council and care providers. Discussions and consultations regarding 2026/27 fees began several months in advance across a range of services, including home care, residential and nursing care, services for older people, and learning disability services. This approach has enabled more open and productive discussions, building on lessons learned over recent years.

Detailed data and evidence are used to inform fee-setting decisions, including the use of the CareCubed model to understand providers' individual care costs. Where providers are able to demonstrate that the cost of delivering care is higher than the rates planned within the Council's budgets, further discussions take place to consider the evidence and financial implications before a decision is made. This approach has contributed to a more constructive and transparent relationship with providers, creating a stronger foundation for collaboration despite the financial challenges facing both the sector and the Council.

The Council continues to support the Welsh Government's commitment to the Real Living Wage. The funding provided for this purpose has been fully reflected in the inflation rates proposed to providers for 2026/27. Although some providers have expressed concerns that the level of funding does not reflect wider wage pressures within their organisations, the Council is able to demonstrate that the funding transferred is sufficient to deliver the policy commitment for eligible workers.

Looking ahead, the Council will continue to develop its commissioning approach, focusing on ensuring sustainable services that deliver the best outcomes for the people of Gwynedd. It plans to work closely with providers, regional partners, and the Welsh Government to ensure that commissioning arrangements reflect local needs, are evidence-based, and contribute to a robust care and support system for the future.



PEOPLE VOICE AND CONTROL

- *All people are equal partners who have choice, voice and control over their lives and are able to achieve what matters to them.*
- *“Effective leadership is evident at all levels with a highly skilled well qualified and supported workforce working towards a shared vision.”*

SNAPSHOT IN NUMBERS:

<p>129 </p> <p>INDIVIDUALS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY ON THE PATHWAY TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT</p>	<p>96% </p> <p>OF CASE CONFERENCES WHERE THE CHILD'S VOICE / OPINION WAS HEARD (Aged 5+)</p>	<p>20 </p> <p>“HELPU’N HUN” REPORTS PRODUCED PER MONTH VIA THE COUNCIL WEBSITE</p>	<p>NUMBER RECEIVING A HOME CARE SERVICE (MARCH 2026)</p> <p>811 </p>
<p>% RECEIVING SERVICE THROUGH DIRECT PAYMENTS (MARCH 2026)</p> <p>20% </p>	<p>1,600</p> <p>NUMBER RECEIVING A TELECARE SERVICE (31.03.26) </p>	<p>82 </p> <p>NUMBER OF ADULTS WHERE AN INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL ADVOCATE WAS PROVIDED</p>	<p>NUMBER WAITING OVER 28 DAYS FOR HOME CARE (MARCH 2026)</p> <p>62 </p>

THE VALUE OF TELECARE AND ROBOTICS: ELEN'S STORY



Elen was living in a Learning Disability Residential Home and often felt sad and uncertain.



Sometimes her anxiety presented as challenging or difficult behaviour.



Staff considered a gentle way to support Elen and help her cope.



Through the Telecare Service, a robotic cat was introduced into the care home.



Elen began stroking the cat, feeding it and caring for it. The cat was given a name – “Pearl”.



Caring for “Pearl” gives Elen a sense of responsibility and purpose. She is much happier in the home.

PEOPLE: VOICE AND CONTROL

Voice of the Child

The *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report highlighted weaknesses where the Council did not consistently act to listen to the voice of abused children. Following a review, social services in Gwynedd strengthened their commitment to ensure that children's voices are always heard. Social workers now regularly visit children involved in safeguarding allegations in order to listen to their views, with parental consent where appropriate and if the parents are not part of the original allegation.

Children's voices and priorities should be at the heart of Councils' decisions as they are the future of our communities. During the year, a new Voice of the Child Strategy was developed under the guidance of the Education Department, with input from the Gwynedd Youth Forum.

How can we do things better?

While the Forum continues to grow from strength to strength, it is recognised that the current approach is not sustainable or consistently reaching all children, especially those who do not engage through formal structures. To support this, we plan to recruit a new role to reach more voices, including looked after children and other children known to social services in early 2026/27.



The Right Way – Embedding Children's Rights

During the year, work was carried out to explore the possibility of UNICEF's "Child Friendly Cities" accreditation, reflecting the approach adopted by Cardiff Council. However, it became clear that there is no longer any local support or national structure available to support a move towards accreditation, following the end of the UNICEF UK pilot in June 2025.

As a result, the focus has shifted to alternative approaches to achieve the same objectives. "The Right Way" by the Office of the Children's Commissioner has been adopted as the main national framework, focusing on embedding children's rights (UNCRC) in all aspects of policy, planning and services. In February 2026, a "The Right Way" workshop was held for Cabinet Members, Scrutiny Chairs, the Senior Management Team and the Gwynedd Youth Forum with the aim of raising awareness and strengthening understanding of the principles. A further work programme is in place for 2026/27.

PEOPLE: VOICE AND CONTROL

Corporate Parenting Panel

The Council acts as the corporate parent of looked after children, with the Corporate Parenting Panel meeting quarterly to provide an overview, challenge and assurance of the quality of services provided. The panel is made up of Cabinet Members, senior officers, the Director, the Chief Executive and representatives from the Health Board.

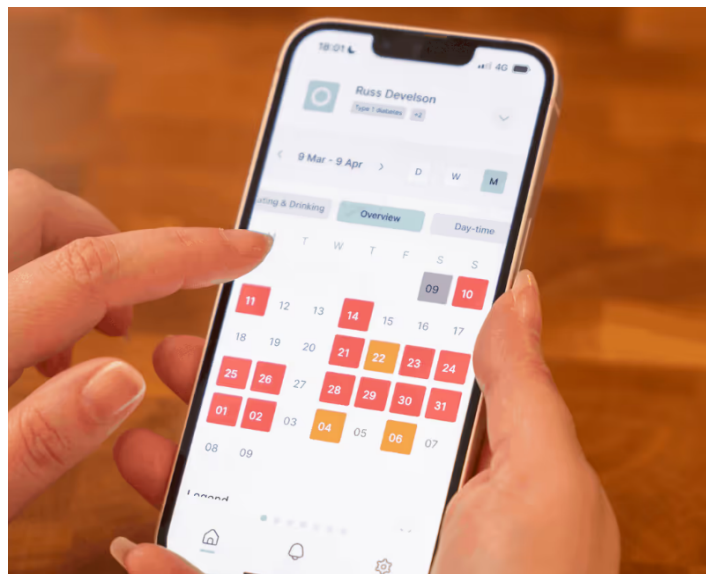
In April 2025, the Panel submitted a report to Cabinet on the implementation of the Welsh Government's Corporate Parenting Charter, confirming that the Council is working positively towards meeting the charter's expectations. Strengthening the voice of looked after children has been a key priority. An individual with lived experience of the care system now sits as a member of the Panel, ensuring that the direct experiences of children and young people inform discussions, challenge and supervision.

During 2026/27, a review of the Corporate Parenting Strategy is planned, ensuring that looked after children are central to the work. The strategy will be informed by the voice and experiences of children and young people in care and care leavers.

Adults: Independence Promotion Services Team

During the year, a new Independence Promotion Services Team was established to bring together the areas of direct payments, telecare, assistive technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and development of micro companies.

The aim of the work is to ensure that individuals get the support, technology and choices they need to live as independently as possible, in line with their wishes and circumstances.



How can we do things better?

The target of ensuring that no person waited more than 28 days for a domiciliary care package following an assessment was not achieved. Although workforce challenges contributed to this, performance indicates that more needs to be done to ensure that people receive the right support at the right time.

This highlights the need to accelerate the implementation of the recommendations of the **Llechen Lân: The Future of Older People's Services report**, with a focus on ensuring that the alternatives are offered consistently across the county. As well as promoting voice and choice for individuals, this approach contributes to reducing the demand for traditional care and increases the flexibility of support available.

PEOPLE: VOICE AND CONTROL

Telecare, Technology and AI

Individuals and their families can now apply directly for telecare equipment through the Council's website, facilitating faster and easier access to support. At the same time, the work of transferring residents from analogue systems to digital technology is gathering pace. The Council works closely with the housing associations (Adra and Grŵp Cynefin) to ensure a smooth and safe transition for residents.

A virtual occupational therapy tool is now live on the website and is increasingly being used by residents. Currently, **around 20 users generate reports each month**, enabling individuals to self-assess and explore support needs independently from their homes. It is estimated that this use **could have saved around 200 additional referrals**, demonstrating its potential impact in improving early access to information and support, and reducing the need for formal intervention in the early stages.

See how further advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are starting to transform the way services operate as well. The Beam Notes (formerly Magic Notes) pilot was a success with a cohort of staff during early 2026, and it is planned to extend the use of the technology across the service during 2026/27.

Technology such as Beam Notes helps reduce the time spent on administrative and recording work, freeing up more time for social workers to focus on working directly with individuals and families.

Beam Notes pilot in figures...

3.38 hours

time saved per staff member per week (average)

61%

reduction in care assessment completion time

35%

improvement in the accuracy and detail of case notes

95%

of staff who reported a reduction in administrative time

Direct Payments

The use of direct payments continues to steadily increase, **with 20% of residents now receiving their support through this method, compared to 17% in 2024/25.**

While progress has been slow, it reflects a positive shift towards giving individuals more voice, choice and control over the way their care and support is provided.

All new direct payments packages now include an offer of an employment card, although changing the long-standing arrangements of individuals who have used direct payments for years remains a challenge in some cases. During the year, some difficulties were experienced with the current employment card provider, and work is underway to research alternative providers to ensure a more reliable service and better choice for users.

PEOPLE: VOICE AND CONTROL

Learning Disability: Extending Work Opportunities

Promoting work opportunities and paid employment remains a key priority within the Learning Disability service, recognising the importance of work in terms of individuals' independence, confidence, social connections and well-being. The Learning Disability Career Pathway Coordinator operates across Gwynedd and Anglesey, with the support of three Support Officers who work specifically to promote employment opportunities and support individuals towards paid employment and fair pay.

The year saw a further increase in the number of individuals taking part in the programme, with 129 now on the pathway to work. Presentations to the Council's management network have generated positive interest. During the period, two individuals managed to secure posts within the Council, demonstrating that the work of raising awareness and creating opportunities is beginning to bear fruit.



The work has also gained national recognition, with the team being invited to present at the IMPACT "Improving Adult Care Together" conference in Cardiff. This was an opportunity to share Gwynedd's good practice, showcasing the innovative approach to supporting people with learning disabilities into meaningful work, and strengthening the county's profile as a leader in the field.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Team

The Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Team supports staff to understand individuals' unique needs and methods of communication, recognising that behaviour is often a way of expressing feelings or unmet needs. The team helps staff respond in ways that are person-centred and focused on wellbeing.

Through a combination of training, practical modelling and consultancy work, the team has helped staff to better understand what matters to the people they support, strengthen relationships and develop more person-centred approaches to care. The team's intensive coaching model, which involves working closely alongside teams within their own environments, has been particularly effective. As a result, improved communication and understanding have contributed to enhanced wellbeing, greater opportunities for choice, and an increased sense of control over daily life for the people receiving support.



"Once we understood the reasons behind the behaviour, we stopped trying to manage it and started supporting the need behind it. The change has been incredible."

Feedback from a Service that received training from the PBS Team.

WHAT PROGRESS WAS MADE AGAINST LAST YEAR'S COMMITMENTS?

Last year's commitments	Progress
Reduce our waiting lists for new domiciliary care packages and ensured that no person in Gwynedd waits longer than 28 days following a care assessment.	
Develop our use of technology to support care and independence, promoted the Telecare service, and explored the potential of robotics.	
Child-friendly Gwynedd: In the coming year we will take a closer look at UNICEF's "Child Friendly Cities" scheme.	
Officially adopt the Welsh Government's Parenting Charter working to strengthen the voice of looked after children.	
It is planned to revisit the resource needed to ensure that Dewis is accessible, promoted across the county and effectively meets the needs of residents	







2026/27 COMMITMENTS

1. Recognising that the service has not achieved its targets this year, we will continue to work to **reduce our waiting lists for new domiciliary care packages** and ensure that **no person in Gwynedd waits more than 28 days following** a care assessment.
2. We will work with the Education Department to **adopt and implement the Voice of the Child Strategy**, continuing to embed an approach that promotes children's rights and supports Gwynedd's vision as a child-friendly county.
3. We will appoint a **dedicated Participation Officer** to strengthen the voice and involvement of children and young people with care experience, disabled children, and other groups who require additional support to ensure their views inform services and decision-making
4. We will **expand the use of Beam Notes across Social Services** to reduce the time spent on administrative tasks, free up more time for staff to work directly with individuals, and support more effective ways of working.
5. We will **update the Llechen Lan report** following the publication of new demographic projections, and continue to implement its recommendations with a focus on developing preventative approaches and reducing reliance on traditional care services.
6. We will work with children in care and young people with care experience to **update the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy**, ensuring it provides clear direction for the Council in its role as a corporate parent.

PREVENTION

- “The need for care and support is minimised and the escalation of need is prevented whilst ensuring that the best outcomes for people are achieved.”
- “Resilience within communities is promoted and people are supported to fulfil their potential by actively supporting people who need care and/or support including carers to learn develop and participate in society.”

SNAPSHOT IN NUMBERS:

<p>NUMBER OF CARERS ASSESSED</p> <p>292</p> 	<p> 305</p> <p>RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM DEMENTIA ACTIF</p>	<p>245</p> <p>NUMBER OF RE-ENABLEMENT PACKAGES COMPLETED DURING THE YEAR</p> 	<p>510*</p> <p>NEW ASSESSMENTS WHERE NEEDS WERE MET WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A CARE PLAN</p> <p><i>(out of a total of 2,135)</i></p>
<p>143</p> <p>YOUNG CARERS RECEIVING SUPPORT</p> 	<p>162 </p> <p>RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM THE GAFAEL LLAW TEAM</p>	<p>482</p> <p>NEW CARERS SUPPORTED BY CARERS OUTREACH</p>	<p>133</p> <p>YOUNG CARERS USING THE AiDi APP</p> 

TROBWyNT TEAM AND EARLY INTERVENTION: ANNIE'S STORY



Annie was living in a hostel and going through a difficult period in her life, with a dependency on alcohol and drugs.



Annie became pregnant. Her older children were already in care, and the baby was placed on the Child Protection Register before birth.



Annie received intensive support from the Trobwynt Team over several months.



Annie's life gradually changed – no alcohol or drugs, and a supportive relationship.



There were doubts about whether Annie would be able to keep her baby, but she demonstrated that she was able to provide safe and loving care.



The child was removed from the Child Protection Register. Annie's story shows what is possible when the right support is in place.

PREVENTION

Supporting Our Carers

According to the 2021 Census, **around 10,500 people in Gwynedd (9% of the population) are unpaid carers**. Supporting their health and wellbeing is a key priority for Social Services, with support commissioned through *Carers Outreach* for adults and *Action for Children* for children and young people. During 2025/26, 482 new adult unpaid carers and 143 children accessed this support. However, more needs to be done to ensure carers are appropriately identified and supported. This was highlighted in the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales report, **Are we caring for our carers? Revisited**, which reviewed local authority arrangements.

Local data shows that challenges remain. Only **71 (4%)** of all assessments completed during the year were carer assessments, with a further **221 (12.6%)** joint assessments where the carer's needs were considered alongside the needs of the person receiving care. While no one was waiting for a carer assessment at the end of March 2026, a significant number of carers were supported directly by *Carers Outreach* without having a statutory assessment. This suggests a need to strengthen arrangements to identify carers earlier and more consistently.

Work is underway locally and regionally to respond to these challenges. This includes developing a local carers action plan, improving information and advice, raising awareness of carers' rights and assessments, supporting staff who are unpaid carers, and developing more flexible respite opportunities. In addition, under the chair of the Director of Social Services in Gwynedd, a regional group is leading the development of a new North Wales strategy to improve how carers are identified, assessed and supported, ensuring greater consistency across the region.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to strengthen the early identification and support of carers, increasing the use of carer assessments. Emergency planning should also be enhanced, ensuring that clear contingency arrangements are in place if a carer is temporarily unable to provide care. Further work will be undertaken on the Mosaic data system to improve the recording of emergency plans, and to expand the use of the Message in a Bottle scheme, which provides a simple way to record essential information for emergency situations.

Falls Protocol

A clear falls protocol ensures a consistent, safe and timely response to individuals who have fallen, supporting appropriate decision-making and helping to prevent or reduce unnecessary interventions. During the year, discussions were held with Winnicare regarding the iStumble app, a digital tool that supports an effective response to falls. While the app offers significant benefits and is much easier to use than paper-based versions, it is not currently available in Welsh, which limits its use in Gwynedd.

As a result, a request has been made through national networks to explore the possibility of developing a bilingual version. The issue has also been raised with the national Digital in Social Care (DiSC) programme for further consideration.

PREVENTION

Dementia Actif

Gwynedd Dementia Actif provides activities, information and support to individuals living with dementia and their families. The service helps people to stay active, connected to their communities and to access support after diagnosis, reducing isolation and supporting the well-being and confidence of individuals and carers.

The impact has been significant, and an increase was seen again in the number of people contacting the service: **in March 2026, 305 individuals attended – 55 living with dementia, 61 being unpaid carers, and a further 189 benefited socially.** This demonstrates the value of preventative services in assisting individuals to live independently and to support carers.



“After receiving a diagnosis, the question then is what happens next – what help is available, where to go and who to contact. It is important that people are not left alone... I don't know where I'd be without Gwynedd Dementia Actif”

An unpaid carer who attends Dementia Actif sessions with her husband.



Some Dementia Actif activities



Gwynedd and Anglesey Youth Justice Service

Following an inspection in 2024, an improvement plan was implemented for the Youth Justice Service, with positive progress made in a number of key areas. The governance arrangements and oversight of the management board were strengthened, with improved attendance and participation from partners.

During the year, the use of out-of-court solutions remains strong, with the vast majority of cases resolved without going before the youth court. A decrease was also seen in the percentage of women involved in the system compared to 2024/25. The service has purchased virtual reality headsets that provide realistic training situations to help staff members develop their response skills in challenging situations.

Work continues to strengthen regional collaboration and ensure that victims' voices are appropriately represented. Although some progress has been made in responding to the speech, language and communication needs of children, gaps in therapeutic provision remain and continue to be raised regularly with the health board and regional partners.

PREVENTION



“(The child) was taken off the child protection register and that reminded me that day why we are doing the work and how individuals can change for the better when the right intervention and support is available to them.”

Trobwynt Team Member

Supporting Families: Trobwynt and Team Around the Family

Family Support Services continue to work towards ensuring that every child has the best possible opportunity to thrive within their family and community. This approach is based on the principle of fairness – recognising that not all children and families start from the same place, and therefore different levels of support need to be provided according to individual circumstances and needs.

While the number of looked after children has increased, and care will always be a vital option when safeguard a child, our aim is to increase the likelihood that children can remain safely at home, where appropriate, by providing the right support at the right time.

During the year, there were 77 children in child protection processes at the start of the Trobwynt Team intervention, with the aim of supporting them to stay at home with their families. The intervention was successful for 64 of these children, demonstrating the value of providing support tailored to the needs of each family.

How can we do things better?

The increasing demand on children's services highlights the need to continue strengthening and investing much more in preventative and early intervention services. By intervening earlier and targeting resources effectively, we can reduce the need for more intensive and crisis interventions later on and improve outcomes for children and young people across the county.

Trauma Informed

The Council continues to develop a trauma-informed approach across its services, recognising the long-term impact of trauma and the need to provide support in a way that avoids re-traumatisation. A number of teams have identified the positive impact of the training provided, reporting changes in both their understanding and their approach to working with individuals.

The clear corporate intention is to further develop this work, and the Council continues to operate in line with the national framework by expanding access to training, particularly to front-line staff such as support workers, social workers, contact centre staff and homelessness teams. The Social Services Director and Cabinet Member for Children's Services intend to complete the training during 2026/27 to provide guidance.

PREVENTION

Wellbeing Conversations - Gafael Llaw Team

Last year, the Gafael Llaw pilot project was launched in response to the pressures on the Galw Gwynedd service. The project reflects the Council's vision of being a compassionate, kind and empathetic organisation, with an emphasis on person-centred support that focuses on individuals and their strengths.

By proactively reaching out to people who have applied for a Blue Badge, the aim of the work is to identify early signs of need and reduce the likelihood of more intensive interventions being required at a later stage. During 2025/26, 162 residents were supported through the Gafael Llaw Team. Concerns relating to financial pressures, health, wellbeing, loneliness and access to information frequently emerged, and a wide range of support was offered to individuals. Despite staffing capacity challenges, training sessions were delivered on conducting collaborative conversations and on providing financial advice.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to accelerate the work of aligning the “front door” for adult services to ensure more consistent and effective arrangements for people seeking information, advice and assistance. Progress on this work was delayed during the year and, as a result, it will need to be prioritised during 2026/27.



Men at Work and Healthy Relationships

Online influences, harmful content and stereotypes about relationships and sex are having an increasing impact on children and young people. As a result, there is a need to support professionals to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills required to have open and constructive conversations with young people about healthy relationships, respect, self-image and emotional wellbeing.

In July, under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Education, the “Together for Healthy Relationships” event was held in Bangor. Through contributions from people with lived experience, specialists and partner organisations, the event provided an opportunity to share knowledge, raise awareness of the early signs of harmful relationships, and strengthen collaboration to support young people more effectively.

In addition, a series of further training sessions for staff was commissioned from Men at Work, an organisation founded by Michael Conroy, to provide professionals with greater confidence and practical tools to facilitate constructive conversations with boys and young men. Feedback from staff was very positive, with the training being regarded as a valuable resource in supporting work with young people.

WHAT PROGRESS WAS MADE AGAINST LAST YEAR'S COMMITMENTS?

Last Year's Commitments	Progress
Strengthened support for unpaid carers by ensuring unpaid carers are identified early and receive full support to help them continue in their role without jeopardising their own well-being.	Yellow
Re-examined and simplified the "front doors" to create a consistent and simple experience for residents as they access social services.	Red
Used the LIFT system to identify individuals and families in need, to support them to claim the benefits to which they are entitled, and offer further support to reduce the impact of poverty on the lives of the people of Gwynedd.*	Green
Reviewed existing arrangements to support the hubs, creating a more sustainable and collaborative model with partners for the future.*	Yellow

**These projects are reported on in greater detail through the Supporting People Programme arrangements. The Supporting People Programme Annual Report 2025/26 will be presented to the Cabinet in July.*

2026/27 COMMITMENTS

1. We will **expand the use of the 'message in a bottle' scheme** and have ensured that the new Mosaic system supports the **recording of emergency arrangements for unpaid carers**.
2. We will **adapt our Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) service arrangements**, ensuring that the route of access is clear, simple and effective to help residents access social care services.
3. We will expand the **trauma-informed training programme across frontline services** and ensure clear corporate leadership. The Director and the Cabinet Member will complete the training during 2026/27.
4. We will **review strategic structures and arrangements across Social Services** to ensure resources are used in the most effective way, with a greater emphasis on prevention, long-term planning and the sustainability of services.

The list of strategic priorities in the Council Plan is set out here: [A Caring Gwynedd](#)



PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

- *“Effective partnerships are in place to commission and deliver sustainable and fully integrated, high-quality outcomes for people”*
- *“People are encouraged to contribute to the planning and delivery of their care and support as equal partners”*

WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD: MAI'S STORY



While Mai, aged 93, was in hospital, concerns were raised about financial abuse and neglect, leading to a safeguarding referral.



The social worker, ward staff, the Safeguarding Unit and the Legal Department worked together to agree the best way forward.



Mai's son wanted to move her far away from her home, but the journey posed a risk to her health.



Although Mai lacked capacity to make the decision, she had always expressed a wish to remain local.



When further concerns were raised, the partners worked together to submit an urgent application to the Court of Protection.



Through effective partnership working, the best outcome for Mai was secured, enabling her to remain in her local area in line with her wishes and wellbeing.

PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Working with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Over half of the Community Resource Teams are now co-located with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board staff, with these arrangements strengthening collaboration and supporting integrated work across health and social care. While the collaboration is generally positive, further work is needed to ensure that systems and processes fit together effectively, and specific workshops have been planned to support this.

During the year, Cyngor Gwynedd and the Health Board developed a live information dashboard for individuals at Ysbyty Gwynedd who need to return home with support. This work, along with the discharge safety arrangements over the winter period, has been very successful, with the associated data systems now being refined and shared regionally across the Health Board.

There are also ongoing challenges regarding Continuing Healthcare decisions and cost-sharing arrangements under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act. During the year, social services funded legal support to challenge several cases, and this has already contributed to better collaboration in some fields.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to strengthen data-sharing arrangements with the Health Board across Social Services. There have been recent challenges in the areas of Corporate Parenting and Children Looked After in obtaining data from the Health Board. This issue is intended to be raised with the Chair of the Board to ensure more reliable and consistent arrangements for information sharing in the future.

Derwen: Disabled Children's Integrated Team

Derwen is one of Gwynedd Social Services' key services supporting disabled children and their families and is seen as a positive and valuable service by users. However, the demand and intensity of work have increased significantly over the past few years, putting increasing pressure on the workforce. This increase is reflected in the number of children receiving disability benefits and pupils with Additional Learning Needs in Gwynedd.

The results of two key pieces of work that commenced in 2025/26 are expected:

1. A review of access and practice is examining the Derwen criteria and its working arrangements, with the aim of improving the efficiency of the service and responding to demand.
2. The Llechen Las research considering the current and long-term needs of disabled children in Gwynedd, and the implications of this for education, social care, and housing adaptations.

Due to the scale and complexity of the work, the timelines for both pieces of work have slipped slightly, and the outcomes are expected to be reported during 2026/27.

The service continues to face ongoing challenges in relation to workforce capacity and the availability of social workers. In response, a five-year workforce plan has been developed in an effort to ensure a skilled workforce, and its implementation will begin over the coming year in collaboration with the Gwynedd Care Academy.

PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Cydweithio efo Mantell Gwynedd

Working with the third sector to ensure that social services in Gwynedd are effective, appropriate and relevant to local people is essential.

Mantell Gwynedd provides an effective co-ordination service and support to the third sector in Gwynedd, and a new Compact has been developed through partnership working and consultation and is expected to be presented to the Council's Cabinet for approval in 2026/27.



Yn cefnogi grwpiau gwirfoddol a chymunedol
Supporting voluntary and community groups

It would be wrong for us not to note the success of the partnership, and for that to be reflected in the words of Mantell Gwynedd itself:



“It is true to note that the relationship has improved significantly, and these changes have led to more open and constructive discussions. This, in turn, has led to new projects that improve circumstances and opportunities for some of the County's most vulnerable individuals.

With regular meetings between the Statutory Director of Social Services and Mantell Gwynedd it has led to the identification of opportunities for collaboration, and a better understanding of how the third sector can contribute to Cyngor Gwynedd's aims and objectives. These conversations have been lost in the past.

An example of how the discussions have led to better collaboration is the Ffrindia Newydd project. The Council recognised restrictions on domiciliary carers in terms of providing medication and Mantell Gwynedd saw ways to resolve some of the restrictions through a buddy project. This resulted in project funding from the SPF fund to pilot a buddy project. The pilot project ends in June 2026 and Mantell Gwynedd has now identified a fund that will be able to support the work in the longer term. Without the collaboration and the pilot, this would not have happened in the first place. Ultimately this has meant improving circumstances for vulnerable individuals in Gwynedd and, at the same time, has benefited volunteers.

Another example is the Helping Hand to Volunteer project. Again, through discussions with Cyngor Gwynedd, the need for a resource that would support vulnerable individuals to volunteer was identified. This project has now supported over 180 individuals with additional needs to volunteer. Lottery funding is now supporting the project for a period of four years. Again, without the collaboration this would not have happened.”

Bethan Williams, Mantell Gwynedd Chief Officer

PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Working with the Housing Department

While collaboration with external partners is important, internal collaboration between Social Services and other Council departments, particularly Housing, is essential.

As noted in last year's Annual Report, the Adults Services and the Housing Department commissioned a joint report to plan the provision of accommodation and long-term care for older people in Gwynedd (Housing LIN Report). There has been some delay in the work, but an initial draft of the report has now been received. The aim of the work is to explore current and future needs, inform developments, and create a single comprehensive plan for mapping out future services, including nursing care, dementia care, extra care housing, sheltered housing, supported living and general housing for older people.

Extra care housing is a particularly important area, and is being considered as part of the response to the challenges identified in the report Llechen Lân. The current intention is to develop three new extra care housing schemes in Gwynedd, namely in Caernarfon, Pwllheli (the Penrhos site currently under development), Bangor and the Dolgellau area. The Housing LIN report will provide an important evidence base for the level and nature of need and support these schemes.

In addition, the Internal Provider Unit has commissioned assessments of all residential homes managed by the Council to assess their current suitability and identify the developments needed to meet future needs. The findings of the internal assessments and Housing LIN report will be merged into one comprehensive plan to determine the type of provision needed, the minimum standards, and the long-term accommodation options for older people across Gwynedd.



MOSAIC: New Data System

As noted in last year's Annual Report, a new system was required as the existing social services data system (WCCIS) is coming to an end. Collaboration took place with local authorities across North Wales to complete the procurement process within a challenging timeframe, and the MOSAIC system has since been purchased. During the year, extensive preparatory work for the transition began, including planning, technical work and workforce preparation. The implementation timetable has now slipped to March 2027. MOSAIC is expected to improve recording, information sharing and communication with residents and partners.

PARTNERSHIP AND INTERGRATION

Working with the Education Department

The *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report identified some weaknesses in the arrangements for collaboration between the Education Department and Children's Services. Since then, structural changes have been made to strengthen working links between the two departments. The Education Department has established a Schools Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team, and the manager attends Children's Management Team meetings, improving information-sharing and coordination across services.

One example of improved collaboration is the joint commissioning of the NSPCC to deliver training on grooming and exploitation. The training will be delivered in two parts: a basic module for staff, governors and elected members, and a more specialist joint session for social workers, teachers and designated safeguarding persons in schools. The aim is to support more consistent understanding and improve the consistency of responses across services.

Domestic Abuse Service

Approximately **11.1 per 1,000 of Gwynedd's population (1.1%) experience domestic violence every year**, which underlines the need for effective and co-ordinated services.

The need to strengthen collaboration across the Council in the field of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) was noted during the year, including a better understanding of roles and responsibilities and moving towards joint commissioning. This is particularly relevant following Grŵp Cynefin's decision to bring the Gorwel Domestic Abuse Service to an end, and in light of IDVA arrangements, given the UK Government's intention to phase out the functions of Police and Crime Commissioners over the coming years. At present, the Police and Crime Commissioner funds IDVA services in North Wales.

To support this, the Housing Department, through Housing Support Grant funding, has commissioned a comprehensive assessment of existing services and population needs, with the report to be completed by the end of July 2026 to inform the tendering process for the new service. Work is also being undertaken to consider models of good practice, including arrangements in Bridgend.

The Welsh Government is currently undertaking a national consultation on domestic violence services, highlighting differences in funding and delivery models across regions. The consultation is an opportunity to consider greater national consistency in the approaches.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to strengthen the consistent approach to commissioning and delivering VAWDASV services across the Council, as services have to date been commissioned separately without a complete picture of the overall provision. To address this, a cross-departmental Task Group (Housing, Children's Services, Adult Services and Community Safety) has been established to bring the work together, improve coordination, and develop a clearer understanding of the services available.

WHAT PROGRESS WAS MADE AGAINST LAST YEAR'S COMMITMENTS?

Last year's commitments	Progress
Completed the implementation of the new data system, ensuring comprehensive training for the workforce.	
Reviewed and improved the data systems that support hospital discharge, building on the robust relationship while personnel changes take place at a strategic level.	
Review Derwen service arrangements to address waiting times for nursing and psychology assessments, and complete the research to understand the growth in the population of disabled children.	
Resumed and strengthened partnerships with the third sector, including the formulation of a new Compact to establish a clear basis for collaboration.	
Commissioned external researchers to analyse trends and determine additional provision needs in relation to care accommodation.	

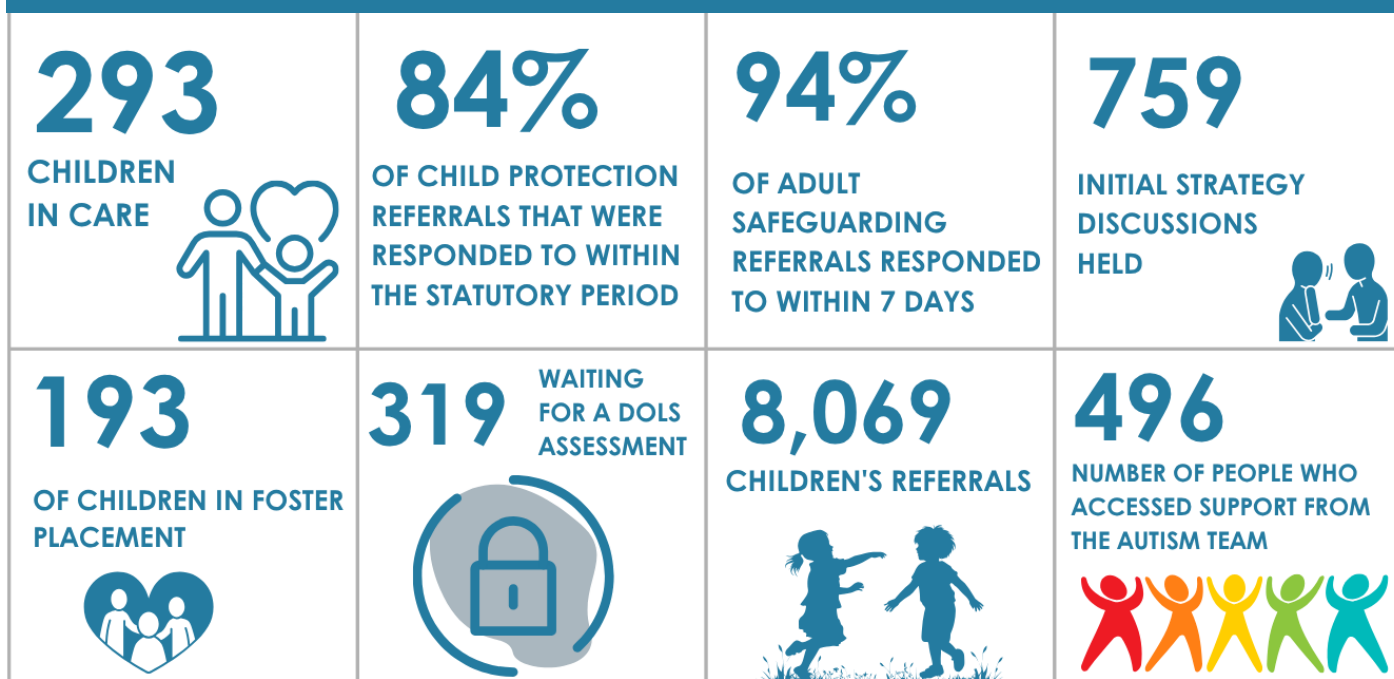
2026/27 COMMITMENTS

1. We will continue the preparation and implementation work for the **transition to the new MOSAIC data system** by March 2027.
2. We will **work collaboratively with the Health Board to improve data sharing in relation to children in care**, enabling the Corporate Parenting Panel to make informed decisions.
3. We will receive the findings of the **Derwen access review and the Llechen Las research** and take action to improve the service model.
4. We will develop an **integrated long-term accommodation strategy for older people** across Gwynedd, ensuring a strategic, consistent and sustainable approach to meeting future housing and care needs.
5. In the area of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV), we will **strengthen internal collaboration across the Council, complete the needs assessment, and move forward with preparations to commission a new service** that is more consistent and better coordinated.

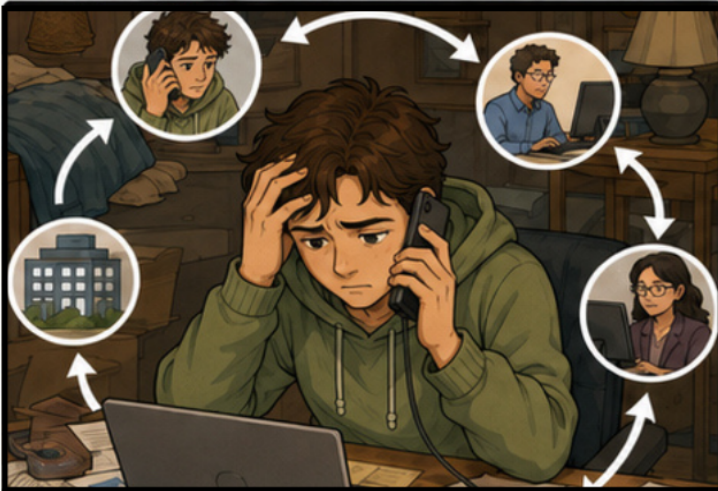
WELL-BEING

- “People are protected and safeguarded from abuse and neglect and any other forms of harm.”
- “People are helped to manage their well-being and make their own decisions so that they can reach their full potential and live independently as long as possible.”

SNAPSHOT IN NUMBERS:



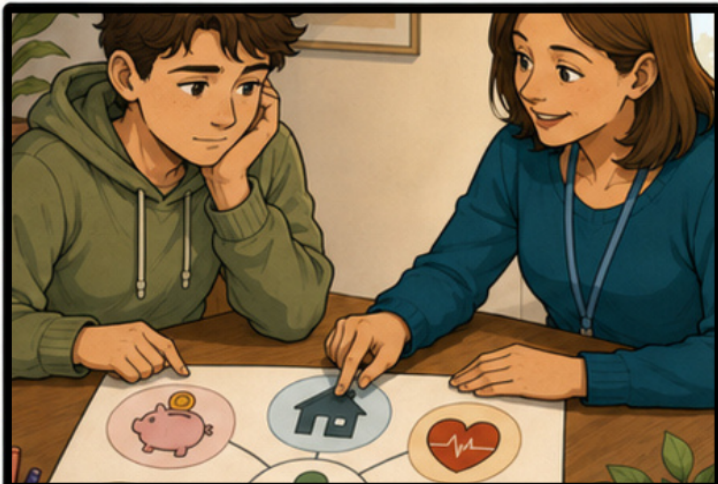
PERSON-CENTERED SUPPORT: ALUN'S STORY



Alun is autistic. He had been seeking support for some time but was being referred between different services without finding the support he needed.



Alun contacted the Autism Team and was given the opportunity to discuss what mattered to him in a face-to-face conversation.



Alun was listened to, and a plan was developed with him. He received support with benefits, housing, changing his GP, and other issues affecting his wellbeing.



A single, consistent point of contact was appointed. Trust was built, and adjustments were made to make communication and meetings easier.



Alun experienced a period of homelessness and had to move home. With advocacy support and by breaking tasks down into small steps, he was able to adapt to his circumstances.



With support, Alun developed greater confidence, independent living skills, and better ways of managing stress and changes in his life.

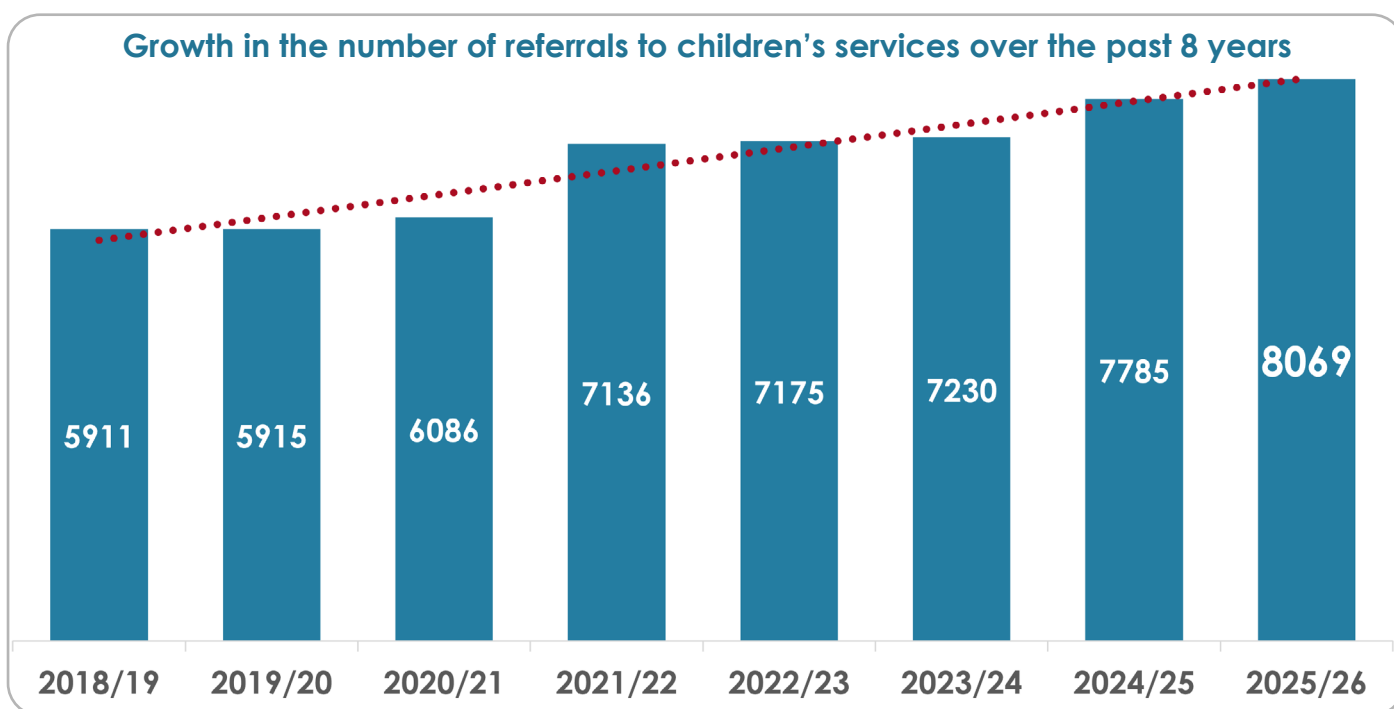
WELL-BEING

Cyfeiriadau Gwasanaethau Plant

There was a significant increase in the number of referrals to Gwynedd Children's Services during the year, although the county's child population is decreasing. Over 8,000 referrals were received – a record number for the Council – putting significant pressure on the workforce and resources. In response, the Council agreed to invest over an additional £600,000 in the next year, enabling the creation of new jobs, including a quality assurance role, to strengthen services and ensure that the voice of the child is at the heart of the work.

This increase may also reflect the positive impact of increasing awareness of safeguarding, with more concerns being identified and referred early. It is essential that concerns are appropriately referred in order to ensure effective safeguarding.

To strengthen the corporate response, a Corporate Safeguarding Champion was appointed to reinforce the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and improve staff awareness, confidence, and compliance with mandatory training. During the year, more accessible training methods, including video format, were developed, with the intention of launching them during 2026/27.



Children's Department: Quality Assurance Framework

One of the positive developments during the year was the introduction of a new quality assurance framework for the Children's Services. The framework sets out a clear vision for the service, explaining its values, purpose and the principles underpinning the work, with a strong emphasis on ensuring that the voice of the child is central.

It also defines the roles and responsibilities of staff within safeguarding and child protection arrangements, strengthening quality assurance methods and providing clearer assurance on the quality of service. It is intended to promote it further to staff and the service over the next year to ensure that it is implemented consistently and effectively across all fields.

WELL-BEING

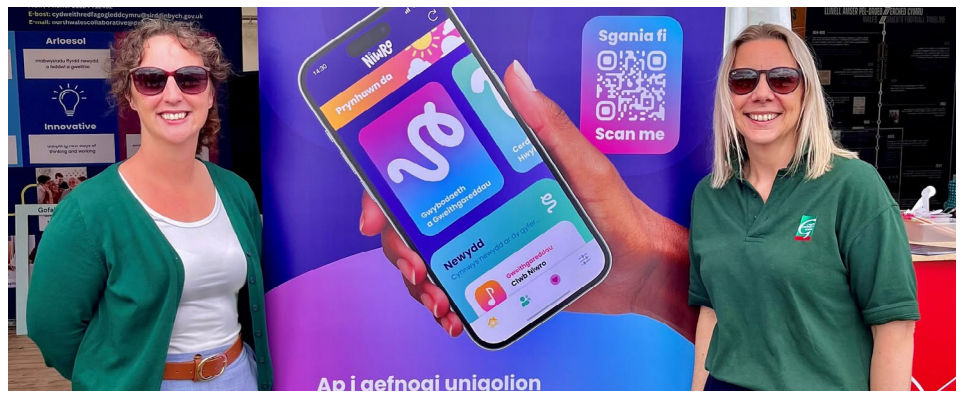
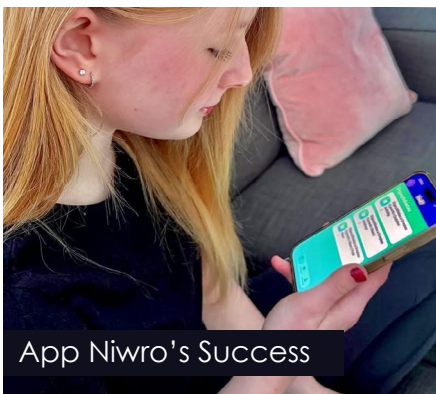
Children in Care

There was an increase in the number of looked after children over the year, with 12 more looked after at the end of the year compared to the previous year. Unregistered placement arrangements (OWR) had to be used for 4 children due to a lack of suitable placements across the United Kingdom. This is not unique to Gwynedd, with many local authorities across Wales and the UK facing the same pressure. As a result, some children are located outside the county, far from their families and local area, in locations that are not always culturally suitable, and which are very costly for the Council.

The development of small group homes across the county is a priority in the Council Plan 2023–28 to enable more children to stay local. Whilst two homes are already operational in Morfa Bychan and Deiniolen, with the children well settled, the original target for opening the home in Edern was not met, as significant refurbishment work needs to be completed on the building. Another house was purchased in Cricieth in the meantime, and the home is going through the registration process with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), with a view to opening during 2026/27.

How can we do things better?

There is a need to accelerate work to strengthen local provision, including expanding fostering opportunities, reducing reliance on high-cost out-of-county placements, and ensuring that more children and young people can remain close to their families, schools, and communities. A dedicated role was created in March 2026 to lead the programme, supporting the Welsh Government's agenda to eliminate profit from children's care.



Ap Niwro

The Gwynedd Autism Team continues to innovate, and the Niwro Cymru App was launched in January 2026 as an accessible and useful resource for families and professionals. The app offers clear and reliable information, soothing activities, details of local events and a wide range of resources and support. Since its launch, it has attracted a significant number of queries and around 1,000 downloads, reflecting a growing demand for this support.

The Autism Team is recognised as a strong and effective team. A working model has attracted attention at regional and national meetings, with interest from nine other counties looking to emulate the approach – it is good to see good practice in Gwynedd recognised and widely shared.

WELL-BEING

The County's Learning Disability Day Services

Day services for people with learning disabilities in Gwynedd have continued to develop significantly during the year, with various models across the county meeting local needs and promoting the well-being of individuals.

In Caernarfon, initiatives such as Siop Galwch Acw and activities at Glynllifon provide opportunities for individuals to develop craft and production skills, as well as contribute to the community through gardening and local environmental maintenance work. Llwybrau Llesiant, funded through the regional grant, focuses on what matters to individuals, offering choice and control over a range of activities such as trips, social clubs, nights out, and discussion groups.

In the Pwllheli and Pen Llŷn area, where transport is an additional challenge, Canolfan y Gwystl continues to be a successful example of a service providing meaningful and productive opportunities. During a recent visit, the dedicated workforce who have supported the service over many years was highlighted, with the centre offering a wide range of activities, including Popty Prysur (a baking and cake sales enterprise), growing potatoes for local sale, along with social and creative clubs.

In Dolgellau, there has been a period of change with the demolition of the Dolfeurig site to enable the development of a new centre. By the end of the year, good progress had been made on the building, which will include a training centre, day service, and community café to be run by individuals who use the service. This development is expected to further strengthen local opportunities and community connections during 2026/27.

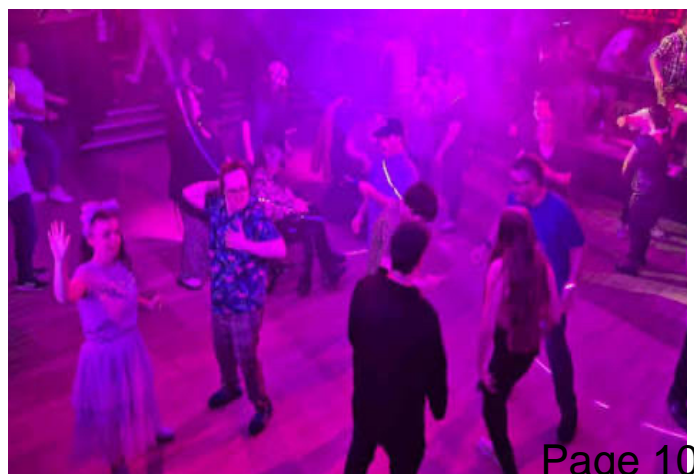


"I will be going to the Trilogy nightclub for the first time ever tonight. It will be great to be able to be in a nightclub atmosphere with the great wellbaing team Llwybrau Llesiant. I would like to thank the amazing crew for all the work they are doing to arrange different activities and sessions. Without them there would not be such excellent opportunities to have in the first place. Thank you very much! "

Llwybrau Llesiant Service User (Learning Disability Team)



Llwybrau Llesiant at Trilogy Nightclub



WELL-BEING

Mental Health Service

In last year's report, the establishment of a new mental health service within Social Services was highlighted. Although the service is not fully integrated with health services, it has been established to work in close partnership with colleagues in the Health Board. The service provides social care and support services rather than medical or clinical treatments.

The team successfully ensured that there was no waiting list for mental health assessments, with the vast majority of individuals being assessed within approximately 10 days and only a small number waiting up to two weeks. In addition, a number of residential placements were commissioned for individuals with mental health needs, ensuring appropriate support was available when required.

Looking ahead, the department is reviewing how the service should develop further, including the role of support workers and care practitioners, in order to ensure the most effective use of available resources and to support people to live as independently as possible within their communities.

How can we do things better?

There are some situations where individuals with complex needs fall between services, leading to delays and discussions about responsibility for their care. This includes cases such as autistic individuals who do not meet the eligibility criteria for learning disability services, young people transitioning into adult services, and complex situations such as hoarding. This highlights the need for improved coordination and collaboration to ensure that individuals receive the appropriate support at the right time.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Assessment Waiting List

During the year, emphasis was placed on ensuring that individuals who lack the capacity to make decisions for themselves are properly protected, whilst respecting their rights when implementing Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards arrangements. While these decisions are complex and challenging, it is essential to ensure that individuals are not wrongfully or unlawfully deprived of their liberty. It was noted that the system remains complex, with some delays due to bureaucracy and a lack of progress in legislative developments.

During the year, the Council provided valuable additional investment to the service but faced significant recruitment challenges for a period. By the end of the year, two new members of staff had been recruited, who have now completed their training, qualified, and started their caseload, contributing to an improvement in capacity. As a result, performance has steadily improved, with an increase in the number of authorised cases and a decrease in the waiting list.

As of March 31, 2026, **there were 319 individuals waiting for a DoLS assessment, compared to 356 the previous year.** The aim is to continue to improve the situation, aiming to ensure that no one has to wait more than 21 days for an assessment, by continuing to invest resources and further reducing the backlog.

WHAT PROGRESS WAS MADE AGAINST LAST YEAR'S COMMITMENTS?

Last year's commitments	Progress
The Council will complete the preparation and opening of two additional homes in Dinorwig and Edern, extending the ability to offer local residential care to children with complex needs.	
It is planned to recruit two new Best Interest Assessors to reduce the backlog of DoLS assessments that need to be completed.	
The Council will develop a strategic plan to maintain and upgrade the standards of our residential care homes, ensuring warm, safe and respectful environments for residents.	

2026/27 COMMITMENTS

1. We will use the additional £600k investment to **strengthen capacity within the Children's Department**, including the creation of new posts and the appointment of a dedicated quality assurance manager role.
2. We will **embed the Quality Assurance Framework across all teams in the Children's Department** to ensure a consistent way of working, with a clear emphasis on quality and the voice of the child.
3. We will **accelerate the implementation of the "eliminating profit" agenda** by expanding sustainable in-house provision, including the development of local fostering and increasing the provision of small group homes across the county.
4. We will **complete and reopen the newly refurbished Dolfeurig Centre**, strengthening local provision of day services and community opportunities
5. We will continue to **reduce the backlog and speed up DoLS assessment timescales**, improving efficiency and ensuring that individuals receive timely assessments.

The list of strategic priorities in the Council Plan is set out here: [A Caring Gwynedd](#)



FURTHER INFORMATION

AUDITS AND REVIEWS

The close relationship between Cyngor Gwynedd and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Estyn and Audit Wales continued throughout 2025/26. An annual workshop was held as usual with representatives of the main audit organisations, continuously strengthening the approach to reviewing and assessing services.

During the year, there have been several important inspections and reviews across children's services. As already noted in the Annual Report, the Our Bravery Brought Justice Child Practice Review was published in autumn 2025, highlighting several weaknesses in practice. Significant work continues to respond to the recommendations, with progress being monitored through the **Response Plan Programme Board** and a quarterly report to the Cabinet by the Board Chair, Professor Sally Holland.



"I would like to acknowledge the commitment shown by Board members during what has been a complex and sensitive period of work. Attendance and participation continues at a high level. The Board recognises that strengthening safeguarding arrangements and embedding a child-centred, rights-based approach across a whole system takes time, sustained leadership, and requires careful scrutiny.

I am encouraged by much of the progress being made and the willingness to learn and adapt. The Programme is ambitious and will continue to demand senior staff time and other resources to be successful. The Board will continue to provide constructive support and robust oversight to Cabinet as this work progresses, with a continued focus on impact, transparency, and the lived experiences of children and young people."

Professor Sally Holland, Quarterly Report (10 March 2026)

In November 2025, a **joint review was carried out by Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn of the Council's safeguarding arrangements**. While the inspection identified many positive practices, four areas were highlighted for strengthening, including ensuring greater consistency in considering the voice of the child, developing quality assurance arrangements, strengthening safeguarding training, and improving some operational and commissioning arrangements. Work is already underway to respond to these findings, including the development of a Voice of the Child Strategy and the implementation of a new Quality Assurance Framework. The Response to Recommendations can be viewed in the Governance and Audit Committee papers from February 2026: **Item 11**.

The Adoption, Derwen and Fostering Services were also inspected by CIW during the year, with generally positive results. The Derwen Service report was particularly positive, recognising the high standard of the service and the results achieved. Work continues to implement the relevant recommendations to further strengthen the services.

There have been no external audits of Adults Services during 2025/26. However, the department continues to implement the recommendations of previous audits, with regular monitoring arrangements in place to review progress and ensure continued improvement.

COMPLAINTS

Although the Services consistently strive to provide care of the highest possible standard, there will inevitably be occasions when things go wrong. The statutory complaints procedure provides a formal route for individuals to raise concerns, enabling departments to learn lessons and avoid repeating mistakes.

During 2025/26, a total of 31 formal complaints were received at Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure, which is 3 more than the previous year. Five progressed to Stage 2 (compared to 3 complaints in 2024/25), and none were referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. This reflects a proactive approach to addressing concerns early and effectively, including close collaboration between Customer Care Officers, service teams, managers, and the Legal Service.

	Formal Complaint (Stage 1)	Stage 2 Complaint	Corporate Complaint	Ombudsman
Adults	15	2	4	0
Children	16	3	7	0

In the Children's Services Department, it is noted that a significant number of complaints are submitted while related cases are subject to court proceedings. In line with the relevant guidance, consideration of these complaints must be deferred until the legal process has been concluded, with individuals concerned being advised to raise their concerns through their legal representatives during proceedings.

No particular pattern was identified within Adult Services this year, with complaints being varied in nature and reflecting the unique circumstances of each case.

A more notable trend is the increase in Subject Access Requests (SARs), with approximately 20 more received than in the previous year. These requests often relate to individuals who have been in contact with Children's Services over long periods or who have been in care for a number of years. As a result, the process of retrieving, reviewing, and releasing information can be complex and resource intensive, creating additional pressure on the service while ensuring requests are handled fully and in line with legal requirements.

Learning from complaints is central to the complaints process, with each case reviewed by Departmental Management Teams to ensure appropriate and timely action is taken. In addition, in December, the Care Scrutiny Committee established a task and finish group to examine complaints arrangements in more detail (**Item 8**). Members were keen to improve their understanding of the nature of complaints received, the complaints process, the use of the Welsh language in complaints, and the support available to staff dealing with persistent complainants.

The full Annual Complaints Report, containing further detail, will be presented to the Care Scrutiny Committee in November 2026 and made available to the public via the Council's website, as part of our commitment to transparency and accountability. See previous complaints reports here: [Annual Complaints Report](#)

Further Information Links

This final section lists where to obtain further information about some of the topics referred to in this report.

- [Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28](#)
- [Cyngor Gwynedd Performance Report](#)
- [Compliments and Complaints procedure](#)
- [Response Plan Programme Board](#)
- [Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership](#)
- [Care Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [North Wales Regional Partnership Board](#)
- [North Wales Population Needs Assessment](#)
- [Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Service Board Well-being Plan](#)
- [Care Inspectorate Wales](#)
- [Helpu'n Hun Online Assessment Tool](#)





CYNGOR GWYNEDD



Report to Full Council meeting

Date of Meeting:	3 July 2025
Title of Item:	Annual report by the Head of Democracy Services in relation to support for Members.
Contact Officer:	Ian Jones, Head of Democracy Services

1. DECISION

The Full Council is asked to accept the report

2. What is the background and relevant considerations?

- 2.1 I am required to report to the full Council annually outlining the support available to Councillors.
- 2.2 In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Act 2011, the Democracy Services Committee is responsible for specific matters (under Section 11), as follows:
 - Fulfilling the role of the local authority to appoint a Head of Democracy Services
 - Review the support available in relation to staff, buildings and other resources available to the Head of Democracy Services, to ensure they are adequate for the requirements of the role.
 - Produce a report, at least once a year, to be presented to the Full Council in relation to support for Members.
- 2.3 This year's annual report is concise and focuses on the developments made during the year rather than outlining all the support available to Members. It also outlines the top priorities for the year ahead.
- 2.4 I wish to express my thanks to the members of the Democratic Services Committee for all their constructive comments during our meetings over the year. A number of teams assist me in providing the best possible support to you. I want to thank everyone for their work, but I want to specifically thank the



Democracy and Language Service officers, who are your main day-to-day contacts, the learning and development team, and all other officers who assist in supporting your role.

3. Any consultations undertaken prior to recommending the decision.

A draft of the Annual Report was presented to the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on the 16th June and amended following their comments.

4. THE STATUTORY OFFICERS' OBSERVATIONS

Monitoring Officer:

I appreciate the close collaboration that exists between Legal Services and the Democratic Services. In preparing for the election and beyond, this collaboration will be key to supporting the members preparing for the new term. I welcome this report.

Statutory Finance Officer:

The decision sought does not create a new expenditure commitment and I have no further comments to add.



Annual Report of the Head of Democracy Services

2025/2026





FOREWORD

I have now been in my role as Head of Democracy Services in Gwynedd for 4 years. During this time, I have learned a lot and have appreciated your comments to help improve the service for you. The world is constantly changing, and we are trying our best to adapt the support available in line with the new challenges.

I am pleased to present my annual report briefly outlining the support available for Gwynedd Councillors.

My special thanks to Councillor Anne Lloyd-Jones, Chair of the Democracy Services Committee, along with the members of that committee for their input and insightful comments. Thanks also to all the officers working in the background.

I look forward to working with you over the coming year in preparation for the May 2027 election.

Thanks, and regards,
Ian



Ian Jones,

Head of Democracy Services

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SUPPORT FOR YOU AS COUNCILLORS

Several teams across the Council provide support for you as Councillors. However, the main provision comes from the Democracy and Language Service. There have been some changes during 2025/26, so here's an overview of the latest changes:

Eirian's Retirement

Eirian Roberts retired in July 2025, after almost 40 years of service to the Council.



Sian has been responsible for civic work, supporting the Lord Lieutenant and Chairperson, as well as undertaking various other duties. Sian's flexible retirement period will come to an end in July 2026. Best wishes to you Sian and thank you.

Sian's Retirement



Courtney's Appointment

Courtney Jones is a Democracy and Civic Officer and has taken up the role since June 2025. Courtney will be undertaking civic duties in the future.



Gwen Roberts has been welcomed as a Democracy Services Officer during the summer of 2025. Gwen is now responsible for supporting Cabinet meetings.

Gwen's Appointment



Sera's Appointment

Sera Whitley has also joined the team taking responsibility for supporting the committees of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee.



Catrin Meirion Owen has been appointed to the role of Member Development Officer in the Learning and Development Team during the year. We wish Cara Williams well in her new role.

Catrin's Appointment



Support for Political Groups

We welcomed and said goodbye to an officer who assisted the Plaid Cymru group during the year. We look forward to having full support for the groups over the coming year.



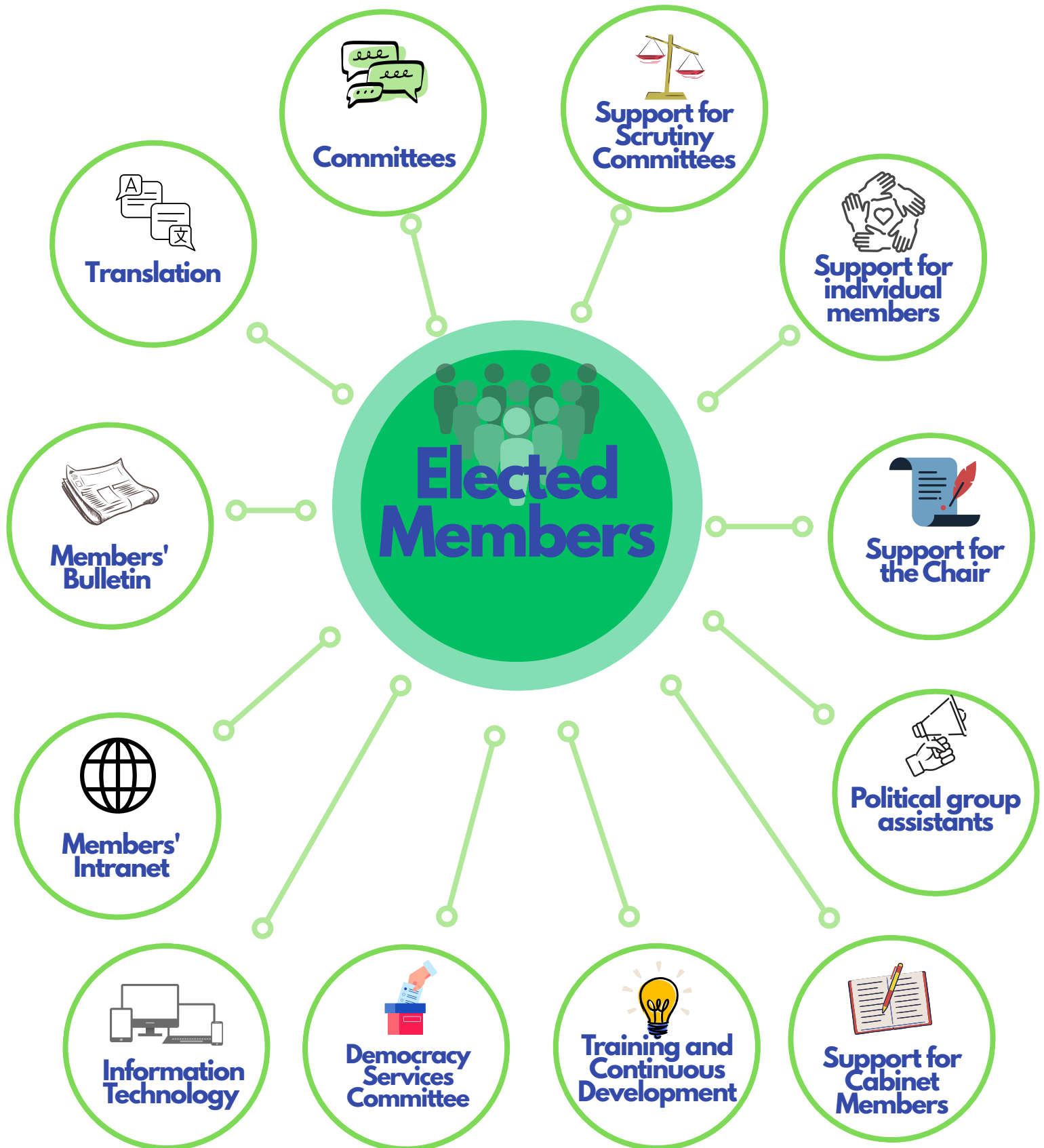
Congratulations to Lowri Elin Evans who has qualified as a translator with the translation team. You may not see her often, but many of you will have heard her providing simultaneous translation in various meetings. Congratulations Lowri!

Lowri's Qualification



There have been a few changes again this year, and I wish to congratulate the service on continuing to provide a service to the highest standard alongside the induction of new staff in their roles

SUPPORT FOR ELECTED MEMBERS



SUCSESSES 2025/26

The Democracy and Language Service serves you in your role as Councillors throughout the year.

The service has two performance measures.

Members' satisfaction with the service of the Democracy Team.

88% of Gwynedd Councillors have reported that the service from the Democracy Team is very good, with 12% stating 'good'. This is an increase from the 97% who reported very good or good in 2024/25, and the 91% in 2023/24

Publishing Decision Notices within 5 working days.

The service is legally required to publish decision notices for all committee meetings, to obtain a clear statement of the decision for transparency to the public. 98% of decision notices were published within 5 working days in 2025/26, up from 94% in 2024/25. The minor slippages were due to the system not working and waiting for comments from certain officers.

See below other successes involving the day-to-day work of the service:

- Maintaining the committee programme for the year, over 150 meetings in total – virtual and hybrid meetings ensuring the webcasting of all relevant meetings
→ *The webcasts had over 22 thousand views over the year.*
- Holding an extraordinary meeting of the Full Council and two extraordinary meetings of scrutiny committees to ensure that all members had the opportunity to give input to the Council's response to the Our Bravery Brought Justice Report.
→ *Over 14 hours of scrutiny of the plan in its entirety before being considered by the Cabinet.*
- Providing a simultaneous translation service at all Council committees and informal meetings and providing a written translation service to all Council departments.
→ *In 2025/26, the team translated 4.5million words in writing. In addition, a simultaneous translation service was provided at 55 meetings a month on average.*

- Providing specific support for the Council's Chair and Vice-chair as well as Chairs and Vice-chairs of the Council's committees via specific training, answering enquiries during committees and preparing briefing sheets for them.
- Specific support is offered for the Scrutiny Chairs through the Scrutiny Forum, in addition to the day-to-day support for them at each committee meeting.
 - ➔ Holding four meetings of the Scrutiny Forum over the course of the year to allow the Chairs to discuss scrutiny developments and challenge one another.
- Welcoming two new Councillors during the year, ensuring that they had access to IT provision and the latest information.
- Administration of Councillors' salaries and expenses and publishing the information in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Conducting a full training programme for Councillors and consulting Councillors on the content of the training programme.
 - ➔ 17 sessions were held during the year.
- Prioritising and holding briefings on matters of importance to all members and recording and uploading these onto the members' intranet to assist those who work.
 - ➔ 8 briefing sessions were held and recorded during the year.
- Administration of regional committees, particularly the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and its sub-committees. Contributing vastly towards the developmental work of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee.
- Running training sessions on the Council's democracy arrangements for members of staff to ensure their understanding of the arrangements.
 - ➔ *A pilot has been conducted and a series of sessions scheduled for 2026/27.*



DELIVERY AGAINST PRIORITIES

2025/26

I set out specific priorities for 2025/26 in addition to the day-to-day work. This is an update against what I had promised.

What did we promise?

Start preparations for the Election in May 2027 looking at :

- **Pre-election arrangements**
- **Election day arrangements**
- **Welcome and induction arrangements**
- **Arrangements for the first 6-12 months and an outline of arrangements for the second year**
- **General support for Councillors**

Update

Work has begun in the background to identify all the different steps that need to be accomplished against each of the above titles.

In addition, it was decided that members needed to be consulted so a small group of councillors from each party have volunteered to take part in specific discussions on an area-by-area basis to share their experiences. The group consists of four members from each group with half joining before 2022 and the rest after 2022. The work is ongoing and progress will be formally reported to the Democracy Services Committee over the next few months.



What did we promise?

We will review the provision in the Chambers with regards to the equipment and the quality of the experience. We will aim to develop a feasibility study and improvement plan during the autumn, 2025.

Update

We have assessed our provision in the chambers with regards to the sustainability of the current equipment, as well as the quality of the user experience (whether chamber user or system user).

It became clear that the current provision in our chambers is very volatile and poses a high risk to the Council as regards being able to continue to provide hybrid meetings and maintain the Council's democratic arrangements. We have consistently experienced a few failures but have succeeded despite the system.

Many members have also shared frustrations with their experience of hybrid meetings, and the officers who conduct the whole process work hard to resolve various problems in every meeting.

A bid for money was submitted through the usual arrangements; however, a more detailed report has now been submitted to proceed with going out to the market in search of an appropriate provider. A project board will be set up to drive the work forward in the best possible way.



What did we promise?

To make better use of both the time and support of the political group assistants. To rationalise the training programme and briefing programme for Councillors to ensure the best use of Councillors' time and the best use of Council resources.

Update

It has been an unstable year in terms of support from the assistants of the political groups with periods without officers in the roles. My thanks go out to the rest of the service for taking on some of the tasks carried out by these officers over the past year. Hopefully, it will be possible to move forward and deliver more against this element during 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Major steps have been taken to rationalise the training programme and briefing programme - with high praise for the briefing sessions which are short and purposeful.

What did we promise?

Raising Councillors' awareness of the need to report any incident or threat by completing and returning the relevant forms (HS11).

Update

Unfortunately, the safety of Elected Members is still a matter that needs constant attention. Specific support is provided from a designated officer in North Wales Police, and they have offered several virtual sessions for members in consideration of their safety. The officer has also assisted and advised some individual members when issues have arisen.

Support has been offered to several individual members when safety or well-being issues have arisen, signposting them to the guidance available on the members' intranet, and assisting others in a practical manner. We are aware that many Councillors face threats in their communities and urge everyone to report this.

We have not promoted the completion of the HS11 forms which collect information about threats and incidents as an electronic system has been developed over the past year. We have recently trialled the new arrangements with one member and will be conducting training on the reporting arrangements for all members in 2026/27.



What did we promise?

An 8th area of core training for Councillors has been adopted, namely Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and sexual violence.

Update

The core training areas have been identified to equip Councillors to successfully and safely carry out their role. At the Full Council meeting on the 3rd of July 2025, the 8th core area was adopted in line with the recommendation of the Democracy Services Committee.

Since then, the Democracy Services Committee has been monitoring the number of members completing each area of the core training. A discussion was had around the disappointment of committee members that so many members have not completed the eight core training areas, although members can now do so on-line in their own time. There is an increased risk for the Council at the non-completion of key areas e.g. the code of conduct and safeguarding.

Following a request from Committee members, the Learning and Development Manager is reviewing the training areas and developing a Training Strategy for Elected Members for 2027/28 onwards. The Strategy will set out the expectations on members clearly, with the emphasis on enabling Members to successfully and safely undertake their role.





PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

I am comfortable that robust arrangements are in place for supporting Elected Members in Gwynedd, and we will continue to build on these firm foundations over the coming years. It is time to start looking at and thinking about arrangements for May 2027 and onwards, and the following priorities are all linked to timely preparations:

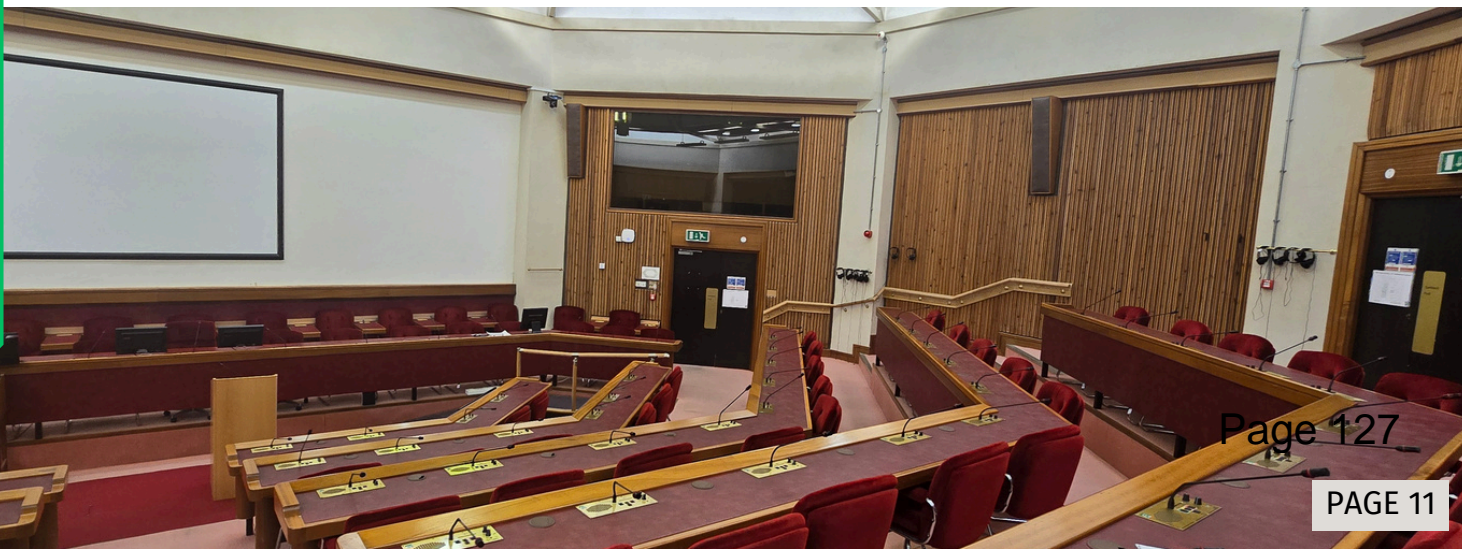
Preparing for the Election in May 2027.

We will continue with the work that has already begun looking at

- Pre-election arrangements
- Election day arrangements
- Welcome and induction arrangements
- Arrangements for the first 6-12 months and an outline of arrangements for the second year
- General support for Councillors.

Replacing the resources in the chambers

The project will follow the necessary procurement arrangements to replace the equipment in the chambers to enable simultaneous translation, remote access, voting and webcasting of Council meetings from the chambers. We want to ensure that the experience for the users of the chambers, for the people of Gwynedd who view the webcasts and for the Council staff responsible for using the system is user-friendly and effective. The work will have to be carefully scheduled, and committees will be somewhat affected if everything is to be in place ready to welcome Councillors for the 2027 term and onwards. However, we have no guarantee that we will be able to complete within this timescale.





TO CONCLUDE

All of you as Elected Members will probably be considering your wishes for the 2027 term. I want to thank all of you for your input over the years, and best wishes to all who will be standing in the next election or deciding to step down.



CYNGOR GWYNEDD



MEETING	Full Council
DATE OF MEETING	2 July 2026
TITLE OF ITEM	Cyngor Gwynedd's Statement regarding promoting Diversity
PURPOSE	To submit the Cyngor Gwynedd Diversity Statement, together with the Work Programme.
CONTACT OFFICER	Ian Jones – Head of Democracy

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

It is recommended that the Full Council adopt the new Diversity in Democracy Statement together with the Work Programme to support the implementation of the statement.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Foreword

3. Cyngor Gwynedd has been supportive of promoting diversity in democracy, with many steps being taken over the years to try to encourage more people from various backgrounds to stand for elections.
4. At the Full Council meeting on 7 October 2021, Cyngor Gwynedd adopted the Diversity in Democracy Statement - stating clearly and publicly our commitment here in Gwynedd.
5. With the Wales Local Government elections looming in May 2027, it is timely to review the public statement that Cyngor Gwynedd promotes diversity in democracy. Although it is not a statutory requirement, we believe that Cyngor Gwynedd's current elected members are eager to ensure a fair representation of society in Gwynedd to stand in the elections and therefore encourage individuals from every background to do so.
6. There is a review of the statement in **appendix 1**. There is no significant change in the statement, only minor updates to ensure it is current. However, it is

important that we reiterate our commitment to promoting diversity in democracy ahead of the 2027 Local Government election.

7. **Appendix 2** includes a work programme to ensure that the Council takes specific steps to try to promote diversity in democracy and realise the above statement.
8. The Full Council is therefore asked to adopt the new Diversity in Democracy Statement together with the work programme to support the implementation of the statement.

9. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

A draft of the statement was presented to the Council's Democracy Services Committee on 16/06/2026 and observations in support of the statement and the work programme were received, recommending the statement to the Full Council for adoption.

THE STATUTORY OFFICERS' OBSERVATIONS:

Monitoring Officer:

As noted in the work programme the Legal Services Teams will be contributing to and supporting this work moving towards the 2027 election

Statutory Finance Officer:

Nothing to add from the perspective of financial propriety



Datganiad Amrywiaeth Cyngor Gwynedd

Mae'r Cyngor hwn yn ymrwmo i fod yn Gyngor Amrywiol. Trwy hynny, rydym yn awyddus i fod yn adlewyrchu'r gymdeithas rydym yn byw ynddi gan geisio cynyddu'r niferoedd o ferched, pobl ifanc, pobl anabl, pobl o gymunedau Du, Asiaidd a lleiafrifoedd ethnig a phobl sy'n adnabod fel LGBTQ+ sy'n sefyll etholiad i fod yn Gyngorydd Gwynedd.

Rydym yn ymrwmo i

- Ddarparu ymrwymiad clir a chyhoeddus i wella amrywiaeth mewn democratiaeth
- Ddangos diwylliant agored a chroesawgar i bawb, a hyrwyddo'r safonau ymddygiad uchaf
- Hybu gweithrediadau fel Cyngor Amrywiol cyn etholiadau lleol 2027.
- Ddangos ymrwymiad i ddyletswydd gofal dros Gyngorwyr
- Ystyried sut i ddarparu hyblygrwydd ym musnes y cyngor drwy adolygu ein trefniadau ymarferol
- Barhau i annog fod yr holl aelodau yn derbyn y lwfansau a'r cyflogau y mae ganddynt hawl eu derbyn, ac yn benodol unrhyw ad-daliadau am gostau gofal, fel bod yr holl aelodau yn derbyn cydnabyddiaeth deg am eu gwaith ac nad yw rôl yr aelodau yn gyfyngedig i'r rhai all ei fforddio.
- Weithio tuag at sicrhau bod cynghorwyr o grwpiau a dangynrychiolir yn cael eu cynrychioli pryd bynnag fo'n bosibl mewn rolau proffil uchel a dylanwad uchel.



Gwynedd Council Diversity Statement

This Council commits to being a Diverse Council. Therefore, we wish to reflect the community in which we live by increasing the number of females, young people, disabled people, people from the Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and people who identify as LGBTQ+ who stand in the elections to be a Gwynedd Councillor.

We commit to

- Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy*
- Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct*
- Promote actions as a Diverse Council ahead of the 2027 local elections*
- Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors*
- Consider how to provide flexibility in council business by reviewing our practical arrangements*
- Continue to encourage all members to take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.*
- Work towards ensuring that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.*

APPENDIX 2 - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

In committing to being a Diverse Council, we wish to:

Commitment	What are we going to do?	Timetable
<i>Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy</i>	<p>Full Council to adopt a review of the diversity statement.</p> <p>Enquire with members about their experiences, including which obstacles they have faced and what additional steps can be taken to remove these obstacles.</p> <p>Update the 'being a councillor' page on the website, working with the elections team.</p> <p>Continue to raise awareness of the role of a councillor, working with the elections team and the communication team to draw attention to the benefits of voting and raise awareness of the Local Government elections at the same time. All of which with the intention of encouraging individuals to consider being a councillor.</p> <p>Continue to webcast meetings in order to be open and transparent. Consider developing ways of raising the public's awareness of the meetings being held and the items under consideration.</p>	<p>07/2026</p> <p>November / December 2026</p> <p>September / October 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<i>Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all, promoting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct</i>	<p>Full Council declaring support to the One Voice Wales, NALC and SLCC 'Pledge of Respect and Courtesy' campaign as a result of the Council Leader's notice of motion.</p> <p>Raise the awareness of the current political group leaders to the possibilities of promoting diversity in democracy and the requirements regarding promoting the standards of conduct from the highest level in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) 2021.</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive induction programme based on the Welsh Local Government Association induction framework to include training on the Code of Conduct (including respect towards others), and Equality and diversity (including self-awareness and conduct).</p> <p>Develop a Training Strategy for Members which will outline specific arrangements for Members to provide continuous development.</p>	<p>June 2026</p> <p>October 2026</p> <p>April 2027</p> <p>April 2027</p>
<i>Promote actions as a Diverse Council ahead of the 2027 local elections</i>	<p>Hold an ongoing programme of online activities to promote the role of Councillors and raise awareness of Local Government elections, encouraging individuals to consider standing.</p> <p>Offer a question and answer session for people who are considering standing. It will include an explanation of the role of councillor, expectations, commitment, opportunities, support etc. Videos of various councillors sharing their experiences are likely to be a part of the event.</p>	<p>October 2026 - Election</p> <p>January / February 2027</p>

Commitment	What are we going to do?	Timetable
<i>Demonstrate a commitment to a duty of care for Councillors</i>	<p>Consider holding specific training for new Councillors on lone working, personal safety, work-life balance, bullying and social media as part of the induction programme over the course of the first year.</p> <p>Provide advice and guidance on practical matters in terms of setting out your workspace properly - information on the councillors' intranet site.</p> <p>Give Councillors the proactive offer to ask them whether or not they wish to publish their home address and/or phone number on the website - only publishing the official e-mail address if that is the individual Member's wish.</p> <p>Raise the awareness of political leaders of the duty under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 regarding promoting good conduct.</p>	<p>April 2027</p> <p>Now / ongoing</p> <p>Now / ongoing</p> <p>November 2026</p>
<i>Consider how to provide flexibility in council business by reviewing our practical arrangements</i>	<p>Implement hybrid meetings and fully virtual meetings in order to make better use of Councillors' time.</p> <p>Conduct a questionnaire following the 2027 election on the timing of the Council's main committee meetings.</p> <p>Consider school holiday periods (avoiding them where possible) when creating the Council's annual meetings calendar, consulting with the Democracy Services Committee before submitting to the full Council for adoption.</p> <p>Ensure training and assistance for Councillors to have the technical skills to be able to take part in virtual and/or hybrid meetings.</p>	<p>Now / ongoing</p> <p>2027/28</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>ongoing</p>
<i>Continue to encourage all members to take up the allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.</i>	<p>Information about financial remuneration to be part of the sessions for the public, information on our website and information that will be presented to the members in the induction sessions.</p> <p>Salaries are paid automatically to Councillors in accordance with the Democracy and Boundaries Commission adjudication, unless an individual Councillor notes differently.</p> <p>Continuously remind Councillors of the reimbursement of care costs that is available - via the Members' Bulletin and by political Group Leaders.</p>	<p>October 2026 onwards</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<i>Work towards ensuring that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high-profile, high influence roles.</i>	<p>Working with political group leaders to ensure that consideration is given to under-represented groups for high-profile, high influence roles.</p>	<p>2027/28</p>

MEETING	Full Council
DATE	2 July 2026
TITLE	Members Confidential Reporting Policy (" Whistleblowing ")
AUTHORS	Catrin Thomas - Corporate Director Iwan Evans – Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer
AELOD CABINET	Cyng. Llio Owen Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Legal and Welsh Language
PURPOSE	To recommend that the Council adopt the Confidential Reporting Policy ("Whistleblowing") Members to be included in the Constitution.

1.Recommendation

That the Council adopts the Members Confidential Reporting Policy (“Whistleblowing ") to be incorporated in the Constitution

2. Background/ Context of introducing the new Policy and Procedure

- 2.1 On 20th January 2026 the Cabinet adopted a new Whistleblowing Policy for Staff. As an amendment to the Constitution the Policy was reported on the Full Council on 5 March 2026. That policy is specific for the Council's employed staff and others in employment/ volunteering positions and derives from the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and consequently does not apply to Elected Members.
- 2.2 Therefore, it was acknowledged at the time that there was a need to consider a policy enabling Elected Members to also present, in confidence, concerns of the same nature as to what is included in a normal Whistleblowing Policy, i.e., matters that could be criminal, significant malpractice or gross inappropriate conduct, whether from a Member or an officer. However, it must also be highlighted that the Whistleblowing procedure for staff is based on employment legislation. It creates a framework of rights, protection and legal outcomes that are not reflected in the relationship between elected members and the Council.
- 2.3 When drawing up this type of Policy, it must be acknowledged that members come into contact with the Council for many reasons. This could be raising concerns on behalf of constituents, complaining about a Department or service's arrangements, or expressing discontent about the quality of the work of a specific team. This is a part of the Council's daily work, and it is dealt with under a range of arrangements and Protocols. These are matters that would not be a routine part of the dealings of staff and their employer or contractors. They are dealt with through the Council's routine arrangements. This is not what is covered here, but rather matters that are the cause of a more serious and grave concern.

- 2.4 There is also a need to outline what is in the Members' Code of Conduct and the requirements on members to report on specific matters. Therefore, it is a requirement under the Code for members to report to the Monitoring Officer if they are of the opinion that a member has breached the Code of Conduct. This is not optional and a member may be required to refer the matter to the Ombudsman. In addition, further provision within the Code of Conduct places a legal requirement on members who discover criminal behaviour in the Council's work to either report to the Council by means of a confidential reporting procedure or relevant enforcement agency. It is also emphasised that criminal behaviour within the scope of this may include a range of matters that could be criminal. For example, dishonesty, health and safety offences and matters such as attacks. Safeguarding matters are exempt as there is a specific procedure for reporting on such matters that would address the duty under the Code. However, beyond this, there are instances where it is appropriate for Members to obtain assurance of confidentiality when highlighting specific gross misconduct.
- 2.5 Adopting this policy is an essential step to strengthen the culture of transparency and accountability, and it has been noted consistently as a high priority following the publication of the Child Practice Review Report: Our Bravery Brought Justice. Support from the Response Board is also to be adopted, reflecting a strong consensus across the organisation regarding its purpose and value.

3. Other arrangements for different types of concerns

- 3.1 As well as this Expressing Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy and Procedure, several other clear pathways already exist by the Council for reporting on different types of concerns (e.g. safeguarding, fraud, or Member and Officer code of conduct issues). However, in some circumstances, it is essential to be able to protect the confidentiality of those making the allegations, in particular to create the confidence to raise concerns, and ensure that sensitive information is handled appropriately.
- 3.2 In order to support Members and to ensure consistency, Appendix 2 provides a useful overview of different paths for enquiries, complaints or disclosing concerns. This brief overview is an attempt to include all different pathways in one useful place for Members, and it will be included in the Members' Handbook in the future. It will also be the basis of the induction training for new Members following the Local Government Election 2027.
- 3.3 Also see below a link to the full document of each of the processes highlighted on the overview in Appendix 2:

Type of 'Concern / Enquiry'	Relevant document:
Disclosing Serious Concerns / Behaviour	The Constitution (to be reviewed after the Council meeting on 02/07/2026)

Safeguarding	Polisi-Diogelu-Ionawr-2025-Cymraeg.pdf
Complaint about another Member's conduct	Adran-18---Cod-ymddygiad-aelodau.pdf
Fraud	Anti-fraud Strategy: Atodiad 1 - Strategaeth.pdf
Complaints about an Officer / Chief Officer	Member / Officers Relations Protocol Adran-21---Protocol-ar-gyfer-cysylltiadau-aelodau-a-swyddogion.pdf
Complaint about a Service on behalf of electors	Complaints Policy: Cyngor Gwynedd Concerns and Complaints Policy
Service request on behalf of electors	Member / Officers Relations Protocol Adran-21---Protocol-ar-gyfer-cysylltiadau-aelodau-a-swyddogion.pdf
General enquiry / request for information about Council services	Galw Gwynedd or direct contact with the service or information on the website Adran-21---Protocol-ar-gyfer-cysylltiadau-aelodau-a-swyddogion.pdf

4. Engagement

- 4.1 When drawing up the Policy, discussions were held and input sought by the Member Enquiries Task Group, which had already discussed this procedure when looking at the general relations between Members and Officers. Engagement was also undertaken with all Members and a single response was received noting that it was; "clear and self-explanatory".
- 4.2 In addition, consultation was also undertaken with the Protect Organisation, which is a charitable body specialising in whistleblowing matters under the act to identify opportunities to take advantage of their support. On the whole positive feedback was received for the Policy but with suggestions for adapting and strengthening some aspects. These changes are noted and underlined in the appendix. The only aspect where an amendment was not incorporated was in relation to the list of possible sources of behaviours that would be relevant to the Policy. This list has been included partly due to the specific requirements of the Code of Conduct and also to give context. However, the suggestion to extend the list to include behaviours by the public and businesses as the source of concerns was incorporated

in the draft at paragraph 5.3 .In addition, the wording has been amended to provide better clarity as to the purpose of the list.

Standards Committee

The views of the Standards Committee were sought on the 8th of June, and they confirmed their support for the Policy.

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

The Policy was considered by the Committee on the 18th of June 2026 where it was stated:

"RESOLVED that the Committee declared support for the Policy and asked the Monitoring Officer to make changes in line with his response to members' comments.."

The Committee specifically asked to clarify the reference to safeguarding arrangements in Part 3.1 in that it related to referring concerns about individuals not wider policy issues. In addition, modifications were requested to highlight that the Policy did not prevent members from directly reporting an issue externally. These changes have been incorporated.

Statutory Officer Comments

Monitoring Officer

Joint author

Cheif Finance Officer

"I support the decision sought; there are no direct financial obligations."

Background Information

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee 19 January 2026 [Agenda for Communities Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 19 January 2026, 10:30am](#)

Cabinet [Agenda for The Cabinet on Tuesday, 20th January, 2026, 1.00 pm](#)

Full Council 5 February 2026 [Agenda for The Council on Thursday, 5 February 2026, 1.30pm](#)

Standards Committee 8 June 2026 [Agenda for Standards Committee on Monday, 8th June, 2026, 10.30 am](#)

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee 18 June 2026 [Agenda for Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 18th June, 2026, 10.30 am](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Elected Members' Whistleblowing Policy (draft)

Appendix 2 – Overview of the Members' Pathway for Reporting Concerns

Confidential Reporting (“Whistle Blowing”) Policy for Members

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Gwynedd Council as an organisation, the Elected Members and the Officers serving the Council, are committed to the highest standards of honesty, propriety and accountability in all aspects of the Council's functions.
- 1.2 The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for Members and a Code of Conduct for Staff and is committed to upholding these behaviours in all aspects of its work.(In this document reference to "Member" or "Members" means anyone who is bound to the Code of Conduct for Members or other individuals co-opted by the Council to any committee or body)
- 1.3 The Council has adopted a Policy for staff in accordance with the provision of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1998.
- 1.4 This document builds on the Council's confidential reporting procedure to provide a clear pathway for Members to be able to report on matters that may constitute criminal, serious malpractice or serious inappropriate behaviour. It's designed to provide clear guidance to any Members who may have concerns. Whistleblowing helps to protect staff and service-users, and we want to hear about any concerns you may have so action can be taken to resolve them.
- 1.5 Paragraph 18.3.6(B) of the Code of Conduct for Members provides that they must:
- “.....report, whether through your authority’s confidential reporting procedure or direct to the proper authority, any conduct by another member or anyone who works for, or on behalf of, your authority which you reasonably believe involves or is likely to involve criminal behaviour (which for the purposes of this paragraph does not include offences or behaviour capable of punishment by way of a fixed penalty).”
- 1.6 The purpose of this procedure is to provide the confidential reporting procedure referred to above and to provide clarity to Members on the process for raising such concerns within the Council.

2 Scope of this Procedure

- 2.1 This procedure is relevant to all Members.
- 2.2 This procedure applies to concerns about the conduct of (list not exhaustive):-
- (i) Members of the Council
 - (ii) Council Staff;
 - (iii) Agency workers, consultants and contractors engaged by the Council;

- (iv) Volunteers who participate in the provision of services by the Council.
- (v) Members of the public and businesses in their engagement with the Council.

2.3 The Council has several other pathway processes that enable Members to submit day-to-day concerns about performance, policy, decisions etc and this procedure is not intended to replace these processes. To avoid any ambiguity this Procedure applies to :

- (i) Matters which may be of a criminal nature
- (ii) Significant malpractice
- (iii) Serious inappropriate behaviours
- (iv) Illegal activities

3 Matters to which this Procedure does not apply

3.1 This procedure will generally not apply in the following cases as they are already being or have been investigated or there are other procedures in place to raise concerns : -

- (i) Matters subject to a current or closed investigation (either internally or externally);
- (ii) Complaints arising out of a breach of the Protocol on Member/Officer Relations.
- (iii) Allegations that a member has breached the Councils Code of Conduct for Members
- (iv) Concerns about the safety and/or well-being of a person (child or adult) which should be **directed to the referrals system in** accordance with the Councils Corporate Safeguarding Policy

4 Confidentiality

4.1 Reports or referrals made under this procedure are treated by the Council as made in confidence and will not be made public (or communicated to other Members or officers) unless: required by law, required by procedures on investigating allegations, or in circumstances where this is necessary such as providing evidence or making a complaint to the appropriate investigating authority. This will be discussed with members on all occasions.

4.2 A Member who makes a report under this procedure will be expected to keep their report confidential and will ensure that any investigation is not impeded by disclosure of the report or complaint they have made.

5 Reporting Concerns

5.1 Conduct to which this procedure applies should be reported to the Council's Monitoring Officer who will decide how to take the matter further and conclude whether the matter in question is appropriate for this procedure or for another recognised process or procedure.

Appendix 1

- 5.2 If the concern relates to fraud or corruption then the Monitoring Officer will refer the matter to the Internal Audit Manager in the first instance.
- 5.3 Reports may be made orally or in writing. Written reports must be clearly marked as CONFIDENTIAL. You may use your Council e-mail or a personal e-mail to raise a concern.
- 5.4 In the event of a conflict of interest by the Monitoring Officer the matter should be referred to the Chief Executive
- 5.5 If there is a conflict of interest between the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer, then the matter should be referred to the Head of Corporate Services.
- 5.6 In an exceptional case where the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate services have an interest, the matter may be brought to the attention of the Wales Audit Office in the first instance.
- 5.7 Depending on the circumstances of the case at hand, the Monitoring Officer (or in the case of 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 the relevant officer) may arrange for an investigation to take place internally or refer the matter to an independent body or investigator in accordance with the normal propriety requirements. He or she may also advise a Member in relevant cases to refer the matter externally e.g. to the attention of the Police or the Public Services Ombudsman.
- 5.8 It is recognised that raising concerns about serious misconduct can be a difficult step for Members, and anyone using this policy will have access to independent support and advice through the Medra* and Protect** services, before, during, or after making a disclosure.
- 5.9 **Whilst Members are encouraged to raise concerns through the Council's arrangements, this Policy does not preclude Members' ability to report directly to any external body or regulator with responsibility for investigating the subject of the concern.**

6 Action Following a Member's Report

- 6.1 Once the Monitoring Officer or other officer has received a report from a Member under this procedure, he will consider the matter and determine what, if any, further action is required. This may involve an investigation by an appropriate officer such as the Councils Audit Team or Health and Safety Team . They will acknowledge receipt and make initial contact with the Member within no later than 7 working days following the referral.
- 6.2 Alternatively, the Monitoring Officer may decide that the matter requires the involvement of the Police or Public Services Ombudsman for Wales or another body, regulator or law enforcement agency and may report the matter or direct the member to report the matter.

6.3 The Monitoring Officer may advise the reporting Member of the outcome of the investigation. However, this may not be possible in all cases. Depending on the nature of the matter giving rise to the concern, it might be necessary for further details of the investigation to remain confidential and as such to be withheld from the reporting Member. Or it may be in the hands of a separate enforcement or regulatory body. In so far as appropriate this will be explained to the member.

7. Victimisation

7.1 If any Member feels they have been treated poorly by a member of staff because of making a disclosure, please inform the Monitoring Officer or any other of the listed officers .This can include negative treatment such as negative comments, ignoring or removing work, and refusing to co-operate with a Member because they have raised a concern. Such conduct is not acceptable and although the statutory protections do not apply to Members it is important that such conduct is brought to light and addressed.

Contacts

<u>Role</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>e-mail</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
Monitoring Officer	Iwan Evans	iwangdevans@gwynedd.llyw.cymru	07435741322
Chief Executive	Dafydd Gibbard	dafyddgibbard@gwynedd.llyw.cymru	01286 632001
Head of Corporate Services	Ian Jones	ianjones@gwynedd.llyw.cymru	07795823944
Audit Manager	Luned Fon Jones	lunedfonjones@gwynedd.llyw.cymru	01286 634687

Audit Wales

[Whistleblowing | Audit Wales](#)

Medra Counselling Service

[Edrych ar ôl lles fy hun / Looking after my wellbeing](#)

Protect – “Speak Up to Stop Harm “

“Protect runs a free, confidential legal advice line for those who have whistleblowing concerns.”

[Protect | Speak Up, Stop Harm](#)

Appendix 2: Overview of the Members' Enquiries and Reporting Pathways

Type of 'Concern / Enquiry'	e.g.	Reporting Procedure
Disclosing Serious/Criminal Behaviours or Concerns	Criminal behaviour disclosure in accordance with the requirement in the Code of Conduct; including corruption, fraud and offences such as health and safety	<p>New procedure to be submitted to the Full Council on 2 July 2026</p> <p>The Constitution</p> <p>(to be reviewed after the Council meeting on 02/07/2026)</p> <p>In accordance with the Members' Whistleblowing Policy (NEW)</p> <p>Report to the Monitoring Officer or in accordance with part 5.4-5.7 of the Procedure</p>
Safeguarding	<p>Physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse</p> <p>Physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial neglect</p>	<p>In accordance with the Safeguarding-Policy-January-2025-English.pdf</p> <p>namely</p> <p>Contact the Police (999) if a child or adult is at risk</p> <p>Contact Cyngor Gwynedd Social Services</p> <p>Safeguarding-Policy-January-2025-English.pdf</p>
Complaint about another Member's conduct	Bringing the post and the authority into disrepute, disrespect, abuse of position, misuse of the Authority's resources, breach of confidentiality, not drawing attention to breaches of the code.	<p>In accordance with:</p> <p>Section-18---Members-code-of-conduct.pdf</p> <p>Report to the Monitoring Officer</p>
Fraud	False representation; intentional failure to disclose information or fraud through abuse of position	<p>In accordance with the Code of Conduct and the Anti-fraud Strategy: Appendix 1 - Strategy.pdf</p> <p>Report to the Audit Manager</p>

Complaint about an Officer / Chief Officer	Being disrespectful towards a member, ignoring correspondence, breach of confidentiality, or acting contrary to the Members and Officers Protocol.	In accordance with Section-21---Protocol-on-member-and-officer-relations.pdf Report to the officer's line manager; arrangements for escalating to the Head of Department / Director if it is not resolved.
Complaint about the Chief Executive / Monitoring Officer	Conduct that is contrary to the Members and Officers Protocol, or breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.	In accordance with Section-21---Protocol-on-member-and-officer-relations.pdf
Complaint about a Service on behalf of electors	Waste collections regularly missed in an area, delay	In accordance with the Cyngor Gwynedd Concerns and Complaints Policy Informal Resolution by reporting to the relevant Manager / Head of Department. Submission of a Formal Complaint through the central complaints point of contact - Galw Gwynedd, website or complaints e-mail.
Service request on behalf of electors	Request for a new bin, request to replace a street lamp, reporting a pothole	Direct request through any medium of the members' choice, e.g., e-mail / phone the service directly, through Galw Gwynedd; through the public website; through the members' Self-service.
General enquiry / request for information about Council services	Asking what day the bin is being collected, advice on a planning application, Council tax requests	Contact via Galw Gwynedd or direct contact with the service or information on the website.

MEETING:	Full Council
DATE:	2nd July 2026
TITLE:	Amendments to the Constitution – Section 22 – Staff Whistleblowing Policy
AUTHOR	Iwan Evans, Monitoring Officer

1. Recommendation

To accept the information about the amendments to Section 22 of the Constitution set out in Appendix 1

2. Background

2.1 In accordance with paragraph 2.6.3 of the Constitution, I have the right to incorporate legislative changes into the Constitution.

"2.6.3 Legislative Change

The Monitoring Officer may amend any part of the Constitution where such amendment is necessary in order to comply with any legislative provision. Such amendments will come into force when the Monitoring Officer so decides or when the legislation (where applicable) provides for it. Such changes will be reported to the next meeting of the Full Council for information."

2.2 On the 6th of April this year Section 23 of the Employment Rights Act 2025 came into force. According to the department it added to the behaviours that can be included within the definition of protected disclosures in the Employment Rights Act 1996. This Act is amended to include provisions and protections arising from the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. In response to this statutory change I have acted to include "sexual harassment" in the Ringing Policy to reflect the latest statutory definition of protected disclosure.

22.1 Frequently Asked Questions

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when an employee, contractor or supplier shares a serious concern about malpractice, inappropriate behaviour or illegal activity with the Council.

Why does this policy exist?

The policy gives people a safe way to speak out if they have serious concerns. It helps to protect the Council's standards and to ensure that inappropriate actions are prevented.

What can I raise a concern about?

A concern can be raised about anything of public interest, such as:

- fraud or misuse of public funds
- abuse or neglect towards customers or clients
- corruption or abuse of authority
- risk to health and safety
- concealment of important information or malpractice
- **Sexual Harassment**

22.5.3 Complaints can be about something that is thought to be in the public interest including something

- that is illegal, fraudulent or corrupt;
- which amounts to maladministration as defined by the Local Government Ombudsman. Maladministration encompasses, for example, unjustified delay, failure to follow the authority's rules or the law, prejudice, using inappropriate considerations, providing inaccurate information and several similar matters which cause injustice.
- that is contrary to, or is not in accordance with, the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations or policies, codes of practice or legal obligations;
- which does not meet the established standards of practice;
- which is in breach of any statutory code of practice;
- **which amounts to sexual harassment**
- which amounts to inappropriate behaviour;
- which amounts to sexual, physical, or emotional abuse of clients;
- which endangers the health and safety of an individual;
- which causes, or is likely to cause, harm to the environment;
- which is a miscarriage of justice;
- which is an abuse of power or the use of the Council's power and authority for some unauthorised purpose;
- which fails to rectify or take reasonable steps to report an issue which is likely to result in a large avoidable cost or loss of consequence to the Council or which would otherwise jeopardise the Council, or;
- which is an attempt to hide any of the above examples.

MEETING:	Full Council
DATE:	2nd July 2026
AELOD CABINET:	Llio Elenid Owen, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language
TITLE	Procurement Thresholds and Modifications to the Contracts Procedure Rules
CONTACT OFFICERS:	Iwan Evans, Monitoring Officer Arwel Evans Procurement Manager

1. Recommendation

1. To increase the procurement thresholds as follows:

- Procurements up to £10,000 single quotation (previously £5,000)
- Procurements between £10,000 and £100,000 request three quotations
- Procurements of over £100,000 open request for quotations or tenders (previously £50,000) and;

2. Make the minor amendments to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules as set out in the Appendix .

2. The Reason Why the Council Needs To Make the Decision:

2.1 It is timely to review our tender and quotation thresholds in the wake of a change in national contracting and procurement legislation and a significant increase in the cost of goods and services due to inflation.

2.2 The item is presented as the request to increase the thresholds and make a change to procurement and contracts arrangements involves modifying the Contract Procedure Rules contained in Section 17 of the Council's constitution.

3. Introduction And Rationale

3.1 Procurement thresholds are the limit that determine when a formal competition needs to be held to appoint contractors or service providers, and when asking for quotes only is sufficient. The current procurement thresholds have been in place since 1996. Since then, prices and inflation have increased by an average of about 3% each year. As a result, today's prices are about 2.4 times higher than they were then.

Current thresholds

3.2 Our current procurement thresholds include the following arrangements:

- Purchases up to £5,000 a single quotation.
- Purchases between £5,000 and £50,000 request three quotations.

- Purchases over £50,000 open request for quotations or tenders.

The method of calculating the contract value has also changed recently where VAT is included. This has meant a real-term reduction in the thresholds.

National Procurement Regulations

- 3.3 The method of procuring goods and services is governed by the Procurement Act 2023 that came into force in February 2025. The Council has established Contract Procedure Rules which set out arrangements for the local implementation of these regulations. From April 2026, the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act will also be fully in force.
- 3.4 It is primarily the monetary value of the contract that determines the extent to which the national regulations apply. The national regulation thresholds are reviewed every two years, with the next review period in January 2028. [PPN 11/23: New Thresholds - GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppn-1123-new-thresholds>](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppn-1123-new-thresholds)
- 3.5 While it is possible to influence and set local arrangements for contracts that have a value below the national thresholds, there is still a need to comply with the national procurement principles. The procurement principles seek to ensure that all public sector procurement is carried out in an equal, fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner.
- 3.6 Our procurement and contracting arrangements also seek to ensure that we get the best value for money from providers who deliver quality, safely and legally.

National Landscape

- 3.7 Although public organisations are governed by the same Procurement Act, procurement and contracting arrangements vary. In 2022, the WLGA undertook an investigation to compare the procurement arrangements and thresholds of Local Authorities in Wales.
- 3.8 Some authorities appear to have set thresholds to coincide with the Welsh Government's Policy Note [WPPN 013 <https://www.llyw.cymru/wppn-013-caffael-syn-gyfeillgar-i-fusnesau-bach-a-chanolig>](https://www.llyw.cymru/wppn-013-caffael-syn-gyfeillgar-i-fusnesau-bach-a-chanolig) and others have a higher threshold. The higher thresholds average around £75,000 with some distinguishing between goods and services and the threshold for works (construction).
- 3.9 The Welsh Government Policy Note encourages tendering opportunities to be openly advertised over £25,000 + VAT. This is to encourage open competition and to try to make businesses more aware of the opportunities and apply for work. Neither the Welsh Government nor the WLGA intends to harmonise the thresholds across Welsh Local Authorities.

For information, the thresholds for some of the North Wales councils are:

Local Authority	Current Tendering Thresholds	
	Goods and Services	Works (Construction)
Conwy Council	£50,000	£50,000
Denbighshire Council	£25,000	£250,000
Flintshire Council	£25,000	£250,000
Cyngor Gwynedd	£50,000	£50,000
Isle of Anglesey County Council	£214,904	£5,372,609
Wrexham Council	£25,000	£75,000

4. Consideration

4.1 There are a number of factors to consider when adjusting the thresholds, I would assume changes would entail;

Lower thresholds:

- Open competition and value assurance
- Transparent award and appointment arrangements by stating criteria
- A comprehensive process that provides an opportunity to assess the complete aspects of the purchase

Higher thresholds:

- More direct appointments
- Earlier appointment arrangements with the need for less administrative resources
- Limited competition to achieve value assurance

4.2 Higher thresholds are an opportunity to support local businesses in providing flexibility in our procedures to invite local companies to submit quotations. There would also be an opportunity to include in the procedures arrangements to encourage open competition where a number of local businesses also exist. It would also be necessary to be vigilant that local start-ups have the opportunity to apply for work and that higher thresholds do not mean that there is no need to review arrangements before renewing contracts. It needs to be pointed out that a large proportion of the Council's contracts exceed the national thresholds.

Construction and Construction Work

4.3 There are different national thresholds for goods and services in the areas of Care and Construction (works). The thresholds where the national regulations apply are £663k for areas of care and £5.3m for construction works.

4.4 For consistency and to simplify the arrangements of our contract procedure rules, I would recommend that all areas we procure follow the same quotation and tender thresholds.

5. Changes To The Contracts Procedures Rules

5.1 The minor changes to the regulations are intended to raise awareness of the value of the contract where a contract details notice needs to be published.

5.2 Consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Head of Finance for authorising direct appointments is included to ensure compliance and appropriate use of these arrangements.

6. Governance and Audit Committee

The recommendation was submitted for consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee who resolved:

"DECISION

- Accept the report
- Support changes to the Procurement Thresholds
- Recommend that Full Council approve Amendments to the Constitution – Section 17: Contracts Procedure Regulations"

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS:

Monitoring Officer:

Joint Author

Head of Finance:

From the perspective of financial propriety, I welcome this review of the Contract Procedure Rules, including the thresholds outlined therein. As the report explains, the thresholds have not been reviewed for some time and this, over time, has led to the creation of bureaucratic hurdles that slow down the smooth administration of the Authority. It is timely and appropriate that these issues are reviewed.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Table of changes to the Contract Procedure Rules

Review of the Contract Procedure Rules – Changes Table

17.2.1	A definition of a <i>Direct Award Justification Report</i> has been added.
17.2.5	Responsibility has been amended from the <i>Legal Department</i> to the <i>Monitoring Officer</i> .
17.7.2(a)	The threshold for one quote has been amended from £5,000 to £10,000.
17.7.2(b)	The threshold for 3 has been amended from £5,000-£50,000 to £10,000-£100,000.
17.8.1	The value for contracts which need to be tendered has been amended from £50,000 to £100,000.
17.8.1	The requirement has been amended from “at least three tenders invited” to include the option of open competition .
17.9.4	A new clause has been added to reflect publishing requirements under the <i>Procurement Act 2023</i> : A <i>Contract Details Notice</i> must be published for contracts awarded under the Act with a value of £30,000 or above .
17.17.3	A reference to the <i>Direct Award Justification Report</i> has been added to align with requirements under the <i>Procurement Act 2023</i> .
17.17.5	A specific reference to the circumstances and conditions when a direct award may be used has been added.
17.17.5	A new requirement has been introduced to consult with the Procurement Manager (for any contract value/ extension of more than £50,000) and the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Finance (for any contract value/ extension of more than £100,000) prior to undertaking any direct award.
17.17.6	A new clause has been added to note the Monitoring Officer's right to delegate.
17.25.6	The wording of the contract value threshold has been amended from £25,000 + VAT to £30,000 inclusive of VAT. It requires publication of a <i>Contract Details Notice</i> has been explicitly included.