



*The Annual report by the
Head of Democracy Services
2023/24*



FOREWORD

I am delighted to present my annual report outlining the support that is available for Gwynedd Councillors. In this report I have focused on the additional achievements undertaken during the year to support you.

I am eager to continue to support you in the most effective way and this would not be possible without your support as Councillors, and the support of the various officers working in the background.

I look forward to working with you over the coming years. Thank you.

Regards,

Ian



Ian Jones,
Head of Democracy Services

REPORTING BACK ON THE PRIORITIES FOR 2023/24

2023/24 – continued support

2023/24 has been a year of continuing with the work of building on the solid foundations of support that are in place for you. I had outlined the four top priorities for the year. The following shows the progress against all four areas.

SECURITY AND SUPPORT FOR COUNCILLORS

What did we promise?

Continue to focus on security issues for Councillors as well as mental health and well-being support for Councillors.



What did we achieve?

- We continue to focus on Security matters for Councillors, with risk assessments undertaken prior to all hybrid meetings.
- Specific training on Security for Members is held, with Security issues also being discussed as part of the training for Chairs.
- A series of Member bulletins have given focus to well-being support for Councillors, and also specific pages on the Members Intranet available.
- Informal sessions with female Councillors are held with the benefit of Councillors being able to support each other in their unique role.

TRAINING FOR COUNCILLORS — PERSONAL DEVELOPEMENT TALKS

What did we promise?

We will offer 1-1 sessions for Councillors to discuss support in terms of development in your role and to prepare for potential future roles e.g. role as Chair.

What did we achieve?

- There has been some change of track by prioritising the need to address core training as a starting point.
- We have started by revisiting the most appropriate use of resources by initially targeting core training:
- Nevertheless, we are running a full programme of training, including more developmental training for Councillors.
- We provide high-quality internal and external training.
- The challenge now is to ensure the most appropriate use of resources.



EXAMINING OUR SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS FOLLOWING THE WORK OF AUDIT WALES

What did we promise?

We will examine our scrutiny arrangements in light of the work report from Audit Wales on our current arrangements, examining whether there is a need for more training or to adapt our committees in any way.



Purpose of Scrutiny in Gwynedd:

TO FACILITATE DRIVING IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICES FOR THE PEOPLE OF GWYNEDD

This will be done constructively by:

- Investigating concerns regarding the quality of our services
- Acting as a Critical Friend, and ensuring that appropriate attention is given to the citizen's voice
- Identifying good practice and weaknesses
- Holding the Cabinet and its members to account
- Review or scrutinise, decisions or actions, that are not the responsibility of the Cabinet

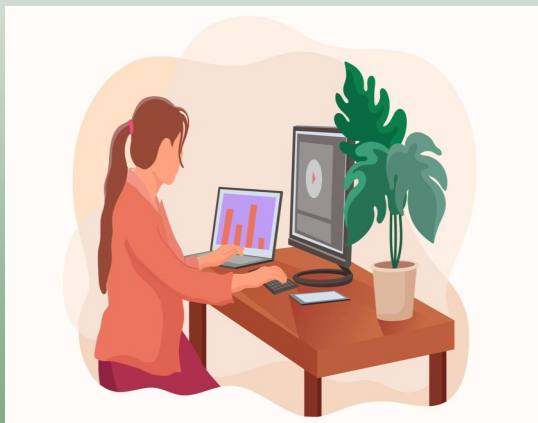
What did we achieve?

- ♦ A review has been completed during the year.
- ♦ Confirmation of proceeding with current arrangements of 3 committees.
- ♦ Training has been offered to all Councillors to emphasise the importance of strategic and insightful questioning and the need for clear recommendations in order to be able to track and evidence the impact of scrutiny.
- ♦ Modifications to our internal arrangements to sharpen our scrutiny arrangements e.g., a particular focus on insightful questioning in the briefings, preparing questions in advance in the informal sessions and self-appraisal of the performance of committees.

A PAPERLESS COUNCIL

What did we promise?

Moving towards becoming a paperless Council to reduce our carbon footprint and to realise the relevant savings for the Council



What did we achieve?

- * We have acted to achieve the various benefits - environmental benefit, instant sharing of information, achieving savings.
- * 29 Councillors received paper copies (for between 1 and 10 committees each).
- * We have provided an additional screen for Councillors to assist with their work and offered 1:1 training on the installation and use of the equipment.
- * Some individuals continue to receive paper copies as required.
- * This has saved the Council money with printing and postage costs, as well as reducing the carbon footprint, avoiding any postal problems, and enabling direct communication etc.

Thank you to everyone for their co-operation.

2023/24— OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

91% of Gwynedd Councillors have reported that the service from the Democracy Team is good/very good.

98% of Decision Notices from Council committees are published within 5 working days.

Ran the committee programme for the year, over **150** meetings in total, virtual and multi-location meetings and developed our web-broadcasting arrangements.

Administered the salaries and expenses of Councillors and publishing the information in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Assisted individual Councillors with various situations. Reviewed the Councillors' maternity arrangements and rights is one example

Welcomed a new Councillor during the year, and reviewed our welcoming and induction arrangements.

Took additional steps to overcome connection issues and improve sound in the chambers for hybrid meetings.

Administered regional committees and supported the establishment of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee and its sub-committees.

Administered Councillors salaries and costs in accordance with the Independent Remuneration Committee.

Conducted a full programme of training with recordings of many of the events on the Members Intranet.

Continued to develop the Members' Intranet and publish a weekly Members' bulletin for timely communication.

Offered support and guidance with using technology in meetings.

Supported the Chairs and Vice-chairs of various committees by providing them with a briefing note, reports, advice and guidance in both formal and informal situations. Held specific training for Chairs and prospective Chairs, including an element of using technology.

PRIORITIES FOR 2024/25

During 2024/25 we will continue with the usual array of support for Councillors. In addition we will:

- ◇ ***Continue to build upon our arrangements for security and support for Elected Members within our means.***

- ◇ ***Rationalise the training programme and briefing programme for Councillors in order to ensure the best use of Councillors' time and the best use of Council resources.***

- ◇ ***Proceed with the changes to scrutiny arrangements to ensure that scrutiny makes a difference.***

- ◇ ***Work with the Chair of the committee to highlight the support available to Councillors—starting with 'the Chair's newsletter' as part of the Members Bulletin following each Democratic Services committee meeting .***

Please contact me or any of the team directly to discuss any concerns.

I look forward to working with you over the coming year.