
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 3/7/25

Present: Councillor Elin Walker Jones (Vice-chair in the chair).

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

Officers: Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Carys Fôn Williams (Head of Housing and Property), Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Menna Baines, Beth Lawton, Richard Glyn Roberts and Ioan Thomas.

2. MINUTES

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

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

4. THE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Condolences were extended to the family of Councillor Rob Triggs, who had passed away recently, and Cllr Eryl Jones-Williams paid tribute to him.

Condolences were expressed to the family of the late O P Huws Llanllyfni who had been a Member of this Council for many years. A tribute was paid to him by Cllr Craig ab Iago.

Condolences were extended to the family of Sharon Warnes, a Lay Member on the Governance and Audit Committee who had recently passed away, and the Vice-chair paid tribute to her.

It was noted that Annette Bryn Parri had recently passed away, and condolences were expressed to her family.

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

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

Reference was made to the retirement of two highly experienced members of the Council's Management Team after spending their careers in Cyngor Gwynedd. Aled Davies, Head of the Adults Department and Geraint Owen, the Council's Corporate Director were thanked for all the work they had achieved over the last forty years.

The following were congratulated:

- Nyth (Fran Wen, Bangor) who had been Highly Commended at the [RIBA MacEwen Awards ceremony](#), which recognised buildings that improve the lives of people and the community. The transformation of the former St Mary's church in Bangor into a new creative cultural hub was praised.
- Councillor Gwilym Jones on becoming a grandfather again, to a little girl called Nansi.
- Caernarfon Rugby Club (Men) on winning the Welsh Rugby Union Division 1 Cup – the first North Wales club to win it.

Best wishes were extended to the Wales Women's Football Team in Euro 2025.

Councillor Geraint Wyn Parry was welcomed to his first meeting of this Council as the Member for Teigl, and former Councillor Linda Ann Jones was once again thanked for all her work over the years.

Following the recent announcement that the Senedd Election would be held on 7 May 2026, it was noted that the Council's 2026 Annual Meeting would be moved from that date to 14 May.

It was noted that this was the last meeting of the Full Council where Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer) would be taking the minutes as she would be retiring at the end of July. She was thanked for her service taking the minutes in Council meetings over a number of years, and having worked in her position for over forty years.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. QUESTIONS

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

(1) Question from Councillor Elin Hywel

I sincerely congratulate officers for creating such a valuable, useful and laudable resource as the *Mam, Dad a Magu* podcast.

I'm glad to hear that user opinions are sought regularly.

It is noted that concern has been raised regarding the appropriateness of the title '*Mam, Dad a Magu*' on several occasions. I accept the reasoning that engagement with fathers needs to increase. We know that fathers, like mothers, are successful in supporting families that do not follow the traditional, heteronormative pattern offered in the title, are worthy of our support and are to be celebrated.

Nevertheless, the concern that the podcast's title conveys a heteronormative message remains, and that it could be read as prohibitive. The result of this would be a failure to be inclusive of the diversity of families that exist in our society.

It is noted that the failure of the title is not a reflection of the success of the content and the hard work of our officers.

Gwynedd schools have been talking about "the family" for a long time. We do this to ensure that they are inclusive. Will Cyngor Gwynedd follow this example, which has been shown to be effective, and change the title to mention "Raising a family"?

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

Thank you for the question, Elin, and thank you for taking an interest in the work of the Children's Department and in the specific work of the Early Years service. I'm also very pleased with the praise for the good work that is ongoing, and it's great to be able to state that the podcast has received a lot of positive attention and good feedback. Gwynedd's Early Years service is leading nationally in developing this kind of exciting podcast, and it's wonderful that we have the opportunity to celebrate that.

In the context of the question, it's worth confirming that here in Cyngor Gwynedd we welcome and provide services to all kinds of families, not just traditional, heteronormative ones, and we believe that diversity and a welcoming society are essential parts of the county and the Council's work. There is absolutely no intention to promote heteronormative ideas in the title - only an intention to ensure that fathers are included, as well as mothers.

There was considerable discussion with focus groups of service users about the discussion topics, the whole idea of the podcast, and the name in general. Through that, a variety of topics came to the fore, such as breastfeeding, sleep, and preparing children for school. One important topic, according to these focus groups, was the connection of fathers with parenting and fathers' mental health issues, and so on. The original name that was agreed upon was "*Mam a dad a magu*" (Mum and dad and nurturing).

The issue of the name has already been raised, bringing up similar concerns to those you raise today. As a result, there was further discussion with user groups, and it was agreed that changing the name slightly would be appropriate — by removing the "a" and changing it from "*Mam a dad a magu*" to "*Mam, dad a magu*." A small change, but one that allowed for broader inclusion. Since then, no one from the public or users has raised the name again, apart from a few fathers who welcomed the fact that dads were being included.

As part of our further work with fathers, it was realised that all of our family support officers are women, and as a result, we are about to appoint a Fathers' Officer to support the work with fathers' groups in our county.

This podcast series (six episodes) is about to conclude, and it is too late to change the title for this series. However, I give this assurance to my fellow councillors, that we will discuss this again with the user groups before starting a second series and take the opportunity to consider a new name. There is no certainty that there will be a second series, as the costs are significant, but if there is, we will ensure a thorough review of the name.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Elin Hywel

Thank you for the response and for preparing a thorough response. I am aware that conversations have been held between constituents and councillors and therefore that conversations are going on in our communities, but recognise that they have not reached the department.

So how will you, as Cyngor Gwynedd, proceed to rebuild bridges that have been damaged somewhat because of the impression given by the podcast's title?

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

It was thanked and noted that constituents may have gone to some Councillors but had not disseminated the message. The last thing the department wanted to do was exclude anyone, and they will try to find new ways to break a taboo about common challenges baby and toddler families face. The idea for a podcast came when we saw the need for a new way to talk about common problems in raising families. All the while they have been gathering feedback from the families and at the end of the series they will be doing a thorough review of the podcast including the title.

(2) Question from Councillor Beca Roberts

In light of the recent rise in international tensions and the increasing military attitudes of the United Kingdom Government, and given the fact that nuclear sites are considered prime targets in any military conflict – including sites such as Trawsfynydd – what assurance do the people of Gwynedd have that the Council is taking action to ensure that there is no further nuclear-related development at the Trawsfynydd site, and that the site be decommissioned immediately in order to protect the area for the future?

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

Decommissioning work continues at the Trawsfynydd site. All of the high-level radioactive waste was transported from the Trawsfynydd site for treatment and re-processing at Sellafield in Cumbria over twenty years ago. The site has been focusing on the processing of intermediate radioactive waste since then and they are almost at the end of the journey by processing the waste residues from the cells within the ponds building and transporting them to the dedicated on-site storage. This waste will be safely stored on site until the UK's radioactive waste repository is built over the next few decades. Low-level radiation remains in the fabric of the reactor structure, and there is a work programme in place to treat and dispose of this waste in order to achieve the goal of leaving the site safe for the public and the environment. Decommissioning work has been programmed on site up to 2060 according to the latest plans from NRS.

Cyngor Gwynedd is part of a Site Stakeholder Group (SSG) where NRS, which manages the site on behalf of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, reports on the decommissioning work; and site safety is the priority in every discussion. It was noted that a statement could be viewed as part of the papers.

I would be very happy to facilitate a site visit to Trawsfynydd for any Councillor who is keen to see the work in progress and to meet the team who are doing the work.

190 are currently employed directly by NRS at the Trawsfynydd site. An additional 100 are employed through contracts. Around 120 additional workers are expected to be on site over the next three years while the height of the reactor building is lowered. 93% of those who work for NRS on Trawsfynydd site live in either Gwynedd, Anglesey, or Conwy County. Alternative employment opportunities for these workers are very scarce in Gwynedd.

The specialist skills and techniques that have been developed at the Trawsfynydd site have received Lead and Learn Site recognition for Nuclear Decommissioning work across Britain. Although the workforce specialises in the field of nuclear decommissioning, many of the skills are considered transferable to various jobs within engineering, technology, science, construction and management. Due to the uncertainty about the future of the site and the jobs, I am pleased to say that Cyngor Gwynedd is currently working with partners to try to establish a science park on site that would ensure that quality work continues in the Meirionnydd area for generations. The intention is to develop an Innovation Centre outside the boundary of the licensed site, which would include opportunities for working and learning

with the intention of triggering new ideas and job opportunities for the future. While the business case will focus on maximising the opportunities arising from the decommissioning work in the short term, interest from different sectors, keen to make use of the site's special skills and infrastructure, has already been declared, such as an AI Centre, Data Centre and an Occupational Skills Centre to support significant investments in the region.

It would not be Cyngor Gwynedd's role to make a decision if new nuclear activity takes place at the Trawsfynydd site in the future. There is considerable uncertainty about the direction of Government's policy, funding and priorities means that it is highly unlikely that the Trawsfynydd site will be considered by the Government and the private sector for new nuclear development in the near future. This is why having plans for alternative work opportunities, which would be within our control for the future is key.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Beca Roberts

Therefore, can the Council confirm that there are no plans to develop a small modular reactor or an advanced nuclear technology reactor as part of the plans for the Science Park you mention in your response.

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

The boundaries of the proposed 'Traws Barc' science park are outside the licensed Trawsfynydd nuclear site, therefore I can confirm that the construction of a small modular reactor and an advanced technology nuclear reactor is not part of the scheme. The intention is to develop an innovation, learning and development centre to establish a science park in order to safeguard and create new jobs for the future in the area.

(3) Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen

Is it possible to get an update on any discussions the Council has had with the Government regarding the Llanbedr Bypass?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Nia Jeffreys

I would like to thank Councillor Gwynfor Owen very much for presenting the question. We fully understand and acknowledge the significant interest in this long-standing issue which Cyngor Gwynedd has been actively seeking to take forward over an extended period.

Officers from the Council continue to lead and play a key role in the multi-agency working group which includes Welsh Government officials to identify a transport solution to alleviate Llanbedr's traffic problems.

A full response has been provided in writing, which is available to Councillors and the public, that further elaborates on the WelTAG process etc.

But more recently the Chief Executive and I, along with Mabon ap Gwynfor MS, met on Tuesday morning, 17 June with Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for North Wales and Transport to discuss the scheme and more specifically the financial position to fund it. Following this, a letter has been sent jointly from the Chief Executive and myself to the Cabinet Secretary and you have been provided with a copy.

The letter expresses a general concern that the level of Welsh Government investment in transport schemes in rural areas such as Gwynedd is completely inadequate and unfair. This in no way meets the expectations or requirements of our local communities nor indeed the aspirations set out by the Welsh Government itself in strategic documents such as Llwybr

Newydd. In particular, the question has been asked, what is the situation in terms of the availability of funding and the route to deliver the Llanbedr transport project.

I will of course ensure you are updated when a response is received.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen

The Leader and Cyngor Gwynedd officers were thanked for all the time and work they have invested in the Bypass. The former leader was thanked for all the work he put into the scheme. Disappointment was expressed to hear that there is no guarantee from the Welsh Government of securing funding for this scheme. Bearing in mind that very recently the UK Government had said that the Welsh Government had received all the money they had requested, with the Welsh Government stating that they had submitted all their schemes that were on the shelf.

The Leader was asked to go back to the Welsh Government and remind them that the Llanbedr Mitigation Scheme had been on the shelf for years, in fact it had moved from the top shelf to the bottom, and then from the bottom shelf until there were almost a few shovels in the hands of workers and the machinery ready to start before the Government pulled the plug and sent £7m back to Europe. Will you as Leader promise the residents of Llanbedr that Cyngor Gwynedd will continue to push for the money from whatever possible source for the safety of the residents, but also for any hope of a prosperous economic future for Ardudwy.

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Nia Jeffreys

It was noted that the situation was a scandal, not only for Llanbedr but for the Meirionnydd area and it was a national scandal. Imagine if they had not pulled the plug back in 2021. The bypass would be almost complete and what a difference this would have made to Llanbedr, which would be a thriving village, with high-quality jobs, children playing and wandering around the village, and older or disabled people being able to travel and feel safe in their village'. Instead, we have people worrying about jobs, children not feeling safe going out, and older people and disabled people unable to cross over the bridge. What has happened is scandalous and that the bypass is not in place.

Therefore, I fully agree with the Councillor's comments and am more than happy to make that promise for the sake of the people of Llanbedr and the wider community of Meirionnydd.

(4) Question from Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones

I would appreciate an answer from the two most relevant cabinet members, Councillor Menna Trenholme and Councillor Dewi Jones, to reflect the spirit of the question.

I'm aware that Cardiff Council is a child-friendly city. Several other councils have now reached that goal or are working towards it. Clearly, being age-friendly is important to Gwynedd, and I've taken every opportunity over the years to call for us to be truly age-friendly – that is, friendly to all ages.

In the spirit of the question, all departments need to collaborate and prioritise the child's rights in making decisions, policies and strategies.

Where does Gwynedd stand on that journey?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

Thank you very much for the valuable question that raises fundamental issues about the role of children's rights in public life in Gwynedd.

As Cabinet Member for Education, I fully recognise the importance of ensuring that children's rights are realised in all aspects of the Council's work. This is not just about status or label,

but about a culture of listening, including and respecting children as fully-fledged citizens. I believe that Gwynedd is on a positive journey towards becoming a truly age-friendly county, and one that puts the rights of children and young people at the heart of everything it does.

We are already seeing positive examples of these principles in action. We include children and young people in the decision-making process through the Young People's Voice forums. These forums have now been set up across the county, giving young people a platform to voice their opinions, share their experiences and influence decisions that affect them. The forums include representatives from schools, youth groups and partners, and meet regularly to discuss local and key issues, such as mental health, transport, community safety and the environment. The information gathered through these forums has already led to real action, including planning specific activities in communities, influencing the content of youth strategies, and expanding partnerships with other services such as health and the third sector.

We fully agree with the principle that it is the responsibility of each department to ensure that children's rights are taken into account in policy-making, decision-making and service delivery. This is an integral part of our vision for a truly child-friendly Gwynedd – and for people of all ages.

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

Thank you to Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones for her question and her interest in this important area. I saw the response from my fellow Cabinet member, Dewi Jones, and I fully agree with him. UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities initiative is one that carries excellent principles, many of which we already uphold. Of course, putting these principles into practice can be more challenging, and I'm pleased to say that youth forum plans have already begun here in Gwynedd and that we are currently prioritising this work. While the UNICEF initiative is specifically aimed at cities and boroughs, local government can embrace the same values and act in the same way, and it is a privilege to have the constructive opportunity to do so. Thank you to the Councillor for giving us the opportunity to highlight this work.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Dawn Lynne Jones

Thank you very much for your response. You mentioned positive plans that are in place, therefore I wonder if there is scope in the Children and Young People and Education Panel to discuss the formulation of an inclusive strategy that would implement the objectives of the UNICEF plan across all the Council's departments.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

Simply, yes. We can make sure that this is discussed, and that young people lead the conversation and come up with a strategy where we can embed these things into all our work as a Council. It was noted that there was room for councillors to be part of the conversation as well as with the young people in order to support them and to hear their voices directly.

(5) Question from Councillor Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn

The Welsh Government has recently been discussing the creation of a public transport system linking buses and trains across Wales, but the reality is that there are problems and concerns linked to this. For example, a large number of residents in my ward have come to me over the last few months concerned about various issues relating to buses coming (or used to come) to Blaenau. This includes a change in service to the T22, where there is no bus going to the Cwm pub and this means a further journey for residents (especially older residents) to get to the bus stop near the stations. A change in bus arrangements that used to run from Blaenau to Manod from Ysgol y Moelwyn alongside the T22 changes has also raised parents' concerns, and there was also a major blow to the town's people when the T19 bus service

linking Blaenau to Llandudno was discontinued back in February 2023 - although there is a train service here, it does not deliver what the bus was capable of, and is seen as unsuitable for local needs.

Despite all the talk from the Government of a revolutionary change with buses and transport, things are worse for the people of Blaenau.

Is it possible to discuss solutions further with the Cabinet Member on how we can address and find solutions to these concerns please?

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

I would like to thank Councillor ap Elwyn very much for his question and for the regular contact with me and the Department's officers on behalf of his constituents regarding transport issues in his ward.

Working in partnership with Transport for Wales, Gwynedd's local bus network has been the subject of an extensive review over the past two years. The aim and output of the review was to provide the best and most attractive possible level of opportunities for bus travel while optimising the scarce resources available. This included the introduction of standard timetables and distance-based fares. This has now been successfully achieved on most of the network, and it's good to report that it has resulted in a positive and encouraging performance in terms of usage. This is in a context where bus usage in general has been steadily declining across Wales since the 1980s.

We continue in our efforts to provide and maintain the best possible level of public bus services across Gwynedd within the resources available to us. Taking into account the rural and extended nature of the County we consider that the opportunities to travel across Gwynedd compare well and favourably with other similar rural areas.

Blaenau is served by the innovative T22 electric bus service. The service between Caernarfon-Porthmadog-Blaenau Ffestiniog offers attractive, reliable quality travel opportunities with modern electric buses. The G25 bus service provides local travel opportunities within the town.

As well as the local buses, Blaenau is of course also served by the famous Conwy Valley Railway. This railway is recognised, as well as a mode of travel, as an attraction in itself for visitors as well as local residents by being one of the most scenic train journeys anywhere in the world.

Unfortunately, as has already been shared, the available drivers and bus resource has been optimised with the T22 service. There is of course a limitation on what can be provided with the available resource and, having looked at the additional requests that have been made, these cannot be met at this time. We are always looking for opportunities to meet local wishes and aspirations but unfortunately and inevitably this will not be possible on all occasions.

With regards to the provision of local school transport, in accordance with the Education Transport Policy, a home address is required to be more than 3 miles from a secondary school to receive free transport. Unfortunately, the distance from Manod to Ysgol y Moelwyn is less than 3 miles and as such there is no requirement that the Authority arranges transport for this journey. It is possible to use the T22 bus to school in the mornings, but very few currently take advantage of this service. This Council had no influence on the decision by a private company to end the commercial operation of the T19 service between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Llandudno. At the time, the company stated that the reason for ending the service was because it was not sustainable on a usage basis and this, unfortunately, had been declining.

As a Council, we continually make the case to the Welsh Government that the investment they are making in public transport, particularly in rural areas such as Gwynedd, needs to be

much greater in order to come anywhere near to meeting and realising their vision and ambition. Unfortunately, strategies and plans such as Llwybr Newydd (2021), the national transport strategy, raise expectations but the burden of responding, explaining and justifying what could be provided with the money that the Welsh Government provides very often falls on local authorities.

The bus industry and how bus services in Wales are provided, maintained and managed is changing as Transport for Wales, on behalf of the Welsh Government, is looking to introduce a system that is maintained through a franchise model. The intention is to have a co-ordinated national network that is managed in its entirety. It is still unclear what effect or influence this will have in practice. The reality is that, as the level of investment by the Welsh Government is likely to be relative to current rates, the change, at least from the perspective of consumers and potential users, is not likely to be transformative. This Council will engage with a positive and hopeful approach to the change but also with realistic expectations as to what is likely to be achieved.

The nature of bus networks means that they are dynamic and subject to change. However, following a recent comprehensive review, there is no short-term intention or scope to consider or introduce significant changes to the network for which Cyngor Gwynedd is responsible. The unfortunate truth is that the extra money that would be needed to achieve this is not available.

An increase in usage is the most influential and positive basis to support business cases to maintain and improve provision. It is very difficult to make the case if the level of usage is low or very low. Bus services in this scenario are neither environmentally nor financially sustainable. In order to maintain the current level of service and look to improve it is important to maximise the use of the services and travel opportunities that are provided. The saying 'use it or lose it' is particularly true and relevant in this context.

Public transport networks depend on a critical level of usage on an ongoing basis. Where this does not exist, public transport is unlikely to be the appropriate solution. This is obviously a challenge in rural areas of course when, often, there isn't that critical demand of people who want to travel at the same time on the same routes. With this, while noting the positive factors in relation to the local bus network in Gwynedd we fully recognise that it will not be possible, nor probably appropriate, to meet individual and everyone's expectations, wishes and needs. But I would like to reassure and encourage you that we will continue to work with the other key stakeholders which include Transport for Wales, Welsh Government, neighbouring Local Authorities and the bus companies themselves to provide the best possible level of service.

I would be very happy to continue the conversation with Cllr ap Elwyn but I hope that the above is of use in confirming the situation and sets the context, challenges and opportunities.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn

With the proposal to carry the conversation forward, would it be possible for the Cabinet Member to come and answer questions in Blaenau Ffestiniog at a public meeting?

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

Yes.

(6) Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur

In terms of the wording of the new education language policy, to what extent does the Cabinet Member agree that:

Noting that it is up to the school to determine what is taught in English across the curriculum;
Referring to a definition of Welsh-medium schools in accordance with the education bill rather than the non-statutory guidelines;

Expressing that the percentage of Welsh-medium education provision is for all pupils;
Providing more detail of what is expected in Progress Plans;
And noting that all extra-curricular activities are in the medium of Welsh, would make the language policy more robust and clear?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

I welcome the opportunity to confirm some key aspects of the draft Education Language Policy and to provide clarity regarding specific matters that have arisen.

Firstly, in terms of the inclusion of English across the curriculum, the policy clearly states that Welsh is the main medium of education in Gwynedd schools, with English being introduced intentionally and used appropriately in line with pupils' linguistic development.

Secondly, I am happy to confirm that the policy specifically refers to the intentions of the forthcoming Welsh Education Bill, preparing the way for the Authority to fully comply with the new statutory system of categorising schools when it comes into force.

Thirdly, the policy clearly expresses the percentages for Welsh-medium education provision, including the aim to ensure at least 80% of school activities through the medium of Welsh at primary level, and at least 70% at secondary level. We will work towards any statutory requirements in accordance with the content of the Welsh Language Bill, which may take up to 5 years to come into effect.

In terms of Progress Plans, the document already sets out the expectations for individual schools and their clusters to develop clear, agreed plans with the Authority, including transitional periods and success measures. This ensures transparency and accountability.

Finally, I acknowledge that the policy places strong emphasis on ensuring that school activities, including extracurricular activities, are available through the medium of Welsh. In line with the Language Charter, extracurricular activities will be delivered in Welsh.

I will continue to support the work of strengthening the Education Language Policy, ensuring a balance between linguistic ambition, practical flexibility, and support for our schools as they implement the policy successfully.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur

The current draft of the language policy does not clarify whether the expected percentage for Welsh education is to be for all children unless for children who are excluded or children with additional learning needs. Does the policy therefore want to provide clarity to this effect, and express what it should say which is that the Welsh-medium provision is for all children. If there is no willingness to express this clearly, isn't it fair to say that the draft policy does not offer a robust defence to Gwynedd schools to be able to prevent a situation where a substantial percentage of children try to avoid Welsh education.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Dewi Jones

No, I believe that the language policy offers the protection. What has been set out in the Education Bill was noted, namely that there will be only one percentage for everyone, and as a result it is a much simpler system.

(7) Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfa

I understand that a significant change is underway to the Social Housing Registration Form, which means that prospective tenants will not be able to indicate where they wish to live. What are the implications of the change? Does this mean turning our backs on the right of vulnerable people to choose a place to live, and does it reverse Gwynedd's 'local' policy?

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

There is no intention to change the application form in such a way that means that prospective tenants will not be able to indicate where they wish to live. While a minor amendment was recently made to the application form asking individuals to tick the location(s) where they wish to live (rather than number them), there are no further changes in progress. The form can be seen on the Council's website, and you will see that question 15 asks prospective tenants to note where they would like to live. The housing allocations policy can also be found on the website, and it has not changed at all.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfaï

I'd like to apologise if I misunderstood, I'm pleased to see an opportunity to identify areas. But it is a matter of opinion that the right to indicate where someone wishes to live, by stopping the order of numbering, which is prioritising, is a minor amendment without any involvement with the public or fellow Council members, important data goes missing. Data that paints a picture of the real need for social housing everywhere. It seems like the Housing Department is working at odds with the Planning Department, because without data how is it possible to identify where there is a need for development and where there is no need for housing. How can the real need be identified?

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

I confirm that applicants continue to identify the areas they want to live in, as this is essential to know. It was clarified that there is no desire to change that. The previous application form asked people to prioritise, but people often ignored instructions and ticked locations where they wanted to live. The information could have been beneficial but as so many ignored instructions, the information was not sound and therefore failed to form the basis of policy. The knowledge of preferences did not play a part in the process of letting a property, and that is the most important thing. If it continued, people were misled, it led people to think they were more likely to have a property in the area where they had prioritised, which was not the case at all. The form encourages people to note where they are keen to be located, therefore the information gives meaningful and specific information about where the need is and enriches future housing plans.

7. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2024/25

The Chair of the Standards Committee submitted the report, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to present it. She expressed that the year had been a very successful one for the committee. All members were thanked for upholding standards, and in particular the three political leaders for working so closely with the Monitoring Officer. Gratitude was also expressed to the former leader for his work during his time in the post.

It was highlighted that not a single case had been submitted before the committee and it was hoped that this would continue into next year. It was highlighted that a number of members were not attending essential training, and the need for Members to work with the group leaders to complete the training was noted.

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

The Chair was thanked for her work over the past year.

RESOLVED

To accept the report.

8. ANNUAL REPORT BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY SERVICES 2024/25

Gratitude was expressed for the opportunity to present the report. It was highlighted that the report had been split into two parts. It was noted that the first part provided an update on what had happened in the field over the year, along with staffing changes. It was emphasised that the Democracy Services committee had paid considerable attention to the area of training this year, and that the report highlights what had been discussed along with a further addition to the core training.

It was noted that the level of satisfaction with the work of the Democracy Team had increased since last year, and the team's work of supporting over 150 meetings was recognised. It was explained that extensive work had been done to develop the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee to establish the democracy element.

Priorities for this year were highlighted, namely, to begin the work of preparing for the May 2027 Election, in terms of reviewing what had been done during the 2022 election, and to introduce improvements for next term. Attention was drawn to the need to examine and create a plan to modernise the chamber systems and create a plan to be presented as a business plan this year.

In discussing Member Training, it was expressed that discussions had taken place in the Democracy Services Committee to introduce an eighth core area which was the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence module. It was explained that this module was mandatory for staff and therefore needed to be extended to members.

Staff in the field were thanked for their hard work.

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

The Chair of the Democracy Services Committee thanked the Head of Department and the team for their work, and members of the committee were thanked for their work.

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence training was welcomed, requesting that it be held as soon as possible.

The Questions item on the Council's agenda was discussed, with some expressing concern about its length with so many questions to be discussed. It was resolved that this matter was an issue to be discussed further in the Democracy Services Committee in terms of the constitutional perspective and to examine how other Councils were dealing with the matter.

It was enquired in relation to the updating of the chambers and technical developments that the provision and update needed to be extended beyond Caernarfon and to Council locations across the county.

RESOLVED

- 1. To accept the report**
- 2. To establish an 8th field of core training for Elected Members, namely "Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence", in accordance with the recommendation of the Democracy Services Committee.**

9. WALES PENSION PARTNERSHIP – IMPLEMENTING 'FIT FOR THE FUTURE' BUSINESS PLAN

The report was submitted by Cllr Elin Hywel, Chair of the Pensions Committee. It was explained that this item was one that had been discussed over the past few months. The officers were thanked for their endless work on this plan. In the Committee's opinion, it was emphasised that this was the best option that met the needs identified by the UK Government.

It was explained that Cyngor Gwynedd was the administrative authority for the Gwynedd Pension Fund, which meant that it administered pensions for over 50,000 members, almost 50 employers and £3.2 billion of assets. It was stated that the Pension Fund had been working since 2017 with the eight Local Government Pension Scheme funds in Wales, through an inter-authority agreement that had been approved by the Full Council back in March 2017, which was the pool established, namely the Wales Pension Partnership.

It was noted that the Pool had around £25 billion of assets under its management, with benefits through cost savings, improved investment opportunities, improved performance and increased collaboration and governance across Wales. It was explained that this had worked well for Gwynedd, with 85% of the Gwynedd Pension fund being pooled and that the collaboration had been very beneficial to the fund.

Since October 2023, it was noted that the Government had been reviewing the investment arrangements of Local Government Pension Schemes in England and Wales. It was expressed that an initial consultation had taken place, and that the Pensions Bill had recently been published. Attention was drawn to the expected operating model that would meet the noted standards.

The final need, namely, to set up an investment management company, was explained, which was under consideration today. It was noted that the Wales Pension Partnership intended to establish a separate investment management company ("IM Co") which had been regulated by the FCA in accordance with Government criteria, this project had been dubbed the 'Snowdon Project' by the Welsh Pension Partnership.

It was explained that the decision to build an investment management company ("IM Co") for the Wales Pension Partnership offered a unique opportunity to establish a centre of expertise in LPGA investments in Wales. The Wales Pension Partnership had prepared a strong business case for the Government in February 2025, and a letter of support for the Business Case was received in April 2025.

There would be a need to introduce new elements in the governance structure, including a Shareholder Board with representation from all administrative authorities. In the medium and long term, it was noted that WPP hoped to provide financial benefits that would exceed the costs of the operating model. There was no investment transfer costs but it was estimated that the cost of the new model would be approximately £5-£5.5m - the costs of the Fund and not the Council. The decision was noted.

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

Of the two proposals identified by the UK Government, it was stated that this was the best option. It was noted that this retained control within Wales and therefore retained control within Welsh Local Governments. It also ensured that decisions protected the interests of Wales as well as ensuring that the Welsh language was used as a business language and kept alive.

Concern was highlighted regarding signing up to this with risks if other Authorities went out of business financially, particularly as Cyngor Gwynedd had been so good at doing this work. It was explained that these were points that had been raised as a committee. It was stated that there were some things to bear in mind namely that 85% of investments had already been pooled with the Wales Pensions Committee and therefore, the good work already undertaken was being maintained rather than being expanded.

It was emphasised that the Pool in Wales was regarded as the Pool that led the work and was a huge success and the Pool from England would be very keen to join. However, it was explained that keeping it in Wales ensured the Welsh element.

RESOLVED

1. To note the Wales Pension Partnership Fit for the Future Business Case (Appendix 3, Appendix 4 and section 4 of the report)
2. To approve the formation of a corporate entity wholly owned by the WPP Administering Authorities (AAs) to be the WPP Investment Management Company (IMCo.) and all other actions necessary to submit an application to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) for the authorisation of the company including but not limited to the selection and recruitment of Senior Management Function (SMF) roles as required by the FCA and the preparation and submission of the application to the FCA. (Section 5 of the report)
3. To approve the revised WPP Business Plan and budget 2025/28 which includes design/enabling costs for **Project yr Wyddfa** (Appendix 5 and Section 6 of the report)
4. To delegate powers to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Pensions Committee the right to proceed with the **Snowdon Project** with WPP Administration Authorities in accordance with the Government's timetable within the approved budget.
5. To delegate the final approval of the final formal documentation required for IMCo. to be operational, described as "Go Live Work" as outlined in Section 7, to the Pensions Committee to give effect to the WPP Fit for the Future Business Case.

10. RECOMMENDATION OF THE INTERVIEW PANEL - APPOINTMENT OF LAY MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

The report was submitted by Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones in the absence of the Chair of the interview panel. It was stated that there was a need to appoint three Lay Members to the Governance and Audit Committee and there were three members on the interview panel - the Chair of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Chair of the Democracy Services Committee.

Four individuals had been interviewed, and after careful and thorough consideration it was noted that three had met the criteria. As a result, it was requested to appoint Dr Peter Barnes, Mr Dewi Lewis and Mr Paul Millar-Mills as members of the Governance and Audit Committee for the next 5 years.

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

Dissatisfaction in terms of gender balance among lay members was expressed. Of 18 elected and lay members, it was noted that there were only 4 women which was not a fair reflection of society. It was asked whether more effort could be made to attract women. Since the change to have six lay members back in 2022, the Head of Finance noted that the committee had never had full lay membership. It was emphasised that the committee could not control who applied to be a lay member, but it was stressed that over the years the department had tried all sorts of ways to attract members, but it was emphasised that it had been a fair process and that all applications had been given fair attention.

It was asked what kind of checks and references were required when applying, whether the members were having thorough background searches and what they had achieved. It was explained that the appointments were subject to the receipt of acceptable references which would be received over the coming weeks.

RESOLVED To appoint Dr Peter Barnes, Mr Dewi Lewis and Mr Paul Millar-Mills as Lay Members of the Governance and Audit Committee for the next five years, subject to receiving acceptable references.

14. NOTICES OF MOTION

- (A) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Rhys Tudur in accordance with Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-

Given the language shift seen in Gwynedd from census to census, this Council welcomes the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities and calls upon the Government to urgently introduce measures giving local authorities the powers and funding to counter the language shift.

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

- That it was a turning point for the language that the Government was keen to designate areas where the Welsh language was a day-to-day language.
- It was stated that the Welsh Communities Commission had made a number of recommendations, and that areas where over 40% of people speak Welsh were identified as linguistically significant areas. It was explained that the whole of Gwynedd would be identified under this standard.
- It was stressed that areas that did not reach the percentage level would be able to be designated, and it would also give status to some locations.
- It would lay a strong legal foundation for the language to flourish.
- Noted examples were areas such as the Basque Country which had seen increasing numbers.
- Gwynedd had the highest number of designated areas, with several locations with over 70% speaking the language on a day-to-day basis; there was only one other location across Wales outside Gwynedd.
- The Government had stated their support in principle, but the Government had been called upon to act before the election.

Support was expressed for the motion noting the need to put things into practice and to ensure that everyone could and had the opportunity to live their life and to work through the medium of Welsh.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

This Council welcomes the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations of the Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities and calls upon the Government to urgently introduce measures giving local authorities the powers and funding to counter the language shift.

- (B) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Gwynfor Owen under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-

Following the revelation that improvements to the Oxford to Cambridge railway line have been changed from an England only scheme to an England and Wales scheme, and also in the wake of the paltry sum announced in the Westminster Government's spending review of £450m over 10 years, Cyngor Gwynedd is calling on the Welsh Government to demand that the entire Wales Rail Network is devolved to Wales as a matter of urgency. This Council is of the view that Gwynedd and Wales are missing out significantly on investment due to being tied to England on these issues. We believe that Wales should have the same rights as Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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

- He did not accept that Welsh railways were part of the English and Welsh rail system, and as a result paid for the costs of updating railway lines in England, which cost millions while Wales received £0.5m over a 10-year period.
- It was stated that the Westminster Government indicated that this had been requested in Wales with the Minister stating that it would improve the connection between Wales and Liverpool and Manchester.
- It was emphasised that railways in Wales had been underfunded for decades and would be underfunded for years to come.
- It was highlighted that cuts had hit Gwynedd with cuts to Cambrian Railway trains being a prominent example.
- It was expressed that the system was changing, for railways to be devolved, for Wales to receive the money it owed to secure the improvements that needed to be made to make the railway fitting for the country.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

Following the revelation that improvements to the Oxford to Cambridge railway line have been changed from an England only scheme to an England and Wales scheme, and also in the wake of the paltry sum announced in the Westminster Government's spending review of £450m over 10 years, Cyngor Gwynedd is calling on the Welsh Government to demand that the entire Wales Rail Network is devolved to Wales as a matter of urgency. This Council is of the view that Gwynedd and Wales are missing out significantly on investment due to being tied to England on these issues. We believe that Wales should have the same rights as Scotland and Northern Ireland.

- (C) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Jina Gwyrfaï under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-

Given that

- a) Agriculture is one of Wales' main industries, and that a high percentage of Gwynedd's economy is linked to agriculture.
- b) the stability of the family farm is a vital and invaluable contribution to the preservation of the Welsh language in our Welsh-speaking communities.
- c) the agricultural industry in Wales is currently able to make a valuable contribution to the food stock of the 'United Kingdom' in an age of increasing uncertainty, although the stock is low.

This Council notes with regret that the Inheritance Tax Act poses a threat to the traditional farming unit, to the economy of the country and to the Welsh countryside, especially to the Welsh-speaking areas. (At least two farmers are known to have committed suicide since the Act was passed and families and related local workers and businesses face collapse if the Act comes into effect in 2026.)

I therefore call on Cyngor Gwynedd to bring pressure to bear on the Welsh Government to take the following actions:-

- i. pressurise the Westminster Government to recognise that the farming industry is crucial to the UK's security strategy, and to exclude family farms that produce food from the new tax when it comes into force.
- ii. make a plea to the Welsh Government to commission research to assess the impact of the Act on the Welsh economy and Welsh-speaking communities; also, to implement adequate mitigation measures to protect the agricultural industry which is so crucial to the future of our country's rural communities.

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

- The response to a motion back in December had been unsatisfactory, with no plans in the pipeline.
- That 75% of farms would be adversely affected with this tax, and would create a complete mess.

- The Aberystwyth University Agricultural Survey had highlighted the gross income of a family farm at around 0.5% of the value of the farm. However, the value of the farm would be taxed and therefore, the threat was huge.
- It was highlighted that investments in farms had decreased since the announcement of this tax which highlighted a lack of confidence in the plan.
- Mental Health issues had increased especially in older farmers, due to the immense mental anguish of thinking about the future of their farms.
- Links with Welsh communities were evident, with 43% of farm workers being Welsh speakers across Wales with numbers higher in Gwynedd. Highlighted that the tax was a threat to the Welsh language and culture in communities.
- Food production was the purpose of farms and that was why it had historically been kept out of inheritance tax, but compared to the 80s the percentage of food coming from farms had decreased to 54% and as a result food prices had increased. There was a need to expand farms both economically and environmentally.

Support for the motion was expressed by members highlighting the points below:

- The Government did not comprehend the impact of this, and did not realise that the money was in the land and not in the bank. Farms were tied to the soil and there was no single occupation that was so deeply rooted in communities.
- It was explained that the Government was limiting the tax to over £3 million, which sounded like a high figure but not if you took into account the value of land.
- Possibilities that farms would be sold to address the tax, and meant being sold to large companies with no ties to the communities which would result in an adverse impact on communities.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

Given that

- a) Agriculture is one of Wales' main industries, and that a high percentage of Gwynedd's economy is linked to agriculture.**
- b) the stability of the family farm is a vital and invaluable contribution to the preservation of the Welsh language in our Welsh-speaking communities.**
- c) the agricultural industry in Wales is currently able to make a valuable contribution to the food stock of the 'United Kingdom' in an age of increasing uncertainty, although the stock is low.**

This Council notes with regret that the Inheritance Tax Act poses a threat to the traditional farming unit, to the economy of the country and to the Welsh countryside, especially to the Welsh-speaking areas. (At least two farmers are known to have committed suicide since the announcement of the Act and families and related local workers and businesses face collapse if the Act comes into effect in 2026.)

I therefore call on Cyngor Gwynedd to bring pressure to bear on the Welsh Government to take the following actions:-

- i. pressurise the Westminster Government to recognise that the farming industry is crucial to the UK's security strategy, and to exclude family farms that produce food from the new tax when it comes into force.**
- ii. make a plea to the Welsh Government to commission research to assess the impact of the Act on the Welsh economy and Welsh-speaking communities; also, to implement adequate mitigation measures to protect the agricultural industry which is so crucial to the future of our country's rural communities.**

The meeting commenced at 1.30pm and concluded at 4.30pm.