



ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT
2020-21

Foreword

2020-21 was an extraordinary year with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic seen on a global scale. This period has taught us the need to appreciate the little things, the importance of community and the need to support vulnerable individuals and families.

This is the first full year of implementing our current scrutinising arrangements following the scrutiny review. The scrutiny work was delayed for a while due to the huge work pressures on Council services, which stemmed from the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. During this difficult time, an effort was made to continue with the scrutiny work, adapting to hold our activities on a virtual basis. The journey to restart the work is elaborated upon in the report.

This report provides a summary of the scrutiny work achieved during the year, focusing on the main scrutiny work and expanding on items scrutinised in formal meetings. When identifying items to scrutinise, members consider how the scrutiny work could add value and contribute towards driving improvement in services for the people of Gwynedd.

A list of all items scrutinised in formal meetings during the year can be seen in an appendix to this report.

I wish to record my appreciation of the contribution and work of the chairs and vice-chairs, and all scrutiny members that have been part of undertaking important scrutiny work during the year. Members have responded positively to the change in the way of completing the scrutiny work with valuable contributions at virtual meetings of the scrutiny committees.

In addition, I would like to thank Gwynedd residents, Cabinet Members, other agencies and relevant officers for their contributions and their support.

Looking ahead to 2021-22, scrutiny workshops were held in May in order for scrutiny committees to prioritise items by drawing up their draft work programme. The scrutiny work will be essentially important to contribute towards driving improvements in services for the people of Gwynedd.



Councillor Beth Lawton,
Chair of the Scrutiny Forum

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Scrutiny Forum

Members of the Scrutiny Forum include the Chairs and Vice-chairs of the Scrutiny Committees and the Audit and Governance Committee. The Forum takes an overview of all the Council's scrutiny work with members challenging each other to ensure that the right matters are prioritised.

Membership of the Scrutiny Forum during 2020/21:

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee



Councillor
Paul Rowlinson



Councillor
Elwyn Jones

Communities Scrutiny Committee



Councillor
Elfed P. Roberts



Councillor
Gethin Glyn Williams

Care Scrutiny Committee



Councillor
Dewi Wyn Roberts



Councillor
Beth Lawton

Audit and Governance Committee (Role of Scrutinising Corporate Issues)



Councillor
John Brynmor
Hughes



Councillor
Angela Russell
(until 15/10/20)



Councillor
John Pughe
Roberts (from
15/10/20)

The role of the Scrutiny Forum is:

- Advise to **PRIORITISE** scrutiny items (majority being formal scrutiny with a small number of investigations) and challenge the basis of identifying matter to scrutinise.
- Identify the most effective scrutiny method within the resources available (formal scrutiny/investigation)
- Identify items for information, seeking to avoid using scrutiny arrangements to fulfil the information sharing role.
- Assess the contributions of the individual committees and assess the **IMPACT** of the scrutiny work, and review our scrutiny arrangements on an ongoing basis.

The Forum was key in terms of restarting the scrutiny work after it was delayed for a while due to the huge work pressures on the Council, which stemmed from the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A meeting was held on 10 July 2020 to discuss the way forward with recommencing the scrutiny work. It was concluded to invite members to submit matters for Chairs and Vice-chairs to raise at informal meetings with Cabinet Members, Heads of Department and the relevant Director during the period between 16 and 23 September.

Following the informal meetings, a meeting of the Forum was held on 29 September 2020 to confirm the way forward in terms of restarting the formal scrutiny work, and a discussion was held in terms of prioritising items.

Meetings of the scrutiny committees recommenced in October 2020. An informal session was held for Forum members in December 2020 with an opportunity for members to reflect after the first virtual meetings.

The Forum met on 2 February 2020, a discussion was held on the practical arrangements of the virtual scrutiny committee meetings. The future was considered at this meeting and arrangements to draw up a work programme for 2021/22 were confirmed. It was resolved to hold workshops for each committee in May 2021 with an opportunity for all members to submit potential items for the work programme.

The Scrutiny Forum enables Chairs and Vice-chairs to have an overview of all scrutiny work, recognising that prioritising items for a timely discussion will mean that there will be a difference in terms of the number of items included on committee meeting agendas. As a result, the practical arrangements of scrutiny committee meetings vary from meeting to meeting.

Membership of the Scrutiny Forum will change during the Council year of 2021/22. A training plan will be formulated for chairs and vice-chairs with attention given to practical/technical matters and governance matters.

Scrutiny Items

During 2020/21, items for scrutiny were prioritised considering the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the huge pressures on Council services. A snapshot of the items scrutinised in formal meetings is provided below. The items that have added the most value are focused upon. A complete list of items scrutinised in formal meetings can be seen in the Appendix to this report. All information on what was discussed during 2020/21 can be seen on the Council website - <https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/scrutiny>

North Wales Economic Growth

Over the past few years, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee has been a key part of the process to establish the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and has scrutinised the work of the Board after its establishment. In 2016, partners of the Ambition Board adopted a Growth Vision for the Economy of North Wales with the Growth Deal agreed upon in October 2018. The North Wales Growth Deal is a portfolio that includes five programmes for implementation over the next fifteen years, seeking to deliver a total of up to £1.1bn of investment in the north Wales economy (£240m from the Growth Deal). In November 2019 the Ambition Board, the Welsh and UK Governments came to an agreement on the heads of terms, for final deal agreement to be completed in 2020.



At the meeting of the scrutiny committee on 5 November 2020, the key documents and the final agreement were scrutinised before they were submitted to the Cabinet and the Full Council for approval. Prior to recommending to the Council, the scrutiny committee was required to consider whether the Business Plan, Governance Agreement 2, the funding model and the operational arrangements were clear and robust to achieve the objectives of the Growth Agreement for the benefit of the businesses and residents of Gwynedd.

Here are some of the observations submitted by scrutiny members during the meeting:

- ❖ Approve the principles and vision, but that the major problem would be achieving the goal, as now was not a good time to set up this kind of plan bearing in mind Covid and Brexit and everything else we were up against.
- ❖ Concern that the majority of the sector that contributed most to the plan, i.e. the private sector, was in the north-east. The Wylfa B scheme would have contributed to the sector in the north-west, but this would no longer be happening.
- ❖ That the plan laid very firm foundations and that many of the projects were interesting and ambitious.
- ❖ It would have been good to see some of the investment coming to the Llŷn Peninsula and south Meirionnydd, but best wishes were extended to the Board and officers as they worked together to ensure a thriving and economically prosperous north Wales.

After receiving responses to the observations of members, the scrutiny committee was of the view that the Business Plan; Governance Agreement 2; the funding model and the operational arrangements are clear and robust to achieve the objectives of the Growth Agreement for the benefit of the businesses and residents of Gwynedd. The Full Council approved the report and the action to complete a final agreement at its meeting on 3 December 2020.

The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee will continue to scrutinise the work of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board in future.

Delivering the Youth Engagement and Development Framework in Gwynedd

The Youth Engagement and Development Framework was introduced by the Welsh Government in 2013. The framework sets out the government's strategy to reduce the number of young people between 11 and 25 years old who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The role of the Management Group that has been established in Gwynedd is to set a local vision for the Framework.

A number of services in the Council contribute towards supporting young people who are at risk of falling out of education, or who are not in education, training or work, including the Youth Justice Service; Children and Supporting Families Service; Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service and the Youth Service.

The Council's arrangements and provisions to support young people who are at risk of disengaging from education or who have disengaged from education, training or employment were scrutinised at the meeting of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 15 April 2021. This was done in the context of funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) for specific projects coming to an end:



Reduce the number of individuals who are at risk of being NEET by supporting young people aged 11-16 through a variety of interventions and consequently improve the life chances of vulnerable individuals

Funding ends in July 2022
The total value of the scheme is £4.6 million (£3.3M of ESF funding).



Support Young People aged 16-24 to re-engage with Education, Training or Employment.

Funding ends in May 2021
The total value of the scheme is £1.6 million (£1.1M ESF funding).

It was noted during the discussion, from the information submitted, that the projects had been successful. Concern was expressed in terms of the future given the impact of leaving the European Union and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the provision. It was resolved to accept the report, noting the observations made - particularly in respect of the suitability of the Framework's arrangements, the need to offer full support

"The observations are very much welcomed."
Cabinet Member

for young people who are at risk of disengaging / are disengaged from the field of education, training or employment, ensuring that these elements are addressed when reviewing our provisions in the future. The committee would consider the field further, discussing the timetable for that at the committee's Annual Workshop in May.

Use of the Housing Support Grant to reduce homelessness in Gwynedd

Since the beginning of the pandemic, homelessness has been highlighted as a matter that requires immediate attention. There was a 26% increase in referrals to the homelessness service during the past year, with the number of homeless people 71% higher than it was following the inception of the Housing Act 2014. In 2020/21, approximately 950 individuals were homeless.

At the Care Scrutiny Committee on 18 March 2021, the intended direction to take in order to ensure that the Housing Support Grant lead to the best possible support for the homeless in Gwynedd and to prevent homelessness in the future was scrutinised. The aspiration of the Housing and Property Department was to wind up the overuse of bed and breakfast accommodation by providing a sufficient supply of temporary accommodation and developing suitable supported accommodation to be used to meet this demand. The Housing Action Plan sets out how the aspiration will be achieved with a sufficient budget available to provide such a resource over the next few years. In 2019-20, the Care Scrutiny Committee was part of the process as the Council adopted the Housing Action Plan 2020-2025. The scrutiny work managed to contribute to prioritising the schemes and to highlight further matters that required consideration.

When scrutinising the matter, it was noted that one type of service would not be suitable for everyone, as well as the importance of collaborating with local agencies and local members. The motion to end the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation as temporary accommodation was supported. A proposal to increase the size of the support team was welcomed, as was the aim of reducing the staffing ratio from one supporting officer to approximately 60 individuals to one officer to approximately 25 vulnerable individuals. An enquiry was made regarding future funding, it was confirmed that there was no definite certainty regarding the grant funding, but the instructions highlighted the need to plan on a long-term basis.

The Housing and Property Department will undertake a joint exercise with local providers over the coming year to review the valuable services provided by them, and return with a further review on the findings of the work to the Care Scrutiny Committee for further input.



Research Paper: Managing the use of dwellings as holiday homes

A report was submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 5 December 2019 updating the Committee on the detailed research that the Cabinet had agreed for the Environment Department to conduct in relation to holiday homes. The objective of the

work was to seek to address how we could limit the number of houses that could be used for holiday purposes, looking at measures that are being implemented in other places and how could planning legislation be changed for implementing in Wales.

At the committee meeting on 10 December 2020, members received the opportunity to scrutinise the research on holiday homes before the Cabinet considered it on 15 December 2020.

Some of the observations made by members in their discussion were:

- ❖ The report was welcomed - it was a good foundation to begin lobbying and was a golden opportunity to change the system and to take responsibility and control of the situation.
- ❖ The report addressed matters such as AirBnB, however, not enough was being made to change the Planning Act by setting thresholds for control. It was necessary to persuade the Welsh Government to change the Act.
- ❖ It was necessary to act and challenge the Government to make a difference.
- ❖ More details regarding employment was required as well as the high house prices in some areas. This would highlight how the Welsh language was losing its foothold - the Welsh language strongholds were losing their Welsh character.
- ❖ There was a need to close the gaps in order not to avoid regulatory arrangements. 'Short let holiday units' could be targeted - owner was likely to transfer back to the 'second home' category as a way of avoiding control.
- ❖ A suggestion to adopt 'intervention' - create two tiers, holiday and local, that would protect the local housing stock and drive prices.
- ❖ Need to consider Land Transaction Tax - an opportunity to charge a premium
- ❖ Control was required over 'second homes' - no opportunities or homes were available for young people

The contents of the report were accepted and officers were thanked for presenting evidence and detailed and useful information which may be used to try to convince Welsh Government to change its planning policies. At its meeting on 15 December 2020 in light of the need to obtain better control of houses being taken out of the supply available for local people, and thus benefit local residents first, the Cabinet resolved to approve the research work to be submitted to Welsh Government.



Public Protection Service

One Council service that has been significantly affected in terms of service provision during the pandemic is the Public Protection Service. Members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee were eager to scrutinise their work during the period.

A report was submitted to the committee on 25 February 2021 detailing the work. It was explained that there were 3 services prior to the pandemic, namely:

- Pollution Control and Licensing Service
- Trading Standards and Animal Health / Animal Feed Services

- Food, Health and Safety Service (including infectious diseases)

In light of the pandemic, Public Protection duties involving infectious diseases have clearly become one of the Council's main priorities, and a new Service was created in May 2020 to undertake the relevant work, namely the Test, Trace and Protect - Covid Service. The service came into operation on 1 June 2020.

One concern was noted for the service in moving forward, namely the provision of normal service as well as the current requirements relating to the pandemic.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:

- ❖ Gratitude was expressed for the report and to the whole department for their very important work during the period.
- ❖ There was praise for the tracing officers who had worked tirelessly in order to contact everyone involved, especially when a surge of Covid-19 was seen in some areas.
- ❖ How does the department deal with residents who have started food businesses from their homes during the pandemic?
- ❖ The news that three new members had been appointed to the department was welcomed and it was noted that this was a good move for the future.
- ❖ Members gave thanks for all e-mail updates provided on the public protection situation and it was reiterated that this report outlined the additional work that was being done.
- ❖ It was asked whether the service was confident that it would be able to cope with its workload when normal duties returned.

As part of their response to the above observations, the officers noted that the service would be under pressure should inspections recommence at the usual scale, on top of the Covid-19 duties. It was acknowledged that the department's officers worked long hours and that this was now a long-term situation, and not a temporary one as initially anticipated. It was noted that support from the Council and Welsh Government to appoint additional staff was to be welcomed as this reduced pressure on officers. A challenging period was anticipated in coping with the phased reopening of the economy.



The field was identified as a matter to be monitored by the committee. At the request of the Head of Department and Cabinet Member, consideration was given to the staffing resources of the Public Protection Service at the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 22 April 2021.

The report detailed the challenges in relation to ensuring capacity and resilience now and in the future. During the discussion, members noted the need to strengthen resilience for the long-term and that savings made in the services had gone far. Reference was made to the need to retain experienced staff and attract new staff and in the context of higher salaries in other north Wales councils. It was resolved to accept the report, noting the observations made during the meeting, and to recommend that the Cabinet considered looking at staff salary scales across the Council, and how they compared with the salaries of neighbouring councils.

Control of Firework Displays

At the Full Council meeting on 3 December 2020, the Council adopted a notice of motion submitted by Councillor Paul Rowlinson in relation to the control of firework displays. One clause of the adopted notice was to request the Communities Scrutiny Committee give consideration within its work programme to review what steps the Council could take to promote or encourage:

- ❖ That all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries should be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people.
- ❖ A public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.
- ❖ Local suppliers of fireworks to stock ‘quieter’ fireworks for public displays.
- ❖ People to limit the use of fireworks to a period close to specific dates.

In accordance with the request, the matter was discussed at the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 22 April 2021. A presentation was given by the Assistant Head of Environment where it was explained that statutory requirements applied to the sale and storage of fireworks, the type of fireworks permitted as well as noise restrictions and sale periods. It was explained that the law restricted the Council's ability to change regulations regarding fireworks.

Some of the observations made by members in their discussion were:

- ❖ Welcomed the report and suggested that the fireworks code needed to be amended or restrictions imposed on the licences of retailers and give them further guidelines to avoid anti-social use.
- ❖ That most residents followed the rules and that only a minority were being anti-social and setting them off from mid-October onwards and not on Bonfire Night only.
- ❖ Thanked Councillor Paul Rowlinson for submitting this important matter to the Full Council.
- ❖ Would a further report be submitted to the Committee? A suggestion to establish a sub-group to discuss the matter including the Councillor who had proposed the notice of motion.
- ❖ That fireworks had now been developed to be much noisier and disturbed people on a larger scale.

In response to the observations, the officers noted:

- ❖ That advising consumers before events was something that officers had been doing for a while. It was noted that improvements were possible in terms of highlighting the guidelines and also by continuing to maintain a good working relationship with the retailers.
- ❖ Agreed to continue to raise awareness and highlight good practice and to discuss with the Councillor who had proposed the notice of motion.
- ❖ It was possible to highlight and share good practice with retailers and consumers as a way forward. The Council had been bound by law in terms of what could be done.



Image: "freepik.com @lifeforstock"

It was resolved to accept the report, noting the observations made during the meeting.

Call-in

As part of the scrutiny system, members have the right to call-in decisions to be scrutinised. The process of calling in a decision - the Chair or Vice-chair of a scrutiny committee, along with two members of that Scrutiny Committee (from two different groups) will need to make a request, noting their reasons for calling in the decision.

In 2020/21, one decision was called in for scrutiny, namely:

The Cabinet's decision to carry out a statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ysgol Abersoch

15/09/20

Cabinet decides to hold a statutory consultation on the proposed closure of Ysgol Abersoch

25/09/20

Receive a request to call the decision into scrutiny

08/10/20

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee scrutinizes the decision

03/11/20

Cabinet decides not to modify the original Cabinet decision

At the request of Councillors Paul Rowlinson (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee), Dewi Roberts (Local Member) and Elwyn Jones (Vice-chair of the Scrutiny Committee), the decision was scrutinised at a meeting of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 8 October 2020. An opportunity was given to the Cabinet Member and the Education Department to respond to the reasons for call-in, the Local Member submitted information and the Chair and Vice-chair of Ysgol Abersoch Governors were invited to submit evidence and answer questions.

A record of what was discussed at the meeting can be viewed via this link - [Minutes of Call-in Item](#)

Following a comprehensive discussion, it was resolved that the scrutiny committee remained concerned about the situation and therefore referred the matter back to the Cabinet for reconsideration for the following reasons:

- ❖ Owing to the COVID situation and legal guidance and the Education Department's policies, it is not possible to hold meetings in the usual manner and it is impossible to hold meetings with some people who have a keen interest in the matter. It is also impossible to hold public meetings in the usual manner in the community to discuss and respond to the consultation.
- ❖ The Headteacher was off work during the period, and she continues to be off. As the permanent headteacher was best placed to know about the school's situation, continuing with the process when she continued to be off was unfair to the school and the community.
- ❖ Some believe that small schools should not be closed without scrutinising the decision.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee attended a meeting of the Cabinet on 3 November 2020. He presented the rationale and the background behind the decision of the Scrutiny Committee. The Local Member elaborated on the school's situation and the concerns in terms of undertaking a public consultation under Covid-19 restrictions. After weighing up what the Scrutiny Committee had highlighted, the guidance of the officers and the reasons for the original decision, the Cabinet did not consider that the matters raised justified an amendment to the original decision.

IMPACT OF SCRUTINY

Although the Cabinet did not amend its original decision, this scrutiny work managed to highlight local concerns with the Cabinet recognising the need to keep an eye on the consultation and to ask the Education Department to provide a regular report on how the process was moving forward.

Scrutiny Investigations

Scrutiny Investigation - Supporting Disabled People in Gwynedd

The work of the scrutiny investigation was reported in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-20. A progress report on the implementation of the recommendations had been programmed for presentation to the Care Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2020. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this was not possible. A progress report was submitted to a meeting of the committee on 26 November 2020.

An update was received in terms of actions on the recommendations by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being and the North Wales Posture and Mobility Service (PAMS).

Full details of the update can be viewed via this link - [Progress Report on the Recommendations of the Supporting Gwynedd's Disabled Persons Scrutiny Investigation.](#)



Here are some of the observations noted during the meeting:

- ❖ There was a shift in specific matters for the Health Board but progress had slowed down due to Covid-19.
- ❖ Appointing an Occupational Therapy Lead for Gwynedd Council had facilitated communication and collaboration with the Health Service.
- ❖ Electronic referral documents were currently being trialled by the Health Service, and it was intended to introduce an electronic referral system soon.
- ❖ The Council's occupational therapists were responsible for carrying out an environment assessment in the home and PAMS occupational therapists were responsible for completing assessments for specialist equipment. There were no further developments regarding an agreement with the Health Board for Occupational Therapists from Local Authorities to receive the specialist training. Despite this, there had been progress in joint visits, which improved collaboration and reduced delay in ensuring suitable equipment on a timely basis.
- ❖ It was noted that it was important not to forget the recommendations, to continue to receive updates and continue to improve in order to move forward.

As a follow-up, a report on the Occupational Therapy Service was scrutinised at the meeting of the Care Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2021. The main conclusions of the discussion were as follows:

- ❖ The Service was facing a few challenges, however, it was also a period of opportunity to improve the service. A concern was noted that staffing level did not correspond with the workload.
- ❖ The vision of the Department is to establish a manual handling service that would support timely hospital discharge arrangements and to ensure that the individual receives the right support and equipment to enable them to meet what matters to them. An application has been made for funding from the Independent Living budget of the Welsh Government to fund the service.

- ❖ There was a need to keep an eye on the impact of Covid-19 on the service and whether or not there were sufficient resources to deal with the workload.

Impact of New Building Developments on the Quality of Education - Scrutiny Investigation

Reference was made to the work of the scrutiny investigation in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-20. A draft investigation report was to be submitted before the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on [19 March 2020](#), however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the meeting was cancelled.

Due to a period where no formal scrutiny meetings were held, matters to scrutinise in formal meetings were prioritised. The report of this investigation was not prioritised and, therefore, the committee has not considered the findings and recommendations of the investigation.

The findings and recommendations of the investigation are summarised below. The main question to be addressed by the investigation was:

"What effect has new building developments had on schools and the quality of pupil education, and are there lessons to be learnt in future?"

Members of the group who undertook the work were Councillors:

- Beth Lawton (Chair),
- Steve Collings,
- Cai Larsen,
- Paul Rowlinson.



It was seen that the new buildings offered flexible, safe facilities of a high standard that would not require any substantial maintenance for a long time. The opportunities and the spaces that have been created facilitate education provision in Gwynedd, and the pupils have reported that they are very proud of the facilities and the investment in their areas.

It became apparent that it was difficult to prove the impact of the new buildings on the quality of education, and the conclusion was reached that the buildings was one element that contributes towards the quality of education. Members of the investigation were pleased to see that the investment had brought more flexible learning conditions to our schools, as well as pride amongst the pupils, the staff and within the communities. Lessons to be learnt were identified from the qualitative evidence gathered which has led to presenting the recommendations below.

- ❖ That the Education Modernisation Service continues to evaluate projects by learning lessons whilst delivering them, and adapt in light of those lessons. Specific points identified by the investigation should be considered with those lessons.
- ❖ That the Cabinet Member makes a formal application to Welsh Government in order to slacken the guidelines and 21st Century grant conditions somewhat, giving consideration to the methods of projecting the population of individual schools in the longer term.

- ❖ That the Cabinet Member makes a formal application to Welsh Government to carry out a study across the whole of Wales on the impact of new school buildings on the quality of education.

Throughout the case studies and the meetings with the experts in the field of education, the impact of good leadership on the quality of education became apparent, and therefore the members of the investigation note the importance of aiming towards strong leadership.

Undertaking Scrutiny Investigations in the future

No matters for investigation were identified during this Council year. Members have been aware of the additional requirements on officers during the Covid-19 pandemic and have attempted to avoid placing additional substantial work pressures on them.

When prioritising the 2021-22 work programme, consideration will be given to whether a matter is suitable/merits a scrutiny investigation. As usual, areas that will be the subject of a scrutiny investigation will need to be prioritised, giving consideration to the virtual meeting context.

At the time of writing this report, Covid-19 restrictions are continuing to ease. It is hoped that the situation continues to improve. The pandemic has shown us that it is possible to hold meetings virtually, with members taking part in a remote meeting. In the past, video conferencing equipment was used with a choice for members to take part by attending Council offices in Caernarfon, Dolgellau or Pwllheli.

The technology available to hold virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams and Zoom maximises the opportunities to programme meetings that are convenient for members to participate. In a time where focus is placed on climate change, holding virtual meetings reduces carbon emissions as members do not travel as much.



At times, it is fair to say that face-to-face meetings are of an advantage, especially when witnesses are called in to provide personal evidence. Looking at body language and eye contact can help to make witnesses feel more comfortable when presenting evidence.

It is not yet clear how exactly scrutiny investigations will be carried out. The above considerations will be considered along with work pressures on Council Departments. A conclusion will be needed per investigation on the best way to act and learn lessons in moving forward.

Parking Task Group

A request was received from the Cabinet Member for the Environment to establish a Task Group in 2019, to assist the Department with the work of analysing the range of options to manage parking in light of the financial income challenges from car parks in the future.

Members of the Task Group undertaking the work are Councillors:

- Kevin Morris Jones,
- Angela Russell,
- Annwen Hughes,
- Gethin Glyn Williams.



Image: "freepik.com"

A report on the work of the Task Group was submitted to a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 10 December 2020 detailing the options and recommendations put forward by the Task Group.

It was reported that the Task Group had undertaken a review of the Council's current parking strategy, having regard to electric vehicles, use of cash, events, use of dwellings and holiday homes, motor-homes, changing the structure of parking fees, parking during the Christmas period, Blue Badge Scheme, Parking Scheme for Residents and strengthening the Parking Enforcement Team.

The committee resolved to accept the update and support the recommendation of the Task Group that pay and display fees be increased by 10%. The report and minutes of the meeting can be viewed via this link - [Report and Minutes](#)

A report was submitted to the Cabinet on [16 February 2021](#) in terms of the parking review. The recommendations of the Task Group were accepted and an adjustment was made in terms of reconciling the enforcement hours of Band 1 Car Parks to be operational between 10am and 4:30pm. It is intended to hold meetings of the Task Group in 2021/22 and report back to the Communities Scrutiny Committee.

"...so good as a Cabinet Member, to see our scrutiny committee system, by means of the cross-party task group, contributing towards making a decision rather than examining a decision and scrutinising it afterwards. I think that this is always good news. ...there are very positive elements in the report. I would like to congratulate the group on their work."

IMPACT OF SCRUTINY

Members of the Task Group collaborated with the Cabinet Member and added value as they reviewed the parking strategy. It is an example of what can be achieved when collaborating with a Cabinet Member.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act requires public bodies to design services that protect future generations in the long term. It places a duty to improve the environmental, economic, cultural and social well-being of the people of Wales.

When undertaking scrutiny, members consider the five ways of working that are noted in the Act:



Long Term

Balance short term needs with long term ones and plan for the future.



Prevention

Prevent problems from occurring or worsening in the future, rather than responding to problems.



Integration

How the Council's well-being objectives can affect the national well-being goals and the well-being objectives of other public bodies (e.g. local health board or police).



Collaboration

Working with others to achieve the well-being objectives.



Involvement

Include the people of Gwynedd when seeking to realise plans and ensure that those people reflect the area's diversity.

It is essential that members refine scrutiny skills giving consideration to what is required of public bodies within the Act. It is proposed to regularly remind members of the Act's requirements in order to be able to ensure that the Council acts in accordance with the Act.

Cabinet Members Sessions

As 2020/21 was a very different year, the need was identified for Cabinet Members to hold sessions for members in order to share information on the work of departments, the impact of Covid-19 on service provision and the main priorities of the Cabinet Member/Department for the future. Members were given the opportunity to make observations and to ask questions.

Information sessions per Cabinet Member were held during November 2020:



Members who attended the sessions greatly appreciated them. It was a golden opportunity to receive information and to receive responses to members' questions in an informal setting.

An appreciation was noted of the staff's work during the pandemic, responding to challenges and endeavouring to provide first class services for the people of Gwynedd.

The sessions were beneficial with members receiving information that gave them a better understanding of the work of different services within the departments.

Facts about Scrutiny in Gwynedd in 2020/21

48 members have been a part of undertaking important scrutiny work during the year.

29 items have been scrutinised in formal meetings.

3 meetings of the Scrutiny Forum have been held during the year.

A total of **32** scrutiny members have **attended 9** Cabinet Member information sharing **sessions**.

Others who are part of the scrutiny work:

- ❖ **7** co-opted members (5 with a vote on education matters only, 2 without a vote)
- ❖ **1** lay member

Meetings were held between the Chairs and Vice-chairs and relevant Cabinet Members and Heads of Department.

Support for the scrutiny work by the Democracy and Language Manager, Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor and Scrutiny Advisor.

APPENDIX

Scrutiny Work Programme 2020-2021

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee	
8 October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call in - Cabinet decision (15/09/20) to hold a statutory consultation on the proposal to close Ysgol Abersoch.
5 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Wales Economic Growth (North Wales Economic Ambition Board)
4 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Annual Report 2018-19, 2019-20, The Education Department's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic The Education Department's Priorities • GwE's work programme and support for schools during the Covid-19 Pandemic • Post-16 Education Informal Engagement • Developing the Principles of Sustainable Tourism and Tourism Tax
15 April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering the Youth Engagement and Development Framework in Gwynedd • Review of the Mobile Libraries Service

Care Scrutiny Committee	
26 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress Report on the Recommendations of the Scrutiny Investigation: Supporting the Disabled People of Gwynedd (Wheelchair Service) • Looked After Children and Young People
14 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational Therapy Service
18 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra care and housing provision on the Penrhos site, Pwllheli • Use of the Housing Support Grant to reduce homelessness in Gwynedd

Communities Scrutiny Committee	
22 October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Update by the (Gwynedd and Anglesey) Community Safety Partnership

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Report of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board 2019/20
10 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Structure and Delivery Arrangements of the Public Services Board • Update - Parking Review • Research Paper: Managing the use of dwellings as holiday homes
25 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights of Way Action Plan • Supplementary Planning Guidance: Tourist Facilities and Accommodation • Public Protection Service - work of the services during the pandemic
22 April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Services Board - Progress on realising the Well-being Plan • Control of Firework Displays • The Council's Public Protection Services staffing resources - ensuring capacity and resilience now and in the future

Audit and Governance Committee

15 October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings Overview: progress report on realising savings schemes • Budget Strategy 2021/22 (scrutinise this work early with regards to Council budgeting)
11 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Savings Situation • 2021/22 Budget (with a focus on risk, prior to the Cabinet recommending the budget and tax for approval by the Full Council) • Capital Strategy 2021/22 (including Investment and Borrowing Strategies) - note the relevant information and risks, and support submission of the strategy to the Full Council for approval