

## **Annual Performance Report & Self Assessment 2024-25**

### **Leader's Foreword**

I am pleased to present the Annual Performance Report 2024-25 which looks at the Council's work over the past year. This is the second performance report of the 2023-28 Council Plan.

It is miraculous that we have been able to achieve so much as a Council given the huge funding gap we were facing as a result of the inadequate settlement by the Welsh Government, which has been the case for many years. I'm extremely pleased that we committed to protecting the most vulnerable among us when setting the budget for this year. I can't help but think of all the extra things that we would have been able to achieve for the people of Gwynedd if they had received an adequate and fair budget.

Reflecting on what has been achieved in the past year there are so many highlights that I could refer to. A priority programme for me is the cross-departmental Supporting People programme which helps those facing permanent hardship. It's nice to be able to report on the progress of this work over the past year. The programme has progressed considerably since it was established in order to tackle poverty and the cost-of-living crisis and continues to do great work in funding and supporting community hubs, supporting the county's food banks and work to reduce the impact of fuel poverty on the residents of Gwynedd.

Our Housing Action Plan is going from strength to strength with so many county residents having benefited from new homes and practical support. This scheme has brought several empty houses back into use, ensuring that social houses are built, developing Tŷ Gwynedd housing as well as work to mitigate the effects of homelessness.

The past year has seen the opening of the new Ysgol Treforthyr in Cricieth, an eco-friendly school that will provide a first-class learning environment for the children of Cricieth and the surrounding area. Significant investments have also been made to two primary schools in Bangor to ensure a wealth of learning experiences for local children in the area.

We have been able to attract and benefit from several grants here in Gwynedd over the year, one that stands out is the £2 million to Gwynedd's slate communities to fund the innovative LleCHI LleNI project over a five-year period. This funding will raise awareness of the slate heritage of the World Heritage Site areas and celebrate the importance of the Welsh language.

Another source of pride is our investment in young people. I was delighted with the launch of Academi Gofal which tackles staff shortages in the Care sector by attracting and developing individuals to pursue a career in a Welsh environment in this vital field. Increasing the use of the Welsh language is very important to me and the great work of promoting the prosperity of the language continues through significant projects.

Further challenges lie ahead, with the financial situation forcing us to make difficult decisions. Yet I have every faith that we as a Council will continue to do our best for the people of Gwynedd. I, as Leader, will continue to voice my dissatisfaction and lobby the Welsh Government and Westminster about the lack of investment in Local Government, particularly rural areas such as Gwynedd, trying to secure adequate funding for the future.

Councillor Nia Jeffreys

## Introduction

The 'Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28' includes a series of ambitious projects which will enable us to develop and improve our services for the residents of the county over a period of five years. The projects are covered under seven priority fields:

- **Tomorrow's Gwynedd**  
*Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life*
- **A Prosperous Gwynedd**  
*Strengthening the economy and supporting the people of Gwynedd to earn a decent salary*
- **A Homely Gwynedd**  
*Supporting the people of Gwynedd to live in suitable and affordable homes in their communities*
- **A Caring Gwynedd**  
*Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities*
- **A Welsh Gwynedd**  
*Ensuring that we give our residents every possible opportunity to use the Welsh language in the community*
- **A Green Gwynedd**  
*Protecting the county's natural beauty, and responding positively to the climate change crisis*
- **An Efficient Gwynedd**  
*Putting the residents of Gwynedd first and treating them fairly and ensuring that the Council performs effectively and efficiently*

This report looks back at what was achieved during the second year of the Council's Plan. It is customary to undertake an annual review of the Plan to ensure that the projects remain suitable, and to give the Council the opportunity to adapt them in light of local and national developments over the period of the Plan. This annual report covers the plan as agreed by the Council on the 7 March 2024.

Like last year, the report is divided into chapters that reflect the seven priority areas, describing the progress made during the year along with the main achievements in the day-to-day work of our departments, for example child and adult care, the economy, and housing.

The Priority Areas within this document are our Well-being Objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Objectives will directly contribute to achieving the seven national well-being goals. As we take action, we will also give appropriate consideration to the five ways of working within the Act by considering the long term, prevention, integration, collaborative working and being inclusive of people of all ages. We will do this by adopting a way of working which focuses on putting the people of Gwynedd

at the centre of everything we do. The table at the end of this report outlines the contribution of each priority project towards the five ways of working.

The second part of the performance report is our self-assessment for the year. This is our fourth self-assessment. The Council is expected to submit this annually under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Also, this year an additional section is appended that outlines how the Council is complying with the Social Partnership Duty which is a new reporting requirement under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

The need to make financial savings is more or less an annual challenge for Local Government by now, and last year was no different. A total of £43 million of savings have been realised since 2015/16, with £5.6 million of this total coming from the 2024/25 financial year. Despite these financial challenges, the Council is constantly innovating and trying to find better and more efficient ways of providing services.

As part of our performance arrangements, a series of departmental performance challenge and support meetings are held on a regular basis to see how the departments are making progress with their day-to-day work as well as Council Plan projects. This Annual Performance Report is based on the findings of these performance challenge and support meetings. The aim of the report is not just to highlight the good things, but to give a fair and honest picture of our performance during the year. In doing so, we can celebrate our successes and see which aspects of our work needs further attention, in order to assist us in providing the best possible service for the residents of the county within the resources we have.

This annual Report is submitted to the Council Cabinet and to the meeting of the Full Council for approval.

## **Tomorrow's Gwynedd**

Our ambition is to ensure that every child educated in Gwynedd gets:

- Treated equally, encouraged to treat others equally and that we give priority to their happiness and well-being.
- Education of the best possible standard including access to a broad range of academic and vocational subjects to fulfil the requirements of the new 'Curriculum for Wales'.
- Access to Welsh-medium education throughout their time in education.
- Educated in buildings that are in a good state of repair, are safe and fit for purpose to the best of our ability.
- The opportunity to develop into rounded citizens, who are content and confident in the world.
- Tailored support from professional services to meet their additional learning needs.
- The opportunity to have a nutritious meal in school, free of charge to as many pupils as possible.
- Access to equipment and technology that promote modern and effective learning.
- An assurance of suitable facilities and playing fields that are available for children and young people in their leisure time.

## **Projects**

- Transforming education for children in their early years
- Modernising buildings and the learning environment
- Promoting the well-being of children and young people and reducing the cost of sending children to school
- Extending opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people
- Formulate and implement a 10-year strategic direction for education in Gwynedd
- Review and improve the range of inclusion provisions in Gwynedd

## **Project Updates**

### **Transforming education for children in their early years**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A new strategy for the early years is being implemented which includes work to provide support to fathers, provide perinatal mental health support, a toileting scheme, and develop speech and language.
- The two-year-olds childcare provision has been extended to a number of new areas in the county, including Abermaw, Bala, Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Bangor.

### **Modernising buildings and the learning environment**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The construction work commenced on the site of the Bangor Byw'n Iach car park to upgrade the area and create parking spaces for Ysgol Hiraef staff, which will make

the school a car-free site. The building work on the improvements to Ysgol Hirael itself will begin in 2025-26.

- The former Ysgol Glanadda building has been demolished and the construction work for the new Our Lady's School has begun. The frame for the new school is already in place, and work will continue over the next few months.
- An Outline Strategic Case has been produced and submitted to the Welsh Government to improve the condition of the buildings and the learning environment at Ysgol Tryfan, Bangor. Discussions are ongoing to ensure that the project can be delivered within the available budget.
- The construction of Ysgol Treferythyr in Cricieth has been completed, and a new school for 150 learners opened its doors in early September 2024.
- An Outline Business Case for a new school in Bontnewydd was approved in July 2024. Work on the creation of a temporary school, which will allow space for the new school to be built, is progressing with the intention of being operational by September 2025.

### **Promoting the well-being of children and young people and reducing the cost of sending children to school**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Research findings about the financial cost of attending school were shared with schools.
- A work programme was drawn up to respond to the findings of the questionnaires, and as part of this actions will be drawn up, which are unique to each school, which will lead to a reduction in the cost of sending children to school.

### **Extending opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Young people's views on all the available youth provisions were gathered. The gaps will be addressed in the Youth Service's new strategy.
- We will review the facilities available in the high image playing fields and make improvements within the available funding.

### **Formulate and implement a 10-year strategic direction for education in Gwynedd**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A draft of the new Education Strategy has been prepared, and we aim to introduce it early in 2025-26.

### **Review and improve the range of inclusion provisions in Gwynedd.**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Following the establishment of a Project Board in March 2024, work was undertaken to map needs and research provisions in other counties in order to identify good practice. As a result of this work, Cabinet agreed in April 2025 to create a (multi-site)

Unit for the provision of support to children with significant behavioural and engagement difficulties. A funding plan was agreed delegating the timetable for implementation and delivery of the plan to the Head of Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education. The main location of the provision is in Llanwnda on the former site of the School, with an investment from the ALN Capital Grant to ensure the building is fit for purpose.

### **Some of our key achievements**

- There is a Project Boards arrangement in place to ensure that education capital project management is robust. Significant work has been carried out during the year to meet the expenditure requirements of one-off capital grants during the year such as the Additional Learning Needs grant and community schools and Rolling Programme capital projects are now progressing as expected.
- For admission to Primary and Secondary schools in September 2024, 99.5% of parents' first choices were offered.
- We have been successful in offering training and follow-up workshops to EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) designated persons and support staff in several secondary schools during 2024/25. Thirteen secondary schools attended the initial presentation, and 10 secondary schools were able to attend the following 3 workshops. We will be offering the training to more secondary schools during 2025/26. We will be offering seasonal supervision sessions to these schools, and we hope to train more staff in the following educational year.
- Free school meals are available to all children from reception to year 6 in all primary schools in Gwynedd.
- We provide professional and efficient education transport for eligible learners in line with the Welsh Government's statutory requirements to facilitate access to all educational sites in the county.
- By reducing the number of pupils in the ABC Centres and also ensuring that all pupils have a shared placement with their Mainstream schools, we have improved the quality of the service. The plan allows us to focus more effectively on individual targets and respond appropriately to the needs at the Centres. In addition, the shared placement arrangement ensures that schools have the opportunity to get to know the pupils, enabling them to plan and prepare an appropriate provision for the Reception year. As a result, there are improvements in developmental progress sooner, and the willingness of the intensive pupils to transition to full-time education.
- 97% of school safeguarding designated persons have completed designated person training in the last two years. While the national guidance states that a period of more than three years should not be left between training, we encourage refresher training every two years as a good practice. The figure is not 100% as three new

members of staff have started in their roles and have not yet completed the training but have registered to do so.

- The Inclusion Service has been focusing on strengthening the support available to pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). This has included developing more systematic approaches to identifying needs early, ensuring that interventions are provided in a timely and effective manner. We worked closely with schools and other services to co-design a new strategy, with the aim of ensuring that the support offered is inclusive, sustainable and evidence based. As part of the strategy, we will be establishing a new centre which will be operational from September 2025, offering a range of targeted services to support pupils.

## **A Prosperous Gwynedd**

The foundation for enabling the people of Gwynedd to prosper is ensuring that there are suitable jobs available in the county paying salaries that enable them to support themselves and their families. Our ambition is to ensure:

- High-quality jobs.
- Support for businesses to thrive.
- Sustainable tourism for the benefit of communities.
- Strong and resilient communities.
- Prosperous and vibrant town centres.

## **Projects**

- Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy
- Regenerating communities and town centres
- Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work
- Keeping the Benefit Local

## **Project Updates**

### **Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A Sustainable Visitor Economy summit was held with over 100 attendees.
- We reviewed our arrangements to support events in Gwynedd.
- Four 'Aros-fan' (stopping places) have been opened across Gwynedd for visitors travelling in motorhomes. We are monitoring the use made of them and will prepare an evaluation report in due course.
- A structure has been established to implement the Gwynedd and Eryri Visitor Economy Plan 2035, and funding has been earmarked to implement the scheme.
- Communities and businesses in Gwynedd were supported to promote and celebrate culture locally through the 'Diwylliesiant' project. £715,553 was invested to support 109 organisations and businesses to carry out various activities, which attracted an additional investment of £5.8m for the County. A lot of activity took place through Storiell, Byw'n Iach, Archives, Libraries and Parc Glynllifon.
- The communities of Gwynedd were supported to take advantage of the slate industry's world heritage designation by securing Heritage Lottery funding for the LleCHI LleNi projects, and funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Levelling-up Fund. Several major projects are underway including the redevelopment of the Slate Museum and Parc Padarn in Llanberis, and town centre improvements and the installation of public art in six towns. In addition, the Aelwyd yr Urdd was upgraded, and works were completed on a connecting route in Blaenau Ffestiniog.



## **Regenerating communities and town centres**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The Local Regeneration Plans for each of the 13 regeneration areas in the county were published on the Council's website, and a review of the local co-ordination arrangements was undertaken.
- Grants worth £1.8m were offered through the Community Support Key Fund to a range of local regeneration projects.
- Place Making Schemes have been completed for Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Bala and Dolgellau.
- £1.8m of Shared Prosperity Fund grant funding has been invested to upgrade Gwynedd's town centres.
- A number of town centre improvement projects were awarded a Transforming Towns 2024/5 grant, including College Park, Bangor; the vacant property of Galeri Cyf; Menter y Tŵr Pwllheli; Canolfan Bro Tegid, Y Bala; and Bangor Health and Well-being Centre.

## **Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- 600 businesses and social enterprises received support from the Council through the ARFOR programme and the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The Gwynedd Business Week was held in October, with a series of events organised for businesses in Dolgellau, Pwllheli and Bangor. A campaign by the Council to encourage residents and visitors to support local businesses managed to reach 50,000 other accounts.
- We continue to support the North Wales Growth Bid schemes, paying particular attention to the schemes that offer the greatest benefit to Gwynedd, including the approved Bryn Cegin Park Scheme, and arrangements are in place to start operating on the redesigned Glynllifon Innovation Hub Project and site.
- 221 people were supported to return to work in 2024/25 and 251 people were assisted to increase their ability to earn a good salary.

## **Keeping the Benefit Local**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A new procurement strategy has been drawn up which will soon be presented to the Cabinet.
- Our procurement procedure rules were reviewed to ensure compliance with the new Procurement Act.
- We have updated our website and intranet to raise awareness of the new regulations, procurement techniques and the aim of keeping the benefit local in due course.

## **Some of our key achievements**

### **Developing the economy and regenerating communities**

Cyngor Gwynedd provided a wide range of support to sustain and support businesses to thrive during the past year:

- Support was provided to 176 different businesses through Council-led business support schemes. The support was a combination of financial help in the form of a grant to enable businesses to invest in order to reduce costs or take advantage of new opportunities, practical support to help businesses review their activities and plan for the future, and support for businesses to make better use of technology and digital media.
- Following support from the Gwaith Gwynedd team, 221 residents were successful in getting a job. This was an increase of one third on last year's result.
- As a result of being offered financial support from the Council during 2024/25, 54 businesses have committed to paying their employees a real living wage and using more Welsh.
- Completion and publication of Place Making Schemes to improve six towns within the county - Bangor, Caernarfon, Pwllheli, Porthmadog, Dolgellau and Bala.
- Cist Gwynedd, the community grants portal, has allocated over £1.6million of grants to various groups and organisations in the county.
- The Regeneration Programme Service has secured an investment of £8.5m for town centre projects.
- To improve the towns of the county, financial support was given to bring 10 empty properties in town centres back into use, and to renovate and improve a further 26 buildings.

### **Culture and Leisure**

- A new website was launched for Parc Glynllifon [www.parcglynllifon.cymru](http://www.parcglynllifon.cymru) to promote what is available there.
- A bid worth £300,000 for financial support from the Welsh Government was successful. As a result of this, work will take place in 2025-26 to resurface the car park, install charging points for cars and bicycles, solar panels and interpretation/signage works.
- There have been improvements to the infrastructure of leisure centres including the resurfacing of the indoor tennis courts, the installation of a new Padel court – the first public court in North Wales – at Arfon Tennis Centre, and the conversion of the MUGA into a 2G 7v7 pitch at Glan Wnion, Dolgellau.
- A new 3G pitch was opened in Caernarfon by former Wales and Liverpool footballer, Ian Rush.
- Improvements have been made to Porthmadog harbour which included replacing the harbour mooring chains to ensure the safety of boats, and the improvement of the harbour's outer enclosure to provide a more practical and safer site. The CCTV

system at Barmouth harbour was upgraded to improve security and improvements to the Compound Road were completed.

- Following a £450,000 upgrade to the car park, a new charging system for parking in Dinas Dinlle was trialled.
- £280,000 has been invested to modernise the exhibitions at the Lloyd George Museum in Llanystumdwy after obtaining a grant from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The Warm Welcome campaign is active in all of Gwynedd's Libraries with the opportunity to join in activities such as playing chess, making jigsaw puzzles and a dementia choir. Caernarfon Library's Thursday afternoon chess session is growing from strength to strength, with children, young people and older people playing together regularly.
- Our Library system (LMS) was upgraded in December 2024. The LMS Cymru team, led by Cyngor Gwynedd, is working on launching a new app and All Wales book catalogue.
- A varied programme has been developed at Neuadd Dwyfor, with an emphasis on live music evenings by individuals and bands in Welsh, in addition to the usual film and theatre show offerings. As part of this, the 'Gigs Town Hôl' brand was introduced which is going from strength to strength.
- Financial support worth £77,000 was provided to hold 33 different events in the county. 154,000 people attended the events, and it was estimated that this benefited £4,069,561 to the local economy as a result.

## **A Homely Gwynedd**

Our ambition is to ensure that the people of Gwynedd can access a suitable home of a high standard, that is affordable and improves their quality of life. We will try to achieve this by setting an ambition to:

- Ensure that no-one is homeless in Gwynedd.
- Help the residents of Gwynedd to own an affordable home in their community.
- Ensure that houses in Gwynedd are environmentally friendly.
- Ensure that houses in Gwynedd have a positive influence on the health and well-being of the county's residents.

### **Projects**

- Increasing the supply of housing for local people
- Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty
- Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Managing second homes and short-term holiday accommodation

### **Project Updates**

#### **Increasing the supply of housing for local people**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- 386 social housing units have now been erected since the start of the Housing Action Plan, and these will help almost 1,300 individuals.
- Construction work has begun on sites in Llanberis and Bangor to create affordable housing under the Tŷ Gwynedd scheme.
- 23 houses were purchased through the Buy to Let Scheme (bringing the total to 46 houses), and these will be let at affordable rent levels.
- 108 vacant properties have been brought back into use through grant aid to renovate empty homes since the start of the Housing Action Plan.
- 62 households have now bought their home through the Homebuy Scheme.

#### **Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The county's residents were supported to make the most of schemes to reduce energy costs such as ECO4, with 216 applications having been approved.
- Ensuring that the residents of Gwynedd are aware of all the benefits available to them by working with internal and external partners.
- We have distributed 656 energy vouchers to residents in need who are on a prepayment meter in Gwynedd with expenditure of £24,719. Since the beginning we have distributed 5,671 vouchers worth £236,055 – money that has gone directly to the county's most vulnerable residents.
- We have referred residents to get additional support from organisations such as the Food Banks, Canllaw, Telecare, the Council's Empty Homes Grants and Council Loans,

Gwaith Gwynedd, the Priority Services Register, Welsh Water, Community Hubs and we have also referred to the Smart Energy Meters service.

- Expertise and useful information were shared on Cyngor Gwynedd's Costs of Living website which is available to everyone.
- Community clinics were held to refer people to the services and support available.

### **Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Developments to accommodate homeless people have been completed in Bangor and Pwllheli, and construction work is ongoing on another development in Bangor.
- The purchase of the former Government offices, Penrallt, Caernarfon, has been completed and substantial background work has taken place, such as structural assessments, feasibility assessments etc, prior to submitting a planning application for conversion into units for local people in need of a home.
- An additional 12 properties were attracted to the Leasing Wales Scheme which enables more people to rent privately in Gwynedd, making it a more affordable option. We will continue to engage with landlords and the Government to look at options to increase opportunities over the life of the scheme. To date 28 properties have been let, helping 65 individuals.
- Our 'One Stop Shop' is almost ready to launch. The 'One Stop Shop' is a new resource to respond to the needs of residents as they submit applications relating to housing in one central location.

### **Managing second homes and short-term holiday accommodation**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Following a period of public consultation, it was decided to introduce an Article 4 Direction for the Gwynedd planning authority area, to manage the use of homes as second homes and holiday accommodation. This has been implemented and is now in place across the county.
- Research was carried out into the effect of the Council Tax Premium with respect to any change of use of a property. It was found that there had been a decrease in the number of second homes and self-catering holiday units, but there was not enough data available at the time to prove that this was a direct result of the Premium. Following this, the Council decided to keep the Premium at the same level for 2025-26.

### **Some of our key achievements**

- We have set an ambition to create 83 supported accommodation units for our county's homeless people by the end of the Housing Action Plan, to meet the growing demand for the service. Since 2021, 20 units have been created, with a further 62 on the work programme. To date, at least 30 people have received support in the new units, and we will continue to support individuals and families over the next few years.
- In October 2024, Dôl Sadler – a brand-new building for providing supported accommodation to our county's residents – opened on the site of the former Ysgol Glan Wnion in Dolgellau. The development was shortlisted for the Inside Housing Development Awards in the Best Supported Housing Development category: Rural/Suburban.
- There are two Tŷ Gwynedd sites in the construction process – the Llanberis and Coed Mawr, Bangor sites. Another two will start in 2025/26, with more to follow in the coming years. Other sites are being considered across the county to address local needs.
- Through the Buy-to-Let Scheme, the Council buys homes on the open market to let them to residents in housing need. The Council has already purchased 46 houses (exceeding the ambition set for the end of the 2024/25 financial year, which was 43). The Council has let 16 houses and is completing necessary repairs and upgrades on a further 20 houses.
- To bring more empty homes back into use, there are several interventions available to the people of Gwynedd. Through the Housing Action Plan, the Department can offer an additional year's exemption from council tax on empty homes, so that a family or individual can complete key restoration work to bring the house to an acceptable standard of living. To date, 123 exemptions totalling £165,061 have been granted to empty homeowners.
- Grants are available for owners to carry out necessary upgrade work to a house that used to be empty, and to date 108 of these grants have been allocated. The total number of empty homes that have come back into use because of the Council's support is 284. This means, of course, that 284 empty houses have also come back into use for local residents. This meets and exceeds the ambition set to bring 250 empty homes back into use.
- The Housing and Property department is working closely with its housing partners on social and intermediate housing developments to meet the huge demand for housing in Gwynedd. During 2024/25, 90 affordable homes were built across Gwynedd bringing the total number of new homes since the start of the Housing Action Plan to 386.
- The Department has been successful in attracting additional funding from the Welsh Government to deliver more affordable housing developments. In 2024/25, an additional £8m was attracted which will enable our housing partners to build at least an additional 50 units.
- Work on developing the Penrhos, Pwllheli site is underway, after the Council, in partnership with Clwyd Alyn housing association, secured an additional grant of around £7.7m from the Welsh Government to enable the start of phase 1 of the development which will create 44 new homes.
- The Homebuy Scheme has managed to help 62 households to buy a home on the open market in Gwynedd. Another 25 are currently in the process. The Council, in

partnership with the Dwyfor Pilot, has succeeded in extending the maximum value of eligible properties in certain areas of Dwyfor to respond to the local situation, meaning that more people can benefit from the Scheme.

- Since October 2022, 753 homes have received grant support to improve their energy performance. This has helped many residents of Gwynedd to live in more cosy homes and to avoid or get out of fuel poverty by providing support to insulate houses, receive effective heating equipment and eco-friendly upgrades such as solar panels and air-source heat pumps.
- During April and May 2024, Taith ar Daith was held, which was the first series of drop-in events for helping the public with housing issues. Three locations were visited – Caernarfon, Pwllheli and Dolgellau, and positive feedback was received at each site from the 158 people who called in. The Department has received several invitations to visit other locations, and these will be visited in the coming years.

Looking after vulnerable individuals is one of our main responsibilities, and our ambition is to support the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities by:

- Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Supporting residents to participate and engage with their communities, and to reduce poverty and its effects.
- Ensuring that children, young people and their families live happy lives and reach their potential in terms of their education, health and well-being.
- Ensuring there is information available for the residents of Gwynedd to assist them in making informed decisions about their health and physical and mental well-being.
- Enabling the residents of Gwynedd to live independently in suitable accommodation with dignity for as long as possible in their community.
- Supporting unpaid carers.
- Providing high-quality care and support in the right place at the right time.
- Supporting our communities to ensure accessibility and to develop into an Age-Friendly Gwynedd.

### **Projects**

- Modernising our care resources to meet future needs
- Using technology more effectively to improve the ability of Gwynedd residents to access support and care
- Working with Health Services to enable people to live their best life in the community
- Developing training and employment opportunities for individuals in need of support
- Llechen Lân
- Supporting People's Well-being
- Autism Plan
- Developing a residential provision for looked-after children in small group homes

### **Project Updates**

#### **Modernising our care resources to meet future needs**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- We have finished upgrading Hafod Mawddach and Cefn Rodyn.
- Dementia units in Bryn Blodau have opened.
- Discussions have begun on the development of Extra Care Housing in Caernarfon.
- We are investigating whether there is a need for additional provision of Care Housing at the Penyberth site, Pwllheli.

#### **Using technology more effectively to improve the ability of Gwynedd residents to access support and care**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The Dewis search tool and AskSara occupational therapy system have been integrated into the social services website pages. This means that people can obtain



suitable and timely information and advice to help them remain independent and reduce pressures on traditional services.

- A menu of telecare devices has been created and is being promoted on the website, in the media and through the social work teams to help people remain independent. It will also reduce the pressure on traditional services.

### **Working with Health Services to enable people to live their best life in the community**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Arrangements for regular communication and meetings were established in order to promote collaboration and enable the adult teams to feel more like one. This reduces duplication and improves communication which in turn provides a better service to the individual.
- New joint-working arrangements were developed for the mental health teams, and a review of the arrangements was carried out to ensure they were robust.

### **Developing training and employment opportunities for individuals in need of support**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A Job Opportunities Co-ordinator and additional Employment Support Officers were appointed, and work was undertaken to identify the type and number of opportunities needed. This meant that individuals with a learning disability were given paid employment (real living wage) and that both the individual and the employer received support from Council officers.

### **Llechen Lân**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- An analysis of Gwynedd's demographics, the demand for service, and adult social services best practice was completed in order to understand and highlight the demand for service and the associated resources that will be required for the next twenty years.

### **Supporting People's Well-being**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Well-being Champions were appointed, and cost-of-living events and various drop-in sessions were held.
- Two Supporting People Hubs have been established in two new areas.
- We worked with Citizens Advice to provide numeracy and budgeting support to residents.
- Practical support was provided for people to learn how to go on-line, and IT equipment was distributed as part of the Digital Inclusion Project.
- The pilot of the Gafael Llaw scheme has been set up which is a scheme across social services and Galw Gwynedd, which proactively reaches out to residents to make sure everyone knows where to go for help and what help is available.

- A Capital and Revenue Fund was established to support community feeding projects, and cookery courses were provided at the hubs in collaboration with Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board.
- Food and Fun sessions were run during the summer holidays where activities were provided for children which included educational sessions, physical activity and food and nutrition education. Four schools signed up to participate.
- Kits were provided to support children's toileting which included real reusable nappies, potties and information packs.
- Hundreds of free period products were distributed through libraries during 2024/25.
- 5,575 food packages were distributed by community food schemes throughout the county and 11,601 meals were provided.
- 3,478 people attended Croeso Cynnes sessions across 25 schemes across the county where wellbeing workshops such as weekly games and creative sessions were provided as well as drop-in sessions on various issues e.g. finance or health.

### **Autism Plan**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A preventative worker has been appointed to the family support team to work with children who are on the diagnosis pathway or who have been diagnosed. The worker works very closely with the autism team and is involved in providing group-based intervention.
- The team is developing parent/carer support programmes to ensure that the support provided at home is effective and appropriate.
- A range of training was provided to professionals and parents/carers including training on awareness and understanding of autism, and training on worrying behaviour.
- The team continues to work on the Llwybrau Ni project, which will provide social opportunities for young people and a break for parents and carers.

### **Developing a residential provision for looked-after children in small group homes**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A small group home was opened in Morfa Bychan, and two children were welcomed into the home. In addition, two other properties have been purchased and preparatory work is underway for registration.
- A meeting was attended in the area to discuss the plan.
- A 'Statement of Purpose' and policies have been developed for the development as they will be required to register the unit with Care Inspectorate Wales.

### **Some of our key achievements**

- The Care Academy, a unique scheme for people to develop a career in the Care sector, has been launched. Practical experiences and opportunities will be provided for staff to build and develop their skills to ensure a long and successful career within Cyngor Gwynedd's Care services.
- Almost two-thirds (about 1000) of Gwynedd's telecare devices have now been transferred to new digital devices.
- Despite the increase in demand, we managed to reduce the waiting lists for assessment. The '50 Day Challenge' funding has enabled us to fund the work of an Occupational Therapist to address waiting lists, as well as up-skilling Practitioners to carry out assessments for equipment.
- Following changes that involve staff working part of the week in hospitals, we saw that individuals have been receiving a timely assessment and response, which has led to a reduction in the number of individuals waiting to return home safely from hospital.
- The waiting list for domiciliary care has reduced significantly over the year.
- The Council's residential homes occupancy rate has increased and reached its highest level for years which means fewer people are staying unnecessarily in hospitals or are at high risk in the community.
- The 'Learning Disability Job Opportunities Scheme' is going from strength to strength. The specialist chair transport scheme has commenced, which employs individuals with a learning disability, and several individuals have completed training on testing electrical equipment with the aim of providing a testing service for Council departments.
- 1183 nights of short break care for children were offered over the year (April 2024 – March 2025). This allows the child to receive care and support and have opportunities and experiences to encourage their development and wellbeing, while parents are able to enjoy periods of respite from their caring role.
- A new information page has been published on the Council's website to promote the 12.5 hours of free childcare available for children after their 2nd birthday.

As a national leader we will promote the growth of the Welsh language in all parts of the county. Our ambition is to:

- Ensure that every child in Gwynedd can use Welsh confidently in school and in their social life.
- Promote the growth of the Welsh language in all parts of the county and ensuring there are sufficient opportunities for everyone to be able to use the Welsh language naturally in their communities.
- Work jointly with our partners to facilitate the ability for Gwynedd residents to have access to all public services through the medium of Welsh.
- Ensure that promoting the Welsh language is a key part of all the Council's work, and any plans that impact the people of Gwynedd.
- Support efforts to create new Welsh-speakers of all ages.
- Ensure access to facilities and information of a good quality in relation to leisure, culture and the arts.

### **Projects**

- Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children
- Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd
- Review Gwynedd's Education Language Policy and conduct an evaluation of the Immersion System to ensure that all the education policies and services provided to children and young people in Gwynedd set a firm foundation for the Welsh language

### **Project Updates**

#### **Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The construction of a Language Unit on the site of Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn has been completed and the unit opened to learners in January 2025.
- Work to modernise the three Primary immersion units has been completed with improvements made to the Cymerau, Dolgellau and Maesincla units.
- Following a further grant from the Welsh Government, work on the creation of the virtual Aberwla village for Welsh learners has been completed.

#### **Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Several different projects were developed as part of the Language Strategy 2023-33 including some to promote clear communication and the Welsh language in business.
- An evaluation of the project to Protect Place Names was conducted, and a work programme was established for 2025-26 to ensure that Welsh names are protected and continue to be used.
- 'Project 15' has been further developed to increase the use of the Welsh language by children and young people. The project creates digital content in Welsh for various

audiences and in different styles and creates new opportunities for people to use Welsh. A company was commissioned to create content and activities for 2025/2026 as well as produce a report on options for the future.

- We contributed to the work of the Services Board's Welsh Language sub-group which tries to respond to the challenges of recruiting a workforce with Welsh language skills.
- We worked with Bangor University to research the attitudes and language use of residents.

**Review Gwynedd's Education Language Policy and conduct an evaluation of the Immersion System to ensure that all the education policies and services provided to children and young people in Gwynedd set a firm foundation for the Welsh language**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Following a period of engagement, a draft Language Policy was submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 10 April 2025. It will receive further consideration by the Cabinet later in the year.
- An Impact Study of the Immersion System was commissioned and the report, which will include recommendations from the main findings and potential improvements for the future, will be presented to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in the autumn.

**Some of our key achievements**

- Support has been given to Menter Iaith Gwynedd to establish itself as a sustainable language initiative that will promote the Welsh language in communities across Gwynedd. We managed to keep to the original timetable and completed the work before the end of the financial year, and transfer staff to the independent entity by 1 April 2025.
- The Gwynedd Language Forum was co-ordinated, including an engagement project with young people to understand more about their attitude and use of the Welsh language.
- A pilot was carried out to measure the use of the Welsh language by Gwynedd residents when using some of Cyngor Gwynedd's frontline services including libraries, leisure centres, receptions and the call centre.

**A Green Gwynedd**

Cyngor Gwynedd has declared a climate emergency, and our aim is to be a net zero carbon Council and ecologically positive by 2030. Our ambition is to ensure:

- Significant reduction in carbon emissions.
- Response to the effects of climate change.
- An increase in biodiversity and nature habitats.
- An excellent network of routes for residents to have the choice of active travel to their place of work, education or leisure.
- A public transport network that meets the needs of Gwynedd's communities.

## **Projects**

- Acting on flood risks
- Waste and Recycling
- Climate and Nature Emergency Plan
- Active Travel
- Public Transport
- New Local Development Plan
- Clean and Tidy Communities

## **Project Updates**

### **Acting on flood risks**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A new Floods Strategy was adopted for the county.
- A project worth nearly £6 million was completed which will protect the Hirael area of Bangor from the effects of coastal flooding and improve local recreational resources.
- In Barmouth, the detailed design work for the North Promenade is still on the right track and progressing in line with the programme. A physical model of the scheme has been built at Imperial College London and will be used to assess any potential changes to flood risk as a result of our work. The detailed design phase is expected to take about two years to complete.

### **Waste and Recycling**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- A draft Waste and Recycling Strategy has been drawn up which will set a direction for the coming years with the aim of maximising recycling levels and specific actions to transform the waste and recycling services. This will be the subject of public consultation during 2025.
- We have been working with Wrap Cymru to prepare initial plans for modern and purpose-built waste treatment and processing facilities for the Caergylchu (Caernarfon) and Ffridd Rasus (Harlech) sites.
- A scheme to promote the use of certain recycling services was trialled in the Tanygrisiau and Bangor areas, with the intention of extending it to other areas later in the year.

- Additional focus was given to expenditure management, taking into account the savings schemes as well as aiming to avoid overspending.

### **Climate and Nature Emergency Plan**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- 31% of fleet cars and vans are now electric vehicles.
- 60 charging points were installed in 13 locations for the fleet
- The Gwynedd Nature Partnership has attracted £2.3 million to Gwynedd for conservation work in the last two years and has received a further £511,000 for the next two years, contributing significantly to national nature and biodiversity targets.
- We managed to attract the following grants in the field of buildings and energy: £300,000 from Energy Wales for installing batteries at Plas Silyn and Plas Ffrancon Leisure Centres, and £1.7M from the Welsh Government through the Low Carbon Heat Grant for Plas Ogwen Bethesda. This is an exciting scheme with the challenge of bringing such a building up to Passivhaus standard.

### **Active Travel**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- After submitting detailed plans to the Welsh Government for Active Travel schemes and Safe Routes in Communities, successful schemes were developed at Penrhos Road Bangor (second phase), Ysgol Rhostryfan and Ysgol Treforthyr, Cricieth. All the projects will be completed soon in 2025-26.
- Walking and cycling routes were promoted to residents and visitors to the county, drawing particular attention to Gwynedd's active travel network.

### **Public Transport**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Following a review, a new public buses network was introduced in Meirionnydd and Arfon which will improve provision in the area. A further review will need to be carried out in Dwyfor following the results of a recent tender.

### **New Local Development Plan**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- We have begun implementing the Delivery Agreement to facilitate the arrangements for preparing a new Local Development Plan for Gwynedd. The Delivery Agreement received approval from the Welsh Government.
- The first steps of gathering evidence and calling for development sites have begun. This work will continue during 2025-26.

### **Clean and Tidy Communities**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- The Ardal Ni tidying up team has dealt with a significant increase in requests for work which has included cutting urban weed and overgrowth, street washing and removal of gum, cleaning road signs/street names, and cleaning street furniture. They continue to receive very positive feedback from Members, community and town councils and residents.
- There was a 21% reduction in fly-tipping incidents brought to the Council's attention during the year.
- A campaign was undertaken to raise people's awareness to clean up after their dogs, and there has been a reduction in the number of complaints from the public about the problem.

### **Some of our key achievements**

- Trading Standards successfully met the target of inspecting 100% of high-risk businesses during the year. These include properties licensed to sell explosives and fireworks as well as those related to animal health.
- 82% of local bus journeys managed to arrive on time.
- 38% of the Council's cars or vans are now green (electric or hybrid).
- There was an increase of 0.98% in the number of litres of fuel used by the Council compared to the previous year.
- The vast majority (99%) of food businesses inspected continue to achieve a score of 3+, and a revisit is arranged within 3 months for those with a lower score. However, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has stated that the Council is not meeting its statutory duties in terms of the frequency of food standards and food hygiene inspections. The service is in the process of addressing the FSA's recommendations to improve the situation.
- Our recycling levels over the last four years have been a consistent 64%. However, because of the increase in the national target to 70%, we are no longer meeting the statutory target. The Waste Strategy will detail plans to address this.
- There was a significant decrease of 44% in the number of complaints about missed waste and recycling collections during the year.

### **An Efficient Gwynedd**



In order to ensure that the residents of Gwynedd receive the best possible services, we have a responsibility to ensure that our internal operational arrangements are always of the highest standard. Our ambition is:

- To promote a culture of open and inclusive working which always puts the needs of the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do.
- To provide adequate and suitable staffing resources for delivering services.
- To be an organisation that looks after our workforce's well-being and embeds the principles of equality naturally in all parts of the organisation.
- To make the best use of all financial resources.

## **Projects**

- Workforce Planning
- Developing the Council's culture
- Ensuring fairness for all
- Women in leadership
- Managing the impact of national budgetary cuts
- Digital Scheme
- Strategic review of Health and Safety management
- Adopting the Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for future working.

## **Project Updates**

### **Workforce Planning**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Establish a work experiences scheme, as another stream to try and attract people to come and work for the Council in the future.
- A dashboard has been produced which provides information on mandatory staff training.
- A dedicated workforce training scheme for general staff has been set up, to compliment and support plans that are already in place for the wider management and leadership of the Council.
- The Council was successful in achieving Level 2 accreditation in the 'Disability Confident' scheme.
- Establishing a staff forum(s) on equality matters.
- More apprentices and professional trainees were appointed. For 2025, a total of 21 new jobs are available, namely 13 apprentice jobs and 8 graduate jobs.

### **Developing the Council's culture**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- "Ffordd Gwynedd" is the name given to the way of working that we have adopted to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. Changing culture,

behaviours and mindsets are at the heart of this, and it happens across all parts of the Council's activity.

- The Practitioners Group was re-established as the Experiment and Improve Group, with the intention of encouraging greater sharing of best practice and lessons learned.
- Reviews of systems and processes were carried out in service units in all departments in the Council.
- Two series of the Managers and Team Leaders Network were held to deal with items such as cross-departmental joint-working, the well-being strategy, celebrating success, understanding and improving performance, managing absences and the practice of conducting reviews of work systems.
- A Forum for Assistant Heads of Services was established for the first time within the Council, as a result of identifying a gap in the opportunities for this cohort of senior managers to share experiences and contribute to the development of the organisation.
- A new Learning and Development Framework has been launched with the programme for the first year focusing on basic training such as financial management, well-being and digital skills.
- A new Well-being Strategy was introduced. The Strategy is based on three pillars, namely leadership and management, sustainable support and a work environment with mental, physical, social and financial well-being at the heart of what we seek to achieve.

### **Ensuring fairness for all**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- We have gathered, analysed and acted on data relating to schools. In particular, cases of bullying and hate crime, the true financial and emotional cost of attending school along with the attendance, punctuality and attainment of various groups of pupils. Work has begun on identifying training needs for school staff and working with welfare officers, the youth service, the police and agencies to be able to act on the data.
- Reviewed the information that is available in the national data dashboard by Data Cymru and decided to create a similar dashboard internally that looks specifically at Gwynedd.
- Continued with the training framework, ensuring that it covers a range of equality characteristics / diverse topics, to give our staff at all levels within the Council the resources and confidence to respect diversity and deal with a range of needs appropriately. The LGBTQ+ training course is up and running and available to all staff since the start of 2025.
- Following the introduction of the new impact assessment system, we have had a chance to improve it through a pilot period. We have also looked at raising staff awareness of the new system and providing support, information and training to ensure the quality of work.
- Establish a staff forum(s) to discuss equality issues, so that our employees can contribute to the area within the Council.

### **Women in leadership**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Further activities were held that form a foundation for the project's work, such as the Developing Potential Programme and the Sgyrsiau dros Baned.
- Promoted and raised awareness of matters of unconscious bias and self-awareness amongst managers and staff.
- Held events to raise awareness amongst men.
- Continued to consider what Services across the Council are doing to encourage women to apply for senior positions in order to identify and share good practice.
- Continued to pay attention to the constitution of committees and groups to ensure a balance in terms of female and male representation.

### **Managing the impact of national budgetary cuts**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Total savings of £43 million have been realised since 2015/16, representing 93% of the £46.6m required over the period. £5.6 million of the total savings applies to the savings for the 2024/25 financial year.
- Monitored that the Departments are prioritising the realisation of savings that have slipped from previous financial years.
- Worked with the Chief Executive and Directors and Heads of Department on the 2025/26 savings schemes and cuts, looking at alternative ways of providing services.

### **Digital Scheme**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- We are following a detailed work programme to realise the Digital Plan, and governance arrangements are in place to oversee our progress.
- To support the Council's new "Working for the Future" procedure, a new computer system has been developed to enable staff to book desks.
- Work is underway to redesign the Council's website. It will be tested with the public during 2025-26.
- Improvements are taking place to the Council's telephone provision, with almost 1000 staff now on the new system, including the Contact Centre and some schools, and a comprehensive programme has been prepared for completing the provision.
- Work has been undertaken to reach a conclusion on our options for the organisation's future management systems.

### **Strategic review of Health and Safety management**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Commenced the work of introducing a new Health and Safety IT system across the Council.
- Drew up an action plan for the Council's Management Team on how to achieve an integrated model of health and safety management.

## **Adopted a Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for working in the future**

This is what we achieved during the year:

- Work on reviewing policies has been carried out and discussions have taken place with most of the Departments.
- The work of adapting the departmental spaces within the Main Offices has been completed to enable the relocation of staff from the peripheral offices.
- Initial work has been undertaken to identify our need for office space in Ffordd y Cob and Penarlâg, and options were considered for optimising the use of the sites by combining alternative uses.

## **Some of our key achievements**

- During 2024-25, 89 proactive press releases were issued by the Communications Service which led to 469 news items, which compares favourably with the previous year. Over the same period, the Service also dealt with 510 queries from the press and media.
- There were 2,790,297 visits to the Council's website during the year.
- 261,549 requests for a service were submitted on-line during 2024-25 which is 4,472 more requests than in 2023-24.
- A new account was launched by the Council on the Bluesky social platform.
- On average, the translation team has translated nearly 400,000 words each month, along with providing simultaneous translation in nearly 60 meetings each month.
- A Staff Voice Survey was carried out during the year, and the results are being used to identify the needs of our employees and how the Council can improve further.
- A review was introduced to improve the collection rate of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates.
- A review of polling places in the county was carried out in order to assess the suitability of our stations and consider whether more suitable locations are available.

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