

MEETING	Economy and Community Scrutiny Committee
DATE	18 June 2026
TITLE	Performance Report - Cabinet Member for Economy and Community
REASON TO SCRUTINISE	An Opportunity to Scrutinise the Performance of the Department's Services 2025/26
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CABINET MEMBER	Cllr R Medwyn Hughes

1. Why it needs scrutiny?

1.1 For Committee Members to scrutinise the performance of Services within the Department.

2. What exactly needs scrutiny?

2.1 What has been achieved in the area that I am responsible for as Cabinet Member for the Economy and Community Department. This includes outlining the latest regarding the pledges in the Council Plan and the Department's day-to-day work.

3. Summary of the Key Matters

3.1 We are implementing the Council Plan for 2023-28, and I herein report on progress made during the 2025/26 year, as well as the performance measures of the Department's Services. I challenge all of the matters throughout the year, and I am satisfied with the performance.

4. Background / Context

Performance of Projects in the Council Plan

4.1 The table in Appendix 1 gives an update on the progress of the four priority projects in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 that the Economy and Community Department is responsible for implementing. Three of these projects are in the Prosperous Gwynedd section of the Plan, which aims to strengthen the economy and support Gwynedd residents to earn a decent wage. However, the responsibility to lead a workstream within the 'Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities' project in the Caring Gwynedd programme has been transferred to the Department since 2025.

4.2 From the information, you will note that the Department has made good progress against the main milestones of these projects over the past year. The main risk that is common to these four schemes is that the funds that have financed the work since 2023 expired in March 2026 and there is uncertainty around the Government budgets that will replace them. I would like to draw specific attention to the following matters:

Priority Project: Promoting our Culture and a Sustainable Visitor Economy

4.3 The Gwynedd & Eryri Action Plan 2035 (G&E2035) has been put into practice to support a sustainable visitor economy in the County – based on the key points raised in the Residents' Survey, feedback from attendees at the February 2025 summit and discussions within the G&E2035 and Ardal Ni Partnership structures.

4.4 The Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) etc., (Wales) Act came into force in September 2025. The Council is working with the counties of Conwy and Anglesey and the Welsh Revenue Authority to ensure that our impact assessment, consultation and decision-making procedures are aligned where possible. A report on the subject was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in February 2026 and then to the Council in May 2026, when it was decided to go out to consultation on establishing a Visitor Levy for Gwynedd.

4.5 Grants worth almost £300,000 have been offered to 69 organisations across Gwynedd last year to support cultural activities, events and healthy living. Full details of the Diwylliesiant project - [Diwylliesiant Project](#)

4.6 A culture workshop was held at Neuadd Dwyfor in October, to co-develop a vision and objectives for culture in Gwynedd for the future. The vision and objectives will be refined and confirmed over the coming months and will set a direction and ambition for the future. The Council has secured funding from the Welsh Government to support research into the contribution of culture to the economy and well-being of Gwynedd's communities which will contribute to a culture action plan.

4.7 I am delighted to see progress in our Llewyrch o'r Llechi project. The project's activities have now attracted over £35m of investment to Gwynedd's slate communities. Full details are available in the [Annual Report](#). You will note that last year, 68 events were held in the communities with 3,100 people attending and learning more about the value of our heritage in the communities. The 'Yr Aelwyd' building in Blaenau Ffestiniog was opened, public art was unveiled in our slate towns and villages, street and signage improvements have been undertaken, and construction work on the new Parc Padarn visitor centre has been completed.

Priority Project: Regenerating Communities and Town Centres

4.8 The project has achieved all milestones agreed for the next year. £8.9m has been invested on projects which contribute towards promoting and regenerating Gwynedd town centres across the county. You will note from Appendix 1 the range of projects across Gwynedd that have received an investment. The Council has achieved this by targeting funds from the Government and therefore the work is restricted to grant programme guidelines, which are mainly to improve the appearance of town centre buildings. A question has been raised on alternative investments in town centres that could have an impact on the vibrancy of town centres. After the discussion at the

performance challenge and support meeting, I have asked the Department to consider doing work on what measures would have the biggest impact on the vibrancy of town centres in the future.

- 4.9 This year, as a part of the Gwynedd Ni Regeneration Plan, a Town and Community Councils Fund was established as a pilot scheme and proposals for a contribution from each of these Councils were invited. With a budget of £370k, grants have been offered to 55 Gwynedd Town / Community Councils. The nature of the projects varies and includes a series of murals around towns/villages, new play equipment in parks that are managed by local Councils, street furniture which include bicycle storage racks, benches, information panels, improvements to community centres and landscaping.
- 4.10 There will be an opportunity for the Committee to further scrutinise the Department's activity when supporting town centre regeneration in July.

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

- 4.11 You will note from Appendix 1 that £1.3 million has been targeted from Government funds to establish a fund to support 118 Gwynedd businesses in 2025/26. A programme of drop-in sessions and Business Surveys have been held during the year to better understand the barriers facing enterprises, with a package of information / training sessions provided in response.
- 4.12 Adopting a new economic strategy during the last year has been a key step in order to ensure that Gwynedd's priorities are achieved. The Strategy sets a clear direction for the Council's investment programmes and future partners. One of the priority projects within the 2025/26 work programme is to establish Trawsfynydd Science Park. I am pleased to report that good progress has been made to develop the business case to establish a new Innovation Centre on the Science Park site, to protect, sustain and create new, well-paid jobs, in Gwynedd. Ambition North Wales have committed £10 million towards the scheme, subject to the content of the detailed business case. A more detailed report on the scheme will be submitted to this Committee in due course.
- 4.13 In addition, you will note from Appendix 1 that support has been provided to 255 Gwynedd residents to obtain work, with 130 receiving support to enable them to earn a better salary, developing skills and overcoming barriers.
- 4.14 Finally, you will note that construction work has commenced to erect 10 new work units in Minffordd. We anticipate that the units will be ready in the autumn of 2026.

Priority Project: Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities.

- 4.15 You will note from Appendix 1 that further Hwb arrangements are now operating in each of the 13 areas across the county. Work has commenced on developing a more sustainable model of providing support within 3 areas, namely Tywyn, Barmouth and Blaenau Ffestiniog, by incorporating the Hwb arrangements within the Gwynedd Libraries service. As part of the new model of community support, all Gwynedd

Library staff have commenced training. The Well-being Facilitators have also established a programme of drop-in sessions in local libraries, as well as partnership events to raise awareness of cost-of-living support and the support services available.

- 41.6 Six rounds of food grants have been held to support community food schemes across the county. To date, grants to the value of £217,743 have been allocated to community groups and food banks to strengthen local support for residents. I can see that the new arrangements are going to lead to more stable, consistent and integrated support for the most vulnerable residents of Gwynedd.

The Department's day-to-day work

- 4.17 The Department's Performance Dashboard can be seen in Appendix 2. It is scrutinised regularly, with meetings arranged over the year to enable me to support and challenge services on performance. I would like to draw the Committee Members' attention to the following matters:

Leisure Services - Byw'n Iach Leisure Resources, Padarn and Glynllifon Country Parks, Maritime, Hafan Pwllheli and Doc Fictoria, Caernarfon.

- 4.18 The grant investment work at Parc Padarn and Glynllifon continues. At Parc Padarn improvements to the Incline, a new Welcome Block and car park improvements have now been completed; along with improvements to the paths network at Parc Glynllifon. The average customer satisfaction of the Country Parks is 88%, but it is also worth noting that wider work is taking place at Parc Padarn, including investment in the National Slate Museum which is currently closed.
- 4.19 It can be seen that the number of accumulative visits to Byw'n Iach leisure centres over the year is 964,980 - which is 5.6% lower than 2024/25. As noted in the appendix, there are various reasons for this, including an increase in the number of customers paying through direct debit and therefore not recorded in the same way; and also change to how a number of historical visits recorded through the club use 'multiplier'. It is considered that the new system, although not comparative with historical data, is more accurate and better grounds for measuring in the future.
- 4.20 In addition, there is less use by schools, despite the effort to encourage more school visits. I remain concerned that the number of Gwynedd pupils having swimming lessons at our centres is falling. Following discussions with Byw'n Iach and the Education Department, we wrote to the Governing bodies of Gwynedd schools asking them to further consider the risks and inequalities across the county. Byw'n Iach is also considering developing specific packages for schools that would potentially make visits to the leisure centres more attractive and offer further value for money.
- 4.21 The Customer Satisfaction figures have remained quite similar over the past year, with a small reduction from 84.5% to 84.2%. But you will note from the appendix that a programme of improvements has been achieved and planned in response to the comments and improve user experiences. Over the last few months, we have managed to attract grants to make improvements to the fitness room at Dwyfor

Leisure Centre, improvements to the Arfon Tennis Centre, refurbish the 3G pitch at Tywyn, and improvements have been completed to the 3G pitches at Dolgellau and Porthmadog; along with water treatment improvements at the Bala and Arfon Centres.

- 4.22 The viability of the swimming pool systems at Byw'n Iach Bangor, concerns me. The Department has escalated the risk level in its risk register and works closely with Byw'n Iach and the Council's Property Service to identify short-term mitigation measures and long-term investment plans. We will report on the progress of this work over the year.
- 4.23 You will note from the Appendix that 88% of the customers of Gwynedd Harbours and 70% of respondents to the beaches' customer satisfaction survey said that they were of the opinion that their experience was 'very good' or 'good'. The feedback received from these surveys is extremely useful to enable this service to respond with other Council Departments.
- 4.24 The number of customers with a mooring contract increased by 9% in our harbours in 2025/26, compared to last year, which was an increase of 250 to 273 (excluding Hafan Pwllheli and Doc Fictoria, Caernarfon). You will also note that Hafan Pwllheli's berths had a 97% occupancy rate in 2025/26, with 86% of the berths in the outer harbour occupied over the same period.
- 4.25 During the year, there were several storms and periods of high winds which had a significant impact on the harbours. Some boats broke free from their moorings, others sank and several navigation aids were damaged. We also saw landslides as well as an oil pollution incident. The Service officers responded at short-notice, often outside normal working hours, to restrict or prevent further damage.
- 4.26 Over the 2025/26 year, the moorings of Hafan Pwllheli have been 96% full and 86% in the outer harbour. This is not a change from 2024-25 for the Hafan. Concerns remain about the silting levels in Pwllheli harbour. Over the past few months, the Service with the technical support of YGC has moved forward by undertaking further preparatory and technical work as part of a dredging strategy.

Archives, Museums, Arts and Libraries Services

- 4.27 You will note that 91% of the users of the Archives Service was 'very satisfied' with the service. Most of the comments received were very positive, but of those who were not satisfied, comments were received about the opening hours. Opening hours were reduced to the minimum allowed by the National Archives as a result of cuts in 2016. The Service secured a grant of £341,000 from the Welsh Government to invest in the Caernarfon Record Office and Dolgellau Record Office. The work will be completed by end of June 2026, and it will improve the energy conservation of the buildings and the experience and environment for users in the research rooms.
- 4.28 Over the year, positive feedback was obtained, between 97-100%, by partners about the community art service, based on projects such as Porthi Dre, Criw Celf for 7–11-year-old children; Stiwdio Lles to support young people aged 18-30 years (art on

prescription plan with a grant from the Arts Council, in partnership with Cwmni'r Frân Wen and Bangor University); Craft for Adult Well-being; Sgwrs a Chân (Song and a Chat) for those in care flats with Canolfan William Mathias. Night Out and Arts Support Community Arts Grants were provided to ensure that there are opportunities available across Gwynedd, e.g. Croesor, Bangor, Nefyn, Bala and Llanbedr. A key role of the service is to provide advice and support for individuals and organisations to encourage working in partnership. We collaborated with many organisations such as the Youth Service, Cell B, Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias, Theatr Derek Williams, Dawns i Bawb, Theatr y Ddraig, Age Friendly Team, Arts and Health Steering Group, and Ysbyty Gwynedd Gallery.

- 4.29 You will note from Appendix 2 that a Library Services Customer Satisfaction Percentage was 98% in terms of Customer Care with 90% of the users saying that the library had made a positive difference to their lives. But you will also note that only half the users now borrow a book with the role of the centres gradually changing to be warm, welcoming and safe places, which contribute to improving the well-being of residents.

Economy Development, Tourism, Regeneration and Community Support Services

- 4.13 The Economic Development, Tourism, and Community Regeneration and Support services have focused their efforts over the past year on implementing the priority projects outlined in Appendix 1. The performance of these services relies on grant funding and every support package provided to partners, communities and initiatives are monitored and evaluated according to the financiers' terms.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The report has been created based on the information and content of the latest meeting challenging and supporting the performance of the Department on 15 May 2026.

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

- 6.1 The Services and the Priority Projects implement a sustainable development duty - to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, aiming to reach the well-being goals. This is achieved by:
- **Including** residents / service users when making decisions and introducing changes;
 - **Collaborating** with partners where relevant;
 - Seeking to **prevent** problems from arising or worsening in the future;
 - Considering the **long-term** and what people's needs will be in years to come;
 - Considering the potential impact on other public bodies in order to ensure integration.

7. Impact on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Duty

7.1 Every Service from the Department and the Council's priority projects are aware of the duty to prepare an Equality, Welsh language, and Socio-economic Duty impact assessment. These assessments are used to improve projects and services.

8. Next Steps

8.1 We will take the Committee's observations into account and where relevant act to improve services.

Background Information - Appendices

Appendix 1: Progress reports on milestones of projects in the Council Plan

Appendix 2: The Department's Performance Measures