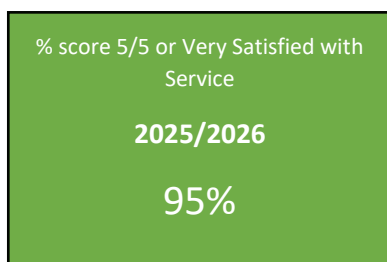


MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	18 June 2026
TITLE	Corporate and Legal Cabinet Member Performance Report
REASON FOR SCRUTINY	To report on the performance of Legal Services .
AUTHOR	Iwan G D Evans – Head of Legal Services
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Llio Elenid Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Legal and the Welsh Language

LEGAL SERVICE

Nia Grisdale – Legal Services Manager

Purpose : To provide the Council with a legal service that enables it to work effectively for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd "



2025-2026															
Score	Percentage [%]	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Very Satisfied 5	95%	19	11	7	8	7	9	8	5	10	18	20	18	140	
Satisfied 4	5%	1		1	3		1							6	
Fairly Satisfied 3															
Dissatisfied 2															
Very Dissatisfied 1															
Total questionnaires returned		20	11	8	11	7	10	8	5	10	18	20	18	146	
Number sent out		40	29	23	74*	77*	25	15	7	28	26	74	76	494	

The performance of the Service is monitored by seeking the feedback of the Departments who use the service. Opinions are measure against a scale of 1-5 in the form of a simple email and the monitoring procedure has improved. (5 = Very Satisfied down to 1 = Totally Dissatisfied). It is also possible for sections to add a comment along with a rating. During the 2025-2026 financial year, the result were 100% very satisfied or satisfied with the service.

A new system of soliciting feedback by filling out an email questionnaire has been brought into force since March 2024. In 2024-2025 only about 14% of questionnaires had been returned, which is clearly low but over the year work has been done on promoting and encouraging Clients to complete responses. Over the year 30% were returned.

There were also specific comments about the service including:

- Accessible, easy and easy to access quickly, well explained and supportive.
- Communicate quickly and clearly.
- Very timely response. Particularly good collaboration. Specialist legal advice for specific clients. have helped to get positive responses and outcomes which mean better outcomes for the individual and have been able to save money for the Council
- Quality service at all times.
- Received valuable guidance on many complex areas over the past year
- [particularly good] relationship with staff and trust in the council

There were also comments on room for improvement:

- Speed of response to requests.
- Explain the costs of outsourced services.
- We are getting more complex cases and need a lot more legal support, the support we are getting is excellent but we need more specialist legal resources to support
- Set a timetable for the work.
- Arrangements for responding to queries and consistency in the quality of guidance
- Track queries and response time. Staff would appreciate knowing that a request had been recorded and when they would likely receive a reply or guidance.

These responses will be discussed at the next team meeting considering action points and any changes to our systems to ensure it meets the requirements of client departments. In addition, an invitation has been extended to all heads of department that any further conversation or discussion about the provision is welcome.

In addition to a questionnaire at the end of each case, an annual questionnaire has been sent to the Heads and Managers of the department asking for their views on service as a whole. The questionnaire was sent out in mid-February and received about 33% of responses. There have been very positive responses with all responses saying that the service currently being offered is good or very good.

- We receive legal advice and assistance in matters of education modernisation and education properties, leases etc
- I think the contact has improved recently and responded to our questions sooner. The contact is friendly and easily talk to them.
- The guidance is of quality and thorough.
- I feel we are receiving a great service – a timely and always supportive response to the service.
- Excellent, extremely supportive and valuable

- Over the past year we have had quite a bit of support from the legal department, and the process has been very smooth
- It's been a big help to be able to get in touch with one lawyer for all the support and this has made things easier excellent support. prompt and thorough response

In terms of a suggestion on how to improve the service into the future and what the challenges are, there have been responses to consider it as well as a positive one

- The biggest challenge is their capacity and there is sometimes time between responses creating delays, and as it happens we have a number of questions raised at the end of the day
- No need to improve
- More resources will be needed to deal with the department's upcoming workload in the coming months

DEPARTMENTAL PLANS

We will continue to develop the Legal Team to build resilience within the Team

What has been achieved?

The department has been part of the Cynllun Yfory scheme for some years and has benefited from employing a trainee who has then progressed to qualify and works within the department as a solicitor.

Further, the department has also taken advantage of the apprenticeship scheme and hired the department's first paralegal apprentice. This is working well, and the apprentice is a great help to the department's lawyers.

The service has moved on from it's previous recruiting issues and can concentrate on providing and improving the service for the Councils Departments.

Following some of the comments received as a result of the questionnaires and feedback from Heads an assessment of capacity and expertise within the department will be considered regularly to ensure that we meet the requirements of our clients.

We will be looking to complete work after surrendering Lexcel accreditation for maintaining professional standards of appropriateness and standards

What has been achieved?

The department has now incorporated a new case management system and has looked to incorporate features of the Lexcel accreditation that would benefit the department. We are specifically looking at a form of supporting each other through colleagues' feedback on cases through file reviews (the accreditation was surrendered as a saving) There is no intention to seek the Lexcel accreditation but rather to use some of the principles to develop the way of working and to strengthen systems.

What we've been doing, examples:

What we've been doing, examples:

- Child protection cases – increase in cases involving young people – complex applications before the High court. Many cases are more complex and involve international elements.

- Supporting several Housing Strategy projects – Purchase of an additional 8 properties with a tight timetable before the end of the financial year.
- New work of creating intermediate rental leases, again in order to secure homes for the people of Gwynedd.
- An increase in DOLS applications before the Court of Protection and "ordinary residence" matters ensuring that other Authorities accepted responsibility for individuals who were not the responsibility of Gwynedd.
- A successful agreement has been reached with a Health Board for a significant care package following a legal challenge.
- Directions received for 2 £3.1m purchases to be completed by the end of March
- A first Closure Order was issued to the Council in relation to a shop selling counterfeit tobacco.
- Supporting and amending the Constitution , reformatting the online version
- Traffic Orders
- Parking Order and agreement with communities council
- Legal support stems from Friars' position.
- Dealing with the legal challenge to the Article 4 Direction
- Advising on the drafting of the Staff Whistleblowing Policy review
- Orders in changing the network of public rights within the county.
- Advising on new Legislations – Procurement Legislation 2023; Special Processes under the Public Health Act;

PROPRIETY

Iwan Evans – Head of Legal Services – Monitoring Officer.

Purpose : To maintain the confidence of the people of Gwynedd in the Council by ensuring and promoting the appropriateness of its activities and the highest standard of behaviour among councillors.

DEPARTMENTAL PLANS

We will continue to support and advise on the Council's functions in terms of ensuring constitutional, legal and administrative propriety.

What has been achieved?

This work is ongoing but in particular a series of "Penderfyniadau Da" course are being held . The aim of the courses is to explain the fundamentals of decision-making in public bodies as well as the constitutional and regulatory framework on reporting to e.g Cabinet. The course is now being held for officers with sessions having been held and planned.

We provide comments and opinions on all Cabinet and Full Council reports to ensure legal and constitutional appropriateness as well as generally advising on issues such as the correct decision-making body and policy and strategic issues. This work includes supporting and providing guidance at the highest level to key issues affecting the Council and advising on issues such as a correct democratic path and requirements around key decisions.

We will work with the Standards Committee, Leaders of Political Groups and Members along with relevant officials to maintain and support high standards of behaviour among councillors.

What has been achieved?

The work is ongoing and meetings have been regularly held with Group Leaders during. The fruits of this work will be reported to the Standards Committee but the results are positive and the level of collaboration is good.

We will be completing the training of Gwynedd Council members in Code of Conduct matters by offering in-depth training sessions on the Code to non-attending members.

What has been achieved?

Courses were held in December and January 24/25 and a recording was also provided for the use of the members available online with a test to complete. It is one of the core courses but there are still members who have not taken advantage of the course and this is being discussed with individual Political Group Leaders to highlight and encourage the members to complete the training. We continue to work with the Leaders to press members who have not yet taken advantage of the online course to complete the work. There will be a renewed emphasis on this as the induction programme is prepared for the 2027 elections.

We will support the Standards Committee to develop arrangements to implement its responsibilities towards Town and Community Councils by offering training sessions.

What has been achieved?

The Standards Committee undertook a review of the joint relationship with Town and Community Councils and identified that there was a need for action to strengthen this partnership. To complement this, a virtual training course has been prepared for them. This provision will be a standing arrangement for the Town and Community Councils going forward.

We will review and ensure adequate resources to support requirements on the Service arising from regional work

What has been achieved?

The requirements and responsibilities of a Monitoring Officer and providing legal support to the CBC had increased significantly in the last 12-18 months. This meant that there was a significant impact on capacity to fulfil the role of Head of Legal in Gwynedd or to adequately provide for the CBC. As a result it was agreed that the CBC would establish a full-time internal role to meet their needs and release the Headteacher back to work in Gwynedd. These arrangements were put in place during February. The role of Monitoring Officer has now come to an end.

We will continue to keep the Constitution under review aiming to complete the main tasks by December 2025

What has been achieved?

This will include:

Review of Officer Delegation Plans - **completed**

Review the provisions of Section 11 Officers within the Constitution in conjunction with the Human Resources Service. **Need to be completed**

Contributing to the revision of the Bell Singing Order - **completed**

Update as needed

In addition, the Principles of Conduct and Code of Conduct were reviewed following statutory changes published in January.

It must be recognised that this work is on-going and also responds to changing demands.

What we've been doing, examples:

- To give a propriety opinion on all Cabinet and Council reports
- To support and advise on constitutional issues that arise as necessary
- Provide appropriate guidance on Leadership Team issues
- Revision of the Constitution
- Advising the Management Team on corporate issues across a range of issues
- Responding to an increase in the speed of bringing projects forward following a review of the work of the CBC Portfolio Office
- Lead on the establishment of a Joint Regional Scrutiny Committee for the WBC
- WBC – advising on governance and establishing a new Constitution for the body
- Supporting Members with Code of Conduct issues

ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

Siôn Huws Attribution and Elections Manager

Purpose : To ensure that the people of Gwynedd have the opportunity to vote easily, and that their vote is counted in the way they intend.

DEPARTMENTAL PLANS

We will work to support the Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer in particular addressing :

Holding Elections

What has been achieved ?

County By-elections were held in Barmouth and Bethel Felinheli

Senedd Election 2026

The election was conducted on the basis of new constituencies and using a proportional voting system. The new 'Gwynedd Maldwyn' constituency is a combination of the UK parliamentary constituencies of Dwyfor Meirionnydd and Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr, and involves parts of four local authority areas. The Chief Executive was appointed as the Returning Officer for the constituency, and there were significant implications for the service due to the geographical size of the constituency, the number of voters and the necessary cross-border arrangements. The Service supported the Returning Officer to hold the election in accordance with the requirements with a count and result on 8 May 2026.

Carrying out a Statutory Community Review

We will undertake a Statutory Community Review process looking at the boundaries of certain specific communities and the electoral arrangements (wards and councillors) within the communities across the county.

What has been achieved?

Following initial information gathering, collation and engagement work the intention and terms of reference to undertake a community review and a review of electoral arrangements in parallel were approved. Since then the following statutory actions have been taken:

- November/December 2024 – First consultation period on the terms of reference
- March 2025 - Approval of draft proposals
- March – May 2025 - Consultation period on the draft proposals

Next steps

There has been a slippage in the timetable which meant that the final proposals were submitted to the Full Council on 3rd October 2025. Any changes to community boundaries will have to receive the approval of the Democracy and Boundaries Commission for Wales which has the power to make the necessary order. The changes will take effect in 2027 in time for the next local elections.

Welsh Government Automatic Registration Pilot Scheme

We have volunteered to be one of four authorities across Wales that are part of the scheme. The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024 has introduced an automatic electoral registration system ('automatic registration') for local government and Welsh Parliament elections, but the procedure must be piloted before it can come into force for the whole of Wales in order to assess the practical implications.

The Act imposes a duty on Electoral Registration Officers to register electors without receipt of an application, where they will have sufficient details. An eligible individual will receive notice and have an opportunity to object to the registration within 60 days.

What has been achieved ?

There are two main streams to the work.

1. The core process of collecting and matching data to identify individuals and register them.
2. Identify and engage with individuals who are unlikely to be identified by the data matching process, and encourage and help them register. Only Gwynedd does this aspect.

Timetable

The pilot period was from January to December 2025 with the registration and engagement activities taking place between June and September. The Welsh Government will then proceed to assess the pilot's advances.

The period during which automatic enrolment was possible ended on 30/09/25. Some engagement work will continue until the end of October where registration support will be offered to individuals delivered through patrols in the voluntary sector.

The Annual Canvas

The Annual Canvas was completed and the Annual Register was published.

Renewal of Postal Votes

As a result of the statutory changes around 13,000 electors have been written to inform them that their postal vote is ending in relation to UK elections. This is in addition to the normal annual process of renewal of postal votes which is coming to an end.

CORONER

Sion Huws Propriety and Elections Manager

Background

The North West Wales Coroner's Area covers Gwynedd and Anglesey. The service is jointly funded by both authorities, but Gwynedd takes the lead role as the statutory 'relevant authority'. This places a duty on Gwynedd Council to ensure adequate resources for the service. The Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroners are appointed and paid by the Council. The service is the responsibility of the Senior Coroner himself. North Wales police provides 'Coroner's Officers' who liaise with families, police, witnesses, doctors, hospital staff etc on its behalf.

Kate Robertson is the Senior Coroner and the Assistant Coroner is Sarah Riley. We employ one full-time member of staff as a personal assistant to the Coroner with additional support coming from the Administrative Unit and the Elections Unit.

We will continue to provide and improve the support available to the Coroner

What has been achieved?

We have continued to work to strengthen the administrative support, by looking at specific processes and developing experience and skills within the Administrative Unit. We have also been reviewing the arrangements with the funeral organisers working on behalf of the Coroner including holding a meeting to give them the opportunity to raise any issues with the Coroner, the Police (who are responsible for calling the undertakers out to death) and the authority.

While agreeing pay is a matter for each Senior Coroner and their authority individually, in practice this has been happening through a Joint Coroners' Negotiation Committee, where the local authority side and the coroners' side are represented, who have agreed a model and scale of pay for England and Wales and the annual pay increase. In March 2025 it was announced that the coroners' side had withdrawn from the Joint Committee because they considered it was no longer an appropriate method of setting their salaries. In consequence it fell on local decision making to address the issue although we were in communication with other Coronial Authorities in forming a response. This was completed with local agreement by the end of the financial year.