CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 17 SEPTEMBER 2026

Present:

COUNCILLORS:

Elwyn Jones, (Chair), Beth Lawton, Jina Gwyrfai, Menna Baines, Elin Walker Jones, Sian Williams, Meryl Roberts, Berwyn Parry Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Rheinallt Puw, Angela Russell, Geraint Wyn Parry, Gareth Coj Parry, Gwynfor Owen, Anwen J Davies, Linda Morgan

Officers present:

Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Adviser) and Courtney Leigh Jones (Civic and Democracy Services Officer).

Present for item 5:

Councillor Paul Rowlinson (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property), Carys Fon Williams (Head of Housing and Property Department), Hedd Tomos (Assistant Head of Housing and Property Department), Sion Hughes (ADRA), Rhiannon Dafydd (Grŵp Cynefin), Edward Hughes (Clwyd Alyn), Allan Eveleigh (North Wales Housing Association)

Present for item 6:

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Adults), Councillor Menna Trenholme (Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families), Mari Wynne Jones (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Elliw Haf Hughes (Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Quality)

Present for item 7:

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Adults), Councillor Menna Trenholme (Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families), Mari Wynne Jones (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Elliw Haf Hughes (Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Quality), Hawis Melangell Jones (Commissioning, Contracts and Projects Manager)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Einir Wyn Williams.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received. A declaration of interest was received from Councillor Gwynfor Owen.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 17 July 2026, as a true record.

5. WORKING WITH THE HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

The item was submitted by the Head of Housing Department. It was confirmed that the social housing stock was transferred in 2010, and since then, Cyngor Gwynedd had been in a close and successful partnership with the housing associations operating within the county. It was noted that the aim of the partnership was to meet the housing needs of Gwynedd residents across the county, stating the local demand, providing funding, coordinating developments and building the houses themselves. Details were provided on the close relationship between the Council and the Housing Associations and the way that they worked together.

They proceeded to discuss the provision that was available because of this relationship and the collaboration plan.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions that had been previously provided to the housing associations, and the representatives answered each question in turn;

Implementing the housing allocation policy and new developments

1. **Can you explain what is your role, as a housing association, in relation to the housing allocation policy?**

It was explained that the housing associations operating within Gwynedd (Adra, Clwyd Alyn, North Wales Housing and Grŵp Cynefin) worked in partnership with Cyngor Gwynedd to implement the Gwynedd Common Housing Allocation Policy and the Common Housing Register. It was noted that the housing policy outlined how the housing register should be set out in terms of priority, and the Council was responsible for the policy. It was assured that the policy and the register were administered under Cyngor Gwynedd's ownership.
It was confirmed that applicants were prioritised according to their housing need from band 1 to band 4. As a property became empty, the Housing Association would ask for a nomination, and the property would be allocated in accordance with this.

It was confirmed that the local authority was responsible for the housing allocation policy and that this was a statutory responsibility. It was assured that the housing associations would allocate in accordance with the policy. It was noted that the Welsh Government set the guidelines in terms of developing a housing allocation policy to a Local Authority in Wales. It was noted that Gwynedd had pushed the boundaries as far as possible within the existing legislation in terms of favouring local applicants. It was explained that a local definition included a local connection for five years within designated areas.

It was confirmed that over 2,000 applicants were on the housing register in Gwynedd, which highlighted the need for social housing within the county. It was confirmed that ADRA had approximately 6,500 social houses in Gwynedd, which was equivalent to 75% of the county's social housing stock.

When referring to the intermediate rental houses, it was confirmed that Grŵp Cynefin administered the Tai Teg register on behalf of social landlords in Gwynedd.

Members asked questions about the housing register. It was assured that people were on the housing register for many reasons and were not necessarily homeless. It was noted that the applications were assessed and prioritised according to need and were placed in appropriate bands when waiting for houses. It was confirmed that there were also various people in band 1, not only homeless people, but members who significantly under occupied a dwelling, members leaving the armed forces and young individuals leaving home. There was a reference to the number of people living in temporary accommodation, stating that these numbers often changed significantly. It was noted that this was a significant cost for local government and was being monitored within the housing register. It was confirmed that the associations were committed to the housing policy to ensure fairness and transparency when allocating residents in houses across the county. It was assured that the housing associations allocated houses in a fair and transparent way in accordance with the policy and consistently acted within the policy's framework.

2. **Do you always operate in accordance with Cyngor Gwynedd's Common Housing Allocation Policy? If you deviate from the policy how often does this happen and why?**

It was confirmed that the Housing Associations operated in accordance with Cyngor Gwynedd's Common Housing Allocation Policy and the procedure was followed throughout the county. It was assured that 93% of housing allocation cases by the Adra housing association had operated in accordance with the policy.

It was explained that there were some exemptions to this, stating that 7% within the social housing stock followed the 'controlled transfers' procedure for cases of domestic abuse, under occupation or when a house with relevant adaptations became available that was appropriate for a tenant in need. It was assured that this was allowed within the allocation policy.

The Local Allocation Policy that also took place within the policy and the number of cases that operated in accordance with section 106, Affordable housing, were mentioned. A Member expressed a concern regarding this due to some restrictions through the planning authorities, such as Parc Eryri. An observation was expressed that this system was disadvantageous to people who lived directly on the boundary outside of the park, and therefore the policy was not entirely comprehensive and could not operate effectively.

Grŵp Cynefin assured that they normally allocated houses through the Allocation Policy but acted immediately at times when the need arose through emergency circumstances or health and safety matters. It was explained that Grŵp Cynefin owned additional care housing, allocated through a joint allocation panel with Cyngor Gwynedd. It was confirmed that their intermediate rent properties had been allocated through the Tai Teg policy. Reference was made to Supported Housing that were managed by other agencies, such as the Homelessness Teams and partners such as GISDA, that were coordinated through specific procedures for those properties. It was asked why there were different procedures for these houses? In response, it was explained that there were different types of properties, where the allocation policy did not address the needs and properties of the dwelling, such as a house that was shared with individuals with profound needs. When talking about additional care, it was assured that the agencies worked very closely with social workers to arrange that houses were adapted appropriately and in accordance with the relevant care needs. It was explained that this was due to the nature of the plans, and the different need justified the difference in registrations. A concern was expressed regarding the different policies.

The fact that the various environments and exemptions all worked within the policy and were approved through the framework was reiterated.

It was asked what happened when an individual failed the rent affordability assessment. It was explained that this tended to happen when a single individual applied for a two-bedroom house, because that was currently the only property available in the area. It was explained that benefits were sometimes an option in a case like this, and various solutions were offered for the individual's benefit.

In response to an enquiry, it was assured that the housing associations informed the council if they objected to any nominations. It was assured that this was recorded in the housing management system.

3. **Does your association have any new developments in the pipeline?**

During the discussion, it was noted that the housing associations had a duty to the 2,000 individuals who needed social housing in Gwynedd and it was felt that their voices were often missing when arguments about housing were being heard. Consideration was given to the background of the need, referring to policies such as 'Right to Buy' and the lack of building social houses throughout the country. It was noted that the number of private housing developments in Gwynedd was also comparatively low and contributed to the volume of demand for housing in Gwynedd. It was highlighted that this drove the projects that were underway, and it was confirmed

that ADRA had developed over 400 social houses over the last five years, in Dwyfor, Arfon and Meirionnydd.

ADRA confirmed that they had new developments underway, and they were in the process of developing or purchasing properties back, currently over 120 properties. It was assured that the majority of these were social housing. It was noted that they were working with the Council on this, and that work by contractors Tyddyn Fletcher and Jewsons were about to be approved soon. It was noted that the Welsh Government supported the work and had given more funding to develop and buy houses over the next three years. It was assured that the Housing Associations continued to lobby and influence for more funding and maximising the need for loans and grant funding in Gwynedd.

The need to meet the demand for housing for older people in Gwynedd as the county's population aged was mentioned, and reference was made to the developments that were underway at Plas Penrhos, Plas Lleiod and Frondeg. It was assured that more of this type of property and sheltered housing was underway in the future and a prosperous programme was expected.

Grŵp Cynefin assured that they had just housed 14 families in the Nefyn area at Cysgod Lefain and were in the process of developing eight homes in Aberdaron (six social properties and two intermediate properties). It was hoped that these would be completed before Christmas.

It was assured that 15 homes were being developed in Trefor at Llys yr Eifl, which would include 4 two-bedroom bungalows, 4 two-bedroom houses, 5 three-bedroom houses, 1 four-bedroom house and 1 six-bedroom house. It was reported that they had just received planning permission for 20 new units in Chwilog, and that discussions were underway in terms of the schedule.

The Clwyd Alyn housing association confirmed that they were developing properties in the Penrhos area in Pwllheli, including 12 properties for older people, 30 flats and 49 homes as part of their plans. It was explained that developments were underway in the Llan Ffestiniog area.

It was acknowledged that there was not much developmental work currently underway by the North Wales housing association, and reference was made to a few houses they had in the Abersoch area.

It was asked whether developments were underway in terms of renovating homes instead of always building new ones? It was highlighted that the answer to this question would be later on in the session.

House Swaps

4. **Does your housing association have data on the number of house exchanges in the last 3 years and the locations of the swaps? (Managed Moves/House Swaps).**

It was noted that section 118 of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act allowed tenants to swap houses for the benefit of each other. It was explained that no landlord had a legal right to refuse this from happening, unless there were genuinely valid reasons to do so.

Discontent was expressed towards this process, and it was noted that many Gwynedd residents were frustrated with this. It was reiterated that this happened for valid reasons and for the benefit of all. It was assured that it worked and was advantageous to both sides and significantly improved their quality of life. Examples were given of valid reasons, including social reasons, work reasons, not enough space in the house for families or too much space. It was emphasised that the process suited both tenants and this was the purpose of the scheme.

Adra confirmed that there had been 15 cases of house swaps in Gwynedd to date in 2026. It was assured that 93% of these occurred within Gwynedd, with one case outside Gwynedd, but it was noted that this person had a previous connection to Gwynedd and it was therefore a valid swap. It was mentioned that there had been 42 cases of house swaps in 2025 and 54 in 2024.

Grŵp Cynefin confirmed that there had been 13 cases of house swaps in Gwynedd over the last three years. It was noted that five of these were house swaps amongst their tenants at Grŵp Cynefin, and the other eight with other social landlords, including four with Adra and one with North Wales Housing, and these were within Gwynedd. It was noted that there were two from other counties in Wales. An overview was given of the locations of the properties, including the Bala, Botwnnog, Caernarfon, Cricieth, Morfa Nefyn, Mynytho and Penygroes areas.

It was highlighted that the only property where a house swap could be refused was a property with a Condition 106 attached, where the planning permission stated that the resident must have a local connection.

It was asked whether it was possible to tighten the house swap process for the housing associations to be able to screen who can move houses and to which community to get a better control over the process to ensure that it was fair and transparent? In response to this, it was confirmed that the housing associations were able to check the cases to some extent and that a screening system was in place but the house swap process could not be refused unless there was a very valid reason - therefore it was acknowledged that implementing the member's suggestion would be legally difficult. It was noted that the number of anti-social behaviour cases because of house swaps was very low, therefore no significant problems arose as a result of the existing process.

5. **How many people with a local connection have swapped a house to move back to live in Gwynedd?**

It was confirmed that 111 families had completed the house swap process over the last three years, and that 100 of these already lived in Gwynedd. It was confirmed that six had moved back to the area who had a previous connection to Gwynedd. It was noted that five had moved from another area beyond Gwynedd. It was reiterated that the Landlords did not have the right to refuse this without a very valid reason and that the Renting Homes (Wales) Act highlighted this. It was noted that Adra had an Agreement Transfer Policy to ensure that these transfers were administered correctly and to respect the right of the tenants to do this when there were valid reasons for doing so.

There had been an extensive discussion on the matters as Members stated points of discontent and frustration with the process and the lack of houses available in Gwynedd for local people. The frustration was acknowledged, ensuring that the housing associations acted in accordance with the policies and within the appropriate procedures for the benefit of residents. Assurance was provided that only 3% of the allocation cases went through the house swap process and that most of the allocations went through the housing register.

Emphasis was placed on the need to ensure that houses were available to young families to ensure the thriving future of Gwynedd.

Tenant support and under occupation

6. **How do you manage under occupation? Are property swaps as a result of under occupation, common?**

It was noted that under occupation was managed through the main Housing Register in the first instance. It was noted that everyone who was eager to get a smaller house or a larger house registered on the housing register and followed the normal allocation procedure.

Reference was made to the Adra Under Occupation Policy, noting that this was for the most intense / most urgent cases through the house swaps. It was noted that there were approximately 20 cases annually because of under occupation.

It was hoped that the developments at the Frondeg, Plas Penrhos and Plas Lleiod sites would encourage people to move within their communities. It was emphasised that the personal element was also important to the housing associations, and that they were not eager to force anyone to move from their home. It was noted that the schemes would provide a supportive network to continue living in the area and the community, if they moved from their houses for additional care.

It was explained that the Renting Homes (Wales) Act sets out the legal reasons for enforcement, in exceptional situations such as a property with significant adaptations, significant under occupation or in cases of specific succession.

7. **How many tenants have swapped properties as a result of under occupation in the past year?**

It was admitted that this was a question that was difficult to answer directly. It was noted that the figure was a combination of the house swaps through the common housing register, the managed moves and the house swaps, therefore it was difficult to determine a figure for the entire county. It was assured that property swaps as a result of under occupation were being encouraged by the housing associations, to try to meet the housing demand.

Grŵp Cynefin was proud of the way that they tried to manage under occupation, stating that they had created the Right Home, Right Size Policy jointly with the tenants. It was noted that the policy noted the options and the support that was available for tenants with under occupation, including adding incentives for them.

It was noted that there were some cases of property swaps based on under occupation but there were other cases due to overcrowding of properties or growing families.

It was asked whether there were any financial implications for people who stayed in properties and were under occupation because they were eager to continue staying in the property? In response, it was assured that this would impact individuals who continued to be of a working age, but once the individuals reached pension age, this would not directly impact individuals. Attention was drawn to the increasing bills as a result of under occupation, and the implications for some individuals as they aged in a house that was too big for them.

It was asked whether it was possible to add a note in the tenancy agreement to encourage individuals to move to another house if circumstances changed. It was assured that the housing associations would not force anyone to move, but appropriate discussions would proceed to ensure that they provided the best provision to the community.

8. **How many community officers does your housing association have to support tenants at grassroots level?**

It was noted that the role of housing associations had changed significantly over the last decade. It was noted that officers faced broad and increasing challenges in the communities, including poverty, anti-social behaviour, loneliness and mental health issues. It was highlighted that public services had shrunk in communities due to extensive cuts and significant pressure on services. It was explained that the Housing Associations had to step up because of this.

It was noted that ADRA provided a broad range of progressive support to the communities through 70 officers working at grassroots level in communities. An overview was given of the different roles, stating the specific functions.

- Rent Officers - who collected the rent, maximised income and benefits and worked with partners such as DWP/CAB/community hubs.
- Community Wardens - who maintained the tenancy and the face and voice of ADRA in the communities. It was noted that these officers collaborated at a multi-agency level regularly.
- Area Officers - who dealt with anti-social behaviour, tenancy management cases, cases deriving from mental health issues. It was noted that they regularly worked with agencies such as the Police, Social Services and individuals returning home from prison. (probation).
- Community Housing Officers - it was noted that they supported people to maintain their tenancies. It was explained that they held various activities within the locations and prioritised serving individuals who were dealing with loneliness. It was assured that they worked closely with the third sector.
- Tenant Liaison Officers - it was noted that these officers organised major work on the estates.
- Community Team - it was highlighted that the priority of this team was the 'Voice of the Tenant' which prioritised community events and community financial funds.
- Allocation - it was highlighted that this team organised the allocation of houses and ensured that everyone had settled into their new properties. It was noted that this team worked closely with community wardens.

Grŵp Cynefin provided details of the working arrangements of their officers, stating that housing officers were responsible for approximately 330 households within their operational area. It was noted that there were six housing officers for general properties in Gwynedd, but some also managed properties in other counties. It was noted that Housing Team Leaders supported the officers, for example, when complex cases arose.

Further details were provided about the work of the officers, stating;

- There were two Housing Officers in sheltered properties
- There were two Housing Officers placed in the Additional Care schemes, as well as a Team Leader
- A Housing Officer was responsible for intermediate properties
- A Housing Officer was responsible for supported housing properties
- Officers worked on a Homelessness Prevention plan
- It was assured that Income Collection Officers and Financial Welfare Officers supported tenants
- That a Community Enterprises Team led on community activities across the operational area.

North Wales Housing and Clwyd Alyn assured the members that their staffing structure was very similar. It was noted that they had housing officers who were responsible for approximately 300 - 350 houses and income officers who were responsible for giving support to tenants. It was noted that carers working at grassroots level were often responsible for the condition of community houses. The way the associations had changed, and the increasing challenges that became prominent were mentioned.

The work of the officers was praised, and they were thanked for their work. The councillors were welcome to work with the officers and wardens.

Housing Quality and Maintenance Work

9. **What is the quality of your houses in Gwynedd and what plans are in place to maintain and improve them?**

Grŵp Cynefin explained that it had a 30-year investment plan for planned works, in line with Welsh Government expectations. It was noted that the programme is informed by information about the condition of the stock and prioritised work related to safety, compliance, property condition, value for money and tenant needs. It was confirmed that they were working to meet WHQS requirements and were working to improve the energy performance of homes, including targeting SAP 75 where practicable.

Adra reported that it had spent £66m of capital work in its housing stock in Gwynedd over the last 5 years. It was noted that local contractors and the Repair Team would carry out the work. It was ensured that 90% of the current housing stock met the requirements of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

It was noted that £44m had been spent on revenue maintenance in the existing housing stock through the work of the Repair Team. It was noted that the work on the houses included roofing, doors, windows, EWI, insulation, kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, walkways and fencing. It was ensured that 80% of customers had been satisfied.

It was reported that they are focusing on the investment programme over the next 5 years, with a minimum of £91m of capital work programmed in the current housing stock in Gwynedd. It was noted that Adra had been in talks with the banks to extend loans. It was noted that this will focus on repairing kitchens and bathrooms and that local contractors had been contracted to complete the work. It was noted that Tŷ Gwyrddfai supported this agenda.

10. **What is the process to submit a request for repair work?**

This was ensured through a number of channels, including; telephone, application via website, email, ADRA officers such as community warden/ housing officers picking up a work card on behalf of the tenant. It was noted that developments were underway to create a portal for tenants, and that this was a priority for the future.

It was assured that emergency repairs outside normal working hours could be reported through the out of hours emergency repair service.

11. Is your property maintenance service available consistently throughout the county and does the waiting time for repairs vary throughout the county?

It was assured that the maintenance service was consistent across Gwynedd and North Wales. It was noted that the standard was consistent across the area, but it was admitted that waiting time for repairs could vary due to a number of reasons, including; availability of specialist contractors, specific materials, access arrangements (from both sides) and seasonal demand.

It was noted that a workforce of 130 repairmen and subcontractors mainly from the county completed the work. It was noted that a Tender Scheme existed to have local contractors on its register of contractors.

Grŵp Cynefin noted that it was monitoring performance across the county as one operational area. It was noted that the key performance indicators were regularly scrutinised to identify any patterns or issues affecting response times, including factors of geography, access and availability of contractors.

12. What is the average waiting time for a tenant awaiting repairs to be made to their house?

It was assured that ADRA completed 32,000 repair requests annually. It was confirmed that urgent works were usually completed within 24 hours, and that Adra had successfully completed over 99% of enquiries.
It was noted that maintenance work would usually be completed within a month, and that they worked on an average of 20 days.

Customer satisfaction levels were noted to be 80% and reflected the figures.

It was noted that the Repair Team had completed 32,000 maintenance/compliance requests in the last 12 months.

It was asked if there was any planning software in place to try to manage this work. It was assured that this was in place and that developments were underway to record the work programme. It was assured that the cases were properly prioritised as needed.

Members commented that residents had to wait over half an hour on the phone with the housing associations, and that this had been happening regularly over the last few months.

It was asked what priority was given to vulnerable people when arranging repairs that caused health and safety problems. It was assured that vulnerable individuals were prioritised in order to try to minimise health and safety risks. It was explained that this could depend on the nature of the repair work and the nature of the vulnerability. It was noted that the housing associations were trying to prioritise resources and work effectively for the benefit of the tenants. It was noted that emergencies were completed within 24 and that reducing the risk to individuals was a priority. It was assured that the housing associations shared the work programme of the repair schedule with the

tenants in order to promote a good relationship between the housing associations and the tenants.

13. What kinds of things usually lead to delays before commencing repairs?

It was acknowledged that it had been a challenging time recently and that the number of officers in the team had increased in order to try to cope with the demand. An overview of the factors that could usually cause delays was given, including;

- The need for specialist work and specialist contractors, specialist materials.
- Effects of the weather
- The need for a survey before starting the work and then arranging it.
- Access issues.
- Lack of information or an accurate description of the work at the time the request was raised
- Situations where the property needed to be cleaned or made safe before a workforce or contractor could attend.

14. Many tenants received digital vouchers for paying for painting after electrical work or repairs but some were struggling to use them due to a lack of internet access. Is it possible to supply vouchers to these people?

It was confirmed that Adra was in the process of introducing a new voucher scheme with Huws Gray. It was noted that vouchers were currently available through Dulux, but it was acknowledged that this did not work for everyone due to the location of the local branches.

It was assured that Adra painted all empty properties and that this included over 600 homes annually in North Wales.

They assured that they were trying to arrange reasonable alternatives where a tenant was having difficulty using digital vouchers, to ensure that a lack of digital access was not a barrier for individuals to receive support. It was noted that this could include support from staff, a direct arrangement or a suitable alternative option depending on the circumstances.

15. How many accessible houses do the housing associations have?

It was reported that Grŵp Cynefin had 239 Extra Care flats (70 in Gwynedd) and 253 bungalows across its General Housing and Sheltered Housing stock. It was noted that data regarding modifications or ground floor properties was not recorded in the asset management system. In response to an enquiry, it was assured that they were developing the database with the details to be able to easily report on them in the future. It was assured that modifications were considered dependent on the needs of the tenants and that was subject to change on a daily basis.

It was noted that Adra had 499 care homes, which had wardens, and 989 designated houses, such as apartments with access and lift. The specialist accessible properties

available were detailed, noting that 90 homes were wheelchair accessible, 11 houses were built with specialist features and 421 new homes were built through the Lifetime Home scheme. It was assured that many kitchens and bathrooms had been adapted, that stairlifts had been added and bungalows that had specific modifications had also been added.

16. **Do you receive a number of requests to make modifications in order to make houses accessible?**

It was noted that Grŵp Cynefin completed modifications to its stock within Gwynedd annually to make housing accessible. It was reported that they had completed 44 requests in the year 2025-26 and there had been expenditure of around £186k in Gwynedd alone.

Adra noted that it received an annual modifications budget of £900k (including elements of external grant). It was noted that 450 minor modifications had been carried out and 130 moderate modifications had been carried out. It was noted that the Adra modifications panel was made up of Gwynedd Council Occupational Therapists and that they met on a monthly basis to agree the priorities. An overview of the requests was given, noting accessible showers, ramps, and stairlifts. It was noted that they were trying to make the best use of the existing housing. It was noted that they would continue to lobby nationally for more money to complete adaptations and that the need for this continued to increase.

It was asked what plans the associations had to decarbonise the housing stock and what measurable plans were in place to monitor this. In response, it was assured that they were working within the Welsh Government framework and that they were working to ensure that the properties would reach EPC C by 2030. It was highlighted that much of this work was dependent on the budget, which caused challenges in completing the work. It was noted that additional funding was needed to try to realise decarbonisation objectives in a timely manner.

Empty Homes and Buying Houses

17. **How many empty houses does your housing association currently have?**

Adra confirmed that there were currently 120 vacant properties. It was noted that this figure remained fairly constant as around 1.5% of the stock was vacant at any one time in Gwynedd. This is encouraged in some cases in order to create opportunities within the housing system e.g. to carry out maintenance.

Grŵp Cynefin reported that there were around 40 vacant properties at any one time across the 7 counties, and that the number could change constantly as properties were re-let or as new properties became vacant.

North Wales Housing reported that 9 properties were currently vacant, which was helpful for the re-letting process.

Clwyd Alyn noted that they did not currently have any vacant properties.

18. What is your usual timetable for bringing an empty house back into use?

Background information was provided in terms of age and profile of local authority housing noting that the stock was usually old and therefore there was more spending on them (Adra and Cartrefi Conwy in North Wales). It was noted that the average tenancy was over 12 years, so spending was needed to ensure sustainable tenancies.

It was assured that the standard of Adra empty houses was high. It was noted that capital works were being carried out during the period the houses were vacant if required, including a new kitchen, a new bathroom, rewiring and carpeting of all vacant properties. It was assured that they made sure to paint all vacant properties as well. It was noted that every property averaged £13k of expenditure when it became vacant. It was noted that this meant spending £20k+ on several properties to ensure quality housing, and customer satisfaction levels were confirmed to be extremely high. It was believed that this sustained tenancies that were sustainable.

It was confirmed that an average of 100 days was the usual timetable for Adra to bring an empty house back into use. It was acknowledged that this was a long time, but for legitimate reasons in order to sustain tenants. It was highlighted that tenants did not want to have work completed at their property once they moved in. It was noted that the timeline depended on the condition of the property, compliance work, availability of materials and contractors.

Grŵp Cynefin noted that the normal timetable was an average of 60 days and that reducing this was a priority for the association.

North Wales Housing reported that the average was 69 days, and that they were also trying to complete any appropriate decarbonisation works possible during this timeframe in order to minimise the impact on the tenants after they moved in.

It was noted that Clwyd Alyn's timetable was 33 days.

19. Have houses been disposed of during the last year?

It was noted that houses were not often disposed of due to property shortages and housing demand, but it was highlighted that this sometimes happened if there was a valid reason to do so, such as if it was not possible to reach EPC C level. Adra noted that no houses had been disposed of in 2026 and 1 house had been disposed of in 2025. It was confirmed that 3 properties were currently on the market. It was reinforced that disposal would be the last step for any housing association, and the money from any property that had been disposed of would go directly towards the construction of a new house.

Grŵp Cynefin confirmed that one had been disposed of in the last year and that 2 were presently on the market. North Wales Housing and Clwyd Alyn reported that they had not disposed of any properties.

20. **Have you bought former Council houses in the last 3 years, and are there plans to buy more?**

Adra confirmed that they had bought back 12 properties over the last 3 years. It was noted that the TACP grant enabled this and the local authority would prioritise how the money was spent. It was noted that the Council itself had bought back some houses. Adra noted that they had also bought back around 15 leased properties, over the past decade. It was confirmed that there were now only 50 lease properties left across the county. It was assured that the main priority to deal with the homelessness crisis was the construction of new housing. It was noted that it can be challenging to purchase old Council houses due to the requirements for them to reach EPC C.

Grŵp Cynefin, North Wales Housing and Clwyd Alyn reported that they had not purchased anything in the last 3 years.

Communication and complaints

21. **Councillors receive a number of complaints from residents that there is an inconsistency in responding to complaints. Can you present data regarding the complaints of residents including the type of complaints, e.g. the house condition, repair work, emergency work received, from which area and a response time-schedule?**

Adra noted that they received about 90,000 calls annually from customers, explaining that it was inevitable that a percentage of these turned into complaints due to the volume of demand.

An overview of the complaints received was given;

- When the housing associations had not done something (maintenance mostly due to the nature of the work).
- When they had not followed a policy or guideline.
- Quality of work or response.

The complaints were further detailed stating the figures;

Repair Complaints: 94 (out of 32,000 work requests).
Audit Complaints: 60 (out of 3,000 audits).
Bro Complaints: 25 (114 cases monthly).
New Building Complaints: 16 (180 new homes last year).
Other: 27

An overview of the number of complaints received was given by area, stating;
Bangor: 34 (1300 houses). 14%
Caernarfon 26 (1,100 houses). 10%
Dolgellau 13 (160 houses). 5%
Pwllheli 9 (400 houses). 4%
Tywyn 6 (160 houses). 3%.

It was reported that 250 official complaints had been received in line with their Formal Complaints Policy in 2025-26. These were acknowledged within 5 working days and were responded to and dealt with within 10 working days. It was noted that a Member of the Senior Management Team dealt with the case if the tenant was not happy with the response, noting that around 17% of complaints reached this stage. It was confirmed that the ombudsman would then deal with the case if the tenant was still unhappy with the solution. It was noted that 26 complaints had reached the ombudsman (Adra) and 21 complaints had not been investigated because they had not followed Adra's complaints procedure. In 5 cases Adra's original decision had been upheld.

Grŵp Cynefin noted that complaints were handled by the Manager of the department, with the response assessed by the Senior Complaints Officer before being shared. Information on the complaints in the first quarter of this year was provided by Grŵp Cynefin, noting that there had been 11 complaints from tenants in Gwynedd and that a decision stated that there were grounds for 5 complaints but not the other 6. It was noted that complaints had arisen in relation to renovations, neighbourhoods, landscaping services and rent collection. It was noted that communication was a constant theme within the complaints and the need to provide updates on services and timetables was recognised. The plan to work on mapping the journey of Grŵp Cynefin's customers was detailed, which included creating standards of service in conjunction with tenants.

It was noted that they acknowledged receipt of complaints within 5 working days, investigated and responded to them within 10 working days.

North Wales Housing and Clwyd Alyn detailed their processes, referring to the two-stage complaints systems. It was explained that the processes were quite similar for all housing associations. It was explained that they scrutinised the complaints data in order to try to identify any ongoing problems in relevant areas, any themes and ultimately to improve the delivery of the service.

22. Councillors receive concerns about anti-social behaviour in some housing estates. Have you, as a housing association, noticed a recent increase in anti-social behaviour?

It was assured that over 90% of Adra tenants saw their home as a safe place to live, and that over 85% were happy with the neighbourhood. It was noted that these figures were high compared to the rest of Wales. It was reiterated that residents lived happily in our communities and were fortunate to live in a place where community spirit remained strong in many of our communities.

It was recognised that anti-social behaviour existed in areas which were noted to have increased somewhat due to the increase in the housing stock. It was noted that the number of interventions taking place by community officers had increased and the types of anti-social behaviour that had been observed were detailed, including threats, noise nuisance, the condition of property and drugs. It was noted that there had been an increase in the presence of the local officers on the ground to try to deal with this. It was recognised that this posed challenges for the future. It was noted that the

housing associations worked closely with partners such as Social Services, Police, Probation Service and Gisda, to maintain their tenancies and resolve any disputes.

Consideration had been given to what was happening with the release of tenants who had earlier committed crimes from prison back to communities including Gwynedd. The Homelessness and Lettings Wales Act (2026) which had not yet come into force, was referred to, but it would mean that housing associations would tackle homelessness sooner, and in some cases this could cause further challenges in our communities.

It was noted that the numbers of more intense cases had increased, such as assaults or violent incidents within families. It was reiterated that this had created major challenges for housing associations and multi-agency agencies. It was noted that they sought to promote good relationships between tenants to assist in creating a happy, peaceful and healthy and thriving community. It was noted that they were trying to deal with cases promptly and trying to promote preventive work.

There was a discussion about the interventions regarding anti-social causes and councillors were encouraged to contact the housing associations regularly in order to try to resolve problems promptly. The need for communication was emphasised and any further discussions with Councillors were welcomed. The housing associations were urged to tackle the discontent from the public and try to better screen individuals in order to try to ensure less anti-social behaviour.

23. What are the arrangements for dealing with queries from councillors when a designated contact officer is on leave?

It was confirmed that Adra had a dedicated member of staff who dealt with councillors' queries in order to ensure a consistent and timely response across the organisation. It was noted that arrangements were in place if the member of staff was on leave (short or extended). It was noted that the officers providing this service provided a great service and positive feedback would often be received from councillors.

Reference was made to the work done by attending the Area Forums and that this was a good way to provide details to councillors and update councillors on specific housing issues by area. They stressed that they were happy to attend again if further information was required. It was agreed that it would be advantageous to do this in the future to discuss things such as new developments/allocations policy/how we deal with anti-social behaviour.

24. When a tenant moves into residential care or becomes a long-term hospital patient, what process and timescales are used to assess the likelihood that they will return to their social housing tenancy, and how long are properties typically left unoccupied before a decision is made on their future use?

It was confirmed that each tenant's occupancy agreement included a clause requiring the tenant to notify Adra if the property was vacant for 28 days or more. It was noted that they assessed every case individually following this in a sensitive and compassionate manner. It was noted that the main consideration was whether the

tenant had a realistic intention to return. It was noted that housing benefit (pension) could be paid for 12 months; and Universal credit (up to 6 months) where there was an intention to return to the property. It was ensured that officers kept in touch with the tenant or representative and worked with the Family/Social Services/BCUHB to assess the individuals' needs before making any final decision.

It was explained that if they moved into residential care, they were expected to give 4 weeks' notice. It was noted that the association took possession of properties in certain circumstances such as if the rent payment had expired, if there was no intention to return on the basis of failure to occupy as a primary home and rent arrears. Everyone was assured that they handled every situation individually, sensitively and fairly.

The associations were praised for their work and thanked for their time in answering the questions.

DECISION

1. **To note the answers provided by the Housing Associations and thank them for their willingness to answer the questions.**
2. **To receive written answers in advance from the Housing Associations in the future and to ask supplementary questions during the scrutiny session.**

6. NORTH WALES POPULATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2027

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being. It was noted that this work was a significant part of the regional work that was underway via the Regional Partnership Board, with six local authorities and the health board working together on this. It was noted that the assessment provided an evidence base, to be used for the planning of health, care and well-being services across north Wales over the coming years. It was noted that it was a statutory document, required to be carried out under the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014. It was noted that the assessment highlighted future challenges, which were escalated in the Llechen Lân document and referred to the ageing population and the increasing demand for care. Reference was also made to the increase in mental health conditions, neurodiverse conditions, increased pressure on unpaid carers and an increase in homelessness. It was noted that the assessment was based on work and data over the last five years and assessed the care and support needs of priority groups in the population which include children and young people, people with physical and learning disabilities, mental health, neurodivergence and carers in need of support. It was noted that it provided an evidence base to support organisations and services across the area as well as strategic planning cycles. All were reminded that the document before the Committee was a draft assessment, and members' input would be required, as part of the consultation process to stimulate any further amendments, before submitting a final version to the Government by the end of April.

The Commissioning, Contracts and Projects Manager elaborated on the assessment, noting that this was the third Population Needs Assessment, which built on work that had been developed because of the previous assessments. It was explained that the regional dementia strategy and disability strategy derived from the previous

assessments and fed into the current work. It was noted that the population needs assessment contributed to the Council's strategic planning cycles and supported the corporate priorities of all councils relating to the health and social care needs of the population.

There was an opportunity for Members to ask questions and comment;

It was asked what kind of work had been done to ensure that there were no differences in service provision between urban and rural areas and that the support provided was consistent across the areas? Attention was drawn to the importance of consistency in provision for all the county's residents. It was recognised that a weakness in the assessment was the lack of a specific overview of the provision available across different areas of the county. Reference was made to specific data from the regional board in the report which contained a little information about the different areas within the county. It was trusted that more work could be done on this and they would re-visit this.

In recognising that there were differences between the needs of different counties, a member asked how could we find out what were the specific needs of Gwynedd? It was asked how the provision could be tailored to the specific demand and needs in each area to ensure that the areas received a specific service to target demand?
It was noted that work was taking place on various areas, and it was confirmed that a piece of work was just underway with the housing department to target adult accommodation needs in Gwynedd. It was ensured that the needs assessment was used to make funding decisions and to prioritise plans as needed. It was noted that the assessment provided an evidence base for the decisions and supported the need to satisfy needs by making use of the funding and grants. It was ensured that it was possible to refer to the assessment that would be used purposefully across various departments as a basis for decisions.

In response to an enquiry, assurance was given that the assessment was based on the care and support to meet the needs of the population. It was noted that health needs were not an integral part of this, although the Health Board had been involved in the work. It was highlighted that the needs of residential care, accommodation and support in the community were covered in this assessment, and it was suggested that this should be highlighted further in the assessment title to ensure that it was clearer.

In reference to the section that provided information about mental health needs, it was asked whether there was any consideration given to drug use included in this? It was emphasised that drugs were causing increasing problems in local communities and that this needed to be addressed to be able to avoid further problems and needs because of drug misuse. It was asked whether it was possible to increase the support and provision available to people living in the community with experience of substance misuse. It was confirmed that this would be touched upon in the assessment, but it was possible to add more specifically on this in the assessment. A member suggested that investment should be made in informing children about the danger of drug misuse as part of the preventive work to try and prevent issues arising in the future.

With reference to the support schemes in place, it was recognised that these did not reach all individuals in need who needed the provision. The fact that many people

relied on unpaid carers had been recognised, with the pressure on unpaid carers increasing. It was considered how support could be provided to unpaid carers to facilitate them to provide care to their neighbours without increasing stress and pressure. The important work and contribution of unpaid carers to the community was recognised. It was explained that work was underway across departments and the third sector to evaluate the support available to carers. It was explained that this support was often dependent on grants and that departments were trying to plan ahead on how to deliver a specific service for the benefit of unpaid carers of all ages going forward. It was recognised that more needed to be done and that a plan was in place to increase provision.

A Member expressed that he did not feel that there was a great deal of new information in the needs assessment that had not been produced before. It was felt that the assessment reflected the challenges already identified in reports such as Llechen Lân. It was asked whether there were any specific new findings or considerations highlighted in the assessment? In response, it was recognised that many of the needs identified were similar to the challenges already raised by previous work, due to the nature of the assessment and the population needs in society. There was concern that the situation was worse than anticipated and was getting worse sooner due to a lack of provision to cope with the increased demand for services.

It was reported that the population was ageing and that problems were increasing, for a variety of reasons. Growth was envisaged in the older population, and the demand for services would increase. Reference was made to a British report when explaining that there was an increase in demand for a service to support individuals with emerging mental health conditions, as well as people with neurodiversity needs.

A Member asked how much collaboration had taken place with the Education Department as part of the population needs assessment. Frustration was expressed that many children did not have access to education, and it was noted that more needed to be done to ensure that children received the right education.

The support available to parents who were carers of children with additional learning needs or mental health conditions was considered. It was noted that they often pleaded for help and they really needed more support. The need for the Council to provide better support to parents and to pay more attention to this was emphasised.

A Member asked what the Council’s definition of learning disability was, and dissatisfaction was expressed that it was not comprehensive enough. The comments were acknowledged.

Concern and discontent were expressed with the care and health provision across the county, noting that residents were struggling to see a GP and to get an ambulance promptly. Emphasis was placed on the importance of preventive work and maintaining a healthy and fit life and the efforts made by Byw'n Iach to run activities for people of all ages who benefitted from the sessions were praised.

A suggestion was expressed that the figure should be changed considering the definition of 'older people' from the age of 65 to 68, to match the state pension age.

Reference was made to the financial challenges to care and support work, and the ongoing challenges in attracting workers to jobs in the care sector. It was explained that it was a priority to try and attract people to stay in Gwynedd and to promote careers in the sector, noting that proactive work was proceeding via the Care Academy in Gwynedd. It was confirmed that a great deal of work was underway to try and attract families to stay in Gwynedd, to add to the care provision.

When discussing the palliative care available in Gwynedd, the nurses who provided the care were praised, but it was noted that there was not enough provision available to meet the demand across the county. More work on the end-of-life care was welcomed in the assessment, to identify people's end-of-life needs. The frustration was acknowledged and the comments were accepted. Members were reminded that the population needs assessment was a report that reflected the situation and did not offer all the answers. It was assured that plans would be underway to address the priorities outlined in the report. It was noted that the report would be submitted to the Welsh Government in April 2027 and there would be a period of five years to implement the priorities. It was assured that the Council continued to lobby the Government for more funding, but it was acknowledged that the financial position limited the work that could successfully proceed.

Reference was made to the figure in the report which stated that 70% of people who committed suicide in Gwynedd were not known to the mental health services. Concern was expressed about this stating that addressing this should be prioritised as part of the preventive work. The Cabinet was congratulated on passing the recent Suicide Prevention Strategy and it was hoped that there would be a reference to this added in the report.

It was noted that the Housing Department and the Education Department should collaborate on this assessment and use the information outlined to support their strategies and plans. It was agreed that the assessment reflected the problems in an accessible manner, and the assessment should be seen to be integrated to influence the policies in place across the Council's departments. Dissatisfaction was expressed that schools across the county were closing and the importance of children for the county's future was emphasised. It was recognised that this was a key part of preventive work, and assurance was given that work was progressing for future investment. The need to look at the care needs assessment in its entirety was emphasised to try to promote cross-departmental provision.

7. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES' DEPARTMENT AND THE ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING DEPARTMENT'S COMPLAINTS, ENQUIRIES AND EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE PROCEDURE FOR 2025-26.

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Adults,Health and Well-being and the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families. It was noted that it was a statutory, annual report, in accordance with the Social Services Complaints Procedure Regulations and the Comments Procedure Regulations. The importance of this report was emphasised in communicating how the Council investigates and dealt with complaints within the Children and Supporting Families and Adults, Health and

Well-being Departments. It was assured that the Council took complaints and queries seriously and acted on them effectively. It was reported that the department had fostered an open culture in welcoming feedback or complaints, that the departments were learning from this and were able to resolve the complaints and problems at local levels, before cases increased. It was acknowledged that challenges remained in terms of capacity and the increased demand on the services, but it was trusted that the complaints level and the lack of investigations by the Ombudsman reflected the fact that both departments were proactive and responsive to complaints and queries immediately and that continuous improvement was a priority.

An overview of the responsive staff structure was given in terms of the Departments' Comments and Complaints procedures, noting that the departments' Customer Care officers were under the management of the Assistant Heads of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. Information was provided on the number of complaints received by the departments during the year, and the reasons for them along with solutions.

Members were given the opportunity to comment and ask questions;

The praise contained in this report was commended and staff were thanked for their work in dealing with complaints in such a difficult and sensitive area. All the staff of these departments were thanked, acknowledging that the recent period had not been an easy one to work in the department. The carers in the care homes and residential homes were praised, and pride was expressed in the number of thanks featured in the report. They were proud that a great deal of the care was done through the medium of Welsh, which was encouraging to see.

Referring to the number of informal enquiries and complaints, it was acknowledged that many of these were resolved immediately without people having to proceed with a formal complaint. It was asked if there was a record of these kept as good practice to identify themes should they arise? It was confirmed that the statutory arrangements sought to encourage departments to deal with complaints and informal enquiries over the telephone to try and reduce the workload and ensure that complaints were resolved promptly and efficiently. However, it was confirmed that informal enquiries were being recorded to try and identify any patterns that arose. It was noted that officers then report on this quarterly to each department, and this was discussed regularly at Management Team meetings to see if any issues arose. Committee Members expressed a desire to see the informal complaints that were recorded to get a taste of what arose and understand any patterns that also arose.

With reference to the appendix containing examples of complaints, it was asked how the department interpreted the lessons to be learnt from the complaints, and why some specific cases had been identified without a lesson to be learnt? It was asked how the department looked beyond the individual case identified and considered any system changes? It was confirmed that this was being noted as there was nothing specific to state or perhaps nothing concrete to put in place because of the complaint that had arisen. It was ensured that everyone received feedback on the complaint that arose, and that efforts were being made to ensure that no such complaint arose again. It was ensured that the service sought to work with service users to avoid escalating complaints and to continually improve services.

It was asked, how confident was the department that residents were happy with the service provision and that the services meet the needs of the people of Gwynedd? It was asked how confident was the department that the low number of complaints was a fair reflection of the situation, rather than residents not being aware of the correct processes of how to raise a complaint? It was admitted that this was a difficult question to answer due to its nature, because it was not possible to fully understand the reason for the low number of complaints. It was expressed that it was encouraging that, on the one hand, there are not many complaints coming to light, but it was recognised that challenges and barriers remained and it was not possible to confirm that every resident was always happy with the care provided by the Council. It was ensured that the departments continued to promote the complaints and enquiries process and encouraged residents to voice their views and collaborate with the department to improve provision. A Member expressed that there was room for Councillors to empower residents to contact the department and raise a complaint and to give thanks where appropriate, to get a better idea of the services provided by the Council.

It was asked how often a complaint, or series of complaints, about a particular provider or service lead to wider action, such as an additional review or monitoring, rather than being considered as an individual complaint. It was recognised that complaints were made by individuals about their own personal experience, and their dissatisfaction with the service that had been provided. It was confirmed that the communications officer was working very closely with the department and would draw the attention of wider services if it was suitable to do so. It was ensured that any safeguarding issues were referred to the designated Officers and the Monitoring Officer and would result in the department opening a safeguarding issue regarding the particular provision. It was noted that patterns and themes were being monitored and fed into this, as officers identified cases where care provision had failed. It was assured that an investigation would be carried out, and the case would be duly escalated. Improvements would be considered together with the individual complaint.

There was a discussion about the recommendations from the Social Services Complaints Task and Finish Group.

With reference to recommendation (a) it was asked whether the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families and the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being corresponded with the Welsh Government to express concern that complaint handling guidance had not been updated since 2014. It was accepted that work had commenced on this by Customer Care Officers through the All-Wales Complaints Officers' Group and this was welcomed. However, a desire was expressed for the Cabinet Members to send a letter the Government in line with the original recommendation to maximise the voice of the Committee Members. The Cabinet Members gave assurance that they would write a letter to the Government escalating the issue and requesting an update.

A Member expressed frustration at the content of the report with reference to recommendation 15.8(d). It was noted that the answer did not address the need for carers to make complaints on behalf of service users, and that more attention was needed to address this. The comment was accepted and it was assured that the departments would reconsider the point and come back to the Councillor.

A Member expressed concern about the lack of capacity within the role of the Customer Care Officer, Children and Family Support Department, and that the significant number of bulky information requests received meant that it had not been possible to add anything new to the work plan. It was asked how the work pressure could be reduced and if another customer care post could be funded as a means of increasing capacity to deal with this? It was reported that consideration would be given to this.

DECISION

1. **To accept and note the report, noting the wish to have the relevant Cabinet Member act on the recommendations received in the Complaints Task and Finish Group and to provide an update to the committee.**
2. **To ask Cabinet Members to consider whether additional resources could be made available to reduce the workload of customer care officers.**

8. PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE MEETINGS

There was a discussion regarding the nomination of two representatives from the Care Scrutiny Committee to attend internal meetings challenging the Council's performance in the field of Housing and Property, in line with the recommendation of the Scrutiny Forum. It was noted that the performance challenge meetings took place four times a year, and committee members would be expected to attend the meeting, listen to the discussion and report back to committee members.

DECISION

It was decided to nominate the following two delegates to attend housing and property performance challenge meetings.

1. **Councillor Geraint Wyn Parry**
2. **Councillor Jina Gwyrfai**