CYNGOR GWYNEDD

Gwynedd Council Annual Performance Report

2021/2022

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Foreword of the Leader of Gwynedd Council

It is my pleasure to present this report which describes and measures the work that we as a Council have achieved during the year. 2021/22 was another difficult year, with our communities continuing to live in the shadow of Covid-19, affecting the lives of the County's residents; nevertheless, the Council has continued to provide services.

The report reflects on the priorities set within the Council Plan, including many new projects in 2021/22 in an attempt to address the side-effects of the pandemic. It is nice to look back and see that some of the cross-departmental plans that were put in place at that time have managed to protect the communities, businesses and residents of Gwynedd. We can also take pride in the work of the Test, Trace and Protect Service, which has continued to contact and advise over 85,000 people during 2021/22.

Despite this extremely difficult time, the heroic effort of our staff is again a matter of great pride, and not just because they continued to deliver services but also they completed a number of other influential projects. One of the highlights of the year was the announcement made by Unesco, stating that the Slate Landscape of North West Wales is now inscribed as a World Heritage Site - the fourth site to gain this honour in Wales. I am looking forward to see the work continuing to maintain the site, by collaborating with all of the partners who have been integral to the success of this project.

You may recall that the Council declared a Climate Change emergency in March 2019. We have now adopted a Climate Change Plan which means that steps are in place to identify where we are having the biggest impact and to reduce our impact as a body on the global crisis. Another source of pride is that we have gone a step further in our efforts to ensure that our communities are clean and tidy. In response to messages from communities across the County, we have established five community teams that will be able to respond proactively to street cleanliness matters and take local needs into account.

In 2021/22, the Housing and Property Department has also recommenced the work of upgrading schools, with extensions completed in Ysgol Glancegin in Bangor, Ysgol Bethel and Ysgol Glan y Môr, Pwllheli. These are all important steps that will contribute towards our aim of ensuring that every child receives an education of the highest quality. The same is true of our care homes and renovation work has now been completed at Hafod Mawddach residential home in Barmouth, Cefn Rodyn in Dolgellau and Tan y Marian in Pwllheli.

Despite the successes, there is no doubt that the increased pressures arising as a result of Covid-19 continue. One indicator of this is the continuing back-log of work in a number of services and plans are now in place to address this during 2022/23. We also experienced staff recruitment challenges in many fields across the Council, which affects our ability to maintain key services. We are now working cross-departmentally in an attempt to address the problem and it is one of the Council's priorities for the year to come.

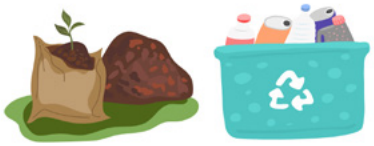
Finally, I would like to thank the workforce for their efforts and commitment to provide the services needed to make a real difference to the lives of the residents and communities of Gwynedd. Following the elections in May, the new Council will set its priorities for the next 5 years, whilst looking to build on what has already been achieved.

Highlights of the year

Below is a visual summary which provides a snapshot of the Council's main achievements over the past year. It includes work carried out by a range of services across Council departments.

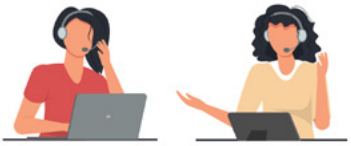
64%

of Gwynedd's household waste is recycled, reused,or composted



New mental health hubs were opened for young people in Pwllheli, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Caernarfon

The Homelessness Unit helped 1,126 people (compared to 945 in the year 2020/21)



87,000

people have received advice from the Testing, Tracking and Safeguarding Service

Established an Autism Plan for Gwynedd in conjunction with our partners

90%

births registered within 5 days (compared to 51% during 2020/21)

6,255

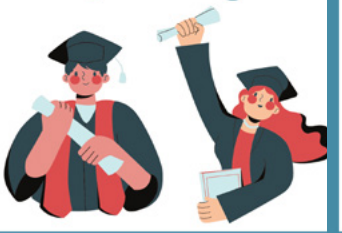
Winter Fuel Scheme applications processed between December 2021 and February 2022

Established the 'Ardal Ni' area Teams to tackle clutter and ensure clean and tidy communities

95.7%

of Council Residential Home residents have received their Covid-19 vaccinations (including the 'booster')

13 new Apprentices and 7 Professional Trainees appointed to priority areas for future workforce planning



7,210

Self Insulation Payment Scheme applications processed

1,770

of families helped through the Discretionary Housing Payment Fund (DHP)

14,080

have opened a new self-service account, which is 2,500 more than in 2020/21

229 of Gwynedd people supported into work

The Council's Community Support Fund financed 21 projects this year attracting £206,000 in funding to the county

7,136 families have received information, advice, assistance and/or care

Published our Digital Education Strategy to help teachers and children in Gwynedd schools

Parliamentary and Police Commissioner elections were held under Covid-19 restrictions which included managing 136 polling stations and two count centers

186,222

of books loaned (which is a 140% increase on 2020/21 figures)

Began developing the old Ysgol Glan Wnion building, Dolgellau, into units to support the homeless

Published our 'Climate Change Plan' to highlight what we intend to do in response to the global crisis

Introduction

The Council published its 'Gwynedd Council Plan for 2018-2023' in March 2018, in which our ambition and priorities were set for the five years in question. We have reviewed the Plan every year since then in order to keep it current and therefore, this report illustrates how we proceeded to realise the ambition of the 'Gwynedd Council Plan 2018/2023: 2021/22 Review'. It also includes information about the rest of the Council's 'day-to-day' work and our expenditure for the year.

Part 1 of this report provides an update on our performance per Improvement Priority, namely the fields that required particular attention from us. Part 2 describes the rest of our work, and there are individual chapters for each Council department. Within the departmental reports, we also update the work on Local Priorities which were identified by the elected members when consulting on priorities for the Council Plan 2018-23.

As outlined in the last annual performance report, 2020/21 was a year of long lockdowns and strict restrictions on people's rights to leave their homes. The restrictions had a huge impact on Council services, and Covid-19 has continued to impact us in 2021/22. Although restrictions have gradually eased over the past months, the impact of Covid-19 continues to be seen today in many fields. This is clear from the number of new projects that are being included in this report this year, e.g. the Digital Learning Strategy, The Gap in Welfare and Attainment of Children and Young People, etc.

The 2021/22 Review of the Council Plan included a number of projects that we had identified to address the needs of Gwynedd residents as part of the recovery from the pandemic. 2021/22 was another year of uncertainty, and we saw unpredictable risks arising during the

year such as new variants of Covid-19, the Ukrainian refugee crisis and the cost of living crisis. This has forced the Council to divert resources and adapt by committing itself to new work and projects that had not been anticipated or planned for in an effort to support those affected.

There is no doubt that the pandemic period has led to many changes for Gwynedd Council, and as the restrictions ease, it appears that there will be a number of lessons to learn from this period. In the 2020/21 Annual Performance Report, we provided a detailed explanation of our response to the pandemic in the 'Impact of Covid-19' chapter. By now, the response to the needs of Gwynedd residents as a result of the pandemic is a part of the day-to-day work of many of our departments, therefore, the departments will refer to the impact of the pandemic on their work in more detail in their individual reports in Part 2.

Gwynedd Council has realised over £32.8 million of savings schemes between 2015/16 and the end of 2021/22. For 2021/22, the Council received an increase in the Government grant totalling £6.4m. This was sufficient to address inflation, and a fairer settlement that what was seen in the years before 2020/21, but there was a need to increase our expenditure by £10.6m in order to retain the same level of service. Therefore, decisions had to be taken to fund the pressures through a combination of realising savings and tax increases. Nevertheless, by the end of the year, the Council had received a number of further Welsh Government grants, including money from the Covid-19 hardship fund, which was obvious support to cope with the financial deficits deriving from additional expenditure and a reduced income.

This is a report at the end of the financial year, but the work of measuring the success of our work, and challenging our own performance, is happening throughout the year. During 2021/22, we reintroduced the process of holding performance challenging meetings following a pause in 2020/21 due to the pandemic. These meetings give the Cabinet Member an opportunity to review the progress made by departments on their Improvement Priority projects and their day-to-day work, with the support of the Chief Executive or Corporate Director.

This Annual Performance Report is based on the balanced findings of the performance challenging meetings that were held regularly throughout the year. The report draws on the main messages of these meetings, as well as any financial/performance information provided during the year. The report is presented to the Cabinet and the Full Council for approval.
With the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) (the Act) designated public bodies are required to work individually and collectively to improve well-being in Wales.

In line with the requirements of the Act, the Council adopted seven Well-being goals in 2018/19, which contribute to the seven national well-being goals, and these remain up-to-date. The objectives are based on the well-being assessment carried out by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and engagement sessions held when developing the Plan.

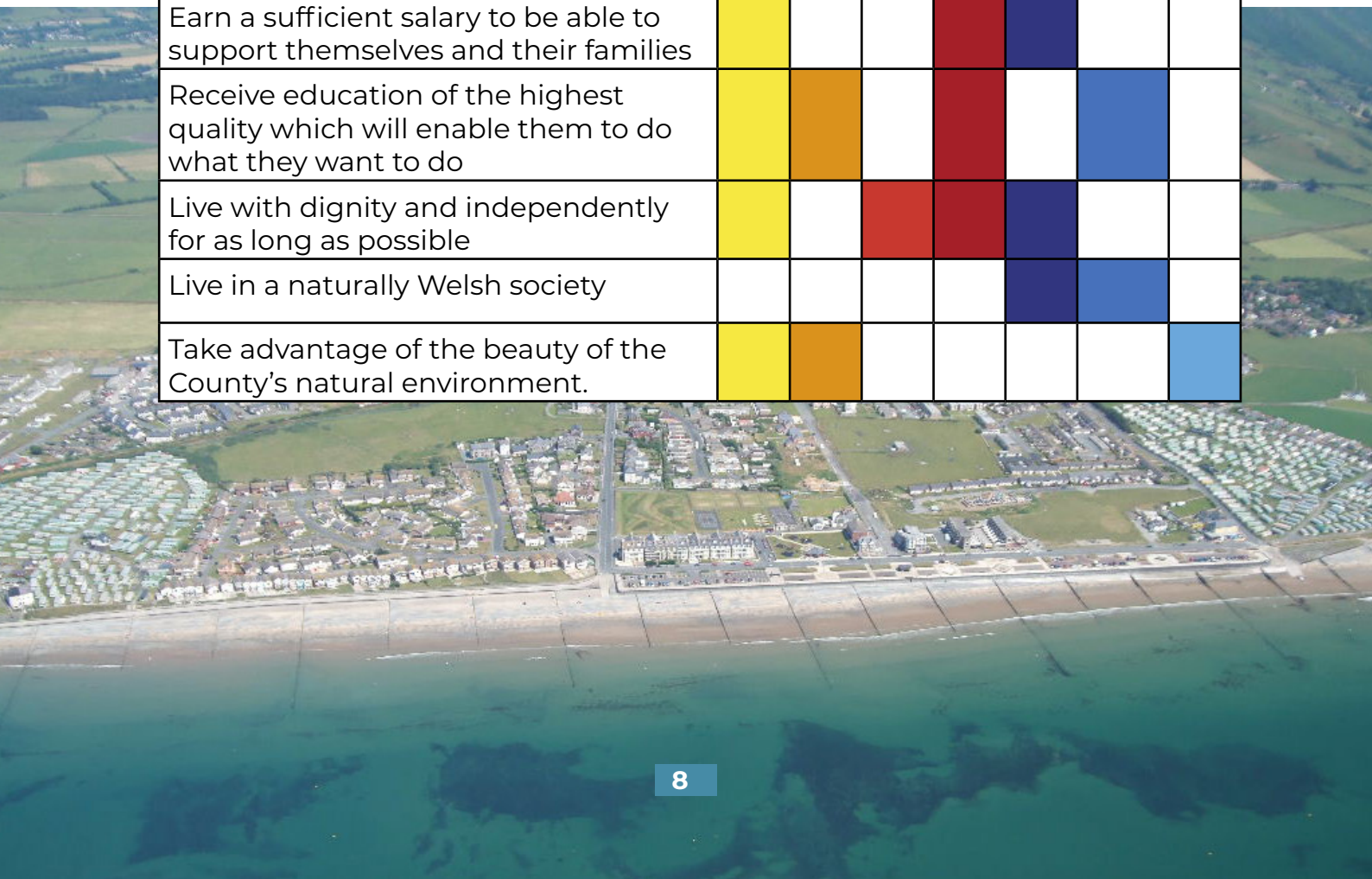
The need to act in accordance with the five sustainable development principles has also been noted, through:

- considering the long-term
- prevention
- integrated working
- working collaboratively
- and being inclusive of people of all ages.

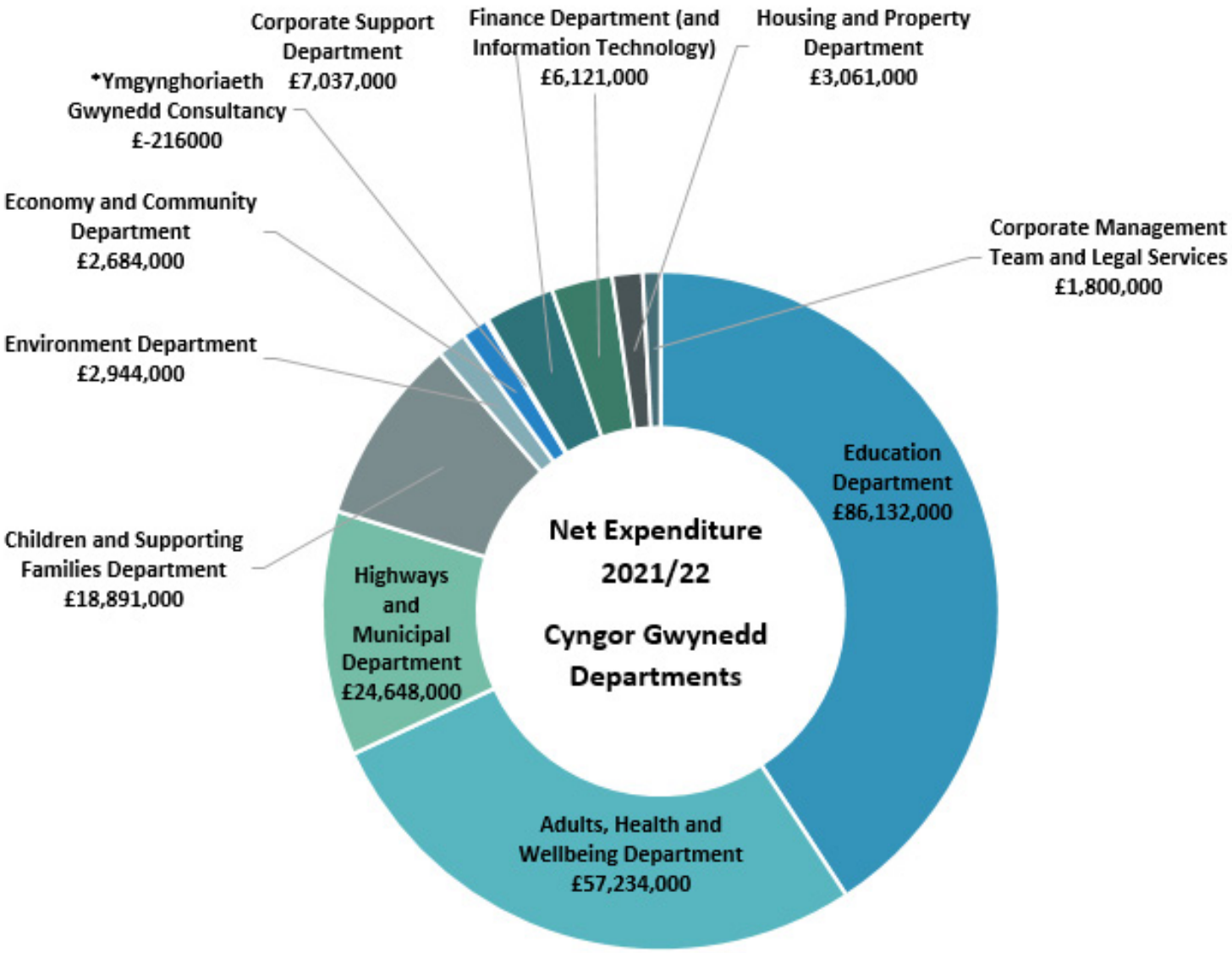
We are expected to report on our contribution to the principles of the Act, and information about many of these activities can be found in the body of the report. In addition, the Well-being Objectives, to which each individual project contributes, and the Departments' day-to-day work are noted at the end of each chapter.

We have agreed that the best way to embed the responsibility for acting in accordance with the five sustainable development principles is for the Department Management Teams to pay attention to the principles when forward-planning. There is some evidence to suggest that this does happen, but the need to assess whether this method is successful has been recognised, and we will continue to consider how this can be improved.

Gwynedd Council Well-being Objectives	**National Well-being Goals**						
We will ensure that the residents of Gwynedd:	Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	Equal	Cohesive Communities	A vibrant culture where the Welsh language is thriving	Globally responsible
Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives							
Live in quality homes within their communities							
Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support themselves and their families							
Receive education of the highest quality which will enable them to do what they want to do							
Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible							
Live in a naturally Welsh society							
Take advantage of the beauty of the County's natural environment.							



Our Expenditure



* The Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy Department attracts income therefore their net expenditure was £-216,000

Part 1
Improvement Priorities

Eight Improvement Priorities have been identified within the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023. These are the key fields within which we believe we need to take action in order to make a positive difference to the lives of the people of Gwynedd.

Under the 8 Improvement Priorities a description is provided of the projects which will contribute towards realising the ambition that the Improvement Priorities describe. On the following pages, a report is provided on the progress of those projects during 2021/22 against what we said we would do in the Gwynedd Council Plan: 2021/22 Review.

Further information on what we will do in the future in the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023 can be obtained by visiting **www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/councilplan**

Improvement Priority 1
Create a viable and prosperous economy.

Ensuring that there are suitable jobs available in the county that pay salaries that enable people to support themselves and their families is the foundation to allowing the people of Gwynedd to thrive.

- North Wales Growth Deal
- Keeping the Benefit Local
- Create High Value Jobs (£28,500 + salary)
- Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig
- Promoting Town Centres
- Implementing the Gwynedd Slate Heritage
- Businesses Receiving Support to Prosper
- Tourism - creating a sustainable tourism plan
- Regeneration: Creating regeneration plans for our areas

Project 1a	North Wales Growth Deal

What did we promise to do?

A lack of growth is a weakness in the economy of the whole of north Wales, and particularly the north-west. In an attempt to overturn the situation, the six counties in north Wales, and other stakeholders such as education institutions in the region and the private sector, came together to establish the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

The Board's main scheme is the 'North Wales Growth Deal' and in December 2020 an agreement was signed between the Ambition Board, the Welsh Government and UK Government, which paves the way to delivering the Growth Deal. The bid will lead to an investment of £945m in the north Wales region over the next 15 years and create up to 4,000 jobs across north Wales.

As a member of the Ambition Board, our aim as a Council is to ensure that the people and businesses of Gwynedd maximise the benefits from this financial investment, especially at a time when there will be a need to respond to the side-effects of Brexit and Covid-19.

In future, we will continue to contribute to the Ambition Board's work programme, including improving the availability of superfast broadband, developing the Trawsfynydd Power Station site, and developing a Rural Innovation Hub in Glynllifon. We will also contribute to the development of the North Wales Economic Framework, which is being prepared by Welsh Government to identify the main regional investment programmes in the future.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

There has been significant progress in the work of preparing the details of the plans over the past year. The initial business plans of several schemes within the North Wales Growth Deal were approved including some that are a priority for Gwynedd such as the Rural Economy Hub in Glynllifon and Bangor University Digital Signal Processing Centre of Excellence. Officers and Members continue to make significant contributions to the work of the Economic Ambition Board to ensure that it delivers. Here is a link to a report that contains further details about the various growth projects at the most recent reporting point.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.

Project 1b	Keeping the Benefit Local

What did we promise to do?

The Council is responsible for procuring, or purchasing, a number of goods and services and is eager to try to ensure that local businesses can compete for and win these contracts in order to ensure that as much of the Council's expenditure as possible remains local.

The local market cannot always respond to opportunities due to restrictions in terms of size or other existing barriers. This then leads to businesses losing the desire and ability to compete for work, and consequently, it is not possible to maximise the Council expenditure that is kept locally.

We are seeking to support local businesses with the changes to procurement rules as a result of leaving the European Union, taking advantage of the opportunities to procure locally. We will address the following fields:

1. Completing a project in order to assess the practicality of delivering a 'Social Value Portal' or similar to Gwynedd, i.e. sharing the method of assessing tenders currently being set by measuring Price and Quality to one that measures Price, Quality and Local Value.
2. Plans to develop the market ability to win the Council's procurement contracts - Respond to the Well-being Act's questions in tenders, support to gain health and safety accreditations.
3. Assess opportunities to award tenders to local companies as a result of Brexit and the freedom to act outside European procurement regulations.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

A reduction was seen in the local percentage of the Council's expenditure to 61% of the 63% realised in 2020/21. Although the local percentage has fallen, we have spent a total of £14m more compared to this period last year, with an additional £7m being spent with businesses from Gwynedd.

The work of trialling assessing tenders based on social value continues, with the second pilot tender completed in the building maintenance field. The response from the market has not been as good as the first pilot and this has highlighted the need to undertake further work to encourage and support the market. We will gather market feedback along with feedback from procurement officers as part of the final assessment with a vision to offer the recommendation regarding introducing this arrangement as a permanent one for the Council during the coming year

We have supported a number of local sectors to procure and win the Council's contracts - whether this be in the transportation field, in response to ethical employment requirements, or in the care field as the new model of providing home care is being presented.

The change in the national procurement regulations has not highlighted the significant opportunities to buy locally as a result of Brexit. There is a further review to implement the new national contracts regulations during the year and we will revise these in due course to try and identify possible opportunities.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 1c	Create High Value Jobs (£28,500 + salary)

What did we promise to do?

Salaries in Gwynedd are among the lowest anywhere in Britain. Weekly pay in the county was the lowest in Wales in 2020 (£500 on average) and the low pay is at its worst in our rural communities (£418 - the lowest in Britain). Low salaries will inevitably lead to higher levels of poverty and rural depopulation, which in turn affects our communities, the future of our young people, and the Welsh language as a healthy community language.

The Creating High Value Jobs project has already taken steps to improve the situation, securing European funding to realise a plan to develop space for businesses to locate at Snowdonia Aerospace Centre in Llanbedr, implement a plan to increase the number of school pupils who study the subjects desired by businesses within well-paid sectors and have influenced the decision to continue with the decommissioning work on the Trawsfynydd Power Station site.

In future, we will continue with these schemes, and we will also lead on other schemes such as supporting the development of the creative and digital industries sector, supporting the development of the health and medical sector and develop a scheme by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to prepare the Trawsfynydd Power Station Site to produce low-carbon energy and medical isotopes in the future. Such schemes will ensure the continuation of high-value local jobs.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

It continues to be a challenging period for the economy that influences the confidence of companies to invest, which in turn has impacted the outcomes of the scheme to Create High Value Jobs over the past year. However there have been a number of positive developments to report, including:

- Securing the support to extend the STEM Gogledd scheme to mid-2023 and commission joint research with the Education Department to help schools to understand the skills needs of our local businesses. 116 young people benefited from the activity during 2021/22.
- Guarantee the continuation of the Creative North Wales network by attracting funding from Welsh Government, all the North Wales counties and Llandrillo-Menai Group. 211 businesses are now members of the network.
- Collaboration with Magnox Company to retain decommissioning jobs on the Trawsfynydd Power Station site and support the Welsh Government to establish Cwmni Egino to develop the site and maintain jobs in future.

However, the decision by Welsh Government not to proceed with the development of the new access road to Llanbedr airfield site was exceptionally disappointing. Its decision has led to the loss of £7.5M of European funding to Gwynedd, and substantial private investment. The Council is continuing to collaborate with partners to fully realise the site's potential to create good jobs for local people in future.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 1ch	Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig

What did we promise to do?

The nature of our rural economy means that 79% of Gwynedd businesses do not employ more than one person and there are too many jobs within sectors that do not pay well. This leads to threats in terms of the sustainability of our rural communities with these challenges having increased as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and Brexit.

The Council is seeking to strengthen the foundation of the rural economy by encouraging local enterprises to develop, create and maintain jobs across Gwynedd. A financial package has been identified via Europe to implement the Rural Development Programme in the area, which includes a package of projects to promote enterprise.

Ensuring digital connectivity for our rural communities, and that the workforce and rural businesses have the skills to take advantage of them are matters that have already received attention. We have held a pilot scheme to provide public Wi-Fi in eight rural towns, and to increase access to computer equipment. We are also a part of the ARFOR programme, a Welsh Government investment to create more and better jobs in areas in west Wales where a high percentage of the population speaks Welsh.

In the future, we will continue to extend the digital provision in communities and will work with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and the private sector to establish a rural innovation hub in Glynllifon, giving particular attention to the food and drink sector, and we will work to develop the foundation economy and support our rural businesses to adapt and develop as a result of Covid-19 and Brexit.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

We have collaborated with the Welsh Government and Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils to secure a fund of £11 million to extend the Arfor Programme over the coming three years, building on the success of Gwynedd's schemes to promote the rural economy in those areas where the Welsh language is under threat.

Beyond ARFOR, there a number of other successes that should be noted:

- Securing £151,000 of funding from Welsh Government to support 60 rural businesses to improve their internet presence and increase their use of technology, in particular to develop links between local suppliers and accommodation providers
- Hold 20 activities within the Ffiws Gwynedd network of locations to support businesses to use modern equipment and extend the network to 10 locations in the county (further information)
- Trial a 'pop-up' shop to facilitate small rural businesses to grow (further information)
- Provide training and financial support under the 'Llwyddo'n Lleol' banner to help 18 young people to establish 12 businesses that respond to the needs of their communities (further information)
- Complete an experiment to evaluate the value of community electric vehicles to respond to the challenges of rural transport, with three or four areas having progressed to develop local transport schemes using electric cars and a mini-bus (further information).

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.

What did we promise to do?

Lively town centres are able to make substantial contributions to the economic and social success of local areas and offer a broad range of services to our communities.

However, the "high street" areas of our town centres are currently facing substantial challenges with a number of national chain stores closing and trading being restricted as a result of Covid-19. There is a need to promote and support the development of town centres to ensure that they are able to adapt and thrive in the future; to maintain and create employment, provide a broad range of goods and services required by residents and visitors and provide new residential units.

We have already been collaborating with businesses in Bangor and Caernarfon to promote the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and to attract resources from Welsh Government's Regional Regeneration Programme. We were successful in establishing a loans scheme for the upgrading of redundant buildings in the areas of Caernarfon, Bangor, Bethesda and Penygroes and the scheme will extend to all Gwynedd towns in 2021.

During 2020, a cross-departmental group was established to develop a programme of improvements and short-term measures in response to the Covid-19 crisis. In future, we will continue with this work, and will prepare plans for 13 catchment areas in Gwynedd, based on what matters to the residents within these communities

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Over the past year, the emphasis of this project has been diverted in light of Covid-19, with a package of short-term environmental improvements having being implemented in light of the success in attracting Welsh Government grants. The package also includes developing digital infrastructure in town centres to offer wi-fi, a new marketing and joint-commerce platform, a method for collecting and managing data on town centre trends.

However, more recently there has been more emphasis placed on trying to respond to challenges and opportunities that will face town centres in future. New arrangements were put in place to target Welsh Government's Transforming Towns funds in order to develop and implement a range of town centre regeneration projects. 'Placemaking' grant resources were secured for the following projects to be implemented during 2021/22:

Scheme	Organisation	Total Cost
Town Centre Property Improvement Grant	Economy and Community Department	£692,866
Empty Homes Grant	Housing and Property Department	£285,714
Improvements to Storiel, Bangor	Economy and Community Department	£199,800
Heritage Centre (Spar Building)	Partneriaeth Ogwen	£345,900
Cymru Fydd scheme	Siop Griffiths	£237,560
Penygroes Decarbonisation Hub	Adra	£338,000
Tafarn y Fic, Bethesda	Tabernacl (Bethesda) Cyf	£67,516
High Street, Blaenau Ffestiniog (3 properties)	Antur Stiniog	£370,025
Digital Platform	Economy and Community Department	£151,000
College Park, Bangor	Bangor University	£1,209,901
	Total	**£3,898,282**

The work of developing projects as part of the Bangor City Centre Regeneration Scheme is also continuing. During the period work commenced on Cwmni Fran Wen's 'Nyth' project – an exciting project worth £3.2m to develop a bespoke creative hub for children and young people in the city centre. A £1.2m package was also secured for Bangor University's scheme to introduce improvements to College Park in the city centre. Developmental funding was secured for preliminary work on the Health and Well-being Centre scheme for the city. Grant funding has also been earmarked to renovate three empty buildings on the High Street, and work has been scheduled to begin during the last quarter of 2021/22.

An Action Plan for Empty Properties has been prepared – combining the functions and responsibilities of various Services across the Council. The Empty Properties Cross-departmental Group has been established to coordinate and supervise the implementation of the plan.

The Department has also provided input to the work commissioned on behalf of the six North Wales counties to develop a regional Town Centres Framework.

Well-being Objectives :

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 1dd	Implementing the Gwynedd Slate Heritage

What did we promise to do?

During 2020, a full nomination from Gwynedd was presented to the UK Government and to UNESCO for a World Heritage Site designation for the Slate Landscapes of North-West Wales. The nomination gives us an opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of the traditional slate industry on an international platform, and to celebrate and protect the Welsh culture associated with those areas.

We have already used the World Heritage Site nomination as a tool to regenerate our slate communities and to increase the value of the tourist industry. £1m of additional resources have been attracted to the county through the Heritage Fund, Welsh Government, the European Union and Snowdonia National Park through the LleCHI project.

In future, we will collaborate with the slate communities, via the LleCHI project, to create a programme of regeneration activities in these areas that will improve the appearance and look of communities, improve the quality of the visitors' experience, and will lead to an increase in residents' ownership of their heritage, language and culture.

The World Heritage Committee will meet in June / July 2021 and we will continue to engage and collaborate with communities, landowners, businesses and partners to ensure that we are ready to take advantage of the opportunities that will come as a result of the designation, in the interests of the people of Gwynedd.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

In July 2021 UNESCO announced that Gwynedd Council and its partners had succeeded in their bid to secure a World Heritage Site designation for the Slate Landscape of North West Wales. Following the huge interest, enthusiasm and pride within our communities, the Council and its partners have been developing and agreeing operational arrangements for the successful future management of the site. A new management structure has been agreed and over the next few months we will proceed to establish the Partnership Board, Action Group and specific sub-groups to ensure that all voices are heard in the management of the site, and that full advantage is taken of the opportunities that stem from the designation.

The activities of the LleCHI project funded by Gwynedd Council, Snowdonia National Park, Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig and the Heritage Lottery Fund have now ended, with a number of community activities having been delivered across our slate valleys, including: art work, anthems, murals, interpretation, exhibitions, events, tours and schemes with Gwynedd's children and young people to highlight the importance of our slate story and to nurture local pride.

A subsequent bid has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund and we have succeeded with the first phase of the funding to secure £113,000 to be implemented over the coming 12-18 months. This developmental period will allow us to engage with communities, partners and businesses in the development of a significant project worth over £1m that could be delivered between 2024 - 2029 if it is approved in due course.

The Environment Department has launched a consultation on a Supplementary Design Guidance to ensure that the site is developed sustainably in the future. Over the coming months, discussions will continue with communities, partners, and businesses to secure the maximum benefits from the designation and we will continue to discuss projects that are developed across the slate valleys.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

Project 1e	Businesses Receiving Support to Prosper

What did we promise to do?

It is currently an uncertain time for businesses as a result of Covid-19 and Brexit and changes in trading and competition arrangements. Gwynedd Council is determined to help local enterprises to adapt and respond to the challenge and we have already made an unprecedented effort to support local businesses by providing financial aid, advice and support.

The county's businesses work with many Council Departments and they receive a service from them, including rates, planning, trading standards, building control and procurement. We have already consulted with the county's businesses to see whether the assistance and support they receive from the Council is the best it can be.

We have already supported and collaborated with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board's Programme Office on a package of Growth Deal projects in order to create opportunities for businesses in Gwynedd's economy in the future. In addition, we have collaborated with the Corporate Support Department team to develop a programme to promote buying locally, and have reviewed the need for space by businesses (pre Covid-19).

In the future, we will continue to prioritise resources and efforts to support our local businesses, ensuring that all parts of the Council consider how they can offer assistance to support businesses. We will also encourage Gwynedd businesses to make the most of the support available from others, and to powerfully convey the needs of Gwynedd businesses when discussing with our partners, in particular in light of the pandemic and Brexit.

What progress was made in 2020/21?

Ensuring that our businesses have the information they need to keep their staff and customers safe continues to be a priority; which has increased as the requirements to prevent the spread of coronavirus have been reintroduced. The numbers receiving the Council's regular bulletin to businesses remains static at just over 4,200.

The work of providing practical and financial support for businesses continues, but with reduced emergency funding to administer since the summer. 291 local businesses have received a total of almost £1.1m of financial support through the Department in 2021/22. The emphasis has changed to monitoring the funding that has been provided and providing practical advice to businesses.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.

Project 1f	Tourism - creating a sustainable tourism plan

What did we promise to do?

We have concerns that the people of Gwynedd do not benefit as much as they should from tourism, and the Covid-19 crisis has underlined how the negative impacts of the industry can sometimes outweigh the advantages.

Work has been done to understand the change in tourism trends over the years and identify the benefits to Gwynedd, along with the risks, including the impact on the communities, language and culture of the area and second homes.

Over the past year, work has been done to draw up sustainable tourism principles for Gwynedd, which will form the basis of a future management plan.

We will complete the work of establishing a vision and principles for tourism in the future and will develop the Gwynedd Visitor Economy Management Plan in cooperation with communities and the sector in order to ensure the best benefits for the people of Gwynedd and tourists. The Plan will set a direction for policies and activities across the Council's departments in the future, but it will also acknowledge the long-term need to respond to the impact of Covid-19.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Work has been done to agree on Gwynedd tourism principles that will form the basis to future management plans. A number of meetings and events have been held to discuss these principles with members of Gwynedd Council and Snowdonia National Park, in addition to events with the sector and communities within Gwynedd. The purpose of these events was to provide input to future priorities and to identify the necessary support to develop and embed sustainable tourism in Gwynedd and Snowdonia. Through this work, between September 2021 and March 2022, engagement was carried out with over 200 representatives of over 100 public, private and voluntary bodies and over 1,500 over observations were received to steer the development of the scheme.

In November 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Gwynedd Council and Snowdonia National Park for future collaboration in this field. A formal collaboration structure has been agreed upon, and the close and open joint working between both partners is continuing as we aim to adopt the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035 in the coming months.

An Action Plan will be developed for the visitor economy as part of discussions and consultation on the Area Regeneration Plans and workshops will be held to ensure that the areas can contribute to the Action Plans. By learning from good practice in other areas of the world, we are confident that our Plan will break new ground to support a sustainable visitor economy.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

Project 1ff	Regeneration: Creating regeneration plans for our areas

What did we promise to do?

There is a risk that every service implements its own programmes in accordance with grant guidelines, but possibly does not respond to the actual needs and regeneration opportunities of Gwynedd. We have established the Regeneration Board with the intention of developing a Regeneration Plan for the County's communities. The Programme will incorporate cross-departmental activities, along with the Council Plan's priorities.

We will establish a new Regeneration Framework and develop 13 Regeneration Plans for the Gwynedd areas.

We will consult with stakeholders in order to understand how communities want to see their areas develop in the next 10-15 years, and identify local priorities. These schemes will give particular attention to the needs of town centres and the future of the 'high street' across Gwynedd over the coming years.

We will ensure that activities across the Council's Departments will contribute to the development and implementation of these Regeneration Schemes.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The Council's Regeneration Board has supported the proposal of developing a New Regeneration Framework for the County, but the work had to be postponed in 2020/21 due to the pandemic. Last year, it was decided to proceed with the programme, and the preparatory work has been completed. The proposed Regeneration Framework will include a county document along with local regeneration plans for 13 areas across Gwynedd.

During the autumn, initial conversations (Step 1) were arranged with Members, Town / Community Councils and progressive regeneration groups to ask for views on the main issues in each of the 13 local regeneration areas. 158 responses were received to the initial discussions, and individual reports were prepared for the 13 areas summarising the main issues.

During February 2022 an engagement programme was launched to ask for views and comments from residents within the county about the main issues and priorities for the local areas. A specific digital platform was developed for the work, available from this link. The platform provides information about the work delivered to date, including area assessments, Step 1 reports, specific maps and questionnaires for each of the 13 local regeneration areas.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Improvement Priority 2
Every pupil is given the opportunity to achieve their potential.

If we are to take advantage of any opportunities that may arise, it is crucial that Gwynedd has a sustainable quality education system in place, which gives our residents the skills to take advantage of those opportunities. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- Post-16 Education Provision in Arfon
- Bangor Catchment Area
- Cricieth Catchment Area
- Meirionnydd Collaboration
- Transforming the provision of Additional Educational Needs and Inclusion
- The Gap in Welfare and Attainment of Children and Young People
- Digital Learning Strategy

Project 2a	Post-16 Education Provision in Arfon

What did we promise to do?

The variety in the quality of the education and experiences of learners across the post-16 education system in Arfon affects outcomes and learning pathways.

The Cabinet has already given permission to commence engagement with stakeholders to discuss the vision for post-16 education in Arfon. The informal engagement was held during the Autumn Term 2020.

In 2020/21, we will use the conclusions of the engagement with stakeholders to proceed to establish draft proposals that will lead to proposing a favoured option to the Cabinet in the autumn.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Although the pandemic has delayed this project following a series of virtual meetings with stakeholders in the autumn of 2020, 2021/22 continued to be a challenging time to hold mass meetings that would have allowed us to progress the project further. Despite the impact of the pandemic, we hope to be able to resume this project early in the Summer Term 2022.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 2b	Bangor Catchment Area

What did we promise to do?

The children's learning environment is unsuitable as a number of primary schools in Bangor (and specifically in the Penrhosgarnedd area) are full or over-full.

The work of constructing a new school for Ysgol y Garnedd that will have a capacity to accommodate up to 420 learners has been completed by November 2020. During 2021/22, we will complete the work of building an extension and ensure community care on the Ysgol y Faenol site in Penrhosgarnedd with capacity to accommodate 315 learners.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Despite the pandemic, the new Ysgol y Garnedd building for up to 420 learners opened in October 2020. The project has won two Construction Excellence in Wales 2021 awards.

Ysgol y Faenol is also in the process of having a major extension to accommodate up to 315 learners. The schedule has been affected by the pandemic, but substantial parts of the extension have now been built. However, there is further slippage in construction due to having to work on a live site. Discussions regarding the transfer of school grounds continue with the Church in Wales before we are able to move forward to complete the final element of the work, namely the demolition of the existing Community Centre and the creation of a purpose-built car park on the site.

In addition to what we said we would do, as a result of increased learner numbers, a new classroom has been added to Ysgol Glancegin and has been used by the school since the beginning of this school year.

Also, due to the poor condition of the building, initial feasibility work has been completed to identify the needs of Ysgol ein Harglwyddes, and there is agreement to locate the new school on the site of Ysgol Glanadda (which is now closed) and this location is in accordance with the desires of the community.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 2c	Cricieth Catchment Area

What did we promise to do?

The condition of the building and the current learning environment of Ysgol Treferthyr in Cricieth is poor, which affects the learners' experience. We will therefore build the new school in Cricieth in order to improve the learning environment and ensure the best resources for the learners to thrive.

In 2021/22, as a result of the process of publishing a statutory notice, we will proceed to engage on the plans, and ensure planning permission and the appointment of contractors.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The Council's Cabinet has decided to support the proposal to increase the capacity of Ysgol Treferthyr to 150, and to build a new school in light of the poor condition of the existing building. As part of the process of submitting a planning application for the relocation of the school to the A497 site, two technical issues have arisen regarding the site, and work has been commissioned in response to that, which is going to affect the original schedule to some extent.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 2ch	Meirionnydd Collaboration

What did we promise to do?

There is a risk that matters relating to the current procedure affects the experiences of Meirionnydd learners, e.g. the Meirionnydd secondary schools find it difficult to recruit teachers, middle managers and leaders. Unless there will be a solution to the situation, the impact on the resilience of the education system and leadership conditions in the area will continue.

Work has been commissioned to conduct research to identify creative solutions that will lead to collaboration between the primary schools of Meirionnydd in order to ensure that the quality of the education is consistently good and sustainable for the future.

In 2021/22, we will establish an amended procedure jointly with Chairs, Vice-chairs and Heads in Meirionnydd.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Progress on this project has been slow and has been affected by the obvious challenges of the pandemic and the busy nature of secondary schools. Nevertheless, we have sought the opinion of headteachers and representatives of the governing body of every secondary school on the potential challenges they face in terms of providing quality secondary education in the area, such as recruiting teachers, middle managers and leaders. We have also circulated a questionnaire to seek the views of learners, staff, parents and headteachers, that will inform the future direction of the project, and we are currently in the process of analysing messages from those questionnaires.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 2d	Transforming the provision of Additional Educational Needs and Inclusion

What did we promise to do?

There is a risk that we will be unable to make suitable provision for each pupil with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) because no resources were received from the Government to meet the increase in the need for statutory provision (ALN and Tribunal Act, 2018).

It is also possible that children and young people will not have the correct access to specialist staff (e.g. bilingual Educational Psychologists, Sensory Teachers) and key roles in terms of statutory jobs within the code (Early Years Lead Officer, ALN Coordinator), due to the combination of recruitment and funding difficulties and an increased workload.

During 2021/22, we will:

- Continue to prepare for the legislative change, focusing on the early years, post-16, the partnership with parents and agencies, and the most suitable funding method for the legislative requirement
- Establish processes and provisions in the Early Years, this includes mapping the demand in workload (e.g. the number of children requiring specialist attention/support)
- Establish processes and provisions in the post-16 sector - close collaboration with the Further Education colleges
- Establish a funding method - review the current funding method in order to obtain a model that provides better stability in terms of provision
- Continue with national discussions - continue to transfer the message regarding concerns about the training and recruitment of specialist staff.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

At present, this project focuses on preparing for the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. This Act came into effect in September 2021, with some elements of the Act being delayed in the first year, e.g. the post-16 period. As a result, the service has been focusing on offering training, workshops and drop-in sessions to assist with the first few weeks of the new legislation coming into force.

The commencement of the Act in the post-16 sector has been delayed, but we are continuing to work with partners and stakeholders in this sector to prepare for when the Act will come into effect.

Systems and processes for embarking on the journey in the early years are well established and embedded. We continue to work with key partners to ensure that we work together effectively to support the learners and their families.

Consultation with schools on possible future funding approaches will begin in May 2022 following the completion of modelling work.

Our discussions with the Welsh Government regarding securing sufficient bilingual specialist staff to respond to learners' needs are ongoing at a national and regional level.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Project 2dd	The Gap in Welfare and Attainment of Children and Young People

What did we promise to do?

There is concern that some children and young people can be left behind in terms of their educational attainment; and some of them need additional help to close that gap as well as support with their welfare. Parents are concerned about sending their children to school or they decide to home school, and there is an increase in safeguarding concerns.

We are aware that the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown period have highlighted the vulnerability of the early years sector. During 2021/22, we will focus on understanding the impacts of lockdown on the welfare of young children and we will review our arrangements and provisions to ensure the best start for families and 0-5 year old children. During 2021/22, we will focus our efforts on the 5- 16 year old age group by supporting the schools to implement the Accelerated Learning Programme with funding from Welsh Government. This will allow us to respond to the impact of lockdown on the welfare and attainment of some specific groups of learners.

Beyond school, we also realise that the 16-24 year old age group has been disproportionately affected by the crisis compared to any other age group. There are more referrals for well-being, mental health and homelessness assistance among this age group. Alongside the increase in the number of young people not in employment, education or training, there is an intention to give specific attention to this field in order to mitigate against any side-effects, ensuring that our young people have support and appropriate provision to enable them to thrive.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The work of supporting the well-being of children and young people over the last year has continued to focus on responding to the challenges and side-effects of the pandemic. We have established cross-departmental project arrangements for the work streams prioritised by us as a Council, which has enabled us to prioritise support and intervention on the basis of the need identified. All of those work streams are moving forward well.

A cross-agency group has met for the first time in two years to discuss what matters to Gwynedd's young people as they emerge from the pandemic, focusing on the support they need at this point in their lives. The group will focus on ensuring that there is support for young people to attend an educational institution, employment or training, thereby reducing the numbers who are not in education, employment or training. Through the work of the group's members, the Council has abolished the £300 fee from Gwynedd's post-16 travel pass, ensuring that all young people are able to travel to educational institutions in the county free of charge. This removes an obvious barrier off the path of young people and facilitates the way for them to secure a successful placement.

A new homelessness project is also about to commence with a grant secured from the Welsh Government which will focus on continuing to strengthen early identification systems for problems and to ensure appropriate support pathways and to develop and provide training for support workers/staff to grow an awareness of youth homelessness and understand how to support young people effectively to prevent homelessness.

Since September 2020, all schools in Gwynedd have implemented an Accelerated Learning Programme with funding from the Welsh Government, to respond to the impact of the lockdown on the welfare and attainment of some specific groups of learners aged 5-16.
Well-being Objectives: • Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives. • Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do. • Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families. • Live in a naturally Welsh society. • Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Project 2e	Digital Learning Strategy

What did we promise to do?

There is a risk of providing a sub-standard education for the children of Gwynedd due to a failure to maximise the opportunities afforded by digital learning. The aim of the strategy is to give the best digital provision to support our learners and teachers to foster a range of skills to use technology confidently, creatively and critically.

As a result of amending the curriculum, digital competence is a statutory responsibility across all learning fields and it needs to be considered in all aspects when designing and introducing the curriculum. The quality of school networks and the quality and number and availability of devices for teachers and learners is varied. There is a varied understanding of the medium amongst teachers. The procedure of maintaining the equipment does not ensure seamless access.

Work is taking place to draw up a new strategy and by 2021/22, we will have published the strategy and put it into practice during 2021/22.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

In order to facilitate distance learning during the last two years, but more specifically in response to the first lockdown, the Education Department was very proactive and prominent in the field of ICT, providing 1,200 Chromebook devices and 175 MiFi devices for families who did not have access to technology and/or internet connection during the first lockdown. This made a great difference in improving access to education and educational experiences for children during this time, however, some challenges remained in terms of a shortage of devices for large families. The Education Department also led on drawing up policies and procedures to allow Gwynedd schools to provide distance learning through live learning technology. Gwynedd's progressive policy was eventually adopted by a number of other authorities, and the department was pro-active in promoting and encouraging live learning sessions with our schools, and saw the clear advantages of that for the learners.

On 9 November 2021, Gwynedd Council's Cabinet approved the Education Digital Strategy. In adopting the strategy, it was agreed to co-fund up to half the costs of refurbishing devices jointly with the schools, as well as agreeing for Gwynedd schools to receive technical support from the Authority's IT service from April 2022 onwards.

A little over £1.3m has been invested in the network over the past two years. Subsequently, a substantial number of devices have been distributed in accordance with the strategy. Enough iPads have been distributed to provide one to every four learners in the Foundation Phase, and enough Chromebooks have been distributed so that all learners in years 3 to 6 have one device each. Windows 10 devices are also being prepared for all pupils in years 7, 10 and 11. Every teacher in Gwynedd will receive a standard device through the strategy over the coming months, with the hope that this will further spark imagination, ingenuity and effectiveness in aspects of digital learning across the sectors.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Improvement Priority 3 Reduce inequality within the county

It must also be recognised that, currently, not everyone in our society has the opportunities to fulfil their potential. Certainly, as in every county in Wales, inequality exists within the county at different levels, with inequality created by poverty high in terms of the damage which is caused.

It is obvious that poverty can also have a significant devastating effect on well-being, and in particular on the future offered to children. Whilst we have services, which endeavour to mitigate the effects of poverty, it is our responsibility to consider if there is more we could do.

We also have a responsibility to maintain a good standard of services to look after those children who find themselves in situations where there is a need for the Council to take responsibility for them. Ultimately, none of them wants to be in such a situation. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- More Gwynedd Residents to Play a Full Part in the World of Work
- Supporting People's Well-being
- Women in Leadership
- Implementing the Equality Plan (Ensuring Fairness for Everyone)

Project 3a	More Gwynedd Residents to Play a Full Part in the World of Work

What did we promise to do?

A large number have lost their jobs in Gwynedd over the past year as a result of Covid-19. Unemployment levels have increased substantially and projections show that it will increase again over the next months. A number of the people of Gwynedd are also unable to achieve their full potential as they are underemployed or excluded from employment.

Unemployment and a reduction in household income can affect the health and welfare of individuals and families and increase the demand on public resources. Preventing this is a key part of the anti poverty agenda. There are direct benefits from being in work in terms of increasing earnings, but there are also wider benefits in terms of health, children's life opportunities and pride in communities.

We have already diverted priorities in order to be able to respond within existing resources by:

- extending the Communities for Work programme in order to support more unemployed individuals who have been referred by Government agencies to receive support to overcome barriers to work
- working with employers, especially within the tourism industry, to ensure that more Gwynedd residents benefit from the employment opportunities available, and support the residents of Gwynedd to foster the digital skills required to access work
- supporting workforces that are being made redundant to assist them to gain access to relevant information by various services, especially during a period of Covid-19 restrictions
- collaborating with partners to develop the Government's 'Kickstart' programme in Gwynedd to support businesses and local employers to employ young people for a 6-month period and develop their work skills.

In future, we will continue with the above plans and collaborate closely with our partners across north Wales and with the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions to improve the coordination of our services. We will provide a programme to offer work experiences for unemployed young people in businesses across Gwynedd and task force will consider whether there are further steps that Gwynedd Council can take to respond to the huge challenge of supporting the people of Gwynedd back into work as soon as possible.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The labour market in Gwynedd continues to change. At the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, unemployment was a significant challenge, but employers are now reporting that they are encountering difficulties in relation to staff recruitment. The reasons for this are complex, but Brexit and the impact of the pandemic are certainly a significant part of the problem.

Throughout this period the Council's Gwaith Gwynedd team has responded quickly and flexibly to address the demand. The team has been helping businesses to promote jobs and recruitment and have focused on supporting individuals who are outside the labour

market to return to work. Approximately 1,600 jobs were advertised on the Gwaith Gwynedd noticeboard, and eight job fairs were held across Gwynedd to bring together employers and prospective employees. 229 people have secured work as a result of the assistance they have received from the team during 2021/22.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

What did we promise to do?

Some residents are finding it difficult to cope with life challenges as a result of the Covid-19 crisis; and the vulnerable situation of some other residents has worsened during the emergency.

These residents need support to cope, to thrive, to be safe and to be healthy. Residents find it difficult to gain access to services and discover information about what is available to assist them, particularly through virtual media and on-line and therefore face being socially and economically excluded.

Some residents are facing financial hardship, losing their job and losing their home. Residents are finding it difficult to obtain the help that they need to deal with these challenges and maintain their well-being, both locally and in a timely manner.

We have broad and numerous networks throughout the county's communities which help and support residents to cope and respond to their various needs. Those networks need support to sustain that voluntary effort.

During 2021/22, we will:

1. Prioritise our efforts and we will focus on supporting residents:
- who are facing homelessness
- who are unpaid carers to their loved-ones
- who are facing financial poverty and food poverty
- who are digitally excluded.

2. We will work across services and with our partners on:
- well-being interventions for children, young people and people of all ages
- supporting communities
- maintaining the resilience of communities and supporting volunteers/community spirit.

3. We will also look at models to ensure that residents obtain access to the broad and new range of support available in a timely, coordinated and local way.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The majority of our efforts during the year have continued to support residents and communities to deal with the crisis or the economic and social side-effects. However, we have also managed to make progress in our priorities as communities and services move gradually towards recovery.

We have drawn together services from across the Council to shape the Supporting People Programme and to date, we have focused our efforts on supporting people who face homelessness, who are carers, who face poverty and exclusion. We have cooperated with partners to support the well-being of children, young people and people of all ages, with supporting communities to maintain and support their residents, and to build on the resilience of communities.

The work of supporting residents facing homelessness is proceeding under the Housing Action Plan, however, during the year the arrangements across our services saw collaboration with the Mental Health Service and the Youth Service to get to grips with the challenges of youth homelessness and mental health needs.

The work of supporting unpaid carers has proceeded via the Carers Action Plan, and the collaboration across services and with our partners has seen new respite opportunities being developed, training and support programmes for carers of all ages, together with better arrangements by us to identify and offer assessments to carers.

Our work in responding to poverty challenges has continued throughout the year. The need for financial, debt and access to benefits advisory services and urgent energy and food vouchers has been more important than ever. We have been collaborating with our partners at the Citizens Advice Bureau and Housing Associations together with other charities, to promote local financial advice services, campaigns to maximise income, and jointly administering vouchers to help with fuel costs and food costs in an emergency.

We have worked with a large number of partners, and several services across the council have been taking steps to tackle digital exclusion amongst residents. There are various schemes in care homes, schools and in communities by volunteers to improve the skills of people to go on-line to get access to services, to keep in contact and to be part of activities for their benefit and friendship.

We have continued to collaborate with a very broad network of community groups and food banks on emergency food provision, feeding schemes, meals on wheels enterprises, food growing schemes, community gardens, allotments, food clubs and learn to cook sessions. This infrastructure across the county supports residents to have access to healthy, affordable food, and food in an emergency; it encourages volunteering and participation and getting to grips with reducing food waste.

During the year, we have also established a Covid-19 Hub in one area of Gwynedd, and from what we learnt there we now support a network of 9 Supporting People Hubs in communities throughout the county. We have collaborated with the Health Board, third sector partners and 9 community groups to develop these arrangements. All the hubs will facilitate the access of residents to services, but also offer a varied menu of activities and local clubs to people; they continue to offer access to Covid-19 tests, food vouchers, energy and digital packages as required. We hope to develop this collaboration model and have hubs to support people in communities during 2022-23.

The work on reviewing our arrangements around our front doors has not moved forward during 2021-22 due to the increasing and continuous demand on our social services, housing and benefits teams.

The long-term nature of this plan when seeking to tackle poverty, complex social challenges, and working across numerous services, means that we are continuing on a journey to achieve the plan's objectives.

In future, we will continue to focus our efforts to support vulnerable groups of people with

poverty, caring and accommodation challenges; develop our arrangements to support communities and build the resilience of communities jointly with our partners; and look to improve our front door arrangements so that residents have easier, timely and local access to our services.
Well-being Objectives: • Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives. • Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families. • Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do. • Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 3c	Women in Leadership

What did we promise to do?

The Council is firm that it adheres to equal pay, however the Council acknowledges that the number of women who have a managerial role within the Council is disproportionate with the split within the entire workforce i.e. 70% women 30% men.

We will introduce a programme to develop potential for women, carrying out an audit of our recruitment and appointment methods for managerial posts and creating a forum for female leaders and prospective leaders within the Council.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

A specific potential programme for women in the Council was developed and presented. There are 11 females across the Council who are in the first cohort to undertake the 7 modules. The programme is being presented by an internal experienced trainer as well as external specialists.

An audit of our recruiting and appointment methods is being led by the Human Resources Team with a full consultation with the members of the Women in Leadership Group before amending individual work conditions. This process will continue to next year.

The popular "Discussions over a Cuppa" meetings have continued with external speakers invited to contribute as well as some of our present internal female leaders. Three series of the "Discussions" were held during the year with plans to continue this provision over the coming year.

A new Intranet page has been designed and published during the year and an event for men in the organisation has been organised for the Summer months in order to raise awareness of what is sought to achieve.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Project 3ch	Implementing the Equality Plan (Ensuring Fairness for Everyone)

What did we promise to do?

We are eager to ensure that equality is deeply rooted within the Council's work in order to improve our services for all the people of Gwynedd.

By the end of 2020/21, we will have held a thorough investigation of the views of the people of Gwynedd who have protected characteristics (as noted in the 2010 Equality Act) about the services offered by the Council as well as identify any barriers that exist. The outcome of this investigation will be the basis to a number of further activities within the Action Plan for the five Objectives within the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan.

During 2021/22, we will:

- Develop a training and awareness-raising programme for staff and managers in order to gain better understanding of the needs of the people of Gwynedd and the Act for its introduction from September 2021 onwards.
- We will also continue to offer support and facilitate the ability of managers to carry out Equality Assessments.
- Encourage staff to complete the monitoring questionnaire in order to obtain reliable evidence to help to improve the diversity of our workforce, and to reduce any possible pay gaps.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Over the last year a diverse programme was developed to ensure a better understanding of the needs of the people of Gwynedd and the Equality Act 2010. Virtual training for front line staff and some other cohorts was trialled and presented during the year and good feedback was received. The training e-module was adapted with the intention of presenting it as part of the formal training programme (which will be core training for every member of staff) from April onwards.

Following a delay in 2020/21 the first part of the public consultation was completed in order to gather the information on any barriers that face the people of Gwynedd when dealing with the Council. A small number of barriers were highlighted in the answers, but we will look at these carefully and operate in order to improve services. Some points will need further research in order to ensure a suitable answer. This work (or the experiences over the past two years) have showed us that this is continuous work but we will start by arranging the second part of the work, which is consulting with specific groups. We are also intending to use suitable information that will come from other consultations.

The Council requires all staff to complete an equality data questionnaire so that we can gain a better understanding of the equality characteristics of our staff and improve the support they're given and promote diversity within the workforce. This information is voluntary and as a result, the numbers who complete this do not tend to be high. We have therefore been running campaigns to encourage staff to complete the equality data questionnaire and it appears that there has been a small but significant increase in numbers as a result of that work. This promotion work will continue.

We have collaborated with other authorities across the North to create a new equality impact assessment form for the Council. The assessment will expand on existing equality characteristics and duties including additional questions on the Socio-economic Duty, the Welsh Language, Human Rights and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The form is in an electronic format which is easy to use and the intention is to start using it to undertake assessments from May 2022. Training is also being created for members and officers which corresponds to the new impact assessment presentation.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Improvement Priority 4
Access to suitable homes

The Housing field has a vital role in helping the Council fulfil its ambition. We know that having a suitable, high quality home leads to better health, more resilient communities and a population that can contribute fully to society. It is important that we develop varied, innovative and green housing proposals - houses that people can live in for their whole lives - and also offer early support to those in need.

As a Local Authority, we will intervene to encourage a range of support and accommodation options to respond to the needs of the population today, and for future generations. Alongside this, we must ensure that the steps taken respect the culture of the county's communities. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- A shortage of suitable homes for the people of Gwynedd: Secure approval for the Housing Plan and begin action
- Easy and clear access to enquiry services and advice on housing issues: Establish 'one front door' and help-desk for the public to help them with housing problems
- Letting social housing to local people: Create a new allocation policy for the county which will give greater priority to local people
- The transfer of holiday units from Council Tax to Business Rates

Project 4a	A shortage of suitable homes for the people of Gwynedd: Secure approval for the Housing Plan and begin action

What did we promise to do?

In order to reach the ambition in our Housing Strategy of "Ensuring that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable home of a high standard, which is affordable and improves their quality of life", we have adopted a Housing Action Plan which contains over 30 specific schemes and an investment of £77 million.

These schemes will aim to fulfil the following objectives:

- No one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Social housing available to all who need one
- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd Housing are environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd

During 2021/22, we will start to implement these plans in order to increase the opportunities for local people to have suitable homes within their communities.

The demand on our homelessness service has increased during the past months as a result of the pandemic and we will aim to prioritise a number of the schemes which would increase the supply of housing available to the homelessness service.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The Housing Action Plan has been operational since April 2021.

Since then, some of the Homelessness projects have been completed, including:

- develop 6 additional supported housing accommodation units for homeless women in Porthmadog
- 4 pods for homeless people in Caernarfon.

Work has also commenced on creating additional supported housing accommodation units in Bangor, Pwllheli and Dolgellau, to create a total of 26 units. In addition, we have invested in renovating our hostels and increasing the capacity of our homelessness teams, that will enable us to provide even more support to our homeless individuals.

In February 2022, the **'Tŷ Gwynedd'** concept was launched. This is our vision for the type of houses that will be built as part of our plan to develop our own houses in order to increase the opportunities for Gwynedd residents to compete in the housing market. Each 'Tŷ Gwynedd' will be energy efficient, flexible, environmentally friendly and built sustainably. A public consultation has been held on our plans for the first development on the site of the former Ysgol Babanod Coed Mawr, Bangor.

Officers visited a wide range of houses and lands over the year and our first house was bought in March 2022, and will be let to local people over the coming months.

In February, a public consultation was launched to establish the housing need in Gwynedd, which attracted almost 800 responses.
Well-being Objectives: • Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives. • Live in quality homes within their communities. • Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible. • Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 4b	Easy and clear access to enquiry services and advice on housing issues: Establish 'one front door' and help-desk for the public to help them with housing problems

What did we promise to do?

Currently, there are many points of contact within the Department for the public to be able to access various services within Housing and Property. Our Housing Action Plan includes a project for establishing a single point of contact by creating a Housing Help Desk.

During 2021/22 we will research different models of providing a help desk and commence the work of establishing some sort of Housing Help Desk that can advise the public on how best to resolve their housing needs.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

During 2021/22, a Leader for the One Stop Shop was appointed, who has started the research work that is required to establish it. We engaged with our internal and external stakeholders in order to understand the needs and to assess the current demand. In parallel with this research, we have also started examining the new structure for the One Stop Shop.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 4c	Letting social housing to local people: Create a new allocation policy for the county which will give greater priority to local people

What did we promise to do?

We have introduced a new Housing Allocation Policy which has been in operation since the summer of 2020. This policy prioritises local people, and replaces the old points system for allocating housing.

The new system means that applications for social housing are put into one of four 'bands' depending on their housing needs and their connection with Gwynedd.

During 2021/22, we will need to ensure that there are effective arrangements for implementing the new allocations policy, and establish a procedure for monitoring that this policy is being implemented throughout the county to ensure the best opportunities for the people of Gwynedd.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

During 2021/22, we have ensured that there are effective arrangements for implementing the new allocation policy. In doing this, we have succeeded to ensure that an average of 97% of social housing have been let to applicants who have a connection to Gwynedd.

We have also initiated the process of reviewing the implementation of the Allocation Policy, and this will continue into 2022/23.

As a result of putting these effective arrangements in place in order to implement the Policy as part of our day-to-day work, we will now no longer report on the Allocation Policy as an Improvement Priority for the Department.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 4ch The transfer of holiday units from Council Tax to Business Rates

What did we promise to do?

For several years now, the Council has been putting pressure upon the Welsh Government to change Section 66 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 in order to control the transfer of domestic housing to self-contained holiday accommodation which would be subject to business rates. The majority currently avoid paying any local tax because they receive small business rates relief. We intend to continue to press for reform in this area over the next few years, using evidence that we constantly gather, so that Welsh Government Ministers understand the scale of the problem in Gwynedd.

The response thus far has been disappointing, with the Government focusing more on the alleged detrimental impact on tourism rather than the real detrimental impact on Gwynedd residents. We will also continue the work of pressing the Welsh Government to amend the Town and Country Planning Order to include a specific use class for residential housing used as holiday accommodation, together with the introduction of a mandatory licensing regime to enable the business to be operated. As a result, any property without appropriate permission for use as short-term holiday accommodation should not be eligible to transfer from a Council Tax band to the non-domestic rates list.

The Council is investing the income generated from the Council Tax premium in our Housing Action Plan in an attempt to alleviate the detrimental impact that second homes are having on the availability of housing for local people. As property transfers to become holiday units it is possible that less property will be subject to the premium.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The pressure exerted on the Government has contributed to a significant change in its stance on this matter. In March 2022 the Government announced:

- An intention to change legislation in order to allow the Premium to increase to a maximum of 300% from 1 April 2023.
- An intention to change legislation so that homes must be actually let for up to 182 days (i.e. half the year) rather than 70 days, and must be available to let for 252 days rather than 140 days, prior to be considered as a non-domestic property.
- The Minister is also considering adapting the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme in relation to self-catering units. Similar consultations in the field of Planning have also been undertaken during the year, and we await the Government's response to this exercise.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Improvement Priority 5
Living lives through the medium of Welsh.

One of the unique features Gwynedd has as a county is its Welshness. Gwynedd Council itself is dedicated to working through the medium of Welsh, but that in itself is not sufficient if we are to keep the unique nature of the county alive. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's services
- The Welsh Language in Public Services
- Native Welsh Place Names
- Promoting the Use of Welsh by Children and Young People

Project 5a	Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's services

What did we promise to do?

Gwynedd Council has been prominent in terms of ensuring that services for residents are available through the medium of Welsh as we operate through the medium of Welsh internally. It is continual work to Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's Services, and we are aware that there is a need to continue to maintain our staff's language skills.

In future, we will focus on working with the rest of the Council services - especially front-line services - to complete the assessment and develop the skills of new staff.

We will also develop an apprenticeship plan to attract and develop staff with the appropriate linguistic ability and will continue to develop the learning provision that is already in place (with flexibility to adapt to the needs of specific teams).

What progress was made in 2021/22?

A total of 2,825 staff members have been assessed against their post's language designations with 91.5% (2,584) achieving or exceeding the requirements. This means that 241 (8.5%) staff members have been identified who do not meet the designations.

Over the last year there has been collaboration with the Highways and Municipal department in order to gather assessments from more front-line staff. 114 more self-assessments were received (an increase from 28% to 47% during the last year). It was also seen that over 50% of the Adults, Health and Well-being department staff had completed the language self-assessment. Gwynedd Consultancy was the first department to have reached 100% of staff completing the language self-assessment questionnaire. There was also good collaboration with the Housing and Property department and the number of staff that have received an assessment in that department has risen from 72.35% (December 21) to 96.55% (at the end of March 22).

Entry level lessons were arranged for community care staff and Intermediate level lessons are continuing, with staff aiming to complete the level and sit the exam. 15 staff members attended "Using Welsh at Work" courses and 11 members of staff are attending weekly lessons with the "North West Welsh Language Learning centre".

Language awareness sessions were held for the Test, Trace and Protect Service Staff (with the Language Adviser), and an overview was provided on the opportunities to learn and develop Welsh skills. In addition, the Dafydd Orwig Memorial Award was re-established and an increase was seen in interest and contributions: 6 nominations for the Learning and Using the Welsh Language Award, 2 nominations for the Promoting the Welsh Language Award.

The Language Designations Forum has been established by now and meets every quarter, with representatives from every Department who are responsible in the departments for sharing information and good practice as well as identifying any future obstacles and risks. The Forum meetings will be a good way of ensuring a language assessment for every member of staff across the Council.

Well-being Objectives:

- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 5b	The Welsh Language in Public Services

What did we promise to do?

At present, there is inconsistency in the provision of bilingual services by public bodies in Gwynedd, which means that it is not always possible for residents to use the Welsh language naturally when communicating with public bodies.

Through the Welsh Language Sub-Group within the Public Services Board, we will draw up a joint plan with our partners on the Board to try to move to a situation where using the Welsh language naturally, straight away, is not only possible but also encouraged.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The purpose of the reception areas project undertaken by the Welsh Language Sub-group (Public Services Board) was to encourage the people of Gwynedd to speak Welsh when they come into reception areas (at the Council and other partners). A company was commissioned to create an assessment of the public's language choice when using services in 12 traditional receptions in Gwynedd and Anglesey and to research possible interventions in order to encourage more people to use our services through the medium of Welsh.

The next steps will be:

- To visit 12 receptions in order to conduct field work and collect data and analyse it during April 2022
- Plan and trial interventions during May and June 2022
- Draw up recommendations, and a resource pack with development guidelines based on the findings during July and August 2022

Well-being Objectives:

- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 5c	Native Welsh Place Names

What did we promise to do?

We are concerned that native Welsh place names are disappearing from the landscape of Gwynedd as a result of a lack of use of Welsh names and an increase in renaming places in English.

We will draw up a work programme and prioritise the fields to be addressed and in what order. We will also consider what can be done as a work programme with regards to Council buildings, street names and place names.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

An officer was been appointed to work on the project in September 2021. A detailed work programme was designed based on the report presented to the Language Committee in 2018, and a cross-departmental Project Board was established to keep an overview on the progress of the work programme.

A number of positive steps have been taken to strengthen our efforts to protect the names of houses and encourage the use of Welsh names and the Project Officer has been offering practical support to officers on applications to change property names.

A register of place/village names in Gwynedd has been created for Gwynedd council officers. A possible risk was identified that different forms of place names are being used publicly as some other agencies were using the Welsh Language Commissioner's list of standardised place-names, and discussions are ongoing to try and change the Commissioner's list to correspond with the names used by the Council.

The Project Officer has been attending the National Park's Scrutiny Panel in order to be aware of their plans in terms of the names of geographic features and we hope to collaborate on projects in the second half of the year.

A number of boosting and promoting activities were also held side by side with the internal work in order to gain the public's interest and enthusiasm towards the subject. This includes 4 radio discussions, 3 articles in the press, 12 items on the council's Intranet page 'Yr Enw a'r Hanes', 4 on-line sessions discussing aspects of place-names and contributions towards the work of the Eryri ambassadors project and the Carneddau project. A Local Names Map will be launched soon, following a pilot activity in Ysgol Sarn Bach, which will be a digital resource to enable the public to note local and oral names on features within their local area.

The next steps would be to gain guidance regarding the Council's name and the principle of adopting Welsh versions of place and street names. The work of maintaining the contact with the Welsh Government officer who is leading on their commitment to protect place-names also needs to continue and to press upon the Government to consider legislative changes.

Well-being Objectives:

- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Project 5ch	Promoting the Use of Welsh by Children and Young People

What did we promise to do?

The skills and confidence of learners (more specifically in non-Welsh-speaking homes) in Welsh have deteriorated as a result of lockdown and Covid-19.

In 2021/22, we will establish a baseline of the current situation of the Welsh language as a result of the impact of lockdown and Covid-19 and will draw up a Strategy and Action Plan in response to the situation.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Following an extended period of home learning, and the national concern expressed about the adverse impact of Covid-19 on the Welsh language standards, we have gathered data via various questionnaires in order to enable us to establish a baseline of the current situation of the Welsh language in Gwynedd schools.

On 8 March 2022, Gwynedd Council's Cabinet approved the Gwynedd Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The WESP is a comprehensive document that incorporates and responds to the concerns highlighted in relation to the Welsh language as a result of the questionnaires shared with all schools. The document clearly outlines Gwynedd's strategy to raise the skills and confidence of pupils in the county, and detailed action plans are in place behind this strategic document in order to achieve the desired targets and outcomes set out in it. A number of very successful and effective cluster schemes have already been undertaken in each catchment area of the county under the guidance of the Language Charter Coordinator. The Secondary Sector Language Strategy Coordinator and the Cluster Language Coordinators during 2021/22 have ensured a much greater focus on oracy skills by offering increased opportunities for pupils to practise their Welsh and take pride in their Welshness.

Well-being Objectives:

- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.

Improvement Priority 6 Helping people who need support to live their lives as they wish.

As a Council, we provide direct care to children and their families and to adults who need specialist support, but our vision is that everyone of all ages receives the support they need in the most suitable and convenient way for them.

As the needs of each individual and family are bound to be different, in order for them to continue to live their lives as they wish we need to adapt our services to be more closely tailored to the real needs of those who need our support. To succeed, we will need to continue to work with other providers, such as the Health Board, always remembering to put the needs of the individual at the centre. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- A Suitable and Sustainable Care Provision for the Future
- Re-designing our Care Services
- The Workforce and Recruitment within the Care Field
- Keeping Families Together Strategy
- Ensure a specialist appropriate local provision for children with the most complex needs
- Ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive

What did we promise to do?

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted a number of factors that can affect our ability to continue to provide suitable care services for the people of Gwynedd. In order to ensure that we are able to continue, in 2021/22, we will:

- seek to understand the "actual cost of care" to consider possible options for our care commissioning arrangements in the future
- ensure that we understand the need for nursing beds provision in the county, and proceed with the Penrhos Site project in order to address the shortages in Pen Llŷn
- work towards further increasing the number of dementia beds in the county
- consider whether our support services, e.g. day care and respite continue to be suitable to address the needs of the people of Gwynedd, or whether we need to do something differently
- consider how we can improve the suitability of our care provider buildings whilst attempting to satisfy additional infection control measures.

We are also committed to improve the quality of our care provision across the county. During 2021/22, we will:

- open a bespoke dementia unit that has been completed at Llan Ffestiniog, but has been unable to open due to the Covid-19 crisis
- complete the work of building an additional dementia unit at our home in Barmouth
- complete modifications to our home in Dolgellau in order to be able to offer more bespoke care for individuals with severe physical needs
- collaborate with the Adra housing association on the development of Extra Care Housing in Pwllheli and seek to identify opportunities for similar developments in other parts of the county, with priority being given to the Dolgellau and Meirionnydd area more broadly
- strengthen our quality assurance services to ensure sufficient support to care providers to help to maintain quality services for the residents of Gwynedd

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The work of trying to understand the 'actual cost of care' is progressing and this will continue during 2022/23. While we have agreed on residential and nursing fees for 2022/23 in line with the region, we will continue to look at the situation over the next months to look at the possibility of paying specific residential and nursing fees for Gwynedd that reflect the actual cost of care. Jointly with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board work has also commenced on an Open Book Accounting process, namely a method whereby a contractor gives a transparent picture of their costs to justify their fees. This process will be followed by some specific providers that raise fees above their standard fees.

During 2021/22 work has been undertaken on a number of the Council's homes to make them more suitable in the future, including Cefn Rodyn in Dolgellau, Tan y Marian in Pwllheli and Hafod Mawddach in Barmouth. This work will enable us to offer more bespoke care to persons with intensive physical needs and to persons with dementia, for example.

We hope to get resources from the new Welsh Government fund 'Regional Integration Fund' to coordinate and proceed with all the suitable care provision work including re-modelling residential care homes to include dementia beds, day care provision etc., during 2022/23. This work-stream will also include continuing to proceed with the work of developing the Penrhos site in Pen Llŷn. During 2021/22 the Department jointly with the Health Board has commissioned specialist legal guidance by an external company to look into the possibility of developing an internal nursing provision in Penrhos to get to grips with the lack of specialist beds currently in Gwynedd.

Unfortunately, due to staffing issues, we have not been able to open the bespoke Dementia Unit that has been completed in Llan Ffestiniog. It is hoped that recruitment work during 2022/23 will get to grips with this problem early in the year.

While the work of developing Extra Care Housing in Pwllheli is going ahead as expected, there is a slippage to report in terms of trying to seek opportunities for similar developments in other parts of the county. In our 2021/22 Plan we prioritised the Dolgellau and Meirionnydd area, however, currently we have not been able to find a suitable location.

The quality assurance team will support providers in sorting out elements that have been neglected due to the pressures of the pandemic. It is unlikely that we will reach every provision due to lack of capacity.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.

What did we promise to do?

The county's care needs are changing, and we have been collaborating with the Health Board to transform our community services. We need to facilitate the ability of our staff and Health Board staff to collaborate as one team within specific areas. This will lead to ensuring that individuals who require health and care support in the community will have one point of contact, in order to ensure the best outcomes and a seamless service. We are also working to change our way of providing domiciliary care across the county in order to facilitate our ability to ensure that the care is tailored based on what matters to the individual. During 2021/22, we will:

- empower the integrated teams (teams that include care staff as well as health staff), to be able to achieve what matters to the adults of Gwynedd. This will include looking at appropriate training and removing any technological barriers
- award new home care contracts in each area, with the aim of implementing the new model early in 2022/23
- strengthen our Occupational Therapy service, including developing a specialist manual handling service to enable individuals to live as independently as possible
- add to the network of community hubs that support and create opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities by developing plans for Canolfan Dolfeurig in Dolgellau
- re-open our community mental health hub in Pwllheli, after it had to close as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, and look at options to develop further hubs across the county
- look at options to develop an emotional and practical support provision for the younger cohort in the Arfon area.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The work of equipping the integrated teams has continued during 2021/22. The system of sharing information across agencies has received attention, as well as to establish a procedure where any health or care enquiry reaches one point within the areas, to simplify matters for Gwynedd residents. The work of developing the integrated teams will continue during 2022/23.

In 2021/22, we have been able to appoint a specialist manual handling team to strengthen the Occupational Therapy Service. By now we have appointed four permanent positions and one temporary position. We have also appointed two Occupational Therapy trainees which will mean we can develop the required future workforce.

The work of re-designing the Home Care Service by providing new contracts in each area, has continued during 2021/22 and there has been close cooperation to prepare providers and Gwynedd residents for this change. The tender package was shared in April 2022, and the contracts will be awarded in summer 2022 and the new model will be implemented following this.

Although there has been some delay with developing the plans for Canolfan Dolfeurig in Dolgellau due to planning difficulties regarding flooding risk, the work is proceeding and soon

in 2022/23 an amended time-schedule will be in place, and we can go out to consultation and update Gwynedd residents.

We have also managed to re-open the Mental Health Hub in Pwllheli. For the younger cohort, we have recently set up well-being hubs for people up to the age of 25 in Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog. The service will be provided by Gisda and will give emotional and practical support to individuals. During 2022/23 a Community Resilience project will be launched to develop the hubs across the County, and to bring all the available support together in the local areas.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.

What did we promise to do?

Recruiting to the care field is challenging for various reasons. We have an effective and committed workforce, and this has been especially evident during the Covid-19 crisis. However, we must ensure that we have sufficient workers with the necessary skills to cope with the increasing need that is likely to arise in the future.

During 2021/22, we will:

- review the arrangements of the recent #GalwGofal recruitment campaign in order to consider how we will approach recruitment in the future
- consider our registration and training arrangements as well as staff development arrangements, in order to increase flexibility and resilience in the field
- develop a Grow our Own scheme to address the lack of expertise in some fields, such as Occupational Therapy.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

During 2021/22 recruitment to the sector has remained challenging throughout the country, however, progress was made against the improvement priority during this difficult period.

A Marketing and Development of Care Careers Officer was appointed to focus on the coordination of recruitment elements in Gwynedd as well as other work-streams. Co-operation with WeCare Wales has continued, and purposeful events have taken place in areas where recruitment is a specific issue. One example is an event in Maesgeirchen where 6 staff members were appointed to Plas Hedd care home. We intend to learn from this and build upon the experience across the County during 2022/23.

We are developing a relationship with Coleg Llandrillo Menai to provide opportunities for students, but also to attract persons into the field in the future.

The registration process for care staff has continued during 2021/22 and this will continue throughout 2022/23, to raise the status of jobs within the sector and develop staff to ensure future resilience in the field.

Fostering talent is important for the Department in areas where there is likely to be a future shortage, and having Social Work and Occupational Therapy trainees is an important way of ensuring sufficient future capacity. The financial bid to establish a Care Career Pathway Plan (i.e. fund new trainees and upskilling existing service staff) was unsuccessful and therefore it was not possible to proceed with this work-stream as effectively as we would have hoped. Two professional leading and management trainees have commenced on the Cynllun Yfory scheme during 2021/22, to foster talent to lead the Department in the future.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in quality homes within their communities
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

What did we promise to do?

Some families need specific support at times to help them bring up their children so that those children are able to stay with their family, to thrive, to be healthy and to be safe. No children are brought into care unnecessarily in Gwynedd and we wish to ensure that this does not happen. Sometimes, it is inevitable that a child is brought to our care as it is dangerous for them to remain at home. Our arrangements and decisions when that happens are based on the risk and needs of the family. When a child comes into care, every effort needs to be made so that the child receives appropriate, suitable and local care; and that the child and his/her family are supported so that the child can return to his/her family.

The 'Effective Child Protection' Transformation Programme will be operational in Gwynedd, and will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. We will also share this model with other North Wales Authorities.

We will complete the Ffordd Gwynedd work, working across the department's services and jointly with the Education Department to understand what matters to the families of Gwynedd and we will agree on principles, and ways of improving what we do and how we work in order to provide the required support.

We will introduce and adopt a "Keeping Families Together" strategy, which shows our aim, our arrangements and our approach towards avoiding children from coming into care unnecessarily; however, if care is required, then ensure that the child is cared for in a suitable, appropriate and local placement; and that every effort and support is provided in order to return children to their families.

We will receive feedback from Welsh Government on our "Keeping Families Together" strategy.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

During the year, the 'Effective Child Protection' Programme has continued to support our workers to reflect on their practice and their way of working via a programme of training, developing skills and through the support of our practice mentor. The changes to our practice means that we can better support families to safeguard children by focusing on collaboration and avoiding situations of conflict with families.

We have recommenced our Children's Department and Education Department Ffordd Gwynedd intervention, and have held a high number of reviews with individuals who have received a service, schools and other agencies. We have agreed on action principles and have identified several ways to improve our arrangements. In 2022, we will act on the amendments and the principles, as well as equipping staff in both Departments to be efficient when providing a service.

We have adopted a 'Strategy for Keeping Families Together' and monitor the impact and results of implementing that strategy with our families. Some impact of this strategy can already be seen, such as the reduction that has been during the year on the number of

children that come into care. In reviewing the strategy regularly we have identified that we face staffing challenges and this is a threat to our ability to realise this strategy. We have commissioned an external consultant to identify the factors that cause a risk to the plan's success. The work will look at the recruitment issues of professional workers amongst other workforce matters to ensure that we have the capacity, the skills and qualified workers to assess and identify risks to implement the strategy in its entirety for the benefit of children and families in Gwynedd.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.

Project 6d	Ensure a specialist appropriate local provision for children with the most complex needs

What did we promise to do?

Some children and young people who come into our care have complex and severe needs. Some of these children have to receive care and support in an expensive placement outside Gwynedd or Wales, far from their family and community. We wish to ensure that we have a variety and sufficient number of suitable placements available locally, and that we have specialist workers and support locally to address these children's needs.

During 2021/22, we will:

- Implement a specialist training programme for staff so that they are able to appropriately support children with complex needs and their families
- Develop and agree upon a business case, across local partners, for operating and practising as one multi-disciplinary team so that the support for families and children is more effective and efficient
- Develop a plan for identifying local residential provision for children with complex needs
- Increase the number of foster carers by recruiting and providing resources to assess carers in order to secure a sufficient number of placements.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

We have been able to train staff so that they can offer suitable support to children with complex needs via a training programme to workers from the world of education, social services and health. This specialist training programme has included PACT (Autism), Nurture (Parenting), Family Links, that equip our workforce to provide interventions and specialist support.

Although the pandemic had an impact on our ability to move forward as quickly as we would have wished with the Regional Transformation Programme, we have however cooperated with partners to establish a Multi-agency Team. We will evaluate this model during 2022, and will move forward to integrate the model into local arrangements that are linked with our Strategy for Keeping Families Together.

We have not managed to move forward with our work to complete the feasibility studies and options for local residential provision for children with complex needs. We intend to resume this work during 2022.

We have continued with the work of increasing and expanding the number and types of foster placements in the county by cooperating in the 'Foster Wales' campaign. 'Foster Wales' was launched in September, this includes a new web page for the foster Service as well as a national recruitment campaign.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.

Project 6dd	Ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive

What did we promise to do?

Children and young people with autism and high skill abilities; and children with autism and no learning disability, find it difficult to access the specialist support that they require. The experiences of these children and their families show that there is room to improve our current assessment arrangements; that there are gaps in the provision and that they require help during the transitional period to other services such as adults and health.

During 2021/22, we will:

- Launch an Autism Plan for the county, jointly with the Health Board, third sector partners and across the Council's services
- Appoint a role in the Council for working in the field, giving specific attention to the transitional period from childhood to adulthood in the field
- Review the arrangements for accessing the integrated disabled children's service (DERWEN)
- Improve arrangements for collaborating, sharing information and providing support in the field with our health partners and with specialist providers in the third sector.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Jointly with our partners we have adopted an Autism Plan for Gwynedd including establishing a Partnership Board to take an overview of the plan together with securing Resources to appoint an Autism Coordinator to lead on the plan. In 2022 we will move forward to raise awareness and train workers in the field of autism, together with engaging with the third sector to try and develop a range of preventative provisions.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.

Improvement Priority 7
Placing the people of Gwynedd at the heart of everything we do.

As previously noted, the Council already provides a wide range of activities which seek to ensure that we achieve our vision. However, there is always room for improvement. We recognise that there are examples where we do not always look at things through our residents' eyes, and we need to ensure that this happens everywhere within the Council.

Of course, this does not mean doing everything for everyone, as our resources do not permit us to do that. It means that we prioritise those things which are of most importance to our communities, and ensure that the limited resources available contribute to doing what is most important to the people of Gwynedd (whilst accepting that prioritisation could mean not achieving everyone's aspirations).

This consideration will also have to take place at a time when the funding available for services is significantly reduced. In that respect, there will be a need to ensure that the funding available is used to deliver the most important things. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- Implement the Ffordd Gwynedd Work Programme Plan
- Ensuring that managers practice their Health and safety role effectively
- Planning the Workforce
- Realising Savings
- Strengthening communication and engagement
- Clean and Tidy Communities
- Public Protection Capacity

Project 7a	Implement the Ffordd Gwynedd Work Programme Plan

What did we promise to do?

As a Council, it is our responsibility to ensure, as we provide our services, that it is the needs of the people of Gwynedd which steer how we will offer those services. In doing so, we should avoid any unnecessary working arrangements. We are already challenging service teams to reflect on their current working arrangements, to challenge whether they are placing the people of Gwynedd centrally and whether there is room for improvement.

We will develop training to assist managers to understand the close link between the culture of Ffordd Gwynedd and the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and present that session to the Managers Network during the first half of 2021, whilst releasing the job description to team leaders and the rest of the Council staff that will confirm the behaviours expected of them.

We will establish methods of measuring the progress with the culture sought through a combination of regular self-assessment and challenging established procedures.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Raising awareness sessions were held regarding the close link between the culture of Ffordd Gwynedd and the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in order to ensure a better understanding amongst service managers, whilst the common clauses of the job descriptions for team leaders and the rest of the Council staff have been agreed and the work of adapting all the job descriptions is ongoing.

Every department undertook a self-assessment of their progress in the context of the culture of Ffordd Gwynedd during the last quarter of the year. We will now, with the collaboration of members of the Governance and Audit Committee, analyse the responses and use the conclusions as a basis for a new Three-Year Plan for further developing the establishment and the culture within the Council.

Well-being Objectives:

This project changes the way Council staff plan and provide services for the people of Gwynedd and is therefore essential to the delivery of all well-being objectives.

Project 7b	Ensuring that managers practice their Health and safety role effectively

What did we promise to do?

We need to ensure that our arrangements for protecting Health and Safety are robust and whilst we have mature arrangements within the Council, we are concerned that there are pockets where there is an opportunity to improve operational arrangements.

In order to respond to the situation, we will hold a discussion with heads / senior managers / managers in each Department in order to understand their needs and identify the most effective way of resolving the situation.

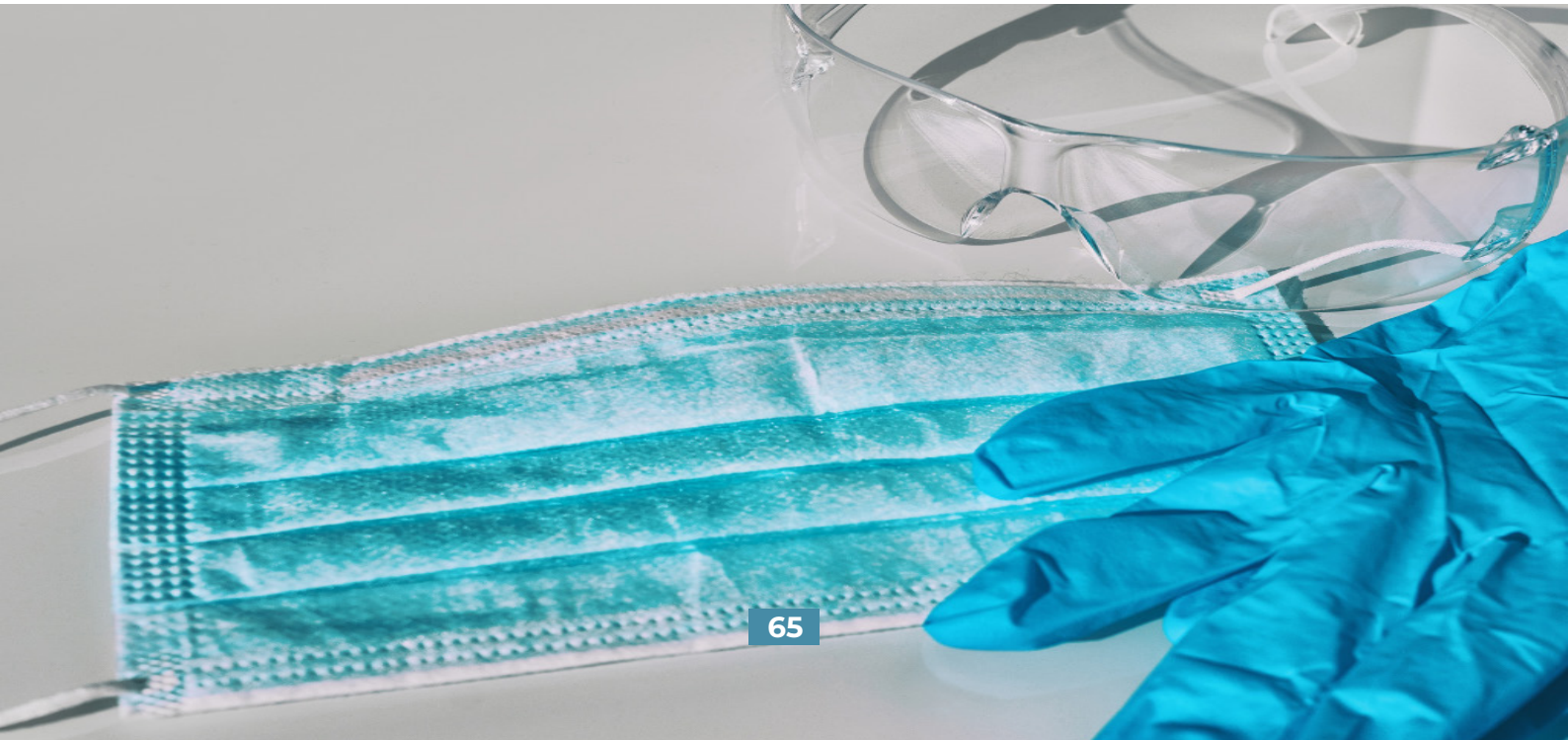
What progress was made in 2021/22?

The timetable of this project has slipped due to the significant additional weight on the Council's Services due to the pandemic, not only the central Health and Safety Service, but also all the Council's front-line Services which are core to the project.

Having said that, the situation, and all the work over the past two years has raised the profile and highlighted the importance in this field and in a way, you could argue that no project could ever hope to do. It has highlighted that keeping the people of Gwynedd and Gwynedd staff safe is core to all the Council's work. This creates a strong foundation to formalise the strong work relationships that have formed across the Council over the past two years to get a more structured and pro-active project plan in place for 2022/23. An outline of the proposed steps has already been presented and a successful bid has been presented for a Project officer to help drive the project over the next twelve months.

Well-being Objectives:

This project changes the way Council staff plan and provide services for the people of Gwynedd and is therefore essential to the delivery of all well-being objectives.



Project 7c	Planning the Workforce

What did we promise to do?

The People Plan prioritises improving arrangements for nurturing talent within the Council, improving our Workforce Planning arrangements, and ensuring that our learning and development arrangements focus on the necessary elements. To ensure that the Council is in a position to provide services that always place the residents of Gwynedd at the centre, we must ensure that we have the right staff in place with the correct skills. This means that we need to continuously train staff, evaluate their performance and foster and develop their talents. Staff training arrangements are an important way of promoting and dissipating the mindset of Ffordd Gwynedd across the Council, and of course, it is vitally important that the Council has officers with the skills to carry out their posts.

The work of identifying gaps and acting pro-actively, which has commenced with the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, will be disseminated to the rest of the Council during 2021. We will also extend the number of apprentices and professional trainees across an increasing number of services across the Council.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The Talent and Apprenticeships team was established as a result of the additional support the Cabinet approved in May 2021. The team has supported managers to develop and hold a series of virtual Recruitment Centres of a high standard during the year and have appointed 13 new apprentices and 7 new Professional Trainees to fields identified as priorities for workforce planning for the future.

We will be appointing 20 additional apprentices in the coming year as well as 7 more professional trainees, again in fields where possible gaps have highlighted themselves. We will also develop a relationship with organisations and local businesses to develop apprentice jobs jointly whilst developing "Identifying and Fostering Talent" plans for internal staff and offer a brand-new Work Experience Plan.

During the next year, we will establish a Workforce Planning Project Group, which will combine all the individual efforts of specific services across the Council, to address this field and the enormous challenge of ensuring expertise and service continuation over the coming years.

Well-being Objectives:

This project changes the way Council staff plan and provide services for the people of Gwynedd and is therefore essential to the delivery of all well-being objectives.

What did we promise to do?

The Council has good financial planning arrangements, which have already identified many efficiency savings in order to reduce service cuts for the residents of Gwynedd.

The work already achieved over a number of years suggests that we have harvested a vast proportion of the available efficiency savings, but we need to continue to monitor the approved plans of all Council departments to ensure that the bulk of the proposed savings are achieved.

After a long period of finding and delivering savings, over £30m in the period since 2015/16, the plans are now so much more difficult to achieve with efficiency projects entailing much more work than cutting services. All savings plans were reviewed to assess which ones are now unobtainable, and a revised programme of savings has been drawn up for 2021/22. Through the robust arrangements we have in place to monitor how departments are delivering savings, we will ensure that this revised programme is realised. We will also support departments with transformation costs, as they introduce new working arrangements.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

The Council's capacity to realise savings is under continuous review. Following the financial settlement for 2022/23 which was better than seen for a number of years, it has been possible to completely remove two schemes worth £489,750 from the programme, and move the delivery profile for schemes worth £1,290,250 to 2023/24 and subsequent years. As a result, the value of the remaining schemes to be deducted from the 2022/23 budget is £595,000, rather than approximately £2.4m that had been originally planned.

Well-being Objectives:

This project changes the way Council staff plan and provide services for the people of Gwynedd and is therefore essential to the delivery of all well-being objectives.

Project 7d	Strengthening communication and engagement

What did we promise to do?

The Highways and Municipal Department is very visible with aspects of the services reaching each resident throughout the County. Value can be added to the department's work by means of effective communication and engagement plans; for example, campaigns to prevent littering or dog fouling, or campaigns and guidelines to encourage re-use, re-purposing and reducing waste. It is also very important that residents are confident in the department's services and that their concerns and enquiries are dealt with effectively.

We will ensure that timely and meaningful response arrangements are in place and we will:

- review current arrangements for communicating and responding to enquiries
- highlight where there are shortcomings/improvement places
- establish a task group with representation from officers together with Galw Gwynedd
- identify measures for monitoring

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Following discussions with the Task Group, with representation of officers as well as Galw Gwynedd, concerns were raised regarding the arrangements to respond to customer enquiries.

Therefore, to ensure that residents are confident in the Department's services and that their concerns and enquiries are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner we are in the process of developing a Services Mapping Project. This project will place the department's assets publicly on the Council's website. The first assets to be placed on the interactive map will be our street lamps with the intention of expanding to a wide range of other assets/ services soon. We are also placing the street bins on an interactive map and it will be possible for residents to see the collection frequency and the status of the bins. We will conduct a 'pilot scheme' with the bins in Caernarfon within the next few months. We were in the process of updating the location of the bins and are looking to install 4 'smart' bins in the town centre.

Benefits to the Customer:-

- An easy way of identifying and choosing a specific problematic asset in a layer on a map.
- You will be able to click on the specific asset if you wish to report a problem
- See the maintenance schedule and the asset in question
- Able to see if the problem has already been reported - and the Council is aware of the matter
- Able to determine if there is a real need to continue to report the problem

We are also conducting a Ffordd Gwynedd review within the collection field where matters such as missing collections is an important matter and one that will receive attention as part of the review. We will map out the current processes within the Galw Gwynedd procedure to ensure that the processes reflect the work arrangements today. It is an essential matter for residents who contact the service that we receive feedback on the status of the enquiry and within a reasonable time. This will be the priority of the review.

Well-being Objectives:

- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

Project 7dd	Clean and Tidy Communities

What did we promise to do?

We will collaborate with the residents and communities of Gwynedd by engaging in order to develop an Action Plan to correspond with this priority by expanding and developing community partnerships to improve the quality and appearance of the county, e.g.

- Clean and tidy streets
- Roads and walking paths in a good condition
- Local work teams to complete the work
- Discussion about the principles and actions by engaging with the community and staff
- Draw up an action plan and identify aspirations and possible stakeholders on a community level.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

As part of the 'Ardal Ni' engagement programme, observations were gathered about what is important to the residents from all regeneration areas during September/October 2021. The majority of the comments to the department related to untidiness and a lack of investment to ensure clean and tidy communities.

We used these observations as the basis of our Cabinet report (31/11/21) where we managed to receive unanimous support to establish 'Clean and Tidy Communities Teams' (called 'Tîm Tacluso Ardal Ni'').

The launch of the first team in Arfon took place in March 2022, the attached video outlines the principles of the 'Tidying up Team'.

Four additional teams will be established in the next few months with the work based on local needs.

Well-being Objectives:

- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

Project 7e	Public Protection Capacity

What did we promise to do?

As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, the importance of our Public Protection Services has become increasingly apparent, in their role of protecting the health of our communities, as well as advising and supporting the county's businesses. There is also an expectation that we use our enforcement powers as a result of allegations of Covid-19 regulations breaches.

The experiences during the emergency period has highlighted the lack of resilience in the Public Protection Services as a result of years of cuts. It is believed that a short-term and long-term solution is required to provide a sustainable and effective service to support and protect the residents and businesses of Gwynedd.

It is intended to carry out a full review of the structures of the Public Protection Services during 2021/22 in order to fully assess the need and consider the staff capacity required in the long-term (whilst noting that it is difficult to anticipate when the current crisis will end), in order to support and protect the residents and businesses of Gwynedd.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

A review has been undertaken in 2021/22 and this has led to plans to introduce Team Leader posts within the current staff capacity, and the Department has been successful with a permanent bid for £16,860 to fund this.

In addition, the Department is attempting to plan for succession and resilience in the Public Protection Services and has been successful with a one-off bid of £261,720 to fund 3 Public Protection Trainee posts for a three-year period. The Department will move to recruit during 2022/23.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.

Improvement Priority 8 Respond to the Climate Change emergency.

At its meeting on 7 March 2019, the Council considered a motion relating to climate change and it was resolved to do our utmost to ensure that the county remains a vibrant, viable and sustainable home for our children and their children for generations to come. We do this by means of:

- Declaring a Climate Emergency;
- Committing to taking decisive action to reduce carbon emissions and strive for a zero-carbon future;
- Looking for innovative means to achieve zero carbon targets;
- Reporting back within 6 months on positive steps the Council has taken to reduce carbon emissions; and
- Call on Welsh Government and the Westminster Government to provide the requisite powers and resources to achieve the target of a carbon-free Gwynedd by 2030.

Only one project will contribute towards realising the ambition, which is:

- Climate Change Action Plan

Project 8a	Climate Change Action Plan

What did we promise to do?

As a result of the Council's decision to declare a climate change emergency, we have attempted to draw up a Climate Change Action Plan; however, unfortunately, the Covid-19 emergency interrupted that work.

It is intended to ensure that we have an initial document that highlights what the departments intend to achieve so that this becomes a basis to a workshop for members to be held virtually, early in 2021, so that this in turn leads to the adoption of the Action Plan before the end of the current financial year.

Once the Action Plan is adopted, it will be published and we will start implementing the plans contained within it.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Following discussions at previous meetings of the Climate Change Board, the membership of the Board was extended in January, with the Biodiversity Champion - Cllr Angela Russell - and a representative from the Communities Scrutiny Committee - Cllr Mike Stevens - joining the Board.

A draft version of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan was discussed by the Climate Change Board, and then the plan was submitted to a meeting of the Cabinet on 8 March. The plan was accepted and it consequently became operational. A further discussion was held on the plan at a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 10 March, and the committee supported it.

The Plan can be seen on the Council's website, and information about the plan has been shared via the usual publicity channels, such as our social media pages.

We must bear in mind that the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan includes the continuation of some projects that are already being implemented, but we are also preparing to plan new projects. The next steps for implementing the plan include - pricing the financial costs and value of carbon savings of some new projects; arranging an engagement campaign with partners and the community; sharing public information about the plan.

Well-being Objectives:

- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

Part 2
Departmental Work Performance Reports

Education Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

One of the Council's main priorities is to ensure that the children and young people of Gwynedd are all given the same opportunities and have the best possible education and experiences.

In a normal year, this report would be a medium to provide a brief analysis of the standards of Gwynedd schools in the context of the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 in the primary sector, and Key Stages 3 and 4 in the secondary sector. We would have reported on the new indicator, namely the Capped 9 points score calculated according to the total of each learner's best nine GCSEs (or recognised equivalent qualification). However, as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, there is no analysis available of standards across the Key Stages, including Key Stage 4, as the external GCSE and A Level examinations were not held as usual during the summer of 2021.

In addition, it is only since January 2022 that Estyn has resumed the inspection of our schools following the pandemic, however, no school in Gwynedd is now in any Estyn follow-up category. 2021/22 was a year of resuming face-to-face education with a clear emphasis on the welfare and happiness of the children and young people under the circumstances. However, the impact of the pandemic on the education of our children and young people was still felt, with many having to transfer to distance learning at times to ensure their education continued because of the need to self-isolate, or stay at home due to high levels of infection.

The Education Department recognises the significant impact that this pandemic has had on children and young people and provides support for them. As the learners returned to the schools, there was concern that some children and young people may fall behind in terms of their educational attainment, and that some would need additional support to close that gap, as well as the need for support with their welfare. In response to this concern, since September 2020, all schools in Gwynedd have implemented an 'Accelerated Learning Programme' with funding from the Welsh Government to respond to the impact of the lockdown period on the welfare and attainment of certain groups of learners aged 5-16. The Education Department in conjunction with GwE (the School Improvement Service) is supporting the schools to implement this programme. The Education Department is also giving specific attention to the impact of the pandemic on the welfare and attainment of children in the early years, together with its impact on welfare, attainment and the projections for young people post-16.

During 2021-22, the Education Department continued to support individual schools when cases of Covid-19 arose, providing appropriate guidance and advice, following the guidance of the test, trace and protect service, whilst also ensuring the continuation of education via a remote provision for bubbles of learners who would have had to stay home to self-isolate for a while. During the year of constant and continuous change, therefore, the Education Department attached great importance to communicating with stakeholders, seeking to ensure timely guidance, guidelines and decisions to enable schools to operate in the most appropriate way under the circumstances.

The Education Department worked in close partnership with the heads, GwE, Council departments and the Welsh Government in order to be able to provide the best guidance and support to the schools under difficult and very challenging circumstances.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

In order to facilitate distance learning since the beginning of the pandemic, the Education Department was very proactive and prominent in the field of ICT, providing 1,200 Chromebook devices and 175 MiFi devices for families who did not have access to technology and/or internet connection during the first lockdown. This made a great difference in improving access to education and educational experiences for children during this time, however, some challenges remained in terms of a shortage of devices for large families, meaning that some children had to share devices and miss out on live lessons if families were required to prioritise the lessons of one child at the expense of the other. The Education Department also led on drawing up policies and procedures to allow Gwynedd schools to provide distance learning through live learning technology. Gwynedd's progressive policy was eventually adopted by a number of other authorities, and the Department was pro-active in promoting and encouraging live learning sessions with our schools, and saw the clear advantages of that for the learners. Here is a cameo from the Estyn Thematic Report (January 2021) on the Department's work to support schools and PRUs:

On 9 November 2021, Gwynedd Council's Cabinet approved the Education Digital Strategy. In adopting the strategy, it was agreed to co-fund up to half the costs of refurbishing devices jointly with the schools, as well as agreeing for Gwynedd schools to receive technical support from the Authority's IT service from April 2022 onwards.

A little over £1.3m has been invested in the network over the past two years. Subsequently, a substantial number of devices have been distributed in accordance with the strategy. Enough iPads have been distributed to provide one to every four learners in the Foundation Phase, and enough Chromebooks have been distributed so that all learners in years 3 to 6 have one device each. Windows 10 devices are also being prepared for all pupils in years 7, 10 and 11. Every teacher in Gwynedd will receive a standard device through the strategy over the coming months, with the hope that this will further spark imagination, ingenuity and effectiveness in aspects of digital learning across the sectors.

The Welsh Language

During the lockdown period, Language Centre staff had to adapt and transform the way they provided support for latecomers to learn the Welsh language. Language Centre staff were in fact the first to pilot live learning sessions during the Summer Term 2020, in order to maintain the spoken language of latecomers who attended Language Centres during the 2019/20 academic year. Language Centre and school staff recognised that most of the latecomer learners only had access to the Welsh language and the opportunity to practise speaking and listening skills through these live learning sessions. To complement the live learning sessions, Language Centre staff also set up Google Classrooms for the

learners on Hwb to provide latecomers with further opportunities to practise and acquire the Welsh language.

The Summer Term 2021 saw the Language Centres reopen for the first time, welcoming learners to the Centres to receive an intensive immersion provision once again. Nevertheless, Language Centre staff continued to make extensive use of the technology developed in response to the pandemic, being able to run distance learning sessions for learners who had to self-isolate for periods, as well as being able to offer an extra boost with Welsh to learners in schools through distance learning sessions.

On 6 July 2021, Gwynedd Council's Cabinet approved a new vision for immersion education in Gwynedd. Through this vision, we will invest £1.1m of Welsh Government Welsh-medium education Capital Grant for the purpose of establishing two new Language Centres in Bangor and Tywyn, as well as improving the learning environment at Porthmadog Language Centre. These three sites will provide immersion education for years 5-9, with another three sites providing immersion education for years 2-4.

In order to respond to concerns identified as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic and the requirements of the WESP outcomes, effective use has been made of the Welsh Language Grant to target workforce language skills and informal use of Welsh among pupils. During 2021/22, 13 Welsh Cluster Schemes were led and completed under the guidance of the Language Charter Co-ordinator and Secondary Language Strategy Co-ordinator, which included all the county's primary and secondary schools. It was encouraging to see that all schools had taken advantage of the opportunities prepared and the teachers noted that the pupils had gained confidence in their Welsh oracy skills as a result of the successful cluster activities. The result of this work will be cascaded throughout the county and elements of it will be shown in a film as part of the announcement celebrations of the Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod in Porthmadog in June.

As part of the plans to respond to the Education Workforce Language Skills Self Assessment data, 12 teachers took advantage of the opportunity to receive Welsh lessons by collaborating with North West Wales Welsh Learning, part of the Bangor University School of Language, Culture and the Arts in during 2021/22. In addition, we successfully supported the teachers and assistant at Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes in Bangor to improve and refresh their Welsh language skills in collaboration with Canolfan Bedwyr, Bangor University.

The Language Charter Coordinator and Secondary Language Strategy Co-ordinator have been working closely with schools to identify needs and offer support to teachers, assistants and groups of learners by offering a series of training and discussion sessions. Focus groups were held with a cross section of learners in the secondary sector to gather the views and ideas of pupils that will be incorporated into the process of establishing Language Forums in every secondary school from September 2022 onwards.

Over 3,600 children in the county have completed the Web Language in September 2021 to note their use and attitude towards

Welsh in the formal and informal periods following Covid-19. We will revisit the questionnaire in the summer 2022 term to compare the results, measure the impact of our action plans, and identify areas for development to be prioritized in 2022/23.

Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (ALN&I)

Following the re-opening of schools, the ALN&I Service has returned to support provision for learners with ALN&I in the school, as well as securing support for children and young people and their families who have found it difficult to return to school and face-to-face education following the pandemic and the extended period of distance learning. The emphasis remains on supporting well-being, and the general resources developed during the pandemic continue to be available, for example:

- Resources for dealing with transformation, five ways to well-being on the website (www.adyach.cymru). The website was used extensively.
- Seasons for Growth Programme (for dealing with loss and grief) and Mindfulness
- ELSA assistants (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) who supported vulnerable pupils during this period
- Well-being sessions for Headteachers
- And as a new addition, resources to respond to the period of uncertainty for years 11-13.

The welfare service supports schools to promote attendance. Difficulties with attendance can arise for a range of reasons, e.g. behavioural, emotional and/or social development difficulties. During the period, elements of the role of the Welfare Officers have changed unavoidably with the usual arrangements for prosecuting parents on hold. Throughout the Covid-19 period, they have supported the schools by helping learners and their families if they had difficulties attending school for a number of reasons as a result of Covid-19. These difficulties have included anxiety about the virus and the new arrangements, lack of incentive because of the situation, as well as historical difficulties continuing and intensifying.

Catering and Cleaning

Catering and cleaning staff responded positively to the various demands on them during the last two years. At the beginning of lockdown, the catering service provided packed lunches for learners who were eligible for free school meals, and from 20 April until September 2020, direct payments were arranged for learners who were eligible for free school meals, with 2,249 children receiving a free school meals direct payment on 14 August 2020. These direct payments continued throughout the school holiday period until Easter 2021. After schools were re-opened, direct payments were arranged for eligible children who were a part of a bubble in a school and who were required to self-isolate, with the remaining eligible children receiving free lunches at school. In addition, 230 catering staff assisted with cleaning schools during the day from 29 June 2020 until 17 July 2020. Since September 2022, staff in the school catering and cleaning service have returned to their normal pre-pandemic working arrangements, except for when outbreaks of the virus in a school resulted in the need for deep cleaning. Despite significant staffing challenges within the service, the catering service has managed to provide the usual school meals every day to all Gwynedd schools throughout the last two years.

Following the Welsh Government's announcement that there will be free school meals for all primary age children in Wales, starting with Foundation Phase children, initial scoping work has been undertaken by the service to ensure that all Gwynedd primary schools will be in a position to provide free school meals to all primary children when the expectation to provide comes into effect next year. As well as ensuring that the infrastructure in the schools is in place to cope with increased take-up of school lunches, we are planning for potentially higher revenue costs for the service due to:

- the need to recruit additional staff. (Recruitment is challenging at the moment.)
- a possible increase in existing staff hours
- the possibility of adding the role of assistant cooks to the larger schools
- higher food costs - food prices have risen recently
- the need to increase the staffing capacity of the in-house Catering Team. (There will be a demand for more staff out in the field.)
- implementation of our food supply agreements - will existing suppliers be able to cope with the increased demand for food? We have already arranged for school deliveries to take place more often.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do
- Live in a natural Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition by providing the timely support necessary to allow the people of Gwynedd to live their lives as they wish.

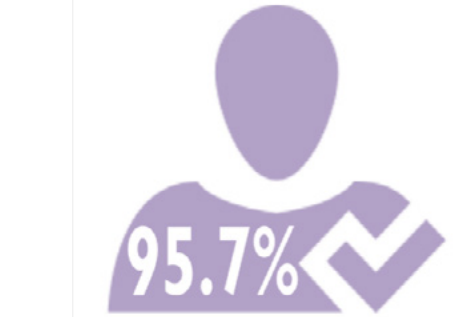
Covid-19

The Covid-19 crisis and it's long term effects has continued to pose significant challenges to this Department during 2021/22. During the year services have re-opened and offered more face-to-face opportunities. However, it was necessary to delay re-opening some services as difficult circumstances remained.

Some of our day centres were specifically closed for a period of time, and some centres remain closed, however, our staff have continued to do their best to provide support in the community wherever possible. The Department has managed to continue to provide most of its services (via alternative means in some situations) and has made a great effort to enable and support our independent care providers to do the same.

By now the restrictions to visit residential and nursing care homes have been relaxed. However, our residential care homes still go through difficult times in terms of Covid-19 levels and we continue to work with the Health and Safety Service to ensure that we keep residents and staff safe, while trying to return to as much normality as possible.

The Department has continued to provide PPE to staff and carers across the sector. Front-line staff and residents who receive support have continued with the regular testing process. Alongside having to cope with the testing requirements, we should acknowledge the heroic effort seen across the field to vaccinate key staff and our vulnerable residents with the booster.



Percentage of Council Care Home residents that have received their Covid-19 vaccinations including the 'booster' dose

The flexibility of the Department's staff to undertake new responsibilities and duties has continued during 2021/22 and has been key to the success of our response to the crisis.

A further challenge for us now of course is to weigh up our options as we consider the shape of our future services. This work has commenced by contributing to the Population Needs Assessment for North Wales that was completed during 2021/22.

One positive element of the Covid-19 crisis is the fact that it highlighted the key importance of the role of care staff. It is pleasing to see this recognised through bonus payments to the sector, as well as financial support from the Welsh Government to be able to pay the Real Living Wage to care sector staff. It will be vital that we ensure that this recognition of the status of jobs within the sector continues in future.

Older People, Physical and Sensory Disabilities

The work on the Community Health and Care Transformation Programme has continued during 2021/22. The emphasis was on

integrating the essential culture within our five Local Teams to ensure that they keep what matters to the individual at the heart of their care. These teams, which include health and care staff, and staff from the third sector and the independent sector, have regular contact on a patch-level; they share information and resources, work together to understand the situation locally and address any barriers.

During 2021/22, the above programme has included projects that facilitate hospital discharges, and a project for sharing information across agencies. During the next period, a project will be conducted to pilot the 'Information, Advice and Support' service across Health and Community Care, so that every health or care enquiry reaches a central place within each area - simplifying arrangements for Gwynedd residents.

During 2021/22, a Specialist Manual Handling Service was established to support the local Community Resources Team. Occupational therapists and a registered nurse are part of the service and they have commenced providing manual handling expertise in the local areas, reducing the time adults wait for this specialist input.

The Home Care Service in Gwynedd is moving towards a model based on local areas, and commissioning based on outcomes for individuals and social value. The work on this project has been developed during 2021/22, and the tendering process to move to the patch system will open in April 2022. The new contracts will be awarded in summer 2022.

Our main indicator as a service now is whether we have achieved what is important to the individual whom we are supporting. During 2020/21 only 3% of individuals (15 individuals) reported that we did not address what was important to thewhere we were unsuccessful (down from 24 individuals in 2020/21).

Although there has been an improvement since 2020/21, one of the reasons for this was that many people had lost confidence to participate in their local communities. To address this, the community resilience project will commence during 2022/23 to support individuals to participate in opportunities in their local communities.

Another reason that has contributed to the failure to achieve what matters to individuals are barriers in the domiciliary and residential care provision, and that day and respite care support has temporarily ended due to Covid-19 risks. As well as the domiciliary care project, we are planning to re-model the day and respite care services. Day care services are gradually re-commencing, and we are developing new day support units at Plas y Don, Pwllheli and Plas Ogwen, Bethesda. There is also cooperation with the Learning Disabilities Service and the third sector to develop new opportunities and provide services to adults in a more effective way in their local communities.

There were periods during 2021/22 where a reduction was seen in the care waiting lists. However, the numbers have continued to increase over the last few months to a

level that has not been seen before. Many domiciliary care providers have given all their packages back in some areas as a result of Covid-19 issues, staff leaving and the recruitment challenge. It is hoped that the Domiciliary Care Project will address the problem during 2022/23.

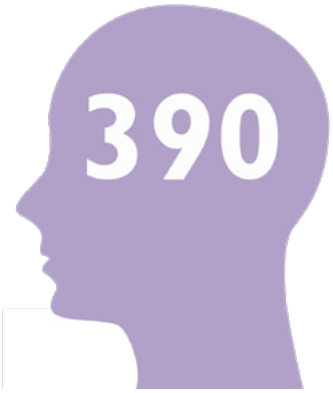
Arranging care in residential/nursing and specialist dementia settings has become a barrier during 2021/22. The number of providers who offer this type of care in Gwynedd has reduced. Barriers have arisen during 2021/22 when discussing our fees with some providers who refuse the Council's standard fees and claim significantly higher fees. As options are scarce in terms of providers, a difficult decision needs to be made between commissioning settings at a significant cost which is a financial risk to the Department and the Council, or not to commission from the providers, which increases risks to the individual. Work is being undertaken to try and resolve the barrier and the work of looking at developing internal nursing provision (including at Penrhos site) is proceeding.

Mental Health

The Mental Health Service is a joint integrated service with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. The Health Board leads this service, and our social workers and Board colleagues are based in multi-disciplinary teams at the Hergest Unit and Ysbyty Alltwen.

Our mental health teams have continued to support individuals virtually and face-to-face, whether in the community or through our ICAN centres. Face-to-face visits have been resumed during 2021/22, and this is the most effective way to support individuals with mental health issues. Having said this, we have seen that virtual contact has worked well for many service users, particularly young users, and this has enabled some individuals to attend groups across the County, where travelling would previously have been an obstacle.

Average number of Mental Health referrals per month to the Multi-disciplinary Team



The ICAN scheme has been developed by the Health Board, but with the support of local authorities. The development of ICAN community hubs across the region aims to improve availability and awareness of mental health support, and engagement with the third sector and other holistic well-being and support services in the community. The hubs are intended to support individuals with lower mental health needs and help sustain recovery. Hubs have opened in Pwllheli, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Caernarfon, with satellite locations across Gwynedd.

It is a concern that everyone does not have a face-to-face appointment with their GP. Research shows that individuals are far more likely to present a physical problem to their GP in the first place, before sharing any concerns about their mental health as a secondary matter on the way out of the surgery. It is difficult to quantify the likely increase in the demand for mental health services as a result of the pandemic, however, it is very likely that we will see the impact for years to come, and it will be a priority to build upon and adapt the mental health services to cope with the demand in the most effective way possible.

Learning Disabilities

The offer of preventative intervention is driving improvements in the field of Learning Disabilities, with the focus on developing community-based services that address what matters to individuals and reduce the need for cor-Services where possible.

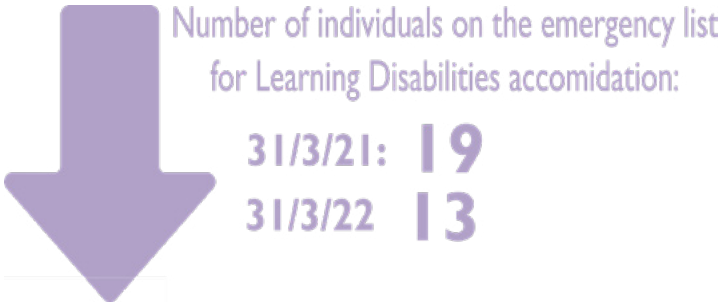
The service's performance measure shows that 98% of our cases have reported that we achieved what matters to them either fully or partially during 2021/22. In those cases where we only partly delivered what matters to individuals, this is often due to situations outside the service's control (e.g. no access to health services). We will continue to work jointly with our colleagues in the Health Board to ensure quality services to individuals with learning disabilities.

We have managed to continue our sessions to promote the well-being of individuals - physically, emotionally and socially, by developing opportunities in our hubs across the County as well as virtual sessions via the Llwybrau Llesiant Team. The programme of activities is lead by individuals with disabilities, with engagement sessions to gather new ideas. By now, work is proceeding to develop elements of the service so that external providers lead on specific elements of the work. Over 150 individuals with Learning Disabilities have received services or preventative support to avoid dependency on core services. Examples can be seenon the Llwybrau Llesiant Facebook/Instagram.

The Service has managed to provide day and respite opportunities and to extend the service to more individuals as Covid-19 restrictions have relaxed. The Learning Disabilities Service has extended the use of the respite units (Sŵn y Môr in Pwllheli and Brookfield in Bangor), to provide an overnight respite service for individuals with disabilities.

By being able to forward plan we have managed to help carers with the substantial pressure there is on them by planning stays in advance..

We know that the issues that prevented us from historically fully achieving what matters were accommodation and employment opportunities. We have a project board in these two priority areas, which corresponds with the priorities of the North Wales Learning Disability Transformation Programme. The accommodation project is making progress, and strong partnerships are being developed with the Housing Associations and the Council's Housing and Property Department. During 2021/22, 16 individuals were introduced to new accommodation.

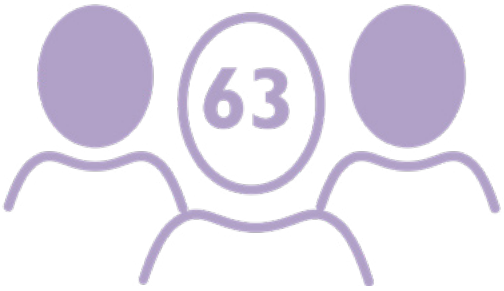


Providing training opportunities and work experiences to individuals with Learning Disabilities has continued to be a priority. As well as working alongside employers, there has been close collaboration with the Regional Transformation Team, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and others. Work opportunities means something different from one individual to another, therefore we are looking at a variety of opportunities for work experience, volunteering, training as well as paid work. The Meals on Wheels 'Cwrs a Sgwrs' Service has been developed in Y Ffôr area to deliver nutritious, affordable meals in the local communities, while creating work opportunities for individuals with a disability. We will look to replicate the success and principles of this scheme in other areas of the county.

Well-being

The aim of the Well-being Team is to be able to respond flexibly to developments and the well-being needs of Gwynedd residents. Because of this, the Team was in a good place to be able to make the most of new grants relating to post Covid-19 recovery. Additional funding was received to build the confidence of the County's older people and encourage them out into their communities following Covid-19. We decided to ensure that older persons themselves led on the best use of this funding. We heard the voices of those who attended events via questionnaires, and the responses and data will be of assistance to provide the best support for older people in their communities in the future.

Number of community groups that have recieved financial support to run social events for older people:



We have made new connections across Gwynedd communities and we hope to build on this during 2022/23 by holding five local forums for older persons. This will be a foundation for the work of establishing Gwynedd areas as age-friendly communities that will become important fieldwork for the Well-being Team in the next few years. The new community resilience project in Gwynedd is an important link during 2022/23.

The Bridging the Communities work programme has continued to be varied and creative, despite Covid-19 challenges. 10 friendship benches have been completed in collaboration with different generations all over the county. The project has continued to support people of all ages via various projects, getting to grips with complex themes such as loneliness, isolation and ageism. We have continued to work closely with residential homes, e.g. Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen pupils have been undertaking a project in the Plas Maesincla garden in Caernarfon.

Dementia Actif Gwynedd is going from strength to strength and has re-opened its classes since the end of January 2022. They have also opened new classes in Sarn Mellteyrn and Blaenau Ffestiniog, as well as a Sport Memories Club in Nefyn and virtual meetings to support unpaid carers of individuals with Dementia.

We coordinate the Gwynedd Health and Well-being Partnership to bring agencies that offer well-being services together to promote joint working and avoid duplication. The booklet 'Looking after myself' which includes the details of all these agencies, has been reviewed during the year. There was close cooperation during the Mental Health Week and the Men's Mental Health Week and we produced a handbook and distributing over 50 digital devices on loan to individuals across Gwynedd as part of the digital inclusion work.

Unpaid Carers

Some unpaid carers continue to be under significant stress as a result of duties and additional care pressure following Covid-19. As part of their day-to-day work, the Social Work Teams work with unpaid carers, and carers are offered an assessment independently from the assessment of those who are being supported. In addition, the Well-being Team have been working on a carers programme and the Carers Project Worker has continued with the work programme throughout 2021/22.

The Carers Action Group is led by the Head of Department and has met every other

month during 2021/22 to ensure that the unpaid carers agenda is prioritised across the services. There were additional grants to support unpaid carers during 2021/22, and these grants were spent in innovative ways jointly with our partners across Gwynedd to ensure that as many carers as possible benefit. Various sessions were offered for carers to relax and have time to themselves (e.g. crafts, music, gardening, etc.). Short breaks/respite were offered to carers in a bespoke holiday bungalow in Waunfawr, and a sitting service was available via Eryri Cydweithredol. Specific attention is given to young carers, and an 'AiDi' app and ID card have been developed and have been successful as an example of national good practice.

Carers network meetings are held several times a year to hear the voice of carers and share experiences and opportunities that arise. One of the main challenges that has continued during 2021/22 is to identify unpaid carers. The number of unpaid carers identified by us in Gwynedd is low, but there are various reasons for this, including family members who do not consider themselves as carers. Direct campaigns have been successful and an information booklet for unpaid carers has been updated jointly with unpaid carers. Work on identifying unpaid carers and meeting their well-being needs will continue during 2022/23.

Our Internal Provision

As a Council we have 13 residential homes (11 for older adults, and two for people with learning disabilities) and we are very proud of the way the service has managed to maintain the quality of the service throughout 2021/22.

Again this year the services have faced several challenges and residents and staff have adapted incredibly well. We are extremely proud of the efforts and the commitment to put people's well-being at the heart of the provision by following the government's guidelines and risk assessments.

One of the main challenges during 2021/22 was the lack of staff, like many providers across the sector, and a great deal has been invested in recruitment. There are elements of our services that we have not been able to re-open during 2021/22 due to staffing problems, including Plas Hedd Day Care Unit in Bangor and a new nine bed Unit at Bryn Blodau, Blaenau Ffestiniog. This has been extremely frustrating, however, it is hoped that following local recruitment work in Maesgeirchen it will be possible to open the Day Care Unit there soon, and we intend to hold similar events in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area to make the most of our beds at Bryn Blodau.

We have managed to re-open services in 2021/22 by offering day and respite care in some of our homes. Certainly, this has assisted in supporting not only the individuals but also their families. It has been a challenge to help individuals and their families to cope with the change, reducing fear, and to get used to being out in the community once more.

We have continued with the programme of investment and modernisation of our homes in order to improve quality and secure bespoke resources to meet service users' needs. The adaptation work has been completed at Cefn Rodyn, Dolgellau and is about to be completed at Hafod Mawddach, Barmouth. The work of adapting our homes to be suitable in the future will continue over the years to come with money earmarked from capital grants.

In relation to the department's Local Priorities, work is continuing on the development of an Extra Care Housing development in Pwllheli. In line with this, we will also be looking at improving the care provision in rural Llŷn in the future. The work of identifying sites for a

development in the Dolgellau area and other areas in Meirionnydd is also continuing.

Safeguarding and Community Safety

In a period of 12 months during 2021/22, 484 safeguarding enquiries have been made, with 88% of them completed within seven days. Although 12% of enquiries were not completed within seven days, it should be noted that the main reason for this is the ability of our partnerships to make enquiries and to respond in a timely manner. It should be noted that work is being undertaken within the seven days to ensure that individuals are safe and that risks are managed in each case, but the enquiries are not completed within seven days in every case. The average response time was five days.

Some individuals continue to refuse intervention, however, the area teams will seek to support individuals to ensure their safety when appropriate. A high number of professional concerns have been open during 2021/22, and we continue to wait for guidance from the Welsh Government on how to manage this procedure.

The Council has continued to work as part of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership, jointly with several other organisations including the Police, Probation Service, Fire Service and the Health Board. The statutory Partnership is a group of organisations who work together to get to grips with crime and disorder. The Partnership's 2021/22 plan (see here) has been delivered and any incomplete action has been included in the new plan for 2022/23.

Although the number of cases of domestic abuse have been low in Gwynedd during the pandemic, contrary to national concern, there has been an increase in the number of domestic crimes in Gwynedd during the last two quarters. Efforts continue to raise awareness of reporting domestic abuse and the Board will give a focus and priority to the matter.
A number of other fields have received attention during 2021/22 and they will continue to do so in 2022/23 - including hate crimes, modern slavery and counter-terrorism.

Quality Assurance

Covid-19 has continued to affect the work of the Quality Assurance Team during 2021/22. It has not been possible to monitor providers in accordance with the usual procedure in each case due to visiting restrictions. The team has continued to support providers by monitoring Covid-19 cases/levels, and also reporting on the situation with empty beds, etc. Four providers have been under the Escalating Concerns procedure during the year, and monitoring visits have been conducted with these providers.

Several providers have faced a challenge in terms of staffing capacity during the periods where Covid-19 leves have been higher, and the Quality Assurance Team has played a leading role supporting the providers through these challenging times.

The Team's capacity to deliver the work programme continues to be challenging.

The Care Scrutiny Committee noted the need to increase capacity within the team in September 2021.

Business Service

A proportion of the Business Service's work over the past year has continued to be driven by the pandemic. Whether this was by re-locating staff, supporting providers with testing /PPE/staffing matters arrangements or administrating several grants received via the Welsh Government to assist the sector. Despite having to prioritise work, the core work of supporting the front-line teams in the care field has continued.

There are also examples of where we have been able to capitalise on the opportunities that have arisen from working virtually - e.g. paying independent residential and nursing providers automatically via the Department's computer system (WCCIS), and replacing the Department's cash funds for Barclaycard cards that are safer and convenient.

Following a period during the pandemic where we had to limit the available Telecare provision, and the various equipment and technology is now available for Gwynedd individuals to continue to live independently. Further work is proceeding in 2022/23 to scrutinise the Telecare Service and to ensure that the latest technology is available for Gwynedd individuals to promote their independence and reduce dependency on core services.

The Department's computer system (WCCIS) is a national system used by every County in Wales. Problems have arisen with the system during 2021/22 that prevent teams from undertaking their work effectively at times. Although effective and timely support is available via the Systems Support Team within the Department, there are some matters that the Team have no influence over them (e.g. system performance). Pressure continues to be placed on the system provider, and the system performance has been stable since the end of 2021/22. Discussions continue regarding the future of the system in Gwynedd.

Recruitment in the care field has been a priority during the Covid-19 period as a result of the staffing challenges that are common across the country. A Marketing and Development of Care Careers Officer was appointed in 2021/22, and has been a valuable resource to get to grips with the recruitment agenda. Examples of specific recruitment work have been successful (e.g. a session in Maesgeirchen, Bangor where six new workers were appointed), and it is proposed to build upon this in other areas of the County.

Commissioned provision

In respect of the provision that is commissioned, we acknowledge and are grateful for all the work that has been undertaken to respond to the pandemic and to look after our vulnerable residents across the County. We supported a number of other residential and nursing care homes during the year, as well as support and day services providers who faced challenges on matters such as management and leadership.

The increase in the wages of care workers in line with the Real Living Wage is to be welcomed. This aspect is a key part of what has been identified as an Improvement Priority to ensure a secure workforce for the future. This has contributed partially to the challenge faced by local authorities across Wales in terms of the standard fees that are paid to care providers to look after our residents. Over the coming year, we will work together with providers to gain a better understanding of the actual cost of providing care, and offer options on the way forwards

which will contribute to the sustainability and stability of the market.

Many grants have been received by the Department from the Welsh Government to support the sector and to restore services following the pandemic, and those have been passed on to the providers across the sector to support them through the challenging period.

Summary

In another very challenging year the Department's performance has continued to improve in several aspects. The main matters that will need addressing further during 2022/23 and beyond are:

- Continuing with the re-design of our care services, including the Domiciliary Care Service, and further promoting the work of strengthening resilience in our communities via local hubs.
- Securing a suitable and sustainable care provision across Gwynedd, looking at the actual cost of providing care and the possibility of providing internal nursing care.
- Ensuring a secure workforce in the care field for the future, continuing with the recruitment and talent development work.
- Re-building and adapting our services, taking account of lessons learned from the pandemic period and the future needs of the population.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Children and Supporting Families Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

Once again, this year has been a very different year for us all. We have continued to have to change our way of working in order to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children and their families throughout this challenging time. At the end of a year such as this, it is good to be able to look back and state that our practice and performance generally across the Children field have remained strong. As a Department we are proud of the efforts of all our staff in succeeding to keep in contact with children and families through visits, keeping in touch calls and virtually. This contact, alongside with the professionalism and the untiring efforts of our workers that has meant that we have been able to support families, managed to support the stability of families and placements, and to provide every possible support to keep families together during this challenging time.

The Department managed to continue to support and safeguard children and keep children and their families together in a context of changing restrictions on the usual ways of working. By now, contact, activities and support in virtual form is second nature to a number of our teams and families.

As our teams and partners restore and adapt arrangements for living safely with Covid-19 we have seen a number of partner services and external agencies recommencing; and in turn this has led to improving contact with other agencies with children and families; and to improving face-to-face contact with families. This has led to families and children being identified and referred to us for support earlier, and is a step forward to restore everyone's ownership to ensure safeguarding children in Gwynedd.

We have come into contact with **7136** families during 2021-22 who required information, advice, assistance and/or care. The range, nature and number of families requiring our help is a reflection of the challenge to families in bringing up children in the current climate. We have continued to offer early support to families when needs are highlighted - from providing advice and information via our Families Hub, to providing direct support for matters such as parenting skills, dealing with challenging behaviours of children, conflict in families and developmental delay in children. We have escalated and adapted our existing programmes such as Flying Start, Families First and the Play and Childcare Offer to maintain our preventative services and to build the resilience of families.

In addition to our preventative services we have also collaborated with partners to expand our provisions to promote the well-being and resilience of children, young people and their families. We have established new programmes such as Haf o Hwyl, Gaeaf Llawn Llesiant and the Child Development Programme to provide opportunities to build resilience in children and young people and to promote their emotional wellbeing. In 2021-22, 3,690 children and young people took advantage of the play opportunities. The Youth Service has focused on providing a variety of opportunities in communities and at school that promote the 5 Way to Well-being amongst young people, and have provided specific interventions such as Well-being through Art and FRIENDS Resilience Groups for vulnerable young people 16 years and over.

When a family needs support to deal with several matters they face, our **Team Around the Family** co-ordinates support for them. **92** families received support from a Coordinator during 2021/22, compared with **61** in 2020-21.

As part of their day-to-day work, the **Social Work Teams** offer timely support and intervention for children and their families and draw on more specialised interventions if appropriate.

The Trobwynt Team works intensively with vulnerable children and families, and children who are on the verge of going into care. They are able to support families with matters such as parenting, counselling, substance misuse, meetings to bring in members of the extended family, mediation, family therapy, and support to cope with adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). We are continuing to develop this specialist support within this team in response to the needs and feedback of families.

One such specialist project is Reflection, which offers specialist support to parents who have children in the care system on a permanent basis. We have also established the Emrallt project in 2020/21, with the aim of trying to reduce the number of harmful sexual behaviour cases being referred to statutory services following an incident of abuse. Our main aim during the year was to provide a programme of training for workers to identify sexual behaviour that is healthy, problematic and harmful. To date **671** workers have attended one or more training events.

The success of collaboration between families and our services means that a number of children have been able to stay at home with their families, some have been able to return home from foster and residential care, as well as ensuring that vulnerable foster placements have been substantially stabilised.

Number of children in the Council's care

At the end of March 2022, **273** children were in the Council's care, and 66% of these received care in a foster placement, with 36% of those foster carers either friends or family members, and 23% of looked after children were placed with their parents, and therefore remained at home.

Over the last few years we have seen a small reduction in the number of children in the Council's care. We see that our Strategy to Keep Families Together has an impact, and therefore this strategy continues to be a priority for the department for 2022-23, in order to continue with the aim of reducing the number of looked-after children.

Children and young people come into our care under highly challenging circumstances, but we are as ambitious for these children as we would be for our own children. We have Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) who monitor the care plans of each child and young person we look after, and they assure us as a Council that the interests of the child are safeguarded throughout their time in care.

Our ability as a Council to place children with foster parents is a key part of the service for children. As a Council we are extremely proud of our foster parents, and the Fostering Team

continues to ensure that we have enough foster parents to meet the needs of children who cannot reside at home. 'Foster Wales' was launched during 2021-22 and we are proud to be part of this, and we have seen developments such as a new website for the foster services together with a national campaign to recruit and attract foster parents. The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit provides assurances to the Council that our safeguarding arrangements are robust. In 2022-23, **302** child protection 'conferences' were held.

Percentage of child protection 'conferences' where the risk assessments were considered to be of high standard: **99%**

This consistently high performance shows the impact of our investment in practice to ensure good decisions that protect the rights of children and their families. We have realised our innovative project on Effective Child Protection.

Hearing and listening to the voice of the child has remained a priority for us over the past year. The Corporate Parent Panel has been working to strengthen this aspect of its work so that it maintains close links with what matters to the children in our care.

One of the highlights of 2021-22 is that we have been able to establish an Autism Plan for Gwynedd jointly with our partners. We have succeeded in ensuring additional resources for this field that will include appointing a designated coordinator for the plan and field; a programme to raise awareness and training regarding autism and moving forward with reviewing our arrangements specifically in the transition period between services. Unfortunately, some of our previous priorities have slipped somewhat or have been set aside for the time being in order to focus on maintaining and providing our essential services.

Some aspects of the North Wales Child Transformation Programme, which was intended to trial new methods of working and new interventions to improve and change services, had to be delayed. We have not been able to fully establish a Multi-agency Team. The team would have provided intensive, short-term support for families with profound and complex needs. We have been able to move forward with some of this work, however, as addressing profound and complex needs in families remains a priority and a risk for us, we will resume this priority in 2022-23 building upon what was commenced via the Transformation Programme.

Once more this year we are very fortunate of our workforce and the willingness and flexibility of our workers to respond to these staffing needs and challenges that have hindered us throughout the year, again showing their continued commitment to the service and to the vulnerable families of Gwynedd. We have commissioned specific work to develop a workforce plan to assist us to get to grips with our recruitment challenges, developing the workforce and maintaining and supporting workers. This will continue to be a priority for us next year.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Economy and Community Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

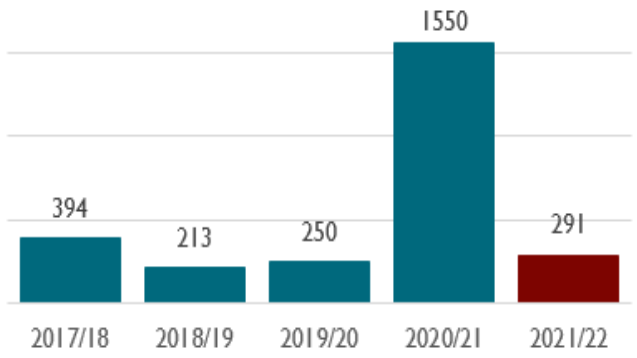
Economic Development Service

Between the impact of Covid-19, the arrangements for leaving the European Union and the war in Ukraine, businesses and employers in Gwynedd have faced another year of economic uncertainty in 2021/22. The Economic Development Service has continued to take proactive measures during the year to try to save and sustain local businesses, support local residents who have lost their employment and create the conditions which would enable businesses to recover and grow in the future.

We have continued to change our priorities and re-direct our efforts to respond to the crisis and formed new teams from across the Department to work closely with other parts of the Council.

During 2021/22, 291 businesses received financial support from the Department. The number was a reduction on 2020/21 due to the huge number of crisis grants distributed to businesses during that year.

The number of businesses receiving financial support



As well as distributing financial support, the Department has worked hard over the past year to ensure that local businesses have the best information about the trading guidelines and advice as a result of Brexit and Covid-19, to enable them to stay ahead and keep their staff and customers safe. A special page was hosted on the Council's website along with a newsletter which is received by over 4,370 local businesses at least twice a week. Business feedback to these bulletins has been extremely positive.

Despite the pandemic, the demand from businesses for more suitable land and property has continued. The Council has committed a budget of £2 million in order to respond to this demand and work to prepare schemes has started.

One of the main challenges facing local businesses at the moment is to recruit workers, and responding to this has been a priority during 2021/22. Eight job fairs were held across Gwynedd to bring together employers and prospective employees, and a notice board was established on social media where 1,600 jobs were advertised. 229 individuals from Gwynedd were assisted in finding employment during the year.

Tourism, Marketing and Events Service

The tourism industry is a key employer in Gwynedd. With an economic value of over £1.3 billion, over 18,000 people work in this field. This is one of the sectors that has been hit hardest in 2020/21 due to restrictions on businesses following Covid-19. During 2021/22, we saw new visitors coming to Gwynedd, a vast number of whom were not used to rural or coastal areas in Britain and problems arose as a result. In response, 105 bulletins were distributed to advise

businesses, and responsible destination and visiting safely messages were shared on the Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website with over 1,038,010 hits on the website. 72,223 people (+10.68%) engaged with us via our social media accounts.

The number that viewed the 'responsible destination' campaign:

10,280,823

The Council has undertaken detailed research over the past year on the situation regarding motorhomes in the county, by consulting with the owners of caravan parks, motorhome owners and communities. This has led to developing the 'Aros-fan' project that will pilot the development of up to six specific sites for motor homes to stay overnight in Gwynedd in 2022/23.

A review of tourism priorities in the area was also completed in 2021/22, which will form the basis of Gwynedd's sustainable visitor economy principles with Snowdonia National Park for the period until 2035.

In addition, in 2021/22, information and guidance were provided for 40 organisers / communities to reinstate and arrange events safely, for the benefit of our communities.

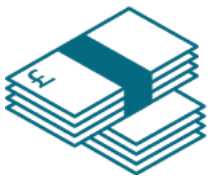
Maritime Services

The Department manages 301km of the Gwynedd coastline, concentrating on eight blue Flag beaches, several other urban and rural beaches, four harbours and two marinas. In response to the increase in the number of visitors to Gwynedd's beaches, the number of beach wardens and their contract lengths was increased in 2021/22 to reflect the extended visitor season. The safety and cleanliness of beaches remained a priority over the year, with a new water safety campaign prepared. During the past year, attention was given to reviewing the management arrangements for Pwllheli marina and harbour for the future and to programme detailed dredging work at Pwllheli Harbour.

1891 boats and 1287 personal watercraft registered

Regeneration Service

The work of preparing the Gwynedd Regeneration Framework has also re-started in 2021. 13 area plans are being prepared to identify local priorities for the future. Welsh Government's town centre regeneration programmes have continued over the past year and the importance of regenerating the high street has been heightened. A range of schemes have been developed in Bangor city centre which contribute to improving the viability of the high street, including schemes to renovate 9 empty properties.



Investment in Town Centre Regeneration programs in 2021/22:

£3,897,899

Community Support Service

The service has continued to support voluntary groups during 2021/22, as well as supporting new groups which have formed in order to offer support to vulnerable individuals in the communities. It has been a challenging time for community groups and the service has been assisting them to overcome some of the challenges they face. The service has also been involved with the work of co-ordinating town centre groups

in order to identify and consult on Covid-19 measures. During 2021/22 the Service also carried out engagement through discussions with local organisations and groups as part of the development of the new Regeneration Framework.

The Council's Community Support Fund has funded 21 projects this year, attracting £206,000 in funds to the county. The Community Support Service has also allocated £25,000 in funds to support the voluntary Covid-19 campaign on behalf of Magnox.

34 local groups and 17 community projects received support during 2021/22

Gwynedd Libraries

Twelve of Gwynedd's Libraries have remained open throughout 2021/22 with safety measures in place to protect services users and staff. Pwllheli Library and Neuadd Dwyfor were opened in March 2022 as a result of a successful project worth nearly £1m to upgrade and improve the facilities.

Permanent changes were made to the Mobile Service over the past year, offering an on demand, free home delivery service to Gwynedd residents rather than through the old method of the Mobile Library vehicle calling at locations within villages once a month. This change has proved to be popular, and it was an essential option for those people who were shielding or were vulnerable for health reasons. Also, the Home Library monthly home delivery service (House-bound) was continued, and arrangements where users can order books - often specially selected by library staff - to be collected from the Library, thereby providing a number of methods for users to access library service.

Number of Library users in 2021/22:

91,198

During 2021/22, 186,222 books were loaned (which is an increase of 140% on the previous year's figures), with approximately 3270 people using the service on a monthly basis (compared with 2075 the previous year). In addition, 100,233 e-resources (e-books, audio e-books, newspapers and magazines) were loaned, an increase of 29% on the previous year. 25,585 specific books were ordered (an increase of 40% on the previous year). From April 1 2021, fines for books returned late were abolished.

Over the past year, 87 sessions for children and families were held, with 747 children in attendance. We collaborated with a number of partners on reading and literacy schemes, including Fusion and the Early Years Unit. 2528 packs to promote books and reading were created and distributed to children in the Early Years and Foundation Phase.

Archive Service

The Council has a statutory responsibility to protect our public records and to ensure that people have access to them. We do this through two record offices in Gwynedd - Caernarfon Record Office and Meirionnydd Record Office in Dolgellau.

Archive Service responded to 28,201 inquiries in 2021/22

The Archives were open throughout 2021/22 with Covid-19 precautionary measures in place to safeguard users and staff. During the

year, the Service responded to 3,151 enquiries, 19,542 used our on-line catalogues, and we provided 5,508 documents to visitors to the Archives. The Education Officer visited schools within the county, with 2,180 pupils receiving the service.

Museums and the Arts Service

This Department has re-opened the Council's museums, galleries and archives over the past year. In 2021/22, over 340,000 people engaged with the museums and galleries ether physically or digitally; an average of 94 artists were supported each month in Storiel, and average customer satisfaction was 94.6%. A number of activities were arranged through the Fusion Scheme, working with numerous partners, and reaching 212 children and young people to support an improved attitude towards learning; supporting 130 hours of volunteering for young people, and engagement with 107 families.

Total number who visited and engaged digitally with the museums and gallaries

Gwynedd's children and people were supported by 19 Community Arts project such as Art on Prescription, Sgwrs a Chân, This is Me, Fa'ma, Clwb Enfys, Craft for Well-being, sessions for Dementia Carers, Criw Celf for 57 young people; Carers Festival including concerts; SHEP programmes for the schools. The Ynys Blastig project supported health and well-being in schools through the arts, which included 29 children and 13 school staff. A fortnight of Well-being for Me activities with 88% experiencing an improvement in their well-being. 80 arts packs were distributed to the County's Young Carers, working with Action for Children; 100 busy packs were distributed and 13 community grants were distributed.

Leisure and Country Parks Service

The department is responsible for a network of 12 Byw'n Iach centres across Gwynedd. Since 2019, these centres have been managed through an agreement with Byw'n Iach Cyf. company. The centres have continued to be open throughout 2021/22 with Covid-19 precautionary measures in place to safeguard users and staff. However, at times numbers had to be restricted and some centres have been used as Vaccination Centres for the Health Service. This has led to a significant reduction in the user numbers compared to a normal year, namely 284,994, albeit an increase on the 79,550 that used the services during the previous year when the centres had to be closed for periods of time. Despite the restrictions, it is encouraging that 84.3% of users were very satisfied with the service.

Number of 'Byw'n Iach' leisure centre users in 2021/22:

284,994

The department is responsible for two Rural Parks - Parc Glynllifon and Parc Padarn. During 2021/22, both parks had to manage a significant increase in user numbers, creating pressure on the parks' facilities. During 2020/21, Glynllifon was successful in its bid for Welsh Government's Sustainable Management Scheme funds and work to restore some historical structures and improving safety in the Park has started. Glynllifon was also successful in its bid for Welsh Government's Brilliant Basics funding during 2021/22, and work to upgrade the toilets and car park is underway. In Parc Padarn, the priority was also ensuring the safety of the public, and conservation architects were appointed to inspect the site's structure and put new safety measures in place

Local Priorities - The Council's Plan

One of the local priorities identified by the elected members when consulting on priorities for the Council Plan 2018-23 is the desire to attract more well-paid, long-term jobs. Members in the Porthmadog, Ffestiniog and Penllyn areas noted this as a high priority for their areas. The Create High Value Jobs project has been set up in order to respond to the problem and it focuses on opportunities which will bring benefits to these communities (see Part 1 of this report).

Improving the poor connectivity of mobile phones and broadband in the Dolgellau area is another local priority. We are pressing on the Welsh Government to prioritise the County for plans in the field, thus adhering to the principles of Digital Gwynedd together with working enthusiastically with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig to meet the need. Because of concerns around the future of the Ffestiniog Community Centre, the regeneration team recently conducted a review of public buildings throughout Gwynedd. This review showed that public buildings in Blaenau Ffestiniog, including the Community Centre, were used ineffectively and this identified an opportunity to improve resource sharing in future.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in quality homes within our communities.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.

Highways and Municipal Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

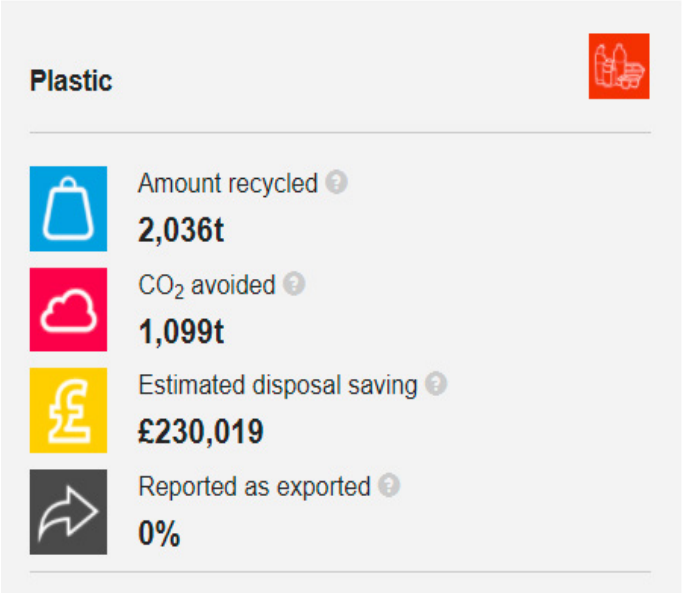
The last year has been challenging once again whilst we have continued to cope with the demands of the crisis. However, we can be proud of the developments that have been noted within this report.

Waste and Recycling

As a department, we provide a multi-stream collection service for the residents of Gwynedd which has been established to ensure that materials are recycled to the highest standard.

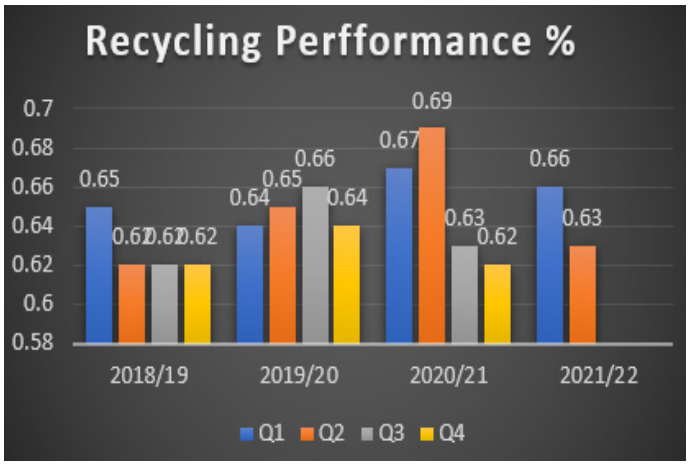
A very important question that is being asked in the current climate is where exactly do the materials go. We can take pride as a County that we are investing in sending our materials through the latest recycling processes within the United Kingdom.

See below an example of the process of recycling mixed plastics as well as Gwynedd's statistics for 2020/21:



In terms of our recycling performance, we are proud to record that at the end of Quarter 3 (April-December) that we have recycled, reused or composted 64% of waste during 2021/22 to date.

See below the graph which shows an improvement in our performance over the past years:

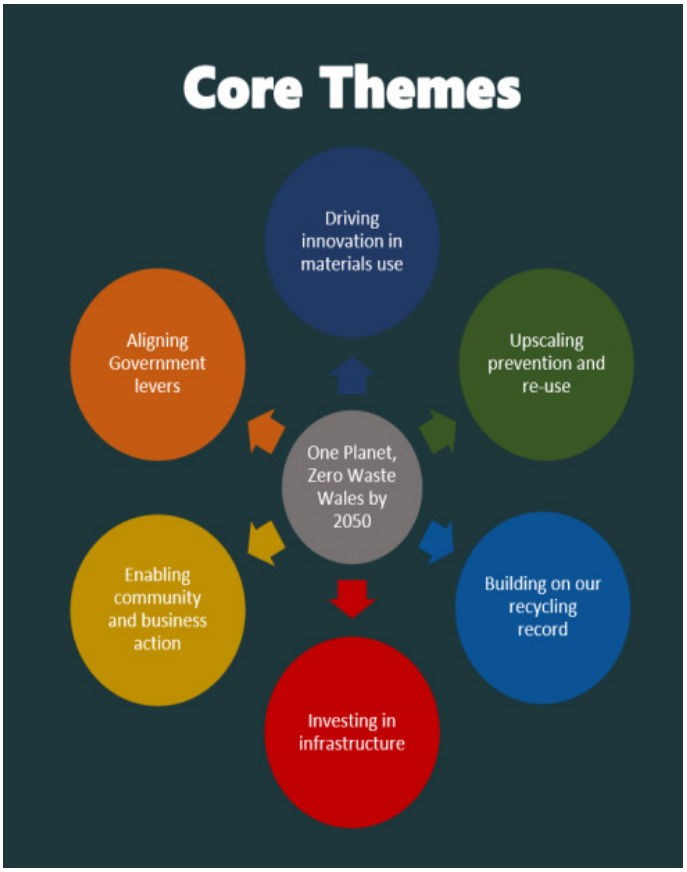


*data for Q3 and Q4 2021/22 to be confirmed

We will work on a new waste strategy for the county during 2022/23. The strategy will consider innovative ways to encourage reuse and increase recycling in order to ensure we can achieve the new statutory target of 70% of all waste being recycled by March 2025.

The Cyclical Economy

Now, we must focus on doing 'more than recycling' by developing a cyclical economy strategy. See below the core themes of Welsh Government's 'More than Recycling' strategy which forms the basis to the department's work:



Over the past year, Welsh Government has earmarked over £43 million in funding through the Cyclical Economy Fund. We managed to attract £1.4m in grant funding to deliver projects in this field over the past year, whilst working closely with the Economy and Community department. We also succeeded in receiving an internal bid to appoint a Cyclical Economy Officer who will lead on the new strategy.

Here, is an update on some of the projects that have been/are being addressed:

- Project to adapt equipment to treat recycled materials in Caergylchu, Caernarfon
- Community food provision project
- Warws Werdd and Antur Waunfawr joint project
- Repair cafe project
- Reuse/bulk items project
- End distributing the Cartgylchu

We intend to add to this work by introducing new bids for funding for 2022/23, which will be worth around a £1m if we are successful.

Commercial Waste Service

We provide commercial waste and recycling collections to more than 2,000 business in the county, and over past years we have witnessed an improvement in the levels of commercial waste that is recycled or composted.

See below the graph which shows an improvement in our performance this year, following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions on local businesses:

Over the coming period, our priority will be to encourage our commercial customers to take advantage of the recycling service and food recycling. We will go a step further following new legislation where commercial materials must be collected separately. We are busy trying to ascertain the best way of implementing this.

Street Apperance

The local environment is extremely important, and a central part of this is to see our streets and areas being clean, tidy and safe. We apply a measure called the 'Cleanliness Index' (a combination of external and internal assessment) in order to assess the cleanliness and appearance of streets. In 2021/22, our cleanliness standard was 97%.

We received the results of Keep Wales Tidy's external survey, which reports on the number of 'defects' on our streets (such as rubbish, weeds, dog faeces, chewing gum and cigarette buts).

See below the main findings of the survey:

- This year's survey recorded an improved performance in Gwynedd across all aspects of the quality of the local environment that is covered by the survey. The changes caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that this is not a normal year. However, it is very positive to see this good performance and we hope that this can be maintained.
- Dog fouling was at its lowest in Gwynedd thus far. We hope that this trend is representative of the situation across the county and that it can be maintained. Whilst it was highlighted that there has been an improvement in the survey conducted, we are also aware that local problems exist and need attention.
- A small increase was seen in the number of streets where fast-food rubbish was seen and the number of streets where cans and plastic bottles were seen has also risen.

Tîm Tacluso ArdalNi

We were successful in receiving Cabinet support to establish 5 Tidying Up Teams. The first team was launched in the Arfon area at the beginning of March.

We received great feedback from members of the public and are now busy establishing the other 4 Teams.

In terms of the work of the Teams, their work will focus specifically on the image of the County such as, deep cleaning, cleaning of furniture and signage, graffiti removal and urban / overgrown weed cutting.

Land Maintenance

The department is responsible for maintaining roadside verges and open spaces in order to improve the environmental quality of our towns and villages and to make them safer places for residents.

Parcels of land can make a positive contribution to our local environment, not only in terms of appearance, but also due to their potential as habitats. Promoting biodiversity within our parcels of land is now a priority and we have adjusted our grass-cutting patterns along county roads in order to promote this aim. We have also committed to reducing our use of damaging weedkillers.

We have attracted grants for our work to promote natural habitats, wild flowers and biodiversity. See below the development of some of these projects during the 2021/22 year:

Wild Landfill Project:

Our former landfill sites contribute towards climate change and affect every living creature. Therefore, in response to this, a wild landfill project was established at our sites near Ffridd Rasus and Llwyn Isaf. Over the past year, the project continues to:

- Plant Trees
- Erect wildlife boxes
- Distribute grass management machines
- Scatter wildlife seeds
- Create a wetland

The 'Eco-Scope' external company are undertaking this work and promote this project by engaging with schools, creating information boards for the sites and establishing a website/educational videos.

See below a few pictures that show the work of this exciting project:

Local Places for Nature:

A suite of projects that includes the management of invasive species, planting native trees, creating wild-flower meadows, planting street trees and pollinating plants was established. Many of the projects were delivered in partnership with community groups.

Here are examples/project developments over the past year:

- An area in Rhiwlas planted trees along the road
- Planting beds installed as well as benches near Bangor crematorium
- Friends of Japan (Shakara Scheme) - cherry trees planted in the Bangor areas

CCTV

The CCTV Service has now been upgraded to a digital system and works very effectively. There was an opportunity to add to the provision in the Hirael area of Bangor via the

Safer Streets project, which was led by the police. Through this project, we have installed 41 additional cameras and upgraded 12 street lighting columns to install the cameras on them.

Fleet Service

This service leads, manages and assists Council departments in order to ensure the appropriate, safe and lawful use of our fleet vehicles.

We have been collaborating with Welsh Government on the fleet de-carbonisation project. One element of the work on the ground is to trial various vehicles during the summer 2020. An electric waste collection vehicle was successfully trialled in one area, it performed well, and was able to carry a similar tonnage without any problems due to travelling in a rural area.

We will look at opportunities to add to our small fleet of electric vehicles and also increase charging points within our depot and offices. We have received a £300k grant for this purpose.

We are also looking at different opportunities within the de-carbonisation field that will include the use of hydrogen within heavy vehicles.

Highway Maintenance

It is important that residents, businesses and visitors in Gwynedd can move with ease within the county. To ensure this, we maintain 2,697km of County Roads along with 199km of Trunk Roads (namely highways of national importance, on behalf of Welsh Government).

While the condition of roads remains fairly static, historically the condition of class C roads highlight the highest percentage that require attention. There is significant pressure on our budgets to maintain our roads in good condition. The 'tar and chip' (road surfacing) programme was not finished during 2020/21 due to a lack of clarity regarding the regulations on close proximity working during the first lockdown period.

The impacts of climate change is increasingly a matter for us to consider as more rainfall, flooding and harsher winters affect our road surfaces. The department will continue to monitor and consider the situation when prioritising the county road maintenance programme.

We are also in the process of reviewing our Highways Assets Maintenance Plan in order to reflect the new requirement to prioritise based on risk.

Street Lighting

We continue to fix street lights promptly and on average it takes around two days for them to be fixed - a figure that has been relatively constant over the past years.

As part of the Council's "invest to save" programme, our substantial programme to change street lights to LED technology has been implemented over recent years. This work is continuing and we are now in the project's final year, and are pleased to report

that approximately 15,000 lamps have been replaced with approximately 1,000 remaining. We anticipate that the work will be completed by the end of October 2022. We are proud to confirm that we are on track to finish this on time.

The table below shows the reduction that has been seen in our carbon emissions as a result of this programme this year:

Year	Tonnes of CO2
2014/15	3435
2015/16	3002
2016/17	2426
2017/18	1703
2018/19	1208
2019/20	959
2020/21	811
2021/22	567

Ash Dieback

A specialist team was created in September 2021 to deal specifically with the disease. Their remit includes conducting surveys of ash trees on Council land and roads and draw up a work programme to deal with those who pose a risk to public safety. They also offer advice to all Council departments in relation to the disease. Another important role is to issue private landowners with legal notices if their trees pose a safety risk to users of Council land.
Since its establishment, the team has started to revisit some of the sites inspected by specialist contractors in 2020 to prioritise which trees to include on a programme of felling and pruning. They have also addressed the felling and pruning of some of the trees that are on the programme.

The work of dealing with the disease was originally funded by introducing annual bids for revenue funding to the Council. However, the Council has acknowledged that the disease poses a long-term risk to the residents of Gwynedd and has therefore ensured that £100k of revenue funding is available annually to deal with the disease from now on.

The priorities of the team for the 2022/23 financial year will be to continue to inspect diseased ash trees on Council lands and roads, and continue to work through the tree felling and pruning programme, on priority basis.

Maintenance of Bridges / Structures

We maintain 631 bridges throughout the county. They include 338 arched bridges and 96 that are listed and have additional requirements. In addition, we have 1,618 retaining walls throughout the county that are also maintained by the Department.

We have seen damage being caused to many bridges over the past year following flooding and storms over the winter; Bodfel Bridge was one that was substantially damaged; however, the work of repairing the listed bridge has been completed. We also submitted a planning application to build a new bridge, which has now been approved, and the work is programmed to commence in the summer 2022.

Playing Fields

We know that playing fields are important for children, parents and childminders, but as play equipment is expensive and funding

is scarce, maintaining them so that they are safe for children and young people to enjoy is challenging.

This year, we contacted groups and other partners within the community that would be interested in establishing partnerships with the service.

Through this engagement work, we received grant funding in order to:

- Introduce a roundabout that is suitable for children who are wheelchair users in the playing fields of Trehwfa, Coed Mawr, Bangor, recently through Welsh Government grant funding.
- Introduce a multi-purpose climbing frame in Penygroes, Mynydd Llandygai and Bethel before the end of the financial year in partnership with community groups/the local councillor

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.

Housing and Property Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

Although Housing and Property is a comparatively new department, the front-line and corporate nature of the services we have means that the Department's role is extensive and key in making a difference to the people of Gwynedd, be that in response to the increasing challenges in the field of affordable housing, responding to the homelessness crisis that now faces all parts of the country, or to ensure that Council buildings are safe and conform to national requirements.

The impact of Covid-19 on the Department's work

During 2021/22, the majority of the staff continued to work from home and the arrangements adjusted to make this work effectively continue to be implemented.

Some of Services continue to be greatly impacted due to Covid-19, mainly the Homelessness Unit, which has witnessed the highest number ever of individuals and families who present themselves as homeless as a result of the new statutory requirement to offer accommodation to anyone who is homeless, regardless of their circumstances. The Housing Options Team is also continuing to deal with a significant increase in enquiries and applications for the social housing register. There are a few services, for example the Housing and Property Development Service, that continue to see the impact of the pandemic on the capability of companies to tender, increasing costs when tenders are received and the higher costs of goods. Although the market has stabilised to an extent, it is estimated that it is necessary to prepare in advance for a current increase of 20-25% in estimated costs from contractors.

Over the pandemic, the Office and Cleaning Units ensured that our offices were safe, in order to enable some of our staff to continue to work there if they were unable to work from home. The Offices Unit is now part of the planning for when staff who wish to return to work in the office are able to do so safely and effectively.

Housing Service

In 2020, the Council's Cabinet approved its Housing Action Plan, with the aim to:

"Ensure that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable home of a high standard, that is affordable and improves their quality of life"

The plan aims to ensure that:

- No one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Social housing is available to all who require this
- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd's Housing is environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd.

It outlines 33 specific projects that will lead to a capital investment of over £77m in the housing field in Gwynedd over the next six years.

The past year has been an important year in preparing and paving the way for a solid and sustainable foundation for the projects, as

well as undertaking key research and scoping to ensure we are doing the right things. As a result, the number of visual outputs seen this year is relatively small and we expect a number of developments to be completed during the next financial year. However, supported accommodation developments for homeless individuals, such as the Pods in Caernarfon and 'Tŷ Adferiad' in Porthmadog have already been completed and others are underway, e.g 137 High Street Bangor and the development of the former Glan Wnion School, Dolgellau.

Pods for homeless individuals in Caernarfon

Artist's illustration of the development of 137 Bangor High Street

The Council uses the **Social Housing Fund** from the Welsh Government to facilitate the Housing Associations' ability to build more houses for local people. Our Housing Action Plan aims to provide 500 new social houses, over the Plan's lifetime. There has been a decline in the number of houses developed this year due to difficulties with the procurement of materials and contractors, and a delay with utility companies. We expect that the units that have been delayed as a result of the above problems will be completed during the next financial year.

Number of new units developed with the Social Housing Grant during the last 3 years

Homelessness Unit

The Unit operates in order to prevent homelessness but also to provide support for families or individuals who find themselves homeless. At the beginning of the lockdown in March 2020, the Government asked each Local Authority in Wales to ensure that nobody slept outside on the street. National regulations were amended overnight to ensure that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, had the ability to obtain support from their Local Authority if they were faced with homelessness. This was originally a temporary requirement, however, now this requirement is a permanent step. Consequently, an increase of 47% was seen in the number who present themselves as homeless since 2018/19, with an increase of nearly 20% over the last year only.

Number of people supported by the Homelessness Service during the year

This has placed great pressure on our temporary housing options and at present we are far from being able to cope with the demand. The result of this is having to over-use bed and breakfast accommodation, originally funded via the Welsh Government's Hardship Fund. However, although the requirement to house everyone who present themselves as homeless continues, the financial assistance from the Government ended at the end of the 2021/22 financial year, which will certainly place additional stress on our resources. We have found a short-term solution to address some of the financial gap, however, there is no certainty yet how we will fund these costs beyond 2023/24. In the meantime, over the next few months we will work on the Rapid Re-homing Strategy, based on the principle of trying to move people into permanent accommodation as soon as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods. It will be key that we collaborate with our housing partners to realise this Strategy.

What is obvious is that the Council does not have enough temporary accommodation to address the demand and continuing to use bed and breakfast accommodation is not a long- term solution. Our Housing Action Plan has identified the need for approximately 50 supported accommodation units, and several projects have been or are about to be completed (e.g. Tŷ Adferiad, Porthmadog and the Pods in Caernarfon) and several projects are underway (such as developing property on College Road and the High Street in Bangor and re-using the former Ysgol Glan Wnion building in Dolgellau).

There are other plans underway in Pwllheli, Corris and Deiniolen and are likely to be completed this year.

In response to the increasing demand as a result of all of this, we have expanded the capacity of the internal support team, which has assisted in reducing every case worker's load, however, the cases that every officer has continues to be higher than the Government's recommendation. We have also been able to increase our capacity to prevent homelessness before it occurs, which has led to preventing 36% of homelessness cases over the last year.

The **Housing Support Grant** has by now increased to £6.8m per annum and provides support for vulnerable people to manage or maintain their tenancy and live independently. During 2021/22, the programme in Gwynedd has supported over 2250 people to access and maintain permanent or temporary tenancies and prevent homelessness.

Housing Options Team

The Team is a key unit on the Department's front-line that faces the demand that has increased greatly over the last two years. A new local allocation policy was adopted during the first lockdown, which prioritises people who have a connection with Gwynedd. We are happy to report that on average 97% of the social housing allocations over the last year have gone to a local person with a connection to Gwynedd (in accordance with the definition in the new Allocation Policy). During 2021/22, 1400 applications were received (18% more than 2020/21) to be included on the General Housing Register and the team was able to process the applications consistently under the 10 day target. Despite the high demand, the number of days that persons were on the waiting list was on average a little less this year - 665 days this year compared with 741 days last year. It is acknowledged that this is much too high, and reflects the shortfall in the number of social housing we have in the County.

Housing Grants and Projects Team

The Teams' work has been affected by the pandemic, which has led to a decrease in the 'Grants for first-time buyers' and 'Empty

Housing Grants' projects, and the 'Empty House Renovation' loans that have been realised this year. We expect that this figure will increase over the next financial year.

The Team has also continued to work on delivering adaptations to the homes of disabled people and children with 186 adaptations completed during 2021/22.

The average number of days taken to make adaptations to the homes of individuals with disabilities was 164 days during 2021/22. The largest adjustments (eg extensions, staircases etc.) have pushed up this average time over the past year, due to the impact of Brexit and the pandemic on the availability of specialist goods, together with the lack of contractors tendering for work. This seems to be starting to stabilise now, so we hope this time will decrease over the next year.

Housing Enforcement Unit

The Unit continues to conduct 'customer satisfaction' surveys and the feedback is always very positive, and the score has been 10/10 every month in the previous year with consistent praise for the staff.

Property Service

Energy Conservation Team

In order to respond to the challenges that arise from climate change, and ensure that Gwynedd communities are prepared for the future, the Council adopted a **Carbon Management Plan** in May 2010. The plan has been a substantial investment in order to reduce the carbon emissions of the Council's activities, in addition to contributing towards the wider aim of a low carbon Gwynedd.

The nature of such plans is integrally measured over a long period of time, with small differences between monitoring periods having a cumulative impact over a more extensive period.

The fact that the majority of staff have worked from home over the past year due to Covid-19 has probably contributed significantly to the reduction in carbon emissions from our buildings and also from travelling. The Energy Conservation Unit acknowledges that the emissions are likely to increase this year if more use is made of our buildings, and the Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed.

An **Energy Framework** was established in partnership with Beond between April 2020-2024. There are currently 16 suppliers on our Framework, and the arrangements included within it, namely 'reverse auction technology' are unique in the energy field. A number of local authorities and organisations across Britain are using the Framework, including: Portsmouth Council; Reigate and Banstead Borough Council; North Wales Fire Service and Buckinghamshire Council. As a result of this arrangement, the Council gains a good reputation in the field, and it is estimated that

savings of £932k will be realised by March 2024 on our gas costs. In addition to this, the Council generates an income from the arrangement, namely £24,926.15 in 2020 and £18,800.13 in 2021. This income in turn will assist us to invest further in our services, e.g. recently the funding helped us to conduct the Tanygrisiau heating viability study.

Property Safety Unit

The responsibility of ensuring that all our schools, care homes, leisure centres, etc., are safe to be used by the county's residents lies with the Property Safety Unit. Although the side-effects of Covid-19 continue to be evident, the unit is continuing to conduct safety inspections in our buildings, such as asbestos condition surveys and fire risk inspections.

Maintenance Unit

The time it takes the Unit to complete each piece of work has seen an increase in the average times for last year (2020/21 - 8.3 days, 2021/22 - 10.8 days), and this was mainly as staff could not visit sites due to Covid-19. A change in the way of recording has also had a small impact on the data, however, this change is an investment and we expect that this will improve the way we report our data in the end. We know, via the feedback received through our customer satisfaction surveys, that the service we give is consistently good with all the customers we asked stating they were very satisfied with the Service, with over a half giving full marks. This reinforces the consistent praise the internal maintenance workforce receives. It was possible to expand this team during the past year, and we now have electricians and water quality testing officers in addition to the carpenters, plumbers and Telecare installation and repair officers.

Pest Control Team

The customer satisfaction of the team has also been very high throughout 2021/22, with great praise for prompt and effective work. They succeeded in continuing to offer this key service even throughout the lockdown periods. We gather customer feedback on a monthly basis and over the past year, 90% of the customers who were questioned were completely satisfied with the service that they received from the Unit. In general, matters relating to bills and paying for services were the reasons that customers gave for not being completely satisfied with the service.

Cleaning and Offices Unit

Our staff have been busy ensuring that our offices are safe for key staff to continue to attend. They have introduced a host of new Health and Safety arrangements overnight in order to ensure that everyone who has had to continue to attend their workplace is safe.

We have also introduced a customer satisfaction measure for our office and Cleaning Unit users. Thus far, the results are very positive with a 100% of staff completely satisfied with the service that they received from the Offices Unit, and 100% of customers in the Cleaning Unit scoring 9/10 or higher for the service.

Estates Unit

Our Unit continues to receive full marks for the service given to customers, however, difficulties in terms of recruitment in the field continue. The unit has also now become responsible for the Council's industrial units and enterprise centres. They examine the efficiency of the provision, and have already achieved savings without affecting the quality of the Service offered to tenants. The Unit

now plays a key role in the objectives of our Housing Action Plan, by assisting with land and property purchases, property surveying and offering advice on leases and Council property.

Housing and Property Development Service

During 2021/22, the Service managed to continue to drive our capital projects forward despite the challenges faced as a result of Covid-19 and the instability of prices in the building market.

In terms of housing projects, the work of developing the former Ysgol Glan Wnion, Dolgellau, into units to support the homeless with their tenancies has commenced with the contractors currently on site. The renovation and upgrading work at Noddfa Hostel is nearly completed, and the Service is working on our first house building scheme at Coed Mawr, Bangor. Since completing the new Ysgol y Garnedd, Bangor building in October 2020, eight other projects have been completed, such as the completion of an extension to the Ysgol Glancegin building in Bangor, work on the condition and suitability of the schools at Bethel and Glan y Môr, and refurbishment work at residential homes in Hafod Mawddach, Cefn Rodyn and Tan y Marian. The work of constructing an extension and renovating Ysgol y Faenol is also continuing. A 100% of these projects are currently proceeding in accordance with the expected timeschedule.

New Glan Wnion Development

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.

Environment Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

The Environment Department leads on the following main areas:

- **Planning and Building Control**
- **Public Protection**
- **Transportation and the Countryside**

During 2021/22, the Covid-19 crisis has continued to have a substantial effect on the department's services due to the responsibilities for enforcing the regulations and providing advice, as well as contributing towards the management of destinations across the County in terms of parking and transportation. The greatest impact was seen in our **Public Protection services**, which has continued with very different work to the norm, but they have also been attempting to deliver their normal day-to-day duties during this period. The new service established during the onset of the pandemic, the **Test, Trace and Protect Service,** has continued to operate; however, the Welsh Government does not intend to fund the Service beyond June 2022.

The challenge of restoring the Department and dealing with the backlog of work in some Services will face the Department in 2022/23, but the Department has and continues to put plans in place to address this during 2022/23 and beyond.

It is also noted that the Department's Services have reviewed the performance measures that were in place for 2021/22, in order to ensure that we are measuring what matters, but also to correspond with the corporate reporting methods that will become operational in 2022/23.

Public Protection

Food and Safety Service

During 2021/22, the Service continued to contribute towards the efforts to stop the spread of Covid-19; however, the Welsh Councils have now reached an agreement with the Food Standards Agency on the implementation of the **Recovery Plan - Food Standards Agency,** as the Covid-related demand on public protection services reduces over time. The plan requires food safety inspections (food hygiene and food standards inspections) to follow a system where new businesses and high-risk businesses are given initial priority.

In line with the plan, councils should have conducted an inspection of every high-risk food hygiene category premises by the end of March 2022, and all other risk categories by the end of June 2022 and others by the end of September 2022. The Service has recommenced programmed inspections since September 2021, and every high-risk category premises (Food Hygiene and Standards), except for 1, has been inspected. Nevertheless, there is a substantial back-log of inspections that have not been carried out in 2021/22 (this due to the fact that the Service had been focusing on Covid-19 work) - with 410 inspections completed and 1605 not completed in relation to food hygiene, and 34 completed and 910 not completed in relation to food standards. These inspections will now be included in the 2022-23 work programme.

Trading Standards Service

During 2021/22, programmed inspections were completed at 55 out of 57 high-risk businesses by the Service, with arrangements already in place to complete the two remaining inspections early in 2022/23. The

Service continues to coordinate the work of regulating animal feed establishments on a regional basis. An agreement was reached with the Food Standards Agency, as a part of an annual agreement, that Gwynedd would aim to complete inspections at 171 animal feed establishments as a part of programmed work in 2021/22. The Service has gone further and has managed to complete 179 inspections.

Licensing and Pollution Control Service

During 2021/22, the Service also contributed towards controlling the spread of Covid-19, by enforcing and providing advice about the regulations and guidance, mainly in relation to licensed premises. This meant that the programmed work of inspecting businesses with air pollution processes slipped, as well as the programme of inspecting private water supplies, and this will now be re-programmed for 2022/23.

A period of long-term sickness occurred in the service's **Licensing Unit** in 2021/22 and this, as well as the increase in licence applications due to many renewal applications being submitted at the same time, affected the time it took to decide applications, with the monthly average varying from 7 days to up to 42 days. The Department has been looking at opportunities to strengthen the resilience of the Licensing Unit, which includes extending the opportunities for applications to be submitted electronically and looking at the post duties in the Unit.

Tracing Service

The Test, Track and Protect Service (TTP) was established in May 2020 and came into operation on 1 June 2020. The purpose of this service is to lead the county out of the pandemic by improving health surveillance in the community, contact tracing and supporting people to self-isolate where needed. The service has contacted and advised over 31,000 positive cases, and almost 56,000 contacts of positive cases over this period.

The 2021-2022 year has been very challenging for the service, and the hard work, commitment and professionalism of the team has been exceptional. It was an incredibly difficult and challenging period around the end of 2021, particularly as a result of the highest numbers of cases that the County had faced since the beginning of the pandemic, and uncertainty about the direction that the virus would take. However, we can be confident that we have a system that has worked, with people and organisations collaborating excellently to reach a common goal. TTP has played an essential part in helping reduce the case rate. The team has done heroic work in helping to break the chain of transmission and support people who were facing the challenge of having to self-isolate, and they continue to do incredible work to help protect Gwynedd's citizens. The team's resilience to changing guidance at the start of 2022 has been astounding, and it has not been easy, and at times, it has been very relentless and tiring.

The Welsh Government will extend the funding provided to TTP contact tracing teams until June 2022. This is due to the major changes in the guidance, with businesses and services returning to some kind of normality, with the Welsh Government's long-term plan announcement for living safely with coronavirus: **Together for a safer future.** Therefore, it is inevitable that tracing work has quietened down by now, and a number of staff have now left the service to return to their permanent posts or follow their careers, with 58 of the 87 staff who have worked for the Tracking Service since its inception, still remaining in the service.

Planning Service

The Planning Service facilitates and manages sustainable developments within the Gwynedd planning authority area (that does not include the National Park area), and in 2021/22. the Service is continuing to facilitate housing developments to meet our communities' needs, with 65% (135 units) approved being affordable housing.

Over recent years, we have been measuring our customers' level of satisfaction. Work is progressing in response to the comments received, specifically around arrangements for contacting the Service and communication difficulties.

During 2021/22, 1222 new planning applications were received and a decision was made on 1160. During this period, planning applications took 103 days on average to decide, compared with 89 days in 2020/21 and 62 days in 2019/20. This mainly derives from the first lockdown, where no Planning Committee was held for 5 months, work processes taking longer, responses from statutory consultees taking longer, and many cases of long-term sickness within the Service. In 2021/22, the recovery work has mainly focused on clearing the backlog of work that accumulated over that period, however, the number of new planning applications remain high.

The service also has a role to investigate and take enforcement steps on developments that have not received planning consent. During 2021/22, 298 new cases were received and 159 cases have been closed, with many complex cases taking a substantial amount of time to investigate. A substantial backlog of 686 cases remain open and this is mainly due to the need to prioritise the work of dealing with planning applications.

The Service has lost experienced staff during the year and the Department has been recruiting and has plans in place to seek to strengthen the resilience of the Service for 2022.

The Planning Service also has statutory duties and a role in Conservation and Mineral and Waste Planning matters, and the service has contributed substantially to the successful bid to designate the World Heritage Site (Slate) and continues to support the work deriving from the inscription. The service is in the process of publishing a design guide to advise and raise awareness of the principles and importance of good design within the designation area.

Joint Planning Policy Service

We worked on the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) during 2021/22, and it was submitted to the Welsh Government in October 2021. The report concluded that the indicators, on the whole, were performing in line with the expectations, and where targets were not being met, this was out of the control of the Joint Local Development Plan (LDP). Although the findings of the AMR note on the whole that the JLDP's policies are performing effectively, it was explained that significant changes had occurred since the Plan's adoption, and that these changes needed to be considered as a part of the statutory review of the Plan which commenced in July 2021.

The Service has prepared a Review Report in line with Welsh Government guidance, and the Report concluded that a full review of the JLDP was required, which equates to a New Plan. The Review Report has been the subject of a Public Consultation and in March 2022, the report was approved by the full Councils of Gwynedd and Anglesey, so that it could be published and submitted to the Welsh Government.

The Service has prepared and gone out to public consultation on Supplementary Planning Guidance following the successful

designation of the World Heritage Site (Slate), and it is intended to report back on adopting the Guidance in 2022/23.

The Service has led on a response to a recent **Welsh Government consultation - Legislation and Planning Policy for Second Homes and Short-term Holiday Lets** and the Service will continue to lead in this field as the work develops, in collaboration with other Council Departments. This work contributes to the Council's improvement priorities which relate to access to suitable homes.

The Service is also collaborating regionally in an attempt to influence arrangements for the preparation of a Strategic Development Plan, which is one of the statutory duties of the Corporate Joint Committee for the North Wales region.

Building Control Service

The Building Control Unit works with the public and partners so that our communities have safe buildings that meet the appropriate building standards. The Service is also responsible for dealing with applications to number streets/properties, property searches and demolition notices.

During 2021/22, the Service determined over 90% of building control applications within the statutory period, and on average, responded to notices of hazardous buildings and ensured that they were made safe within a day of being notified.

The Service is finding it very challenging to recruit and retain qualified Building Control officers since the Service is a commercial service which competes with the private sector for work. Over the past 12 months, two qualified Chartered Building Control officers have moved to the private sector, and the Service has been unable to recruit officers to replace them and has employed an external consultant for a temporary period.

Following a review of the Service and how it has changed over the years, what is highlighted is that the priority has been on the fee-paying work, consequently the resource for non-fee-paying work such as enforcement work has been cut, and the income target has been raised as a result. As a result of the Service review, the Department has plans for 2022/23 to act on a structure review, acknowledging the demands that will derive from the new legislation in terms of competency, and to have a job advertisement pack that is a more attractive offer. It is also intended to trial the use of money deriving from the Department's underspend to contribute to the non-fee-attracting work - which is mainly enforcement work.

Countryside Service

With statutory responsibilities for the Council's public footpaths, the work of preparing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan has continued during 2021/22 and it is aimed to complete this work in 2022/23, by adopting the Plan. Similarly, the work on the Nature Recovery Plan has commenced in 2021/22 with the intention of also completing and adopting the Plan during 2022/23. These Plans, to a great degree, will steer the Service's work over the coming years.
The Ffordd Gwynedd review has slipped as a result of the pandemic; however, work will continue to develop performance measures for the Service.

The various work programmes and projects being implemented by the Service and funded through grants has increased substantially since 2020, and this has led to additional pressures on existing staff and it is intended to increase the capacity to enable the Service to respond more effectively to the opportunities.

During 2022/23, the Countryside Service will build on the work done over the past years in relation to supporting communities to take

care of their local environment, as well as provide access opportunities to nature and strengthen the Active Travel provision.

The 2021/22 period has seen an increase in the number of planning applications that require attention from the Biodiversity team as well as enquires relating to tree matters. Steps have been taken to deal with the workload, including the appointment of staff, but it has proved difficult to attract competent applicants.

The Service will continue to collaborate with the Highways and Municipal Department on the response to ash dieback and will provide input to the Land Use work programmes that derive from the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan (which is an improvement priority that is led by the Department).

Integrated Transport and Road Safety Service

The **public transport** sector in Gwynedd has faced a turbulent time over recent years, with the service having to respond swiftly to major changes in terms of the providers who were available. The Service has now commenced the work of conducting a comprehensive survey of the public transport network. The Service is collaborating with Transport for Wales to plan a network that will provide a better service for the people of Gwynedd. It will also consider innovative methods of offering a public transport network, e.g. flexi bus or on-demand service in some areas. It is anticipated that some of these services will commence during the Summer 2022.

As a result of officers being redirected to alternative duties within the department, we have been unable to gather the usual data relating to the timeliness of bus services. However, we are continuing to collaborate with the transport sector in order to maintain services that meet the needs of the people of Gwynedd.

Parking and Street Works Service

A Parking Task Group was formed towards the end of 2019 in order to address various parking issues and present potential solutions to address the financial deficit facing the Council and also to improve the current parking arrangements. A report was submitted to Cabinet Members in February 2021 and the recommendations were accepted, which included adopting the new parking fees structure, strengthening the parking team and retaining blue badge and resident parking. The recommendations deriving from the review have now been implemented.

The last two years have escalated problems such as a shortage of parking spaces throughout the county, as a result of people staying in the UK for holidays rather than venturing abroad, and this has highlighted the need for additional powers to deal with vehicles that create obstructions and better control of motorhomes.

As a result, the Council proceeded to undertake research which included consulting with caravan site operators in Gwynedd, the motorhome sector, as well as communities across the County. Based on the research, the Cabinet agreed to recommendations, which included conducting a pilot project for the use of Council parking sites (or parts of the sites), located within the Gwynedd Planning Authority area, to provide facilities for motorhomes to park overnight for a fee, which will go hand in hand with management/ enforcement measures. The current timetable (dependent on the planning permission) is for the first pilot to be operational before the end of March 2023. Through this project, the

Department is contributing to the Council's tourism improvement priority, which relates to drawing up a sustainable tourism plan.

In response to motorists who park illegally and inconsiderately causing hazards to other highway users, particularly in the Pen y Pass area that is governed by parking restrictions in the form of a clearway, the Council adopted powers to tow vehicles away. This means that we are not completely reliant on North Wales Police to deal with vehicles that cause obstructions or risks to the public. These powers were approved in September 2021.

Traffic and Projects Services

The Traffic and Projects service deal with matters that relate to any changes to the transportation infrastructure. The main objective is to ensure that the highway is safe for all road users and that it is possible to use the network without obstruction and in a sustainable way. We meet this objective by delivering the following aspects:

- Dealing with applications to introduce parking bans
- Submitting observations as a statutory consultee on planning applications
- Dealing with enquiries about speeding
- Improving and expanding the walking and cycling network, promoting the walking and cycling network, and completing any other duties under the Active Travel Act 2013
- Leading on projects to improve road safety, improvements in front of schools, improving the transportation infrastructure with emphasis on plans to reduce carbon footprint
- Ensuring that roads in new estates are built to the appropriate standards so that they can be adopted
- Administering the highways data and ensuring that the information is up-to-date.

We are always looking for opportunities to fund transportation plans from external sources for the benefit of the area's communities.

The 2021-2022 year has been very challenging as the Service lost experienced staff, and had problems recruiting competent officers.

Business Service (Finance)
Category Management

The purpose of this Service is to collaborate and support the Council's services to design and implement a procurement strategy per category with the aim of maximising value for money and encourage keeping the benefit local. During 2021/22, there are projected reductions in the budget of £395k. As well as additional benefits for every category we have reviewed thus far. The team continues to strive to ensure the best value for money with particular emphasis on sustainable procurement, which complements the Council's latest Climate Emergency and Nature Plan.

We are continuing to engage early with the market and collaborating with Business Wales who are offering support to local companies. Unfortunately, since the local markets were not within our categories that were reviewed in 21/22, our efforts to maximise keeping the benefit local have been unsuccessful, on the whole. Nevertheless, we have been a part of trialling the TOMs tool, which relates to measuring social value, in the hope of ensuring as much social benefits as possible and it is hoped that the pilot will steer companies from outside the county to offer local benefits.

Business Service (Administrative)
Land Charges

Gwynedd's Local Land Charges Unit provides searches information to anyone who wishes to purchase property or land within Gwynedd. The last year has been challenging with

a substantial increase in the number of applications and enquiries that have, and continue to reach us. As a result, the time taken to process applications has increased, and on average take a month to process.

We are considering many options in order to obtain better control of the situation, but it must be acknowledged that no quick solution is possible. Transferring to a national computer system in itself will bring the time taken to process applications down dramatically, with the current target to get the project operational by the end of November 2022. We have appointed casual staff to assist with the project work, in order to release our experienced staff to work through the searches applications.

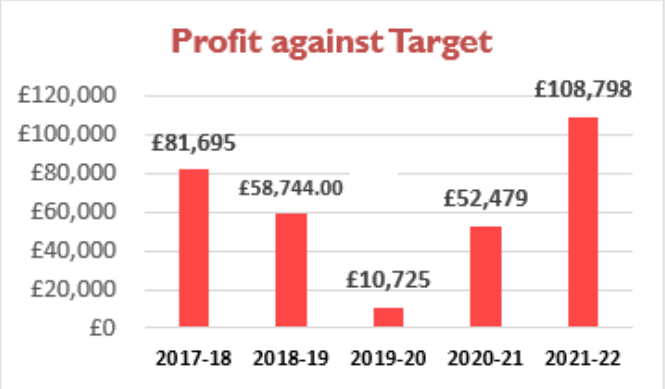
This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.
- Live in quality homes within their communities

Gwynedd Consultancy Department (YGC)

Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC) operates commercially in the field of engineering and construction in order to secure high quality jobs within the County, and aims to generate a profit as a means of helping the Council's financial position.

For 2021/22, we managed to generate a profit that was £108,798 higher than the target of £6.39m that had been set.



During lockdown the financial performance was made possible by completing the design and construction work during the pandemic period. The projects were located in north Wales, mid Wales and Pembrokeshire.

Key to all this was the willingness of staff to work flexibly and to cope and adapt to working from home. We have made very successful adaptations to the department, and we will continue with some of these arrangements in future.

Performance in the field of Water and Floods

This technical service undertakes design and construction projects which reduce flood and coastal erosion risks to the people of Gwynedd . The service has been successful in securing grant funding for these projects.

All these are communities that have either suffered historically, or where there is strong evidence that climate change is likely to increase the risk in future.

In the year 2020/21, the service has worked on over 20 projects to reduce the risk of flooding for hundreds of people

The flooding prevention projects include (please note the number of buildings that benefit from a reduction in flooding risks):

- Viaduct Gardens, Barmouth (**33**) – Begin the detailed design work in order to move forward with the construction in 2022/23.
- North Parade, Barmouth (**712**) - Confirm the favoured option and complete the outline business case. Discuss the next steps in relation to detailed design with Welsh Government.
- Hirael Bay, Bangor (**82**) – Complete the outline business case and confirm the favoured option, proceed with the detailed design. Begin the construction work in 2022/23.
- Porthdinllaen (**18**) – Prepare the detailed plans and a full business case in order to proceed to the construction work in 2022/23.
- Aberdyfi Wharf (**11**) - Complete the detailed design work, full business case and funding. Begin the construction work in 2022/23.
- Afon Gwyrfai (**54**) – Prepare a detailed design and a full business case for the individual plans within the catchment.
- Ogwen Catchment (**95**) – prepare a

detailed business case to carry out improvements along the catchment area, to manage and reduce flooding risk.

Monitoring Assets

The Service has completed coastal and land drainage assets investigations in Gwynedd. The service has 264 assets which are scored from 1 to 5, where 1 is the best score. The target is a score of 3 or less and 219 assets reach this score. Of the 45 that are not on target, the department has plans to improve the condition of these assets. The department also seeks to make all coastal assets safer for the public.

The department also intends to ensure that all the coastal assets are safer for the public.

Flooding Investigations

We continue to gather information about the level of flood risk within the County, and have developed specific maps and databases for this purpose. During 2021/22 it was recorded that 45 residential properties and 2 commercial premises had suffered from internal flooding, which is when water enters the building.

We continue to collaborate with the public sector, and other bodies, by raising awareness of flood risks and coastal erosion.

Regulatory

During 2021/22 we have processed 24 applications for ordinary watercourse consent across the County. The consultancy service offered means that each request received during this period has been acceptable, with an average response time of 22 days within a permitted response period of up to two months.

The purpose of the ordinary watercourse consent process is to manage specific activities that may have a detrimental impact on flooding. During the last year, we have also been discussing the requirements of the new land drainage byelaws with various developers. This is in order to ensure that they are aware of the implications on future developments. This process of raising awareness will continue.

During 2021 we have provided observations on over 350 planning applications to ensure that the flooding and coastal erosion threat for new developments were highlighted and acceptable, and that the application details complied with national policies.

SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems)

Number of Applications

As anticipated, the number of applications has increased this year, from 58 to 91 applications, which is an increase of 57%, and we have therefore employed an additional member of staff as a resource to respond to this.
During this period we have also processed 48 applications for Anglesey, Wrexham and Powys Councils.

We continue to work with the planning departments of the Council and Snowdonia National Park, to highlight the requirements to their applicants.

It appears that the awareness of these requirements has increased, with an associated improvement in the quality of the applications.

We have commenced the process of undertaking a Ffordd Gwynedd assessment for the SuDS service, which will continue over the coming months.

Pre-application Service

Although we received approval to charge a fee for this service, we have continued to offer the service free of charge over the lockdown periods.

Work beyond Gwynedd

Gwynedd Council has been appointed by Anglesey, Wrexham and Powys Councils to process and check all their SuDS applications. But, with the number of applications increasing in Gwynedd, we have decided to provide support solely to Anglesey Council next year.

We also lead on work to develop consistency across North Wales, and collaborate with the County Councils of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. This work comprises drafting policies and procedures that can be used regionally to share resources and establish consistency in the way the requirements are implemented.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.
- Live in quality homes within their communities

Finance and Information Technology Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

The Finance Department ensures the appropriate support for the Council in managing, safeguarding and developing its financial position in addition to providing services, such as collecting revenue and paying benefits in a fair manner, and paying staff salaries and supplier invoices. The Council's information technology services are also part of the Finance Department and they offer high quality technical guidance and support which promotes the Council's basic values.

Financial Management and Savings

The Finance Department's financial management work and accountants support is an asset to the Council's departments when delivering for the people of Gwynedd during challenging times. Through conscientious financial management, the Department has assisted the Council to manage to keep within its budget every year since 2015/16.

In the financial climate of restrictions on public expenditure, reliable financial budgets and accurate and fair accounts have been produced. The Finance department is responsible for the Council's robust arrangements, and for providing suitable resources to ensure that all departments deliver what is expected of them.

As has been noted in the introduction to this performance report, 94% of the savings schemes, with a total value of £33 million between 2015/16 and the end of 2021/22 have been completed, but other schemes were more challenging to deliver. Therefore, the current savings schemes were reviewed during 2021/22, and prudential steps were taken to cancel some savings and slip others on to 2023/24 or beyond.

The Covid-19 crisis had a significant financial impact, with a combination of additional costs and loss of income worth over £16 million to the Council in 2020/21. Gwynedd Council accountants submitted claims to the Welsh Government to compensate for loss of income to the tune of £3 million, and additional expenditure of £13 million.
In terms of the Council's performance for 2021/22, the impact of the crisis has been very clear on the financial position, with significant grant receipts later in the financial year transforming the financial position, including grants for winter pressures on social services, schools' budgets and Council Tax arrears.

Internal Audit

The Council's Internal Audit service gives confidence to the citizen and the Council on the Council's control environment and governance arrangements through independent and objective reporting to the Head of Finance and the Audit and Governance Committee.

During 2021/22, 30 audits were delivered from Gwynedd Council's audit plan, i.e. the audit had been closed or a final report had been released. This equates to 71.43% of the Annual Plan. During the year, some auditors assisted with other priorities, including assessing self-isolation payments.

As well as auditing Gwynedd Council, internal audits were held on behalf of Snowdonia

National Park Authority, GwE, Byw'n Iach company and 70 town and community councils.

Pensions

The Pensions Service administrates the Local Government Pension Scheme on behalf of over 40 employers, including Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy councils. The service focuses on operating accurately and promptly on behalf of its members.

2021/22 has been another busy year for the Pensions Service, with the work of preparing for the three-year Valuation of the Fund (position as at 31/03/2022), in conjunction with the Actuary, remaining on track. 11,600 pensioners have been paid promptly each month, and there has been an improvement in the time taken to deal with bereavement cases. The performance of the service's other duties has remained consistent throughout the year, apart from an increase in the time taken to deal with pension benefit transfers. The provision of virtual training to new staff on this complex topic has been challenging. It is expected that this situation will improve in 2022/23.

Although we continue to send some documents by post, there has been an effort to decrease our use of paper, and 16,500 members have now registered on the 'My Pension On-line' website. These resources will be loaded onto the Consortium's e-learning portal. This will assist with the process of accelerating the processing of pension benefits. We have also been experimenting with options to allow members to process their retirement on-line, and this work will continue during 2022/23.

By now, the i-Connect system is being used on a monthly basis by all Pension Fund employers to update the salary records. This means that the information in the pensions system is as current and accurate as possible.

Due to the Covid-19 Omicron variant and the situation in Ukraine, the Fund's investment circumstances have been challenging in 2021/22, when our asset managers failed to perform in line with their benchmark. Such variations are to be expected within our 5-year performance investment cycle. Since the beginning of the year, the value of the Fund has increased by approximately £300m to £2.8bn by 31 December 2021.

The collaboration work with the Wales Pension Partnership has gone from strength to strength since its establishment in 2017, and by now, 83% of Gwynedd's Fund has been pooled - 56% through the main funds and 27% through passive investments. Through the Partnership, it is possible to access a broader range of funds and asset managers, which improve the resilience of the Gwynedd Fund.

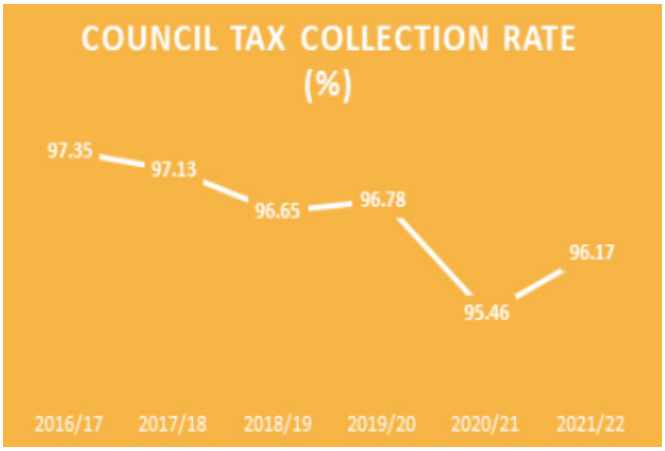
During 2021/22, the Pensions Committee adopted new policies on Skills and Knowledge, Governance and Responsible Investment. As part of the Responsible Investment Policy, the Fund has committed to reducing its carbon emissions to reach 'zero net' between 2030 and 2050, and the Committee received a report on the recent positive steps made by all the asset managers.

Taxes

By the end of March 2022, the Council Tax collection (i.e. collection rate during the year) was 96.17%. This was an improvement on the comparative figure of 95.46% in 2020/21, which was a highly unusual year, but slightly lower than the rate of 96.78% in 2019/20, the last year before the pandemic.

The collection rate during the year is the national performance indicator, but it should be noted that the vast majority of the money that is due is collected eventually. Naturally, dealing with Council Tax debts in a sympathetic manner is a key part of the work, and as the cost of living challenge increases

the pressure on Gwynedd's families during 2021/22, this element of the work will reflect this.



Benefits

The average time taken to process new Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction applications in 2021/22 was 17.89 days, compared to 18.74 days in 2020/21, a slight improvement. However, there was a small increase in the average time taken to process a notice of change in Housing Benefit/Council Tax reduction circumstances to 4.28 days this year, compared to 3.77 in 2020/21.

The Benefits service has assisted 1,770 families through support from the Discretionary Housing Payments Fund (DHP), which is extra support towards paying rent. In doing so, we have been able to assist a significant number of Gwynedd tenants to remain in their existing homes or move to a new property.

The Service processed a school uniform grant / pupil development grant (access) worth £337,200 for 2,559 children (£148,460 / 1,423), and has assessed free school meals claims for 3,090 children in Gwynedd during 2021/22 (3,049 in 2020/21).

In addition to the usual work, the service has continued to process applications from the Self-Isolation Payments Scheme for Welsh Government. In 2020/21, the service dealt with 713 applications for payments between the beginning of the scheme on 16 November 2020 and the end of the financial year on 31 March 2021. During the 2021/22 financial year 7,210 applications were received for processing, with 3,030 of these during the 3 months from 1 January 2022.

During 2021/22, the Benefits Service accepted the responsibility for the Winter fuel scheme, and has processed 6,255 applications and has paid 5,180 between the beginning of the scheme on 13 December 2021 and the end of the scheme on 28 February 2022.

The role of the Benefits Assessors in identifying the needs of residents beyond their benefit claims has strengthened the links with the Supporting People project being undertaken across the Council. Through this work, arrangements have been put in place to allow Benefits Assessors to refer benefit claimants towards further support that is available from the Council.

Insurance and Risk

The service has continued to provide advice to all the Council's departments on insurance matters in relation to a number of risks, including Covid-19, and has arranged additional cover as necessary. The service continues to review claims against the Council in order to identify any patterns in claims that require attention.

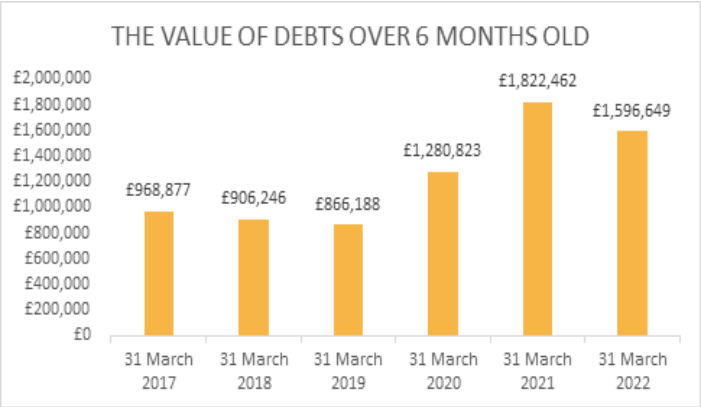
With the Corporate Risk Register having been established in its new form in March 2021, managers across the Council have shown a willingness to use it to illustrate the Council's situation and the priority of actions. This has assisted members to challenge performance and ensure that the expected steps have been taken.

Income

The Income Service aims to process cash

receipts and collect the Council's debts promptly and efficiently.

The value of various debts over 6 months old on 31 March 2022 was £1,596,649, which is a significant improvement on the corresponding figure of £1,822,462 on 31 March 2021, although there is a significant way to return to historical levels. Much of the debt is due to cash-flow restrictions stemming from the pandemic, but we expect the situation to improve as the economy re-opens.



Nevertheless, the service managed to collect 91.13% of invoices raised by the Council in 2021/22, compared to 94.59% in 2020/21. Owing to the economic circumstances during the year, such a reduction was expected.

Payments

The purpose of the service is to pay the Council's creditors correctly and promptly. As a result of the impact of Covid-19, with Council staff working from home, we have adapted to electronic arrangements, which have proven to be successful. In order to deal with the crisis, there was a significant number of additional payments to the value of £11 million, including paying free school meals money to parents of school pupils, winter fuel payments, self-isolation payments and grants for Gwynedd businesses. On average, local suppliers were paid within 21 days, and other suppliers within 28 days.

Salaries

The purpose of the service is to pay staff correctly and promptly, and also to maintain appropriate accounts for external bodies such as HMRC. There were a few cases during the year where the arrangements of working from home during the crisis had led to a failure to send information to the Payroll Unit on time, resulting in having to make amendments to salaries. Despite this, this was a small number and over a period of 5 years, the number of monthly cases which lead to amendments to salaries continues to show a downward trend.

Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) Service provides and supports technology of all kinds to help staff and the people of Gwynedd to gain easy access to information and systems.

Several IT infrastructure projects were completed successfully, including upgrading the corporate network and wi-fi, strengthening our cyber resilience and upgrading the systems and hardware in our data centres. The extremely high standards and consistency in the satisfaction and availability of our services have continued. 916 (99%) of our users stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service received from the Help Desk, with 11 (1%) stating that they were dissatisfied; the availability of our core network was 99.9% and the availability of our core services was 99.97%.

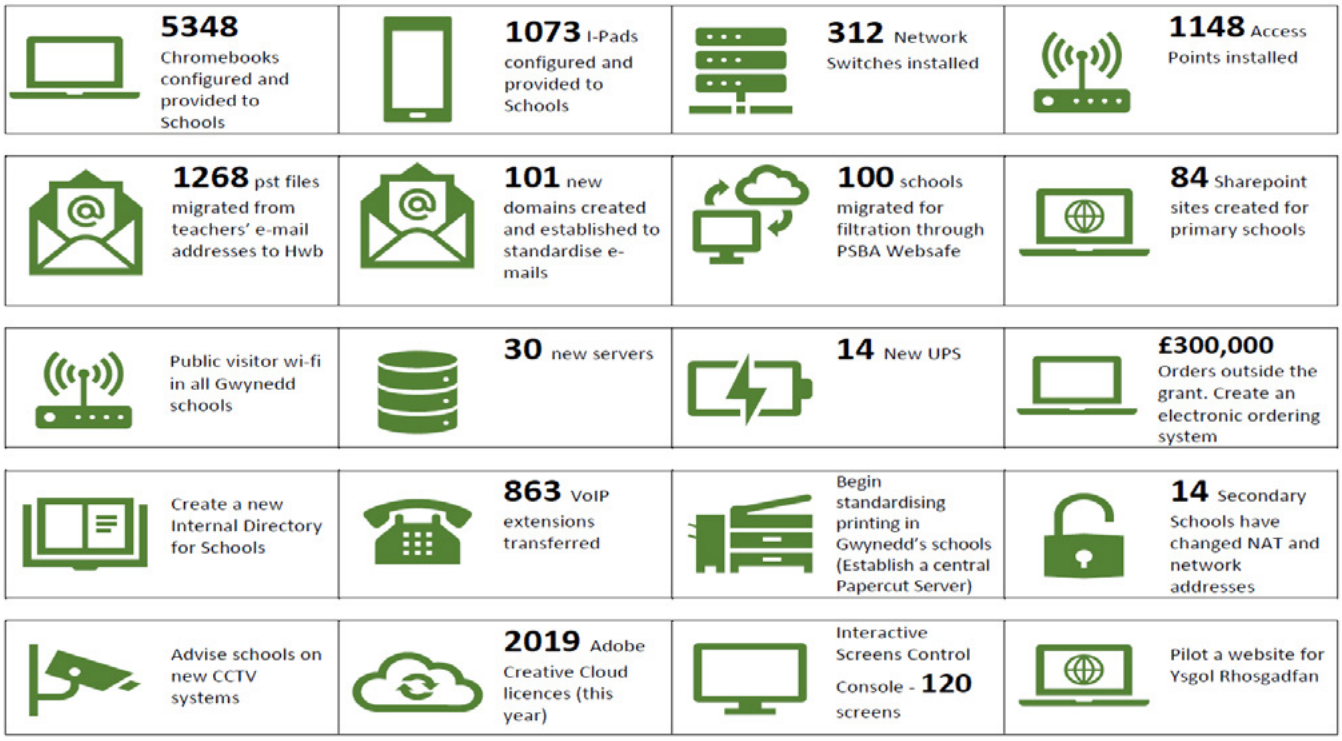
We managed to retain our Public Service Network (PSN) accreditation which expresses the UK Government Cabinet Office's satisfaction with the Council's IT services and network in terms of security, and we continued with the national 'Gold' standard on the standard and cleanliness of data contained in the Gwynedd Land and Property register.

The development unit developed 68 systems. Feedback was received from 17 of the projects, with 15 stating that they were happy and had no improvements to offer. Two had stated that they were satisfied, although they reported that there was scope for improvement as there was no sufficient resource to complete the work sooner.

The Service also supports the Council's departments as they use systems that are hosted externally to the Council. One example of this is the WCCIS system used by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department. The IT Service has supported national discussions to ensure that any matters that arise with these systems receive appropriate attention from the suppliers.

One of last year's significant challenges was to implement the Gwynedd Schools Digital Strategy, the fruition of months of planning, which included internalising support for schools and establishing a new unit within the Information Technology Service. A number of challenges were overcome prior to establishing the new unit, including establishing those included in the infograph below.

In addition to what has already been delivered, the new support unit will provide a laptop for each teacher during the summer term, before moving on to supplying a laptop for each pupil in years 7 to 11.



Corporate Support Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

It has been another unusual year for the whole department with many officers continuing to re-locate to fulfil work which was crucial to enable front-line services to operate - from ensuring PPE supplies for staff to maintaining the Covid-19 vaccination arrangements within the County.

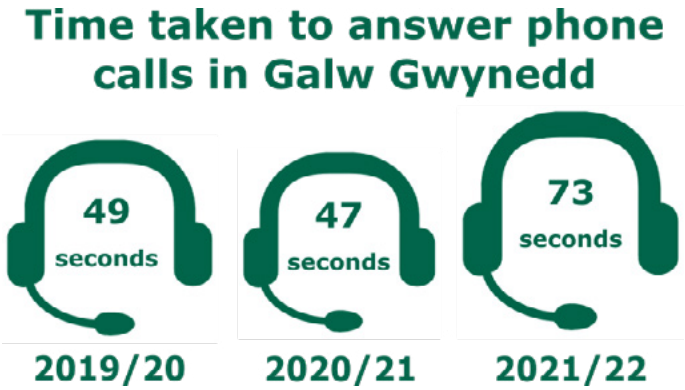
In addition, some of the services had a critical role advising and communicating the message regarding the rules and best practices during the crisis, and following that they were key in ensuring that staff and the public were being protected as best as possible from the spread of the virus.
It was a great effort to fulfil all of this while also maintaining key services and this summary of performance for the year is a reflection of the challenges we faced as well as the successes realised.

Customer Contact

It is possible for Gwynedd residents to access a number of services on-line, at a convenient time for them, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It also provides a more cost-effective way of contacting the Council.

Gwynedd residents and businesses can now get in touch about 37 matters (33 in 2020/21) relating to highways, ordering and paying for a parking ticket, arranging a visit to a recycling centre, paying for school meals with the 4 new services introduced during the year relating to collecting information on pupils that are attending school for the first time, registration and launching boats on Gwynedd's coastline, access to school and applications to transfer school.

Over a quarter of a million enquiries / applications for an on-line service were received during the year which represents nearly 80% of the ones presented to the council in their various ways, with three out of four new services achieved being used totally on-line since their launch. During 2021/22, 14,080 residents opened a new self-service account, which was 2,500 more than did so in 20/21 with the total accounts by now at 68,826.



We provide a face-to-face service through our Gwynedd Shops and by phone through Galw Gwynedd. This year's performance, in terms of the time taken to answer calls, has worsened compared with the previous year, despite the fact that 2,000 less calls had been received i.e. from 47 seconds on average in 2020/21 to 1 minute 13 seconds this year. The main reasons for the decline in the performance was staff turnover and the challenge of attracting workers.

We have experienced some success in attracting staff during the second half of the year and we are making an effort to improve performance, mainly through a combination of further promoting self-service and extending the on-line chat service.

Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages

The Registration Service has seen major changes over the last year, with a change in legislation relating to ceremonies introduced during 2021/22 which lead to an increase in our workload. An increase was also seen in the number of couples wishing to re-arrange their ceremonies from the previous year as well as couples who wanted to arrange new ceremonies. All of this has meant organising more appointments for taking ceremony notices. On the other hand, the increase has led to realising additional income during the year.

Introducing a national arrangement, where Medical inspectors undertake an extra step to prove the cause of death, this has led to some delays with death registrations and as a result a decline in our ability to fulfil work within the statutory time. Since then, we have succeeded in registering 83% of deaths within 5 days (compared with 94% in 2020/21 before the implementation of the additional medical inspection).

90% of births were registered within 5 days during the year, which is a significant improvement on the 51% in the previous year, with the relaxing of the lockdown restrictions being an important factor to this end.

Communication and Engagement

Holding a two-way dialogue with the people of Gwynedd in order to share information about local services and to hear our residents' opinion is a priority for the Council.

In 2020/21 a new engagement software was presented which enabled the Council to engage with the people of Gwynedd based on their local area as well as on a county level. This software enables the Council to plan services and prioritise resources per area whilst making the experience of 'having your say' much easier and more appealing to the public.

Over the year, 14 exercises were held to gather the views of Gwynedd residents on different services with 8,000 individuals taking advantage of these opportunities to give their views.

During 2021/22, 166 press statements were published in the active press by the Service on behalf of the Council with every statement on average leading to attention on 7.1 news platforms. In addition, answers were provided to 650 enquiries from journalists on the Council's work.

The Covid-19 pandemic remained central to the communication work with 22 of the proactive statements published referring to the field and 102 of the responses provided to press enquiries.

By March 2022, 37,858 individuals were receiving daily video clips, digital images and messages through the Council's Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts, which is an increase from 3,686 in the previous year.

Council Business Support

The work of preparing and publishing the Council's performance report for 2020/21 and the review of the Council Plan for 2022/23 was coordinated.

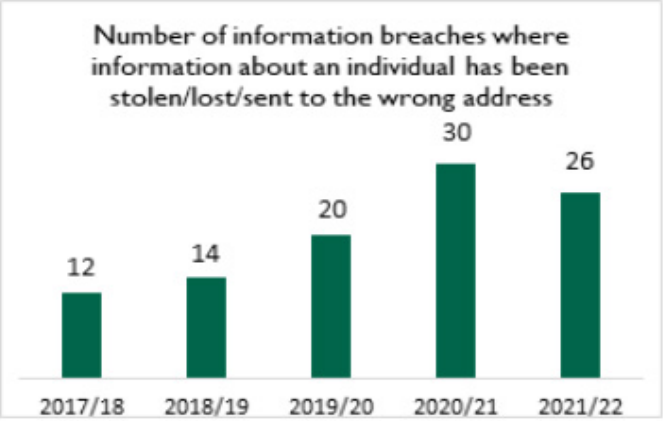
We continued to support and assist with the work of maintaining service reviews and managing a number of projects across the Council as well as leading on implementing the Strategic Equality Plan.

Support is provided to the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board which seeks to ensure that public services providers collaborate in order to improve the well-being of citizens. Over the past few months research work was conducted to look at the well-being of our communities and by now drafts of Well-being Assessments have been published. During 2022/23 the final Well-being Drafts will be published which will lead in the end to creating a new Well-being Plan for both counties.

Research and Information

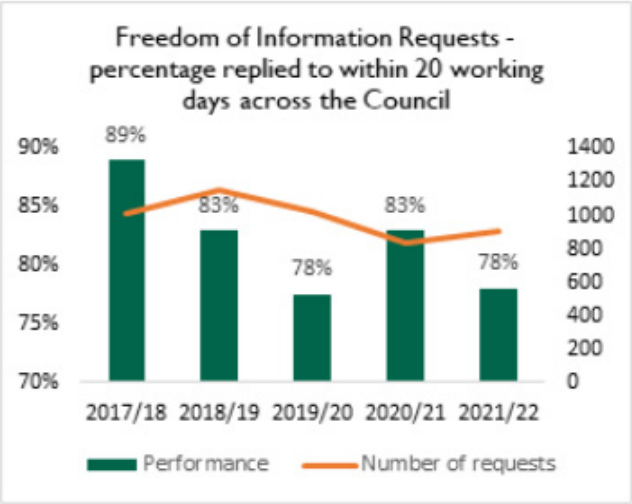
During the year, the Service undertook substantial work on gathering, analysing, interpreting and reporting on relevant data in order to assist the Council's services to respond to the emergency. We will be able to build on the methods and technology learnt during this period to help develop the Council's use of data in other fields in the future.

In collaboration with the Business Support service information packs were created for the 14 well-being areas in Gwynedd and Anglesey, which will provide comprehensive evidence for the Well-being Assessment and the Public Services Board Well-being Plan for both counties.



There was a small reduction in the information events across the Council (i.e. where information had been lost or gone to the wrong person) but the number (26 in 2021/22, compared with 30 in 2020/21) remains high compared with the historical pattern. From analysing the cases, 16 of those (which is 62% of the total) were seen to derive from general carelessness when sending e-mails to wrong addresses. We are discussing technical options with the Information Technology service to try and make such errors less likely; we have also increased the emphasis on this aspect by giving training, guidelines and information safety messages to Council's staff.

A significant increase was made with moving services to the new version of iGwynedd (the Council's electronic record management system) with 6 out of 10 departments fully transferred by now. The response from services which have transferred reported that the new system facilitates sharing information and documents.



Additionally, 905 freedom of information requests were made during the year. The percentage answered promptly was 78%, which is lower than the previous year but the same as the year prior to the pandemic. We will continue to give attention to this including developing the Open Data field, so the answers to some repeat applications for information are available already on the Council's website rather than needing to present an application for them.

Purchasing

In addition to the work on the 'Keeping the Benefit Local' Improvement Priority, the Procurement Service continued to respond to the pandemic's challenges and played a key role in the arrangements of ensuring PPE supplies. The three Category Teams have been a crucial part of these arrangements as well and continue to be involved with purchasing and stock management. Despite this, we have been able to continue with the work of trialling new methodology to assess tenders based on social value as well as the Unit's other work plans.

Democracy and Language Unit

The purpose of the Democracy and Language Service is to support the Council's democracy arrangements and promote the Welsh language continuously. The Service is responsible for three specific fields, namely democracy, translation and language and scrutiny.

During the last year, we have succeeded to further develop our arrangements for holding virtual committees. In addition, a framework noting which committees are to be held virtually and which committees will be held from various locations (hybrid) has been adopted by the full Council. The practical work for holding various location meetings is continuing to take place in order to prepare for the new Council in May 2022. Gwynedd once again is leading by ensuring that simultaneous translation arrangements are available conveniently and without request in every committee.

We have managed to develop preparations for welcoming Councillors following the Local Government Elections in May 2022. The previous arrangements were adapted following discussions with existing Councillors.

We have also managed to review the arrangements for Hunaniaith, with the Cabinet deciding to invest over £200,000 over the next four years in order to employ a Principal officer to lead on establishing Hunaniaith in the community as an independent entity in the future. This will enable communities to take ownership of the direction and support of the language initiative in the future. In the meantime, Hunaniaith continues to work on a number of new exciting projects, including video clubs for young people through the medium of Welsh.

It should also be noted that an area on the Council's website was launched that includes everything associated with the Welsh language, including a digital pack aimed at assisting those moving into the area.

In terms of performance, in 2021/22 we succeeded in publishing 91% of our Committees Decision Notices within 5 working days. Those notices give a summary to the public of the decisions made by the different committees. In addition, 100% of those who responded to note their satisfaction with the translation service scored the service a 5/5. 88% of Councillors noted that the service from the Democracy Team is good/very good.

Human Resources

The service leads on the employment field, by developing the work conditions and advising managers and staff on a broad range of matters associated with working for the Council. It therefore follows that the Service plays a central role in preparing the work arrangements when coming out of the pandemic, and over the year a number of work conditions were adapted and developed in order for staff to benefit from new work arrangements as the restrictions were relaxed. A significant increase was seen in the number of sick days per staff member during the year that has elapsed, from 6.3 days per head last year to 10.7 days per head by the end of

March 2022. This level is higher than those experienced in the years before the lockdown. The challenge for us as the employer, during the coming year, is understanding the reasons for this increase and take every step possible to ensure that the best possible support is offered to promote staff health and well-being.

Number of days lost on average per head as a result of sick leave

2017/18 - 8.72
2018/19 - 9.45
2019/20 - 9.78
2020/21 - 6.30
2021/22 - 10.7

Four employment appeals hearings were held over the course of the year with the Committee's decisions supporting two of the original decisions of the employer.

We succeeded to establish the Government's Kickstart scheme within the council, having previously succeeded in attracting five young persons to the Councils workforce. In addition, the Service had a central role when recruiting a number of principal officers over the past year.

Support Service

The Support Service provides administrative assistance to the Council's staff. The work of introducing the Self-service system to staff without an IT account remains a priority and 94% (92% in 2020/21) of the Council's staff have access to the system by now. We are responsible for processing the DBS checks of Council staff in regulated jobs and during the year we have transferred to completing the checks electronically on-line. As a result, the checks are being circulated to receive the check back within around 7 days compared to 4 to 6 weeks through the paper arrangements in the past.

Organisational Learning and Development

The Learning and Organisational Development service provides a learning and development service for the Council's officers, staff and elected members. The Service also leads on schemes for developing Talent (trainees and apprentices), developing the leadership schemes e.g. Leading Remotely, Women in Leadership, Continuous Evaluation, as well as being prominent in supporting the Council's Ffordd Gwynedd culture. We built on the foundations of 2021/22 by offering 16 learning titles through virtual methods (remotely).

The service is coordinating arrangements to respond to complaints and promoting the lessons learned from the complaints received. During the year, the Service collaborated with the Local Government Ombudsman's Office to create and present a customer care training pack.

By now, 236 of the county's businesses, namely an increase of 28 in the past year, have joined the Staff Benefits Scheme, administrated by the service. The Scheme contributes to promoting the Buying Local Project and use their contacts with the businesses to that end.

Health, Safety and Well-being

For the second year in a row, a significant resource of the Health, Safety and Well-being Team is used dealing with the Council's response to the pandemic. Last year was another year where there were national rules and guidelines, including specific rules for sectors such as health, care and education, these were not only burdensome, but also changed regularly.

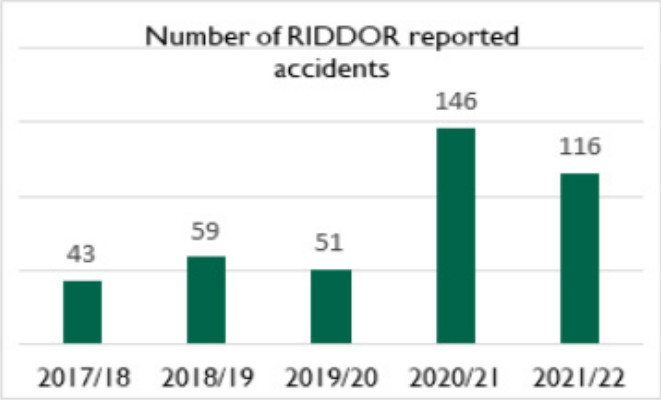
There was an increase in the number of referrals to the Occupational Health Unit during the year. 555 staff members were referred during 2021/22, which is more

than the 473 in 2020/21. This is a significant increase, and the effect of the pandemic plays a part in this, with stress and mental health issues being main reasons for the referral of individuals. Musculoskeletal problems and injuries have also increased over the past few years, and a big increase was seen last year in the number of applications for physiotherapy sessions through the Council. For example, there were 32 referrals for physiotherapy in May 2021 compared to 3 applications in May 2020 and 5 in May 2019.

150 additional vulnerable staff members were referred to us for an assessment relating to working on the front line due to Covid-19 and a number of reviews of the 600 vulnerable staff referred in the previous year were held. Work on the staff well-being programme continued throughout the pandemic and the Council received recognition for the work that was under way in this field when the Gold Level of the Corporate Health Standard was re-validated by the Welsh Government.

Specific recognition for support to staff during Covid-19 was part of the feedback received. The rest of the Unit's work has also resumed, which was specifically undertaking medical tests and health surveillance tests on staff who undertake high risk work. However, further work needs to be undertaken to catch up with these programmes.

The Health and Safety Team has advised and helped services to adapt to the regular changes in the guidelines as well as advising and researching clusters within the workplaces. This has meant intensive support for schools and Headteachers as well as Managers in the care field. The need to report on staff members that caught Covid-19 through work to HSE has continued during the year, and we reported on 116 cases under RIDDOR guidelines this year with most of those being Covid-19 cases.



The work of conducting 'face fit' specialised tests on staff, that provide care in cases where specialist treatments are needed, have continued as well as the manual handling courses and the work of conducting workplace assessments for staff working from home have also been a priority.

Despite the work pressure, there are exciting developments in terms of E-learning with a number of new modules created for staff including a general health and safety module, module on PPE for care staff and manual handling modules.

Beyond the response to Covid-19, the work of the Unit's Officers has been key in assisting the Highways and Municipal Department to gain the BS45001 accreditation for Health and Safety management

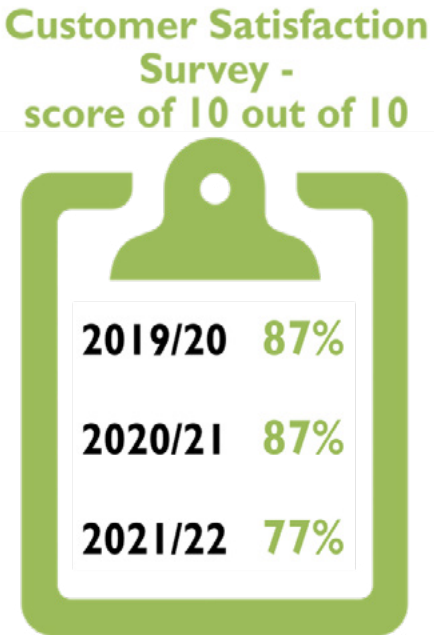
This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Legal Services

The Legal Service provides a full legal service for all the departments within the Council. This includes specialised fields such as employment, commercial property, child protection, litigation and planning.

We receive consistently positive feedback, with the 2021/22 customer satisfaction survey showing that 77% of clients were fully satisfied (a score of 10 out of 10) with the service provided. It is difficult to draw a specific message from the feedback, but we monitor the performance level and the reasons for attributing a score lower than 10/10 closely, and respond to messages that derive from the data. it should be noted that the percentage increases to 94% on a score of 9/10. Naturally, the information contributes to the procedure for managing and monitoring our performance.



Monitoring Officer - Propriety

The Service collaborates locally and regionally to plan and respond to changes to governance and to the Constitution that will derive from the introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. A work programme was established, as well as a project team under the supervision of the Audit and Governance Committee. The first steps have been implemented and the work is progressing in line with the programme. As the Act comes into force over a period that will continue to the 2022/23 year, the project of bringing the provisions operational will continue.

Elections and Electoral Registration

The Service is also responsible for supporting the Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer by administrating all the county's elections and the Electoral Roll.

A grant was received from the Welsh Government early in 2020 to support the work of establishing the new voting rights (16 year-olds) as well as other aspects on the theme of access to voting. A work programme has been established and a project officer has been appointed by using a Welsh Government grant. The Covid-19 situation within education establishments continue to have a substantial impact on the form of the work. However, we succeeded to carry out many activities, particularly in the final quarter of the year as the situation improved, and by collaborating with education organisations, youth groups to raise awareness of the new voting rights and specifically how to register to vote.

Senedd and Police and Crime Commissioner elections, as well as By-elections, were held following the easing of the emergency regulations which had prevented them. These processes were conducted successfully under Covid-19 restrictions, whilst adhering to the quite substantial safety requirements

in force at the time across two electoral wards, including 136 polling stations and two counting centres.

Coroner Support Service

The Service carries out a statutory function supporting the North West Wales Coroner Service. During the year, preparation work was being undertaken with the UK Government's Department for Justice on the next steps in terms of the area's future. However, this work ended due to the decision made by the Chief Coroner that no review should be carried out due to the linguistic character of the North West Wales area. Consequently, we were able to commence the work of creating a service on a long-term basis, and commence the permanent appointment processes and investment in software, which would allow for substantial modernisation of the service.