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Annual Performance Report & Self Assessment 2023-24



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Leader's Foreword



It is my pleasure to present the Annual Performance and Self-Assessment Report, which highlights the work of the Council over the past year. This is the first performance review of the Council's Plan 2023-28.

This year our focus has been on alleviating the financial burden on families, particularly those struggling with the high cost of living. We have successfully upgraded dining facilities and equipped kitchens in our schools, ensuring that we offer every primary pupil a free school lunch. Additionally, we adopted a Poverty Alleviation and Prevention Plan, leading to the establishment of the Gwynedd Poverty Group, and a food sharing network, all of which benefit from the support of organisations across the county.

We strived to support individuals and families who are homeless and further reduce our reliance on temporary accommodation, such as B&Bs and hotels. Supported housing developments have been opened in Bangor, Dolgellau and Pwllheli, and construction has also been completed on four new flats in Caernarfon to help young people at risk of homelessness move towards independent living. The Council has also worked with housing associations to build over 170 new social housing units and bring around 50 empty properties back into use to meet the growing demand for affordable and suitable housing for local people.

I am pleased that Cyngor Gwynedd continues to explore innovative ways of working with our partners. This year, we published the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035 to ensure that communities benefit from tourism, whilst also protecting our unique environment, language and culture. We have already started implementing this work by opening the first Arosfan pilot site in Cricieth, offering an appropriate place to stay overnight for motorhomes, with further sites planned in 2024.

Further steps were taken to reduce the Council's carbon footprint during the year. Solar panels are being installed at Council-owned sites, reducing energy costs and carbon emissions. We've also initiated the process of switching fleet vehicles for electric ones, installing more charging points in public places for residents as well as Council vehicles.

As we celebrate our achievements, however, it would be remiss of me not to emphasize the significant and very serious financial challenges facing local councils over the next few years. We simply don't have enough money to do everything we want to do. As a result, we had to prioritize our plans based on risk and seek additional sources of funding, such as grants, which are becoming increasingly scarce. At the same time, demand for local services continues to rise exponentially.

I am concerned about our ability to maintain quality services in the current climate, and we are having to look seriously at what we can provide for the future. As Leader, I will keep pushing for more investment in local government and emphasize the need for stable and adequate funding from both Westminster Government and the Welsh Government.

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn
Cyngor Gwynedd Leader

Introduction

The Council published its 'Cyngor Gwynedd Plan for 2023-2028' in March 2023, in which our ambition and priorities are set for the five years in question. The 'Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28' includes a series of ambitious projects which will enable us to develop and improve our services for the residents of the county over a period of five years. The projects are covered under seven priority fields:

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

This is our first report which looks at the attainments of the Council Plan 2023-28. The report has been divided into headings which reflect the above priority areas, describing the progress made during the past year, as well as the main attainments in the day-to-day work of our departments, for example, care of children and adults, the environment, and primary and secondary education.

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

We will do this by adopting a way of working which focuses on putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. See table on page 72 which shows the contribution of each priority project towards the five ways of working.

The final part of the performance report will incorporate our self-assessment for the year. This will be our third self-assessment. The Council is expected to present this annually under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

To succeed in our plans, we need to work together and continue to foster a healthy relationship with a broad range of partners – the third sector, the private sector, other public services and of course, our enthusiastic communities.

A new savings programme has been introduced as one of the Council's top priorities in response to the financial situation, and the Council has agreed a £6.4 million savings programme when setting the 2023/24 budget, as well as further savings of £5.2 million when setting the 2024/25 budget. Despite the financial challenges, the Council is constantly innovating whilst trying to find better and more efficient ways of providing services.

As part of our performance arrangements we regularly host a series of performance challenge and support meetings which is a chance for us to see what kind of progress the departments have made with their day-to-day work as well as progress against the milestones that have been set for the projects within the seven priority fields in the Council Plan.

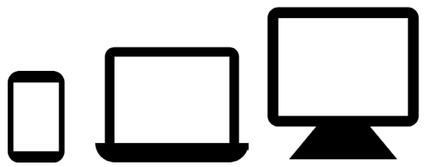
This Annual Performance Report is based on the findings of these performance challenge and support meetings. The report not only intends to draw attention to the positives, but also provide a fair and honest reflection of our performance during the year. In doing so, we can celebrate our successes and see which aspects of our work needs further attention, in order to assist us in providing the best possible service for the residents of the county within the resources we have.

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

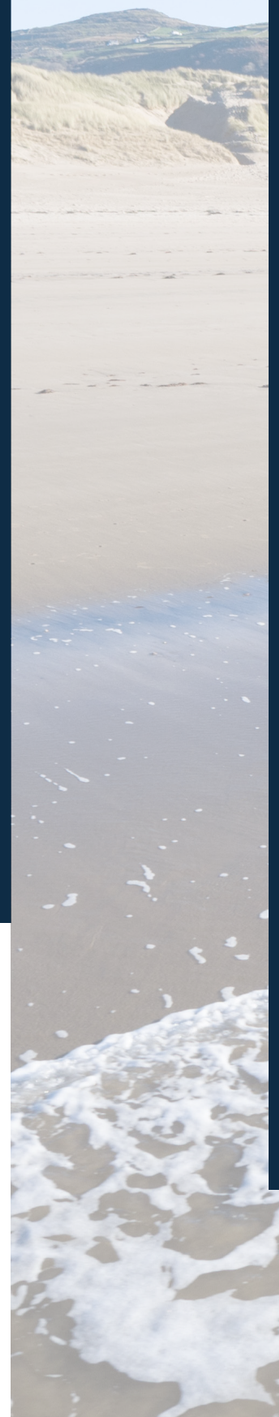
Tomorrow's Gwynedd

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

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







Projects

* Transforming education for children in their early years
* Free school meals
* Modernising buildings and the learning environment
* Promoting the well-being of children and young people and reducing the cost of sending children to school
* Extending opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people

Project Updates

Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Transforming education for children in their early years

Achievements during the year include:

- We have presented a draft strategy for the early years that will respond to the principles, and we have established collaboration arrangements with our health partners.

Free school meals

Achievements during the year include:

- We have upgraded to electric equipment, installing less gas equipment in our kitchens, to reduce carbon emissions.
- It was ensured that there are enough kitchen staff / supervisors in our primary schools to cope with the increase in the numbers who have school dinners.
- We have managed to offer free school meals to all primary aged pupils, ensuring that the dining space is suitable and that our kitchens are adequately equipped to provide dinner and have tried to ensure that as many of the primary aged pupils as possible take advantage of the scheme, and as a result, this project has been completed this year.

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

Achievements during the year include:

- Project groups were established to draw up a work programme and detailed research specifications into the financial cost of sending children to school, and the emotional and psychological cost to some children of attending school.
- Research work was undertaken, and data was collected for the financial cost and the emotional cost of attending school.



Modernising buildings and the learning environment

Achievements during the year include:

- A business case was approved to fund a new school for Our Lady's School in Bangor, with capacity for 150 learners on the old Ysgol Glanadda site.
- A business case was approved to fund improvements for Ysgol Hirael in Bangor.
- Possible options were considered to improve the condition of the buildings and the learning environment at Ysgol Tryfan, Bangor, and the business case will be presented soon.
- The work of building a new Primary School in Cricieth continues, and the school will open in September 2024.
- Post-16 Education in Arfon - At the Cabinet meeting on 28 November 2023, it was decided not to move forward with the review of post-16 education arrangements in Arfon.

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

Achievements during the year include:

- A work programme was drawn up to improve the playing fields, and opportunities to collaborate with local partners were explored.
- Grant requests were submitted to improve the provision for children and young people.
- Information was collected about the provision that is currently available and opinion surveys were undertaken.

CYNGOR GWYNEDD

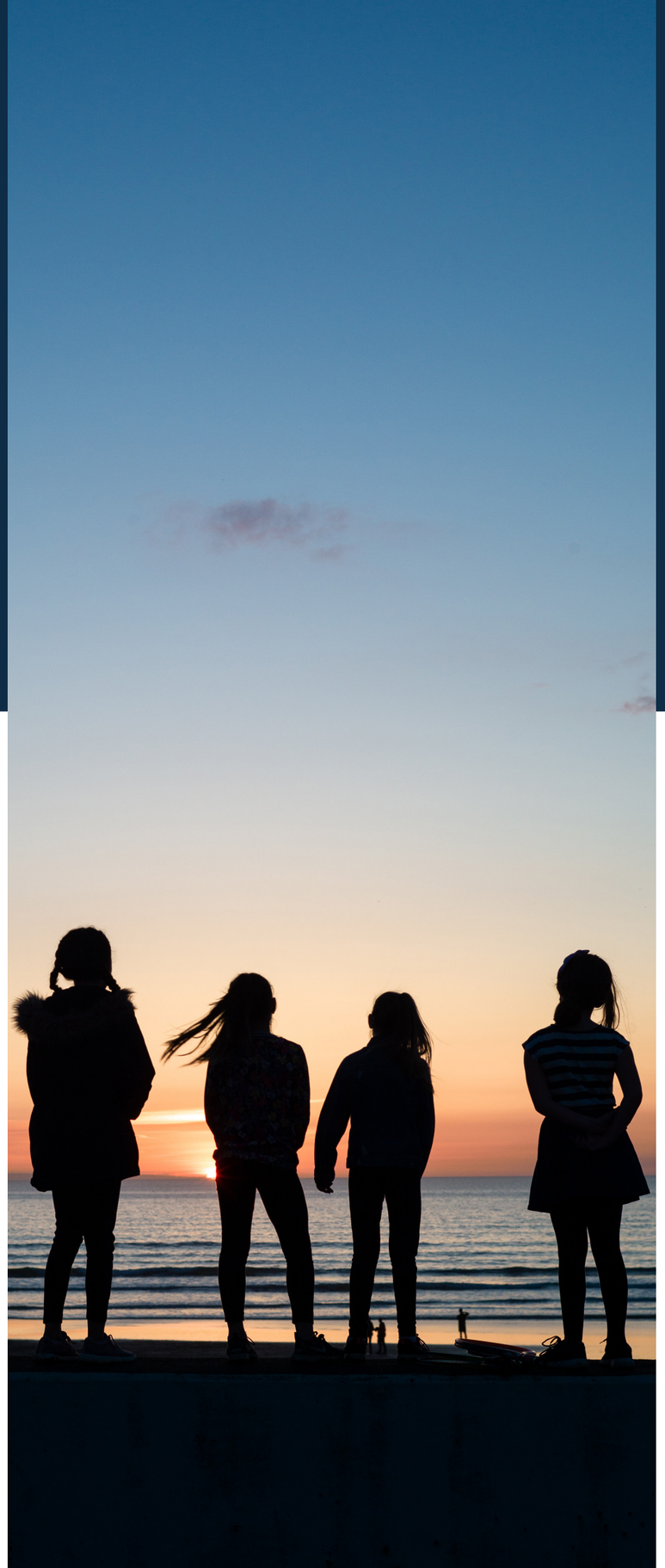
Some of our key achievements

- A Draft Education Strategy has been drawn up and discussed at the Secondary Headteachers' Strategic Group and submitted to the Special and Primary Consultation Group, and the draft has also been submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

- A Project Boards arrangement is in place to ensure that education capital project management is robust. Considerable work has been achieved during the year to meet the needs of the one-time capital grants expenditure during the year, such as the Additional Learning Needs grant and area schools, and the Band C Sustainable Learning Communities capital projects are moving forward as expected by now.

- Every school and Governing Body has a designated person who has completed the level 2 safeguarding training during the last three years.

- We have created a Training package jointly with Speech and Language Therapists to up-skill school staff to enable them to further support learners with speech and language difficulties.



- We have managed to attract grant funding from the Welsh Government to employ three additional welfare officers for a year. The additional officers have enabled us to achieve preventative work to respond quickly to concerns that are highlighted. These resources seem to be making a difference, and the schools are happy with the additional support.

- The visual impairment team has created resources and books adapted for specific pupils.

- The criteria to assess Early Years learners has been updated and proves to be an effective method of joint assessment with all stakeholders involved with the children.

- There was collaboration with the Early Development Team, Flying Start Service to establish a structure to open an electronic profile for very young children who receive support on a targeting at home level. This allows children to transfer to Early years settings with a profile in place. The settings have stated that this ensures continuum in the provision of the targeting level.

Tomorrow's Gwynedd



Protecting the welfare of Gwynedd's children and young people. All schools that have received a monitoring visit during the year have complied with the requirements.



Supporting children and young people with a medical/physical/ sensory condition to have access to education - 91% of users are very satisfied with the service

The number of waiting days for a counselling service has reduced from 51 to 23 since the beginning of the educational year.



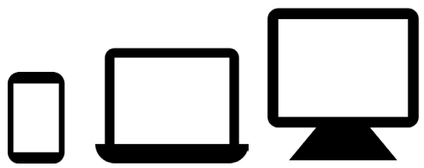
Our young people have achieved 728 accreditations through Youth Service this year.



A Prosperous Gwynedd

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

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







Projects

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

Project Updates

A Prosperous Gwynedd

Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy

Achievements during the year include:

- The Gwynedd and Eryri Plan 2035 was launched and the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Partnership 2035 was established.
- Consultation began on the development of a Culture Plan for Gwynedd.
- The North West Wales World Heritage Coordinator was appointed jointly with Cadw.
- Overnight sites were developed across Gwynedd to provide motorhomes with suitable places to park overnight.
- A programme of activities was held during Eisteddfod week, and support was given to communities, businesses and the cultural sector to prepare for the Eisteddfod.
- Improvements were made to Neuadd Dwyfor in Pwllheli which is an important cultural centre for the Dwyfor area and more widely.



Regenerating communities and town centres

Achievements during the year include:

- Draft Local Regeneration Plans were drawn up for each of the 13 regeneration areas in the county.
- Workshops were held in each local regeneration area to discuss and adapt the draft Local Regeneration Plans; and to update local organisations on the new financial programmes.
- Key Funds were established to support projects within Local Regeneration Plans.
- Town Centre Plans were drawn up for Bangor, Caernarfon and Porthmadog.
- Information was gathered about empty properties in our main towns, and the current interventions of Council Departments dealing with empty properties were reviewed.
- An Empty Properties Project Manager (Economic Development Professional Trainee as part of the Yfory Scheme 2023 programme) was appointed.

Keeping the Benefit Local

Achievements during the year include:

- Training was carried out amongst officers to explain how the council can support the local economy in the purchase of goods and services.
- Workshops were held for local businesses.
- Guidance was developed on the new arrangements.
- Our procurement policies were updated.

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

Achievements during the year include:

- Funding from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund was targeted to strengthen the foundations of Gwynedd's economy.
- We collaborated with partners across North Wales to ensure benefit for Gwynedd from the North Wales Growth Deal.
- The second phase of the ARFOR Programme was implemented, namely an £11 million Welsh Government programme, which works across Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire to support communities that are Welsh language strongholds to thrive. The programme provides economic interventions that also contribute to increasing the opportunities to see and use the Welsh language on a daily basis.
- New arrangements were set up to engage with businesses to provide them with useful information.
- A Business Support Fund was launched to provide additional financial support to the county's businesses.
- Planning permission was secured to develop 10 new work units.
- An agreement was reached with the Welsh Government to provide a Support into Work programme.

Some of our key achievements

Developing the economy and regenerating communities

Cyngor Gwynedd provided a wide range of support to maintain and support businesses to thrive in the past year.

The Council was responsible for:

- A £120 million proposal for 167 schemes across North Wales, which included £23 million for 40 projects in Gwynedd.
- Establishing teams and procedures to manage and administer the ARFOR programme across west Wales and in Gwynedd. We were successful in allocating 99% (£1.04M) of Gwynedd's Enterprising Communities budget to 23 local initiatives, and Gwynedd benefited more than other counties from all ARFOR work streams.
- Over £600,000 was shared to 27 local businesses during 2023/24 as a result of SPF funding, and a total of over £2m was committed to helping businesses develop.
- Providing practical advice and support to 149 businesses as part of schemes commissioned by the Council with SPF funding.
- Securing jobs for 166 local residents who were not working, following the support of the Gwaith Gwynedd team during the year – an increase of 25 compared to the previous year.
- Organising 13 job fairs throughout the county, with 218 employers attending and 1,075 individuals seeking work.
- Resources secured for the development of Placemaking Plans for the town centres of Pwllheli, Dolgellau and Bala during 2024/25.
- By working in partnership with the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board, a Strategic Outline Case was prepared for the Bangor Health and Wellbeing Centre Plan.
- Establishing a project management and implementation structure for the Llewyrch o'r Llechi Programme with legal agreements set with external partners. One plan completed with the majority in the pipeline. The LleChi Scheme was implemented and completed with an application for the operational phase submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund with an award date of June 2024.
- Establishing and launching the Regenerating Our Communities Fund, with £1.5m committed in projects due to be completed in 2024/25.



Culture and Leisure

- The restoration work was completed and the Lloyd George Museum in Llanystumdwy was opened by July 2023. In addition, an SPF grant was received for investment in the second interpretation which will be completed for the 2025 season.
- A Netloan System and cloud printing was installed in all libraries to improve the service available for the public.
- The Welsh Government funded the capital element of the national digital library platform which will be led by Cyngor Gwynedd.
- Neuadd Dwyfor was fully opened in June 2023 and all improvements have been positively received by users. A diverse programme is being developed, with an emphasis on live music evenings by individuals and bands in Welsh.
- Grant applications were submitted to improve the infrastructure of leisure centres - new LED lighting for the Tennis Centre, resurfacing the Tennis Centre courts, improvements to MUGA Dolgellau.
- The Glyn Site was resurfaced and a parking order for the site was confirmed.
- Four Overnight (Aros-fan) sites have been developed for motorhomes with funding from the Council and the Welsh Government's Brilliant Basics scheme in Cricieth, Pwllheli, Llanberis and Caernarfon.
- As a result of a grant of £80,000, 81,000 people attended 21 different events in the county. A benefit to the economy of £2,663,813 was calculated as a result.
- There were 844,000 visits to the Eryri Mountains and Coasts website in 2023/4 where emphasis was placed on providing information on the walking offer, buying locally, heritage and culture and the safe use of the coast and our designated areas.
- Navigation aids were positioned in Tywyn and Abersoch which means full compliance with Trinity House requirements. The fairway buoys of Aberdyfi and Barmouth harbours were refurbished and positioned in their respective sites.
- The work of upgrading the Dinas Dinlle beach car park was completed, with new management arrangements being trialled during the 2024 summer season.
- The Pwllheli Harbour Long-term Strategy Plan was drawn up, which identifies an investment framework for the harbour.

A Prosperous Gwynedd



Byw'n Iach Centres' customers satisfaction level is 85.69% (an increase of +2.15%)



Percentage of Libraries customer satisfaction is 98.2%

Percentage of the Neuadd Dwyfor customer satisfaction is 93.5%

Hafan Pwllheli's customer satisfaction is 91%

Percentage of participants who see progress in their well-being or are improving their skills following their arts experience is 100%



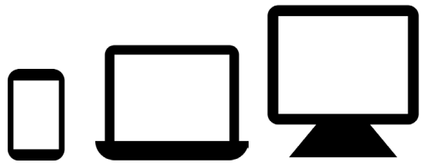
Investment in Town Centre Regeneration Programmes worth £8,336,970



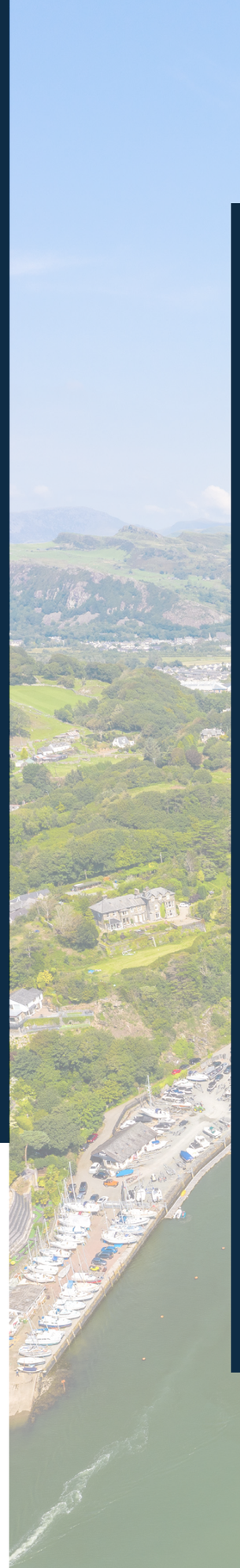
A Homely Gwynedd

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

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







Projects

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

Project Updates

A Homely Gwynedd

Increasing the supply of housing for local people

Achievements during the year include:

- Over 200 additional homes were created for Gwynedd residents.
- Planning applications were submitted for a housing development site in Llanberis and we will soon be ready to build our first houses.
- 13 houses have been purchased (bringing the total to 23 houses) to let at affordable rent levels.
- Many sites were assessed, and 3 development sites were purchased (in Mynytho, Llanystumdwy and Caernarfon) for new development by negotiating and engaging with landowners.
- 53 empty properties have been brought back into use through grants for first time buyers to renovate empty homes.
- By working with our housing partners, over 170 new social houses have been built.

Managing second homes and short-term holiday accommodation

Achievements during the year include:

- A public consultation was held on the proposal to introduce the Article 4 Direction for the Gwynedd planning authority area, to manage the use of homes as second homes and holiday accommodation.



Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty

Achievements during the year include:

- The county's residents were supported to make the most of schemes to reduce energy costs, such as ECO4 and Nyth.
- We collaborated with internal and external partners, including the third sector, to deal with calls from the public, and we ensured that Gwynedd residents are aware of all the benefits that are available to them.
- Expertise and useful information were shared on Cyngor Gwynedd's Costs of Living website which is available to everyone.
- People were referred to Citizens Advice to obtain advice on debts and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) applications, which is additional funding to help with day-to-day lives if someone has an illness, disability or mental health condition.
- Residents were referred to the Food Bank for additional support.
- Community clinics were held to refer people to the services and support available.

Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd

Achievements during the year include:

- The following developments were completed to help homeless individuals and families:
  - Caertref – Caernarfon pods
  - 35 College Road, Bangor
  - 20 Ala Road, Pwllheli
  - Dôl Sadler, Dolgellau
- The construction work for Lle Da, Caernarfon was completed, providing four additional flats which will also support vulnerable young people to make important steps towards independent living.
- 17 properties were attracted to the Leasing Scheme Wales, which allow more people to rent privately in Gwynedd, and make it a more affordable option, and we will continue to discuss with landlords and the Government to look at options to increase the opportunities over the plan period.

A Homely Gwynedd

Some of our key Achievements

- Over the last year, the vast majority of customers who were questioned were completely satisfied with the Maintenance service.
- A grant application presented to the Welsh Government for £1.7m for a pilot scheme to install heat pumps in three buildings was approved, and the Cabinet's seal of approval was received for a business case for a PV scheme worth £500k, and a pilot scheme to install LED lighting in six operational buildings.
- 546 ECO applications were approved during 23/24 which have helped to make houses more energy efficient and reduce the cost of heating them.
- There was continuous collaboration with the third sector and Registered Social Landlords to make the most of the support available to residents.
- The Council's carbon footprint has been considered in relation to each new development. The new Ysgol Treferthyr in Cricieth has been developed as a non-gas school, being heated by an 'Air source heat pump' technology which uses electricity produced by on-site solar panels. The background work has begun to prepare plans to develop the new Ysgol Bontnewydd which goes a step further as it is a Zero-net School.
- 278 social houses have now been developed jointly with our Housing Partners.



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A Homely Gwynedd

- A new supported housing development was completed in Dôl Sadler, Dolgellau, during the year. The building comprises five units that will accommodate vulnerable individuals to be able to live independently and offer support to prepare them to move to their own tenancies. The development also includes an office for staff on the site, to ensure support and continuous assistance for the tenants.
- 208 empty houses have come back into use through the Council's intervention and support.
- 178 Enable grants and Disabled Facilities Grants were provided to help people to live independently in their home.
- The percentage of all the social housing allocations allocated to a local person with a connection to Gwynedd is consistently high (97%) with the latest figure being 100%.
- Over 4800 people have received support to live locally since the beginning of the Housing Action Plan.
- 23 houses have been purchased under the Buy to Let Scheme, and another five are underway, which means that we have reached the target set for 23/24.

A Homely Gwynedd

Image Placeholder

208 empty houses have come back into use through the Council's intervention and support.

Image Placeholder

The percentage of all the social housing allocations allocated to a local person with a connection to Gwynedd is consistently high (97%)

The number of days on a waiting list has reduced gradually since August 2023 and is at its lowest since a year (685 days).

Image Placeholder

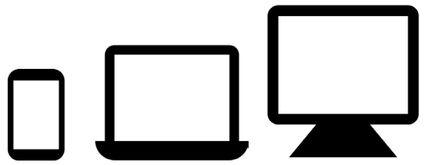
21 houses have been bought under the Buy to Let Scheme, and another 5 are underway.

Image Placeholder

A Caring Gwynedd

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

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





Projects

* Local Preventative Support
* Living Independently
* Specialist Quality Care
* Supporting People's Well-being
* Autism Plan
* Developing residential provision for children who are looked after in small group homes

Project Updates

Local Preventative Support

Achievements during the year include:

- We contributed to the development of Bangor Well-being Centre as part of the Central Bangor Regeneration Plan.
- The preparation of detailed plans was carried out before tendering for the construction to adapt Canolfan Dolfeurig at Dolgellau. This will add to the network of community hubs that support and create opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities, and ensure we use our sites to their full potential for the wider community. It is expected that the building work will commence at the end of summer 2024.
- Plans for an integrated health and care hub have been developed in Penygroes with a focus on developing collaboration and integration between the local community, third sector and statutory bodies to make the best use of resources to meet what matters to the community.
- The Dewis Cymru Project was set up to tackle the challenge of making a programme of social activities and opportunities available for a wide range of individuals and carers across the county.
- We held extensive consultations with the workforce and the public to inform our work on developing a communication and engagement plan for the area of care. The scheme is due to be published at the end of summer 2024 and is designed to ensure that we involve our communities effectively in the development of our services and improve the accessibility of information available to the public.
- Awareness of the Age Friendly agenda was raised amongst the Council and its partners and priorities were agreed for the next 5 years. An application was also submitted to the World Health Association for the Age Friendly county accreditation.



Living independently

Achievements during the year include:

- The Light Extra Care Housing provision has been opened in Pwllheli, with a view to creating similar developments in other parts of the county, with priority for the Dolgellau and Caernarfon areas.
- Suitable accommodation options for individuals with Learning Disabilities have been augmented by the development of new Housing and Support to encourage independent living rather than funding out-of-county placements. We are also looking at developing the Frondeg site, Caernarfon and are identifying and adapting a number of houses across the county to further increase Supported Housing provision.
- Implementing the programme to embed the new home care model ensuring that internal and external care providers become part of the Community Resource Teams and therefore collaborate effectively with the wider communities.
- We developed a Carers (Adults and Children) Plan to ensure we recognise, acknowledge and support the invaluable work unpaid carers across Gwynedd undertake.
- Begin reviewing our daycare and respite provisions to agree a new model to support the well-being of individuals and carers.
- We have started supporting our residents through the process of digital transformation by 2025 – this includes developing a framework for purchasing digital telecare equipment, and we are in the process of upgrading our residents' telecare equipment on an area-by-area basis. We are also trialling and researching new and innovative technology and systems to enable us to work in a more preventative way.
- We have revisited the way we support the process of receiving and delivering care through direct payments, by internalising the service. We are weighing-up different options and a decision is expected to be reached on how the direct payments support service will look like in the future by the end of summer 2024.

Specialist Quality Care

Achievements during the year include:

- We collaborated with residential and nursing providers to understand their costs. We used the 'CareCubed' system to benchmark care costs and ensure that the fees we pay are based on hard evidence. We continued to consider possible options for developing nursing beds in conjunction with the Health Board, with the aim of ensuring adequate nursing beds.
- Develop and implement the business case of the Penrhos site to develop nursing beds in conjunction with the Health Board, as well as a wide range of accommodation provision with care.
- Continue to look for options to further expand dementia provision in our homes.
- A project officer has been appointed to lead on the development of the integrated teams (teams comprising care staff as well as health staff). The intention is to enable them to achieve what matters to Gwynedd adults by removing any barriers.
- We undertook a review of our mental health service delivery model to ensure that we addressed our responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being Act.
- Contributed to a corporate project, Workforce Planning, ensuring appropriate coverage of the specific challenges and career opportunities that exist in the care field.

A Caring Gwynedd



Supporting People's Well-being

Achievements during the year include:

- A Poverty Alleviation and Prevention Plan was adopted (Gwynedd Poverty Group, Food Network and Food Charter was established).
- The existing network of Helping People Hubs has been evaluated with a view to expanding it to further areas.
- We reviewed collaboration and referral arrangements between our main front doors to identify potential improvements in the system.
- Working with the Department of Housing and Property to deliver the Homelessness Prevention Plan through the Housing Support Grant.

Autism Plan

Achievements during the year include:

- Continuing with the training programme for frontline staff.
- Collaborate with the third sector to develop services to support autistic children / young people.
- Establish the necessary jobs to develop a service to provide advice and support to autistic children and their parents.

Developing residential provision for children who are looked after in small group homes

Achievements during the year include:

- A Project Manager has been appointed who will work to develop the new scheme.
- A Business Case has been completed for the establishment of the Small Group Homes.
- A Capital Application was submitted for the purchase / conversion of property.
- A Statement of Purpose and policies have been developed for the development as they will be required to register the unit with Care Inspectorate Wales.

Some of our key Achievements

- The first house was purchased for the Small Group Homes service for children. This will allow us to improve the experiences of looked-after children in the Council's care with intensive and complex needs, who currently have to leave the county or Wales in order to receive suitable provision. We will develop registered residential homes for small groups of up to two children, which will allow them to be looked-after in Gwynedd, attend local schools, and participate fully in the lives of their communities.

- Since January 2024, Canolfan Hafan y Sêr has been open 7 days a week offering respite care for disabled children.

- A new information page has been published on the Council's website to promote the free 12.5 hours per week care provision available where postcodes can be checked.

- Work continues in Deiniolen, an area that has joined the Flying Start service, to expand the provision and service available to families in the village. A new service building including an office for the team and a larger building for the childcare setting will continue to be developed during 2024-25 as we have received £590k capital from the Government. The work will be completed by March 2025.

- Despite a significant increase in the number of calls regarding child welfare, the Out of Hours Team was able to respond to them all.

- Children were offered 615 nights of short break care over the year. This allows the child to receive the best care and support, and to have opportunities and experiences to encourage their development and well-being, while parents are able to enjoy breaks and time to themselves from their caring role. These evenings help families by giving short breaks and prevent children with profound disabilities from entering care.



- The Community Resource Teams coped with a significant increase in demand by successfully carrying out 150 care needs assessments per month (on average) during 2023/24. This was a significant increase compared to 101 during 22/23.

- The Learning Disability service successfully met the accommodation needs of 16 individuals during the year.

- A tender was awarded to Agoriad company to provide practical support for individuals with learning disabilities to succeed in the world of work. The number of individuals with learning disabilities involved in the work opportunities scheme increased from 58 at the beginning of April 2023 to 99 by the end of March 2024.

- Co-developed a Carers Plan with a wide range of stakeholders and initial priority areas identified.

- Gwynedd Dementia Strategy co-produced by a group of stakeholders and priorities identified.

- There has been construction work to improve our residential home in Dolgellau which included replacing a lift and freeing up beds on the first floor. Improvements were also made to our homes in Barmouth, Bangor and Nefyn.

- We have now completely transferred the direct payments service from an external company into the hands of the Council, and while there is more work to be done to complete the transformation, we have more control of the standard of service as a result.

- Work has progressed in preparation for the establishment of a new Mental Health Social Service separate from the Health Board, effective from May 2024.

- 'Gwynedd Age Friendly' application submitted to WHO and work programme is in development.

A Caring Gwynedd

Image Placeholder

The average of case conferences where the voice/ views of the child (5+ years old) were heard is 95%.

Image Placeholder

The percentage of DERWEN assessments completed within 42 days is 76%.

The percentage of reviews where the individual noted that they succeed to achieve what matters to them is 82%

All young people in aftercare have had or have a personal adviser and it's therefore 100% over the past year

Image Placeholder

The percentage of the reviews where we have achieved what matters (Learning Disabilities) is 90% of the cases

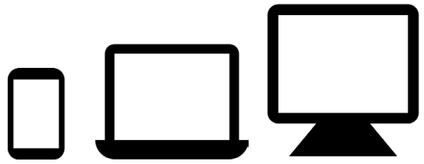
The number of face-to-face Dementia Actif classes increased from 13 to 16

Image Placeholder

A Welsh Gwynedd

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

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





Projects

* Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children
* Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd

Project Updates

A Welsh Gwynedd

Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children.

Achievements during the year include:

- A £1.1m business case for modernising the learning environment of the 3 Primary Language Centres was approved by the Welsh Government.
- Receiving a late immersion grant from the Welsh Government led to the addition of more locations to the virtual village of Aberwla for Welsh learners. In 2023-24, the Museum, Caffi Puw Paned and the Leisure Centre were developed. The resource is now regularly used in the immersion units to support learning and is being trialled across the county. The feedback is very positive.

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

Achievements during the year include:

- The results of the latest census were analysed to establish language needs across the county. Areas were prioritised for community level intervention and support.
- A new Language Strategy for 2023-33 was developed and adopted by the Full Council in December 2023.
- The Prosiect 15 programme of work has been developed and implemented which addresses creating digital content in Welsh for different audiences, on different platforms and in different styles and creating new opportunities for people to use Welsh.
- The Project to Protect Place Names programme of work has been implemented to ensure that the Welsh names are protected and continue to be used.



Some of our key achievements

- Progress on the language strategy (2018-23) was reviewed in accordance with the Commissioner's requirements and the monitoring report was published in January 2024.
- Contributed to the work of the Services Board's Welsh Language subgroup which seeks to meet the challenges of recruiting a workforce with Welsh language skills.
- Continued the work to support the establishment of an independent language initiative – Menter Iaith Gwynedd, to ensure there is grassroots support to increase the use of Welsh.
- In 2023-24, 100% of Gwynedd latecomers achieved the level 1 requirements in the primary Welsh language immersion units.
- Progress against the 7 outcomes of Gwynedd's Strategic Plan - Welsh Language in Education was reported to the Department's Language Forum, Language Committee, and the Welsh Government during the year. The Strategic Plan is the statutory document for Welsh language planning, and the main achievements of the year are:
  - 100% Nursery Provision in Welsh;
  - 100% specialist staff and Additional Learning Needs provision available in Welsh;
  - The activity of the language charter is evident across the county to promote the social use of Welsh;
  - 87.01% of all Gwynedd pupils sit the GCSE Welsh First Language exam.



Annual Performance Report & Self Assessment 2023-24

A Welsh Gwynedd

- All schools in Gwynedd have identified their linguistic category in this year's annual census. With the exception of 3 transitional schools, all schools are Welsh medium. We are working with the transitional schools to support them as they plan their journey to increase Welsh medium provision.
- In 2023-24, 99% of whole school primary learners reported undertaking at least 70% of their school activities (curricular and extra-curricular) in Welsh (Welsh medium schools).
- In 2023-24, 96% of whole school secondary learners reported undertaking at least 70% of their school activities (curricular and extra-curricular) in Welsh (Welsh medium schools).
- New elements of the language policy were implemented and promoted including using Welsh names such as Cyngor Gwynedd.
- We collaborated with Bangor University to investigate residents' attitude and language use.
- A digital support package in the form of Google Classroom which includes resources to support latecomers after they return to school after attending the Language Immersion Units, has been created and shared with school staff.

A Welsh Gwynedd

Image Placeholder

100% of Gwynedd latecomers have achieved level 1 requirements in the primary immersion units

Image Placeholder

100% of Gwynedd latecomers have achieved level 1 requirements in the Primary/Secondary Transition immersion units

73% of Gwynedd latecomers succeeded to achieve level two requirements (one year average in the primary)

Image Placeholder

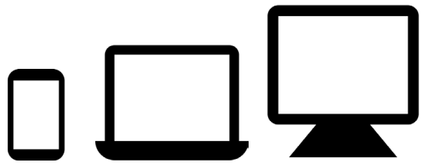
85% of Gwynedd latecomers succeeded to achieve level two requirements (one year average in the Primary/ Secondary)

Image Placeholder

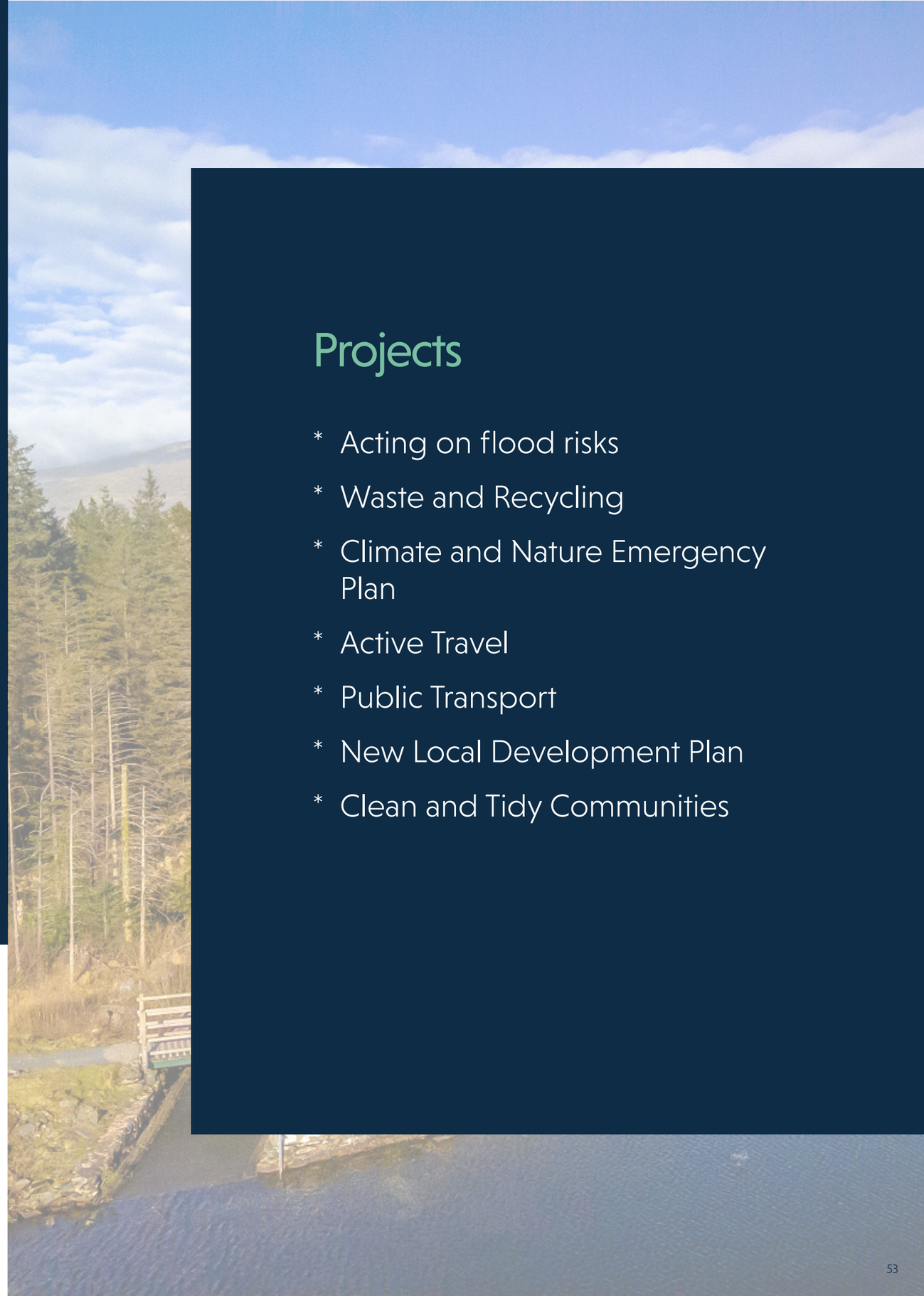
A Green Gwynedd

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

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







Projects

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

Project Updates

A Green Gwynedd

Acting on flood risks

Achievements during the year include:

- Our Flood Strategy was presented to Welsh Government following a consultation carried out on the draft document in early 2024. The Welsh Government's response is due before October 2024 and we plan to formally adopt and implement the strategy thereafter.

Waste and Recycling

Achievements during the year include:

- The waste collection arrangements and management were reviewed in order to adopt a series of improvements within the service, which included reducing sickness levels, strengthening health, safety and well-being and the general satisfaction of the workplace, reducing the level of complaints and tackling issues that were causing overspending.
- Particular attention was also given to strengthening Health, Safety and Well-being arrangements across the waste services, and a programme was commenced to improve infrastructure and the recycling treatment arrangements at our sites.
- The data and information was considered in order to provide a clear direction to facilitate the work of reaching the national recycling targets.



Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

Achievements during the year include:

- Assessed the Council's future fleet needs and agreed to invest £1,048,400 over a period of two years in 2023/24 and 2024/25 to replace vehicles for electric ones, in line with the Green Fleet Plan 2023-2029.
- A total of 37 charging points were installed, which included some for the Council's fleet and some for residents' use in public places, with a programme of work to install more points over an additional 20 sites already underway during 2023/24.
- Agreed to invest £416,617 in a pilot scheme to upgrade lights to LED lights on 6 sites.
- Succeeded to attract a £1.75m grant from the Welsh Government to carry out a pilot project to install heat pumps on 3 sites. Agreed to invest £175,478 from the Council's budget in order to be able to claim the grant.
- Wild Landfill Project received the 'gold standard' from Restor (www.restor.eco), the international hub for nature recovery. This is a project which converts former waste landfill sites into nature habitats.
- Provided Carbon Literacy Project accredited training for Council staff and members.

Active Travel

Achievements during the year include:

- Submitted grant applications to extend our network of active travel routes.
- Delivered the projects that were successful in attracting grant funding from the Government, including:
  - Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor - Phase 1.
  - Improving the infrastructure of Lôn Las Ogwen.
  - Providing Bike Shelters at Ysgol Cymerau, Pwllheli.
  - Improving active travel paths and access to Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn, Bala.

Public Transport

Achievements during the year include

- Completed a review of the cross-county public bus network with the aim of:
  - improving the transport provision by amending the timetables to strengthen connections between buses and trains and create wider travel opportunities.
  - adapting our timetables to operate in a more sustainable way in an attempt to increase the possibilities of travelling to rural areas which currently have an insufficient provision.

The outputs of the review included:

  - Introducing a new network for the areas of Dyffryn Nantlle, Caernarfon and Meirionnydd, with the timetables and standard ticket prices responding to feedback received from stakeholders and to optimise resources.
  - Improved the frequency of the G23 between Barmouth and Porthmadog.
  - Better integration between local and TrawsCymru services.
  - Introduced two new flexi services at Dyffryn Dulas and Dolgellau which offers an important transport link in some of the county's rural areas.

- Introduced the T22 service (Caernarfon-Porthmadog-Blaenau Ffestiniog), which operates with electric buses, with a new charging depot located in Porthmadog.

A Green Gwynedd



New Local Development Plan

Achievements during the year include:

- The new Planning Policy Service was established for the Gwynedd local planning authority area, after the collaboration arrangements with Anglesey came to an end in March 2023.
- New governance arrangements were established and implemented for planning policy work, which included holding meetings of the new Planning Policy Working Group.
- A public consultation was held on the Draft Delivery Agreement of the new Local Development Plan, which is the first statutory step of preparing the New Local Development Plan.
- The Full Council's approval was received to introduce the Draft Delivery Agreement to Welsh Government for their seal of approval.

Clean and Tidy Communities

Achievements during the year include:

- There are now 5 Teams working across the County and are busy working to beautify our communities. Local councillors can submit a request for work in their areas, and the workers can update applications on their tablets whilst out working in our communities.
- Consultation sessions were held within our communities to share the principles of the Tidying-up Teams and to give local members an opportunity to express views on the type of work that needs to be targeted and the best way to deliver it.
- In an attempt to reach our aim of realising Clean and Tidy Communities in Gwynedd, we have now incorporated the following services within one new Service, namely the Street Scene Service, in order to be able to focus on the appearance and image of our streets and roads:
  - Street Cleaning
  - Street Enforcement
  - Ardal Ni Tidying-up Team

Since we established the Tidying-up Teams, their work has made a substantial contribution towards improving the appearance and image of our streets and environment and we are glad to report that they have received very positive feedback from Members, town and community councils and local residents.

Some of our key Achievements

- The first Arosfan site, which offers a place for motorhomes to park overnight, has been opened by Cyngor Gwynedd in Cricieth. This is the first of four pilot sites under development by Cyngor Gwynedd in order to gain better control of motorhomes in the county. Work is also being completed on the Arosfan site in Llanberis at the moment, with work also progressing on the sites of North Quay, Pwllheli and the car park of Doc Fictoria, Caernarfon.
- The vast majority (99%) of food businesses which are being inspected continue to reach a score of 3+, and a re-visit is arranged within 3 months for those who receive a lower score.
- The time taken to make a decision on planning applications continues to improve and the Council's performance is exceeding the national average, with Gwynedd in the upper half of Welsh Councils.
- The Service's work to prepare for and implement the 20mph speed restriction arrangements has been praised in general, following extensive engagement with local communities and representatives.
- After securing Government funding, the first phase of the active travel scheme at Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor, was commenced, along with bike shelters at Ysgol Cymerau, Pwllheli, and a community safety scheme near Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn, Bala. Work has also been carried out to upgrade bridges on Lôn Las Ogwen by means of the Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme.
- During 2023/4, we managed to install 16 x 7kW charging points, and 7 x 50kW charging points, which are available for use by the public on Council sites, and work continues to commission more, early in 2024/25.



- Work to obtain the views of communities has been undertaken, which has fed into the work of drafting the new Nature Recovery Plan which commenced in 2023/24 - and we are aiming to complete the work in 2024/25.
- A new bus service (T22) was launched for the Blaenau Ffestiniog - Porthmadog - Caernarfon route in February.
- A new bus network was introduced in Dyffryn Nantlle and Caernarfon in the Arfon area and also in the Meirionnydd area.
- Our recycling levels are consistent across the period, and we have reached the current national target of 64%.
- We are collaborating with Wrap Cymru and Local Partnerships in the work of preparing a Waste Strategy for the Council, which will be in place in 2024/25.
- 8 Recycling Centres have received almost 14,800 tonnes of waste with 76.8% of this being recycled.
- Defective street lamps were repaired within 2.4 days on average per month. This is better than the target of 3 days.
- Our rate of HGV MOT passes was higher than the monthly national pass rates this year, which shows that we are maintaining our vehicles effectively.
- The results of Keep Wales Tidy's independent survey show that the percentage of clean streets in Gwynedd is 96%, which is higher than the 2023/24 national rate.
- The new Street Scene Services was established at the beginning of the year.

A Green Gwynedd

Image Placeholder

Recycling levels reaching the national target of 64%

8 Recycling Centres have received almost 14,800 tonnes of waste with 76.8% recycled

Image Placeholder

100% of illegal parking complaints are addressed within three days

The average number of days to repair streetlamps - 2.4 days

99% of inspected food businesses continue to reach a score of 3+

Fly tipping cases have increased 126% this year, following the appointment of new Wardens who have succeeded to record more cases

Image Placeholder

The results of Keep Wales Tidy's independent survey show that the percentage of clean streets in Gwynedd is 96%, which is higher than the 2023/24 national rate

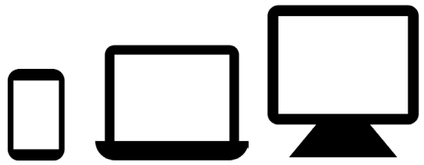
Feedback from YGC clients - no score lower than 9 out of 10

Image Placeholder

An Efficient Gwynedd

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

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





Projects

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

Project Updates

Workforce Planning

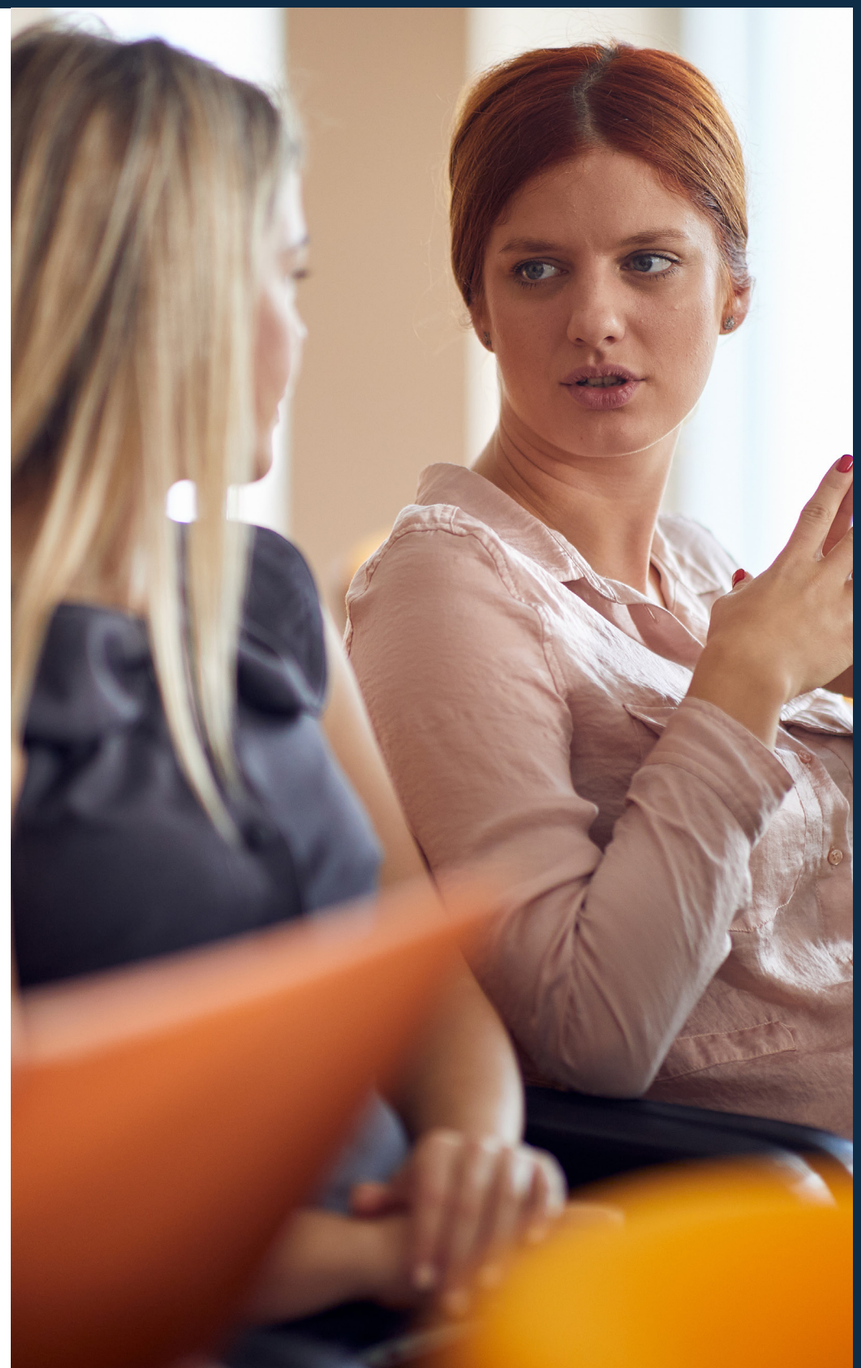
Achievements during the year include:

- Developed the Council's image as an employer, by highlighting the range of career opportunities and the competitive benefits available when working for Cyngor Gwynedd.
- A talent development scheme for the Council's staff was developed and expanded.
- Continued to recruit apprentices and professional trainees, focusing on priority fields.
- Worked with educational establishments to develop the Welsh-language provision that is offered to apprentices / trainees.

Developing the Council's Culture

Achievements during the year include:

- A new Five-Year Plan for the development of the Council's culture was introduced through the "Ffordd Gwynedd" initiative. This is the way of working that we have adopted to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. Culture change, behaviours and mindsets are at the heart of the programme, and it is happening across all areas of Council activity.
- Managers were supported to adapt and apply 'flexible' working arrangements to confirm and strengthen the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd.
- Further small Ffordd Gwynedd reviews were carried out to support departments to improve and develop their performance.



Ensuring fairness for all

Achievements during the year include:

- Expanded our equality training offer especially for front-line workers and in respect of particular characteristics.
- Our new impact assessment procedure was introduced.
- Obtained a level 2 Disability Confident accreditation and an 'Inclusive Employers' accreditation.
- Published the Council's new Equality Plan for the period 2024-28.

Women in Leadership

Achievements during the year include:

- Held more activities that form the basis for the project's work, such as the Developing Potential Programme and the *Sgyrsiau dros Baned*.
- Promoted and raised awareness of unconscious bias and self-awareness amongst managers and staff.
- Held events to raise awareness amongst men.
- Considered the appointment process in terms of trialling anonymising job applicants when drawing up the short list.
- Considered what Services across the Council are doing to encourage women to apply for more senior posts in order to identify and share good practice.
- Addressed the composition of committees and groups to ensure that there is balance in terms of male and female representation.

Managing the impact of national budgetary cuts

Achievements during the year include:

- Monitored that the £5.2m worth of savings for 2023/24, which were approved by the Full Council on 02/03/23, are being prioritised by the Departments to be realised during the financial year.
- Monitored that the Departments are prioritising the delivery of savings that have slipped from previous financial years.
- Conducted a phase 2 review of implementing savings to be realised in the 2024/25 budget onwards.

Digital Scheme

Achievements during the year include:

- The Cabinet adopted a new digital strategy for the Council and the people of Gwynedd on 07/11/23. The Plan outlines improvement plans, risks and any financial implications, either through investment or savings.
- A detailed work programme is now operational, with governance arrangements operational in order to maintain an overview of the implementation of the digital strategy.

An Efficient Gwynedd



Strategic review of Health and Safety management

Achievements during the year include:

- Reviewed the training situation of Managers and Assistant Heads across the Council.
- Introduced a draft detailed action plan to the Council's management team on how to reach an integrated model of managing health and safety.

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

Achievements during the year include:

- Held discussions with every Department to assess whether their assets are fit for purpose for the provision of services.
- Reviewed all our policies in relation to property management and maintenance.
- Established what our office needs will be so that we can achieve our flexible working plan.

Some of our key achievements

- Replied to 138,597 requests from the public at our Galw Gwynedd call centre.
- 257,077 on-line requests were submitted through the Council's website during 2023/24, an increase of 30,734 from the previous year. The substantial project to improve the accessibility of the website continues.
- An analysis of the membership of the Residents' Panel was completed and steps to recruit new members commenced, with the support of elected Members in specific wards.
- The Research Team completed 10 projects in the Council's Information Plan and contributed research and evidence for a number of the Council's key projects, including transforming care services, sustainable visitor economy, and equality.
- A Staff Voice Survey was held during the year. The results will be used to identify the needs of employees in terms of well-being and to draw up the Cyngor Gwynedd Well-being Strategy.
- Succeeded to procure a new case management system for the Legal Service jointly with partners. The system has been installed and is operational. This will allow the Council to continue to maintain now essential electronic legal services and develop more integrated systems to support key work such as child protection.



- By the end of March, the collection rate for the year for Council Tax was 94.4% and Non-domestic Rates was 94.81%. We are working to increase this further during the year to come.
- The Finance Department is supporting the Council's departments to monitor the delivery of savings to the value of £5.2m in the 2023/24 budget, as well as further savings to the value of £5.6m in the 2024/25 budget.
- The new Digital Plan will enable us to take advantage of opportunities to innovate and to embed digital technology to improve our residents' living standards, collaborate better with partners, and strengthen and improve the accountability of our services for the needs and expectations of our customers.
- The Internal Audit Service has considered how it "adds value" and has adapted its purpose
- The collaboration with the Wales Pension Partnership has gone from strength to strength and the fund has started to pool our private equity and infrastructure investments and develop options to pool property assets. The pool has provided the investment options in order to implement the new asset allocation gradually, in line with the conditions of the market.
- The fund has invested in a Sustainable Equity Fund and has engaged with companies to continue to implement our responsible investment policy.

An Efficient Gwynedd

Image Placeholder

Score for the website: 82% of those who used the satisfaction tool noted a satisfaction score of 5 out of 5

An equivalent of approximately £200k of social benefits have been offered from the pilot contracts

Image Placeholder

257,077 online requests were submitted through the Council's website, an increase of 30,734

77% of freedom of information requests were answered on time

40,985 tonnes of carbon from procurement activities compared with 54,584 in the previous year (based on the Welsh Government's formula)

Number of new devices introduced to the schools

Ipads	2,066
Chromebooks	5,966
Laptops	5,904
Total	13,936

Image Placeholder

Average time taken to process a new benefit application reduced to 19.39 days compared with 20.29 days in 2022/23

Average time taken to process a notice of change in circumstances (benefits) reduced to 3 days compared with 4.27 days in 2022/23

Image Placeholder

Contribution to the five Ways of Working in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

	Long term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement
TOMORROW'S GWYNEDD - Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life					
Transforming education for children in their early years	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free School meals	✓	✓	✓		
Modernising buildings and the learning environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promoting the well-being of children and young people and reducing the cost of sending children to school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extending opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A PROSPEROUS GWYNEDD - Strengthening the economy and supporting the people of Gwynedd to earn a decent salary					
Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regenerating communities and town centres	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for businesses and community enterprises to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Keeping the Benefit Local	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A HOMELY GWYNEDD - Supporting the people of Gwynedd to live in suitable and affordable homes in their communities					
Increasing the supply of housing for local people	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty	✓	✓		✓	
Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd	✓	✓		✓	
Managing second homes and short-term holiday accommodation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A CARING GWYNEDD - Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities					
Local Preventative Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Living independently	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specialist Quality Care	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting People's Well-being		✓	✓	✓	✓
Autism Plan	✓	✓		✓	✓
Developing residential provision for children who are looked after in small group homes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Long term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement
A WELSH GWYNEDD - Ensuring that we give our residents every possible opportunity to use the Welsh language in the community					
Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children	✓	✓			
Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A GREEN GWYNEDD - Protecting the county's natural beauty, and responding positively to the climate change crisis					
Acting on flood risks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Waste and Recycling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Climate and Nature Emergency Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Active Travel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Local Development Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean and Tidy Communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AN EFFICIENT GWYNEDD - Putting the residents of Gwynedd first and treating them fairly and ensuring that the Council performs effectively and efficiently					
Workforce Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Developing the Council's Culture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring fairness for all	✓	✓		✓	
Women in Leadership				✓	
Managing the impact of national budgetary cuts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital Scheme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategic review of Health and Safety management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adopting a Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for future working	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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Annual Performance Report & Self Assessment 2023-24

CYNGOR GWYNEDD

Part 2

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 - Cyngor Gwynedd's Self-assessment 2023/24

Background and Introduction

This is the third self-assessment conducted by Cyngor Gwynedd under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Act requires each Council in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements', namely the extent to which:-

i. it is exercising its functions effectively;
ii. it is using its resources prudently, efficiently and effectively;
iii. the Council has robust governance arrangements in place to ensure performance requirements i. and ii.

The intention of the self-assessment process is to encourage honesty, objectivity and transparency about the Council's performance and governance, including its key relationships between political leaders and officers and the way they are managed. An effective approach would be owned and led at a strategic level, but would also involve members and officers at all levels of the organisation and a variety of people across communities and partners.

Although this duty is fairly new, it should be noted that the Council is already preparing a number of documents that contain the type of information we are expected to include within the self-assessment. This includes documents such as Performance, Equality, Director of Social Services' annual reports, Annual Statement of Accounts and the Governance Statement. The Governance Group, which includes officers such as the Corporate Director, Head of Finance Department, Head of Corporate Support Department and the Head of Legal Services amongst others, has led/taken an overview of this process within the Council. In doing so, the intention is for the work to be owned and led on a strategic level.

In the past, our performance reporting arrangements have focused on the progress of projects under our improvement priorities together with the day-to-day work performance of Services and Departments within the Council. A copy of the Council's Annual Performance Report is available here on the Council's website.

This year, like the last, we have integrated the work with the Council's performance challenge arrangements including the self-assessment within the Annual Performance Report so that all information is within the same document.

This document is a high-level summary of a strategic self-assessment of the Council's performance during 2023/24 with results based on evidence from the documents listed above. Performance challenge and support meetings are held at a Departmental level every other month, looking at the progress of priority projects, service performance and the response to the main risks within the Corporate Risk Register. The information then informs

the regular performance reports submitted by each Cabinet Member during the year together with an Annual Performance Report at the end of the financial year.

The document includes an assessment of our governance arrangements using the seven corporate areas that are common to the corporate governance arrangements of public bodies, as suggested within the statutory guidance of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, responding to the 3 performance requirements to which Councils are expected to respond as part of the self-assessment. We have also considered the draft methodology published by the Welsh Local Government Association for Panel Assessments in preparing the self-assessment for 2022/23 and responded to the following questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know that?
- What can we do to improve, and how?

The self-assessment for 2021-22 was our first assessment and steps have been put in place to act on the improvements that had been identified. It was seen that a number of those improvements continue in the 2022-23 assessment as they are long-term matters, however, a number of additional points were also reiterated. This year, we see the pattern continuing, with the long-term matters re-appearing but with new considerations also being added.

Performance Requirement One: The extent to which the Council operates its functions effectively.

How well are we doing?

Last year, the Council adopted a new Plan for 2023-28. This Plan leads our aspirations and priorities for the period. As part of the development of the Plan we considered a wide range of issues to prioritise and engaged and consulted with local people, elected members, Town and Community Councils and partners. One part of the work that was instrumental in the development of the Council's Plan was the work of Ardal Ni which outlines what is good about the area, what is not as good as what needs to be done in order to create a better area by 2035.

In order to ensure that we deliver our functions effectively, we put performance measures in place to challenge performance across all services. Occasionally, we review these measures to ensure that they continue to be relevant, and we are aware of the need to continuously challenge ourselves and set meaningful measures to allow us to improve consistently. We acknowledge that we have room to improve in terms of the work to forward plan detailed work-flow over the period of the Council Plan 2023-28, and consequently, we have introduced a series of annual milestones to allow us to measure progress, as well as plan work for the future. Work to further improve this continues.

It is noted that the Council is involved in several local and regional partnerships such as the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. It would be fair to note that the effectiveness of these partnerships currently varies and we will continue to work to try to ensure that we benefit from these arrangements. Similarly, our relationship with the third sector continues to evolve and with the support of the Third Sector Liaison Group, we intend to look at this during 2023/24.

As set out in the last self-assessment our corporate plans are in line with statutory requirements/guidance or relevant legislation but there is scope to strengthen this link. In developing the Council's Plan for 2023-28, steps were put in place to address the specific statutory requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the five ways of working. However, we have little evidence that it has permeated as a fundamental element of direction setting and mainstreamed.

The Council's 'Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022/23 - 2029/30' sets an ambition which notes that "Cyngor Gwynedd will be net-zero carbon and ecologically positive by 2030". The Plan includes a broad range of projects to reduce carbon emissions and to absorb carbon across a number of areas: buildings and energy, movement and transportation, waste, procurement, governance, land use, ecology. We acknowledge that reaching net zero is a long-term task, but this plan sets several specific milestones for us to measure our annual progress up to 2030. There are so many policy, legislative and budgetary factors that are beyond the Council's control, and are having a huge impact on the Council's ability to deliver many of our projects, such as electricity grid network supplies

or investment in energy and heating buildings. Nevertheless, the Council has chosen to spend substantial funding from our coffers to deliver many of our projects in our Climate and Nature Emergency Plan, and £3m was earmarked for the work.

During 2023/24, £1,640,495 was invested to purchase a fleet of 67 electric vehicles, a lighting upgrade pilot scheme and heat pump scheme. It should be noted that this is a continuation of an annual pattern of trying to invest in carbon saving schemes that dates back to 2010. We will continue to consider where to invest our scarce funding in order to achieve the greatest benefit in terms of reducing our carbon emissions, and take full advantage of any opportunities to attract grants and funding.

Climate change is also a priority in the Council Plan for 2023-28, and progress against the project will be reported to the meetings of the Climate Change and Nature Board.

Work continues to ensure that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other statutory requirements fully integrate within our corporate planning frameworks, instead of doing so in a reactive and fragmented nature. To assist with this, a new template was introduced to plan reports to the Cabinet, which leads officers to refer to the various statutory requirements, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, when preparing their reports.

To support this a new Impact Assessment will be introduced to ensure that attention is paid to issues such as Equality Characteristics, the Welsh language, Climate Change and Socio-Economic Impact. Unfortunately, we have encountered technical problems with the Impact Assessment which has led to a delay before its introduction, but we are in discussions with the app creators at the moment in an attempt to resolve this.

Cyngor Gwynedd is very keen to ensure that equality is deeply rooted within the Council's work to improve our services for all the people of Gwynedd. Consequently, a Strategic Equality Plan was developed for 2024-28 in order to give us a framework to improve fairness within the Council, and ensure that we treat people according to their needs.

An important part of this Equality Plan are the Equality Objectives. We have been asking for the public's opinion over a period of some months, including various groups and individuals, to see what are the best objectives that we can achieve for the people of Gwynedd. These Objectives are based on what we have been told, but also on a number of other factors. These include data from various sources, Welsh Government's action plans and what is possible within the Council.

A broad training programme was provided for Elected Members during 2023/24, which included core training in seven specific areas:

- Safe Leadership and Personal Safety
- Code of Conduct
- The Well-being of Future Generations Act
- Safeguarding Children and Adults
- Your Responsibility for Equality
- Your Responsibility as a Corporate Parent
- Information about People: Your Responsibility

In addition, training was being offered in many other fields as well as an opportunity for every Councillor to receive a personal development interview in order to identify specific developmental fields. There is an offer for councillors to have specific sessions before they undertake roles on different committees, e.g. Cabinet Members, training for all scrutiny members as part of the workshops before the members begin their scrutiny work, and a number of other committees such as Planning, Licensing and Governance and Audit.

In recent years efforts have been made to improve and strengthen the role of Scrutiny Members in Corporate Planning ensuring that the Scrutiny programme is linked to the realisation of the Council's Plan priorities and also holding Cabinet to account over performance. Consideration is given to the priorities of the Council Plan when determining the scrutiny programme for the year and since the new performance challenge and support procedure was introduced, representation from the Scrutiny Committees have been nominated to attend departmental performance meetings twice a year.

It is also noted that the Governance and Audit Committee has struggled to attract suitable lay and elected members to be on the committee as required within the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 which means we did not have the expected number of lay and elected members during the year. There is further recognition that the traditional method of advertising did not offer a sufficient number of suitable applicants to meet the requirements. We will continue to engage with professional bodies, etc., in order to identify suitable individuals.

A new performance challenge and support procedure has been implemented since the first cycle of performance challenge and support meetings in 2022/23. In line with the new system all Council Departments hold an internal performance challenge and support meeting every other month, and report to Cabinet twice a year. The internal meetings are an opportunity to challenge the progress of the Department's improvement priorities projects and service performance measures (that is, the day-to-day work). As the new arrangements have now had some time to embed, work is progressing to review our performance arrangements with the intention of making further adjustments, and as part of that, we will report to the Scrutiny Committee instead of the Cabinet from 2025/26 onwards.

In line with the requirement to consult on performance, we held many consultations and opinion surveys during the year, including looking at customer satisfaction. We are also preparing an annual report on complaints and are continuously adjusting our services when observations or complaints suggest improvements.

Last year, it was seen that the number of Formal Complaints increased with a slight reduction in the number of complaints to the Ombudsman. We are working to reduce the time it takes to respond to complaints, and we are busy developing a new Customer Charter.

During May/June 2023 we undertook a consultation exercise with our Residents Panel, Town and Community Councils, Elected Members, Staff and Unions to establish their opinion on the Council's performance. The level of response was a little disappointing with only 221 respondents. However, several issues to act on were identified and steps have been taken to respond with many of them continuing as improvements outlined within this document.

We did not carry out a specific consultation on our performance when drawing up this document as we are looking at the most effective way of gathering the views of our population, and are considering the possibility of participating in a National Resident Survey led by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Data Cymru. Participating in this work would enable us to gather information regarding residents' opinions about our performance by also enabling us to look at trends over time and allow for an element of benchmarking our performance against other councils. If there is an agreement it is foreseen to carry out consultations regularly so that they contribute towards self-assessments in the future.

We are aware of the need to be cautious to avoid 'consultation fatigue' as we are already seeking the views of our residents on a number of various subjects and schemes, and consequently, a cross-departmental Engagement Group has now been established, which meets every 2-3 months to gather information about proposed consultations and to share results and good practice. This helps to ensure that there is sufficient time to plan consultations and avoid duplication.

After a period of public consultation on the content of the draft Participation Strategy, the results of the consultation as well as the Draft Strategy were submitted to the Cabinet before being presented to the full Council in March 2023, where it was adopted. This Strategy outlines Cyngor Gwynedd's aim of encouraging people to participate in the decision-making process. In it we explain how our objectives in terms of participation will make a genuine difference to the way we engage with people in Gwynedd. Within every objective, we have identified clear outcomes and actions.

How do we know that?

The evidence outlined above includes a reference to some of the highlights of issues where we perform well or not as well. There is further evidence and detail within the documents/sources at the end of this report.

To summarise, the Council acknowledges that we have room to improve in terms of forward planning the work-flow over the Council Plan period and as a result, a series of annual milestones have been set. We are going to continue to collaborate with a number of our partnerships and we are looking for evidence of how our corporate plans permeate as a basic element and set a direction.

During the year, a new template was introduced to plan reports to the Cabinet, which leads officers to highlight how different statutory requirements, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Equalities Act 2010, are greeted when preparing their reports.

Elected members have received a broad training programme and there is an opportunity for every councillor to have a developmental interview and sessions to support them in specific roles. The role of scrutiny members has also been strengthened.

There is a new performance challenge and support procedure in place and an intention to report to the Scrutiny Committees instead of the Cabinet from 2025/26 onwards. We are also preparing an annual report on complaints, and are continuously adjusting our services when observations or complaints point to improvements.
We are looking at the most effective way of gathering the views of our population and considering the possibility of participating in a national survey organised by the WLGA and a Participation Strategy has been published which explains how we are encouraging local people to participate in the Council's decision-making processes.

What needs to be improved?

Additional improvements have been identified this year
• Improving our forward planning over the period of the Council Plan 2023-28, by setting a series of annual milestones for the various projects in the Council Plan.
• Participate in a national survey organised by the WLGA in order to obtain useful information by the county's residents on our performance. This will allow us to benchmark our performance and compare with other Authorities in Wales.

Improvement	
We will:	**Our progress to date**
Continue work to strengthen our internal arrangements to ensure that statutory requirements/guidance or legislation are a core element and better integrated with our corporate planning.	Since the summer of 2023 a template has been introduced where reports submitted to the Cabinet need to refer to how the content of the report reflects the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This arrangement has replaced the previous arrangements where the requirements were enforced through other governance processes. In addition, there is an expectation to report on the findings of any relevant assessments such as the Impact Assessment on Equality Characteristics, the Welsh Language and the Socio-Economic Impact. Over the coming months, it is intended to hold a session with the Leadership Team on the Future Generations Act which will be

	led by the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, as well as holding further training sessions for the rest of the members.
• Continue with work to communicate service performance and the Council as a whole more effectively to residents.	The Communication and Engagement Service, at the request of departments, sends statements on the Council's performance, e.g. a communication Plan was created around the Council's annual report which included a statement and series of social media messages; departmental progress on key projects, e.g. increase the housing stock available for local people, and develop a car charging network across the county. In addition, Council committee agendas and papers are published on the corporate website and a series of messages are being published on social media to highlight individual reports to the Cabinet. As noted above, the Communication and Engagement Service are reliant on individual Departments to bring relevant matters to their attention, and maybe this does not happen consistently across the organisation.
• Improve understanding and raise awareness of the Council's areas of work amongst County residents.	Substantial communication work is being done on raising awareness of the Council's work fields, including press statements, items on our website, social media and the press. In addition, detailed responses are provided to enquiries from the press about the work of the Council and/or committee reports.
• Do work to ensure mutual understanding and ownership of the vision and priorities at different levels within the organisation.	Communication work taking place to raise awareness internally.

Performance Requirement Two: The extent to which the council uses its resources prudently, effectively and efficiently

How well are we doing?

As has already been noted, the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 was adopted during 2023. The Plan is ambitious in an extremely challenging financial climate. Although consideration has been given to the capacity to achieve what is included in the Plan as it is developed, the financial situation has changed substantially since then, and if the financial squeeze continues, it could mean that the Council will need to adapt or reduce our vision and consequently the number of projects that we will be able to complete in full within the period.

There are many examples of good collaboration in partnership with external organisations across our services, including the care and education field, e.g. Estyn stated, " Gwynedd education department works closely and effectively with the north Wales regional school effectiveness and improvement service (GwE) to improve provision offered by the authority's schools.", in their report published in June 2023.

The Council has effective arrangements for financial planning and management to ensure service continuity. Internal auditors focus on effective arrangements and controls in financial systems, whilst the accountants work closely with the departments and encourage managers' ownership of their systems, performance and financial propriety.

The Finance Department, in close contact with the Chief Executive and Directors, undertakes ongoing reviews of the Council's financial forecasts over the next 3 years, updating the model regularly when new information is received reporting regularly to Cabinet members and to the Corporate Management Team (Chief Executive, Directors and Department Heads).

The corporate planning cycle coincides with the statutory cycle of budget planning and we aim to present the annual update of the Council Plan to the same meeting of the Full Council as the budget.

Every year the Council prepares its Financial Strategy which ensures a balanced Budget to ensure continuity of service. The Council also publishes a Statement of Accounts at the end of every financial year, which shows its annual expenditure. Reviewing spending against budgets, and monitoring that savings have been achieved by all Council departments, ensures that the services operate efficiently. In September 2021, Audit Wales published a report confirming that the Council's financial management is good. The report can be found here. The report can be seen on the Audit Wales website. Audit Wales is conducting a similar review again in 2024 as a part of a national review of the 22 unitary authorities. Interviews were held during May 2024 and it is expected that the reports of Audit Wales on the outcome of their work (with local reports to the councils and one report to provide the national picture) will be published during Autumn 2024.

A new savings programme was introduced as one of the Council's main priorities when responding to the latest financial situation, and the Council agreed to a savings programme to the value of £6.4 million when setting the budget for 2023/24, and further savings of £5.2

million when setting the 2024/25 budget. In addition, in May 2024, the Cabinet approved a 'Medium Term Financial Plan' for Cyngor Gwynedd up to the 2027/28 financial year. As a part of this Plan, the Chief Executive was asked to establish and lead on a range of measures and work packages in preparation to address the substantial gap in the Council's budget over the next three years.

The Council also needs to give further consideration to how it can involve residents in significant financial decisions. In the past the Council has consulted on its plans to achieve savings sporadically, for example, through the Her Gwynedd exercise in 2016 and the Financial Strategy consultation in 2019.

It also holds workshops with Members on the Council tax level and engages on Non-domestic Rates on an annual basis. The Council recognises the need to be more open about financial decisions and engage more frequently, or ensure that the people of Gwynedd have an input on decisions. The Cabinet approved the Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 - 2027/28 on 14 May 2024, however, this was only the beginning of the journey. The Plan has identified a substantial gap in the Council's budget over the next three years and the Council has committed to leave no stone unturned when filling this deficit as a matter of urgency. The Council will consider a number of steps, therefore, and we will include Gwynedd residents in the discussions as appropriate when implementing steps to fill the deficit.

The Head of Finance has undertaken a self-assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code, and updates it at least once a year and the current assessment shows high compliance across all standards.

Measuring value for money is an area currently being addressed, with a view to develop an efficient framework for measuring value for money within our performance challenge and support regime. It is subject to a working group of officers chaired by the Chief Executive. As this work develops, we have engaged with external experts (e.g. CIPFA) to support us with this task.

As a Council, we will take advantage of opportunities to innovate and embed digital technology to improve our residents' lives, to collaborate better with partners, and strengthen and improve the accountability of our services to meet the needs and expectations of our customers. To assist us with this, Cyngor Gwynedd's new Digital Plan for 2023-28 was approved during the year.

Recent years have seen increasing challenges in staff recruitment in a number of key work areas such as social care and education. This field is already a priority for the Council and the 'Workforce Planning' project has been included in the Council Plan for 2023-28. It is also noted that the Governance and Audit Committee suggested that consideration should be given to workforce planning, succession planning and managerial progression as potential fields for the Performance Assessment Panel (which will be held during October 2024) to consider.

The main aim of the Workforce Planning project is to ensure that the Council has an adequate supply of competent staff to enable it to provide services for the county's residents, and that we are able to ensure that this supply is in place for the long-term.

The Apprenticeship Scheme has given opportunities to 56 apprentices since 2019 (which is one of the highest numbers in Wales compared to the population and size of other Councils). There are also examples of the success of the Scheme, with individuals who have embarked on the Apprenticeship Scheme receiving promotions and permanent posts within the Council. Similarly the Graduate Scheme (Cynllun Yfory) has given 32 professional trainees opportunities since 2017 with a number of them being offered a position with the Council.

As part of the 'Women in Leadership' priority project, a specific Development Plan was established for women, as they have been identified as a cohort that is reluctant to apply for higher positions. This scheme continues as a priority in the Council Plan 2023-28.

While the workforce planning project brings several departments together to collaborate and tackle the problems of attracting and retaining staff, the Council tends to be responsive in nature rather than planning for the long-term. One weakness of Management (for the most part) is the failure to look forward 5-10 years taking into account the age of current staff and the expertise needed in the future, which has the potential to have a significant impact on the continuity of service.

The results of this year's Voice of the Staff Survey reflects the challenging period encountered over the past two years as we entered the post-pandemic period, at the same time as financial cuts, and a transitional period in terms of establishing our future working arrangements. To reflect this, a reduction was seen in the score for the statement 'the Council is a good place to work' in comparison with the results of the previous survey. There were four parts to the survey this year, and in general, across the Council, the score for the statements in the categories 'my post' and 'my service' were higher than the score for the statements 'my employer' and 'my well-being'. This is a reflection that teams have been working more in isolation over the pandemic period and that the same opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration did not arise. There is robust evidence of some of the main Ffordd Gwynedd principles embedding some of the most positive responses, e.g. 'I understand the contribution made by my service when serving the people of Gwynedd', whilst previous themes regarding being appreciated and receiving acknowledgement continue to be points for improvement.

The Procurement Team provides advice and support to services, and ensures that the organisation adheres to regulations and best practice in the procurement field. The team's aim is to enable the Council to achieve value for money, strengthen and develop procurement expertise, adopt best practice in the field and support the local market. There are also Category Management arrangements in place, where there are Three Categories (Environment, Corporate and People) responsible for purchasing in specific fields, looking at procurement strategically and putting more emphasis on collaboration, conducting a thorough analysis of the market in an attempt to ensure that we obtain value for money.

The Council has already adopted the Sustainable Procurement Policy which complies with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By adopting the Policy,

the intention is to consider the possible social, economic and environmental impact that our procurement decisions can have and what steps can be taken to make the best possible use of the Council's expenditure, for the benefit of the county.

A project has reached a conclusion in 2023/24 to assess the feasibility of introducing a social benefits assessment methodology for Gwynedd, i.e. sharing the method of assessing tenders currently being undertaken by measuring Price and Quality to one that measures Local Price, Quality and Value. As part of the project, three further pilots were completed during the year using the social benefits-based tender assessment method. The three schemes have created over £100k in social benefits for the residents of Gwynedd.

During 2023/24, we will also be developing measures for the County's catering contract, it will be expected to report on the social, economic and environmental impact during 2024/25 as a result of including these measures.

Ongoing work is being undertaken to support businesses to respond to the tender requirements as a result of any developments in the field, such as gaining accreditations or responding to the requirements of the Well-being Act. Recently, we have been working with the supply chain to assess the environmental impact and attempting to reduce the carbon footprint.

The Council has a process to manage risks by having a Corporate Risk Register in place. In addition, arrangements for Internal Audit also exist and an annual workshop on assurance and risks is held with external auditors (Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn).

In order to ensure that arrangements are in place to respond to any recommendations from audit bodies, consideration is given to quarterly update reports from Audit Wales at the meetings of the Governance and Audit Committee. Also, there are appropriate arrangements in place to respond to any reports from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Note that principal governance risks are scored corporately and on a Departmental level, since the risk level varies. There is an in-house Governance Group with an overview and responsibility for quality assurance within Cyngor Gwynedd.

A revamped Corporate Risk Register was launched in March 2021 and the system has proven to be a user-friendly facility in all Departments. It is now much easier to make a link between the risks as Departments consider their priorities and identify what needs to be done as a response, and it also assists Members to challenge performance and ensure that the expected steps have been taken to reduce the risk.

We are aware that there is a need to continue reviewing the procedure of identifying and scoring risks, particularly in order to ensure consistency across the organisation in terms of the assessment and scoring process. In addition, we are going to review the extent to which specific measures being introduced to address the risk manage to effectively reduce the risks. We will also consider whether we should add a record of the score which takes into account any mitigation, as well as the existing risk score (as a result of *impact x likelihood* only).

The Head of Finance will prepare and promote the authority's risk management policy statement and strategy. The risk management strategy is owned at a corporate level through the Governance Group as referred to above and the Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for challenging the governance risk scores.

As a part of its service continuity arrangements, the Council has categorised Services from 1 to 4 on the grounds of post-disaster recovery priorities. This enabled the organisation to prioritise during the Covid-19 period and ensured the continuity of 'essential' services. The lessons that have been learnt when dealing with the Covid-19 crisis has been valuable in subsequent emergencies, e.g. the Ukraine war.

While the future risk management regime and strategies are generally improving and strengthening, the Governance and Audit Committee needs to satisfy itself that arrangements are in place to deal with risks in an appropriate manner and this work has been included in the Committee's forward work programme.

Based on Internal Audit work completed during 2023/2024, which will be noted in the Audit Manager's Annual Report, it was considered that Cyngor Gwynedd's internal control framework during that financial year was deemed to operate at a reasonable level of assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's governance, risk management and internal control framework.

As a part of the 2023-28 Council Plan, we will adopt a new Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for working in the future. This work has already commenced and it will ensure that our Property Assets are fit for purpose and cost effective, particularly following the changes made to working patterns and service delivery over the past years.

In terms of Council vehicles, a plan is in progress to make better use of the fleet, which has already led to some financial savings and is likely to achieve more in the future. The increased use of electric vehicles will also contribute towards reducing the Council's carbon emissions.

How do we know that?

The evidence outlined above includes a reference to some of the highlights of issues where we perform well or not as well. There is further evidence and detail within the documents/sources at the end of this report:

To summarise, the 2023-28 Council Plan is ambitious and in light of the challenging budgetary climate, consideration will be given to the capacity to deliver what is included in the Plan. The Council is collaborating with external organisations across our services and this is essential to ensure efficiency. The Council has effective arrangements to plan and manage money, with the Finance Department in close contact with the Chief Executive and Directors to carry out ongoing reviews of the financial projections. Annually, the Council prepares a Financial Strategy to secure a balance budget to ensure service continuity and publishes a Statement of Accounts at the end of every financial year. Work has been done to address the gap in the Council's budget over the next three years. The Council

acknowledges that consideration needs to be given to how residents can be included in financial decisions in the future.

Annually, the Head of Finance carries out a self-assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Code of Financial Management and work is in progress to develop an efficient framework to measure value for money within our performance challenge and support arrangements.

The Council has already adopted the Sustainable Procurement Policy which complies with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By adopting the Policy, the intention is to consider the possible social, economic and environmental impact that our procurement decisions can have and what steps can be taken to make the best possible use of the Council's expenditure, for the benefit of the county.

The Council has a process to manage risks through its Corporate Risk Register and Internal Audit arrangements also exist.

What needs to be improved?

Additional improvements have been identified this year
• **Review the procedure of identifying and scoring risks, particularly to ensure consistency across the organisation in terms of the assessment and scoring process.**

Improvement	
We will:	**Our progress to date**
• Look to the future in order to anticipate the Council's long-term financial position by preparing a Medium-Term Financial Strategy.	• The Cabinet approved the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 - 2027/28 on 14 May 2024.
• Consider the most suitable ways to engage and involve residents in significant financial decisions and implementation (preparing the 2024/25 budget)	• A series of press releases have already been shared to explain the financial context, and more will be released over the coming months.
• Continue work to review the Council's Assets Plan to ensure priorities remain current in light of the experiences and developments of recent years.	• Drawing up a new Assets Management Plan is a project in the Council Plan for 2023-28. • Some discussions and initial steps have already been taken and the next steps will include holding initial discussions with Council departments to identify whether their property assets are fit for purpose, and ensure that the Cabinet's authority to the Property Management Policies has been adjusted. • When the Corporate Property Management Strategy is approved, it

	will be possible to proceed to prepare a Property Assets Action Plan (the timetable of which will be subject to the Corporate Strategy).
• Looking to develop a way of measuring value for money (efficiency) at service level as part of our performance challenge arrangements.	• We will collaborate with peers in other councils and professional bodies such as CIPFA to develop a framework to be able to identify value for money. This work commenced in 2023/24 and it will continue in 2024/25.
• Continue to implement a project to address the current staff recruitment problems the Council is experiencing.	• The 'Workforce Planning' Project, which is a part of the Council Plan for 2023-28, is addressing this. • A number of initial steps have already been taken in line with the milestones for year 1 of the Project. The next steps will include the establishment of detailed work programmes for a series of up to seven sub-projects which contribute to the full project.
• Continue to provide guidance and advice to services to establish long-term workforce planning practices, so that future recruitment and retention problems can be avoided.	• See above

Performance Requirement Three: The extent to which the Council has effective governance arrangements in practice to ensure performance requirements one and two.

How well are we doing?

The Council generally has a suitable governance system in place. The Council's Constitution is a public document which sets out the governance arrangements, and a Guidance to the Constitution is provided to reinforce this. The Governance Arrangements Assessment Group retains an overview of governance issues within the Council. The Group comprises the Corporate Director, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Head of Corporate Support, Assistant Head of Corporate Support, the Risk and Insurance Manager and the Council's Business Support Service Manager.

In addition, the Council publishes an annual Governance Statement outlining our governance arrangements and their effectiveness following the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.

In April 2024, a workshop of members from the Governance and Audit Committee was held to conduct a self-assessment of the committee's efficiency. The work programme deriving from this assessment was approved by the Committee, with the aim of further improving its way of working, and the matters it addresses.

Audit Wales conducted a 'Review of scrutiny effectiveness' during 2022/23 and the report was published in September 2023. The report received is encouraging, recognizing the changes that have been made over the past few years in order to strengthen our scrutiny arrangements and give scrutiny a higher status in Gwynedd. It was found that the Council had reviewed and introduced changes to overview and scrutiny arrangements, and that there was a higher status to scrutiny within the democratic process. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to further strengthen the contribution, status and impact of scrutiny. This includes recommendations such as training for elected members, strengthening the alignment between the annual scrutiny work programme and the Cabinet's work programme and the Council Plan and that formal arrangements is needed on tracking the impact of scrutiny. In response our scrutiny arrangements were reviewed and at the Full Council Meeting on 7 March 2024 they adopted an option to keep the current scrutiny committee arrangements and approved the actions to improve efficiency in response to the recommendations of the Wales Audit report.

The roles of Council, Cabinet, Individual Members and Chief Officers, together with a clear delegation plan, are set out in the Council Constitution. Cyngor Gwynedd has also prioritised the development of its Leadership Programme and that is part of the People's Plan adopted by the Cabinet. Cyngor Gwynedd has also prioritised the development of its Leadership Programme and this is a part of the People Plan adopted by the Cabinet.

The Council has a positive organisational culture which has been supported by "Ffordd Gwynedd" which is the name given to the "way of working" which we have adopted in order to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. Changing culture, behaviours and mindsets is at the heart of all this and the aim of realising the ambition across all parts of Council activity is a significant challenge and one that requires a comprehensive programme of support.

Progress has been made on the broadest part of the nine work-streams that make up the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan 2023-28. In brief, this is the most marked progress in the first year of the current Plan:

Leadership - The latest departmental self-assessments (March/April 2024) are very positive in terms of the shift to 'lead' instead of 'managing'. Every Department, without exception, acknowledges that this is the aim and practice by the majority of managers but there is acknowledgement that this change has not been embedded as well in every service. In this respect, the need for further training is being considered as part of the further shift to ensure that leading is the norm and expectation when someone joins the Council.

The Cabinet members have continued to invest their time in personal development and as a team during the past year, with a clear intention to build further on this development during 2024/25. The Corporate Management Team has held three whole day sessions during the year in order to develop as a team of leaders in the Council (and the Corporate Management Team is now operating as a Ffordd Gwynedd Lead Group, and has committed as a team to promote the culture and develop the organisation in line with the principles of this way of working).

Furthermore, a series of developmental programmes has been published for the development of managers, senior managers and prospective managers across the Council, e.g. Manager Development Programme, Senior Leadership Development Programme. Details were shared about these programmes during the Autumn series of the Managers Network (Team Leaders now also receive an invitation) and the first cohort have already commenced the Manager Development Programme earlier on during 2024.

One gap was identified in the opportunities to develop prospective senior managers in the future during the year, namely among the cohort of assistant heads across the Council's departments. In response, the Assistant Heads Forum was established as an initial step with a view to offer further opportunities for those individuals by means of the Senior Leadership Programme in the future.

Learn, Experiment and Act to Improve - A Practitioners' Group was established to share best practice as well as lessons learnt, with a register of reviews being

maintained. The number of reviews held during the year was increased, with some of them already leading to an improved service, e.g. Tax Office's provision of advice over the phone has been re-established between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday since 11 September 2023. Furthermore, in order to improve the understanding of Cabinet Members of what derives from holding reviews, an arrangement was introduced where officers who lead on individual reviews attend the meetings of the Leadership Team during the year to share experiences, successes and lessons learnt.

Digital Transformation - the corporate Digital Plan for 2023-38 was approved by the Cabinet on 7 November. The period of this Plan coincides with the period of the Council Plan (in the same way as the period of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan). Funding has already been secured to steer the work programme of the first two years of the Digital Plan with one of the main priorities, namely ensuring a new integrated phone system, to be realised during 2024/25.

There are promising developments in each of the other work streams but the work stream of disseminating the practice of "continuous appraisal" across the Council was identified as the main focus for the year to come. The leadership and support for doing this has been drawn up and there will be a need to launch and promote this over the first months of the second year of the current Plan.

The latest departmental self-evaluations identify matters such as formalising the practice of conducting ongoing appraisals and ensuring better collaboration about issues such as performance within teams and noting the need to offer follow-up to training for managers in the context of conducting reviews of systems and processes and developing the culture within teams. This feedback as well as the response received to the latest annual Voice of Staff Survey will direct what will be prioritised during the year to come. It is anticipated that the annual report, which will incorporate and detail all of this, will probably be submitted to the Cabinet in September.

In terms of the Council's internal activity, we have good engagement and communication arrangements in place with important messages being shared with staff in various ways. Similarly, it is important to gather the views of staff and that they have an opportunity to provide feedback on the kind of employer the organisation is. To this end, Voice of Staff Questionnaires have been in regular circulation asking about areas related to their job, service and also the Council as an organisation. The results are shared with the Heads of Services, so that they have an opportunity to respond to the main messages or any specific challenge, as well as the whole workforce via the intranet, the weekly bulletin and staff self-service. In addition to the corporate survey, some departments have undertaken further work to ascertain the views of staff on a regular basis.

We have effective arrangements to monitor the budget with the Finance Department employing officers with suitable skills, knowledge and experience in order to undertake

this duty. A formal review of the situation with the revenue expenditure will be held at the end of August and November and the results will be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and to the Cabinet for approval. An update on the capital programme will also be presented at the same meetings.

The Council's Treasury Management arrangements have been in place for several years, and are under the supervision of independent teams within the Finance Department. Treasury Management activities are reported to the Governance Committee twice a year in June and November. Treasury Management activity will be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

The debate on whether overspending is due to failure to control spending, or due to an inadequate budget is an ongoing one. Work to review provisions in budgets will continue over the next year in the preparation for the 2025/26 budget.

There is a very constructive relationship between the Council and its Governance and Audit Committee, and the internal and external auditors. This can be seen from the minutes of the Committee meeting, and the committee's Annual Report also highlights this.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has created new duties for Political Group Leaders to take an element of responsibility over promoting good conduct and collaboration with the Standards Committee. Agreement was reached on a protocol and criteria to assess the discharge of the duty at a workshop between members of the Committee and Leaders. These were adopted by the Standards Committee and they will contribute towards preparing the Committee's annual report. This work has been supported by meetings and regular communication with the Monitoring Officer.

The improvements identified within the self-assessment will be addressed by specific Departments within the Council and will report back on progress to the relevant performance challenge and support meeting.

How do we know that?

The evidence outlined above includes a reference to some of the highlights of issues where we perform well or not as well. There is further evidence and detail within the documents/sources at the end of this report:

To summarise, the Council's Constitution is a public document which sets out governance arrangements and the Governance Arrangements Assessment Group keeps an overview of governance matters within the Council. The Council also publishes an annual Governance Statement which outlines our arrangements. Audit Wales carried out a review of our scrutiny efficiency and work is already being done to address a number of recommendations and others are ongoing work. The work coincides with the review of scrutiny arrangements.
The Council has a positive organisational culture by means of the Ffordd Gwynedd principle and progress has been made with the vast majority of the nine work-streams

that make up the plan. Internal engagement and communication activity is good and important messages are being shared with all staff. Also, there are effective arrangements to monitor the budget with the Council's Treasury Management arrangements that has been established for many years.

What needs to be improved?

Additional improvements have been identified this year
• **Complete the actions to improve the efficiency of scrutiny in response to the recommendations of the Wales Audit report.**

Improvement	
We will:	**Our progress to date**
• Conduct a staff voice survey (as has been the case in the past) to engage in constant discussion with the workforce and provide them with the opportunity to say what is working well and the barriers they face.	• Staff Voice Survey held in September / October 2023 and detailed interpretation work has been carried out. • By now, the main findings have been shared with members of the Corporate Management Team, and are also in the process of being submitted to the management teams of every Department individually. The corporate work plan to implement the main findings will be monitored as part of the work of the Ffordd Gwynedd Officers' group.
• Conduct an appraisal of the work of the Governance and Audit Committee to establish whether it is effective.	• The Committee has conducted a self-assessment in April 2024 and we will draw-up a work programme as a result of this assessment.
• Continue to act on the steps already put in place in response to an audit of performance challenge arrangements undertaken by Audit Wales during 2021/22 and continue to look at the success of those arrangements reviewing if necessary.	• Have been acting on current performance challenge and support arrangements since April 2022 (which includes steps put in place to respond to recommendations made by Audit Wales during 2021/22). • Over the past year, further reviews have been held by Audit Wales relating to scrutiny arrangements and use of information on performance and we are currently in the process of reviewing the arrangements with the intention of

	ensuring that members of the Scrutiny Committee play a more central role.
• Implement the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan Work Programme 2023-28 to continue to improve performance and provide the best possible services for the County's residents.	• Formal reviews are taking place or have been completed in many services, and these examples of good practice have been collated in a register. On 25 January 2024, the first meeting of the Ffordd Gwynedd Practitioners' Group was held to share and record experiences learnt when conducting service reviews or when implementing the Ffordd Gwynedd principles. • Draft packages of Ffordd Gwynedd training have been developed, with the intention of launching them during 2024. This includes a document on Ffordd Gwynedd behaviours for the purposes of ongoing evaluation. Here, the progress with the leadership sub-stream also applies: the Corporate Management Team has completed three team development sessions since November 2023; the Assistant Heads Forum was established last year, and; the first Manager Development Programme will run this year, as well as the Senior Leadership Development Programme from the Spring onwards. • Some of the sub-streams of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan circulate around broader strategy planning in the Council. E.g. the digital sub-stream has made considerable progress since adopting the Digital Plan last year; similarly the workforce planning and talent development sub-stream due to the new Workforce Planning Plan. • In terms of the satisfied and healthy workforce sub-stream, one important aspect is ensuring the Absences Group continue to target intervention where there are high levels of sickness.

Useful Appendices

Cyngor Gwynedd's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24

Cyngor Gwynedd's Diversity Statement

Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Equality Performance Report 2022-23

Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2022-23

2021/2022 Governance Statement

Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit 2023-24

Annual Report of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board 2022-23

Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2023-24

Participation Strategy 2023

Ffordd Gwynedd Plan 2023-28

Corporate Risk Register

Annual Workshop with the Regulators and Cabinet Members

Performance Reports of individual Cabinet Members

Annual Report on the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department's Complaints, Enquiries and Expressions of Gratitude Procedure for 2022-23

Sustainable Procurement Policy and Guidance

Employment Information 2022-23

Statement of the Accounts 2022-23

Cyngor Gwynedd's Assets Plan 2019/20 - 2028/29

2021/2022 Governance Statement

Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary 2023

Annual Report Cyngor Gwynedd Standards Committee 2023-24

Final Accounts 2023/24 – Revenue Out-turn

People Plan Strategy

Audit Wales Springing Forward Report 2021-2022

Cyngor Gwynedd - Financial Sustainability Assessment (audit.wales)

Internal Audit Updates reporting to the Governance and Audit Committee all year)
Cyngor Gwynedd's Constitution

Treasury Management Reports -

September 2023 (end 2022/23) 2023 (end 2022/23) -

December 2023 - Mid Year Treasury Management Report 2023-24.pdf (llyw.cymru)

IIP Assessment - Corporate Support Department and Gwynedd Consultancy Staff Surveys

Review of the effectiveness of scrutiny - Cyngor Gwynedd (audit.wales)