

Cabinet Member Performance Report

Councillor Craig ab Iago

Contact Officer: Carys Fôn Williams, Head of Housing and Property



Housing and Property Department

26 November, 2024

Photo: 3D design of the Tŷ Gwynedd Llanberis development



A report for the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Date of meeting	26 November, 2024
Cabinet Member	Councillor Craig ab Iago
Contact Officer	Carys Fon Williams, Head of Housing and Property
Item	Housing and Property Cabinet Member Report on Performance

Y DECISION SOUGHT

To accept and note the information in the report.

THE REASON WHY A DECISION IS NEEDED

In order to ensure effective performance management



1. Introduction



- 1.1 The **purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet on developments in the fields within my remit as Cabinet Member for Housing and Property.** Briefly, this will include an update on the projects of the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023–2028, the progress of performance measures, and the latest on the financial savings schemes.
- 1.2 Generally, **I am satisfied that significant progress is being made with projects led by the department in accordance with the Council Plan** and the performance measures for which I am responsible. The Department is still facing challenges, I am however confident that it has suitable plans to address the situation to the best of our ability.
- 1.3 While the pressure on the Council's **homelessness services** and resources remains high, I'm glad to report that progress can be seen in several of the Department's projects, which aim to tackle the situation. For example, **Dôl Sadler (our brand new supported accommodation in Dolgellau) is now home to 5 individuals** in need and the development was **shortlisted for an Inside Housing award recently.** There is also a promising fall in the numbers in emergency accommodation too. Go to 2.1.4 for more details.

- 1.4 **I want to remind you – Gwynedd is in a housing emergency.** The demand for homes is significantly higher than the numbers of houses we have in the county, and that is why this priority has, and continues to be one of the Department's main objectives in the Council Plan. The Department continues to work proactively to provide as many opportunities as possible for Gwynedd people to live locally, and more can be read about these plans in 2.2.1.
- 1.5 As everyone is aware, **increasing energy costs means that a number of people in the county cannot afford to keep their houses warm,** and consequently there is a genuine risk to the health of some of our residents. I'm very happy that the Department staff are at the forefront helping the people of Gwynedd to benefit from the support available at this very challenging time. More on this in 2.3.
- 1.6 All matters noted here are regularly discussed and have been scrutinised by me jointly with the Chief Executive, the Department Head of Service and Service Managers as well as representatives of the Care Scrutiny Committee. I also had the opportunity in February this year to present an update report on the Housing Action Plan to the Care Scrutiny Committee, where positive and constructive comments were received.

2. CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLAN 2023-2028 SCHEMES

PRIORITY AREA: A Homely Gwynedd

2.1 Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd

2.1.1 993 households presented as homeless and 662 households were placed in emergency accommodation during the 2023/24 financial year. On the basis of the current pattern of presentations and emergency accommodation, the Department predicts the presentation numbers will be similar to last years'. However, through the hard and deliberate work of the Department and the Homelessness Service, the number in emergency accommodation is likely to be fewer than 23/24 figures. Nearly 250 households were in different locations across the county when I last reported. The latest figures show this is down to 188.

2.1.2 Although this is still too high, and it's important to note that there is no quick-fix to this problem, it shows that the Department's tireless work is bearing fruit, and I'm very proud to say that.

2.1.3 Several workstreams are ongoing to ensuring no-one is homeless in Gwynedd – here are some details on a few of the main projects in progress:

Supported accommodation developments

2.1.4 Our goal as part of scheme 1a in the Housing Action Plan is to develop at least 83 supported accommodation units for homeless individuals across the county. The first development, Dôl Sadler in Dolgellau, had completed last time I reported, and by now the development is home to 5 receiving support from our homelessness officers.

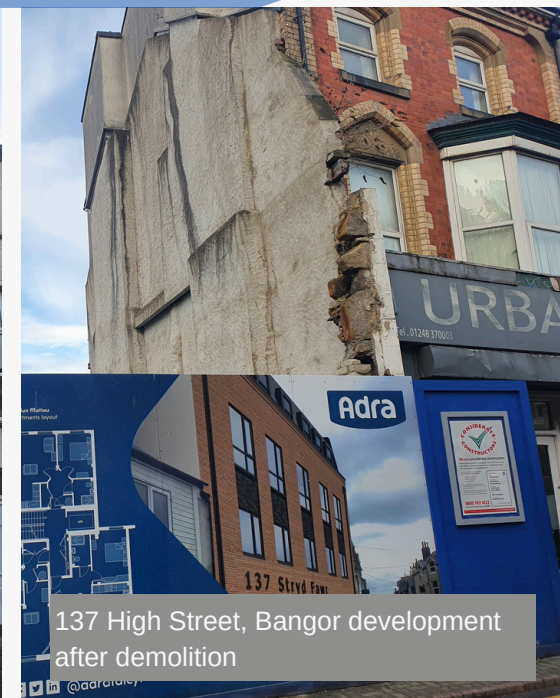
2.1.5 The development was recently nominated for Inside Housing's 'Best Supported Housing Development: Rural / Suburban', shortlisted out of hundreds of nominations. The picture below shows the completed development.



2. CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLAN 2023-2028 Schemes: A Homely Gwynedd

2.1.6 Some other ongoing plans include:

Project	Units	Update
35 College Road, Bangor	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This work is still ongoing although we acknowledge that the timetable has slipped from the original schedule • The snagging work is almost completed and the lease is close to completing; • Hoping to be operational by December
137 High Street, Bangor	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adra has completed the construction work, and an open day will be held on 22 November 2024 • Discussions continue regarding the lease and support arrangements with North Wales Housing
Accommodation in Pwllheli	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on the units has completed • The property is now home to two households





Crown Building, Penrallt, Caernarfon - former Government building

2.1.7 The last time I reported, we as a Cabinet had just approved the for the Department to purchase the former Government building at Penrallt, Caernarfon. The purchase completed in March this year, and the Department is currently assessing, designing and preparing tofor the provision of approximately 38 units suitable for those in need.

2.1.8 The Department is also in the process of converting one of the Council's buildings close to the Headquarters in Caernarfon (known as Mona Building) into supported housing as part of scheme 1dd in the Housing Action Plan. There will be 6 supported housing units in this building with support provided by officers from the Homelessness Services.

Support packages for private landlords – Leasing Scheme Wales

- 2.1.9 To remind you, this scheme's purpose is to encourage private landlords to lease their property to us for a guaranteed rent for a period of 5-25 years. The Department aims to bring 100 properties onto the Scheme over the next ten years, meaning that the Council will have more private sector rented houses in use to deal with the increasing housing demand.
- 2.1.10 This Scheme has made good progress with 22 properties now on the Scheme giving 48 Gwynedd residents a home. Work has completed on 2 properties, with tenants just about to move in. 15 other properties are currently being repaired, and 7 others are awaiting inspection following expressions of interest.
- 2.1.11 As you can see, the figures are healthy, and the flow of enquiries reaching us constant. However, I would like to appeal to Meirionnydd landlords especially to come to us and discuss so that we can increase our options in that part of the county.
- 2.1.12 For more information or to discuss if you are interested, go to our [website](#) or contact the Department through the ways below:



[Leasing Scheme
Wales Gwynedd
website](#)



[cynllunlesucymru@
gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:cynllunlesucymru@gwynedd.llyw.cymru)

Restructuring and service arrangements

- 2.1.13 Over the past year, we have taken the opportunity to restructure the Homelessness Service in order to improve the experience an individual has with through the homeless journey.
- 2.1.14 This change has proven to be a success, and we have received positive feedback from staff and service users alike. There is a feeling of unity in the service, and that is nurtured and maintained day to day as well as in whole service meetings. Staff feel that there is an identity to the team, and feel an appreciation of the opportunity to build on their personal skills and understanding of the work area over the past few months. This in turn will lead to building further on the excellent service already provided by the team to the people of Gwynedd.
- 2.1.15 The process of restructuring, the new structure and the culture that has been created as a result has received recognition for being innovative and has been recognised as good practice by the Welsh Government, which has led to receiving an invitation to present the work to other councils across Wales on the 3rd December.

Raising awareness and breaking the stigma around homeless

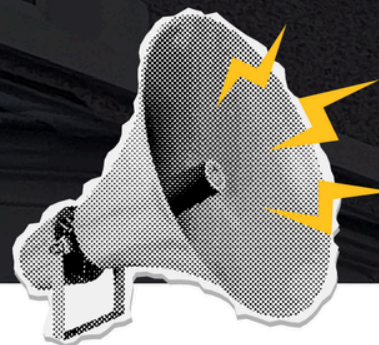
- 2.1.16 I often say that homelessness is an important topic and has the potential to affect us all, but not everyone understands the full picture, perhaps. Therefore, to raise awareness about homelessness and try to dispel the stigma about the field, we have set aside a whole week to the subject.
- 2.1.17 Therefore, on the week of 18-22 November, **'Gwynedd's Homelessness Awareness Week'** will be held where there will be a program of events and publicity material to raise awareness about the homelessness situation in Gwynedd, show the key work that case officers carry out, and share the stories of real people. to show that homelessness can affect all of us.
- 2.1.18 I encourage my fellow Members and anyone who reads this report to watch the videos, read the statistics and understand more about what real homelessness is.



WYTHNOS YMWHYBYDDIAETH
DIGARTREFEDD GWYNEDD

18-22/11/2024

GWYNEDD HOMELESSNESS
AWARENESS WEEK



#WYDGwynedd2024

2.2 Increasing the supply of housing for local people

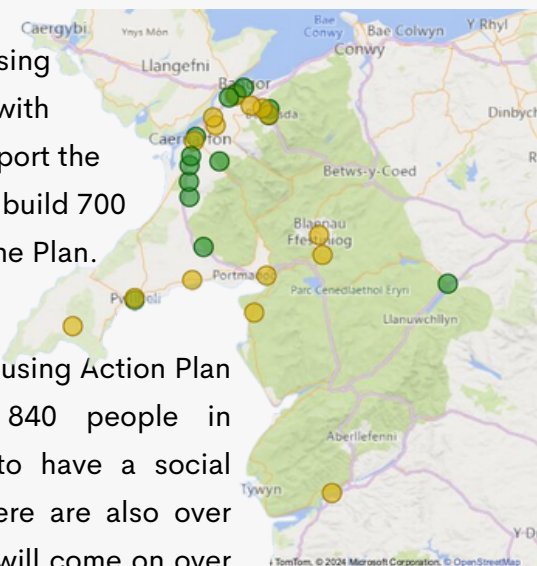
2.2.1 I want to start this part by reminding that Gwynedd is in a housing crisis.

2.1.2 The demand for housing is significantly higher than the number of suitable houses we have in Gwynedd, which is why this priority has been, and continues to be, one of the Department's main goals in the Council's Plan.

Gwynedd Socials Housing Development Programme (PDP)

2.2.3 As part of the Gwynedd Social Housing Development Programme, which is also part of project 2a of the Housing Action Plan, we collaborate with Housing Associations to support the building program and aim to build 700 new houses over the life of the Plan.

2.2.4 317 houses have now been built since the start of the Housing Action Plan which has offered over 840 people in Gwynedd the opportunity to have a social tenancy in their county. There are also over 220 units in progress which will come on over the next year.



Tŷ Gwynedd

2.2.5 I've shared many times that work to turn my and the Department's vision of building innovative and modern houses into reality has been underway for some time, and now I can share that all the hard work that has happened in the background in preparing, planning and designing can finally be seen on the ground.

2.2.6 The first development has started on a site in Llanberis, which will turn the site of the old library into 3 homes for families from Gwynedd ([see design on the front page of this report](#)). The demolition of the old library was completed over the summer (to avoid affecting the neighbouring school and the parents, staff and pupils who would pass by) and the first sod cutting ceremony was held at the end of October this year ([see the press release here](#)). If no problem arises in the meantime, the work is expected to take just over a year to complete.

2.2.7 But Llanberis is not the only development we have starting on a site - the development of Coed Mawr (10 units) will have started by the time I present this report to my fellow Cabinet Members and the first spade will go to the earth in mid-November. Our communications team will share that on our social media and through the press.

2.2.8 There are four other developments on our main work programme, namely:

- Maes Twnti, Morfa Nefyn site (9 units)
- Site at Llanystumdwy (5 units)
- Site at Mynytho (4 units)
- Land near Llanrug Schoolhouse (2 units)

2.2.9 The development of Maes Twnti, Morfa Nefyn is expected to be discussed at the next Planning Committee; designs have been completed by our architects for Llanystumdwy and a planning application will be submitted shortly; we are in the process of organizing an open day for the Mynytho site where we will share designs and receive feedback from the local member and the local community (as was done in Llanystumdwy recently).

2.2.10 As a reminder, all developments under the Tŷ Gwynedd banner will build flexible, green, energy-efficient houses, and will be built sustainably, and will be available to buy or rent at an intermediate rent.



Buy to Let

2.2.11 I am very pleased to report that 28 houses have been bought as the map on the right shows. The latest purchases include locations such as Llanrug, Dolgellau, Bermo, Bala, Felinheli, Bangor and Bontnewydd.

2.2.12 In addition to that there are 16 other purchases planned - across the County. See map on the next page for details of location of purchases.

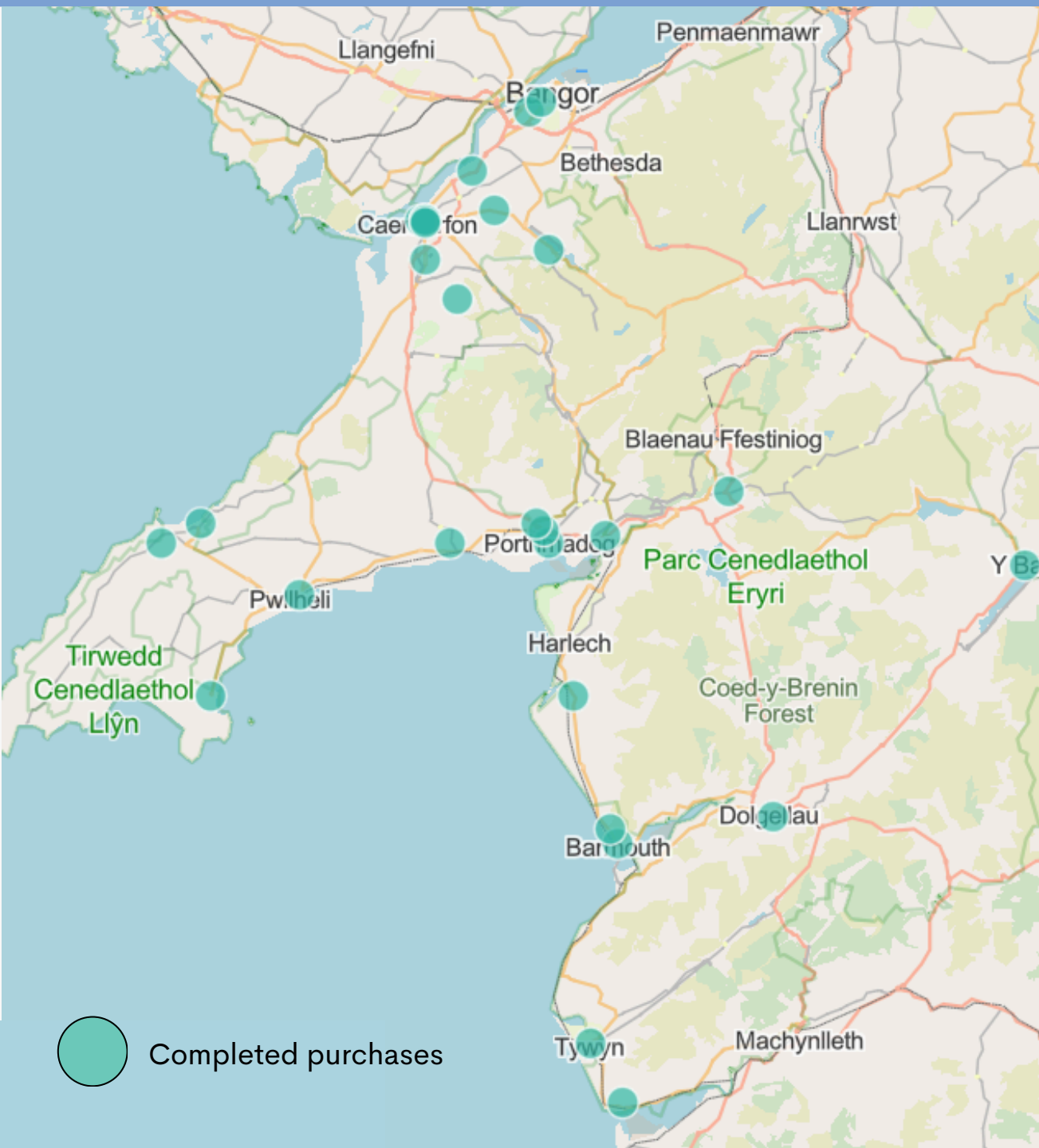
2.2.13 As always, in addition to the above further opportunities are being considered and negotiated continuously. Work is underway to upgrade a number of the houses in our possession, with contractors on site in 3 properties, and others either in the process of tendering for contractors or preparing to do so. See right for an example of a recently renovated home ready to let.

2.1.14 The second "part" of this Plan is the letting of course, and now 10 properties have been let to local residents in locations such as Pwllheli, Llanberis and Penrhyndeudraeth. This means that we are on track to achieve the number of purchases set as an ambition for 2023/24 and I'm very satisfied with the progress and direction of the Scheme.



2. CYNGOR GWYNEDD PLAN 2023-2028 Schemes: A Homely Gwynedd

Homebuy



- 2.2.15 This Scheme - for first time buyers, or individuals/families who can't afford to buy a suitable home on the open market - can offer an interest-free loan to bridge the gap between the price of a property and what can be offered through a mortgage and deposit. The aim through this is to make housing affordable for residents who struggle to get a sufficient mortgage to buy a house on the open market in their local area. The plan is funded through a combination of funding from Gwynedd Council's Tax Premium Fund, and funding from the Government as part of Dwyfor Pilot.
- 2.2.16 Since its launch on 13 September 2022, 42 homes have been purchased with the help of the Scheme across the county, and another 35 at different stages of the process, which includes conveyance, looking for suitable properties, or currently being assessed for the Scheme.
- 2.2.17 I am extremely proud of this Scheme and the way it helps the people of Gwynedd who are in dire need of buying a home. At the time of writing this report, the Department is completing discussions regarding the review of the criteria, with the aim of extending them to enable more people who need our help to be eligible for the scheme.

2.3 Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty

- 2.3.1 Dealing with the crisis of energy costs and fuel poverty has been identified as one of the Department's main priorities in the Council's Plan due to the increase in energy costs, which means that many people in the county are being pushed to fuel poverty, which can mean a real danger to the health of some of our residents. In order to give support and assistance to the people of Gwynedd, the Department has an Energy Service established as part of the Housing Action Plan which works together with our partners to promote and facilitate energy saving schemes, grants and benefits to ensure that as many people as possible take advantage of the support available at a very challenging time.
- 2.3.2 There are two main streams to the work, Decarbonisation of Housing, and Consultation with the public on Fuel Poverty - either method aims to tackle the problem practically and in the method that does the best and the greatest of our power and resources.
- 2.3.3 For example, since the start of the scheme 4383 energy vouchers have been distributed, which is equivalent to a total of £181,589 - money that has gone directly to help the people of Gwynedd.
- 2.3.4 The Department is also involved in the ECO 4 Scheme and the Nest Scheme - schemes which provide support to improve the energy efficiency of houses. 368 ECO applications have been approved between March and August this year, and 75 have seen an improvement in their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) in the same period (353 since the start of the scheme).



Un o'r Cynhadleddau Ynni y mae'r Gwasanaeth Ynni yn eu trefnu er mwyn helpu pobl Gwynedd gydag ymholiadau a materion ynni a thlodi tanwydd

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

- 2.4.1 It remains our intention to adopt a new Property Asset Management Plan (PAMP) which will outline the Council's plan for using its buildings to provide services. The last PAMP was adopted in 2016, and there has been a significant change in working arrangements and service provision since then.
- 2.4.2 The Department's continuous discussions looks at the management and rationalisation of the estate in accordance with the Council's priorities and the needs of services for Gwynedd residents. We will identify the adjustments needed to adapt our policies in relation to management, and maintenance of our property by modifying wordings to meet current statutory arrangements and requirements, meeting the Carbon agenda, and giving suitable consideration to methods of measuring the value of carbon.
- 2.4.3 The Department also plays a key role in carrying out adaptations to the Council's offices to ensure that they are suitable to meet the hybrid working arrangements that have been adopted, as well as enabling us to rationalise our office space, making better use of the Council's resources.

3. OTHER RISKS

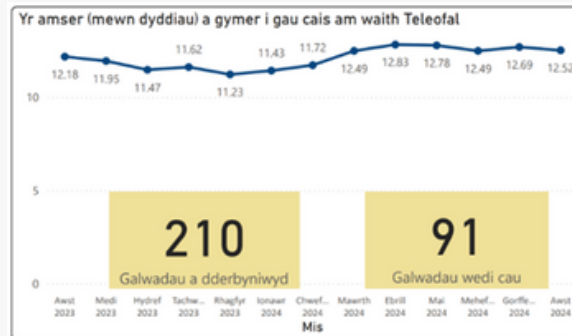
- 3.1 Responding to the pressure on our resources in the homelessness field remains a significant challenge for the Department, and the risk that we will not be able to respond to demand, or a risk to our budgets as a result of the high costs associated with using emergency accommodation, are subjects of continuous discussion, especially since financial sources from the Government have ended.
- 3.2 Officers and politicians continue to meet regularly and plans are underway to try and reduce our use of unsuitable emergency accommodation, and the costs associated with them. Some of those plans means increasing our options to provide suitable accommodation for those who are homeless in Gwynedd, or making our processes and internal arrangements more efficient. We seem to be going in the right direction with all this, and I hope that that pattern will still be seen next time.
- 3.3 It is anticipated that the Council's energy costs will remain unstable, and although we have established our own gas purchase framework which has reduced the costs significantly. Gas and electricity contracts roll from one year to the next, and we're dependent on our broker to give us expert advice to be in the best possible position, which has so far been beneficial. We'll meet our broker again soon to see if it is timely to close for a while.
- 3.4 The Department continues to emphasise the need for users of the Council's buildings (offices, schools etc) to take every opportunity to make the most sensible use of their energy, especially over the coming winter period. The Energy Service will continue to monitor usage to make the best use of energy.

4. PERFORMANCE

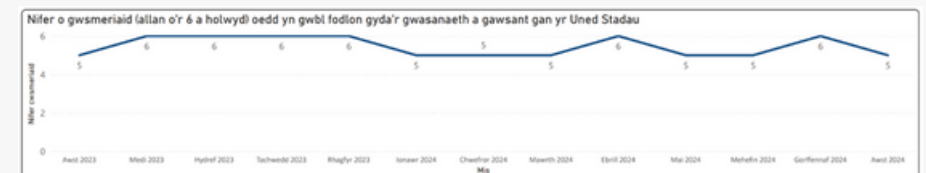
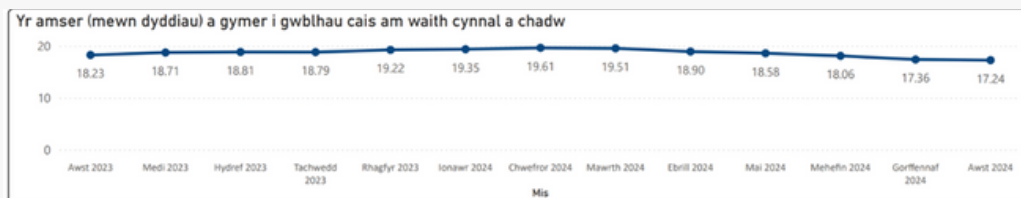
4.1 This outlines some of the main issues arising from the last performance report presented by the Department on the performance of August 2024. The information does not refer to all services in the department, only those we feel that you need to draw your attention to them. I would like to say that I am very satisfied with the performance of the Department.



4.2 1.1. After a period of progress due to the pandemic, there has been an encouraging reduction in the days taken to respond to Maintenance calls. On the other hand, the average days to respond to a Telecare request has increased slightly since I last reported (which also coincides with an increase in the number of calls). The work of updating the Telecare tools from analogue to digital technology continues, and I note that it will likely have an impact on our figures moving forward.



4.3 Since I last reported, a new Estates Manager has been appointed (following the promotion of our former manager to Assistant Head of Department), and the Department is in the process of filling the previous position of the new Manager. We are aware that some comments received to the customer satisfaction survey indicate a delay in receiving some services and that is because the service has seen an increase in their workload due to the Council's Plan Priorities and the Housing Action Plan, as well as a reduction in the team's capacity following the job changes. However, customer satisfaction continues to score high



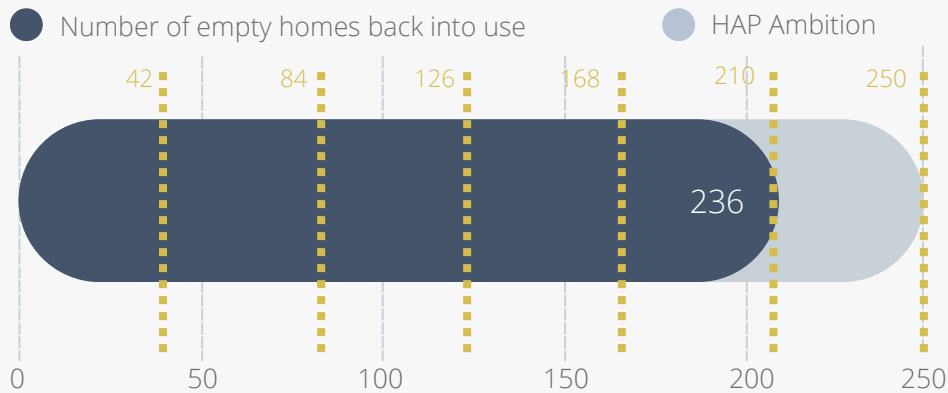


4.4 The number of empty houses that have come back into use as a result of support from the Council has increased again over the last few months to 236 (compared to 208 when reported in February 2024). This includes 81 houses that have received a First Time Buyers grant as part of the 3rd project of the Housing Action Plan. The applications reach us constantly, although things calmed down a bit over the summer. On average, we support over 3 local contractors to complete the work on each application. £890,187 has been spent since the start of the scheme on completed applications. For example, in July 2024, £38,555 was spent across the County on First Time Buyer Scheme grants, and a further £39,050 in August 2024.

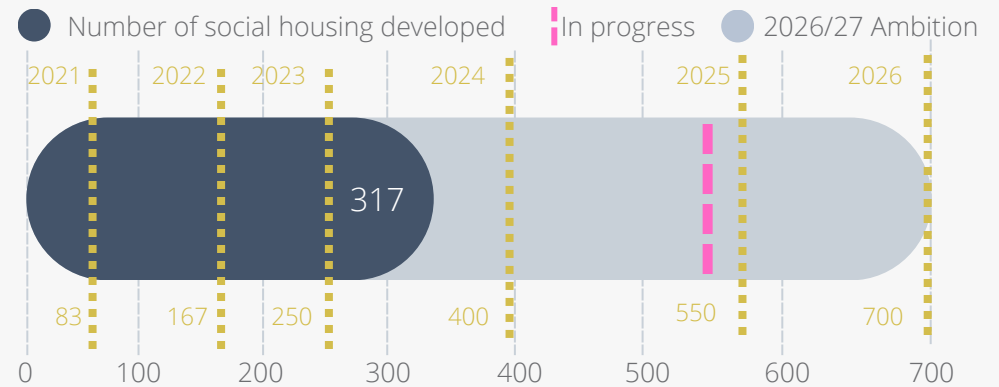


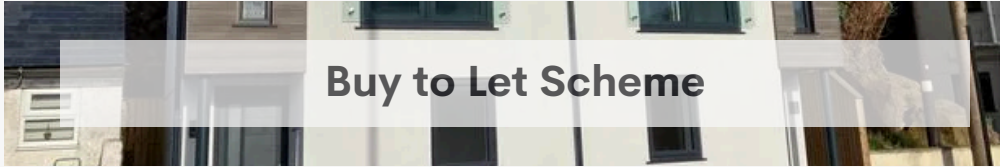
4.5 The Department measures the number of units that have been developed through partnership with the Housing Associations. The Main Program of the Housing Development Program (PDP), funded through the Welsh Government's Social Housing Grant and managed by the Council, has so far built 317 units, with a further 223 in the pipeline. Good progress is being seen on those plans which are in progress with the expectation that some will be completed in the coming months. Furthermore, the 24/25 and 25/26 grant budget has been fully earmarked. By working closely with the Housing Partners strong plans are presented as part of the main 24/25 and 25/26 program as well as additional plans as part of the contingency program and the potential program.

Number of empty homes that have come back into use following support from the Council (since April 2020)



Number of social housing developed in order to reach the HAP ambition

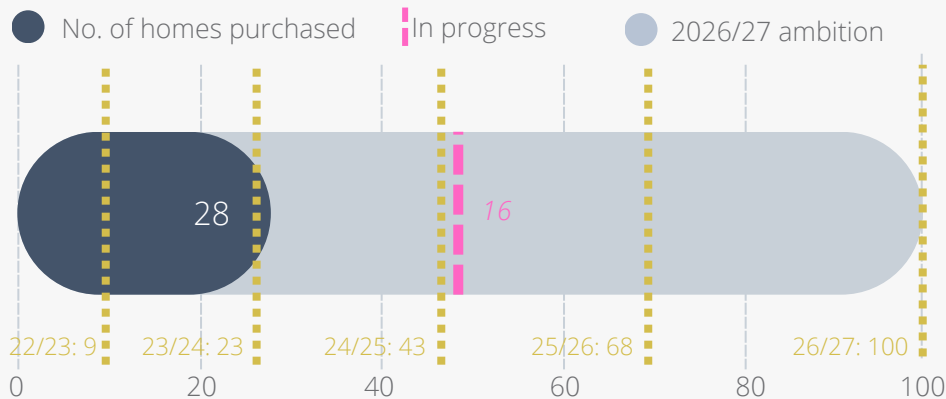




4.6 28 properties have so far been purchased, with another 16 in the conveyance process and others with renovation work in progress. 10 properties have now been to local people including two in Pwllheli and one in Llanberis.

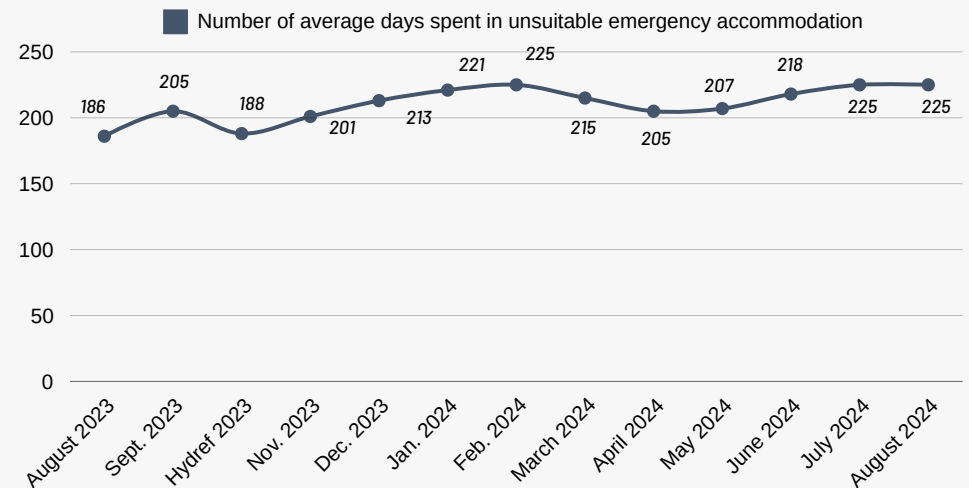
These lets are managed by through a partnership between the Council and Adra.

Number of homes purchased through the Buy to Let Scheme



4.7 The average number of days a person spends in emergency accommodation has increased slightly since April. On the other hand, an encouraging decrease has been seen in the number in emergency accommodation.

We believe the number of average days is high because some complex cases remain in accommodation, therefore we suspect the figure will remain high for a period until more long-term options become available for these individuals.



5. FINANCIAL/SAVINGS SITUATION

- 5.1 According to the latest review of the Department's situation, an overspend of £126k is predicted this year. However, it is estimated that those headings that have overspent significantly in the past will be in a better position than last year at the end of the financial year, e.g. emergency accommodation, which will see its overspend reduced from £1.1m to £370k. An allocation towards this heading of £3.1m was received from the Council Tax Premium when increased from 100% to 150%. In addition, the Department aims to realise savings of £261,230 in 2024/25. One plan is delayed, but all others are on track to be realised this year.

VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

MONITORING OFFICER

No observations to add in relation to propriety.

HEAD OF FINANCE

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of the financial situation of the Housing and Property Department.

