



Statutory Panel Performance Assessment Scoping
Document
Cyngor Gwynedd 2024/25

DRAFT

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1. Introduction

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on Councils to conduct a Panel Performance Assessment **once** within an electoral cycle. The duty came into force in May 2022.

Three statutory duties must be followed when carrying out a panel assessment:

- Preparation (determine the scope, terms of reference, membership, etc.)
- Assessment (carry out the assessment, present findings)
- Follow-up (draw up the final report, the Council's response)

This duty is linked to the duty of holding annual performance self-assessments. Similarly, the panel assessment will look specifically at the extent to which the Council:

- exercises its functions effectively;
- is using its resources prudently, efficiently and effectively; and
- has robust governance arrangements in place for securing the above.

The assessment will consider evidence to enable panel members to reach conclusions on the degree to which the Council meets the three performance requirements noted above.

After consulting the Council's Management Team and Cabinet Members the Cabinet decided that Cyngor Gwynedd's Statutory Panel Performance Assessment should be carried out during October 2024. We will have prepared three self-assessment cycles by that point and the timescale should give us time to conduct the assessment and put steps in place to respond and implement any recommendations made, by the next local government elections in 2027.

The Panel review will look at the self-assessments already prepared by the Council over recent years. As part of preparing for the assessment, consideration has been given to the areas for which we as a Council are keen to obtain impartial views or feedback from an independent panel. A list of these matters can be found in [part 7 of this document](#).

It is hoped that the assessment will result in a number of recommendations that will add value and lead to improvements in the Council's work and the services provided to the county's residents. We welcome the external and independent challenge as one of the ways in which we can ensure that we make a lasting improvement.

Given the current challenges we face, we are keen for the assessment to focus on the core questions outlined above. The [Council Plan](#) has been adopted for the period 2023-28 (reviewed in 2024) and a [Financial Strategy](#) is in place (with a Medium-term Financial Strategy being developed) but we are keen to strike the right balance between our ambition and the constraints that exist and we would appreciate feedback on how that can be done in a sustainable way into the future.

In recent years we have faced a number of unprecedented major challenges such as the pandemic, Brexit, the cost-of-living crisis and the financial pressures on us as local authorities and it is anticipated that this situation is likely to continue into the future.

2. Overview of Place

Gwynedd is one of the most diverse and beautiful areas of Wales, and is a stronghold of the Welsh language.

It covers an area of 2,535km² making it the second largest county in Wales by land area. It shares borders with the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire, Powys, Ceredigion and Anglesey. 80% of Wales's largest National Park, Eryri National Park, is in the Gwynedd area.

Population and Demography

In 2021, there were 117,393 people living in Gwynedd – a 3.7% reduction on the population in 2011 (121,874). Over the whole of Wales there has been a 1.4% increase in population for the same period.

| Ardal | Poblogaeth 2021 | Poblogaeth 2011 | +/- % |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Ardal Pen Llŷn | 7,796 | 8,524 | -8.5% |
| Ardal Porthmadog / Penrhyndeudraeth | 9,759 | 10,323 | -5.5% |
| Bro Ardudwy | 6,331 | 7,157 | -11.5% |
| Bro Dysynni | 6,946 | 7,514 | -7.6% |
| Bro Ffestiniog | 6,077 | 6,479 | -6.2% |
| Bro Lleu / Nantlle | 9,659 | 9,665 | -0.1% |
| Bro Ogwen | 8,213 | 8,351 | -1.7% |
| Bro Peris | 11,374 | 11,685 | -2.7% |
| Dalgylch Bala / Penllyn | 4,422 | 4,362 | 1.4% |
| Dalgylch Bangor | 20,486 | 21,092 | -2.9% |
| Dalgylch Caernarfon | 11,082 | 10,777 | 2.8% |
| Dalgylch Dolgellau | 5,234 | 5,477 | -4.4% |
| Dalgylch Pwllheli | 9,994 | 10,468 | -4.5% |
| Gwynedd | 117,393* | 121,874 | -3.7% |

* *Ffigyrau'r ardaloedd unigol ddim yn adio i union gyfanswm Gwynedd oherwydd dull y Swyddfa Ystadegau Gwladol o addasu rhywfaint ar ffigyrau ardaloedd bychan i warchod cyfrinachedd*

The figures of individual areas do not add up to the exact Gwynedd total due to the Office for National Statistics' method of adjusting the figures for small areas to some extent, to protect confidentiality

15.3% of people in Gwynedd are under the age of 15, compared to 16.5% throughout Wales. 23.3% of people in Gwynedd are aged 65 or over, compared to 21.3% throughout Wales. It is anticipated that there will be a significant increase (42%) in the number of 75+ year olds across the County by the year 2043 which means that we need to support an ageing population and ensure that individuals stay healthy for longer for the benefit of the economy and health and care services. The largest percentage increase is likely to be in the Bala and Penllyn areas of (57.5%) and the Tywyn area with the smallest percentage increase of 17%.

The Welsh Language

On the day of the 2021 Census there were 73,560 people (aged 3+) able to speak Welsh in Gwynedd which equates to 64.4%. In 2011, the equivalent percentage was 65.4%.

Housing

Housing prices and affordability are a major concern amongst local communities across the county and is likely to have a negative impact on the social, cultural, linguistic and economic well-being of areas. Another concern highlighted by communities is the second / holiday home situation.

This was highlighted by county residents during the Ardal Ni 2035 public engagement exercise with these issues identified as one of the top five priorities in each of the 13 local regeneration areas used during the exercise.

Tourism

Based on the STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Assessment Model) figures, prior to the Covid-19 period, the tourism sector had grown to contribute over £1.35bn to the Gwynedd economy and employed over 18,200 people with 7.81m visitors visiting annually. The tourism sector is undoubtedly important to Gwynedd's economy, however, tourism can also create additional pressures on public services and the natural world

Covid-19 has had a negative impact on the country's accommodation and food sector as a result of the restrictions, and this has been more pronounced in tourism-dependent areas.

Local Climate Challenges

In March 2019, Cyngor Gwynedd announced that we were facing a climate change emergency and committed to taking decisive action to reduce carbon emissions and strive for a zero-carbon future.

The intention of the [Climate and Nature Emergency Plan](#) is to outline the actions that we will take between 2022 and 2030 to reach the aim of being a net-zero carbon council.

Parts of Gwynedd face a very uncertain future as sea levels increase, and it is anticipated that some communities will have to relocate over the next few years due to climate changes, while others will face constant threats.

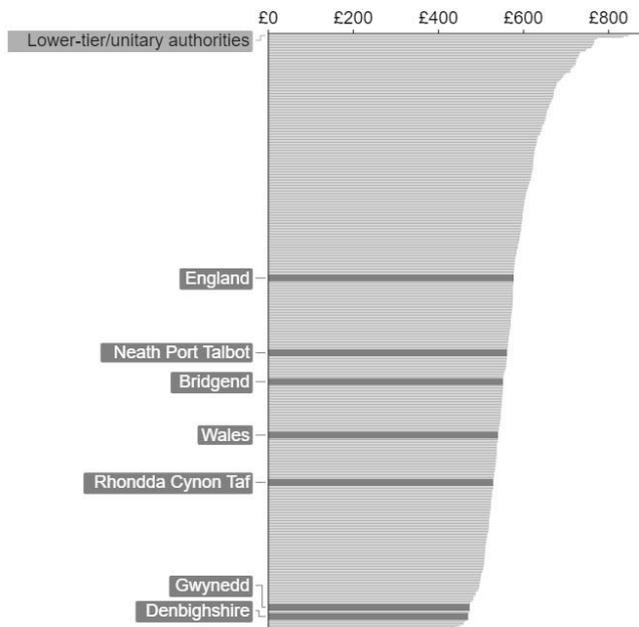
With a much higher proportion of coastline compared to other counties in Wales, one of the most noticeable side effects of climate change is flooding. In Gwynedd, 11,285 properties are currently at risk of flooding / are protected from flooding.

Economy

The latest ONS statistics (2023) show that Gwynedd's wages are among the lowest in Britain:

Gross median weekly pay

Average weekly pay based on where people live, 2023

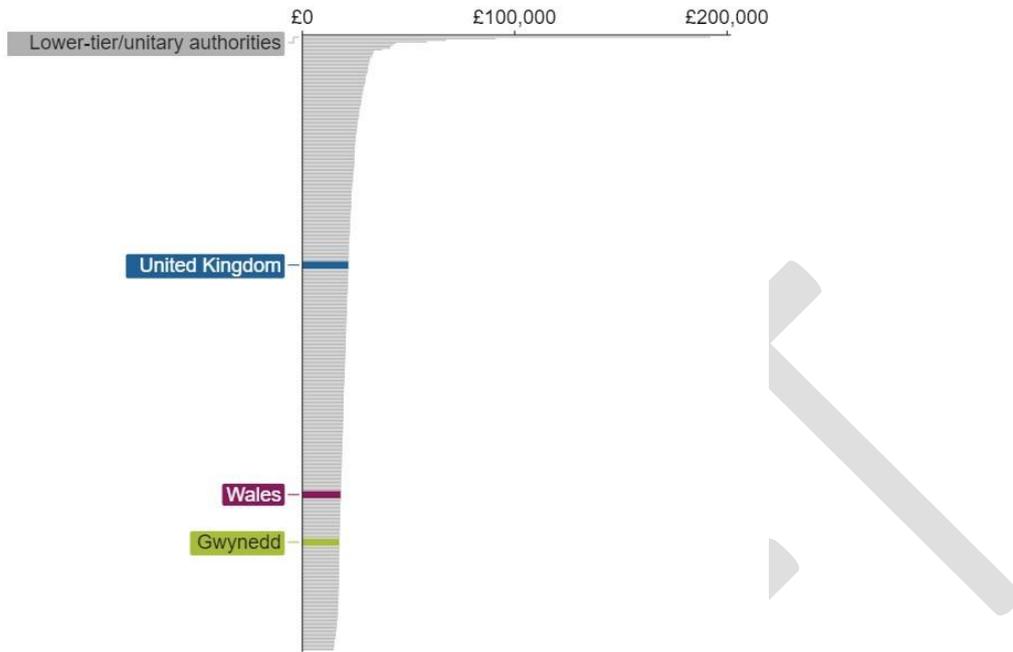


Source: [Office for National Statistics](#) and [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#)

In addition, annual household income in Gwynedd is among the lowest in Britain (£17,430) according to the latest ONS data 2021:

Gross disposable household income

Average income per person after taxes and direct benefits, 2021



Source: [Office for National Statistics](#)

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3. Vision for the Area and Local Priorities

Council Plan

The [Council Plan 2023-28](#) was originally adopted by the Full Council at its meeting on 2 March 2023. The Plan is our public statement as a Council of what we intend to achieve for the people of Gwynedd. It states our vision and ambition for the five years together with the projects we will deliver. The Plan was reviewed for 2024/2025. The purpose of reviewing the Plan is to look at where we have reached after a year of implementation, as well as to make sure we continue to do the right things. The Full Council agreed on the review of the Plan at its meeting on 7 March 2024. Full details of the review can be found on our [website](#).

Following extensive consultation with the people of Gwynedd as part of the [Ardal Ni 2035](#) plan, together with a number of discussions and feedback from the county's residents and beyond, a series of priorities and projects were formed that will allow us to further develop and improve the services provided to the people of Gwynedd. Naturally, only a proportion of the Council's activities is seen in the Council Plan, and the day-to-day work of providing services continues throughout the county.

We are aiming high over the next five years and working hard to reach every ambition set out for the priorities in the plan. To do this, we will review the plan regularly and determine milestones for each project to allow us to measure our progress on an annual basis.

The Plan comprises a series of projects for the five years 2023-2028 under seven priority areas:

- **Tomorrow's Gwynedd**
Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life
- **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

The priority areas are our Well-being Objectives under the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The objectives will directly contribute to achieving the seven national well-being goals. These are difficult times financially and there is no doubt that it will be a challenge for the Council to deliver all of the projects on time. We will, however, be aiming high over the

next five years and working hard to reach every ambition set out for the priorities in the plan. To do this, we will review the plan regularly and determine milestones for each project to allow us to measure our progress on an annual basis.

Performance challenge and support arrangements are in place to report on the progress of the projects every two months to the relevant Cabinet Member and the Chief Executive/Corporate Director. Furthermore, a performance report is published by individual Cabinet Members twice a year which includes the progress of Council Plan projects [*enclose a document containing information about our performance challenge and support arrangements*].

It is noted that it is early days in terms of implementing the Council Plan but an overview report of the progress of all projects submitted to the Leadership Team on 23 April 2024 shows that 24 projects out of 36 (67%) achieved what was stated for the year with the remaining 12 partially achieved [*link to the overview report*]. Steps are already in place to agree milestones for year 2 and the remainder of the Plan period to try to ensure that we are able to achieve what has been set out by the end of the Plan period.

Following the [Ardal Ni](#) engagement process 13 individual regeneration plans have been developed which reflect the aspirations of local communities in Gwynedd. The Plans can be found on the [Ardal Ni 2035 website](#). The vision for the Local Regeneration Plans is based on the following:

“Develop and support healthy, thriving and vibrant sustainable communities that have the confidence to venture and the desire and ability to contribute their own solutions to local needs and to take advantage of new opportunities.”

Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board

The Board has a vision that public services work together to ensure that our communities thrive and flourish in the long term. The [Well-being Plan 2023-2028](#) outlines how this will be achieved and will make a real difference to the lives of Gwynedd and Anglesey residents.

Using the evidence in the local [Well-being Assessments](#) in 2022 (research undertaken to understand and learn more about the well-being of areas within Gwynedd and Anglesey), as well as running workshops and consulting locally, here are the Board's three Well-being Objectives for 2023-2028:

- We will work together to mitigate the effect of poverty on the well-being of our communities.
- We will work together to improve the well-being and achievement of our children and young people to realise their full potential.
- We will work together to support our services and communities to move towards Zero Net Carbon.

The Welsh Language

The Welsh language is a permanent priority for the Board and we promote it in all aspects of our work. The Public Services Board is an opportunity to share good practice, promote the language and ensure that residents of both counties have access to all public services through the medium of Welsh.

A copy of the Well-being Plan for 2023-2028 can be found on the [Public Services Board's website](#).

Since the launch of the Well-being Plan for 2023-2028, the Board has embarked on the work of preparing annual delivery plans that follow Whole System and Healthy Weight/Healthy Wales methodology. Furthermore, IAITH: the Welsh language planning centre was appointed by the Board's Welsh language sub-group to investigate the challenges and successes of bilingual workforce planning among organisations that make up the three North Wales Public Service Boards. IAITH was asked to examine why public organisations across north Wales are struggling to recruit staff to Welsh-speaking posts, and whether the answer lay within the recruitment processes themselves.

Work has also commenced to collaborate on the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Strategy, working on a Whole System Approach and promoting and implementing the North Wales Healthy Travel Charter (including collaborating on energy use in public sector settings infrastructure).

The Council is part of the North Wales Ambition Board, which works to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the region. The Board has developed a Growth Deal, with the intention of generating an investment of more than £1 billion for north Wales.

Cyngor Gwynedd is also part of the North Wales Regional Partnership Board. This was established as part of the Social Services and Well-being Act to improve the well-being of the population and improve the delivery of health and care services. It brings together health services, social services, the third sector and other partners to coordinate the ongoing process of transforming and integrating health, social care and well-being services across the region.

4. Political and Organisational Leadership

Cyngor Gwynedd consists of 69 Councillors who are elected every five years. 69 Councillors serve on the Full Council and the Council operates through a Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees system. The Council is led by Plaid Cymru. Here is the Council's current political composition:

Plaid Cymru: 46
Independent: 21
Labour/Liberal Group: 2
Total: 69

Changes to several of the electoral wards took place in advance of the Election in 2022, reducing the number of wards from 75 to 69. This has meant changing the boundaries of wards as well as increasing the number of multi-member wards.

The Full Council: The Full Council is a formal meeting of all Councillors. It is at the meetings that they set the budget each year and approve a number of key plans and strategies that form the Council's overall Policy Framework. The Council meets five times a year and the meetings are open to the public and are webcast live to ensure access for all.

The Cabinet: The Cabinet includes ten Councillors and is chaired by the Leader of the Council. Each of the Members has a specific portfolio of responsibility for fields within the Council's services (Corporate Support; Education; Finance; Environment; Adults, Health and Well-being; Children and Supporting Families; Housing; Highways, Engineering and YGC). The Leader of the Council is [Councillor Nia Jeffreys](#) (Porthmadog: East). [Councillor Menna Trenholme](#) (Bontnewydd) is the Deputy Leader.

The Chair of the Council: Cyngor Gwynedd elects a Chair and Vice-chair every 12 months at its annual meeting. The Chair presides over Council meetings and represents Cyngor Gwynedd at civic and ceremonial events. At Cyngor Gwynedd's annual meeting on 9 May 2024, [Councillor Beca Roberts](#) (Tregarth and Mynydd Llandygái) was elected Chair of Cyngor Gwynedd and [Councillor Ioan Thomas](#) (Menai (Caernarfon)) was elected Vice-chair.

Scrutiny Committees: There are three Scrutiny Committees in Gwynedd, all of them meeting at least five times a year:

- Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
- Communities Scrutiny Committee
- Care Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Leadership Team

The Corporate Leadership Team is the Council's most senior management tier. It includes the Chief Executive, the two Corporate Directors, the Departmental Heads and the Monitoring Officer, and is responsible for realising the Council's strategic priorities as well as ensuring effective governance.

Dafydd Gibbard is the Chief Executive, the most senior officer, and is responsible for all the staff employed directly by the Council. He was appointed to his post in May 2021. The role of the Chief Executive includes:

- **Leadership:** Working with the Council's Elected Members to ensure strong and visible leadership and direction. Encouraging and enabling managers to motivate and inspire their staff to achieve objectives agreed by the Council.
- **Strategic direction:** Realising the strategic priorities set by the Council's Elected Members and stakeholders, by ensuring that staff understand these and follow them.
- **Policy advice:** Acting as the principal policy adviser to Elected Members of the Council.
- **Partnerships:** Leading and developing strong partnerships with other public services, businesses and voluntary groups across Gwynedd and beyond to improve the quality of life in the county.
- **Governance:** Overseeing and coordinating financial and performance management, risk management, and managing change within the Council.

There are four departments in the Chief Executive's portfolio. In these areas, the Chief Executive leads on strategic work as well as on performance challenge arrangements.

- Economy and Community
- Environment
- Housing and Property
- Education

The Corporate Directors delegate for and support the Chief Executive. They are responsible for the departments noted below. Here, the Corporate Directors lead on strategic work as well as on performance challenge arrangements.

Huw Dylan Owen is the Corporate Director (Social Services). He was appointed to his post in October 2022.

The following departments are in this Director's portfolio:

- Children and Supporting Families
- Adults, Health and Well-being

Geraint Owen is the second Corporate Director; he was appointed to his post in August 2022.

The following departments are in this Director's portfolio:

- Corporate Support
- Finance and IT
- Legal Services
- Highways, Engineering and YGC

5. Governance

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 guidance is provided to reinforce this. The Governance Arrangements Assessment Group retains an overview of governance issues within the Council. The Group comprises the Chief Executive, 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.

The Governance and Audit Committee has a continuous role in the process of providing good governance. The core purpose of the committee is to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects its exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.

In carrying out its work, the Committee has regard to the guidelines of various external bodies and organisations including CIPFA. The Governance and Audit Committee consists of 12 Councillors based on political balance, along with six 'lay members', namely a person who is not a local authority member.

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. A copy of the latest version of the Council's Governance Statement can be found here – Governance Statement [\[Need to include a link to the document\]](#)

The Corporate Risk Register [\[link to the register or a copy of it\]](#) contains 25 Governance risks. These risk scores indicate that two governance fields present a very high risk, four are high risks and 11 are medium risks. A summary of the very high-level and high-level risks can be seen below:

Very high Risk

- Finance - Weaknesses in managing public money
- Safeguarding – Failure to protect children from misuse of reasonable force in schools

High Risk

- Culture - That an inappropriate culture within the Council hinders our ability to do the right things in the correct manner.
- Information - Failure to maximise the potential of information when supporting the business of the Council and failure to meet statutory requirements.
- Health, Safety and Well-being - Unsafe arrangements and action by Council Services to manage health and safety risks effectively.
- Customer Contact - A lack of timely response to enquiries.

Actions are in place to respond to these risks.

Past self-assessments and recent reports from Audit Wales identified engagement and improved participation as an area to receive attention and actions have been put in place to respond. This includes trying to improve how we share information and raise awareness of the work of the Council together with having more and better diversity of representation (including individuals and groups with protected characteristics) when we engage and consult.

As part of our response, a [Participation Strategy](#) was published in 2023, explaining how we encourage local people to become involved in the Council's decision-making processes.

The Council's public participation strategy describes how the Council will:

- promote an awareness of the Council's functions;
- promote an awareness of how people can become Councillors and what the role entails;
- facilitate access to information about decisions made, or to be made, by the Council;
- promote the arrangements whereby people can make representations to the Council about the decisions it has made or will make in the future;
- ensure that public opinion is brought to the attention of its Oversight and Scrutiny Committees;
- promote awareness among Councillors of the advantages of using social media to communicate with local people.

We also welcome formal questions from the public at meetings of the full Council. There are specific arrangements for that, including giving adequate written notice in advance.

6. Resource Management and Culture

Finance

At the meeting of the [Full Council on 7 March 2024](#) Cyngor Gwynedd's budget for 2024/25 was set. The revenue budget of £331,814,710 is to be funded by £233,316,780 of Government Grant and £98,497,930 Council Tax income (which is an increase of 9.54% on the income of individual households). At the same time, a capital programme of £85,224,800 in 2024/25 was established and the Council's decision included approving the methods of funding the programme.

This budget has been set at a time when Welsh local authorities are facing financial challenges, particularly in the context of overall inflation having reached levels in 2022/23 and 2023/24 unprecedented for decades, the impact of which has worked its way through to the 2024/25 budget.

The report submitted to the Council highlighted that our spending would need to be increased by £22.7m by 2024/25 just to "stand still". However, an increase of £5.1m was received in external funding (with an additional £639k to reflect the transfer of responsibilities to the settlement previously funded through specific grants).

The report found that pressures of demand on services as well as inflation pressures indicated that a combination of Council Tax increases and the introduction of a new programme of savings and cuts must be considered if a balanced budget is to be set for 2024/25. The budget for 2024/25 attempts to protect the services that the Council provides to the people of Gwynedd, and the Council's decision was a 9.54% increase in Council Tax to achieve that objective this year. Even then, we will need to look for additional savings and use funds to set a balanced budget, and projections suggest there will be further pressures in aiming to set a balanced budget for 2025/26.

Savings that have been identified have been subject to consultation with Council members in a series of workshops in October 2023. The draft budget was considered by a majority of Council members at a financial situation briefing session held on 16 January 2024, and was scrutinised by the Governance and Audit Committee on 8 February 2024 before the Cabinet considered its recommendation to the Council on 20 February, 2024.

The 2024/25 budget includes a significant proportion of savings that have slipped from previous years, some that were identified when setting the 2023/24 budget as well as new savings.

Procurement Priorities

The Procurement Team provides advice and support to services, and ensures that the organisation adheres to its Procurement Regulations. The team aims to strengthen and develop the procurement expertise within the Council, adopt best practice in the field and support the local market. There are also Category Management arrangements (Environment, Corporate and People) in place in order to look at procurement strategically and put more emphasis on conducting a thorough analysis of the market, encouraging more collaboration.

The Council has already adopted a [Sustainable Procurement Policy](#) that is in line with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By adopting the Policy, it is intended to consider the potential social, economic and environmental impact that our procurement decisions can have and what steps can be taken to maximise the use of Council expenditure, for the benefit of the county.

Organisation and Workforce Design

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 in the Council Plan 2023-28 for an Efficient Gwynedd 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.

The main aim of the Workforce Planning project within the Council Plan is to ensure that the Council has an adequate supply of qualified staff to enable it to provide services to the county's residents, and that we can ensure that that supply is in place for the long term. We will address specific staff recruitment issues in key fields such as in the social care and education field.

The Council's vision for the 2023-28 period identifies the need to establish and implement a [Digital Plan](#) [\(need English link\)](#) as one of its main improvement objectives in the "Efficient Gwynedd" priority area. This priority area forms one of our seven well-being objectives for the period in question, and the Digital Plan has a key role to play in laying the foundations to realise each of the other six objectives as well. At a time that is financially challenging, our use of digital technology and our ability to deliver the projects within this Plan will play a key role in the provision of public services for the people of Gwynedd in the future.

There are further details on other Efficient Gwynedd projects addressing organisation and workforce design within the Council Plan 2023-28 available [here](#).

Ffordd Gwynedd is the name given to the “way of working” that we in Cyngor Gwynedd have adopted in order to place the people of the county at the heart of everything we do. It is neither a process nor a theory, rather a collection of working arrangements, behaviours and culture which, together, allow us to be confident that we always consider the service from the perspective of the user.

Developing this culture means that we need to remove the obstacles that prevent our employees from delivering and that this leads to a continuous challenge in terms of the way that we work. It means working across the Council's internal structural boundaries in order to deliver what is needed, creating and maintaining a work environment that includes everyone. It also promotes and supports the mental and physical well-being of our workers as well as respecting the key operational principles in the context of equality and language.

Further information can be found in this booklet: [Ffordd Gwynedd 2023-2028](#) ([need to update to English link](#))

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7. Improvement Priorities and Planned Actions

Each year we as a Council publish an Annual Performance Report to explain, in a clear and balanced way, what we have achieved over the previous year.

The [Cyngor Gwynedd Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment 2022/23](#) evaluates how we have responded to the priorities that were published in the [Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2018-23: 2022/23 Review \(Council Plan\)](#). Copies of previous annual performance reports are available [\[here\]](#).

As previously stated, we measure our performance continuously throughout the year and Cabinet Members present reports to Cabinet meetings twice a year (in addition to the Annual Report) describing progress. Members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees are also involved in this ongoing process of performance challenge. The Annual Performance Report brings these progress reports together and evaluates success over the year.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires the Council to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the performance requirements, and our Self-assessment for 2022/23 can be found in Part 3 of the Report.

By the time the Performance Assessment by a Panel takes place we will have completed three self-assessments and identified improvements as part of that process while also putting actions in place to respond to the issues highlighted.

An Assurance and Risk Assessment session is held annually between the Council and the main regulatory bodies (Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn). The session is an opportunity to discuss assurance, risks and any topics for consideration when regulators formulate their programmes for the coming year. A list of the main issues (assurance and risk) highlighted at the session held on 4 February 2025 can be found here – [\[link to the assurance and risk document\]](#).

In recent years a number of major changes were seen such as Brexit, the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and the financial crisis which have resulted in very challenging years for the Council, a situation that is likely to continue into the future. It is felt that it is timely for us to take stock of where we are at and to receive independent feedback on the progress of our work against our priorities and recommendations together with what we can do to improve.

The Council has considered what the Panel Assessment should focus on and considers that the following issues should be looked at whilst prioritising the ones highlighted:

- Capacity/ability to be delivering our priorities to the future – are resources aligned with our priorities?
- Organisational leadership and governance – how effective is this politically and managerially and is it supported by strong governance and decision-making processes? Do they allow the Council to respond to challenges by changing and transforming in order to meet the challenges?

- Do we have suitable arrangements in place to measure how we deliver services to customers/residents?
- Testing the effectiveness of our plans or projects within the current Council Plan.
- Carry out an assessment of the core issues within the requirements of the Act:
 - Exercises its functions effectively
 - Uses its resources prudently, efficiently and effectively; and
 - Has robust governance arrangements in place for securing the above.
- Look at the extent to which the culture of the Council and our way of working (Ffordd Gwynedd) has permeated the organisation and the difference it has made.
- To what extent have we incorporated the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act into our work?
- Council self-assessments and arrangements to respond to the issues that need improvement.
- Look at our work and plans in the areas of workforce planning, succession planning and managerial progression and suggest any improvements. (Governance and Scrutiny Committee Suggestion)

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