

MEETING	Care Scrutiny Committee
DATE	12 June, 2025
TITLE	Housing and Property Department Cabinet Member Performance Report
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CABINET MEMBER	Coun. Paul Rowlinson

1. Why does it need scrutinising?

So that the Committee Members can be satisfied that I, as the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Department, has a grasp on performance matters within the Department.

2. Background / Context

2.1 Background / Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the field I'm responsible for as Housing and Property Department Cabinet Member. This includes outlining the latest regarding promises within the Council Plan; the department's day-to-day work; as well as the latest regarding the cuts and savings plan.

We operate on the Council's Plan 2023-28, and I report here on the progress made up to the end of April 2025. All matters have been the subject of discussions and have been scrutinised by myself in performance challenging meetings, and I am satisfied with the Department's performance.

2.2 Logic and justification

Council Plan Projects Performance

Progress against milestones set for the Department's projects within the Homely Gwynedd and Efficient Gwynedd improvement priority can be seen in Appendix 1.

On the whole, progress is good, with several milestones having been reached by the end of the financial year under challenging circumstances. I'd like to bring your attention to some in particular (with numbers corresponding to those in the table in Appendix 1):

A Homely Gwynedd: Increasing the supply of housing for local people

1. The ambition set to build 330 social housing through the PDP and the partnership with the Housing Associations has been reached and surpassed, with 386 units now built, which have helped almost 1,300 people.
2. The Tŷ Gwynedd Scheme is making satisfactory progress, with two developments in the construction stage – the former Llanberis library, and the old Ysgol Babanod Coed Mawr,

Bangor. I'm glad therefore to report that this is in line with the ambition set, and more sites will be reaching the construction phase during the next year.

4. The Department's empty homes schemes are extremely successful, with 108 empty homes brought back into use through grant support for first time buyers and, as a result of recent changes to the plan, is available to all types of buyer since September 2024.

A Homely Gwynedd: Dealing with the energy cost crisis and fuel poverty

1. Ensuring that the county's residents make the most of fuel poverty schemes is a priority in order to support some of the county's most vulnerable people. 216 applications for ECO4 have been approved over the last two months (March and April), with 25 homes seeing an improvement in their EPC. Over the plan's whole period, 753 homes have seen their EPC improve (more information can be found in the Tai 13 measure, Appendix 2).
3. The service helps hundreds of people with their energy situation, and energy vouchers are a large part of that support. 656 of energy vouchers were distributed worth £24,719 to residents in need on a pre-payment meter. Since the beginning of the plan, 5,671 vouchers have been given out, which has directly helped the people of Gwynedd.

A Homely Gwynedd: Ensuring that no-one is homeless in Gwynedd

1. 20 Ala Road completed in the autumn of 2024, and tenants are already receiving support there. Adra completed the construction work on 137 High Street, Bangor and tenants will move in soon in the next few weeks.
4. The Penrallt building was purchased in 2024, and work is underway to prepare a planning application for converting the building into accommodation for individuals in housing need. Because of the building's size and condition, this will not be an overnight process, but I'm glad to report that the work that was promised during 2024-25 has been completed and we will be ready to submit a planning application further on this year.

An Efficient Gwynedd: Adopting a Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for future working

2. The work on adapting departmental space in the Headquarters building has completed, which has allowed us to relocate staff from our nearby offices. This has facilitated collaboration and the new hybrid way of working following the pandemic, and is having a positive impact on staff well-being.

Not every milestone has been reached according to our ambition, with some partly complete, while others have slipped due to numerous reasons as outlined in the appendix. I'd like to offer further details on some:

A Homely Gwynedd: Increasing the supply of housing for local people

3. The Buy to Let Scheme – namely a scheme to purchase homes from the open market to let to the people of Gwynedd on intermediate rent – has succeeded in its ambition to buy a total of 40 homes by the end of the year. Indeed, 46 properties are now in our possession, with several in the process of being renovated to an acceptable living standard. Unfortunately, we have not reached our ambition of letting 20 homes – we are 4 short of that ambition with 16 let up to the end of April. Because of the availability of grants,

purchases were prioritised in the initial period, the letting schedule slipped. We also encountered obstacles while renovating the houses purchased, with a lack of contractors or unforeseen issues arising affecting timescales, which in turn impacted the letting schedule. However, following a recent review of this project's procedures and resources, I'm confident that the letting programme will accelerate and we will reach our ambition next year.

A Homely Gwynedd: Ensuring that no-one is homeless in Gwynedd

1. It has not been possible to finish the renovation of 35 College Road, Bangor within the desired timetable, due to finding defects left by the original contractor. The nature of these defects meant that we had to re-do some work on crucial elements of the building, which has caused a delay to the timetable. However, following a review at the beginning of the year where the necessary work was identified, I'm glad to report that we are nearing an end and will be ready very soon to seek the approval of Building Control so that we can transfer the building to the Homelessness Service.
2. Some delays were experienced with the Lle Da project (which relates to the former building of NatWest and Gisda on the Maes in Caernarfon) – this was due to lease and service level agreement matters. Construction work on the café and the young people's hub continues and will complete in a few weeks.
3. After a good start to the Leasing Scheme Wales: Gwynedd, the number of expressions of interest in the Scheme has slowed over the past months, and therefore we haven't been able to reach our ambition of attracting 20 extra units or let 30 properties. Rather, we have attracted 12 extra properties, and 28 of these have been let to individuals and families in housing need. However, despite this, I'm glad to see that 65 individuals have benefitted from the houses we have leased, and the ability to move households from emergency accommodation to more suitable temporary accommodation has relieved some of the pressure on our homelessness service. The Department intends to undertake a marketing campaign over the next few months to attract more properties.
6. It was not possible to launch the One Stop Shop in time before the end of the financial year because some finalising work on a few arrangements were necessary before launch. These steps are still in progress, including ensuring that appropriate systems, website and communication arrangements are in place. Due to this project being one of the Housing Action Plan's main schemes, and quite a fundamental change to how the people of Gwynedd make contact with us, it's important that the launch is done in the most effective and appropriate manner in order to deliver the aim of the One Stop Shop.

The Department's day-to-day work

The Department deals with several areas of work, and offers various services to the people of Gwynedd, from key front-line services such as Homelessness, Housing Options and Energy; corporate services such as Estates, Maintenance and Property Safety, Offices and Cleaning; and commercial services such as Pest Control.

Performance measures for these services can be seen in Appendix 2, and I wish to highlight some below:

- **Eiddo 4: Percentage change in carbon emissions from Council buildings compared to the same time last year**

In April 2025, the percentage change in carbon emissions from Council buildings was

-29.14% compared to the same period in 2024. This percentage is a large jump compared to March and we believe this is due to several factors, including the weather and the fact that the Easter holidays landed entirely in April this year.

Until recently, we compared the emissions with 2019 so as to compare with the last normal year before the pandemic. However, it was decided to change this for our last Performance Challenge and Support meeting in February, to look at the previous year from now on. You will note therefore that the graph shows only two datasets this time, but will of course populate more datapoints as we go through the year.

- **Eiddo 10: Percentage of the Property Development Service's projects moving forward according to the timetable after the full brief is agreed**

In April 2025, 88% of the Property Development Service's projects were on track according to the agreed brief. Again, an opportunity was taken recently to review this measure to try to better reflect the performance. We therefore have begun a new period of reporting in a slightly different way, showing how many projects are at different stages (e.g. feasibility work, construction phase, defects stage etc.) which will give us a better overview of the work and make it easier to identify successes and barriers.

- **Tai 01: The number of empty homes which have been brought back to use thanks to support from the Council (since April 2020)**

The number of empty properties that have been brought back into use has now increased to 284, which includes 108 grants through the Empty Homes Scheme – the new title of the grants scheme which used to be for first time buyers only, but is now available for all types of purchasers.

- **Tai 04: Number of social housing developed to achieve the HAP's ambition**

A total of 386 units have been developed since the start of the Housing Action Plan, with another 327 in progress on the Main Programme. The latest 27 units completed on the Maes Deudraeth, Penrhyndeudraeth estate and some residents have already moved in to their new homes.

- **Tai 08: Number of days on average spent in unsuitable emergency accommodation**

Over the last period, due to the efforts of the Homelessness team in moving people on to temporary accommodation sooner, a continued gradual decrease can be seen in the number of days someone spends in emergency accommodation. In 2024/25, almost 100 fewer people were housed in emergency accommodation compared to 2023/24, which in turn has allowed us to avoid placing households in unsuitable accommodation, and which has also meant less costs for the Council.

3. Consultation

This report has been created based on the information and content of the latest Housing and Property Department performance challenge and support meeting, where the Chief Executive, the Head of Department, service managers and I were present.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Council Plan project milestones progress report

Appendix 2: Department Performance Measures