
CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 12 JUNE 2025

Attendance:

COUNCILLORS:

Elwyn Jones, Jina Gwyrfai, Menna Baines, Elin Walker Jones, Sian Williams, Meryl Roberts, Berwyn Parry Jones, Gareth Coj Parry, Eryl Jones-Williams, Beth Lawton, Einir Williams, Rheinallt Puw, Angela Russell and Gwynfor Owen

Officers present:

Llywela Haf Owain (Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor) and Iwan Edwards (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for item 7:

Councillor Paul Rowlinson (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property), Carys Fôn Williams (Head of Housing and Property Department), Lowri Cadwaladr Roberts (Assistant Head of Housing and Property Department) and Sion Elwyn Hughes (Senior Executive Officer - Housing and Property Department).

Present for item 6:

Councillor Menna Trenholme (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families), Aled Gibbard (Assistant Head of Children and Supporting Families Department), Sharon Williams Carter (Assistant Head of Children and Supporting Families Department), Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services).

Present for item 7:

Councillor Dilwyn Morgan (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being), Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Mari Wynne Jones (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Alun Gwilym (Assistant Head of Business) and Dylan Owen (Statutory Director of Social Services).

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Elwyn Jones as Chair of the Committee for the year 2025/26.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Sian Williams as Vice-chair of the Committee for the year 2025/26.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Anwen J. Davies, Geraint Parry and Linda Morgan.

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 3 April 2025, as a true record.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND PROPERTY

The report was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property, Head of Housing and Property Department and the Assistant Heads of Department.

It was reported that the Department implemented the Council Plan 2023-2028, and on the progress to the end of April 2025. It was noted that there had been progress against the milestones set for the Department's projects within A Homely Gwynedd and An Efficient Gwynedd improvement priorities. It was reported that the overall progress was good, with several milestones reached by the end of the financial year, and that being under challenging circumstances.

During the discussion, the following observations were submitted by the Members:

Attention was drawn to the 'One-Stop Shop' plan and the member noted that he was disappointed with the progress in the plan. Explanation was asked about the reason why this plan had taken such a long time to be implemented. It was acknowledged that there had been a delay in implementing this plan, but it was explained that he was happy to announce that the shop would open on 15 September.

It was noted that the report was very good and comprehensive. However, it was noted that there was concern with the number of homeless people who lived in an unsuitable accommodation in Gwynedd. It was asked what the plan was to improve these statistics. It was explained that they were developing plans to address this problem with sites currently being built. It was noted that major developments were currently being built in Caernarfon and Bangor. It was hoped that these buildings would be ready to open soon. In terms of clarity, it was explained that there were currently over 200 people in emergency accommodation, with the figure increasing to over 400 when including the houses on lease.

A question was asked regarding the Gwynedd connection, the people who did not currently live in Gwynedd, specifically how many of these people were able to claim a connection with Gwynedd and get a Council house. It was explained that 97% of Gwynedd social housing went to people with a connection to Gwynedd and, in addition, 60% went to people who wished to live in the ward in which they wanted to live. Additionally, it was reported that the Housing Associations had conducted a recent survey of the last 9 developments that they had completed, and it was discovered that 90% of the people who had moved to these social houses spoke Welsh.

The department was praised for the number of plans which attempted to address the serious problems of housing needs in Gwynedd. Attention was drawn to the milestones set to attract 20 additional properties to the Leasing Wales Scheme - Gwynedd, but only 12 had been attracted, asking what problems caused this. It was explained that interest in this plan had started to fade and therefore the department intended to make a significant campaign to raise the interest once again. It was noted that it was a special plan which met many empty housing needs.

Attention was drawn to Property 5 of the Compliance Unit, noting that the number of completed buildings had fallen and continued to fall. It was accepted that a new Officer had been appointed and was not trained yet, but concern was expressed with the work being completed. It was explained that the number had reduced due to many different factors, but the department was on the right track to train again and change responsibilities within the team which would mean conducting more condition investigations. It was noted that she was confident that the officer would address this problem.

It was noted, in terms of increasing housing supply for local people, that it was welcomed that the department had purchased more that were targeted with the figure being 46. However, there were only 16 with tenants in them. It was asked what the most common reason was that so many of these houses were still empty. It was explained that they had focused on purchasing the houses at the start of the plan as there was a timetable on being able to spend the grant funding received. It was mentioned that 16 had been let, 20 were being repaired and 10 were ready to be let. Furthermore, it was estimated that 53 had been let within the year. It was hoped that a significant increase would be seen in the number of houses let this year.

DECISION

To accept the report.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

The report was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families and the Head of Department.

It was reported that the department implemented the Council Plan 2023-2028 and reported on the progress made to the end of March 2025, acknowledging that it was still early days in the context of some of the new pledges in the document since April last year.

It was noted that the Children and Supporting Families Department had two projects in the Council Plan, namely the Autism Plan and Developing a residential provision for looked after children in small group homes plan. It was explained that the Autism Plan was thriving, with a training programme for front-line staff continuing with the aim of being a local authority with an understanding and awareness of autism. It was also mentioned that the collaboration with the Education Department continued with internal and external staff engaging with the third sector. Pride was expressed that there was currently no waiting list for the Autism Team, but it was assumed that this would not continue for long as there was a high demand for the service.

It was explained that the developing a residential provision for looked after children in small group homes plan had significantly developed over the past year. It was noted that staff had been appointed to the first home in Morfa Bychan and two children were welcomed to the placement. It was also reported that two additional properties had been purchased, and preparation work had commenced to get them to a registration standard.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by the Members:

Enquiries were made about the Derwen service, specifically regarding the access criteria for the Derwen service. It was explained that the criteria were if the child had a learning disability or a significant delay in more than one development field. The member noted that he appreciated all of Derwen's great work but that this meant that many families with children who needed a similar service to what Derwen offered were missing out as they did not fit into the learning disability criteria. It was believed that the Council only defined based on 'IQ' and therefore many children, for example children with autism, were missing out on the service that they required. It was explained that the Council did not use 'IQ' for the Derwen criteria, but it was acknowledged that there was a gap and that was the reason for establishing the autism team to try to address part of the gap.

It was asked whether the department could provide assurance that every autism team worker had received training to the highest level in the autism field. It was noted that it was one of the department's priorities to ensure that public-facing staff received appropriate and relevant training for the work that they did. It was explained that they could not say with certainty that every staff member had currently received the training, but the programme was in place and the intention was for all staff in the team to receive the relevant training.

With the Flying Start scheme, it was acknowledged that addressing rural areas was challenging where there was a lack of services and rural poverty. However, it was noted that the Flying Start scheme had increased and spread the provision recently.

Concern was expressed about the funding that the department would lose in 2027 due to lack of grants. It was believed that now was the time to inform the Welsh Government that the scheme provided great support for the people and Gwynedd and that it should not be cut. It was agreed with the member's words and the challenges arising from getting grants and a Government which implemented on the back of grants were noted. It was explained that the funding was given in this format to ensure that the Council was able to apply for more different schemes to show whether they worked and that the benefit came from them, then they could invest more into these schemes.

Attention was drawn to the Fostering department, and it was explained that it would be beneficial to take a more detailed look to see what the exact challenges in the fostering department were. It was asked whether it was possible to have a graph to show whether the situation had improved or worsened over the years. It was noted that the fostering service was now part of a network with the rest of authorities in Wales and collaborated with these. In terms of the statistics, it was explained that they were statistics which were compared across the different counties. It was noted that it was difficult to believe, out of the initial enquiries, that only 17% were approved as foster carers.

DECISION

To accept the report.

9. PERFORMANCE REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

A report was submitted by the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being and the Head of Department.

It was reported that the department implemented the Council Plan 2023-28, and it reported on the progress to the end of March 2025. It was noted that she was aware of all the challenges that the department faced and that this had been highlighted more than ever before as part of the Llechen Lân report. It was noted that she was happy to report that significant progress had been made during the year.

A summary was given of the main projects that had seen progress or caused concern, noting that there were some examples in the report, and that it did not refer to every workflow as the department's projects were very broad.

During the discussion, the following observations were submitted by the Members:

The Head of Department, who was retiring, was thanked for all his hard work over the years and the new Head of Department was welcomed.

The Cabinet Member was asked to ensure that the Council contacted the Government in Cardiff to challenge to ensure that the grants available for the autism team until 2027 continued beyond this. It was also asked how many were waiting for a domiciliary care assessment and what were the figures regarding this. In terms of challenging the Government, it was noted that it was a permanent process for the cabinet members and happened on a weekly basis. To answer the member's question, it was explained that the waiting list for domiciliary care had reduced to 64. It was explained that the department's priority was to ensure that the people on the waiting list were safe. In terms of the number of people waiting for an assessment, it was mentioned that the department had this information every month until the end of March with 129 assessments held over the last two months. It was confirmed that no individual was being refused an assessment.

It was asked what was being done to improve the situation in terms of older people waiting for a care and support plan. It was noted that it was a very timely point as the department was currently doing a lot of work under the preventative banner and that people were waiting for a more detailed assessment. It was reported that there was a need to move away from the mentality that domiciliary care was required to support people. Domiciliary Care was one of the options, but a lot of work was being done within communities to support people who required help and support. It was noted that the Social Services and Well-being Act emphasised the need to look at the strengths of individuals instead of what they could not achieve.

It was asked what the department saw as the biggest obstacle in making more Direct Payments to support people. It was explained that complications in the process of establishing the arrangements had been an obstacle for people to be eager to consider direct payments, but a lot of work had been made by the Department to simplify the process and secure officers to provide support to people to put the arrangements in place.

Attention was drawn to the 'DOLS' arrangements. One member explained that he was unsure of the difference between 'DOLS' and lack of mental capacity. It was asked whether it would be possible to get an explanation of the difference between the two. It was explained that there was a long waiting list for DOLS and that this was true across Wales. It was explained that DOLS in essence worked with people who did not have the mental capacity to make specific decisions. If someone did not have the ability to make decisions regarding safety, the best welfare decisions had to be made on their behalf. If this meant that individuals were under consistent supervision and were not free to leave, a DOLS assessment had to be completed. It was agreed to arrange an information session for members on mental capacity assessments and the DOLS procedure.

Attention was drawn to the dementia units, and it was asked what the reason for the slippage and the delay was in opening these units. It was reported that the Bryn Blodau unit had partially opened, and that staffing was the main reason for the delay in the opening. It was confirmed that things were now moving forward and the unit had to open as soon as possible. It was noted that Plas Hedd had faced many challenges in terms of construction work but there was hope that

these challenges had now come to an end and the sooner the better that these units could be opened.

DECISION

To accept the report

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 3pm