

The performance of the Service is monitored by seeking the feedback of the Departments who use the service. Opinions are measure against a scale of 1-5 in the form of a simple email and the monitoring procedure has improved. (5 = Very Satisfied down to 1 = Totally Dissatisfied). It is also possible for sections to add a comment along with a rating. During the 2024 – 2025 financial year, the result were 100% very satisfied or satisfied with the service.

A new system of soliciting feedback by filling out an email questionnaire has been brought into force since March 2024. In 2024-2025 only about 14% of questionnaires had been returned, which is clearly low but over the year work has been done on promoting and encouraging Clients to complete responses. There is certainly an improvement to be seen in the first months of 2025-2026 with 23% returning the questionnaire.

In terms of the response received, it is encouraging that a number of additional comments are being made on the questionnaire with a response saying:

"Very happy with the quality and timing of the service"

"Very satisfactory - thank you very much"

"Quick work with no problems to report. Very happy."

"Excellent service once again"

"Great service as usual"

"Very good experience of working with the service to charge against the grant. Nice to be able to close one particular link within the service"

"Great experience, the advice I received prior to the release of the agreement was brilliant, and acted on sealing the document very quickly.

hard work and on time."

"Work thoroughly and guided me through the process as this was the first time I had dealt with such an issue. It was a result that I and the public had reached, which allowed us to operate."

"Responded to the Licence application very quickly in the middle of the Christmas period with holidays etc planned. The clients on the other side were not easy to deal with but dealt with brilliantly and managed to get them to sign the deal."

"More resources to assist the lawyers to complete the work in a more reasonable timeframe."

"Excellent quality of work but long timeframe to complete the instructions."

"Professional and timely service"

"Disappointing that the case has been open for a number of years and has been dealt with by several locum lawyers with no progress but has returned and worked miracles to complete this matter in a very short timeframe and has communicated an update to us on a regular basis."

"More resources to assist the lawyers to complete the work in a more reasonable timeframe."

"Excellent quality of work but long timeframe to complete the instructions."

"-All things are very positive"

"very happy with experience"

"No problems and everything went smoothly – thank you Erin!"

"Professional and timely service"

"Completed this case immediately and without any prior notice that he was on the way."

"A good and close and honest constructive approach moving things forward Feedback on the spot – Managerial contact – Looking at a conversation with Heads of Department annually – Door open. "

In addition to a questionnaire at the end of each case, an annual questionnaire has been sent to the Heads and Managers of the department asking for their views on service as a whole. The questionnaire was sent out in mid-February and received about 33% of responses. There have been very positive responses with all responses saying that the service currently being offered is good or very good.

- “We receive legal advice and assistance in matters of education modernisation and education properties, leases etc”
- “I think the contact has improved recently and responded to our questions sooner. The link is friendly and easily talk to them. The guidance is standard and thorough.”
- “I feel we are receiving a great service – a timely and always supportive response to the service.”
- “Excellent, extremely supportive and valuable”
- “Over the past year we have had quite a bit of support from the legal department and the process has been very smooth.
- “It’s been a big help to be able to get in touch with one lawyer for all the support and this has made things easier excellent support. prompt and thorough response.”

In terms of a suggestion on how to improve the service into the future and what the challenges are, there have been responses to consider it as well as a positive one

- “The biggest challenge is their capacity and there is sometimes time between responses creating delays, and as it happens we have a number of questions raised at the end of the day. “
- “No need to improve”
- “More resources will be needed to deal with the department's upcoming workload in the coming months. “

DEPARTMENTAL PLANS

We will continue to develop the Legal Team to build resilience within the Team

What has been achieved?

The department has been part of the Cynllun Yfory scheme for some years and has benefited from employing a trainee who has then progressed to qualify and works within the department as a solicitor.

Further, the department has also taken advantage of the apprenticeship scheme and hired the department's first paralegal apprentice. This is working well, and the apprentice has started on her Paralegal qualification and is a great help to the department's lawyers.

The service has moved on from it's previous recruiting issues and can concentrate on providing and improving the service for the Councils Departments.

Following some of the comments received as a result of the questionnaires and feedback from Heads an assessment of capacity and expertise within the department will be considered regularly to ensure that we meet the requirements of our clients.

We will be looking to complete work after surrendering Lexcel accreditation for maintaining professional standards of appropriateness and standards

What has been achieved?

The department has now incorporated a new case management system and has looked to incorporate features of the Lexcel accreditation that would benefit the department. We are specifically looking at a form of supporting each other through colleagues' feedback on cases through file reviews (the accreditation was surrendered as a saving) There is no intention to seek the Lexcel accreditation but rather to use some of the principles to develop the way of working and to strengthen systems.

What we've been doing, examples:

- Supporting Article 4 Work, planning section, challenge risks
- Supporting a decision to appeal the High Court's ruling on the Article 4 work
- Child protection cases – a large number relating to injuries and requests for secure care.
- Dealing with and advising on employment matters including before Employment Tribunals
- Supported several projects Housing Strategy – Purchase of around 15 new homes over a 12 month period as well as a first time purchase grant scheme and the adaptation of vacant houses
- Work still ongoing on the development of Menai Centre Bangor in conjunction with Llyw Cymru and Betsi
- Implemented a grant to help Galeri purchase a number of buildings and upgrade others in Caernarfon
- Renewal of good income leases in Penrallt for Gwynedd Council
- Working on the Snowdonia Business Park's 'Joint Venture' in conjunction with Welsh Govt
- To deal with DOLS applications before the Court of Protection and "ordinary residence" matters ensuring that other Authorities accepted responsibility for individuals who were not the responsibility of Gwynedd.
- Social Services debt collection (£800k brought in over 18 months)
- A number of prosecutions including environmental and planning issues, health and safety, and also parents who are unable to ensure their children's attendance at school;
- Traffic Orders
- Legal support stems from Friars' position.
- Education Appeal Panels
- Orders in changing the network of public rights within the county.
- Advising on new Legislations – Procurement Legislation 2023; Special Processes under the Public Health Act;
- Lloyd George Museum Trustees Memorandum of Understanding

PROPRIETY

Iwan Evans – Head of Legal Services – Monitoring Officer.

Purpose : To maintain the confidence of the people of Gwynedd in the Council by ensuring and promoting the appropriateness of its activities and the highest standard of behaviour among councillors.

DEPARTMENTAL PLANS

We will continue to support and advise on the Council's functions in terms of ensuring constitutional, legal and administrative propriety.

What has been achieved?

This work is ongoing but in particular a series of "Good Decisions" seminars are planned to be held from October onwards. The aim of the courses is to explain the fundamentals of decision-making in public bodies as well as the constitutional and regulatory framework that applies to this area. We are awaiting confirmation of dates with the Training Service.

We provide comments and opinions on all Cabinet and Full Council reports to ensure legal and constitutional propriety as well as generally advising on issues such as the correct decision-making body and policy and strategic issues.

We will work with the Standards Committee, Leaders of Political Groups and Members along with relevant officials to maintain and support high standards of behaviour among councillors.

What has been achieved?

Arrangements for the implementation of the duty of leaders of political groups are in place but a need to re-establish focus on the work has been highlighted.

The work is ongoing and meetings have been held with Group Leaders during September. The fruits of this work will be reported to the Standards Committee but the results are positive and the level of collaboration is good.

We will be completing the training of Gwynedd Council members in Code of Conduct matters by offering in-depth training sessions on the Code to non-attending members.

What has been achieved?

Courses were held in December and January 24/25 and a recording was also provided for the use of the members available online with a test to complete. It is one of the core courses but there are still members who have not taken advantage of the course and this is being discussed with individual Political Group Leaders to highlight and encourage the members to complete the training. We continue to work with the Leaders to press members who have not yet taken advantage of the online course to complete the work.

We will support the Standards Committee to develop arrangements to implement its responsibilities towards Town and Community Councils by offering training sessions.

What has been achieved?

The Standards Committee undertook a review of the joint relationship with Town and Community Councils and identified that there was a need for action to strengthen this partnership. To complement this, a virtual training course has been prepared for them and two initial courses have been held by the end of the year with an online offer also available. This provision will be a stable proposition for the Town and Community Councils going forward.

We will review and ensure adequate resources to support requirements on the Service arising from regional work

What has been achieved?

As the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee into an operational configuration, there is an increase across the board in resource demand. The current period is particularly challenging because many elements of the CJC's work become operational during the current quarter. In addition, the UK and Welsh governments have jointly placed responsibility for the Flintshire and Wrexham Investment Zone on the CJC. This was added as responsibility for the Regional Transport grant was attributed to the CJC. Although there is a lead period in this increases the work. In addition, the team with Locum provision has been leading on the establishment of a Governance and Audit Sub-Committee and commencing the establishment of the scrutiny regime through the Joint Regional Scrutiny Committee. The Service and a leading role ensured the transfer of the North Wales Growth Plan to the CBC. This has created a platform to move to a long-term SLA regime and free up resources for recruitment. The financial resources are in place in the budget of the Joint Corporate Committee and it is planned to proceed to recruit the post of Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer of the CBC. However growth in the WBC means that it is also timely to be reviewing the requirements in the medium and long term,

We will continue to keep the Constitution under review aiming to complete the main tasks by December 2025

What has been achieved?

This will include:

- Review of Officer Delegation Schemes
- Review of Section 11 Officers provisions within the Constitution in conjunction with the Human Resources Service
- To contribute to the review of the Whistleblowing Policy
- Update as needed

It must be recognised that this work is continuous and also responds to changing demands.

What we've been doing, examples:

- Advising on all Cabinet and Council reports
- To support and advise on constitutional issues that arise as necessary
- Provide appropriate guidance on Leadership Team issues
- Review of the Constitution in particular the functions of Full Council and Panel Performance Assessment
- Advising on specific High School issues
 - Responding to an increase in the speed of bringing projects forward following a review of the work of the CBC Portfolio Office
- Lead on the establishment of a Joint Regional Scrutiny Committee for the WBC
 - CBC – advising the governing body on the establishment of a new Constitution for the body – Commencement of work on preparation for the transfer of BUE to CJC
- Advising on propriety and constitutional issues in general
- Supporting Members with Code of Conduct issues

ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

Siôn Huws Propriety and Elections Manager

Purpose : To ensure that the people of Gwynedd have the opportunity to vote easily, and that their vote is counted in the way they intend.

DEPARTMENTAL PLANS

We will work to support the Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer in particular saluting:

Holding Elections

What has been achieved ?

A county by-election for the Abermaw ward was held in August 2025. The work of holding a further county by election has started

Paratoi ar gyfer Etholiad y Senedd yn 2026

The election will be conducted on the basis of new constituencies and using a new voting system. The new 'Gwynedd Maldwyn' constituency will be a combination of the UK parliamentary constituencies of Dwyfor Meirionnydd and Montgomeryshire and Glyndŵr, and will include parts of four local authority areas. The Chief Executive of Gwynedd has been appointed as the Returning Officer for the election and there will be significant implications for the service due to the geographical size of the constituency, the number of voters and the necessary cross-border arrangements. Planning work has commenced as well as an audit of our resources. Further cross-border arrangements will need to be established in respect of that part of Gwynedd that will be in the 'Bangor Conwy Môn' constituency.

Carrying out a Statutory Community Review

We will undertake a Statutory Community Review process looking at the boundaries of certain specific communities and the electoral arrangements (wards and councillors) within the communities across the county.

What has been achieved?

Following initial information gathering, collation and engagement work the intention and terms of reference to undertake a community review and a review of electoral arrangements in parallel were approved. Since then the following statutory actions have been taken:

1. November/December 2024 – First consultation period on the terms of reference
2. March 2025 - Approval of draft proposals
3. March – May 2025 - Consultation period on the draft proposals

Next steps

There has been a slippage in the timetable which meant that the final proposals were submitted to the Full Council on 3rd October 2025 Any changes to community boundaries will have to receive the approval of the Democracy and Boundaries Commission for Wales which has the power to make the necessary order. The changes will take effect in 2027 in time for the next local elections.

Welsh Government Automatic Registration Pilot Scheme

We have volunteered to be one of four authorities across Wales that are part of the scheme. The Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024 has introduced an automatic electoral

registration system ('automatic registration') for local government and Welsh Parliament elections, but the procedure must be piloted before it can come into force for the whole of Wales in order to assess the practical implications.

The Act imposes a duty on Electoral Registration Officers to register electors without receipt of an application, where they will have sufficient details. An eligible individual will receive notice and have an opportunity to object to the registration within 60 days.

What has been achieved ?

There are two main streams to the work.

1. The core process of collecting and matching data to identify individuals and register them.
2. Identify and engage with individuals who are unlikely to be identified by the data matching process and encourage and help them register. Small Axe is leading on this work on our behalf. They identify areas and groups where there is the greatest 'registration gap' and work with the relevant groups and organisations in the community to develop resources and methods to reach these people. They will also contact individuals directly and assist them in registering. Only Gwynedd does this aspect.

Timetable

The pilot period is from January to December 2025 with the registration and engagement activities taking place between June and September. The Welsh Government will then proceed to assess the pilot's advances.

The period during which automatic enrolment was possible ended on 30/09/25. Some engagement work will continue until the end of October where registration support will be offered to individuals delivered through patrols in the voluntary sector.

The Annual Canvas

The annual canvas was commenced during September. This is a statutory duty and involves contacting every residential property in Gwynedd to ensure that the Electoral Register is as accurate and up to date as possible

CORONER

Sion Huws Propriety and Elections Manager

Background

The North West Wales Coroner's Area covers Gwynedd and Anglesey. The service is jointly funded by both authorities, but Gwynedd takes the lead role as the statutory 'relevant authority'. This places a duty on Gwynedd Council to ensure adequate resources for the service. The Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroners are appointed and paid by the Council. The service is the responsibility of the Senior Coroner himself. North Wales police provides 'Coroner's Officers' who liaise with families, police, witnesses, doctors, hospital staff etc on its behalf.

Kate Robertson is the Senior Coroner and the Assistant Coroner is Sarah Riley. We employ one full-time member of staff as a personal assistant to the Coroner with additional support coming from the Administrative Unit and the Elections Unit.

We will continue to provide and improve the support available to the Coroner

What has been achieved?

We have continued to work to strengthen the administrative support, by looking at specific processes and developing experience and skills within the Administrative Unit. We have also been reviewing the arrangements with the funeral organisers working on behalf of the Coroner including holding a meeting to give them the opportunity to raise any issues with the Coroner, the Police (who are responsible for calling the undertakers out to death) and the authority.

While agreeing pay is a matter for each Senior Coroner and their authority individually, in practice this has been happening through a Joint Coroners' Negotiation Committee, where the local authority side and the coroners' side are represented, who have agreed a model and scale of pay for England and Wales and the annual pay increase. In March this year it was announced that the coroners' side had withdrawn from the Joint Committee because they considered it was no longer an appropriate method of setting their salaries. It will therefore be necessary to work to determine the way forward to establish new arrangements. Discussions are ongoing with the Senior Coroner to agree a new scale. At the same time we will be reviewing the arrangement for converting the daily pay scale for a part-time Senior Coroner to an annual salary on the basis of an assessment of the work anticipated to be achieved.