

CYNGOR GWYNEDD – Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of Item:	Annual Report - Employment
Cabinet Member:	Cllr. Llio Elenid Owen
Relevant Officer:	Eurig Williams (Manager – Human Resources Service)
Date of Meeting:	16 December 2024

1. Decision Sought:

Approval of the annual report for 2024/25.

2. What is the reason the Cabinet needs to take a decision:

To reflect on the corporate strategy for the future in this key area.

3. Introduction and rationale

3.1 Background / Introduction

This report is a summary of the main activities relating to employment within the Council during 2024/25. The information also provides a general overview of the workforce's profile and provides comment on how these guide aspects of the staffing strategy.

THE COUNCIL'S WORKFORCE

The table below provides the numbers employed on a full-time and part-time basis within the Council for the last five years. These numbers include staff who work in our schools and seasonal workers, but not those staff employed on a casual basis during holiday/sickness periods of the permanent workforce.

	31/3/21	31/3/22	31/3/23	31/3/24	31/3/25
Full time	3,073	3,258	3,306	3,354	3,334
Part time	2,776	2,650	2,689	2,648	2,561
Total	5,849	5,908	5,995	6,002	5,895

The data shared in this report includes staff from GwE and Ambition North Wales. The GwE organisation has now been dissolved, and earlier in the year staff from the Wales Ambition Board transferred to the new entity of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee. The data in this report therefore includes those two institutions as well. However, they will not be included as part of Gwynedd Council's data for 2025/26 onwards.

WORKFORCE SPLIT BY GENDER.

A further analysis is seen in the following of the number of people employed on a full-time and part-time basis during the same period. The key message is the fact that there is a significant higher number of females working for the council, with a significant higher number of those individuals working on a part-time basis. This has been a constant theme for many years, not only here in Gwynedd but also generally within the local government sector.

		31/3/23	31/3/24	31/3/25
Full time	Men	1,462	1,501	1,480
	Women	1,844	1,853	1,854
Part time	Men	264	259	247
	Women	2,425	2,389	2,314
Total	Men	1,726	1,760	1,727
	Women	4,269	4,242	4,168
Total %	Men	28.8%	29.3%	29.3%
	Women	71.2%	70.7%	70.7%

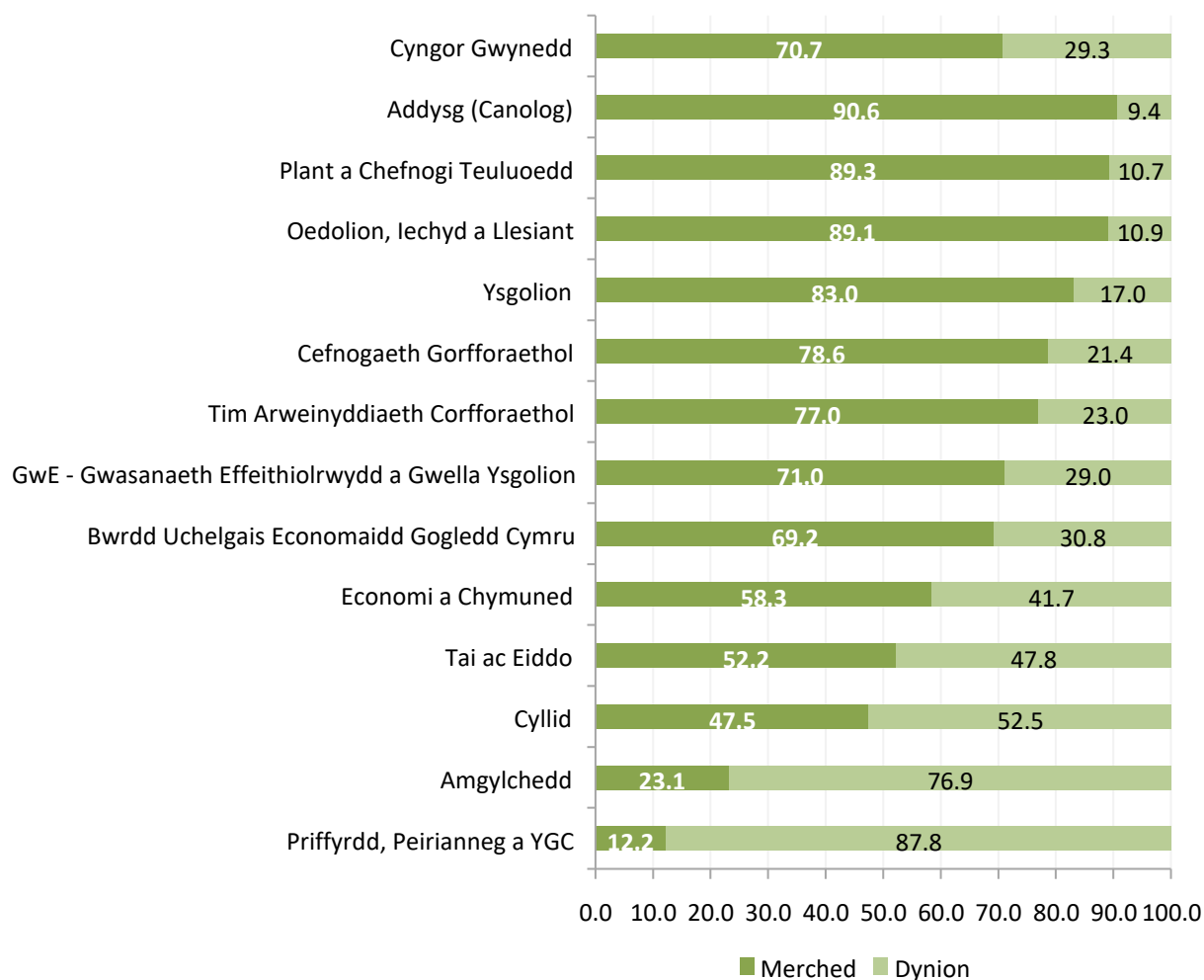
Further, the following provides an analysis of the split between men and women within the Council's departments on the 31st of March 2025.

	Women	Men	Total
Education (Central)	634 (91%)	66 (9%)	700
Environment	85 (23%)	290 (77%)	375
Corporate Services	121 (79%)	33 (21%)	154
Finance	103 (47%)	114 (53%)	217
Economy and Community	105 (59%)	75 (41%)	180
Adults, Health, and Wellbeing	812 (89%)	99 (11%)	911
Children and Supporting Families	335 (89%)	40 (11%)	375
Highways, Engineering and YGC	51 (12%)	368 (88%)	419
Housing and Property	95 (52%)	87 (48%)	182
Corporate Leadership Team	77 (77%)	23 (23%)	100
Schools	1,633 (83%)	334 (17%)	1,967
Sub-total	4,051 (73%)	1,529 (27%)	5,580

North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency	50 (23%)	170 (77%)	220
GwE	49 (71%)	20 (29%)	69
Ambition North Wales	18 (69%)	8 (31%)	26
Total – consistent with what is reported to Data Cymru	4,168 (71%)	1,727 (29%)	5,895

Distribution of female / male Gwynedd Council staff per Department, 31

March 2025



AGE PROFILE OF COUNCIL STAFF

A detailed profile of the Council's age profile can be found in **Appendix 1**. This information is important as it provides a good basis for the Council's workforce planning activities. To enable us to ensure that the necessary knowledge, skills and experience are available within the Council's workforce, it is important that we have an understanding of colleagues' long-term plans and what risks might there be in terms of service delivery as a result? This type of information and discussions within teams enables departments to proactively plan and develop their workforce to address such risks.

We have reported for a number of years that much of our workforce is over 40 years old, and that this poses a long-term risk of losing crucial information, skills, and experiences from the workforce. The figures were consistent again for 2024/25, with 65.5% over the age of 40 and almost 42% over the age of 50. An age profile like this is not a problem in itself; after all, such a workforce profile means that a large number of staff have developed skills and valuable experience that enable them to contribute fully to the work of the Council. The challenge is the need for us to prepare for the period when those staff will leave the Council's employment, and how we can position ourselves in a situation where key gaps do not emerge in the Council's workforce. This is a significant challenge for us as an employer, but also for local government and the public sector in general. That is why, for example, there are efforts in the field of social care nationally to try to improve the image of some elements of that occupation, and also why there are discussions taking place at Welsh level about whether there is a need to look at the harmonisation of social workers' pay and terms of work across Wales. These are substantial and complex discussions, but the situation means that as employers we must try to consider all options when looking to the challenges of the years ahead. This is all long-term work, but it is key to the continuity and effectiveness of services into the future. One example of the work internally here within Cyngor Gwynedd is the continued emphasis on investing in and attracting professional apprentices and trainees, whilst work is also underway on promoting effective workforce planning practices amongst the Council's services.

STAFF TURNOVER

The rate of staff turnover, (staff leaving the Council's employment altogether), has been fairly stable for many years. That said, there has been a gradual increase over the past two years. The process relating to GwE may have contributed to this (given that information on staff would have been included in figures for Gwynedd), although the organisation did not fully come to an end until early summer of this year.

The annual turnover levels since 2020/21 are:

2020/21	6.8%
2021/22	8.5%
2022/23	8.1%
2023/24	8.9%
2024/25	9.9%

There is also variation in the situation across council departments. Turnover was highest this year in the Economy and Community (23.5%), and Corporate Services (13.3%) departments. There is a link between the level of turnover in the Economy and Community department and the method of funding contracts of employment; a number of staff work contracts which are funded through grants from outside Gwynedd Council. Such working arrangements can of course create great uncertainty for staff. Although grants are very often renewed annually (thus meaning extending employment for another year), it can be late in the day on such decisions reaching the Council, and therefore this creates uncertainty for affected staff.

On the other hand, there is no obvious reason why Corporate Services has the second highest level of turnover over 2024/25. In fact, last year, it was reported that that department had the lowest rate in the Council. Bearing in mind that staff turnover can be healthy and a natural part of employment within an organisation, it does not follow that there should be concern in a situation where there is no consistent pattern and reasons for leaving; it must be respected that staff want to take advantage of opportunities to develop and move forward in their careers.

During 2024/25 turnover was at its lowest level within the Housing and Property (2.5%), Children and Family Support (6.3%) and Highways, Engineering and YGC (6.5%) department.

It is possible to further analyse these high-level statistics, in order to better understand what the reasons for high and low turnover are, and to see if it is possible to learn from any particular factor. This type of information, along with analysis from the staff survey, can provide guidance to heads of department on how to try to influence turnover levels.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

The following is a simple table that shows the rate of sickness absence amongst the workforce over the past three years, which is shown as the number of days lost to sickness per head during the year in question.

2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
10.22	10.29	12.94

The pattern of an increase in levels has been steady for several years, but during 2024/25 there was a considerable spike in the rate. One reason for this is the improvement in the recording of sickness absence by services across the Council. During 2024/25 managers were introduced to a new computer module on the Council's Self-Service system, which enables them to record staff sickness absence and record the contents of conversations on managing those situations. The system also guides managers through sickness absence management policy and arrangements. We believe from the data we have that the introduction of this system has meant an improvement in the standard of recording; it was a substantial step forward from the old paper arrangements that had existed for many years. In addition, there is a significant and ongoing effort by departments and a number of support services to deal with sickness absences within services. Here's an outline of that work over the year:

1. Introduce new policy and procedures.
2. The introduction of a computerised recording system to assist managers, and providing a programme of training on its use.

3. An Occupational Health Service that offers a range of specialist support and advice to staff and managers.
4. Individual case review arrangements with specific departments experiencing high levels of sickness absences.
5. Managing individual cases through capability panel arrangements, with an emphasis on supporting and assisting staff to improve their health and return to work.

One challenge with the above work programme, however, is to try to ensure consistency of action across all Council services. There is a specific skillset in dealing with sickness absences in a way that is caring, but also in taking difficult decisions when it is really necessary to do so.

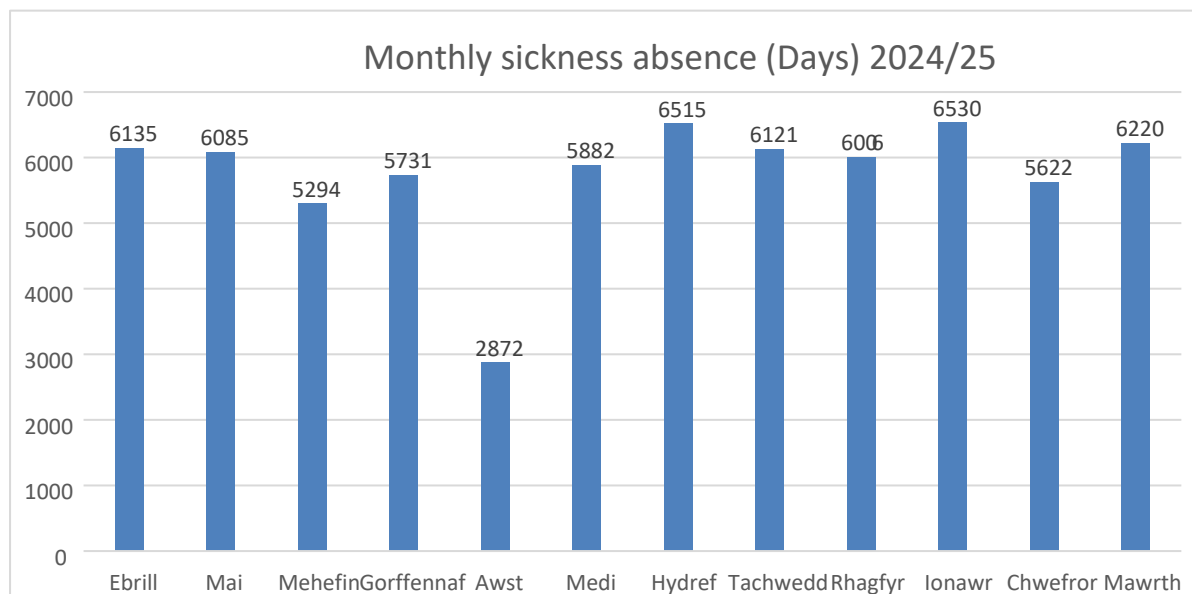
The following provides the split of sickness absence on the basis of long-term and short-term illness. Long-term illness is defined as 28 or more consecutive days of sickness.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Long term	53%	51%	58%
Short term	47%	49%	42%

There was a change in the percentage of long-term and short-term illness during 2024/25, compared to previous years. Again, this can be linked to an improvement in recording, but the context must also be remembered. Sickness levels are on the rise across different sectors of the economy. We also know that from the individual cases we deal with, health service problems in turn does have an effect on sickness absence levels within Cyngor Gwynedd; many staff are waiting for treatment on waiting lists and there is no doubt that this is having an impact on our long-term sickness levels.

Of all staff employed by the Council over 2024/25, 55% did take time off work due to sickness absence. This means that 45% of Council staff were not absent as a result of sickness absence during the year.

The following table shows the levels of sickness absences, month by month, over the past year.



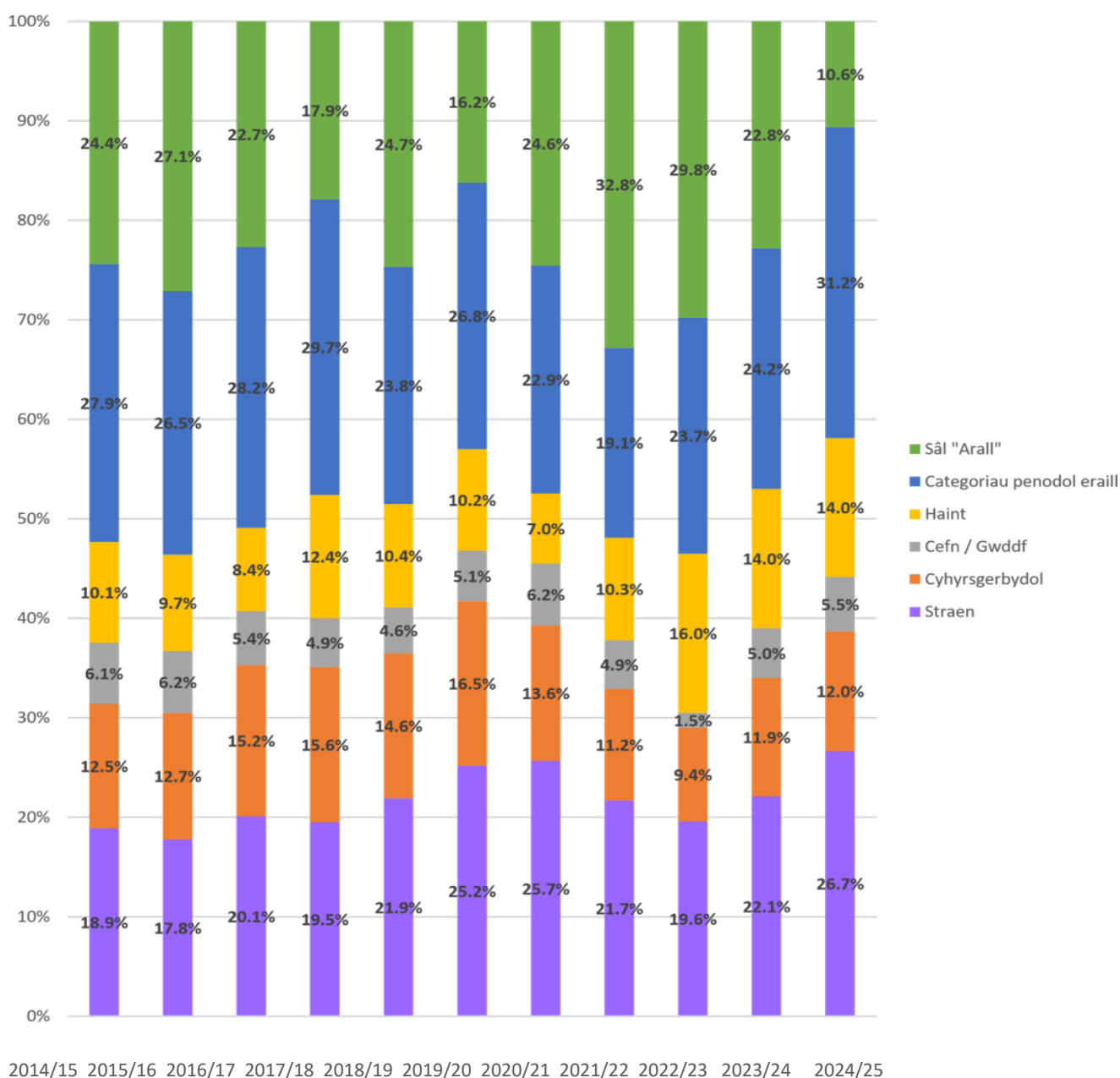
Department	Total
Education – central	13.11
Education – schools	14.43
Environment	16.79
NMWTRA	7.08
Finance	7.97
Economy and Community	8.02
Corporate Services	11.28
Gwe	6.73
Adults, Health, and Well-being	17.13
Children and Supporting Families	11.79
Highways, Engineering and YGC	8.37
Housing and Property	10.02
Corporate Leadership Team	7.43
Ambition North Wales	2.72
Total	12.94

Please note again that the figures above include those of GwE and North Wales Ambition; They will not be included in the figures for 2025/26. Similarly, the figures also include the Trunk Roads Agency, which again operates at an arm's length from the Council.

The following table analyses the type of illness that has been recorded for absences over the past five years.

Analysis based on reason recorded for sickness absence in the years up to

2024/25



Amid statistics showing that sickness absence is on the rise, it is positive to see that the number of illnesses recorded as "other" has decreased significantly over the year. This is as a result of the emphasis placed on accurate recording with the introduction of the new computer system to managers; that system means there are more options available for staff to be able to record the condition. On the other hand, you will also find that the levels of stress have risen, which is obviously worrying. However, despite the higher levels of stress, having accurate recording is one positive step forward to enable us to identify the problem. Whilst the information in this report focuses on providing a very high-level analysis, at whole Council and department level, we use data at a more detailed level in order to use it with those departments that need to try and resolve specific situations within their services.

PAY AND SALARY STRUCTURE

The Pay Policy for 2024/25 was approved by the Council at its meeting on March 7th, 2024. In the ensuing months, the Joint National Committee for Local Government Employees came to an agreement on pay rises for the year until the 31st of March this year. The agreement meant an annual increase of £1,290 on each pay point up to point 43, followed by a 2.5% increase on salaries above that.

RECRUITMENT

The below are details on the number of vacancies advertised by the Council in recent years, along with the number of applications received and also the number of vacancies re-advertised. Analysing these details contributes to our ability to identify areas that the Council should focus on in relation to the development of expertise and future workforce planning.

Year	Number of jobs advertised	Number of applications	Number of jobs re-advertised	Number of applications re-advertised
2017 / 2018	472	2312	47	179
2018 / 2019	555	3281	57	240
2019 / 2020	586	2726	101	249
2020 / 2021	486	2112	77	227
2021 / 2022	515	2394	114	369
2022 / 2023*	1054	3402	259	315
2023 / 2024	848	3608	195	471
2024 / 2025	855	3038	163	254

***Please note that the figures from 2022/23 onwards include the jobs within our schools, which explains the difference in numbers compared to previous years.**

DISABILITY CONFIDENT ACCREDITATION (LEVEL 2)

During the year, the Council achieved Disability Confident (Level 2) accreditation, which emphasises our commitment as an employer to improving how we attract and retain disabled staff. Our long-term aim is to reach Level 3 of the Accreditation, which is the highest level, and in order to do that we will need to be able to demonstrate that we are a leading employer in this area of work. This aim is consistent with the Government of Wales' ambition, and we are looking to take advantage of the support offered by Government officials in order to meet the requirements in the long term.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND INDIVIDUAL CASES

We have for years prided ourselves on the constructive relationship that exists between the unions locally and us as officers. The emphasis is on trying to work together to ensure a smooth relationship between management and staff, and there is certainly good collaboration between us.

That said, it must be recognised that there are difficult situations to be discussed at times, but we believe that there is a mutual appreciation of the complexity that can be in the relationship between staff and the employer, and because of that there is a genuine desire to work together for the benefit of everyone who works for the organisation. The relationship is nurtured through constant contact and discussions between us as officers and union officials, with the ultimate intention of trying to resolve employment issues before situations deteriorate to such an extent that the working relationship between individuals breaks down. We meet as a group on a monthly basis, and there is also an arrangement in place to meet the union officers individually on a monthly basis, in order to try to resolve any situations that are unique to that union. There is also a strong link between the union officers and some of the management teams of some individual departments, but there is still room to develop more on that aspect.

Funding was secured to enable us to support the unions to release staff in order to undertake union activities. This is a positive step forward as we can provide assurances that staff can be released from their jobs in order to take up their roles with the unions. We are working together to ensure that arrangements are in place that facilitate the work of union colleagues, and we will also be looking to further strengthen the relationship that exists between us at a more strategic level within the Council, in order to meet the Welsh Government's aspiration of working on the basis of Social Partnership. This approach involves consulting and collaborating with the unions on key and strategic issues.

Having said all this, it is inevitable that Council managers sometimes have to deal with difficult individual cases, and HR officers have a key role in advising and providing guidance on such situations. The following summarises the number of formal cases during 2024/25.

INDIVIDUAL CASES 2024/25

Disciplinary investigations	117
Complaints	15
Voluntary and compulsory redundancy	15

The above figures also include staff in our schools. That said, it has to be noted that the figure of 117 disciplinary investigations is a significant increase, given that over the last few years we have been reporting that there are about 50 – 60 cases on an annual basis. There is no obvious pattern at all in those cases, but there is no doubt that such situations can be difficult for everyone involved, both staff facing the cases, but also the managers who carry out investigations and the human resources service who advise and support.

TUC LANGUAGE CHARTER

The Council and the local unions aim to be the first local authority to adopt a Language Charter which has been developed by the Trade Union Congress in Wales.

APPRENTICE SCHEMES AND GRADUATE TRAINEE SCHEME

These schemes are an important element of attracting and developing the talent of the future, as part of the Council's wider workforce planning efforts. Here are the key statistics for 2024/25:

Apprenticeship Scheme:

The Scheme has provided an opportunity for **81** apprentices since its launch.

10 new apprentices have been appointed for this year, in the areas of Information Technology, Energy, Finance, Housing and Property, Civil Engineering, Fleet.

Over 50% of appointments are females and many of that percentage have been appointed in technical fields.

Over 79% of apprentices started at the age of 16-19.

Graduate Trainees:

Since 2017, the Council has appointed **43** professional trainees, with 98% of trainees being offered a job at the end.

6 new graduate trainees have been appointed in the areas of Finance & Accounting, Health, Safety & Wellbeing, Environmental Health, Planning, Planning Ecologist, Taxes & Benefits.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND PAYROLL SYSTEM

A new human resources and payroll system will be introduced over the next year. That need has arisen due to the fact that the current payroll system expires in the winter of 2026. From a HR data perspective, this development is exciting and will be a significant step forward; what these types of systems have to offer will facilitate the work of managers and the teams that support them, and also mean that we will be able to report on new topics of information in due course. The project is ambitious in terms of schedule, but the timescale involved means that it is the priority for the next 12 months.

CONCLUSIONS

This report is very high-level information, but such information at a detailed level is helpful to managers and those officers who advise them to plan a service and identify in a timely manner those issues that require further investigation and action. This information also drives our priorities for 2025/26 and onwards, which include:

1. Workforce planning.
2. Developing the social partnership with the unions.
3. Human Resources System
4. Sickness absences.
5. Changes to employment legislation – for a year now the Government in London has been working on introducing new legislation that will introduce wide-ranging changes to employment law. To be confirmed and adopted over the next few months, it appears that the package of changes will begin to come into force in spring 2026 and will be rolled out over several years.

4. View of the statutory officers.

4.1 Chief Finance Officer

I am satisfied that the report is a fair reflection of Gwynedd Council's employment situation in 2024/25. The Employment Annual Report contains useful and important information that will assist the Council in planning for future challenges, but adopting the decision sought would not create an additional spending commitment.

4.2 Monitoring Officer

The report provides an important overview of the staffing and employment situation in the Council. I have no further observations to add in relation to propriety.