
THE COUNCIL 05/03/2026

Attendance:

Councillors: Ioan Thomas (Chair)
Elin Walker Jones (Vice-chair)

Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Wendy Cleaver, Robert Glyn Daniels, Dafydd Owen Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Gwion Emyr, Alan Jones Evans, Gwilym Evans, Dylan Fernley, Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Jina Gwyrfai, John Brynmor Hughes, R. Medwyn Hughes, Elin Hywel, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gwilym Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, June Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Dewi Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Llio Elenid Owen, Gareth Coj Parry, Geraint Parry, Nigel Pickavance, John Pughe, Rheinallt Puw, Beca Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Meryl Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Peter Thomas, Menna Trenholme, Rhys Tudur, Hefin Underwood, Einir Wyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams, Gruffydd Williams, Sasha Williams and Sian Williams.

Officers:

Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Services), Nia Grisdale (Legal Service Manager), Ffion Madog Evans (Assistant Head of Finance – Accountancy and Pensions), Delyth Jones-Thomas (Investments Manager), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager) and Annes Sion (Democracy Team Leader).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Anwen Davies, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Arwyn Herald Roberts and Elfed Roberts.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 4 December 2025 as a true record, along with the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 5 February 2026.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer, on behalf of the chief officers present, declared an interest in item 9 as the report related to their salaries. It was explained that the Chief Executive would stay in the meeting but should there be a discussion on his salary then the Chief Executive would leave. The officers were deemed to have a substantial interest therefore the Monitoring Officer, together with the Head of Finance and the Head of Democracy Services left the meeting during the discussion on the item.

4. THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well wishes were relayed to Councillor Louise Hughes and her daughter who had recently undergone surgery, and to Councillor John Brynmor Hughes following a stay in hospital. It was expressed that several members of this Council had been unwell lately and they were all wished a full and speedy recovery.

On Saturday evening, the Cân i Gymru competition had taken place, the winning composers and soloist, namely Emlyn Gomer from Caernarfon, Gath Thomas from Dinas Dinlle and Henry Priestman from Anglesey and singer Sara Owen from Dyffryn Nantlle were congratulated.

Congratulations were noted to Celyn and Caio from Rhostryfan who were responsible for the production and distribution of Papur y Bobl – a new community paper for the area. Also to Jac Dei from Ysgol y Moelwyn who was busy making a name for himself in the world of darts. Along with 12-year-old Rio Chung from Bangor who was representing Wales at the European Billiards and Snooker Championships in Gandia this month.

5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

6. QUESTIONS

(The Cabinet Members' written responses to the questions had been published in advance.)

1. Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen

If you don't already know, a campaign has been started in Harlech by a woman called Andrea Bowen to have a memorial to Catrin, daughter of Glyndŵr. Catrin's story is extremely sad, and she was clearly a very brave woman.

May I therefore ask whether the Council would be able to support in principle the community campaign to erect a statue of Catrin, daughter of Owain Glyndŵr, in Harlech, given her direct historic connection to the town through Harlech Castle, and the fact that there is currently no public memorial recognising her sacrifice and role in Welsh history?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community, Councillor Medwyn Hughes

Thank you to the Councillor for his question. Harlech plays a prominent role in Welsh history, and the story of Catrin, daughter of Owain Glyndŵr, is significant in this history. I'm sure Cyngor Gwynedd would support in principle a local campaign to interpret the story by creating a statue of Catherine in Harlech. It would be an excellent opportunity to raise awareness and promote the story for the children and young people of Gwynedd and for visitors to the town and the Castle, which are of course part of a World Heritage Site. I know that officers from the Economy and Community Department are very willing to support the local group, and I'm sure other Council services will also support the campaign to identify a suitable site for the memorial.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen

He thanked the member for the response and looked forward to discussing the matter with the officers. He believed that the Department would certainly agree that it was a good idea to have a statue of the girl in north Wales as there were only a few memorials for women across the whole of Wales.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Economy and Community, Councillor Medwyn Hughes

The Cabinet Member agreed completely.

2. Question from Councillor Beca Brown

A report was published by Audit Wales in January 2021, assessing how successful or otherwise Ffordd Gwynedd had been. A section of the report titled “Culture – Empowerment, Trust and Leadership” warned of two problems: that constructive challenge was being suppressed and that some destructive challenge existed, often from those in authority — something that undermines trust and prevents empowerment.

Both issues contribute to the same systemic risk: a culture where concerns are not raised effectively, where ideas are not shared safely, and where unsafe practices may go unchallenged. Some of the consequences of such a culture were highlighted in the Our Bravery Brought Justice report.

Given that these concerns were raised in 2021 — two years before the arrest of Neil Foden — what actions were taken at the time to improve trust and to develop a working culture that empowers healthy and constructive challenge?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Llio Elenid Owen

Ffordd Gwynedd is the term used to refer to our way of working here in Gwynedd. It forms nine work streams which are part of the Organisational Development Plan. There is an emphasis on putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do and looking at the service that is provided through the eyes of the citizen.

A piece of work was designed in collaboration with Audit Wales to look at how the culture had embedded by 2020. The output of that work was a letter summarising the situation.

Audit Wales’s main finding in the letter was that:

"Ffordd Gwynedd is well rooted and driving cultural change, however, there are some common barriers and misconceptions that are slowing down the progress of Ffordd Gwynedd".

The work carried out by Audit Wales was based on interviews with every Head of Department and Director at the time. Among several constructive findings and recommendations, destructive challenge was identified as one barrier:

"... to feel empowered, you need to be able to trust those around you. They need to be supportive and positive, even when challenging. A safe environment is key, which is a safe space to experiment and explore ideas. A place where it is safe to fail and learn, seeking support and input from colleagues. Clearly, at a higher level in any organisation there is an inherent need to accept and respond to challenge, it is part of the job. However, it must be done in a constructive, supportive way or, otherwise it can be counterproductive. At present, in the Council, there are examples where this relationship of trust and constructive challenge does not exist; challenge is often described by some people and perceived by others as destructive."

In response to the Audit Office's letter, as a direct result of these comments, specific steps were taken by Council officers during 2021 to strengthen trust, and to further develop culture.

Following the appointment of a new Chief Executive in May 2021, one of the first steps he took was to try to ensure that each challenge was constructive in nature. The ethos of the Departmental Performance Challenge meetings was changed to one where there was a culture and emphasis of "Challenge and Support". This change supported two basic principles:

1. **Healthy and constructive challenge**, based on clear evidence and leadership; and
2. **Supporting performance** by strengthening management skills, ensuring consistency, and fostering an approach that is focused on development rather than criticism.

Since then, the new arrangements have become part of the Council's governance arrangements.

In addition:

1. The training pack for Managers has been reviewed ensuring that it includes promoting the culture of constructive challenge. (Similar training was given to Elected Members following the May 2022 election.)
2. The Audit Wales letter was submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2021 and a Task and Finish Group of Committee Members was established to work with the Chief Executive and Corporate Director to undertake an in-depth Review of how the way of working was developing throughout.
3. The Review included an assessment by each Departmental Management Team of how their department was implementing the way of working.
4. The conclusions of the Review were reported to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in October 2022 with a number of recommendations on how to continue to develop the way of working.

The findings of this Review were discussed at the January 2023 meeting of the Council's Leadership Team and again when adopting a new version of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan for 2023-28 at the Cabinet meeting in March 2023.

Several comments were made by the Cabinet Members at the time about different elements of Ffordd Gwynedd including equality, working with external partners and the importance of looking at the Council's services through the eyes of users.

We are now halfway through the plan that was adopted in 2023, and it is the Chief Executive's intention to undertake a further review of progress over the coming months. Reviewing and checking organisational culture is something that should happen continually, especially following the publication of the Our Bravery Brought Justice report.

The Our Bravery Brought Justice report has shaken the whole Council and is very relevant in the review of Ffordd Gwynedd. It will be essential to secure Members' input into this Review, and we will be seeking input from Audit Wales this time as well.

As always, when discussing this important topic, it is the victims who are at the forefront of our minds. I reiterate this Council's apologies to the victims and all those who were affected by the crimes. Through the Plan and the Response Board, actions are taking place to ensure that change happens, including change to the Council's culture; this is the greatest tribute we can pay to the courage of the victims.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Beca Brown

Considering that the Audit Wales 2021 letter raises concerns about organisational culture that are relevant to the issues explored in the Our Bravery Brought Justice report, and that this document does not appear to have been shared with the child practice review, can you explain what evidence there is that the actions you have stated, such as training and changes to performance challenge meetings, have improved trust and people's ability to raise concerns safely.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Councillor Llio Elenid Owen

Cyngor Gwynedd complied and co-operated fully with the child practice review, detailed and thorough chronologies were prepared and hundreds of documents were shared with them. Background information was also shared in response to further requests as the review progressed. We accept all recommendations put forward by Our Bravery Brought Justice and are determined to act on all of these through the Response Plan. Trust is something

extremely difficult to measure as has been mentioned in the answer. A review of Ffordd Gwynedd is in the pipeline following Our Bravery Brought Justice, and members will have the opportunity to be part of that review.

7. 2026/27 BUDGET

The report was presented, stating that a number of questions arose about how council tax was spent. Information was presented which highlighted the main areas, such as that 80% of the funding went towards Education and Care. It was highlighted that 8,000 hours per week were given to domiciliary care each week, with 1500 individuals receiving a Telecare service. It was noted that 12,000 people had received support through the Housing Action plan since 2020. They highlighted that 93% of children had been able to stay at home with their families through the Trobwynt intervention, and that two Small Homes were now in operation, with a further two homes on the way. It was expressed that good work was being done and that the successes achieved by Council staff needed to be highlighted.

The budget was presented stating that it was necessary to begin with the financial forecasts from the current financial year in order to fully understand the situation. It was highlighted that there was a £5.3m overspend, where departmental budgets were not sufficient to meet the demand for service. It was explained that the main demand was in care, with a deficit of £3m in the Adults department and £1.8m in the Children's Department. It was added that the overspend had been funded through the use of reserves. It was expressed that due to the deal made in Cardiff at the end of last year, the settlement was much better than predicted at 4.1% – an additional £10.4m.

It was explained that as part of the budget-setting process the department had made a number of assumptions such as a pay rise of 4% for teachers and 3.4% for the rest of the Council's workforce. Along with natural inflation, it was noted that there was a need to invest in services, and there were ambitious plans for the coming year such as investment in care and education services.

It was estimated that an additional £23.3m would need to be spent in the next financial year to sustain our services, with the greatest pressure coming from salary inflation, general inflation and the increase in the demand for services. It was noted that this created a spending requirement for 2026/27 of £380m. It was explained that the settlement from the Welsh Government was £264m which left a gap of £116m. In terms of savings, it was highlighted that £664,000 worth of savings had already been approved, with a quarter of a million of these being available to cover the funding gap. As a result, in order to set a balanced budget this will mean raising the Council Tax by 5.17%.

It was explained that the tax base increased to just under 58k of dwellings due to an increase in the number of properties, the number that were subject to the Council Tax Premium and the decision to increase the premium on long-term empty properties. They expressed that it was very disappointing that the tax increase was higher than inflation once again, but the situation was much better than what they had feared back in December.

The Statutory Head of Finance drew attention to the Section 25 Statement in the appendices, which was a personal statement by him highlighting the robustness of the estimates on which the budget was based, as well as the potential risks and mitigation actions. He emphasised that the Cabinet had received a medium-term report back in September, and that the projections were being updated regularly and were based on the latest information. He expressed that accepting an annual settlement was challenging, and that the result of the Senedd election in May would have implications for the Council.

The context of the budget was highlighted by looking at this year's budget deficit which highlighted the additional financial pressures on services, specifically social care. He

explained that there was a recommendation to fund £9.9m of bids to address this. Despite this, he noted that the Council had a successful track record of complying with financial standards, codes of practice and sound governance organisation which was ratified annually by external financiers. It was explained that inflation rates had fallen to 2%, but that political events over the past week could affect them. Nevertheless, he remained confident that the projections were watertight.

In the context of the savings schemes, it was highlighted that the Council had managed to make savings over the years but that pressures continued to materialise, but there were mitigation measures in place to cope. It was reported that there was £110m in reserves, with £7.9m in general balances as well. It was explained that the general balances were at a reasonable level but needed to be reviewed. It was reported that Audit Wales had reviewed the Council's management of balances and had noted overall that the Council was constructive and provided assurance that there were arrangements in place to deal with funds.

It was noted that through the required work carried out to report on the robustness of the estimates that underpinned the budget, and having considered all the risks and mitigation actions, the Head of Finance was of the view that the Council's Budget for 2026/27 was robust, adequate and achievable.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

The significance of the decision to set a budget at a time of financial pressure was noted, and Plaid Cymru was thanked for reaching an agreement with the Labour Government. It was stressed that no one wanted to raise the tax in the face of financial pressure on residents. It was highlighted that excellent work was being carried out within the available budget, without making cuts to frontline services. In relation to the children's department, it was noted that there had been a marked increase in the number of individuals with profound complex needs who required specialist intervention. It was noted that this was not an easy budget but it was responsible and prioritised children and vulnerable people.

The members thanked the officers for the report and asked with regard to the financial assessment how premature the assessment was in light of the events of the previous week, and that oil costs had risen tremendously. It was expressed that the report had been published over a week ago, therefore they could not have known of events of the previous week. However, the assessment had been created with the situation as it was over a week ago, therefore the members could be assured that it was correct when it was sent. It was expressed that there were reserves for any costs that may increase such as energy costs, and therefore the Council would be able to cope with a rise in costs.

The Cabinet Member for Adults indicated that he welcomed the effort to set a balanced budget. He noted that he was seeing increased demand in the field daily, and that the decision to allocate £9.9m for the extra pressure was critical to securing services. He highlighted that setting the budget showed support for frontline staff and reflected the true cost of care in order to maintain quality, retain staff and avoid failures. It was recognised that setting a sustainable budget formed the basis of a sustainable service, albeit challenging in terms of finding the balance between raising taxes and maintaining services. It was emphasised that the budget was a clear statement of the values of the members, the county and their commitment to caring for vulnerable residents.

Comments were received from the Cabinet Member for Education who noted that the cost of teaching the next generation was high. He drew attention in particular to Additional Learning Needs, highlighting that additional funding had been identified in the budget. He stated that it was new funding that did not detract from any other services. Although this new funding was welcomed, he noted that the money was not enough and that a national revolution was needed. He highlighted that additional funding had been offered in England but no corresponding funding would be provided in Wales. However, he noted that the Government

had announced that significant funding would be provided to the Welsh Government for ALN. He promised that whichever party would lead the Senedd in May, he would try his best to influence and receive a fair share of the money.

There was agreement with the Cabinet Member for Education's comments, stressing the need to lobby the funding and that there was truly a need for a national revolution.

It was expressed that although £7.9 was available in the Council's general reserves, this represented approximately 1.3% of the budget. They noted the need to strengthen this, and that 3-5% was required.

It was noted that Central Government over the years had put more and more pressure on Local Government to maintain services at a lower level of budgets. The need to get the money to deliver services was emphasised.

A member enquired whether the Council had a database that monitored how many people who paid council tax had now had to apply for benefits, to see what the trend was over time. It was noted that the department had information about requests for discounts to Gwynedd, but not at a national level. A further conversation was offered with the member in order to understand what kind of information they required.

RESOLVED

1. To establish a budget of £379,701,110 for 2026/27 to be funded through a Government Grant of £264,009,390 and £115,691,720 of Council Tax income (which is a base increase of 4.75% plus a further 0.42% to cover the levy from the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, which gives a total of 5.17%)
2. To establish a capital programme of £40,179,430 in 2026/27, to be funded from the sources set out in Appendix 4 of the report.

8. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27 (INCLUDING INVESTMENT AND BORROWING STRATEGIES)

The item was presented, stating that the report addressed the statutory requirement and provided a long-term context to capital expenditure and investment decisions while taking the risk into account. It was noted that the strategy combined the Budget report with the Borrowing and Investment plan by combining the capital programme with the treasury management side.

It was expressed that the report had already been submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee for consideration of any risks arising from the strategy. It was explained that since this was a technical field, a presentation had been given on aspects of Treasury Management by officials from the Arlingclose company to try and enhance understanding of the field.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

A member enquired whether they would consider getting capital money from the reserves, as borrowing could incur costs. Officers responded by noting that this already happened, and that the Council had not borrowed externally for years.

It was expressed, with the change in the boundaries of a new electoral areas, members might be in a difficult position when it came to lobbying for an individual authority and then there would be increasing pressure on the Council to lobby much more. In response it was noted that time will tell, but there was a possibility that the Council's voice would be strengthened.

RESOLVED

To accept the report and approve the Capital Strategy for 2026/27.

9. ANNUAL REPORT – THE COUNCIL'S PAY POLICY

The report was presented, stating that there was a statutory duty on all Councils to have a pay policy adopted annually by their Full Council. When adopting the pay policy for 2012/13, the Full Council decided to ask the Chief Officers Appointment Committee to conduct an annual review of the future sustainability of the pay policy and to submit recommendations to a meeting of the full Council in March each year. The Appointments Committee had considered the content of the draft pay policy at its meeting in February.

It was highlighted that there were two parts to consider. It was explained that annual salary increases for chief officers were set by the National Joint Council for Chief Officers. It was explained that the employers and unions had reached an agreement back in July for 2025/26, which was a 3.2% increase on the annual pay of chief officers. It was expressed that the process was about to begin for 2026/27.

The second element was the salaries of staff below chief officer level, and it was explained that these were also set by the Joint Council. It was highlighted that the employers and unions had agreed on a 3.2% increase for all staff and to also eliminate level 2 on the pay structure. It was noted that it was early days on the negotiations for 2026/27.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

It was pointed out that in recent years the reports had been approved by the Monitoring and Finance Officer but this year it was being approved by their deputies. It was added that this was obviously more sensible as they were discussing salaries, but the member asked why the change in procedure. They responded by noting that they had not changed things deliberately and that it was customary for deputies to approve the report but the Chief Executive would look into this.

RESOLVED

To adopt the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27.

10. WALES PENSION PARTNERSHIP (WPP) – UPDATING THE INTER-AUTHORITY AGREEMENT (IAA)

The Monitoring Officer highlighted the reasons for submitting this report, noting that back in July the Council had agreed, with the eight authorities that were part of the investment pool, to set up a company. Consequently, it was explained that the Joint Committee would remain but within a new system. It was highlighted that only the Full Council had the right to change the terms of reference, and that the role of the joint committee needed to be revised and the revisions approved before the company became operational and to ensure full scrutiny of its work.

The Chair of the Pensions Committee noted that the Pensions Committee was cross-party and that they were unanimous in their support of the recommendation presented. She explained that a huge amount of work had been undertaken to prepare towards the change to be a company. She expressed that the matter was complex but the Committee had taken all possible steps to ensure that this decision was correct and fully scrutinised.

The report was submitted, stating that it sought approval to update the Inter-Authority Agreement between the eight Councils in Wales that administered Pension funds. The agreement had originally been approved by the full Council on 2 March 2017, to establish an investment pool for Welsh pension funds. It was explained that amendments had been approved back in October 2021. It was stressed that the arrangement established

under the system had worked well, with effective collaboration and the intention of saving investment managers' fees by investing on a larger scale.

However, the Westminster Government's "Fit for the Future" programme over the last eighteen months had meant that we had been forced to change. The Full Council in July approved the formation of a corporate entity wholly owned by the Wales Pension Partnership Administering Authorities, namely the WPP Investment Management Company, and to approve all other actions necessary to submit an application to the Financial Conduct Authority for authorisation of the company.

It was explained that the enforced changes had involved significant work along with time and resources. The new company was due to be operational by 1 April, 2026. However, there was one other agreement that the Council could not delegate to the Pensions Committee, which was the Inter-Authority Agreement. The amendments made to the agreement were highlighted, explaining that they had been the subject of work by legal advisers. It was expressed that there had been several discussions to keep track of the developments and they were therefore confident that it had been properly scrutinised.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

They expressed support for the decision and emphasised that there was little choice, but that the Pool hoped they would continue to work well together.

It was expressed that given the good performance of the pool, there were obvious risks to not signing this. It was explained that work had been carried out to ensure that we could continue to work as a partnership but the main concern was that this had been forced on us.

A member asked if there was an interest if a member was part of the pension scheme, it was stated that there was none.

RESOLVED

The amendments to the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) for the Wales Pension Partnership were accepted.

The Head of Legal Department, in consultation with the Head of Finance, was authorised to take the necessary actions to complete the agreement.

11. AMENDMENTS TO THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT AND THE COUNCIL'S WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer who noted that the report highlighted changes to the constitution. He noted that there were two aspects, the first being amending the code of conduct in line with the Local Government Regulations that came into force in January. He expressed that this was a minor change, simply in terms of the wording in the Code of Conduct and Principles of Conduct when discussing equality. Previously, for example, gender, race, disability and religion were listed individually, but the amendment changed this to "protected characteristics" as a term that covered all of them. In addition, in accordance with the Regulations, "socio-economic circumstances" were also included.

It was highlighted that the Code had already been statutorily amended, but the Council was required to formally adopt it and authorise the Monitoring Officer to amend the Internal Resolution Procedure as well to correspond with the Code of Conduct.

It was explained in relation to the second aspect that the Cabinet had reviewed the Whistle-blowing policy back in January and that amendments had been made. As it was a document that formed part of the Constitution, it was a requirement to submit it to the Council for information so that there was a record that a change had been made to the Constitution.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

It was noted that the items had been discussed in the Standards Committee, and that they were happy with the amendments.

RESOLVED

1. To adopt the amendments to the Principles of Conduct and Members' Code of Conduct in accordance with the statutory requirement. The Council is also asked to authorise the Monitoring Officer to amend the Local Resolution Procedure to correspond with the Code of Conduct where these provisions are referenced.
2. The content of the revised Whistle-blowing Policy was set out in the Constitution.

12. COMMITTEES CALENDAR 2026/27

The report was presented by the Head of Democracy Services, who highlighted that the May Election and the 2027 Election had a significant impact on the dates. He drew attention to the additional Scrutiny Committees that had been included in July because of the committees' work pressures and the pre-election period. Consequently, he highlighted that there was one change to the date of the Local Consultative Committee because of the need for dates for the additional Scrutiny committees. The committee would be held on 22 September, and this change would be reflected following a decision.

He noted that extensive consultations had been carried out and that amendments had been made following discussions with Eryri National Park and the Fire Authority. He expressed that we had tried to be as flexible as possible but were unable to address everything.

The Democracy Services Committee was thanked for their input to the Calendar at their meeting in February.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

The members were grateful for the discussions with the Fire Authority, but questioned if there were discussions when urgent or additional meetings were held. The officer responded by stating that this was something to keep in mind in terms of consultation, and that there was a need to carry on the discussion with the Fire Authority, but these were exceptions.

DECISION

To adopt the Committees Calendar for 2026/27

13. (A) NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR GRUFFYDD WILLIAMS

The notice of motion was submitted by Councillor Gruffydd Williams under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and was seconded.

The motion was supported, noting the following:-

- That personal freedom was all important and something that can be lost.
- It has often been highlighted that actions like this happen – starting small and growing over time and that there is a risk to individuals' data.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

In January 2026, the Westminster Government made a u-turn regarding their plans to make digital ID cards mandatory for proving the right to work, following a significant response from members of the public with a petition signed by over 3 million being submitted to the Government stating their opposition to DI. While the mandatory requirement for employment has been dropped, the government plans to move verification processes on-line by 2029, leading to concerns that a digital identification system will still be introduced gradually through the back door, as it were.

That this Council is totally opposed to the Digital Identification system and that Cyngor Gwynedd calls on the Welsh Government to oppose DI in line with the Government in Scotland and also in line with several local authorities across the UK. Convenience should never come at the expense of personal liberty.

11(b) NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR ELIN HYWEL

The notice of motion was submitted by Councillor Elin Hywel under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and was seconded. The member set out the context to her motion, noting:-

- That democracy cannot function without trust, and that it is won or lost through the way people speak, conduct themselves or the decisions that are made. It was stressed that trust in politics was currently extremely low.
- It was a very challenging time for the residents of Gwynedd at the moment with national and local events affecting trust in politicians.
- She noted that the responsibility lay with Councillors and asked the question, what was their part? As councillors they had a responsibility to declare and demonstrate a willingness to exercise and maintain trust. She explained that to declare this was only the first step.
- She expressed that only 38-39% of Gwynedd residents had voted in the Local Government Election back in 2022, and that 28 seats had been elected uncontested. As a result there had been no democratic procedure in those areas, because without a choice there was no election.
- She welcomed the Senedd's actions through the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act to strengthen the integrity of public life and place honesty at its heart.
- She expressed that most of the Councillors were here for the best reason which was to improve people's lives and to create better communities. She highlighted that discussions could be heated but that serving the residents of Gwynedd was focal to everyone.
- She noted that what happened in the Chamber needed to serve to strengthen democracy and to build respect and confidence in organisations.
- It was explained that if we can lead through words then we must be honest and they must truly mean something, because by losing trust in words there will be a loss of trust in democracy.
- She emphasised that the motion was not intended as a partisan accusation or finger-pointing but to stand together on one principle and to follow the Senedd's actions to strengthen integrity. She noted that Councillors had a duty to maintain and restore public trust.

Members provided observations on the notice, stating the following:-

- Trust was the foundation of democracy, because if the public were not involved then the connection between members and the public would disappear. The trust must be earned, and we must be transparent and respectful in our work and discussions.
- It was acknowledged that there were challenges but these were not unique challenges. It was expressed that the motion was a positive call to lead by example and to make it clear that Councillors took their responsibility seriously.
- A member disagreed with the paragraph about the Councillors who had been elected uncontested meaning that there was no democratic procedure, as individuals did have a choice, the choice to put their names forward and therefore there was a democratic procedure. It was expressed that it was not a reflection of trust but the need to

encourage more people to get involved and to stand up for their area, and the need to include this as part of the motion.

- It was highlighted that some seats were perhaps elected uncontested because the public was satisfied with the Councillor who had been serving them.
- The public's reasons for not standing were discussed, highlighting that time and work commitments can be reasons.
- The motion was supported, stating that the 2022 figures caused concern in terms of polling rates and a high number being elected uncontested. Reference was made to the need to look at culture, because trust was dependent on how individuals and organisations behaved, and the place and environment where individuals feel comfortable and safe to voice their opinions.
- It was noted that the motion was timely and that we needed to look at what we could do locally. A member expressed the need to look at what hung in the balance, as research showed that if people lose trust in an organisation they will move to non-organisational right-wing leaders.
- Plaid Cymru was asked to trust the Independent Group when considering chairs as they felt that their voice was not being heard.
- A member expressed that claiming there is no democratic choice if a Councillor is elected uncontested was not an insult to those particular Councillors, but rather a reflection of the flaws in the system.
- A member asked how the Senedd legislation was relevant to the motion. It was expressed that there had been an amendment to the legislation to ensure that lying during election campaigning was illegal. By doing this the Senedd had prioritised honesty and recognised the importance of that. It was noted that in a time where people do not trust politicians, it needs to be highlighted that transparency and honesty were at the heart of Gwynedd politics.

RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-

In accordance with the Notice of Motion received from her pursuant to Section 4.19 of the Constitution, Councillor Elin Hywel will propose as follows:-

This Council recognises that trust is the foundation of democracy. We know that recent events locally, nationally and internationally have undermined that relationship with the people of Gwynedd. Democracy cannot function healthily without public trust in those who represent them; that trust enables people to participate in local democracy and, in turn, ensures their voice in shaping their future.

Evidence from the Office for National Statistics indicates that trust in politics and politicians is at a very low level, with only one in five trusting political parties, and that there is a direct link between low trust and low participation.

In light of that, this Council notes the low turnout in the 2022 Cyngor Gwynedd election, in line with wider trends throughout Wales, with around 38-39% voting, and that 28 of the 69 seats were elected uncontested, meaning that a large number of Gwynedd's constituents did not have a democratic choice.

The Council recognises that these figures highlight a serious challenge to the health of local democracy and to the relationship between constituents and their representatives.

It is recognised that our behaviour as public leaders sets the standard for democratic discussion. That trust cannot be built, or participation increased, unless we model those values ourselves.

This Council welcomes the actions of the Senedd through the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act to strengthen the integrity of public life and place honesty and truth at the heart of our democratic culture.

Accordingly, this Council makes it clear that we have a duty, both personally and collectively, to maintain and restore the public's trust.

We are committed to the truth, to transparency, to fairness, and to respect - the cornerstones of our right to represent the people of Gwynedd.

The meeting commenced at 1.30pm and concluded at 4.45pm.

CHAIR