

Scrutiny Annual Report 2025-26



Mi allwch ddarllen y ddogfen yma yn Gymraeg hefyd. Ewch nôl i'r dudalen we, a chliciwch ar y botwm iaith ar dop y dudalen.



Cyngor **Gwynedd**

www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/scrutiny

Foreword

The purpose of scrutiny in Gwynedd is 'To contribute to driving improvement in services for the people of Gwynedd'. During 2025/26, scrutiny members have scrutinised a range of different matters across the Council's areas of work, through formal committees, scrutiny investigation and task and finish groups.

To ensure that scrutiny arrangements are effective, members across the political groups work as a team to investigate concerns about the quality of services; acting as a Critical Friend ensuring that proper attention is given to the citizen's voice; identifying good practice and weaknesses and holding the Cabinet and its members to account.

New arrangements were introduced for performance scrutiny, scrutiny evaluation and chairs or vice-chairs attend Cabinet meetings to report on discussions and decisions/recommendations following the pre-scrutiny of a matter before Cabinet reaches a decision.

It is vitally important that the people of Gwynedd have the opportunity to participate in scrutiny. Three requests for scrutiny were received from members of the public this year. Although only one request was timely for scrutiny, it was pleasing to see the request to scrutinise funding matters of the Climate Change and Nature Emergency Plan leading to recommendations from the Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Particular attention was paid to safeguarding matters and extraordinary meetings of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Care Scrutiny Committee were held to scrutinise the Council's Response Plan to the child practice review, the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' report. The work of the Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools Scrutiny Investigation was ongoing in 2025/26.

Safeguarding has been a clear priority in the 2025/26 scrutiny work programme and will certainly continue to be a priority in 2026/27. The scrutiny investigation will report to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 14 July 2026. Also, the scrutiny committees will receive a progress update on the Response Plan.

I would like to sincerely thank my fellow scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs, scrutiny members, cabinet members, officers and everyone who has been involved in the scrutiny work during the year.



Councillor Cai Larsen, Chair of the Scrutiny Forum

Contents

Forward Scrutiny Programme	3
Scrutiny Forum	4 – 6
Scrutiny Committees	7 - 14
Scrutinising the Response Plan - Our Bravery Brought Justice	15 - 16
Scrutiny Investigation	17 - 18
Task and Finish Groups	19 - 20
Performance Scrutiny	21
Evaluation	22
Tracking Arrangements	23
Facts about Scrutiny in Gwynedd in 2025/26	24
Looking ahead to 2026/27	25
List of items scrutinised at formal meetings	26 - 28

Forward work programme

At the beginning of the Council year, members of the scrutiny committees draw up a work programme for the coming year.

All Council members, the public, Cabinet Members and Heads of Council Departments were given the opportunity to suggest potential items for scrutiny. The scrutiny advisers bring together a list of all the possible items suggested per committee including information about the items:



At the informal meetings of the scrutiny committees in July 2025, a draft work programme for 2025/26 was drawn up by the Scrutiny Committee taking into account this information and the following factors:

- Does the matter affect the residents of Gwynedd?
- Can scrutiny make a difference / have an influence? (people / service / performance)
- Is it timely to scrutinise the matter?
- Is the matter a priority for the Council?
- Are we clear about what we are trying to improve?

Open discussions were held and an initial version of the draft work programme was produced. The aim was to prioritise a maximum of three items per meeting to ensure that the items were addressed properly.

The next step was for the Scrutiny Forum to take an overview of the work programme as a whole before the individual scrutiny committees adopted their work programme.

The forward scrutiny programme is a live programme. During the year, the content of the forward programme was reviewed to ensure that the right matters were addressed.

On page 26, you will find the 2025-26 work programme in its entirety. The annual report details the scrutiny work during the year.

Scrutiny Forum

The Scrutiny Forum meets regularly to take an overview of all the Council's scrutiny work, with the members (Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees) challenging each other to ensure that the right issues are prioritised.

The chairs and vice-chairs per committee for 2025/26 were:

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Cai Larsen



Councillor Rhys Tudur

Communities Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Annwen Hughes



Councillor Delyth Lloyd Griffiths

Care Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Elwyn Jones



Councillor Sian Williams

At the first meeting of the Forum on 8 September 2025, members were given a presentation regarding the role of the Scrutiny Forum:

- Advise to PRIORITISE scrutiny items (majority being formal scrutiny with a small number of investigations) and challenge the basis of identifying matters to scrutinise.
- Identify the most effective scrutiny method within the resources available (formal scrutiny / investigation).
- Identify items that are purely for information, seeking to avoid using scrutiny arrangements to fulfil the information-sharing role.
- Assess the contributions of the individual committees and assess the IMPACT of the scrutiny work, and review our scrutiny arrangements continually.

The members considered the draft scrutiny forward programme before the individual scrutiny committees adopted their work programme. Particular attention was paid to the role of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Care Scrutiny Committee in scrutinising the Crime Response Plan following the publication of the Child Practice Review, 'Our Bravery Brought Justice'. It was stressed that constructive and transparent scrutiny discussions would highlight the key matters to be addressed and lead to progress reports to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

Scrutiny members' initial impressions of the revised performance scrutiny arrangements were considered. Since June 2025, the scrutiny committees consider performance reports twice a year. The changes to the arrangements are detailed on page 21 of the annual report. The Scrutiny Forum supported the new arrangements.

The Forum also gave its seal of approval to use an evaluation table for self-evaluation of scrutiny at committee meetings. The table is used to evaluate the scrutiny per item by designating the scrutiny as effective scrutiny, acceptable scrutiny or basic scrutiny (see page 22). It was agreed that the scrutiny Chairs and Vice-chairs and the relevant scrutiny adviser undertake an evaluation as a first step. Before sharing the evaluation with the rest of the committee members and discussing it at the informal meetings.

The next meeting of the Forum was held on 17 December 2025. Consideration was given to the scrutiny forward programme. Resources were prioritised to support and maintain a Social Services Complaints Task and Finish Group. The efficiency of the new arrangements for scrutiny evaluation and performance scrutiny in scrutiny committee meetings was discussed. It was concluded that the new evaluation arrangements should be continued and the impact of departments' performance scrutiny on the committees' workload should continue to be monitored.

A presentation was given on the arrangements for conducting a Performance Assessment by a panel in accordance with the requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

At the Forum meeting on 23 February 2026, the forward scrutiny programme was considered to ensure that the right matters were prioritised. It was decided to reschedule the meetings of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee (23 April 2026) and the Care Scrutiny Committee (26 March 2026) to July due to the Senedd pre-election period.

The performance scrutiny arrangements were addressed taking into account the comments of committee members on the arrangements. The need to discuss different options for adapting the arrangements was noted taking into account the panel Performance Assessment report.

The content of the annual report was discussed and it was decided to take the following steps to produce a scrutiny work programme for 2026/27:

- 1** Consider the Cabinet's forward programme and hold liaison meetings with the relevant Heads of Department and Cabinet Member to seek to identify potential items for scrutiny.
- 2** Send an e-mail to all Council members giving them the opportunity to submit suggestions of potential items for scrutiny.
- 3** An opportunity for residents to suggest potential items for scrutiny by providing information on social media and the Council's website.
- 4** Hold annual workshops in May to consider potential items and draw up a work programme.
- 5** Consult with the Heads of Department following the workshops and give them the opportunity to comment on the scheduling of the items.
- 6** Scrutiny Forum to take an overview of the forward programme to ensure the right matters are prioritised.
- 7** Scrutiny Committees to adopt their work programmes for 2026/27.

Scrutiny Committees

There are three scrutiny committees in Gwynedd, and each has a role to scrutinise specific areas of work. This year, new arrangements for performance scrutiny were established. Further details of these arrangements can be found under the heading 'Performance Scrutiny' on page 21.

In this section, there is information about which work areas each different committee is responsible for scrutinising and the items scrutinised during 2025-26 in a Committee meeting in addition to the performance reports and the Response Plan - Our Bravery Brought Justice (see page 15).

The reason for scrutiny, the evaluation of committee members and a scrutiny adviser (effective scrutiny, acceptable scrutiny or basic scrutiny) and the impact of the scrutiny is detailed per item.

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Education Department, Economy and Community Department, Ambition North Wales, Leadership and Legal Team, Corporate Services Department, Finance Department, The Council's Internal Operations and Partnerships

Gwynedd Economy Strategy

Pre-decision scrutiny / Strategic Plan

Acceptable Scrutiny

The Strategy for the development of Gwynedd's economy between 2025 and 2035 was pre-scrutinised to ensure that the vision is sufficiently clear, that there is sufficient detail in terms of implementation and how the progress and impact of the Strategy is intended to be measured.

Impact of Scrutiny

Expressed concern regarding the availability of grants for deprived areas; noting the importance of collaboration and recognising the need to put in place a clear structure to review what was achieved at the end of a year against the delivery plan.

Immersion Education System

Council Plan 2023-28 – A Welsh Gwynedd

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the efficiency of immersion provision taking into account the findings of Estyn and Bangor University and the arrangements of the current model of pupils attending an immersion centre four days a week.

Impact of Scrutiny

Recognised the need to further lobby the Welsh Government for additional financial resources; that further consideration needs to be given to the option of returning to five days and/or consideration of the length of the period in the language centres, taking into account the welfare of the pupils; and the need to further consult with stakeholders and ensure flexibility in provision.

Procurement Strategy

Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 – A Prosperous Gwynedd

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the draft strategy addressing the legislative context and ensure that it delivers value for money, social benefit, de-carbonisation and support for the local economy.

Impact of Scrutiny

Highlight specific matters to the Cabinet Member that need to be addressed in the implementation of the strategy – doing everything possible to maintain the economic benefit locally, supporting small businesses, increasing social value and strengthening the use of the Welsh language.

Schools Strategy

Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 – Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Effective Scrutiny

The draft strategy was scrutinised to ensure that the priorities are suitable and responsive to challenges and opportunities in education and that there is a clear vision for the future.

Impact of Scrutiny

Recommendations to strengthen the strategy by including more information about safeguarding, poverty, social equity, voice of the parents, faith schools, inclusion, staff welfare, governance and the Welsh language.

The Benefit of the Growth Plan for Gwynedd

Acceptable Scrutiny

Matter arising from performance scrutiny

Scrutinised the benefits provided by the North Wales Growth Plan to Gwynedd, assess value for money, impact on jobs, regional investment, and ensure that communities across Gwynedd benefit.

Impact of Scrutiny

Expressed concern about the slowness of some of the plans to maturity and about the balance of rural and urban investment. Took action to improve future reporting - request that future progress reports include more detail in relation to the jobs that have been created specifically in Gwynedd.

Visitor Levy

Effective Scrutiny

Impact on Gwynedd

The rationale for introducing a Visitor Levy was scrutinised, taking into account the potential impact on businesses, visitors, communities, the environment and the visitor economy.

Impact of Scrutiny

Highlighted the need to give full consideration to the operational complexities and economic impacts. Emphasised that if it is decided to introduce a visitor levy there needs to be a clear commitment to income spending, thorough consultation, transparency in the use of the money, and sensitive communication of exceptions.

Communities Scrutiny Committee

Environment Department, Highways, Engineering and YGC Department, Local Development Plan, Public Services Board, Crime & Disorder and Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

Climate and Nature Emergency Plan: 2024/25 Annual Report

Effective Scrutiny

The Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

Scrutinise the Council's progress towards achieving its climate and nature objectives including reaching the net zero carbon target by 2030.

Impact of Scrutiny

Recommendation to revisit the Council's ambition to be net zero carbon by 2030 and set a realistic target for reducing carbon emissions. The need to continue to develop practical solutions for transport, the Council's fleet and the de-carbonisation of buildings was highlighted.

Salt Bins and Gritting Arrangements

A follow-up to the scrutiny at the 28 September 2022 meeting

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the effectiveness of the Council's winter maintenance arrangements, including gritting circuits, salt bin management, use of new technology and road network safety.

Impact of Scrutiny

Recommended that safe access to school grounds during severe weather should be considered as part of the review of gritting circuits.

Request for scrutiny by a member of the public – Climate and Nature Emergency Plan Funding Matters

Assurance in terms of funding arrangements

Effective Scrutiny

Consider a member of the public's concerns about governance, transparency, project prioritisation arrangements and expenditure within the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan.

Impact of Scrutiny

Pay attention to the citizen's voice and confirm that appropriate governance and scrutiny arrangements are in place. Recommended to the Cabinet Member that there was a need for more public engagement and to request more details of expenditure in the annual report to increase transparency.

Review of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

Pre-decision Scrutiny / The Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

Effective Scrutiny

Scrutinise the revised plan, consider its ambitions, projects and ability to achieve the Council's climate and nature objectives.

Impact of Scrutiny

Welcome the intention to reconsider the 2030 net zero carbon target in line with the Committee's recommendation. Recommend that the successes of the scheme be communicated, more open questions used in consultations, and wording reviewed to be more ambitious.

Active Travel

The Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

Effective Scrutiny

Scrutinise the progress of active travel schemes, benefits, funding sources and challenges relating to network maintenance.

Impact of Scrutiny

Recommend that expenditure for maintenance and potential savings need to be examined; include questions about maintenance as well as local matters in the public consultation; and examine risk assessment arrangements.

Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Progress Report

The Committee's role to scrutinise the Public Services Board's work

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the Board's progress on the implementation of the Well-being Plan and to monitor the impact of partnership work on areas such as poverty, children's rights, the Welsh language and trauma-informed.

Impact of Scrutiny

Recognised the Public Services Board's work on poverty, children's rights and trauma-informed approaches, providing support and assurance in the direction of the work.

Annual Update by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership

The Committee's role as a Crime and Disorder Committee

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the Partnership's work to prevent crime and disorder, promote community safety, tackle violence, domestic abuse, organised crime and protect vulnerable people.

Impact of Scrutiny

Took action to improve future reporting – more performance data and a map highlighting the location of crimes. Asked for more information about violence prevention projects to receive reassurance. Support to accelerate the work of ensuring a "Trauma Informed Council" accreditation for the Council.

Waste Collection and Recycling Services

The Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

Effective Scrutiny

Scrutinise the performance of the waste and recycling service, meeting the Welsh Government's recycling target, efficiency of operational arrangements and the development of the new Waste Strategy.

Impact of Scrutiny

Emphasise the need to increase education and awareness about recycling. Recommend that consideration be given to the introduction of financial penalties for failing to recycle appropriately to support better performance and avoid financial risks to the Council. Recommendations that will help the Council meet the Welsh Government's target of 70% recycling of waste.

Footpaths

Assurance in terms of implementation

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the condition, accessibility and management of Gwynedd's public rights of way network, taking into account resources, maintenance and the impact of climate change.

Impact of Scrutiny

Highlight the need to prioritise resources based on route usage, and improve accessibility and access for all through relevant stakeholder input.

Care Scrutiny Committee

Adults, Health and Well-being Department, Children and Supporting Families Department, Health and the Housing and Property Department

Annual Report 2024-25 - Complaints, Enquiries and Expressions of Gratitude Procedure – Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults Department

Acceptable Scrutiny

Assurance in respect of the arrangements for handling complaints in care work

Scrutinise the arrangements of the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department in dealing with complaints, enquiries and praise, and using the information to improve services.

Impact of Scrutiny

Establish a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise complaints, enquiries and expressions of gratitude in more detail to identify lessons and further opportunities to improve services.

Hospital Discharges

Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the multi-agency arrangements that support people to return home safely and in a timely manner after a period in hospital, promoting independence and reducing pressure on services.

Impact of Scrutiny

Highlight the need to expand the provision beyond Ysbyty Gwynedd to serve residents returning from other hospitals. Request a progress report in 18 months' time to assess the results.

Working with the community

Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise Dyffryn Nantlle's community collaboration model which is designed to help people access support locally and prevent increased demand on health and care services.

Impact of Scrutiny

Support the approach and encourage implementation of the scheme in other parts of Gwynedd, recognising the potential of the model to strengthen community resilience and preventative support.

Empty Houses

Council Plan 2023-28 - A Homely Gwynedd

Basic Scrutiny

Scrutinise the Council's work to bring empty homes back into use, increase the local housing stock and support the objectives of the Housing Action Plan.

Impact of Scrutiny

Receive assurances and highlight the need to continue to address long-term empty homes and their impact on communities and the Welsh language.

A Strategy for Keeping Families Together

The existing provision and the resources available to realise the strategy

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the Children and Supporting Families Department's preventative approach of supporting families at an early stage to avoid a crisis, reducing the need for statutory care and keeping children safe at home where possible.

Impact of Scrutiny

The scrutiny highlighted the importance of preventative services and the risk arising from reliance on short-term grants. The committee asked for more information on collaboration with the Education Department; assurance that services continue during maternity leave and how this is achieved.

Youth Justice Service

Assurance that the service is efficient

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the performance and arrangements of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Youth Justice Service, focusing on crime prevention, early intervention and supporting young people through a "Child First" approach.

Impact of Scrutiny

Receive assurances that the service has made significant progress in implementing inspection recommendations. Highlight the lack of speech and language provision for young people in the justice system and ask the Cabinet Member to write to the Welsh Government to press for additional resources to provide the speech and language support.

16+ Team

Assurance in terms of the provision for those aged 16+

Acceptable Scrutiny

Scrutinise the support provided to young people aged 16-25 who are looked after or have left care, including accommodation, education, well-being and developing independence.

Impact of Scrutiny

Receive assurances about the support arrangements and multi-agency work to support vulnerable young people. Highlight the challenges associated with accommodation, homelessness and supporting young asylum seekers who receive support from the service.

The agendas and minutes of Scrutiny Committee meetings can be viewed under this link –

www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/scrutiny

Scrutinising the Response Plan

A Response Plan to the crime of a former school headteacher was adopted by the Cabinet on 21 January 2025. The report of the Child Practice Review 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' was published on 4 November 2025. The Council's Response Plan was revised in response to the report.

Extraordinary meetings of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Care Scrutiny Committee were held in January 2026. The revised Plan was scrutinised to ensure that it responds appropriately and fully to the 'Our Bravery Brought Justice' report and to scrutinise the work programme.

The content of the Response Plan was considered with regard to the work streams:



Work Stream 1

The Voice of the Child and Supporting Victims



Work Stream 2

Managing Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children



Work Stream 3

Training and Policies



Work Stream 4

School Governance



Work Stream 5

Restrictive Practices



Work Stream 6

Crisis Planning and Crisis Response



Work Stream 7

Ysgol Friars

The scrutiny committees made **37 recommendations** to the Cabinet. All recommendations and minutes of the Care Scrutiny Committee meetings ([13 January 2026](#)) and the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee ([19 January 2026](#)) can be found on the Council's website.

In addition to the scrutiny committees, the Governance and Audit Committee considered the Response Plan. A report was presented to an extraordinary meeting of the Full Council on [5 February 2026](#) and the committee chairs were given an opportunity to convey the discussions and recommendations.

Here is a summary of the amendments to the Response Plan as a result of the scrutiny:

- Note that the door would not close if a victim wished to receive a support package in the future.
- Reference to the Estyn inspection in 2023 was removed.
- Well-being of children and young people added to the description of Work Stream 7.
- Address the voice of the family as well as the child's voice in safeguarding arrangements as part of Work Stream 1.
- External female contact name added to posters sharing information about concerns and ensure contact details are available on schools websites and the Council's website.
- A number of amendments related to training, empowerment and behaviour change on topics such as fostering inappropriate relationships 'grooming' and the use of reasonable force.
- Introduce arrangements to measure that training changes behaviour and decisions in practice.
- Arrangements to measure how the voice of the child and victims' experience influence decisions and outcomes as part of Work Stream 1.
- Appropriate attention to children facing challenges and avoiding unconscious bias.
- Consider the suitability of adults to work with children and vulnerable adults as part of safeguarding arrangements.
- Audit of Part 5 allegations, Wales Safeguarding Procedures, extended to a five-year period.
- Review arrangements to check safeguarding records.
- Ensure transparency by releasing as much information as possible.

The Cabinet adopted the revised Response Plan at its meeting on [10 March 2026](#). The chairs of the scrutiny committees were present at the meeting to convey the discussions and recommendations of the extraordinary meetings of the scrutiny committees.

To receive assurances that progress has been made and to receive confirmation of what has been done in response to the recommendations of the scrutiny committees. The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Care Scrutiny Committee will receive an update in 2026/27.

Scrutiny Investigation

The purpose of a Scrutiny Investigation is to assess the impact of current policies and/or service performance. This is achieved by gathering essential evidence which includes listening to people's experiences.

The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee adopted a brief for a **Scrutiny Investigation into Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools** on [13 February 2025](#). The work of the investigation up to the end of April 2025 was reported in the 2024-25 annual report.

The main question that the investigation addresses is:

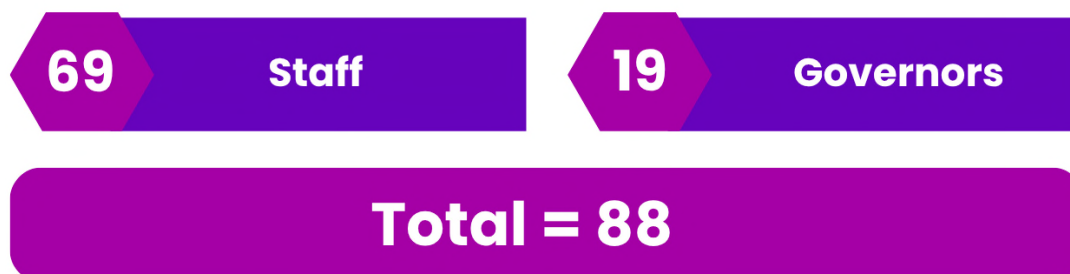
‘Are safeguarding arrangements in the county's schools appropriate and implemented consistently?’

The members who have been undertaking the work of the investigation are:

- Councillors Cai Larsen (Chair), Dawn Lynne Jones, Gwynfor Owen and Richard Glyn Roberts
- Co-opted Member - Sharon Roberts (Parent/Governor Representative for Arfon)

During May to July 2025, visits were carried out to 11 schools to understand how safeguarding arrangements are implemented in schools. Members and a scrutiny officer visited a sample which included six Primary Schools, three Secondary Schools, 1 Special School and 1 All-through School.

Informal open conversations were held with Headteachers, Designated Safeguarding Persons, Designated Safeguarding Deputies, Teachers, Support Staff as well as Chairs of Governors and Designated Safeguarding Governors.



As well as holding conversations, members took note of the schools' environment and culture of safeguarding. At the end of the visits members discussed and recorded their impressions.

The welcome received from the schools and the open discussions which gave members an insight into how safeguarding arrangements are implemented in practice in schools were greatly appreciated.

A meeting was held to discuss members' initial impressions of the visits on 22 July 2025. Potential findings and recommendations arising from the school visits on 10 September 2025 were discussed.

The themes that arose when discussing the members' findings were:

Safeguarding **Matters under the safeguarding threshold** **Systems**

Training **Governors** **Staff** **Parents**

Pupils **Attendance** **Visual / Building Matters**

Contact with the Education Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department

In subsequent meetings, attention was given to:

- matters that had arisen in light of the visits to the schools.
- appointing a provider to complete work to hear the voices of pupils.
- human resources matters.
- the collaborative relationship between the Education Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department.
- matters relating to assessing an individual's suitability to work with children.
- possible recommendations arising from the meetings of the investigation.

The need to ensure that the voice of pupils is given the attention it deserves as part of the investigation has been central to the work. It was stressed that due to the sensitivity of the situation, professional officers need to undertake this work as they have the necessary training and qualifications to deal with such a situation. A provider was appointed to carry out the work on behalf of the investigation in April 2026. Arrangements were put in place to complete the work during May 2026.

Next Steps....

- Receive a presentation on the work of hearing the voice of pupils.
- Consider the findings and recommendations of the pupils' voice work.
- Analyse the evidence gathered and conclude on the recommendations arising from the work of the investigation.
- Prepare a draft report.
- Meeting to share the final draft of the scrutiny investigation report with the relevant Cabinet Members and Heads of Department.
- Submit the draft report of the scrutiny investigation to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 14 July 2026.

We will report on the recommendations of the scrutiny investigation in the next annual report.

Task and Finish Groups

A Task and Finish Group examines a particular topic in a little more detail than is possible in a formal committee meeting. A maximum of 5 members can participate in a task and finish group.

During 2025-26, two Task and Finish Groups were held:

Education Language Policy

The Draft Education Language Policy was submitted to the meeting of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on [10 April 2025](#). During the discussion, possible amendments to the wording of the draft policy were suggested. As a result, it was decided to hold a Task and Finish Group to examine the wording of the Policy considering whether suggestions needed to be made to the Cabinet Member/Education Department, and report back to the committee.

A meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 2 June 2025. Councillors Rhys Tudur (Chair), Jina Gwyrfai, Richard Glyn Roberts and Huw Rowlands were members of the group.

The Draft Education Language Policy and suggestions from Councillors Rhys Tudur and Richard Glyn Roberts regarding the wording of the policy were shared with the agenda. The Chair of the task group guided the members and officers through the suggestions explaining the rationale behind the amendments. Members were given the opportunity to make observations and propose further amendments and officers were invited to offer comments.

The recommendations of the Task and Finish Group in relation to amendments to the wording of the draft policy and the Education Department's response to the recommendations were submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee meeting on [19 June 2025](#).

The Cabinet Member for Education was asked to consider the range of comments submitted by members at the meeting when formulating the final policy.

The Cabinet Member for Education submitted the draft policy to the Cabinet on [16 December 2025](#) to engage publicly on the policy. The Chair of the Committee was present at the meeting to elaborate on the discussion in the committee and the decision.

Here are some of the amendments to the draft Policy following the scrutiny:

- Highlight at the beginning of the document that Cyngor Gwynedd's strong recommendation would be that all schools in the county use the wording of Cyngor Gwynedd's Model Education Language Policy.
- References to the school language categories defined in the Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025.

- Pre-school Provision – To note that this formative period is essential to the introduction of the Welsh language through play and through natural experiences, creating a solid foundation for children to use and acquire the Language.
- Foundation Phase up to Year 2 – Note that Welsh will be the sole medium of education, assessment and extra-curricular activities for pupils.
- Years 3 to 6 and Secondary Schools – Note that English will be introduced as a subject, and as a medium for certain tasks in specific work units specified by the school, in accordance with the school's Delivery Plan.
- Identify the requirement in terms of provision for new speakers and refer them to the Immersion System.
- Identify the transitional schools and make it clear that the long-term aim is for all schools in Gwynedd with support from the Council to become a Primarily Welsh Language School, in accordance with the latest legislation.

The Cabinet will come to a decision on the Language Education Policy at its meeting on 9 June 2026.

Social Services Complaints

The Annual Report on Social Services' Complaints, Enquiries and Expressions of Gratitude 2024-25 (Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department) was scrutinised at the Care Scrutiny Committee meeting on [25 September 2025](#).

It was decided to establish a Task and Finish Group to discuss it further. A brief for the work was developed and adopted on [18 December 2025](#) by the Care Scrutiny Committee.

Five members were elected to be part of the task and finish group namely Councillors Menna Baines, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Angela Russell and Sian Williams.

The Task and Finish Group met on 27 February 2026 to:

- understand the arrangements to deal with complaints
- receive concise information about all complaints received during 2024-25
- have a better understanding of the reasons behind individuals' choice to complain in English and whether something could be done to encourage more to complain in Welsh
- ensure that there is adequate safeguarding support for staff dealing with persistent complainants.

There was an opportunity to receive an overview of the complaints procedure, further information on the complaints of the two departments involved, the complaint record sheet, and the persistent complainants policy. All members were also given the opportunity to ask questions to the officers.

The findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group will be considered by the Care Scrutiny Committee on 16 July 2026.

Performance Scrutiny

Since June 2025, the scrutiny committees consider performance reports twice a year. The differences in the former and new arrangements are highlighted here:

Former Arrangements	New Arrangements
Cabinet Member challenges the service (5 meetings)	Cabinet Member challenges the service (4 meetings)
2 scrutiny members attend the meetings (2 times a year)	Report to the 3 Scrutiny Committees (2 times per year)
Summary report to the Cabinet	Full report to the Scrutiny Committees
Cabinet Member and Head of Department accountable to their fellow Cabinet members	Cabinet Member and Head of Department accountable to scrutiny

The purpose of this change is:

- to be more transparent and an independent challenge to the performance.
- hold Cabinet Members to account in public.
- committee members all see the performance of departments consistently.
- identify matters for further scrutiny / in more detail.
- final step in terms of improvements to scrutiny arrangements following the Audit Wales report.

Scrutiny members were given a presentation on the new system and training in terms of what would be presented to committee meetings and the role of members in May 2025.

During the first year of implementing the arrangements, progress and next steps were scrutinised to realise priority projects in the Council's Plan 2023-28 and performance against the performance measures of Council departments. Challenges, matters to be considered to improve performance were highlighted and the cabinet members were publicly held to account.

Here are specific examples of matters that arose following performance scrutiny:

- Identified the need to scrutinise the benefit of the Growth Plan for Gwynedd (Scrutinised on 12 February 2026).
- Encouraged the Housing and Property Department to publicise specialist new housing developments for people with specific needs.
- Asked the Children and Supporting Families Department to develop a new performance measure to show that looked after children are regularly seen by Council staff.

Evaluation

This year, new arrangements were established for evaluating scrutiny at committee meetings.

A procedure has been developed whereby the members of the individual committees self-evaluate the scrutiny in meetings per item.

This is done in two stages:

- Chair, Vice-chair and scrutiny adviser evaluate the scrutiny
- Committee members have the opportunity to consider the evaluation and amend if necessary

In order to ensure that the methodology of the self-evaluation is consistent across the three scrutiny committees, an evaluation table is used:

Effective Scrutiny	• Structured scrutiny of the topic undertaken by one team through insightful questioning, no repetition and avoidance of local questions. • Formulated SMART recommendations (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) to the Cabinet Member, which should lead to improvements for the residents of Gwynedd.
Acceptable Scrutiny	• Scrutinised the topic in a fairly structured way with a combination of insightful questions, but some repetition and some local questions. • Provided feedback and comments to the Cabinet Member during the discussion.
Basic Scrutiny	• Asked questions about the topic and understood the field better. • Accepted the report and no specific recommendations.

It is noted per item if the scrutiny is considered to be effective scrutiny, acceptable scrutiny or basic scrutiny and the rationale for this.

It is important that members of the scrutiny committees reflect on the scrutiny and self-evaluate to learn as they are going forward and identify how the scrutiny can be improved so that scrutiny recommendations lead to driving improvement in services for the people of Gwynedd.

Tracking Arrangements

Scrutiny decisions and recommendations are tracked to ensure implementation and to track the impact of scrutiny over the short and long term.

Here are examples of scrutiny decisions/recommendations in 2024/25 and what has been done in response:

Education Transport

Request that the Cabinet Member for Education contacts the Welsh Government in the context of introducing a free travel pass for young people 16-21 years old to reduce the pressure on the Council to provide free transport, and to facilitate travel to work, to college or sixth form.



The Cabinet Member sent a letter to the Welsh Government in accordance with the request. A response was received acknowledging good practice by Cyngor Gwynedd in providing free transport for post-16 learners. While sympathetic to the request for Welsh Government funding, such a scheme would not be affordable in the current financial climate.

Planning and Welsh-speaking Communities

Request that the Housing Associations provide data to the Council to assess information about the Welsh language in planning.



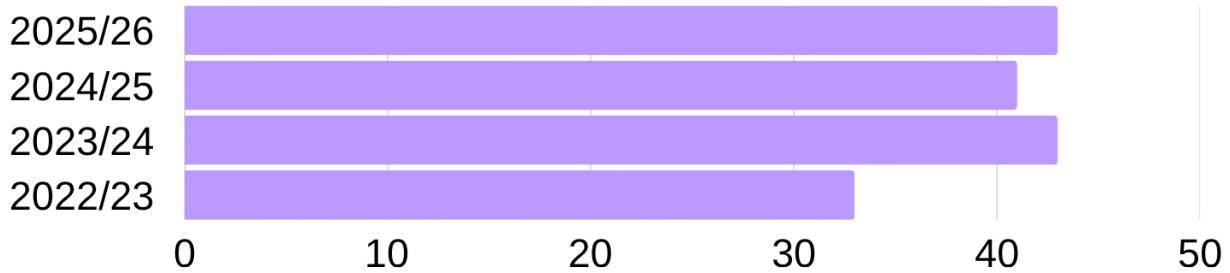
The Planning Policy Service contacted the housing associations. Confirmation was received from Adra that they are undertaking a survey of the language skills of households that have moved into recent housing developments. This practice was highlighted to Grŵp Cynefin and North Wales Housing and they were also encouraged to carry out such surveys.

Information was received on recent housing developments which included the percentage of Welsh as the preferred language of the principal tenants and any joint tenant along with the percentage of Welsh speakers (aged 20+) in the relevant ward.

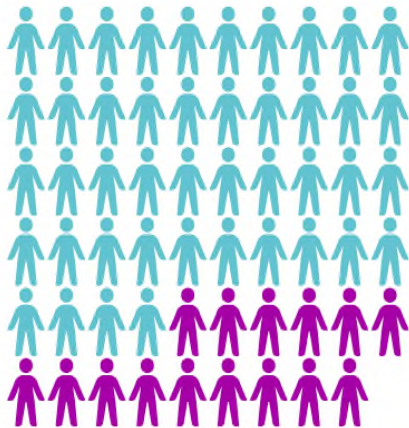
Tracking decisions/recommendations is a means to ensure they are addressed. While they do not always lead to significant change, they do contribute to driving improvement in services.

Facts about Scrutiny in Gwynedd in 2025/26

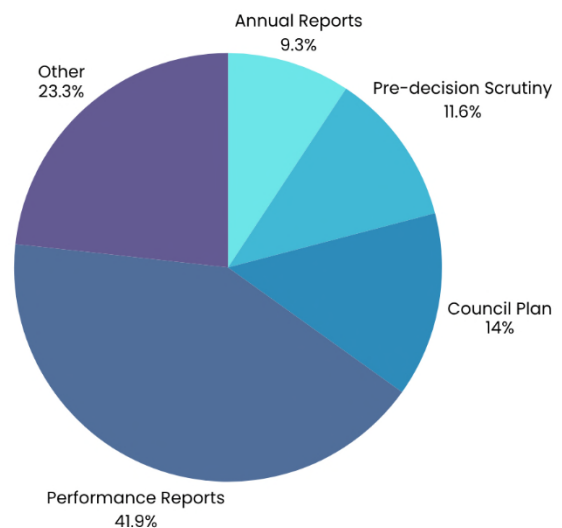
43 items scrutinised at formal meetings (24/25 = 41; 23/24 = 43, 22/23 = 33)



44 members (out of a possible 59) have been involved in carrying out the scrutiny



Percentages - Reason for Scrutiny



Number of times a Chair has reported to Cabinet following pre-decision scrutiny

4

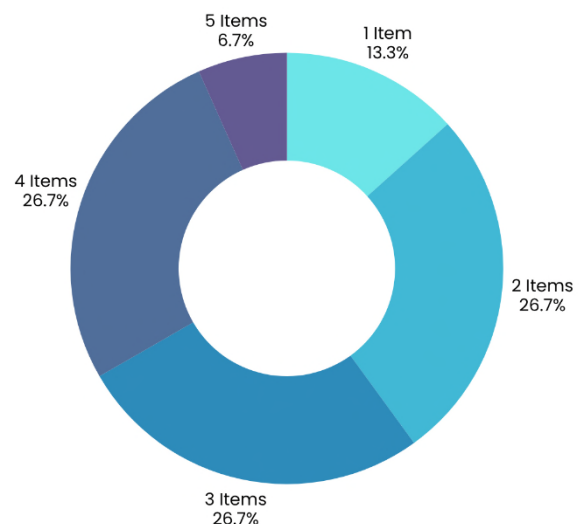
Education Language Policy

Schools Strategy

Response Plan

Economy Strategy

Number of items scrutinised at a meeting



Looking ahead to 2026/27

- 1** **Scrutiny Workshops – May 2026**
- 2** **Safeguarding Arrangements in Schools Scrutiny Investigation reports back to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee – 14 July 2026**
- 3** **Social Services Complaints Task and Finish Group report to be submitted to the Care Scrutiny Committee – 16 July 2026**
- 4** **Consider amendments to performance scrutiny arrangements**
- 5** **Housing Association Representatives attend the Care Scrutiny Committee to answer members' questions**
- 6** **Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Care Scrutiny Committee to receive a Response Plan update**

Scrutiny Work Programme 2025–26

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date	Items	Reason for Scrutiny
19/6/25	• Draft Education Language Policy Task and Finish Group Report	Task and Finish Group
	• Cabinet Member for Education - Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	• Cabinet Member for the Economy - Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	• Cabinet Member for Finance - Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	• Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language - Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
16/10/25	• Gwynedd Economy Strategy	Pre-decision scrutiny / Strategic Plan
	• Immersion Education System	Council Plan 2023-28 – Gwynedd Gymraeg (A Welsh Gwynedd)
	• Procurement Strategy	Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 – A Prosperous Gwynedd
	• Cabinet Member for Corporate and Legal Services and the Welsh Language - Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
11/12/25	• Schools Strategy	Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 – Tomorrow's Gwynedd
	• Cabinet Member for Education - Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	• Cabinet Member for the Economy - Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	• Cabinet Member for Finance - Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
19/1/26 (Extraordinary Meeting)	• Response Plan	Assurance in relation to implementation
12/2/26	• Benefit of the Growth Plan for Gwynedd	Matter arising from performance scrutiny
	• Visitor Levy	Impact on Gwynedd

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date	Items	Reason for Scrutiny
5/6/25	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for the Environment	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways, Engineering and Gwynedd Consultancy	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
18/9/25	Climate and Nature Emergency Plan: 2024/25 Annual Report	The Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd
	Salt Bins and Gritting Arrangements	Follow-up following scrutiny at the 28 September 2022 meeting
6/11/25	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways, Engineering and Gwynedd Consultancy	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Performance Report of the Cabinet Member for the Environment	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
22/1/26	Request for scrutiny from a member of the public – Climate and Nature Emergency Plan funding matters	Assurance in terms of funding arrangements
	Review of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan	Pre-decision scrutiny / The Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd
	Active Travel	The Council Plan 2023-28 – A Green Gwynedd
	Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Progress Report	The Committee's role to scrutinise the Public Services Board's work
19/3/26	Annual Update by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership	The Committee's role as a Crime and Disorder Committee
	Waste Collection and Recycling Services	The Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd
	Footpaths	Assurance in terms of implementation

CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date	Items	Reason for Scrutiny
12/6/25	Housing and Property Cabinet Member Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Adults Cabinet Member Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Children Cabinet Member Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
25/9/25	Annual Report 2024-25 - Complaints, Enquiries and Expressions of Gratitude Procedure – Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults Department	Assurance in terms of the arrangements to deal with complaints in care work
	Hospital Discharges	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd
	Working with the community	Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd
	Empty Houses	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Homely Gwynedd
18/12/25	Housing and Property Cabinet Member Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Adults Cabinet Member Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Children Cabinet Member Performance Report	Scrutiny of the performance of Council departments
	Task and Finish Group Draft Brief – Social Services Complaints	Task and Finish Group
13/1/26 (Extraordinary Meeting)	Response Plan	Assurance in relation to implementation
29/1/26	A Strategy for Keeping Families Together	The existing provision and the resources available to realise the strategy
	Youth Justice Service	Assurance that the service is efficient
	16+ Team	Assurance in terms of the provision for those aged 16+