THE CABINET, TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2026

Present-
Councillors: Nia Jeffreys, Menna Trenholme, R. Medwyn Hughes, Craig ab Iago, Huw Wyn Jones, June Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Llio Elenid Owen and Paul Rowlinson.

Also present-
Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Nia Grisdale (Legal Services Manager), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Head of Education), Miri Siôn (Chair of Arfon Schools Forum), Eleri Jones (Human Resources Advisory Service Manager), Catrin Love (Assistant Head of Corporate Services Department), Delyth Gadlys Williams (Equality Advisor), Gail Warrington (Health, Safety and Well-being Advisory Services Manager), Gareth Jones (Assistant Head of Environment Department), Rhodri Owen (Planning Policy Team Leader), Ffion Mai Jones (Senior Executive Manager), Ffion Madog Evans (Assistant Head of Finance – Accounting and Pensions).

1. APOLOGIES

Gratitude was expressed to the members and officers who had contributed to the preparation of the submitted reports.

No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Councillor Menna Trenholme declared an interest in relation to Item 11. The member did not consider it to be a prejudicial interest and did not withdraw from the meeting.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent matters.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

There were no matters arising from overview and scrutiny.

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2026 were accepted as a true record.

6. THE VOICE OF THE CHILD STRATEGY

The report was submitted by Cllr Nia Jeffreys.

DECISION

1. To approve Cyngor Gwynedd's Voice of the Child Strategy (Appendices 1 - 5)
2. To note that a corporate Action Plan will be developed and implemented to support the implementation of the Strategy across the Council's services.

DISCUSSION

The Strategy was presented and the Chair of the Arfon Schools Forum was welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that the presence of the Chair of the Forum reflected the fundamental principle of the Strategy itself, namely that children and young people were partners in the formulation of decisions that affected them. Gratitude was expressed to all the young people who had contributed to the development of this Strategy.

It was explained that this was a corporate Strategy, which highlighted the fact that listening to children and young people was a responsibility across all services. The input of children and young people into the development of the Strategy was detailed, noting that the document was based on seven core pledges, which reflected what mattered to these children and young people. It was stated that reporting on the outcome of children and young people's contributions, as well as ensuring that all children and young people had an equal opportunity to participate, were prominent themes. It was highlighted that the success of the Strategy would depend on the Council's ability to demonstrate how the voice of children and young people had influenced services, policies and decisions within the Council.

The process of formulating the Strategy and the important messages arising from the discussions were discussed. An example of a matter raised as part of the discussions with children and young people, and the way Council officers had addressed the matter, was provided. The similarities between the priorities identified at the Forums and those of the Council were also highlighted.
It was recognised that the inclusion of children's voices in decisions was more challenging in some services, but the importance of engaging with the youth forums to get their views when a decision potentially impacted children and young people was noted. It was explained that the Strategy crossed several fields, with particular reference to including the voice of the child across the Council's Children's Services. It was noted that there was wider representation within the children and young people's voice forums in Gwynedd, and that there was an attempt to reach further cohorts of children as well. It was stated that these children and young people also had a desire for a shadow Cabinet for the children and young people of Gwynedd.

Pride was expressed that children and young people now had the opportunity to be part of discussions and give their views. There was anticipation for further collaboration between the Forum and the Council.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- It was explained that there was a specific piece of work on how the document would look within the Council's documentation, and the importance of the Strategy going forward was noted. It was stated that foundations were in place, and that work needed to be done within the Council to establish the procedure for including engagement with the Forum in reports.
- In response to a question about ensuring that the seven pledges within the Strategy were implemented, the content of the pledges was detailed and it was explained how the structure of the Forums and the engagement methods would contribute to this. It was added that different forums were operational, which as a result, enabled a variety of people to contribute in a way that was comfortable for them.
- Reference was made to the previous lack of opportunities for young people to contribute to these discussions, and how key it was to ensure that there were opportunities for them to voice their views. Pride was expressed in the 'Journey of the Voice' element of the Strategy, reiterating the importance of reporting back on any action and changes arising from that.
- In relation to the attempt to retain young people in Gwynedd and attract them back to the County, reference was made to the importance of young people's contributions in shaping the County.
- Gratitude was expressed for the passionate presentation of the item, and it was assured that what emerged from the Strategy would permeate through the Council and its services.
- In response to a question about the next steps, it was reported that a baseline questionnaire on the voice of children and young people would soon be shared and it was therefore hoped that this would form the basis of the Action Plan. This was expanded upon by explaining the complexity of the Action Plan in terms of how the different aspects would feed into it, and how they would be implemented within the Council mechanism. It was proposed that it might be an idea to pilot the Scheme and discuss with Council departments to see how this could be fed into services.

7. ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26, STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-28

The report was submitted by Cllr Llio Elenid Owen.

DECISION

To note the content and approve the 2025-26 Annual Report, Equality Plan 2024-28.

DISCUSSION

Pride was expressed that most of the work earmarked for the year had been completed, and that any further work was being carried out during this year.

It was explained that five objectives had been identified within the Equality Plan, and the work that had been ongoing in relation to these objectives was reported.

In relation to Objective 1, the Staff Equality Forum was mentioned, which had been established to discuss and share views on relevant matters. It was added that a staff member had also set up an Ethnic Minority Employees' Forum. Reference was also made to the revised Whistle-blowing Policy that had been adopted, including Sexual Harassment as a reported basis. When mentioning Objective 2, it was stated that the data dashboard was almost ready to go live. In relation to Objective 3, it was reported that the percentage of individuals who had completed the Equality title since March 2025 had increased from 35.5% to 62.8%. It was added that equality officers had started visiting departmental management teams to present information. Objective 4 was discussed stating that equality officers worked with the Customer Care and Registration Service to ensure accessibility. In addition, details were provided of the work underway within the Museums service and the Housing and Property department. Objective 5 was then discussed, explaining that most of this work had been completed in the first year of the Plan.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Attention was drawn to the fact that the Council had signed an Age-friendly Pledge, and that collaboration was underway to develop in the field of employment for older people.
- The success of the Staff Equality Forum was reported, noting that there was an intention to promote it further. Reference was made to the Ethnic Minority Staff Network explaining that it had been set-up and run by staff. It was noted that the Network extended across Gwynedd, Conwy and Anglesey, and that members of the Network also reported back to the Forum. It was stated that Community Cohesion Officers worked across three counties and reported back on any messages that arose within communities. Reference was made to the Equality Impact Assessment, which was being completed in-house to correspond with strategies and policies as well.
- Pride was expressed in the success of the Women in Leadership Programme, noting that there had been an increase in the number of women in manager-level positions since establishing the Programme.
- It was noticed that no gender-based pay audit had been conducted during the 2025-26 period. In response, it was explained that the contact who usually carried out the audit had withdrawn due to lack of capacity. It was ensured that the service had contacted other councils to try to get a different contact to complete the work. It was intended to extend the audit to include disability and race following a change to the legislation.
- It was stated that work was underway in relation to the voice of the child and it was intended to increase the capacity of the service to assist with this.
- Reference was made to the importance of improving the ALN provision within the field of education, and it was reported that there was a specific objective in the Equality Plan regarding equality in the field of education. Reference was made to the ongoing engagement to obtain the views of

young people from various groups in relation to this objective, and the intention of making further use of the Schools Forums as well.

- It was questioned whether the Council was doing enough in terms of recruiting people with learning disabilities. Reference was made to a recent presentation at the Managers' Network, acknowledging that several departments had subsequently got in touch to try to encourage people with learning disabilities to work within their services. It was believed that more needed to be done, but that this was a step in the right direction.
- The Citizens Panel was mentioned and it was explained that it was a group of people who are committed to participate in engagement. It was elaborated by noting that there was an attempt to ensure that there was a variety of people on the Panel so that there was broad representation of society.

8. ANNUAL REPORT - WORKFORCE

The report was submitted by Cllr Llio Elenid Owen.

DECISION

To approve the annual report for 2025/26.

DISCUSSION

It was emphasised that the Council's workforce had continued to provide high-quality services to the residents of Gwynedd in a period of financial pressure, increasing demand for services and significant change in the labour market.

Although the size of the workforce had decreased over the period of the report, it was highlighted that staff turnover appeared to have stabilised. Attention was drawn to the age profile of the workforce, stating the importance of long-term planning for attracting, developing and retaining talent, and ensuring effective transfer of knowledge and skills. Reference was made to the success of the Council's apprenticeship and trainee schemes in strengthening the foundations of the future workforce, highlighting that there had been a 120% increase in the number of applications for these posts since the previous year.
It was stated that staff well-being and sickness management remained a corporate challenge.
It was mentioned that the Council had continued to show leadership in promoting the Welsh language in the workplace, developing social partnership, strengthening equality and inclusion, and implementing new policies and initiatives to support a positive work culture.

Looking ahead, several key priorities were identified:

- developing long-term workforce planning,
- supporting staff well-being,

- strengthening staff recruitment and retention,
- implementing new systems,
- ensuring that the Council had the right people, skills and culture to meet Gwynedd's future needs.

It was added that this was a high-level report before the Cabinet . It was assured that the trends and challenges set out in the report were not unique to Gwynedd, and that work was underway with partners to address this.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- There was concern that the Council's staff numbers were decreasing, and reference was made to staff turnover and it was enquired what this meant to the Council. In response, it was clarified that the staff turnover rate did not take into account the number of staff in a department, nor did it take into account how many staff were on short-term contracts. Details of the Economy Department's high turnover levels were provided, explaining that many of those jobs were dependent on grants and were therefore not permanent jobs. Attention was drawn to the impact of the Local Government funding approach on staff turnover due to the reliance on grants and the resulting uncertainty for staff, and a call was made for multi-year funding for Councils.
- There was concern about the increasingly high levels of illness and reference was made to the high level of stress-related absences. It was confirmed that illness levels were also increasing across other counties. It was explained that training for managers was essential in encouraging staff to return to work and managing cases effectively through collaboration with the Occupational Health and counselling services. It was stated that a comprehensive review of working conditions was being carried out to see what could be done to be more supportive and inclusive.
- It was asked whether enough was being done in terms of workforce planning and promotion of the apprenticeship and trainee roles. It was confirmed that considerable marketing and engagement work was ongoing. Reference was made to the In-house Careers Group which aimed to put a focus on attracting staff to work and develop a career within the Council.
- In discussing the problems that arose in different departments, it was explained that musculoskeletal problems were common in front-line services, but it varied across the Council. The costs associated with delivery in relation to front-line services were also mentioned. The seasonal patterns seen in the figures were also highlighted, for example that schools were closed in August so sickness absences were lower.
- Reference was made to the new Human Resources system that was being developed, hoping that there would be more data in moving forward as a result.
- It was explained that what was seen in Gwynedd was not unique compared to other councils. It was mentioned that managers received detailed reports on illness within their services, so that action was possible.

- In relation to sickness levels, there was concern about the increasing demand for services, but a reduction in the number of staff within the Council.
- It was noted that it was intended to prepare a Leadership Team paper regarding the matters raised during the discussion.

9. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING ANNUAL REPORT

The report was submitted by Cllr Llio Elenid Owen.

DECISION

This report is submitted to the Cabinet so that members have an essential overview of the main health and safety matters that arose during 2025/26.

DISCUSSION

It was highlighted that there had been significant advances in the way events were reported and managed, with the introduction of a new digital system.
Although there had been an increase in the number of reports submitted, reference was made to the fact that the number of serious incidents had decreased. It was proposed that this implied a stronger reporting culture and better management of risks across the organisation.
The new system was detailed, explaining that it provided better management information, live dashboards and better data to support decisions and help managers monitor health and safety performance. It was reported that there had been a visit by HSE during the year relating to the use of plant protection products, but no matters leading to formal enforcement action had been raised.
It was explained that a high percentage of managers had now completed IOSH Managing Safely training for managers, along with training on the new incident reporting system. It was highlighted that a high number of referrals to the Occupational Health Unit had been received, recognising that mental health and stress were prominent themes. In addition, attention was drawn to the further work underway across the Council to develop lone working and personal safety arrangements.

<u>Observations arising from the discussion:</u>

- The officers were thanked for their work, and for including the graphs within the report that made the information easier to follow.
- It was noted that the number of reports was high in the Education and Adults' departments, and it was asked whether there were any specific reasons for this. In response, it was confirmed that the increase in reporting showed an increasing willingness to report incidents and therefore suggested an improvement in culture. It was highlighted that the number of RIDDOR reports in those departments had decreased over the past year, and that staff in those departments were working on the front-line, therefore, more incidents in such fields were likely.

- Referring to the reduction in the number of RIDDOR incidents, it was stated that there had been investment in training for managers over the last decade so that better management measures were put in place to try and prevent serious incidents. There was anticipation to see the impact of the new reporting system, highlighting that the data and information on accidents was available live to managers through the system, so that it was possible to identify what further control measures were required.
- An enquiry was made about the main health and safety risks facing the Council's workforce and what was being done to monitor. It was noted that tendencies to trip, fall and slip, as well as musculoskeletal matters, were the most prominent fields within the Council and across the country. In terms of specific threats, it was noted that task groups had been set up to examine matters such as lone working, with an emphasis on ensuring risk assessments with strict control measures in place. Reference was made to the ongoing work in relation to lone working, referring to the agreement that was in place with another Council.
- It was emphasised that one of the Council's main responsibilities was to ensure the safety of staff in their work. Reference was made to the increase seen in violent incidents, whether physical or verbal, and the increase in the use of social media to share videos of staff at work. Details of the steps being taken to review lone working arrangements and arrangements in relation to social media related events were provided. It was added that there was also an attempt to drive the conversation around behaviour towards staff on a national level.

10. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2025-2026

The report was submitted by Cllr Craig ab Iago.

DECISION

That the Cabinet accepts the Annual Monitoring Report 8 (Appendix 1) and agrees for it to be submitted to the Government by the end of October 2026.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted stating that the Local Development Plan was required to be monitored annually, in accordance with the regulations, and to submit an Annual Monitoring Report to the Welsh Government.

It was explained that the report focused on the Gwynedd planning authority, and that this was the final report for the current Development Plan as its period was coming to an end. It was added that the current Joint Local Development Plan would not have statutory development plan status after the end of this year as a result of the Regulations. As a result, it was noted that Future Wales: The National Plan for Wales, would act as the statutory development plan for planning decisions. Although the Joint Local Development Plan would no longer have the status of a development plan, it was highlighted that its policies would remain

material planning considerations if they were in line with the aims and policies of Future Wales.

An overview of the main conclusions of the report was given, explaining that it reported on performance against a set of 70 indicators that had been specifically identified in the Joint Local Development Plan. The number of indicators that corresponded with the symbols used to monitor the effectiveness of policies and to provide an overview of performance was reported. The action noted against each indicator in the Annual Monitoring Report as part of the analysis was then reported. It was highlighted that 42 indicators suggested that LDP policies were being implemented effectively, 13 indicators suggested that the Policy was not as effective as expected, and 15 indicators where the target had been achieved.

The main conclusions of the Report were mentioned, highlighting the fact that permission had been granted for 215 new residential units during 2025/26, of which 67.4% were affordable housing. It was noted that three applications had been refused in part due to language matters, and eight applications had been granted permission with a planning condition for linguistic mitigation measures. It was stated that the Report had also been submitted to the Planning Policy Working Group.

It was then noted that 55.8% of all units completed since the adoption of the Plan were affordable housing. Members were reminded that the Plan was not for housing only, highlighting that it also facilitated economic and environmental development. It was added that the Plan had also been effective in safeguarding local community facilities.

Residents were called upon to participate in the development of the new Local Development Plan, in whatever way possible.

<u>Observations arising from the discussion:</u>

- Reference was made to the importance of the Plan and the fact that it was ambitious. It was noted that it touched on various aspects and highlighted that it was a vehicle for facilitating the Council's other strategic objectives. When referring to the need to estimate the level of population growth, it was highlighted that the Plan was based on the evidence available at the time including recognised models, evidence from the Welsh Government, and past housebuilding trends for example. It was acknowledged that situations could also change. Attention was drawn to a specific development that was not realised during the term of the Plan, noting that the flexibility of the Plan had enabled the Council to respond to that.
- A question was asked about the fact that the figure of houses completed in the Gwynedd Planning Authority area on sites earmarked for housing was low. In response, the windfall element that occurred was explained, especially considering that it was the last year of the Plan.
- It was highlighted that the correct steps and regulations must be followed in relation to this Plan. It was confirmed that there was evidence that any development was in line with the requirements of the Plan. It was noted that there must be an element of flexibility within the Plan, but that

something was needed to provide guidance to developers as to where they could develop. Frustration was shared about this challenging process, but it was stressed that the Plan was a crucial document.

- Reference was made to the comment regarding the windfall sites, ensuring that they were within the boundaries and therefore compatible with the Plan. It was agreed that the process of establishing local development plans was too long and costly, but it was also reminded that the process was lengthy due to the need to involve the public at all stages and therefore there were valid reasons for the timetable.

11. CAPITAL STRATEGY

The report was submitted by Cllr Huw Wyn Jones.

DECISION

To approve:
• funding of £1.49m for the funding gap of the North Promenade flood prevention project in Barmouth
• funding of £583k for the funding gap of the Ysgol Bontnewydd project
• the provision of £6.86m for the next phase of the rolling Sustainable Schools programme
• the provision of £4.11m for the next phase of the rolling Sustainable Schools programme and respond to traffic risks on Secondary School sites
• the delegation of the right to agree on the exact division of the £4.11m between secondary schools improvement and traffic risk response, to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, the Head of Education and the Head of Finance after the completion of further work.
• the de-committing of £3.5m from the Council's existing asset plan to be released to contribute to the resources available to fund the above.

The Cabinet is requested to confirm commitments already approved for the cost increases of Ysgol Tryfan (16 December 2025 Cabinet) and the Trawsfynydd innovation centre (10 February 2026).

DISCUSSION

It was explained that the Council had adopted a 10-year Asset Plan, the purpose of which was to commit the Council's core capital to projects that took time to plan and realise, so that forward planning could be done.

It was confirmed that it was a live plan and that the report in question recommended how to allocate the additional capital funding available. It was believed that this would provide assurance to continue with a few schemes prior to a comprehensive review of the Asset Plan, which would extend the scheme for a further ten years for the purpose of forward planning. Attention was drawn to

the fact that an annual amount had been set aside within the Asset Plan for smaller capital projects that arose, and they were handled through the bidding system.

It was highlighted that a sum of £16 million was available through various grants and capital receipts to meet the capital spending needs.
Reference was made to a number of new requirements that had arisen, with plans having developed since the implementation of the current Asset Plan along with an increase in costs.

Details were shared on what had not been possible to meet two years ago when the Council had adopted the 10-year Asset Plan. It was confirmed that maintenance requirements had now been met beyond this system. It was then noted that an amount had been earmarked as part of the application in question to enable the development and application for grants for the next phase of the Sustainable Schools rolling programme.

Attention was drawn to the other matters and strategic challenges within the Education department that needed to be addressed, but funding was insufficient to meet their high-level objective. As further work needed to be undertaken to understand the exact challenges and solutions, it was suggested that an amount should be earmarked for these matters, with the right to agree on the exact allocation of this money to be delegated in line with what was set out in the report.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Reference was made to the recent visit of some Cabinet Members to the new Our Lady's School building in Bangor. The quality of the building was highlighted and that this was needed for all the county's children. The importance of investing in the County's children and young people was emphasised, including making improvements to school sites and estates.
- It was mentioned that the Council was no longer a partner in the development of the Health and Care Hub – Canolfan Lleu, as the scheme now continued on a much smaller scale. It was hoped that it would be possible to be involved in any future projects.

12. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27 – END OF AUGUST REVIEW (31 AUGUST 2026 POSITION)

The report was submitted by Cllr Huw Wyn Jones.

DECISION

- To accept the report on the end of August review (31 August 2026 position) of the capital programme.
- To approve the following revisions to the Capital Budget that was approved on 5 March 2026 from the programme's financing perspective (as shown in part 3.2.3 of the report), namely:
  - an increase of £846,000 in the use of borrowing
  - an increase of £64,980,000 in the use of grants and contributions

- an increase of £5,000 in the use of capital receipts
- an increase of £673,000 in the use of revenue contributions
- a decrease of £350,000 in the use of the capital reserve
- an increase of £13,329,000 in the use of renewal funds and other reserves.

DISCUSSION

It was explained that the Departmental breakdown of the £176 million capital programme for the 3 years 2026/27 - 2028/29 was included in the report. Attention was then drawn to the sources to fund the net increase of £101.5 million since the original budget, of which £22 million had come from re-profiling at the end of the previous year.

The main conclusions were detailed that there were definite plans in place to invest £123.5 million in 2026/27 on capital schemes, of which £72 million (58%) was funded through specific grants.

It was noted that an additional £12 million of proposed expenditure had been re-profiled from 2026/27 to 2027/28 and 2028/29, and reference was made to the main schemes that had slipped since the original budget.

Attention was drawn to the list of additional grants worth £66 million, that the Council had been able to attract since the original budget, which had been included in the report.

<u>Observations arising from the discussion:</u>

- The staff were thanked for the work to bring these grants to life.

The meeting commenced at 1:00pm and concluded at 3:35pm.