Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
Cyngor Gwynedd Self-Assessment 2025/26

Background and Introduction

This is the fifth self-assessment conducted by Cyngor Gwynedd under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Act requires all Councils in Wales to continually review the extent to which it meets the 'performance requirements', i.e. the extent to which:-

i. it is exercising its functions effectively;
ii. it is using its resources prudently, efficiently and effectively;
iii. the Council has robust governance arrangements in place to ensure performance requirements i. and ii.

This year, like the last, we are considering these three questions in the context of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the priorities in the Council's Plan. The purpose of this 5-year Plan is to set out the Council's vision and priorities for the period from April 2023 to the end of March 2028, so considering the above three questions when detailing our main strengths and weaknesses is a suitable and effective approach to shining a light on the Council's performance.

Since adopting the 5-year Plan, annual reviews have been held in order to ensure that the Plan continues to be relevant and that it responds to the Council's current needs and priorities.

As part of the development of the Plan, we considered a wide range of issues to be prioritised and engaged and consulted with local people, elected members, Town and Community Councils and partners. One part of the work that was key in the Council Plan development was the ‘Ardal Ni work, which outlines what is good about the area, what is not as good, and what needs to be done to create a better area by 2035.

The self-assessment process is intended to encourage honesty, objectivity and transparency about the Council's performance and governance. Although this duty is quite new, the Council is already preparing a number of documents containing the type of information that we are expected to include within the self-assessment. This includes documents such as Performance, Equality, Director of Social Services' annual reports, Annual Statement of Accounts and the Governance Statement.

The Governance Arrangement Assessment Group, which comprises officers such as the Chief Executive, Head of Finance, Head of Corporate Services and the Head of Legal Services, amongst others, has led /taken an overview of this work within the Council. In doing so, the intention is for the work to be owned and led on a strategic level.

During the year, an independent Panel Performance Assessment was conducted on the Council's work. A Panel Assessment needs to be carried out at least once within an electoral

cycle and linked to the duty to carrying out annual self-assessments on performance with these documents forming part of the evidence base.

Our arrangements for challenging and supporting performance have been in place for several years now. Meetings are held at Departmental level every other month, and focus on the progress of Council Plan projects, service performance (namely the 'day-to-day' work), and the response to key risks within the Corporate Risk Register. The information then feeds into regular performance reports submitted by each Cabinet Member during the year together with the Annual Performance Report at the end of the financial year. A copy of the Council's Annual Performance Report is available on the Council's website. Adaptations were made to the arrangements for challenging and supporting performance from April 2025 onwards, when a procedure was introduced to report directly to the Scrutiny Committees. This has led to providing more input to the process of challenging and supporting performance for members.

The document includes an assessment of our governance arrangements responding to the 3 performance requirements that Councils are expected to respond to as part of the self-assessment. We have also considered the draft methodology published by the Welsh Local Government Association for Panel Assessments in preparing the self-assessment for 2024/25 and have responded to the following questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know that?
- What can we do to improve, and how?

The self-assessment for 2021-22 was our first assessment and steps have been put in place to act on the improvements that had been identified. It was seen that some of these improvements continue in subsequent years as they are long-term issues, but several additional points were also reiterated. This year, we see the pattern continuing, with the long-term matters re-appearing but with new considerations also being added.

This document is therefore a high-level summary of the Council's performance during 2025/26, categorised as a series of Strengths and Risks/Challenges under each priority area that align with the priorities set out in the Annual Report and the Council's Plan.

The Strengths are based on:

- highlights of the annual performance report
- feedback received from external audit bodies (e.g. Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales, Estyn, etc.)
- Issues arising from the internal performance challenge and support process
- Independent Panel Performance Assessment

DRAFT

The Risks/Challenges are based on:

- our main risks as noted in the corporate risk register
- issues identified by external audit bodies
- other matters we have identified and included in the Council Plan
- issues arising from the internal performance challenge and support process
- Independent Panel Performance Assessment

It is important to note that many our strengths are included in other parts of the annual report, particularly where they relate to the Council's Plan projects and our day-to-day work. To avoid repetition, we (mostly) do not list them in the Self-assessment as well. For the reader, considering the two documents (the Annual Report and the Self-Assessment) together will give a fuller picture of the Council's performance over the period in question.

While many of the priorities involve cross-departmental responsibilities, it should be noted that 'Efficient Gwynedd' is much more corporate in nature as many of the strengths and weaknesses found here are institutional. This priority is therefore a little different from the rest, which is more inclined to reflect departmental strengths and weaknesses.

In accordance with sections 90 and 91 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Council has considered the views of local people, people who use the Council's services, recognised trade unions, businesses, partners and other stakeholders in reaching its conclusions on its performance during 2025/26.

These views were gathered through a range of activities, including the National Residents' Survey, local surveys and consultations, the Staff Voice Survey, discussions with trade unions, service user feedback and complaints, and engagement undertaken when developing and reviewing the Council's plans.

This evidence has been considered alongside information on service performance, the Council's financial position, corporate risks, feedback from audit and inspection bodies, and the Panel Performance Assessment. It has informed the strengths, risks and improvements identified in this self-assessment. In particular, residents' views have contributed to the conclusion that more needs to be done to strengthen trust and satisfaction, demonstrate value for money, ensure that residents' views influence decisions, and improve the use of engagement findings to inform services.

DRAFT

An Efficient Gwynedd

Strengths

- The Council has been able to effectively cope with periods of austerity/lack of funding, but the situation is becoming increasingly difficult as the funding provided by the Government has dwindled. The Council is very concerned about the pressure this is putting on the county's residents to meet the increase in Council Tax (6th highest in Wales, when the income level of the County's residents is relatively low), as well as the Council's ability to provide adequate services to the population of Gwynedd within our budget.
- The Governance Arrangements Assessment Group keeps a continuous, disciplined view of governance matters, raises broader awareness of them, and promotes broader ownership of the Annual Governance Statement. The Group comprises the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Head of Corporate Support, Assistant Head of Corporate Support, the Assistant Head of Finance, the Risk and Insurance Manager and the Council's Business Support Service Manager.
- We have good corporate Governance arrangements on the whole. To ensure that we deliver our functions effectively, we put performance measures in place to challenge performance across all services. We review these measures from time to time to ensure that they continue to be relevant, and we are aware of the need to continuously challenge ourselves and set meaningful measures to allow us to improve consistently. We recognise that there is room for improvement in terms of detailed workflow forward planning over the period of the Council's Plan 2023-28, and as a result we have introduced a series of annual milestones for each of the projects to allow us to measure progress as well as plan work for the future. The work to improve this further continues, particularly to ensure that the arrangements in place are followed consistently.
- The Council has adopted codes of conduct for its members and officers, based on national regulations (codes such as the Member/Officer Relationship Code; Members' Code of Conduct; Officers' Code of Conduct; Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Policy and the Whistleblowing Code of Practice) and these together set the foundation to ensure integrity and ethics. There is clear evidence that the Council considers the Ombudsman's reports as part of the work of the Standards Committee, which works effectively.
- The Council publishes an annual Governance Statement outlining our governance arrangements and their effectiveness following the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.
- An annual workshop on assurance and risks is held with external auditors (Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn) to share our strengths/successes and risks/challenges.
- When recommendations are issued by external audit bodies, an institutional response will be prepared on behalf of the Council, and the Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for reviewing and assessing the response along with progress against the

DRAFT

recommendations. In 2025, a new arrangement was introduced where departments have a maximum of 12 months to act on the recommendations of external auditors. This will ensure that the Council responds to and acts promptly following the auditors' recommendations.

- The 2021-2026 Council Information Plan (updated in 2024) includes several plans to address the information management risks and use of data. The cross-departmental Information Group takes a corporate overview of this field.
- The Health and Safety Policy adopted by the Council is reviewed annually. There are appropriate arrangements to respond to any reports from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
- Note that principal governance risks are scored corporately and on a Departmental level, since the risk level varies. The in-house Governance Arrangements Assessment Group has an overview and responsibility for quality assurance within Cyngor Gwynedd.
- In terms of significant governance matters, the Council's self-assessment of its governance arrangements (in accordance with the CIPFA Framework/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government and the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021) identifies the following improvements that will be implemented in 2026-27:
  - In response to the recommendations of a study by Audit Wales, we will be looking to improve our service commissioning arrangements.
  - Improve training on risk identification and management.
  - Act on the relevant recommendations in the Assessment Panel's report.
  - Act on the relevant recommendations in the Local Partnerships report.
  - Act on the findings of the Staff Voice Survey, including appreciation and well-being.
- The new Asset Management Plan for the 10-year period between 2024-2034 was adopted by the Council on 11 July 2024.
- During 2025-2026, *Local Partnerships* were commissioned to carry out a review of our governance arrangements, giving the Council an independent and objective challenge as well as proposing improvement recommendations. The following were addressed specifically:
  i. Undertake a rigorous review of our existing arrangements including our governance and financial arrangements.
  ii. Review our governance arrangements in the context of the current Constitution to assess whether it is fit for purpose.
  iii. Assess whether the Annual Governance Statement fulfils its purpose.
  iv. Identify how we meet the full range of statutory requirements in decision-making, e.g. Equality, the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the Welsh language.
  v. Evaluate how we identify and assess risks and review and monitor them.
  vi. Evaluate how we monitor and deliver recommendations for improvement from external and internal regulators and learn lessons across the organisation.

DRAFT

vii. Identify what we can do to strengthen our governance arrangements in the future.

- The Governance Group has a work programme in place to respond to the recommendations deriving from the work of *Local Partnerships*.
- The Council has a process to manage risks by having a Corporate Risk Register in place.
- In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, an independent Panel Assessment was carried out on Cyngor Gwynedd's governance arrangements in March 2026. The Panel acknowledged that further work was to be done to reconcile the risk management arrangements, and this included continuing to review the procedure to ensure consistency across the organisation. We will implement a response plan to the Panel's recommendations, which will be tied in with the response to the recommendations of our insurers. These actions will place the Council in a stronger position in terms of reconciling the process of identifying, assessing, scoring and mitigating risks.
- Although the future risk management procedure and strategies are improving and strengthening on the whole, new arrangements have been put in place in an attempt to standardise and seek to reconcile the scores for very high risks. During 2025/26, our insurers were commissioned to review our risk management arrangements, and their recommendations will be implemented in 2026/27.
- Audit Wales's work to undertake a Review of the Council's Risk Management Arrangements during 2026/27 (slipped from 2025/26) will feed into this work, along with recommendations from the *Local Partnerships* review.
- The risk management strategy is owned at a corporate level through the Governance Group referred to above and the Governance and Audit Committee which is responsible for challenging the governance risk scores.
- The Panel Assessment suggested that the Council needs to develop and agree on a corporate risk strategy which expresses the Council's risk appetite, and:
    i. Ensures an up-to-date corporate risk register and strategy.
    ii. Defines the role of the leadership team, the governance and audit committee, the cabinet, and the full council in supervising and monitoring the strategy and the register regularly.
    iii. Consider the training and development needs of members on supervising the council's risk.

  As a result, we will:
    i. Complete and present the Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy (including a risk appetite statement) to be approved by the Cabinet/Full Council, and an annual review from the Governance and Audit Committee.
    ii. Ensure that the Corporate Risk Register is up to date: standardise the risk register template, define the risk owners, and confirm that every risk includes Residual and Target scores, using the Council's 5x5 matrix.
    iii. Impose governance, reporting and reviewing arrangements:
        a. Corporate Management Team to review the Corporate Risk Register every quarter and agree on escalating/degrading risks;

DRAFT

b. To report every quarter to the Governance and Audit Committee;
c. Cabinet to set the Council's risk appetite, ensuring that decisions consider risks and stay within the limitations, whilst reviewing and improving the risk management arrangements regularly.

iv. Develop and provide a training and development programme on risk management for Members (including a supervisory role, risk appetite, reading the risk register and challenge controls), and for managers as "risk owners"; record attendance and conduct annual refresher sessions.

- Reinforce the process and the culture; establish a service risk register timetable (at least quarterly), use a "SMART" method of tracking mitigation steps, and record "lessons learnt" from incidents/audits to guide continuous improvement.
- Based on the work of Internal Audit completed during 2025/26, it was considered that Cyngor Gwynedd's internal control framework during that financial year was operating at a level of reasonable assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's governance, risk management and internal control framework.
- Gwynedd is a host authority for several different partnerships and provides effective support to them.
- There are robust arrangements in place for supporting Elected Members in Gwynedd, with 97% of Gwynedd Councillors reporting that the service provided by the Democracy Team is good/ very good. We will continue to build on these solid foundations in the year ahead.
- The Head of Finance has undertaken a self-assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code and updates it at least once a year and the current assessment shows high compliance across all standards. Since 2025, we have commissioned CIPFA to undertake an independent verification of the self-assessment, and the outcome of that work is being considered when designing a financial support service for the future.
- Since 2019, the Apprenticeship Scheme has given **103** individuals an opportunity on an apprenticeship agreement, which is one of the highest numbers in Wales when comparing with the population and size of other Councils. Similarly, since 2017, the Graduates Scheme, Cynllun Yfory, has provided an opportunity for **47** professional trainees. There are several examples of success, with various individuals who have commenced the scheme accepting promotions and permanent jobs within the Council. For 2026, a total of **30** new jobs are available, namely 22 apprenticeship posts and 8 posts for graduates with most already filled. The work areas vary - from new areas, such as grounds maintenance, forestry and digital marketing, to established areas such as Civil Engineering, Finance and Business to name but a few. The schemes were praised by Audit Wales in a recent report in 2026.
- A Staff Voice Survey was conducted in 2026. This followed a challenging period which included financial uncertainty, political changes in the Council, and a period of introducing further changes to our 'future working' working arrangements. A small increase was seen in the staff satisfaction levels in response to most of the questions, and the satisfaction level remains high for some of the main indicators, e.g. the score for

DRAFT

the statement 'the Council is a good place to work' at 80%, and 88% for "My service makes a difference to the lives of the people of Gwynedd." Like last year's survey, there were 4 parts to this year's review - Me and my well-being, Me and my job, Me and my service, and Me and my employer.

It was seen that some emerging themes last year and the previous year were repeated, particularly relating to receiving appreciation and acknowledgement, and although an improvement has been seen, these continue to be points for improvement. Work pressures, which may possibly be because of the financial squeeze facing the Council over recent years, has improved slightly but it remains a concern and this will also receive further attention.

1,279 staff members completed the Voice of Staff questionnaire, which is around 21% of the staff that had the opportunity to respond to the survey. Including Council staff and the county's school staff, 69.6% noted that they agreed or strongly agreed that the Council was achieving its duties effectively.

65.8% agreed or strongly agreed that the Council was making the best use of its resources, and 69.2% agreed or strongly agreed that the Council has arrangements in place to ensure that they perform effectively.

The results of the above are very similar to what was reported last year.

- Cyngor Gwynedd has established a Liaison Group between the Council and the trade unions for many years, and the group meets monthly. The social partnership arrangements were strengthened during the year by holding meetings between the Council's Chief Officers, including the Chief Executive and Directors, and the trade unions. These meetings were used to discuss strategic matters that are affecting the organisation and the workforce, including the Council Plan and budget.
- As part of the process of producing the Council's Self-Assessment for 2025/26, the recognised trade unions were asked for their feedback and comments on the authority's performance and potential areas for improvement. No formal response was received to this request, but we will continue with the discussion at the Liaison Group's meetings and our meeting with the Chief Officers.
- The Council gathers the views of the people of the county in many different ways to improve services and also to meet the legal requirement for councils to engage with residents under various acts such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- In 2025, Gwynedd was a part of the National Resident Survey, the first of its kind to be conducted in Wales. While we are aware of the limitations of such a survey, it is an additional means of gathering opinions and we will triangulate the findings with other data and information we collect to ensure that we respond appropriately. One particular advantage with this survey is that it allows us to compare our results with other councils, something that has not been possible with internal surveys alone. There were 3,094 responses to the survey and the results include:
    i. Percentage of respondents who are fairly or very satisfied with how the Council is running things:

Gwynedd: 31% (3rd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)

ii. Percentage of respondents who generally believe that the council provides high-quality services (to some extent or to a large extent):

Gwynedd: 55% (3rd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)

iii. Percentage of respondents who generally believe that the council provides services that represent good value for money (to some extent or to a large extent):

Gwynedd: 43% (3rd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)

Other results seen in the survey include:

iv. Percentage of respondents who generally believe that the council takes residents' views into account when decision-making (to some extent or to a large extent):

Gwynedd: 27% (2nd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)

v. Percentage of respondents who generally believe that the council is acting on the concerns of local residents (to some extent or to a large extent):

Gwynedd: 30% (2nd out of 9 councils that took part in the survey)

vi. The percentage of respondents who agree somewhat or strongly that contacting the council is simple:

Gwynedd: 50% (1st in Wales of the 9 councils that took part in the survey)

vii. Percentage of respondents who agree little or strongly that up-to-date information about council services is easy

Gwynedd: 45% (1st in Wales of the 9 councils that took part in the survey)

viii. Percentage of respondents who trust the council to a large or very large extent

Gwynedd: 37% (joint 3rd of the 9 councils that took part in the survey)

- It is intended to hold a residents' survey again in the Autumn 2027.
- Several local surveys were carried out in Gwynedd with residents throughout the year. This was a way for the Council to make decisions about service development and how to prioritise spending in the future, making sure we make the best use of available resources, among other factors. The main ones included consultations on:
  - i. Climate and Nature Emergency Plan
  - ii. Bangor Public Spaces Protection Order
  - iii. Gwynedd Council and the Third Sector 'Compact' (Partnership Agreement)
  - iv. Waste and Recycling Strategy Survey
  - v. Tourism Survey - Gwynedd Residents 2025
  - vi. Ageing Well in Gwynedd
  - vii. Gwynedd Model Education Language Policy
  - viii. Draft Education Transport Policy
  - ix. Gwynedd Local Development Plan Survey

DRAFT

- The engagement findings have reinforced the need to strengthen trust and satisfaction, demonstrate value for money, increase the influence of residents' views on decision-making, and make more consistent use of engagement intelligence to inform service delivery.
- Surveys were also carried out with businesses in the county, including the annual Business Survey, and specific parts of other consultations were aimed at businesses as well, e.g., the Waste and Recycling Strategy Survey, since business needs are very different from the general public. In the Business Survey, 20% of responses reported that they had received support from the Gwynedd Council Business Support Team in the past 12 months, and all businesses were given the chance to indicate what type of support would be helpful to them in the future. It was noted that local businesses continue to face significant economic pressures, with rising energy prices, operating costs and economic uncertainty among the main challenges. A quarter of businesses had experienced recruitment difficulties, primarily due to a lack of local expertise, while financial and regulatory barriers were limiting the ability of many businesses to invest. Despite this, there was an ambition to develop, with 41% planning to grow over the next 12 months. The survey also highlighted demand for practical and financial support, including grants, assistance to improve business sustainability and one-to-one support.
- While the Council engages with residents on a range of financial and operational matters, there is an opportunity to further develop the ways in which the public are involved in discussions about spending priorities, taxation decisions and budget-setting. There is also a challenge in ensuring that meaningful opportunities are available for residents to contribute to these discussions within the tight timescales imposed by the Welsh Government financial settlement process.
- These results were considered alongside other performance evidence in reaching the self-assessment conclusions. This led to the recognition of strengths in the accessibility of information and the ease of contacting the Council, but also to the identification of areas for improvement in trust, satisfaction, value for money and the extent to which residents feel that their views influence decisions. These findings are reflected in the conclusions section of the self-assessment.
- We also prepare an annual report on complaints and are continuously adjusting our services when observations or complaints point to improvements.
  It can be seen that the number of Valid Formal Complaints has increased, and those submitted to the Ombudsman have increased again this year, compared to the same period in 2024/2025. The pattern/trend over a longer period shows that the number of Formal Complaints has reduced gradually from 2018/2019 to 2021/2022, when a substantial increase was seen, but things seem to be relatively stable. A change in culture was seen, with most Services receiving complaints in a more positive and constructive way in order to learn from them, with the response time gradually reducing. We are still working on reducing the time taken to respond to complaints by implementing the Customer Care Plan.
- The Procurement Team provides advice and support to services and ensures that the organisation adheres to regulations and best practice in the procurement field. The

DRAFT

team's aim is to enable the Council to achieve value for money, strengthen and develop procurement expertise, adopt best practice in the field and support the local market.

- The Council has already adopted the Sustainable Procurement Policy which complies with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By adopting the Policy, the intention is to consider the possible social, economic and environmental impact that our procurement decisions can have and what steps can be taken to make the best possible use of the Council's expenditure, for the county's benefit.
- Ongoing work is underway to support businesses to respond to requirements in tenders as a result of any developments in the field, such as gaining accreditations or responding to the requirements of the new Legislation. We continue to work with the supply chain to assess the environmental impact and seek to reduce the carbon footprint, helping businesses with the new procurement arrangements will continue to be a priority.
- Ffordd Gwynedd continues to be one of the Council's key strengths, and the Panel Performance Assessment acknowledges this as an important organisational strength which has made a positive contribution to the Council's culture and performance. However, it was also noted that there is a need to re-emphasise its purpose and role as a common framework for the organisation to ensure that it remains relevant, understandable and influential across every service.
- From the point of view of the Council's internal activities, we have good engagement and communication arrangements in place with important messages centrally shared with staff in a variety of ways including a weekly staff bulletin, a staff Facebook group, the intranet, staff self-service, the 'Gair o Gyngor' magazine, front-line staff visits and Q&A sessions with the Chief Executive. In addition to this, departmental and managerial communication activities take place on a regular basis. However, we acknowledge that we need to ensure a stronger voice for the workforce when developing our strategic and transformation plans in the future, bringing different practice areas that already exist in the Council together, to ensure a whole Council method of inclusion and internal engagement.
- A broad training programme was provided for Elected Members in 2025/26, which included core training in eight specific areas:
    i. Safe Leadership and Personal Safety
    ii. Code of Conduct
    iii. The Well-being of Future Generations Act
    iv. Safeguarding Children and Adults
    v. Your Responsibility for Equality
    vi. Your Responsibility as a Corporate Parent
    vii. Information about People: Your Responsibility
    viii. Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- In addition to this, training was offered in several other areas as well as the opportunity for each Councillor to receive a personal development interview in order to identify specific areas of development. There is an offer for councillors to have specific sessions before they take up roles on different committees e.g. Cabinet Members, and several

DRAFT

other committees such as Planning, Licensing and Audit and Governance. Furthermore, briefings will also be held for members, which are an opportunity to present an update on important issues e.g. when there are changes in legislation, etc.

- We as a Council take advantage of opportunities to innovate and embed digital technology to improve the lives of our residents, to work better with partners, and to strengthen and improve the responsiveness of our services to the needs and expectations of our customers. To assist us with this, in 2023 Cyngor Gwynedd's new Digital Plan for the five years from 2023-28 was approved. The period of this Plan coincides with the period of the Council Plan (in the same way as the period of the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan). Funding has been secured to complete the work programme of the two first years of the Digital Plan, and several of the priorities are already operational. During 2025/26, the responsibility for its implementation was transferred to the Corporate Services Department, and the Plan will be reviewed to ensure that it continues to reflect the Council's priorities.
- Over the last two years, changes were seen in the Council's political leadership with the appointment of many new Cabinet Members, as well as new appointments amongst the Council's senior officers. We know that changes like this can cause challenges in terms of consistent leadership and causing a delay when making strategic decisions, but we have been aware of this possibility and have addressed the issue. The Panel Performance Assessment referred to a healthy and appropriate working relationship between members and officers, and this confirms that the Council has dealt with the changes effectively.

Risks

- Although strong defences are in place to withstand a Cyber-attack, including firewalls, anti-virus software, protocols and access policies and maintenance procedures, the risk of a cyber-attack remained high, and attacks were seen on several other public organisations during the year.
- Setting a balanced budget for 2027/28 is a challenge, particularly given the need to ensure that departmental budgets are adequate to provide the necessary level of services for the people of Gwynedd, and to avoid overspending as seen in 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- In 2025/26, a 3.8% increase was seen in the Cyngor Gwynedd grant from Welsh Government, which equates to an increase worth £9.1m in external funding. However, it was anticipated that the Council's spending would need to be increased by £25.8m to "stand still", due to the demand for services as well as the continuing high inflation pressures. Therefore, savings and cuts had to be introduced as well as raising the Council Tax levels to set a balanced budget.
- Pressures were seen on the Council's services in 2025/26, with an overspend of £6.6m at the end of the year, mainly in the field of adult and children care and the waste field. A grant receipt and an underspend on corporate budgets assisted to alleviate the financial position somewhat, but £3.2m had to be transferred from the Financial Strategy Fund to balance the position of departmental financial deficit. The financial

DRAFT

out-turn position 2025/26 was reported to the Cabinet at its meeting on 19 May 2026. The Cabinet members approved the services' net overspend of £160k for the year.

- We have held an internal review and provided additional support to improve our Council Tax collection arrangements, and actions have been introduced in order to increase the collection rates. Nevertheless, the matter continues to be a challenge, and as a result, it will continue to receive attention and added support for the year to come. We are also eager to ensure that such matters receive attention earlier in the future, and we will review our arrangements to ensure that this happens. Audit Wales will carry out further work to look at our Council Tax collection arrangements during 2026-27.
- There are recruitment difficulties in key areas, such as social care and education, which can endanger service continuity. This concern led to the establishment of a specific project in the Council Plan, namely 'Workforce Planning', to address the challenge and develop a range of answers. Following a recommendation from the Governance and Audit Committee, the matter was considered by the Panel Performance Assessment at the start of 2026, and the Panel noted the importance of workforce planning to ensure the continuity of Council services. The Panel approved 'Cynllun Yfory', namely the Council's scheme to recruit graduates and apprentices, and the Council itself has acknowledged the value and importance of this scheme for many years.
- We are eager to refine our performance management arrangements, and to do so, we will review and map existing performance management arrangements across the Council in order to merge processes, reduce duplication and create a more coordinated corporate framework. This will include:
    - Developing a clear set of performance measures and indicators, which show the contribution of services and departments towards prioritising the Corporate Plan.
    - Integrating performance reports and the corporate risk register and departmental risk registers to strengthen the connection between progress, risks and mitigation steps.
    - Strengthening the scrutiny and challenge arrangements by establishing regular opportunities for peers within and beyond the Council to review performance, share good practice and offer a constructive challenge.
    - Strengthening arrangements for regular monitoring, reporting and reviewing to ensure that information and performance is used consistently to guide decisions, improve services and support corporate accountability.
- The Council is part of a number of local and regional partnerships such as the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. It would be fair to note that the effectiveness of these partnerships is currently fluctuating, and we will continue to work to try to ensure that we benefit from these arrangements. Similarly, our relationship with the third sector continues to evolve and we, with the support of the Third Sector Liaison Group, will be looking at this again during 2026/27.
- The work of ensuring that equality is deeply rooted within the Council's work to improve our services for all the people of Gwynedd continues. A Strategic Equality Plan

DRAFT

2024-28 was developed to provide a framework to improve fairness within the Council and ensure that we treat people according to their needs. This work continues, and we are now in the plan's third year, with many actions completed, e.g., develop the training framework, commence the establishment of the data dashboard, assess the accessibility of our website, and raise awareness of our impact assessment.

- As has already been noted, the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 was adopted during 2023, and three years have now elapsed. By now, most of the schemes should be clearly defined, with the necessary resources identified and considered as a part of the annual planning and budgeting cycles. As a result, the lack of money in itself is unlikely to be the main reason for not completing what is in the Plan. The risk now is ensuring that the Council continues to prioritise clearly, maintaining focus on the most transformational projects, and managing capacity and dependencies effectively to achieve what is realistic by the end of March 2028.
- There is a need to develop a united corporate transformational method that sets a clear strategic direction for change across the whole Council. This will bring different existing transformational programmes, projects and initiatives together within a coordinated framework with clear governance priorities, outcomes and arrangements. We will give particular attention to this when drawing up our next Council Plan, focusing on a smaller number of projects of a transformational nature, which will improve the services provided to the people of Gwynedd.
- The Finance Department, in close contact with the Chief Executive and Directors, undertakes ongoing reviews of the Council's financial forecasts over the next 3 years, updating the model regularly when new information is received and reporting regularly to Cabinet members and to the Corporate Management Team (Chief Executive, Directors and Department Heads). The corporate planning cycle coincides with the statutory cycle of budget planning, and we aim to present the annual update of the Council Plan to the same meeting of the Full Council as the budget.
- Every year, the Council prepares a Financial Strategy and sets a balanced Budget to ensure continuity of service. The Council also publishes a Statement of Accounts at the end of every financial year, which shows its annual expenditure. The review of expenditure against budgets and monitoring that savings have been achieved by all Council departments and ensures that the services are operating efficiently. However, as noted earlier, the increasing pressures on the Council's budget are making it harder for departments to maintain the same level of services within the budget provided, which leads to a risk of overspending.
- The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has created new duties for Political Group Leaders to take an element of responsibility over promoting good conduct and collaboration with the Standards Committee. Agreement was reached on a protocol and criteria to assess the discharge of the duty at a workshop between members of the Committee and Leaders. These were adopted by the Standards Committee, and they will contribute towards preparing the Committee's annual report. This work has been supported by meetings and regular communication with the Monitoring Officer.

DRAFT

- Sickness absences continue to pose a risk to the capacity and sustainability of the Council's services. During 2025/26, the average number of sick days per capita increased to 13.01 days (12.94 days in 2024/25), with long-term illness accounting for 62% of all absences. Stress continues to be a leading cause of sickness, contributing to 28.3% of all absences. The Council responds by strengthening attendance management arrangements, improving sickness recording and monitoring systems, providing support through the Occupational Health Service, carrying out individual case reviews and developing support and training for managers to reduce long-term illness and support staff health and wellbeing.
- When the independent Panel Performance Assessment was held at the start of 2026, it was noted that the Council should review the capacity of its strategic leadership on an operational level to enable it to complete its key priorities and plan for the long-term. We will further consider this and review the strategic leadership capacity to ensure that we are able to complete priorities and plan effectively for the future.
- We wish to ensure that we have completely robust corporate safeguarding arrangements, and several actions have already been completed, including ensuring that the Safeguarding Strategic Panel meets regularly to discuss the corporate safeguarding agenda, and present e-learning safeguarding training for staff. Fields such as the counter-terrorism and modern slavery agenda are also being discussed under this agenda.
- The Council has identified the need to improve and upgrade the financial system. Work is underway to do this, but in the meantime, a risk exists if this is not completed in a timely way.
- A risk has been identified regarding the management of open land in the Council's ownership, which varies from a plot of flat, green land, to quarries, where no management plan is in place for them. The Housing and Property Department are busy identifying site managers on every site by collaborating with departments, and this includes raising departments' awareness of lands designated to them.
- We are aware of the need to improve our forward planning and our management of projects across the Council. This also includes managing the challenges associated with the introduction of new IT systems/software, as well as managing other departmental projects.

A Caring Gwynedd

Strengths

- Timely and good quality Statutory Reviews are carried out to ensure that care and support plans remain appropriate.
- During the year, a new Independence Promotion Services Team was established to bring together the areas of direct payments, telecare, assistive technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and development of micro companies. The aim of the work is to ensure

DRAFT

that individuals get the support, technology and choices they need to live as independently as possible, in line with their wishes and circumstances.

- An increase in the appropriate use of direct payments and practice based on strength and developments in the extra care housing field.
- Individuals and their families can now apply directly for telecare equipment through the Council's website, facilitating faster and easier access to support. At the same time, the work of transferring residents from analogue systems to digital technology is gathering pace. The Council works closely with the housing associations (Adra and Grŵp Cynefin) to ensure a smooth and safe transition for residents.
- A new head was appointed to the Adults Department, as well as a temporary head for the Children's Department. The appointments offer an opportunity to reconsider the operational systems and structure of the departments.
- Day services for people with learning disabilities in Gwynedd have continued to develop significantly during the year, with various models across the county meeting local needs and promoting the well-being of individuals.
- During the year, it was managed to ensure that there was no waiting list for mental health assessments, and the vast majority of individuals were assessed in around 10 days, with only a small number waiting up to a fortnight. In addition, several residential placements were commissioned for individuals with mental health problems, ensuring that appropriate support was available when required.
- The Llechen Lân report proved useful during the past year, assisting us to plan for the long-term needs of social services. We will update the report following the publication of new demographic projections and we are continuing to implement the recommendations with a focus on developing preventative methods and reducing reliance on traditional care services.
- During the year, Cyngor Gwynedd and the Health Board developed a live information dashboard for individuals at Ysbyty Gwynedd who need to return home with support. This work, along with the discharge safety arrangements over the winter period, has been very successful, with the associated data systems now being refined and shared regionally across the Health Board.
- Gwynedd continues to be the only authority in North Wales that does not use agency social workers, a situation that has been sustained for over a decade. Every other authority in the region, as well as the vast majority of councils across Wales, now rely on agency staff to some degree. Amongst the advantages seen from this in Gwynedd is a more consistent service for the county's people, as well as the ability to provide care through the medium of Welsh.
- Departmental budgets were reviewed again this year to consider the additional resources needed to complete any action plans, and to deal with historic budget shortfalls in some departments (e.g. social services). This is intended to ensure that the services provided can be provided within the base budget to support the Council's financial sustainability. The work of reviewing provisions in budgets will continue over the next year when preparing the 2027/28 budget.
- Further developments in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) are starting to transform the way that services operate. The Beam Notes pilot was successful with a cohort of

DRAFT

staff at the beginning of 2026, and it is intended to extend the use of technology across the service during 2026/27. Technology such as Beam Notes keeps a record of the conversation, helping reduce the time spent on administrative work and thus releasing more time for social workers to focus on working directly with individuals and families.

Risks

- Following the publication of the North Wales Regional Safeguarding Board's report, Our Bravery Brought Justice, in the autumn, a comprehensive response plan was drawn up by Cyngor Gwynedd to address the recommendations, as well as broader matters noted in inspections and associated investigations. This was a challenging and damning report, and the Council acknowledged that there were important lessons to be learnt. A Response Board was established to supervise the work, chaired by Professor Sally Holland, the former Children's Commissioner for Wales. The board has met regularly and has benefited from input and guidance from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Estyn, the Children's Commissioner's Office, and the Welsh Government. Also considered was what was learnt from the CIW and Estyn joint-inspection in November 2025. Professor Sally Holland reports every quarter to the Council's Cabinet, whilst the Welsh Government's Ministerial Assurance Group also monitors progress against the recommendations. By March 2026, positive progress was achieved on several of the steps noted. However, work is still to be done, and the Council remains committed to act on what was learnt and to ensure continuous improvements. Details on what has already been done and what is in the pipeline can be seen on the website: Response Plan Programme Board
- We did not manage to reach the target of ensuring that no person waited for more than 28 days for a domiciliary care package after their assessment. Although staffing challenges have contributed to this, the performance showed that more needs to be done to ensure that people receive the right support at the right time. This highlights the need to speed-up the implementation of the Llechen Lân report's recommendations: Older People's Services in the Future, particularly work to ensure that alternative options to traditional care services are offered consistently across the county. By strengthening this method, we can give a greater voice and choice for individuals, reduce reliance on traditional care packages, and ensure that more flexible support is available sooner to meet people's needs. We will continue to try and reduce our waiting lists for new domiciliary care packages and ensure that no person in Gwynedd waits for more than 28 days following a care assessment.
- To ensure the highest quality services and effectively manage costs, the teams need to collaborate on a multi-disciplinary level with partners such as health, police, the third sector, and care providers. Steps have already been taken to strengthen these partnerships although there is further work to be done, for example to further develop the collaborative relationship with the Health Board.
- If enough staff cannot be recruited, there is a risk that the best services cannot be provided to the people of Gwynedd. We have therefore recently reviewed salaries and

DRAFT

introduced the Llechen Lân project, as well as introducing a Care Academy to try and improve the situation and we intend to take additional steps shortly as well.

- In general, it was acknowledged that the focus on the Our Bravery Brought Justice report and the follow-up work has taken most of the time and resources available over the past year, making it difficult to give equal attention to every field of social services.
- A weak relationship with institutional stakeholders could lead to a failure to provide quality services to the people of Gwynedd. Steps are being taken to ensure a good relationship between organisations, as well as to try to simplify the working relationship which can be overly complex due to legislative barriers.
- An increase in demand for services coupled with an increase in the complexity of needs, leads to budgetary pressures and risk of overspending.
- There is a need to reconsider and simplify "front doors" to create a consistent and simple experience for residents as they access social services.
- In March 2025, the national population forecasts were received, and the research will be further updated based on new population data. It is suggested that it will show even higher demand levels than previously predicted.
- There is a need to strengthen support for unpaid carers by ensuring unpaid carers are identified early and receive full support to help them continue in their role without jeopardising their own well-being.
- Concern exists regarding the availability of statutory review officers in the Children and Families field. If no statutory review officer is available, there is no assurance that the voice of the looked-after child is being heard.
- If the Business, Care Commissioning and Monitoring services are not effective and efficient, there will be a risk to the safety of individuals and staff, and a risk that we are not providing quality services to the residents of Gwynedd.
- Being unable to obtain mental health assessments outside working hours leaving individuals at risk and facing mental health distress without appropriate support.
- There was a need to ensure a new system as the current social services data system (WCCIS) is coming to an end. There was collaboration with local authorities across North Wales to complete a tendering process within a challenging timetable, and since then, the MOSAIC system has been purchased. During the year, extensive work commenced to prepare for the transfer, including planning, technical work and preparing the workforce. The operational timetable has now slipped to March 2027. MOSAIC is expected to improve the recording, sharing of information and communication with residents and partners.
- Although temporary leadership is now in place, uncertainty continues in terms of the long-term leadership of the Council's children's department.
- Reducing the substantial profit made by private companies when delivering children's services is a national priority. There is a need to speed-up the work on strengthening the local provision, including extending the fostering opportunities, reducing the reliance on expensive placements outside the county, and ensuring that more children and young people can stay close to their families, their schools and communities.

DRAFT

- Any competition with staff salaries in nearby counties/regions can cause discontent and affect the recruitment market.

Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Strengths

- The outcomes of primary and secondary school inspections are generally strong.
- Support to meet the needs of learners/Welsh-language provision - including the Immersion Education system.
- A new Schools Strategy for 2026-2036 is now in place.
- We continue to make improvements to schools across the county, and substantial capital schemes are in progress in Bangor and Bontnewydd. We have taken every opportunity to apply for grant support to enable us to modernise existing buildings and develop new buildings.

Risks

- Changes in the county's demography affect the viability of the current school system and increase the lack of equity that exists due to the significant variation in cost per capita, per pupil.
- Arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and promoting pupil attendance need to be improved. Attendance levels remain a concern following the pandemic-induced slump. Attendance is also a priority for the Government and Estyn.
- We will strengthen provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and ensure arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of that provision.
- Ensuring that our safeguarding arrangements in schools are of the best possible standard and delivering on the content of our Crime Response Plan. We have already created a new Safeguarding and Well-being Team service in the Education Department.
- Being unable to provide Catering and Cleaning services adequately and safely.

A Prosperous Gwynedd

Strengths

- As part of a new Regeneration Framework, a Local Regeneration Plan has been prepared for each of the 13 regeneration areas in the County. The plans reflect local priorities highlighted during the 'Ardal Ni' consultation with Gwynedd residents. The Local Regeneration Plans incorporate projects that are being developed by a wide range of organisations and groups active in the area and contribute to the economically, environmentally, socially or culturally improvement of areas to create healthy, thriving, dynamic and sustainable communities with a prominent and central place for the Welsh language.

DRAFT

- The 'Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035' has been jointly developed by Cyngor Gwynedd and the Eryri National Park Authority. This is a groundbreaking scheme and introduces a new way of operating, supporting and measuring the impact of the visitor economy as a whole on the area.
- Again, this year, we have managed to secure substantial funding from sources such as the Shared Prosperity Fund. Together with our partners, we have allocated a further £8.2 million from the Shared Prosperity Fund to schemes that have contributed towards strengthening the Gwynedd economy, improving skills and creating pride in our communities. During 2025/26, over 780 businesses, enterprises and organisations have received support, over 100 jobs created or safeguarded, and over 300 local people have received training.
- A total of over £32.6 million has been invested in local plans since 2022 by Cyngor Gwynedd via the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Town Centre Schemes have been created for several towns in Gwynedd. The Plans give particular attention to high street areas, with the intention of making them more attractive places to visit and work, and to encourage people to spend their time and money there.
- New plans in the pipeline include:
    - Work to establish the Visitor Levy has developed well and we will hold a public consultation on this early in 2026-27.
    - Trawsfynydd Science Park - a capital package of £20M is almost in place and the business case has been completed.
    - Growth Deal - Glynllifon and Bryn Cegin project awaiting the CJC approval this month.

Risks

- Implications because of the end of the ARFOR Programme has led to possible adjustments to the Council Plan to establish a new "Back to Gwynedd" project.
- The SPF Programme is ending with only partial transitional arrangements confirmed through new funds (Pride in Place and Local Growth Fund).
- A substantial reduction in finance, flexibility and scope compared with the SPF, creating uncertainty regarding finance and administration in the future.
- Bangor City Centre - continuing to seek to establish a capital package for the Health Hub.

A Homely Gwynedd

Strengths

- Substantial Capital schemes have been completed and in the pipeline.

DRAFT

- The Housing Action Plan is continuing to create new social housing, bringing empty houses back into use and buying houses in order to let them.
- A Housing One Stop Shop was established in September 2025 for all housing and accommodation enquiries.
- The Empty House Council Tax Premium was increased by 150% to be reinvested mainly in the housing field.
- The Housing and Property department is working closely with its housing partners on social and intermediate housing developments to meet the huge demand for housing in Gwynedd.
- Through the Buy-to-Let Scheme, the Council buys homes off the open market to let them to residents in housing need.
- To bring more empty homes back into use, there are a number of interventions available for the people of Gwynedd to take advantage of.
- The Department has been successful in attracting additional funding from the Welsh Government to deliver more affordable housing developments.
- The Council helps many county residents avoid or get out of fuel poverty by providing support to insulate houses, receive effective heating equipment and eco-friendly upgrades such as solar panels and air-source heat pumps.

Risks

- Homelessness remains a challenge even though several new interventions have recently been introduced. We will continue to implement a number of ambitious schemes including the development of several additional sites across the county.
- Managing expectations and tensions relating to social housing development applications.
- An increase in construction costs, contractor availability and an adequate workforce. e.g., small-holdings, Buy-to-Let houses.
- Use of planning powers as one of the interventions for the Management of Second Homes in the county, particularly in the context of Article 4.
- Following the Article 4 court case, the Council will look again at the situation and consider whether there are any lessons to be learnt.

A Green Gwynedd

Strengths

- We have updated our "Climate and Nature Emergency Plan" to meet the ambition of being carbon net zero and ecologically positive.
- A Flood Strategy has been adopted which highlights the current and future risks of flooding and coastal erosion in the county and how the risks will be managed.
- Attracted significant grants from the Government to fund renewable energy schemes, an electric vehicle fleet and public and fleet charging points.

DRAFT

- Willingness to experiment and innovate – Welsh Government grants and capital from the Council will fund projects to reduce carbon emissions.
- Working with external partners – the Council leads the Gwynedd Nature Partnership
- In line with the Council's Green Fleet Plan, when vehicles need to be replaced, we have been converting to electric vehicles where possible. 48% of the Council's cars and vans are now electric vehicles.

Risks

- In order to meet the national recycling target of 70% and avoid a financial penalty, residents' behaviours need to change so that they recycle more and reduce the residual waste that needs to be collected.
- Waste treatment sites need to be modernised as well as improvements made to our recycling centres.
- There is a significant risk of coastal flooding which could have a detrimental impact on many communities, such as Fairbourne.
- Failure to meet frequency targets in relation to food hygiene inspections and food standards.
- National expectations and changes can lead to a delay as we develop a new Local Development Plan.
- The Council's 'Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022/23 - 2029/30' sets an ambition that notes that "Cyngor Gwynedd will be carbon zero net and ecologically positive by 2030." The Plan includes a broad range of projects to reduce carbon emissions and to absorb carbon across several fields: buildings and energy, movement and transportation, waste, procurement, governance, land use, ecology. We acknowledge that reaching net zero is a long-term task, but this plan sets a number of specific milestones in order for us to measure our annual progress up to 2030. There are so many policy, legislative and budgetary factors that are beyond the Council's control and are having a huge impact on the Council's ability to deliver many of our projects, such as electricity grid network supplies or investment in energy and heating buildings. Nevertheless, the Council has chosen to spend substantial funding from our coffers to deliver many of our projects in our Climate and Nature Emergency Plan, and £3m was earmarked for the work. Despite the investment, however, the uncertainty from the perspective of external factors means that meeting the ambition to be ...'net zero carbon and ecologically positive by 2030' remains a practical and financial risk for the Council.
- While the Council has invested £3M of its own funding since 2022, which is a continuation of significant investment in carbon saving schemes since 2010, there is a real risk to not having the funding or human resources to deliver the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan as a whole.
- Work is ongoing to ensure that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other statutory requirements are fully integrated within our corporate planning frameworks, rather than in a way that is responsive and fragmented in nature.

DRAFT

- Making hazardous buildings safe, e.g. The Corbett Arms, and act on building control enforcement matters.

A Welsh Gwynedd

Strengths

- The Welsh language is a key part of all the Council's work, and any plans that affect the people of Gwynedd. Welsh is the Council's main administrative language, which means that we are one of the largest employers in the country who use Welsh on a day-to-day basis in the workplace.
- We offer opportunities for staff to develop their language skills including training to learn Welsh and to further develop Welsh language skills across all levels.
- The Council has modernised and expanded the immersion provision for learning Welsh to children and intends to further increase the provision of Welsh-medium education in the county.

Risks

- There may be a perception by some that a 'University' standard Welsh is needed to work for the Council, and while that is not accurate, it may affect recruitment to some posts.
- Welsh-speaking young people migrating.

Conclusions of the Self-evaluation

Based on the evidence gathered, the general conclusion is that Cyngor Gwynedd is operating from a firm organisational foundation. The governance, scrutiny, risk management, engagement and performance monitoring arrangements provide a sound basis for the Council to assess its performance, and examples such as the Apprenticeships and Graduates Schemes and the £8.2m in funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund in 2025/26, can show the Council's ability to turn priorities into practical steps.

When evaluating the broader picture, the quantitative data shows a mixed performance. The results of the Staff Voice Survey 2026 are positive in terms of pride and purpose, with 80% agreeing that the Council is a good place to work and 88% agree that their service is making a difference to the lives of the people of Gwynedd. However, the results on the three performance requirements are lower, namely 69.6% on achieving duties effectively, 65.8% on making the best use of resources, and 69.2% on arrangements to ensure effective performance. The National Residents Survey (2025) reinforces this picture: although Gwynedd is relatively strong in terms of contacting the Council and obtaining information, only 31% was satisfied

DRAFT

with how the Council is running things, 43% saw services as good value for money, and 37% trusted the Council (it should be noted that Cyngor Gwynedd is among the best 3 local authorities out of the 9 that participated in the Survey in 2025). This shows that there are firm foundations, but that more needs to be done to strengthen trust, satisfaction and consistent use of information to improve services. This conclusion has been directly informed by the views of residents, staff, businesses and other stakeholders. The Council has given due consideration to these views in identifying its strengths, risks and priorities for improvement for 2026/27.

It can be concluded that the Council performs effectively in several fields, but that there is a need to strengthen arrangements for improving and developing services, as well as how progress is measured. Substantial risks continue in terms of financial sustainability, costs and staffing of care services, schools' sustainability, recycling rates and the ambition to be carbon net zero and ecologically positive by 2030. These are areas where the impact on residents is direct, including access to timely services, service costs, experiences of children and young people, and the quality of the local environment.

Additional improvements identified for 2026-27

Improvement	Responsibility
• We will update the Llechen Lân report following the publication of new demographic projections and continue to implement the recommendations with a focus on developing preventative methods and reduce reliance on traditional care services.	Dylan Owen
• We will act on the recommendations within the report prepared following the Panel Assessment.	Governance Group

Improvements identified in previous Self-Assessments that will continue into 2026/27.

Improvement	
We will:	**Our progress to date**
• In response to the recommendations of a study by Audit Wales, we will seek to improve our service commissioning arrangements.	• Actions have been developed in response to the recommendations in the Audit Wales study. The plan was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting in February 2026, with the intention of responding fully to the recommendations by the end of 2026/27.
• Improve training on identifying and managing risk.	• Work to strengthen risk management arrangements is being developed in response to recommendations from our insurers and as part of the Panel Performance Assessment. This will include developing and delivering a training programme

DRAFT

	for Members and managers as risk owners, with annual refresher sessions.
• Act on the relevant recommendations in the Local Partnerships report.	• Local Partnerships was commissioned during 2025/26 to undertake an independent review of the Council's governance arrangements, and a number of recommendations were made. The Governance Group has a work programme in place to respond to the recommendations arising from that work.
• Consider how we can build on the residents' survey organised by the Welsh Local Government Association/Data Cymru and obtain more information/evidence to enable us to improve services.	• Gwynedd took part in the National Residents Survey in 2025, which received 3,094 responses. The results provide a new comparative basis for understanding residents' views, and the Council will use the findings alongside other data and information to inform service improvements. It is intended to conduct another residents' survey in autumn 2027 and we will continue to explore options to obtain additional information and evidence to help us improve services as part of our response to the recommendations arising from the Panel Performance Assessment.
• Review the process for identifying and scoring risks, particularly to ensure consistency across the organisation in the assessment and scoring process.	• The Chief Executive and Corporate Directors have been looking specifically at the very high risks to ensure that the correct risks are included and that there is consistency in how they are scored. New arrangements have also been put in place to seek to align very high risk scores, and further work to strengthen the corporate risk strategy and register is continuing.
• Continue the work to strengthen our internal arrangements to ensure that statutory requirements/guidance or legislation are a core element and are better integrated with our corporate planning work.	• During 2025/26, work continued to strengthen the use of impact assessments, including raising awareness of them as part of the implementation of the Strategic Equality Plan. This work helps to ensure that statutory requirements, including equality, the Welsh language and the Well-being of Future Generations Act, are considered an integral part of the Council's planning and decision-making arrangements. • In addition, the recommendations of the Panel Performance Assessment emphasise the need to strengthen the links between corporate planning, performance management and risk management. An action plan has been developed to respond to the recommendations in the assessment, which will contribute to this improvement.
• Continue the work of reviewing the Council's Asset Plan to ensure that the priorities remain	• During 2025/26, work continued to develop asset management arrangements following the adoption of the Asset Management Plan 2024–2034 (July 2024). Relevant policies were reviewed and discussions were held with

DRAFT

current in light of the experiences and developments of recent years.	Council departments to ensure that the priorities reflect recent needs and developments. Work to prepare a Property Asset Action Plan is continuing and is linked to the development of the Corporate Property Management Strategy.
• Seek to develop a way of measuring value for money (efficiency) at service level as part of our performance challenge arrangements.	• The Finance Department has begun work to develop a benchmarking framework to identify areas where appropriate interventions could be considered to improve value for money where possible, including comparisons with relative costs in other authorities. This work is under way during 2026/27, with the intention of being able to report on initial results before the end of the financial year. This will be ongoing work, and a range of other suitable solutions is also under consideration, including acting in accordance with suggestions from CIPFA.

DRAFT