MEETING	Communities Scrutiny Committee
DATE	19 November, 2026
TITLE	Cabinet Member for Highways, Engineering and YGC Performance Report
REASON FOR SCRUTINY	An opportunity for Members to discuss and scrutinise the Department's improvement measures and priorities
AUTHOR	Steffan Jones, Head of Highways, Engineering and YGC Department
CABINET MEMBER	The Councillor. June Jones

1. Why does it need to be scrutinized?

To provide an update to Scrutiny Committee Members on performance issues for the first half of 2026/27 within the Department.

2. Background

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update you on what has been achieved in the area I am responsible for as Cabinet Member for Highways, Engineering and YGC. This includes an update on our projects attached to the Council's Plan; measures challenging the Department's performance; as well as an update on savings and cuts plan.

We are operating on the Council's Plan 2023-28, and here I report on the progress made so far in the year 2026/27. All the issues have been the subject of discussion and have been challenged by me at a recent performance challenge meeting, and I am happy with the performance of the Department.

2.2 Performance of Council Plan Projects (Green Gwynedd)

The progress against the milestones for the project 'Action on flood risks' within the Council's Plan' can be found in Appendix 1. It can be seen that the Department has made good progress and has completed the main milestones of the project.

Work continues to implement the objectives of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy by developing a programme of plans and projects to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk across Gwynedd.

A number of schemes are currently in the detailed design and business case stage, including Barmouth North Prom, Bontnewydd Flood Scheme, Mynydd Llandegai, Groeslon and Waunfawr.

Construction of the coastal defence scheme at Hirael, Bangor has now been completed, while surface water studies are being carried out in the Bangor and Blaenau Ffestiniog area and development work is underway for flood schemes at Clynnog Fawr and Criccieth.

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy has been submitted to the Welsh Government and comments have been received on the contents. The Strategy is expected to receive formal approval, providing the strategic framework for prioritising and developing flood and coastal erosion plans in the near future.

The Department plays a key role in supporting the delivery of a number of priorities within the Council Plan.

2.3 The Department's day to day work (Performance Measures)

The Department's performance measures are set out in Appendix 2. There are 30 measures in total, reflecting the key objectives and responsibilities of the Department's services.

Performance is monitored and discussed regularly through the Challenge and Performance Support meetings. Following the September review, 76.6% of the measures were reported as being on target (green), demonstrating the strong performance delivered across the Department's services during the current year.

An overview of some of the Department's key performance measures is provided below:

Corporate/Departmental Measures

These look at the Department's performance in terms of Freedom of Information Requests, Mandatory Titles, Language Self-Assessment and the Department's sickness rate. It should be noted that our Freedom of Information request response percentage at the end of September was 97.7% with only one request answered late. We are also pleased to report that our performance in terms of the percentage of staff and workforce who have completed mandatory titles has improved significantly. This increase stems from the work of the Corporate Protection Trainer who developed a video to enable frontline workers to complete the safeguarding module. A number of new modules have been introduced, with more in the pipeline, and we will continue to work to improve completion rates.

Highway Maintenance

The Highways Maintenance Service continues to respond quickly to issues affecting road user safety, making 80.3% of critical defects and 76.6% of safety deficiencies safe within the relevant time targets. 395 complaints about potholes in roads were received between April and September, with the service successfully closing applications in an average of 9 days.

The overall condition of the county's road network is currently in a satisfactory condition, with 69.3% of Class A roads, 65.1% of class B roads and 46.8% of class C roads overall in good condition. The recent investment through Welsh Government grant funding into maintenance and improvements to the network ensures a stable manner over time in the current state of the county network.

Street Lighting

The Street Lighting Service continues to respond to faults well within its five-day target, with faults being resolved on average within 2.6 days. Where faults relate to assets owned by the National Grid, response times are outside the Council's control, as the utility company has up to 20 working days to undertake the necessary repairs. This can occasionally impact the level of service experienced by customers.
To provide greater insight into the work of the Service, a new performance measure has been introduced this year to report on the inspection of the County's street lighting assets in accordance with the established inspection programme.

Fleet Service

The Service continues to perform strongly, and the implementation of the new fleet management system has been a success. The transition of the Council's fleet to low-emission vehicles is progressing well, with 94 cars and vans now either electric or hybrid. According to a report by the Welsh Government Energy Service, Gwynedd Council ranked second among Wales' rural local authorities for the number of low-emission vehicles within its fleet.

Street Scene Service and CCTV

The street cleaning service has benefited from investment in new technology and equipment, including more efficient sweepers and a digital system to record bin emptying and monitor street bin filling levels. The information collected helps to better plan resources and provide a more effective service in line with demand. In addition, the system helps to monitor and manage the tasks of the road sweepers while specialist machines ensure that hard-to-reach areas and narrow streets receive appropriate attention. Work is also underway to strengthen local partnerships and improve communication with community councils, local members and community groups in order to achieve more thorough cleaning, use resources more efficiently and improve the cleanliness and appearance of communities across the County.

Public Toilets

The Municipal Asset Service continues to provide and maintain 60 public toilets across the County, as well as supporting 37 community toilets. During the first half of 2026/27 129 enquiries were received, with the main issues relating to cleanliness (23%), opening hours (17%) and blocked toilets (16%). While the number of enquiries has increased during the summer months, the service has maintained an average response time of four days between April and September, reflecting an ongoing commitment to providing clean, safe and suitable toilets for residents and visitors. We are also pleased to report that we have opened a new block of toilets to replace the old building on the North Prom in Barmouth. In addition, we have also been successful in securing funding through the 'Balchder Bro Gwynedd' Fund to upgrade the public toilets at Cambrian Court, Barmouth, expecting to see the work completed early in the new year.

Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC)

YGC are currently performing particularly well, with 7 of their 8 performance measures being green. This reflects the hard work and high standard of the teams in delivering complex and specialist projects across the County and across the whole of Wales. The programme of work remains healthy and ambitious, with a significant number of flood, civil engineering and environmental projects underway. Our principal client is the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent, for whom the Department delivers a wide range of services and projects. These range from routine maintenance, and minor improvement works to the delivery of major infrastructure and highway improvement schemes.

As well as providing core services such as flood risk management, infrastructure design, land surveys and construction, YGC now offers a wide range of specialist consultancy services that attract clients not only in Gwynedd but across the whole of Wales. The team works closely with public bodies, local communities and regional partners to provide sustainable solutions that improve safety, resilience and our response to the climate change crisis.

I am pleased to note that YGC continues to grow its reputation as a team of Consultants with engineering excellence in Wales, providing a professional, reliable and innovative service that makes a significant contribution to the County and beyond. Through this we are securing opportunities for local jobs here in Gwynedd in the field of consultancy.

2.4 External Auditors' Reports

The Department of Highways, Engineering and YGC holds, and maintains three key accreditations namely BSI – ISO 45001 (Health and Safety), ISO 14001 (Environmental) and ISO 9001 (Quality) – which underpin our work across the Department. These standards ensure that we operate with the highest level of safety, environmental management and quality, and give our clients and partners confidence in the service provided. One of the requirements of our work through a service level agreement with a Trunk Road Agency is that we hold and retain these accreditations.

Following external audits undertaken during the year, the Department received a number of positive and supportive findings from the auditors. Most notably, no issues were identified in relation to compliance with, or the maintenance of, required standards. This provides assurance that the team's work is being delivered in a professional, effective and well-managed manner, with appropriate systems and processes in place to maintain high standards of performance and governance.

The outcome is evidence of the Department's continued commitment to improvement, transparency and leadership in best practice in the areas of Health and Safety, Environment and Quality, and supports our ability to deliver a high quality service across all areas of our work.

2.5 Savings and Cuts Plans

The total Savings Plans for 2026-27 were £91,000. The Department is on track to achieve this full amount. £120,000 worth of Historic Savings have been realised and have slipped into this year. See 117k worth of Historic Savings remaining on the Budget.'

3. Additional Questions Raised by the Committee

3.1 What are the risks to delivering the priority projects?

- Dependence on external funding: Applications for grant support have been submitted to the Welsh Government. If funding is not approved, or if there are delays in securing funding, this could affect the service's ability to deliver the work programme.
- Dependence on external partners: The success of the work is partly reliant on collaboration with Natural Resources Wales and progress on projects in Fairbourne, Porthmadog and Pwllheli. Any delays or changes in priorities by partner organisations could impact the Council's delivery timescales.
- Planning risks: A planning application has been submitted for the North Prom project in Barmouth. There is a risk that the planning process, planning conditions or objections could delay the project and increase the significant risk faced by the local community.

3.2 What are the performance risks?

A number of risks may affect service performance throughout the year. These include external factors that are beyond the direct control of the department, such as periods of severe weather, flooding incidents and the wider impacts of climate change, all of which can increase demand on services and lead to unforeseen expenditure.

In addition, financial pressures, reliance on external funding sources, staffing capacity and delays by partners or contractors may affect the department's ability to deliver work programmes and achieve performance targets.

3.3 What is being done to mitigate these risks?

The department maintains robust monitoring arrangements to identify and manage risks as early as possible. Service performance and financial positions are monitored regularly by service management teams, with performance, project progress and expenditure challenged through formal reporting processes.

In addition, the Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly to ensure that key risks are assessed and that appropriate mitigation measures are implemented.

3.4 Has consideration been given to developing a performance measure to assess performance against the road work programme?

Looking ahead to the second half of the year, a new performance measure will be introduced to report on the performance of the Highways Maintenance Service against the road works programme.

4. Consultation

The report has been created on the basis of information submitted to the most recent meeting to challenge and support the performance of the Department of Highways, Engineering and YGC, with the Corporate Director, Head of Department, Service Managers and myself attending this meeting.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Council Plan project milestone progress reports 2023-28

Appendix 2: Departmental Performance Measures