Cyngor Gwynedd

Annual Report and Self-Assessment



2025-26

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The Leader's Foreword

It is a privilege to serve as Leader of Cyngor Gwynedd and to present the Council's Annual Performance Report for 2025/26, which reports on the progress made over the third year of the Council Plan 2023-28.

The past year has been a challenging time for local government, with ongoing financial pressures and increasing demand for services. The Council has faced a significant challenge following the publication of the *Our Bravery Brought Justice* report in November 2025. Since then, a great deal of work has been carried out to implement our Response Plan and strengthen safeguarding arrangements. This work is an ongoing commitment for us as a Council. This is the greatest tribute we can pay the victims, which is to listen to them, take action and embed change.

The annual report shows how the Council focuses on supporting communities, improving opportunities for residents and providing reliable, high-quality services while prioritising the Welsh language. It also highlights the support provided to individuals and families through the Supporting People programme, as the impact of the high costs of living continues to be felt across the county.

The body of the report expands on our priorities and includes examples of the impact of this important work on the residents of Gwynedd.

Looking ahead, challenges remain, but this report shows a Council that is ambitious, resilient and determined to make a positive difference to the lives of the people of Gwynedd. I'm extremely proud that we are continuing to invest in our communities and put the people of Gwynedd at the heart of our work.

I would like to thank Council staff, elected members, our partners and the many volunteers and community organisations for their dedication and hard work over the past year. By working together, I am confident that we can continue to build a Gwynedd that is prosperous, caring, sustainable and a place of opportunity for all.

Councillor Nia Jeffreys
Cyngor Gwynedd Leader

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Introduction

The 'Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28' includes a series of ambitious projects that will enable us to develop and improve our services to the county's residents over a five-year period. The projects fall under seven priority areas:

- **Tomorrow's Gwynedd**
  Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life.
- **A Prosperous Gwynedd**
  Strengthening the economy and supporting the residents of Gwynedd to earn a decent wage.
- **A Homely Gwynedd**
  Supporting the people of Gwynedd to live in suitable and affordable homes in their communities.
- **A Caring Gwynedd**
  Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities.
- **A Welsh Gwynedd**
  Ensuring that we give every possible opportunity for our residents to use the Welsh language in the community.
- **A Green Gwynedd**
  Protecting the natural beauty of the county and responding positively to the climate change crisis.
- **An Efficient Gwynedd**
  Putting the people of Gwynedd first and treating them fairly and ensuring that the Council performs effectively and efficiently.

This report looks back at what was achieved during the third year of the Council's Plan. It is customary to undertake an annual review of the Plan to ensure that the projects remain suitable, and to give the Council the opportunity to adapt them in light of local and national developments over the period of the Plan. This annual report provides an update on the plan as agreed by the Council on 6 March 2025.

Like last year, the report is divided into chapters that reflect the seven priority areas, describing the progress made during the year along with the main achievements in the day-to-day work of our departments, for example education, the environment and finance.

The Priority Areas within this document are our Well-being Objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Objectives will directly contribute to achieving the seven national well-being goals. As we take action, we will also give appropriate consideration to the five ways of working within the Act by considering the long-term, prevention, integrated working, collaborative working and involving people of all ages. We will do this by adopting a way of working which focuses on putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. The table at the end of the report shows the contribution of each priority project towards the five ways of working.

Looking ahead, the review of the Plan for 2026/27 will build on the progress already achieved by introducing and placing greater emphasis on a new priority area, **An Equal**

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Gwynedd, and the **Response Plan: Our Bravery Brought Justice**. An Equal Gwynedd will emphasise that equality, equity and inclusion are at the core of all the Council's work, bringing together the work to ensure fairness for all, strengthen inclusive representation in leadership, and develop Gwynedd into a child-friendly and trauma-informed county. Giving a prominent place to the Response Plan will also underline its importance and the Council's continued commitment to implementing the report's recommendations. Although it was not part of the Council's Plan for 2025/26, we have been consistently reporting on the progress of measures that have been put in place to respond to recommendations over the past few months and will continue to do so. These reports can be found on the Council's website.

The second part of the performance report is our self-assessment for the year. This is our fifth self-assessment. The Council is expected to submit this annually under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. A section is appended that outlines how the Council is complying with the Social Partnership Duty which is a new reporting requirement under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023.

The need to make financial savings is more or less an annual challenge for Local Government by now, and last year was no different. Savings of almost £47 million, namely 93% of the revised schemes since 2015, have now been realised. Despite these financial challenges, the Council continues to adapt and tries to find better and more efficient ways of providing services.

As part of our performance arrangements, a series of departmental performance challenge and support meetings are held on a regular basis to see how the departments are making progress with their day-to-day work as well as Council Plan projects. This Annual Performance Report is based on the findings of these performance challenge and support meetings. The aim of the report is not just to highlight the good things, but to give a fair and honest picture of our performance during the year. In doing so, we have been able to celebrate our successes and see which aspects of our work need further attention, to assist us in providing the best possible service for the residents of the county within the resources we have.

This annual Report will be submitted to the Council Cabinet and to a meeting of the Full Council for approval.

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Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Tomorrow's Gwynedd focuses on giving children and young people the best possible start. By investing in education, well-being, play, inclusion and early support, we work to ensure that all children have a fair opportunity to learn, develop and thrive in their communities.

Our ambition is to ensure that all pupils educated in Gwynedd get:

- Treated equally, encouraged to treat others equally and assurance that their well-being and happiness is a priority for us.
- Education of the best possible standard including access to a broad range of academic and vocational subjects in order to fulfil the requirements of the new 'Curriculum for Wales'.
- Access to Welsh-medium education throughout their time in education.
- Educated in buildings that are in a good state of repair, and to the best of our ability are safe and fit for purpose.
- Receive the opportunity to develop into rounded, happy and confident people in the world.
- Tailored support from professional services to meet their additional learning needs.
- The opportunity to have a nutritious meal at school, free of charge to as many pupils as possible.
- Access to equipment and technology that promote modern and effective learning.
- Assurance that suitable facilities and playing fields are available for children and young people in their leisure time.

Projects

- Transform education for children in their early years
- Modernise buildings and the learning environment
- Promote the well-being of children and young people and reduce the cost of sending children to school
- Extend opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people
- Formulate and implement a 10-year strategic direction for education in Gwynedd
- Review and improve the range of inclusion provisions in Gwynedd

An update on the projects

Transform education for children in their early years

The early years work has focused on widening access to childcare and supporting parents with practical advice:

- The Childcare for Two-year-olds Scheme has been extended to the following areas: Tywyn, Harlech, Llandderfel and Llanuwchllyn, Penrhyndeudraeth, Efailnewydd/Buan, Botwnnog/Tudweiliog, Cricieth, Seiont 1 – Caernarfon, Llanberis and Porthmadog West ensuring that more areas within the county benefit from the Scheme. The Scheme has a positive impact on families by providing access to 12.5 hours of free childcare, helping to reduce the cost of living. There is a positive impact on children, through access to quality care and activities that support their development alongside their peers. The Scheme enables providers to benefit

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through financial investment in resources and professional support from the Early Years Advisory Teacher and the wider childcare team.

- The Toileting Policy for Gwynedd schools was changed in September 2025 and families were prepared for the change by collaborating cross-departmentally with Health and an episode of the *'Mam, Dad a Magu'* podcast was created, which focused on toileting. The podcast helps families on the journey through the early and crucial years of childhood. The podcast is available on various platforms such as YouTube and Spotify.

Modernise buildings and the learning environment

School modernisation has progressed to ensure more suitable, safe and sustainable learning environments for children and staff:

- The Council continued to invest in the modernisation of educational buildings to ensure that Gwynedd's children and young people have access to safe, sustainable learning environments suitable for future needs. This investment will not only enhance learners' educational experiences but also contribute to the well-being of local communities. The Cabinet approved increasing the budget for the Ysgol Tryfan project from £18 million to £23.6 million to achieve net zero requirements, supporting a modern and more sustainable learning environment for Bangor learners. The design team continues to work on developing the plan and the business case will be submitted in the Summer 2026 term.
- In the Bontnewydd area, a new temporary building has been completed which has enabled the school and community centre to continue to operate without disruption to educational provision or community activities. This has ensured stability for pupils, staff and users of the centre while work is underway on the development of the new permanent building.
- At Our Lady's School, construction work on the new school has been completed. Providing high-quality modern facilities for pupils and staff. The new building will support improved learning experiences, offer a more accessible and engaging environment, and contribute to the well-being of the whole school community for years to come. The school opened following the summer holidays in 2026.
- In addition, the design work for the Ysgol Hirael development was completed during the year. This is an important step towards providing modern facilities that will strengthen local educational provision and ensure that learners in the Bangor area can benefit from a learning environment that meets the needs of contemporary education. The school modernisation programme ensures that more children and young people have access to modern, sustainable and inspiring buildings that support their education and well-being. As well as improving learning experiences, the investment strengthens local communities by providing high-quality facilities that schools and communities can use and enjoy together.

Promote the well-being of children and young people and reduce the cost of sending children to school

This work has focused on understanding and reducing the costs that can prevent children from participating fully in school life:

- The schools have used the findings of the Cost Friendly School Audit to implement practical steps to reduce costs for families. As a result, they have reviewed school

uniform policies, promoted second-hand clothing schemes, considered the cost of school trips and additional activities, ensuring that information about financial support is clearly available and shared with parents and carers. Following this, a Cost Friendly School Charter was developed, and the schools are now working towards achieving the relevant metrics to be recognised as 'Cost Friendly' schools. The schools are supported to implement the principles of the Charter, share successful practices across the county, and ensure that the voice of families and learners continues to inform provision. In addition, children and young people are given more opportunities to participate in activities, regardless of the family's financial situation.

- This work contributes to reducing the financial pressure on Gwynedd families at a time when many are facing significant cost of living challenges. By reducing costs associated with school uniforms, trips and activities, schools help ensure that all children are able to benefit from educational and developmental opportunities equally. This supports the well-being of children and young people, strengthens their sense of belonging to the school community, and reduces the risk of any child being excluded due to financial circumstances.

Extend opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people
The play and youth project has focused on giving children and young people more opportunities to socialise, play and have a voice.

- Youth forums have been set up across the county, with plans to launch the Council's full young people's voice forum. This creates new opportunities for children and young people to influence decisions that affect their lives, ensuring that services are more responsive to their needs and that the voices of often under-represented groups are heard and valued.
- This work has expanded opportunities for the children and young people of Gwynedd to socialise and have a say in decisions that affect them. This contributes to improving their well-being, developing their confidence and social skills, and strengthening their sense of belonging to their schools and local communities.
- The Welsh Government's Play Opportunities grant was used to improve 29 playing fields across the county. This provides safer, more attractive and accessible play spaces for children and families in their local communities.

Formulate and implement a 10-year strategic direction for education in Gwynedd
The Schools 2026-2036 strategy has been developed to set a clear direction for the future of education in Gwynedd.

- The draft strategy was presented to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and to the Cabinet, after engaging with Gwynedd's schools, governors, children and young people. This ensures that the long-term direction of education in Gwynedd is informed by the experiences of learners and the aspirations of learners, families and the education workforce. The Strategy provides a clear direction for the development of education provision over the next decade, helping to ensure that Gwynedd's children and young people have the skills, support and opportunities they need to thrive in school and in their future lives.
- The Strategy will also help the Council, schools and partners to plan more effectively for future challenges and opportunities, ensuring that investment in education

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remains focused on improving outcomes and the well-being of Gwynedd's children and young people.

Review and improve the range of inclusion provisions in Gwynedd

The inclusion work has focused on strengthening support for learners who need additional support:

- The 'Camu i'r Copa' Pupil Referral Unit in Llanwnda is now operational as a registered provision. 'Camu i'r Copa' was established as a specialist provision to support learners who are struggling to thrive within mainstream education. The main aim of the Unit is to restore learners' confidence, build their resilience and help them develop the skills they need to reconnect with education in a positive manner. It provides educational, emotional and social support in a safe and nurturing environment, helping learners who need extra support to stay in education, improve their well-being and develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed. The provision also provides families with additional reassurance that their children are receiving the appropriate support in an environment that responds to their individual needs.
- The Inclusion Strategy was published to strategic headteacher groups. This will help schools and the Council to provide more consistent and coordinated support to vulnerable learners across the county, reducing barriers to learning and ensuring that children and young people get the help they need as quickly as possible. As a result, more families will be able to access clear and consistent support, giving their children the best opportunity to participate fully in school life and achieve their potential.
- This work contributes to the creation of a more inclusive education system in Gwynedd where children and young people are given the support they need to thrive academically, socially and emotionally, where families can be confident that their children's needs are being identified and met in a timely and appropriate manner. For many of the young people, the provision has offered a fresh start. Learners have had the opportunity to build positive relationships with adults and peers, develop greater confidence in themselves and strengthen their social and emotional skills. This has helped to improve their well-being, engagement with learning and their willingness to participate in education.

Some of our key achievements

- The Youth Service delivers 34 community projects and clubs on a weekly basis across Gwynedd, with 16 based in Arfon, 10 in Meirionnydd and 8 in Dwyfor, ensuring a wide geographical spread and fair access for young people throughout the county. The provision includes 12 clubs funded by local councils, 3 Friendly Clubs in partnership with Derwen, 18 mobile community clubs that respond flexibly to local needs, and 1 specialist Neuro club.
- There are high levels of participation, 489 accreditations completed by young people, 97% reported an improvement in their well-being after using the service, and 95% enjoy the provision.

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- The Free School Meals provision for all primary learners has continued to be a success during 2025/26. In March 2026, an average of 6,160 free school meals were provided on any given day. The service has also continued to support the Council's wider priorities by promoting local food, reducing food waste and raising awareness among learners of the importance of healthy eating.
- The average attendance of pupils within the Authority up to April 2026 was 91.0%. This equates to the Wales rate for the same period. Gwynedd's historical data shows a steady increase over a three-year period. Direct support through Education Welfare Officers has remained a key element of the work, helping to reduce barriers to school attendance and supporting learners to re-engage with their education. This progress is supported by a continuing focus on early intervention, monitoring of attendance patterns, and close collaboration between schools, the Authority's services and families.
- 100% of Year 7 Admission applications were first choice, and 99.8% of Reception applicants were offered a place at their first-choice school.
- User satisfaction levels are consistently very high (often 97%-100%) across several ALN services, with clear evidence of progress in children receiving specialist support.

Case Study - Further case studies can be found on the Council's website

'Camu i'r Copa' - Pupil Referral Unit in Felinwnda

The 'Camu i'r Copa' Pupil Referral Unit was established on the site of the former Ysgol Felinwnda, Llanwnda, in September 2025 in response to the increase in the number of learners facing complex emotional, behavioural and social needs. The aim is to provide specialist support to young people who have difficulty engaging with mainstream education, helping to prevent disengagement, improve attendance and reduce the risk of being excluded from school.

During its first year, a safe, stable and nurturing environment was developed with small classrooms, personal learning plans, a flexible curriculum and emotional support tailored to individual needs. Emphasis was also placed on strengthening the connections between the Unit, schools, families and partner services to ensure effective transition arrangements and support for learners.

The provision has had a positive impact on many young people by improving their confidence, resilience, social skills and engagement with education. Families have benefited from seeing their children receiving appropriate support in an environment that understands their needs, providing more assurance and reducing concerns. Schools had also taken advantage of the Unit's expertise to plan more effective support. Although this is the first year of the provision, the early evidence shows that 'Camu i'r Copa' already plays an important role in reconnecting vulnerable learners with education and setting a firm foundation for their success in the future.

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A Prosperous Gwynedd

A Prosperous Gwynedd focuses on strengthening the local economy, supporting businesses and creating better job opportunities for the people of Gwynedd. By investing in our local economy, culture, sustainable tourism and local procurement, we are working to retain greater economic benefit within the communities of the County. Our ambition is to ensure:

- High-quality jobs.
- Support for businesses to thrive.
- Sustainable tourism for the benefit of communities.
- Strong and resilient communities.
- Prosperous and vibrant town centres.

Projects

- Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy
- Regenerating communities and town centres
- Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for community enterprises and businesses to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work
- Keeping the Benefit Local

An update on the projects

Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy

The culture and visitor economy work has focused on strengthening local attractions and supporting tourism that benefits communities:

- Discussions were commenced on the development of the Arosfan space in Tywyn following the completion of the Cricieth, Pwllheli, Llanberis and Caernarfon sites. This will help to better manage overnight stays and ensure that visitors contribute more positively to local communities. It is intended to carry out an evaluation of the pilot in 2026/27 to to assess its value and identifythe key lessons learned.
- Improvements to the Lloyd George Museum have been completed and the museum has now reopened. This strengthens the cultural offer of the area and provides more opportunities for residents and visitors to learn about local heritage.
- Storiel's exterior improvements are underway and the café has reopened. The exhibitions and the Audience Development Plan are helping to attract more people to the site and to strengthen Storiel's role as a cultural hub for the community.
- Significant projects are underway across the slate landscape, helping communities benefit from the World Heritage Site's heritage through activities, public art and local investment:
    - The Llewyrch o'r Llechi project has already attracted over £35 million of investment to Gwynedd's slate communities. The project has been given an extension, and all elements of the programme are now in place. This will ensure that the investment continues to support Gwynedd's slate communities.
    - 68 events were held with 3,100 people attending, including 1,938 children. This helps residents connect with their heritage and ensures that the World Heritage status brings direct benefit to local communities.

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- Public art was installed at four of the six locations, with arrangements progressing for Llanberis and Bethesda. This enhances the appearance and identity of local places and helps to celebrate the history and culture of the slate areas.
- LleCHI LleNI activities were carried out in communities and schools. This provides opportunities for children, young people and residents to understand and appreciate the slate heritage of their areas.

Regenerating communities and town centres

Work has focused on investing in town centres and local projects that improve facilities, support businesses and strengthen community pride:

- £800,000 from the Shared Prosperity Fund was secured for a fund that supports local regeneration projects such as Menter y Tŵr, Meithrinfa Seren Fach, the Old Library in Deiniolen, Canolfan Rhyd Ddu, Antur Nantlle and Menter Rabar to improve facilities and support local activity.
- £1.3 million was secured from the Shared Prosperity Fund for the Gwynedd Ni Regeneration Plan. The package has supported improvements to public spaces, toilets, community buildings and local schemes, making towns and villages more attractive to residents, businesses and visitors.
- The Empty Properties programme has helped bring 13 empty properties back into use in town centres, and £995,000 has been secured for the Bangor High Street pilot. This helps to regenerate town centres and create new uses for properties that have been empty.
- A Transforming Towns grant was secured for projects at the Porthmadog Community Centre, Cob Crwn and Llety Arall, as well as preparatory funding for Bangor Roman Camp and Slate Quay. A £1.5 million package has also been developed for the Pride in Place Impact Fund, creating further opportunities to improve local places in 2026/27.
- As part of the Gwynedd Ni Regeneration Plan, grants were offered to 55 town and community councils through a pilot fund of £370,000. This has supported local projects such as murals, new play equipment, street furniture and information panels, enhancing community spaces and increasing local pride.
- Since 2022/23, £31.8 million of grants have been secured for the development and implementation of town centre regeneration projects in Gwynedd. This investment helps improve local places, support businesses and create more vibrant town centres for residents and visitors.

Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for community enterprises and businesses to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work

The economic work has focused on supporting businesses, creating jobs and helping residents develop skills and find work:

- £500,000 was secured to continue ARFOR across Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. This helps to transfer the learning from the programme and to develop interventions that support young people, positive migration and Welsh-speaking communities.
- Business Week 2025 took place in October, and news and opportunities were shared with over 4,000 businesses weekly via business bulletins. This provides local

businesses with timely information and helps them take advantage of support and development opportunities.

- A new economic strategy was developed which was approved by the Cabinet and the Full Council. This will provide a clear direction for the Council's economic investment and target resources to the areas that have the greatest potential to create benefit for businesses, employees and local communities.
- Several major economic projects are progressing, including the industrial units of Parc Bryn Cegin, Glynllifon Rural Hub, Portmeirion Tourist Academy, Zip World developments (Penrhyn and Llechwedd Quarry), Albert Gubay Business School (Bangor University) and Trawsfynydd Skills and Science Centre. These investments will create new work, training and business opportunities in different parts of Gwynedd.

Keeping the Benefit Local

The procurement work has focused on ensuring that increased Council spending creates local benefit, social value and a positive impact on the local economy:

- A new Procurement Strategy was developed which sets clear priorities in the areas of delivering local benefit, carbon reduction, value for money, social value, technology, governance and the Welsh language.
- Purchases in areas such as domiciliary care, housing, school transport, equipment hire and recycling are provided by local companies. This helps to keep more public spending within Gwynedd's economy.
- Training sessions for procurement officers were developed and conducted on a regular basis. This increases understanding of how to buy locally, deliver social value and reduce carbon through day-to-day procurement decisions.
- We worked with Business Wales and Adra to raise business awareness of procurement opportunities and the new national procurement regulations. This helps local businesses understand how to compete for work and to take advantage of opportunities in the public sector.

Some of our key achievements

Economic Development and Community Regeneration

- Since June 2024 to the end of March 2026, 3,518 overnight parking bookings have been made at Arosfan sites in Caernarfon, Cricieth, Llanberis and Pwllheli. This helps to better manage overnight stays, reduce pressure on local communities and improve the visitor experience. Fresh water, chemical waste-water, recycling and general waste facilities are provided at the sites. The sites are located within walking distance of the county's key towns and destinations.
- Grants worth almost £300,000 were offered to 69 community organisations across Gwynedd to support cultural and healthy living activities, including Sports Clubs, cultural and community events, activities for children and young people and well-being projects. The Diwyllesiant project supports the benefit and well-being of Gwynedd's communities, environment and businesses by promoting and developing opportunities in the priority areas of Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Sports and Sustainable Visitor Economy.

- £1.3 million of grants were secured from Government funds to support 118 businesses in Gwynedd in 2025/26. The support, along with drop-in sessions and a business survey, has helped local enterprises reduce costs, increase income and access relevant information and training.
- Support was provided for 255 residents of Gwynedd to find work, and 130 residents were supported to earn a better salary, develop skills or overcome obstacles. This increases income, confidence and stability for individuals and families throughout the county.

Culture and Leisure

- Almost 965,000 visits to Byw'n Iach centres were recorded, demonstrating strong usage and demand for the services.
- There were over 1.2 million digital visits and engagements with the museums and galleries service. Customer satisfaction was consistently high across cultural services, including 95% in Museums and Galleries, 98% in Libraries and 95% in Neuadd Dwyfor.
- Between 97% and 100% of participants reported that they had benefited from community arts and well-being projects.
- Neuadd Dwyfor attracted almost 20,000 ticket sales and over £200,000 in income, while there was a significant increase in visits and activities at other cultural locations.

Case Study - Further studies can be found on the Council's website

Gwaith Gwynedd

The number of people who want work but are unable to get a job in Gwynedd is low; but there are a higher than average proportion of working age people in our community who do not have work and are not looking for a job.

Gwaith Gwynedd is the name of Cyngor Gwynedd's service to help our residents overcome barriers that prevent them from working or getting a better job. During 2025/26, Cyngor Gwynedd secured a £1.5 million investment for this important field, employing a team of 14 to offer help directly to the residents and fund further support from partners within our communities.

As a result of this commitment and intensive support, 255 individuals got a job during the year and another 130 completed training that will help them to get a better paid job.

One of the Gwaith Gwynedd beneficiaries in 2025/26 was Seimon:

Seimon was homeless, sleeping rough and without any income when he self-referred to Gwaith Gwynedd at the advice of Job Centre Plus. Seimon was supported to get urgent access to the Council's homelessness team and, once he had gained temporary accommodation, Gwaith Gwynedd helped him to apply for jobs locally and prepare him for an interview. With our support, within a month, Seimon moved from sleeping rough to having accommodation and a job. To ensure that his success was sustainable, Gwaith Gwynedd provided him with a bus ticket to ensure that he could travel to work until he

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received his first pay packet. Seimon returned for further help following the loss of his job, which is not unusual for an individual who has experienced homelessness. He continues to live in temporary accommodation but has secured new employment and is currently awaiting a start date.

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A Homely Gwynedd

A Homely Gwynedd focuses on helping people live in suitable, affordable and quality homes in their communities. By increasing the supply of housing, bringing empty homes back into use, reducing fuel poverty and strengthening homelessness arrangements, we are working to improve the quality of life, health and well-being of Gwynedd residents. We will try to achieve this by setting an ambition to:

- Ensure that no one is homeless in Gwynedd.
- Help the residents of Gwynedd to own an affordable home in their community.
- Ensure that new housing in Gwynedd is environmentally friendly.
- Ensure that Gwynedd housing has a positive influence on the health and well-being of the county's residents.

Projects

- Increasing the supply of housing for local people
- Tackling the energy cost and fuel poverty crisis
- Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Managing second homes and short-term holiday lets

An update on the projects

Increasing the supply of housing for local people

Work to increase the supply of housing has focused on creating more homes for local people and making better use of existing properties:

- 139 social homes were developed during the year, bringing the total to 506 since the start of the Housing Action Plan (HAP), exceeding the target of 500. This increases the choice of affordable homes and helps more people stay or return to their local communities.
- It was proposed to bring 28 empty properties back into use through the empty homes grants during the third year of the Plan. A further 37 empty properties were brought back into use during the year through the grant, bringing the total to 145 vacant properties since the start of the HAP.
- 85 properties were purchased through the Homebuy Scheme helping 221 people to live in their local communities. This gives individuals and families a practical opportunity to find a suitable home close to their local networks and services.
- A target was set to buy 68 homes off the open market through the Buy to Let Scheme by March 2026, with the aim to let at least 40 of them to tenants in need of housing. 66 were purchased with a further 4 in the legal process. 32 houses were let with a further 7 in the process of being let.
- Difficulties with the water connection have delayed the work. There was some slippage with the two Tŷ Gwynedd developments due for completion during 2025/26, namely Dôl Afon Goch in Llanberis and the Coed Mawr site in Bangor, but they will be completed during 2026/27, and two further developments are in the pipeline.

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Tackling the energy cost and fuel poverty crisis

Work on fuel poverty has focused on supporting residents facing high energy costs and on improving the efficiency of homes:

- Almost 650 individuals were referred to ECO4 and Nyth in 2025/26 exceeding the original ambition of 300. This helps residents access energy improvements that can make homes warmer, more efficient and cheaper to run. Between October 2022 and March 2026, 1158 homes have seen an improvement in their energy performance with an increase in the EPC (Energy Performance Certificate), with 125 increasing to A; 824 to B and 166 to C. This has meant that over £10 million has been spent in the county since the start of ECO4.
- 309 vouchers worth £11,880 were distributed to residents in need who were on prepayment meters. Since the scheme began, 6,515 vouchers worth £264,773 have gone directly to the county's most vulnerable residents, providing direct support with vital living costs. This has helped the county's most vulnerable residents to receive assistance with heating costs.
- 67 residents were referred to support services such as the foodbanks, Age Cymru, Carers Support, Canllaw, Citizens Advice and housing associations. This ensures that people are connected to the most suitable support for their situation.
- 32 energy drop-in sessions were held across Gwynedd. These sessions give residents face-to-face advice and help them understand what support is available to reduce energy costs.

Ensuring that no one is homeless in Gwynedd

Homelessness work has focused on increasing suitable accommodation options and reducing reliance on emergency accommodation:

- Improvement work was completed at 35 Ffordd y Coleg, Bangor and tenants are due to move in over the coming months. Tenants have also moved to 137 Stryd Fawr Bangor, which provides accommodation for 12 individuals. This increases local accommodation options and helps people move on from vulnerable situations.
- An open day was held for the Penrallt scheme in Caernarfon, and the planning application is ready to be submitted. The scheme will help create additional and suitable accommodation provision for people who need support.
- Reliance on costly, unsuitable emergency accommodation to house homeless people remains high in Gwynedd, but the Housing and Property Department is making intentional and successful efforts to reduce dependency and further increase temporary accommodation options. The department is seeking opportunities to purchase prefabricated buildings, and 3 buildings were purchased over the last period to further increase temporary accommodation options – 1 in February (Bangor) and 2 in March (Caernarfon and Bangor).

Managing second homes and short-term holiday lets

The work on second homes and short-term holiday accommodation has focused on managing the impact of the housing market on local communities:

- The Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) report was submitted to the Cabinet in June 2025 and was adopted to assist applicants in understanding and implementing relevant planning policies when submitting applications. However, in February 2026 the Judge refused to allow the Council's appeal, quashing the Article 4 Direction. As a

result, the SPG is no longer operational. However, the Council remains committed to tackling the housing crisis, protecting Gwynedd's communities, and ensuring fair opportunities for residents to live in the county.

- The results of the research into the impact of the Council Tax Premium in relation to any change of use of a property were reported to the Council on 4 December 2025. The premium has been shown to have made a contribution to bringing second homes back into use as primary residences. The Council Tax Premium on second homes was maintained at 150% (2025/26) and the Council Tax Premium on long-term empty properties increased to 150% in 2026/27, as a result of the number of empty houses that still exist. The money raised since the introduction of the Premium in 2018/19 has contributed to funding the Housing Action Plan, which aims to build, purchase or refurbish over 2,000 units that will help over 15,000 Gwynedd residents over the lifespan of the Plan. This has resulted in helping 13,194 people in Gwynedd since the introduction of the Premium in 2018/19.

Some of our key achievements

- The empty housing grant has helped 145 people in Gwynedd to bring empty properties back into use. The grant, which is now available to a wider range of buyers, supports vital works such as roofing, insulation and heating systems, turning derelict homes into suitable and quality homes for local people.
- Through the Buy to Let Scheme, 66 homes were purchased from the open market, with 32 already let and others being renovated or in the process of being let. This keeps more homes in use and offers more affordable rental options to people on the intermediate housing register.
- The average time spent in accommodation has remained stable over the past year, and it can be reported that the number of of people in B&Bs decreased from a peak of 217 in July 2025 to 182 in March 2026.
- Leasing Scheme Wales is a scheme that gives landlords and owners of empty homes the opportunity to lease their property to the local authority for a period of between 5 and 20 years. The scheme guarantees property owners a monthly rental income and a full property management service from the local authority, without the need to pay commission. 53 expressions of interest for Leasing Scheme Wales were received over the year from landlords and owners of empty homes, and several properties are going through the process of being assessed or further action being discussed. 91 individuals have benefited from the Council's houses on lease, and the ability to move households from emergency accommodation to more suitable temporary accommodation has eased some of the pressure on the homelessness service.
- 13,194 people have received support to live in a home in their local area through the Housing Action Plan schemes since it was launched. The Housing Action Plan includes Supported Accommodation for the homeless, Tŷ Gwynedd, a Homebuy Scheme and a One Stop Shop.
- 506 social units have been developed through the Housing Action Plan, which is part of the Social Housing Development Programme, with a further 299 underway on the Main Programme at various stages of the process.

- The Council has helped bring 343 empty homes back into use with an additional 62 properties in the last year alone.
- 97% of social housing lettings were made to people with a local connection to Gwynedd during the last 12 months, ensuring that housing meets the needs of local communities.

Case Study - Further studies can be found on the Council's website

A young local couple receives a house in Porthmadog through the Buy to Let Scheme
The Cyngor Gwynedd scheme to buy and upgrade houses to let for local people has already changed the lives of residents in the county, including a young couple in Porthmadog who have now received keys to an affordable home in their own community.

Since 2021, the Council has been implementing the Buy to Let scheme, which is a central part of the Housing Action Plan that is worth £190 million. The aim is to purchase 100 properties across the county and let them to local people to address the shortage of affordable rent houses in Gwynedd.
Through the scheme to date, the following has occurred:

- 66 properties have been purchased by Cyngor Gwynedd
- 32 of these have been let to local people
- The remaining ones are in the process of being renovated to appropriate standards before being let.

These properties include houses in areas where many people in Gwynedd are having difficulties finding affordable housing, such as the communities of Aberdyfi, Llanberis, Cricieth and the Pen Llŷn area.

The Council is working with Adra on this scheme, with Adra taking responsibility for managing the properties on behalf of the Council. The homes are available for individuals who meet the Tai Teg criteria. For those who are interested, registering with Tai Teg is the first step to apply for one of the houses.

One of those who have benefited is Ffion Morris and her partner Rhodri, who now live in a house through the scheme in Porthmadog:

"As a local couple, one from Penrhyndeudraeth and one from Porthmadog, we had been looking for a home for some time but had difficulty finding a suitable place to rent in the area.

Moving to our new home through the Council's Buy to Let scheme feels like a dream and an incredible opportunity for us.

We see a bright future here in our new home and are very grateful to the Council, Tai Teg and Adra for supporting us through the process."

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A Caring Gwynedd

Caring for vulnerable individuals is one of our main responsibilities and our ambition is to support Gwynedd residents to live full and safe lives in our communities by:

- Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- Supporting residents to participate and engage with their communities, and to reduce poverty and its impacts.
- Ensuring that children, young people and their families live happy lives and reach their potential in terms of their education, health and well-being.
- Ensuring there is information available for the residents of Gwynedd to assist them in making informed decisions about their health and well-being.
- Enabling Gwynedd residents to live independently in suitable accommodation and with dignity for as long as possible in their community.
- Supporting unpaid carers.
- Providing high-quality care and support in the right place at the right time.
- Supporting our communities to ensure accessibility and to develop into an Age Friendly county.

Projects

- Modernising our care resources to meet future needs
- Using more technology to improve the ability of Gwynedd residents to access support and care
- Ensure that timely and full support is available to support people to be able to live at home with their families
- Working with Health Services to enable people to live their best life in the community
- Developing training and employment opportunities for individuals in need of support
- Llechen Lân
- Support People's Well-being
- Autism Plan
- Develop a residential provision for children in care in small group homes

An update on the projects

Modernising our care resources to meet future needs

The work of modernising care has focused on developing services and accommodation that suit people's needs now and in the future. This is what we achieved during the year:

- The Council's priority is to ensure that the county's care homes meet modern standards and that a wide range of accommodation options are available to support individuals who continue to be able to live independently with little support. An outline business case for a new nursing and dementia home in Penyberth was submitted to the Cabinet in December 2025. The scheme is a partnership between the Council, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and ClwydAlyn Housing Association. The scheme will be part of the Penrhos integrated health and care campus, offering modern and bilingual care provision, which will have 56 beds including high-quality dementia and nursing provision closer to home. This new

model of nursing care helps people receive appropriate care closer to their communities.

- 2 supported houses were completed for individuals with learning disabilities in Harlech and Penrhyndeudraeth. Supported Housing in the Community offers individuals suitable and safe care homes and gives them the opportunity to live independently, with the support they need.
- Work to develop Extra Care Housing in Pwllheli is ongoing. The scheme will help people live independently for longer, with support available when needed.
- A brief and business case was submitted to the Housing and Property Department for Extra Care Housing in the Caernarfon area. However, due to the need to confirm practical information, there is a delay in drawing up the timetable.
- Although we had planned to commission work during the year to produce a full analysis of the Council's internal residential homes to identify the investments needed to meet modern standards, the timetable has slipped. It is planned to appoint a company to undertake the work shortly.
- Work with the Housing and Property Department was commissioned by Housing LIN to produce a report summarising the demand for care accommodation in Gwynedd over the next 20 years. This will enable us to plan accommodation developments for the coming years based on clear evidence. The final version is expected to be ready during 2026/27.

Using more technology to improve the ability of Gwynedd residents to access support and care

The digital work has focused on helping people and their families access information, advice and support more easily:

- The Dewis Cymru website shares information about services, organisations and events that support individuals in their community, with many of the services being statutory. We continued to promote the website and train editors to support the system in future. This helps residents find local information about support services and well-being activities.
- It was seen that the number of telecare users continued to increase steadily, as individuals transferred from services from the housing associations of Adra and Grŵp Cynefin. The team continues to work closely with the housing associations to ensure a smooth transition for residents. Social work teams are supported to understand and use telecare devices so that they can promote the menu of telecare devices to individuals and families. This enables people and their families to request equipment through the Council's website, helping more people to become safer and more independent at home. The aim is to promote independence and living well, reducing the need for traditional care intervention.
- The project to transfer people using Direct Payments to the new employment card system has faced a number of challenges. While the new arrangements allow for closer monitoring and better collaboration with individuals and their carers, issues with the current provider have led the department to consider alternatives to ensure better choice for users.

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Ensure that timely and full support is available to support people to be able to live at home with their families

This work has focused on ensuring that support for individuals and carers is more timely, clear and co-ordinated:

- The Council encourages people with medical conditions or who are vulnerable to be part of a national plan that could save vital time in an emergency. Working with local partners, the Council is promoting the 'Message in a Bottle' scheme, which is a way of keeping key personal and medical details where the emergency services know to look out for in an emergency. It includes a form to record details such as allergies, health conditions, medications, and emergency contacts, which is safely kept in a small bottle with a green cross on it in the refrigerator. Stickers and a green cross will be put on display at the home, drawing the attention of the emergency services to the presence of the bottle. This gives families peace of mind and helps services respond more quickly when needed.
- While waiting lists for domiciliary care have remained relatively similar, work on the implementation of the work programme has been progressing steadily and the number of people waiting over 91 days for domiciliary care has reduced. The work continues to promote closer collaboration between the social work teams and the provider.
- 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 that individuals get the support, technology and choices they need to live as independently as possible, in line with their wishes and circumstances.

Working with Health Services to enable people to live their best life in the community

Collaboration with health services has continued to support people to live their best life in the community:

- The Adults department continues to pilot the role of a Social Work Practitioner who is based with Hospital Discharge Coordinators to facilitate patient discharges and prevent unsuitable referrals from reaching the community resource teams. This allows access to the local care knowledge and expertise to ensure the most appropriate support in the community where the patient lives. The results are encouraging and the performance data shows that there is an increase in the number of assessments being carried out.
- To ensure that the Council fully promotes the well-being of individuals, local community resource teams are now working on a sub-area basis, taking greater ownership of local care packages. This improves an overview of people's needs and helps provide more co-ordinated care.

  By making more effective use of third sector support, it enables the Council to provide alternative support to promote good living and early identification of needs. It is expected that this will reduce pressure on statutory services and enable the Council to focus its resources on those who need it most. A review of the commissioning of 3rd sector services has been undertaken, and we will continue to work with Mantell Gwynedd.
- Gwynedd Dementia Actif provides activities, information and support to individuals living with dementia and their families. The service helps people to stay active,

connected to their communities and to access support after diagnosis reducing isolation and supporting the well-being and confidence of individuals and carers. The impact has been significant, and an increase was seen again in the number of people contacting the service: in March 2026, 305 individuals attended, 55 living with dementia, 61 were unpaid carers, and a further 189 socially benefited. This shows the value of Dementia Actif when supporting individuals to live independently and to support carers.

Developing training and employment opportunities for individuals in need of support
This project focuses on increasing employment and training opportunities for individuals who need additional support:

- Work to raise awareness of employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities within the Council is starting to bear fruit. More individuals are now employed, and discussions are ongoing with other services to expand these opportunities. This helps people develop skills, confidence and independence. By the end of 2025/26, there were 134 individuals involved in the scheme, with 60 of these in paid employment and the remainder volunteering. These opportunities are very important from a well-being perspective and a sense of fulfilment for the individual, while also promoting independence and providing an opportunity to engage with others within the community and consequently reducing the demand for care services.
- The Learning Disability work: Extending Work Opportunities has gained national recognition, with the team being invited to present at the IMPACT conference 'Improving Adult Care Together' in Cardiff. This was an opportunity to share Gwynedd's good practice, showcasing the innovative approach to supporting people with learning disabilities into meaningful work, and strengthening the county's profile as a leader in the field.
- Work has begun on developing a community opportunities strategy with the department's partners for learning disabilities in Gwynedd. The work will continue in 2026/27 alongside the reshaping of the Llwybrau Llesiant scheme. Funding for the employment support service will continue until March 2027 but we are yet to resolve how the service will be funded permanently into the future.

Llechen Lân
The Llechan Lân work has focused on bringing together the work of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department in a clearer and more coherent manner:

- It is planned to create a single plan for bringing together all the work of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department to streamline the work streams. When preparing an analysis of the demography of Gwynedd; the demand for service and the best practices of adult social services, we will better understand and highlight the demand for service and the associated resources that will be needed for the next twenty years.

Supporting People's Well-being
Well-being support work has focused on ensuring that local support is available to residents facing hardship, isolation or cost of living pressures:

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- The Council supports networks of Community Hubs, which are in place in all 13 areas across the County. The hubs provide help with information about things like food, energy and money, as well as activities and services in residents' communities.
- The Well-being Facilitator has established a programme of drop-in sessions at local libraries and partnership events to raise awareness of the cost-of-living help and support services available. This makes it easier for people to get advice and support close to their homes.
- Grants worth £217,743 have been allocated to community groups and foodbanks to strengthen local support for residents. The Food Scheme includes the establishment of a grant fund for food and feeding schemes by community groups, community cooking courses in conjunction with the Health Board and the creation of community gardens and allotments.
- As part of strengthening the support offered to residents, the Council has started to introduce Money Guiders training to front-line staff to develop residents' support skills with financial and budgeting matters. The training comes in three levels and aims to give staff the skills and confidence to support individuals with financial issues in a sensitive and effective manner. Staff in libraries, Siopau Gwynedd and Galw Gwynedd have already started attending the training, moving towards providing more comprehensive support rather than just a discursive approach.
- Through the Community Resilience Project, the Council continues to work with Citizens Advice and Advice Mid Wales to strengthen the financial support and advice available to people locally. This includes supporting individuals to complete national financial application forms. This brings specialist advice closer to people who need support and numeracy and budgeting support is provided to the residents of Gwynedd.
- As part of our efforts to tackle under-claiming, Pension Credit campaigns were carried out during 2025/26, targeting 167 residents who were identified as eligible but not claiming the benefit. This can mean up to an extra £23,199 a year for residents, or around £209,874 over the average lifetime of someone claiming it.
- The social tariff offers a 'cap' on bills to households on lower incomes or in vulnerable circumstances, helping to reduce the pressure of vital living costs. In September 2025, it was reported that 2,607 Gwynedd residents were claiming Welsh Water's HelpU social tariff. However, up to 5,400 residents may be eligible for this support but are not currently claiming it. The Council is pleased to be working with Welsh Water to promote this scheme and to ensure that more residents are aware of their entitlement and receive the support they deserve.
- 26,368 food packages were distributed, ensuring urgent and vital support to thousands of households at a time of financial pressure.
- During 2025/26, 41 community groups were supported through the Emergency Food Grant with an amount of £150,335 going towards Food Banks, Food Pantries, Dinner and Lunch Clubs and Food Packages in communities.
- Housing Benefit continues to be a vital source of support for Gwynedd residents, with 2,557 citizens receiving it during 2025/26, with a total value of £11,779,117.
- The Benefits service administers the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Fund, which provides additional financial support to those facing housing difficulties. During 2025/26, 1,105 families received support through the DHP fund with a value of £451,296.

- A large number of Warm Welcome venues in Gwynedd continue to grow from strength to strength. During 2025/26, 67 new locations were registered on the Warm Welcome map, and £49,045 in grants were allocated to support a range of locations. The scheme offers warm, welcoming spaces throughout the county where people can drop in for a cup of tea and a chat, take part in social activities, or have a bite to eat, helping to reduce loneliness and strengthen community ties.
- The Council's Cost of Living website has been used significantly, including 495 visits to an energy support page, 544 visits to a community hubs page and 412 to a page for information on keeping warm.
- The Preparing for Winter campaign has attracted around 1,900 visitors to the information page on the website since September 2025. A specific booklet was also printed for the campaign, which was distributed to GP surgeries, community hubs, libraries and various community settings and partners.

Autism Plan

The Autism Plan has continued to strengthen understanding, support and resources for neurodiverse people, their families and the workforce:

- 2163 Social Services workers have completed Autism level 1 and 2 training, with further training underway in fields such as social work through a neuro-positive lens in the workplace. This improves staff understanding and helps to provide more suitable support for neurodivergent people. The team also trains employees to facilitate and run support and educational groups and programmes for parents and carers, as well as identity groups for autistic young people.
- The Cygnet Train the Trainer programme runs quarterly, and a parent support programme through the medium of Welsh has been developed in-house which reflects the voice of parents/carers, current research with a neuro-positive ethos and approach. More relevant, accessible and responsive support is provided to parents and carers.

Develop a residential provision for looked after children in small group homes

This work focuses on providing local, stable and home placements for looked after children:

- The plan for developing residential provision for looked after children in small group homes has now developed significantly. The home in Morfa Bychan has been operational with two children living there since 2025, and the house has received a registration from Care Inspectorate Wales. Ensuring that they are looked after in Gwynedd allows them to attend local schools and participate fully in the life of their communities. Although renovation and registration work is ongoing, the house in Deiniolen is now operational with two children living there, increasing local provision for looked after children.
- The renovation work on the children's residential home in Edern is ongoing and no children are living there yet. The Children and Families department is currently working on the Care Inspectorate Wales registration application to ensure that the application is ready once staff have been appointed for the home.

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Some of our key achievements:

- RoboPet technology was introduced to some members of the community within the Physical Disability and Older People's service and the Learning Disabilities service, in the form of a pet. This simple technology can help reduce loneliness, reduce anxiety, offer comfort and connection on a daily basis and improve the well-being of people living alone.
- The bilingual Niwro Cymru App was developed and launched by Autism Gwynedd to support children and young people and neuro-diverse adults, their families and professionals. The App offers clear and reliable information, fun and soothing activities, local event and support spaces as well as other resources. Through discussions with the young people of Gwynedd and their families, their ideas were used to create the content, key features and logo design of the App.
- There was a total of 293 looked after children in Gwynedd at the end of the financial year, and over the last year, 7% of them have left care and returned home. 96% of case conferences were held where the voice or opinion of a child over the age of 5 had been heard. Also, 100% of assessments are now completed using a child's language. This shows that the voice of the child is taking a more central place in decisions.
- Within the Youth Justice Service, the number of young people entering the service for the first time fell to 20, a decrease of 17%. This is welcomed given the efforts made by the service and the Management Board over the past two years. It reflects prevention and support work that helps young people to avoid further contact with the justice system.
- 39 Fun sessions took place during 2025/26, with 1,142 children attending. In addition, 706 children and 323 parents attended 34 Play Trailer sessions during the year. This provides play, socialising and support opportunities for children and families across the county.
- Additional funding was secured to support the Children and Families services, including operational jobs, residential service, out-of-county placements, direct payments and Derwen support workers. This helps to maintain more stable and responsive services for the children and families of Gwynedd.
- The After-care Team continues to identify opportunities for young people to come together, socialise and get extra support. During May, some young parents were given the opportunity to come together in the company of an individual from the Care Academy to discuss the opportunities available to them within the field of care in Gwynedd.
- 150 career events were held to promote the Care Academy, and 110 work experience placements were organised. 6 new Gwynedd Care Academy trainees were appointed in February 2026, bringing the number of Academy trainees to 11. 51 applications were received for this opportunity. This will increase the workforce and help respond to recruitment challenges by developing local talent.
- A 72% increase in the number of followers of Teulu Gwynedd's service on social media following the re-branding and re-structuring of the team to have more officers operating on the marketing and engagement element.
- 'The Right Way' by the Office of the Children's Commissioner has been adopted as the main national framework, focusing on embedding children's rights (UNCRC) in

all aspects of policy, planning and services. In February 2026, a 'The Right Way' workshop was held for Cabinet Members, Scrutiny Chairs, the Senior Management Team and the Youth Forum with the aim of raising awareness and strengthening understanding of the principles.

Case Study - Further studies can be found on the Council's website

Team Around the Family

A young person was referred to support services following concern about his behaviour in the community, where he had already received two yellow cards and was at risk of getting into further problems. He also faced significant educational challenges because of additional learning needs that they had not fully understood, with a risk of being excluded from the school. As a result, tensions and conflict in the home were increasing, impacting the well-being of the whole family.

Support was provided by appointing a Team Around the Family Co-ordinator to assess the needs of the family and co-ordinate services. A wide range of interventions were held, including parenting support, outdoor counselling sessions, support to improve communication between the parents, and educational support through Rhwyd Arall. Other family members also had access to additional support services.

By the end of the intervention, the young person was attending school regularly three days a week and engaging well with his education. A much better understanding of his needs had led to more suitable support, whilst familial tensions had significantly reduced. The mother noted an improvement in her mental health and her relationship with her child, and the family felt stronger and more stable. This positive impact was confirmed through the family's feedback, improved school attendance and assessment measures that showed clear progress.

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A Welsh Gwynedd

As a national leader, we will promote the prosperity of the Welsh language in all parts of the county. Our ambition is to:

- Ensure that every child in Gwynedd can use the Welsh language confidently at school and in their social life.
- Promote the prosperity of the Welsh language in all parts of the county and to ensure that there are adequate opportunities for everyone to be able to use the Welsh language naturally in their communities.
- Collaborate with our partners to facilitate the ability for Gwynedd residents to access all public services through the medium of Welsh.
- Ensure that the promotion of the Welsh language is a key part of all the Council's work, and any schemes that affect the people of Gwynedd.
- Support efforts to create new Welsh speakers of all ages.
- Ensure access to quality recreational, cultural and artistic information and facilities.

Projects

- Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children
- Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd
- Review Gwynedd's Education Language Policy and conduct an evaluation of the Immersion System to ensure that all the education policies and services provided to children and young people in Gwynedd set a firm foundation for the Welsh language

An update on the projects

Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children
The modernisation of the immersion system has focused on improving the resources available to children, teachers and schools, and sharing good practice more widely:

- A new website was launched, which includes weekly blogs and resources. The resources have also been shared with schools through HWB, along with additional resources on request. This gives schools easier access to high-quality materials, supporting more children to develop their Welsh skills, gain confidence in the Welsh language and participate fully in the life of the school and their communities.
- Training on the principles of immersion education was held for prospective teachers at Bangor University in October 2025, with some visiting immersion centres to observe the work first-hand. This helps to develop a skilled and confident education workforce that can support children to acquire the Welsh language effectively, ensuring a high-quality learning experience for learners who are new to the language.
- This work expands the opportunities available to the children and young people of Gwynedd to develop Welsh language skills and thrive in Welsh-medium education. It also supports families that are new to the Welsh language by ensuring that appropriate support and provision is available, contributing to the Council's aim of strengthening the Welsh language and increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the county over the long term.

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- The Immersion System has developed work units suitable for use in schools to support pupils following the Agored Cymru – World of Work Skills course. They have ensured that linguistic support is included within the units so that pupils who are latecomers to the Welsh language can access the work. The need to develop the units was discussed with Agored Cymru to ensure that the work meets the requirements of the framework and is useful to schools that already offer World of Work Skills as part of their curricular offer.

Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd
This work has focused on increasing practical opportunities for people to use the Welsh language in businesses, workplaces and communities:

- We worked with Menter Iaith Gwynedd and the Business Support Team to encourage businesses to use more Welsh with customers. Around 200 businesses in Dolgellau, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Penrhyndeudraeth, Tywyn and Bro Peris were targeted to display a poster stating that they are happy to speak Welsh and support new speakers. This makes it easier for residents and learners to use the Welsh language when shopping and receiving services locally.
- The Cabinet gave its seal of approval to adopt Twf – The Welsh at Work Charter in partnership with the Welsh Trades Union Congress and local unions. This reinforces the Council's position as a leading organisation in fostering a culture that places the Welsh language at the heart of its work, as it is the first workplace in Wales to sign and adopt the Charter. The Charter will support workers, trade unions and employers to create bilingual workplaces and to increase the natural use of the Welsh language at work.
- Work has begun on the establishment of a Welsh Language Project Board to provide a better strategic overview of the work taking place across the Council's departments. This will help to agree clearer priorities for the promotion of the Welsh language in the future.
- The Gwynedd Language Forum Young People Sub-group was established, and a consultation was held with young people aged 16-18 who live or work in Gwynedd about their use of Welsh. 200 responses were received highlighting the need to strengthen young people's confidence in using Welsh, particularly in writing and on social media.

Review Gwynedd's Education Language Policy and conduct an evaluation of the Immersion System to ensure that all the education policies and services provided to children and young people in Gwynedd set a firm foundation for the Welsh language
This work has focused on ensuring that Gwynedd's education policies and services lay a strong foundation for the Welsh language from the early years to the end of statutory education:

- The Gwynedd Schools' Model Education Language Policy was adopted to strengthen Welsh language education and support schools to respond to new legislative requirements. This will help ensure that children and young people across the county have a consistent educational experience that develops their Welsh language skills and confidence to use the language in school, in the community and in the workplace in the future.

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- The policy is for Gwynedd and reflects Gwynedd, its values, its ambition, its needs and the needs of the children and young people of the county.
- The report on the Immersion Evaluation was completed by Bangor University which reviewed the practical arrangements of the 10-week course and empowered the after-care provision, and it was submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in October 2025 where it was accepted. The research identifies clear strengths and proposes four recommendations to further develop the provision. This work helps to ensure that every child and young person in Gwynedd, regardless of their linguistic background, has the opportunity to develop strong Welsh language skills and take advantage of the benefits of Welsh education.

Some of our key achievements

- A draft of the Model Education Language Policy was submitted to the Cabinet, prior to public engagement and subsequent adoption of the Policy as a model for Gwynedd schools. This provides clear and consistent direction for schools in implementing the new requirements of the Welsh Language and Education Act (2025).
- Guidelines, information sessions and a support programme have been developed for headteachers, governors and schools to support the consistent implementation of the Language Policy across the county.
- The Immersion System's new website was launched, providing resources, blogs and support tools to schools, staff and learners across Gwynedd.
- Immersive resources for schools and new speakers were developed and renewed, including materials on HWB and new work units for older learners.
- Training was provided to prospective teachers and teaching staff on the principles of immersion education, strengthening the expertise of the workforce and supporting the quality of provision for new Welsh learners.
- The quality of the immersion provision was positively recognised by Estyn, who noted that the provision was extremely valuable in supporting latecomers to acquire Welsh and succeed in Welsh-medium education.
- Menter Iaith Gwynedd collaborated with Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau to hold a nursery rhyme event for parents and children. A professional playlist was produced so that families can continue to listen and sing together at home, helping to introduce the Welsh language to young children in a natural and fun way.
- Community activities and chat sessions were provided to learners in all well-being areas in Gwynedd. This has provided informal opportunities for learners to practise Welsh, gain confidence and use the language in their local community.
- Community organisations were supported to increase the use of the Welsh language locally including the Rhiwlas Hall committee, a group in Dinas Mawddwy and the Urdd groups in Llanystumdwy and Penrhosgarnedd. This strengthens opportunities for people of all ages to use the Welsh language in community and social activities.
- A Support for Sports Clubs Project was developed to maintain and increase the use of the Welsh language. Local football and rugby clubs contributed to the development of the package ensuring that the support was practical and relevant to clubs that play an important role in the lives of young people and communities.

- During the year, attention was given to increasing the visibility of Welsh names as well as promoting them through the implementation of the Place Names work programme. We worked with Engineers in the Arfon and Dwyfor area to install around 40 new Welsh language street signs and discussed a list of other street signs to be installed during the next financial year. It was arranged for Welsh language signs to be installed at the beaches of Porth Neigwl and Porthor.
- The Council advised others such as Conwy County Borough Council and Monmouth Council on the Council's internal processes relating to property naming, a digital names map and a names app for staff and advised Caernarfon Civic Association about promoting a list of old Caernarfon Street Name plaques.
- 97% of primary pupils and 79.24% of secondary pupils complete at least 70% of their school activities through the medium of Welsh, with very high levels of confidence among teachers to teach through the medium of Welsh. The Language Centres also deliver excellent results with 100% of learners reaching Level 1 or above.

Case Study - Further studies can be found on the Council's website

Developing and Implementing the Gwynedd Education Language Policy
Cyngor Gwynedd has been committed for years to ensuring that children and young people develop robust Welsh language skills and can use the language confidently. However, as a result of demographic changes and national policy developments, it became apparent that there was a need to review and modernise the framework that steered Welsh-medium education across the county.

Although all Gwynedd schools shared the commitment to the Welsh language, there was a need to ensure consistent expectations across the whole education system. The need for a modern and strategic policy that would provide a clear direction for schools when planning the linguistic development of learners and when contributing to the aim of maintaining and strengthening the Welshness of Gwynedd communities was noted.

A new Gwynedd Education Language Policy was developed to provide a consistent strategic framework to develop the Welsh language across the county's schools. The policy was created based on research, analysing evidence and engagement with key stakeholders, including headteachers, governors, learners, parents, officers, elected members and the wider community.

After a period of consulting and refining, the policy was submitted through the Council's formal democratic processes, including the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet, where it was approved.

The new policy was developed based on evidence, research and existing practices, with input from schools and stakeholders to ensure that its content reflected the needs and reality of Gwynedd schools. The policy was submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to challenge and review before being submitted to the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet for approval. Following this, the policy was submitted to school headteachers across the county and schools were encouraged to consider its adoption. To support the implementation process, guidelines, information sessions and discussion

opportunities were provided to ensure a clear understanding of the expectations and, where required, governing body meetings were attended to explain the content of the policy and respond to enquiries. In addition, schools received practical support to strengthen Welshness and increase the natural use of the Welsh language within their school community.

From adopting the policy, Gwynedd learners benefit from a clear and consistent direction to develop their skills. Schools and governing bodies also benefit by having a strategic framework to support planning, evaluating and developing their linguistic provision.

On a wider scale, Gwynedd communities benefit as the policy helps schools to contribute to maintaining and increasing the use of Welsh, supporting the language as an integral part of the county's community life and culture.

Although the first step of every school's journey is adopting the policy, an important impact can already be seen. Gwynedd schools now have a general strategic framework that sets a clear direction to develop the Welsh language and plan the learners' linguistic progress.

The policy has sparked strategic discussions in schools regarding their existing Welsh provision. It has also provided a clear path for schools to evaluate their existing situation and plan further steps to strengthen the use of Welsh.

In addition, the work has strengthened the willingness of schools to respond to national developments such as school linguistic categorisation arrangements and the Welsh Government's language policy developments in the future.

An increasing number of schools have already adopted the Education Language Policy or are considering its adoption through their local governance processes. This commitment shows that schools acknowledge the value of the policy as a strategic framework for planning linguistic provision.

Discussions with headteachers and governors show that the policy has already sparked a reflection on schools' Welsh language provision and provide a general foundation for planning further developments. The demand for presentations, clarity and practical support from the Education Department's officers is also evidence that schools use the policy to steer their plans and decisions.

Developing and implementing the Gwynedd Education Language Policy is a strong example of strategic leadership, collaboration and building a consensus across the whole education system. The policy being adopted by schools is not the end of the road, but the beginning of a new period of planning and developing. By providing a clear direction and general expectations, the policy sets a robust foundation for strengthening the Welsh language, supporting learners and ensuring that Welshness remains a central element of education in Gwynedd for years to come.

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A Green Gwynedd

Cyngor Gwynedd has declared a climate emergency, and our aim of being a net zero carbon and ecologically positive council by 2030 remains central to this field. By reducing carbon, improving biodiversity, strengthening recycling arrangements, managing flood risks and improving travel options, we are working to create more resilient, cleaner and healthier communities for the people of Gwynedd:

- Significant reduction in carbon emissions.
- Response to the impacts of climate change.
- An increase in biodiversity and nature habitats.
- An excellent network of paths so that the residents have the option of active travel to their place of work, education or leisure.
- A public transport network that meets the various needs of the communities of Gwynedd.

Projects

- Acting on flood risks
- Waste and recycling
- Climate and Nature Emergency Plan
- Active Travel
- Public Transport
- New Local Development Plan
- Clean and Tidy Communities

An update on the projects

Acting on flood risks

Work to manage flood risks has focused on putting clearer arrangements in place to protect communities from the effects of extreme weather:

- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires the 22 Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) in Wales to produce Local Flood Risk Management Strategies. The strategy for Gwynedd was completed and submitted to the Welsh Government. The strategy sets a clear direction for local risk management to protect homes, businesses and community infrastructure. It identifies the current and future risks associated with flooding and coastal erosion, ensuring residents are aware of all sources of flooding in the community. The work plan that accompanies the strategy is now part of the Council's day-to-day work. This will help to respond more proactively to flood risks and to increase the resilience of communities over time.

Waste and recycling

Work has continued to improve waste and recycling arrangements to make it easier for residents to recycle more and reduce the amount of waste that is disposed:

- A draft Waste and Recycling Strategy was submitted to the Cabinet, and residents were consulted over a period of more than seven weeks. 1,245 responses were received to the consultation, and 62% reported that their residual waste bin was only about three quarters full or less at the end of the three-week period. The

feedback has been used to strengthen the strategy so that future arrangements reflect the experience and needs of the people of Gwynedd.

- Hessian sacks instead of the recycling cart have been trialled in three circuits in the Arfon area in around 1,500 homes, with relatively successful results. Further trials are planned to be held in other areas of the county. The hessian sack trial has shown potential to increase recycling capacity at a lower cost than the recycling cart, with 78% of respondents willing to use them for additional materials.
- The Environment department aims to encourage and persuade residents to improve their recycling practices. Specific awareness raising campaigns were carried out and all households received information about recycling services. This helps to drive behavioural change while also helping residents understand what is available and to recycle more consistently and ensuring that recycling rates continue to improve.

Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

During the year, practical progress was made to reduce the Council's carbon footprint, strengthen clean energy infrastructure and protect nature in Gwynedd:

- The Council now owns 82 electric cars or vans and 9 hybrids, and 6 electric equipment (loading shovels, street cleaning machines), representing 40% of all Council cars and vans.
- By the end of 2025/26, there are 58 charging points at 12 locations across the county to keep the fleet of electric vehicles on the road. During the same period, 48 charging points were installed at 12 public locations, and an additional 12 charging points at 4 Council sites in collaboration with Transport for Wales. The Energy Service (Welsh Government) reported that the Council has the second largest number of green vehicles in its fleet compared to other rural councils in Wales.
- The pilot project of installing LED lighting across the Council estate has been completed at 8 sites, and the provision will be extended across the Council estate in 2026/27. These works will reduce energy consumption and running costs while also contributing to the reduction of carbon emissions.
- The Local Energy Plan was adopted by the Cabinet in September 2025 and all energy saving or generating projects will contribute to the implementation of the scheme.

Active Travel

Active travel has focused on improving walking and cycling routes, so that residents have more choice to travel safely and sustainably, ensuring that walking and cycling become a normal choice for everyday journeys:

- Work was completed on Phase 3 of Ffordd Penrhos/Penchwintan in Bangor creating a multi-use path between Ysbyty Gwynedd and Treborth. The new path and crossing near Ysgol y Faenol make travelling on foot or by bike safer for local children, families and workers.
- Work on footpaths and crossings for Ysgol Foel Gron, Mynytho has improved links in the village. This helps children, parents, and residents move around more safely.
- £500,000 from the Active Travel Core Capital Fund was used to progress several schemes, including, Chwilog to Afonwen, Tywyn to Aberdyfi, Llanberis to Caernarfon, Llanystumdwy to Cricieth and Bethel to Caernarfon. These plans will improve local connections and offer more opportunities to travel without relying on a car.

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- Information packs for headteachers have been developed to raise awareness of road safety, active travel and public transport. A further consultation in 2026 will give residents the opportunity to influence future active travel priorities.

Public Transport

Public transport work has focused on improving access to bus services and making travel easier for residents and visitors:

- We continued to pilot and monitor the Sherpa'r Wyddfa services, G23 between Barmouth and Porthmadog and the Fflecsi service in South Meirionnydd. 563,783 journeys were made in 2025/26 which is an increase of 6.6% on the previous year. This shows that more people are using public travel options.
- As the County's old bus stops have seen better days, sites have been identified to prioritise improvements and install new stops. Improvements worth £500,000 to bus stops have been completed in line with the programme at nine locations across Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd. This has made traveling by bus more comfortable, accessible and reliable, which offers a better experience for passengers.

New Local Development Plan

Work on the new Local Development Plan has begun to lay the foundation for planning the future of Gwynedd's communities:

- An informal survey was carried out to gather views on the matters that the Local Development Plan should consider. This gives people the opportunity to contribute to decisions that can influence housing, jobs, services and the local environment.
- Work is underway to develop strategic options, including considering the demographic evidence of Gwynedd. This will help to ensure that the scheme responds to the needs of local communities over the coming years.

Clean and Tidy Communities

The Clean and Tidy Communities project has focused on improving the appearance of towns and communities, and supporting more desirable local environments for residents, businesses and visitors:

- The town centre cleaners are now active in Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd. Their presence helps to keep town centres cleaner and more attractive for people who live, work and visit these areas.
- Eight purpose-built road sweepers were purchased as part of the modernisation of the cleaning fleet. This will help the workforce to respond more effectively and maintain standards of cleanliness in local communities.
- The Ardal Ni Tidying-up Teams continue to work with community and town councils and local members. Feedback from these councils will help prioritise tidy work where it is most needed. This promotes local ownership and develops a sense of pride by working at a community level.

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Some of our key achievements

- There are improvements in recycling centres such as ensuring that leftover paint can be re-used. This reduces waste, saves costs and provides a practical benefit to residents who can use resources that would otherwise be thrown away.
- A recent study shows that 57% of residents' bins and 58% of business bins contain materials that could be recycled. A trial of opening black bags at recycling centres has reduced the amount of recyclable material that goes into the residual waste. This helps residents make better use of recycling facilities and reduces the environmental impact of waste.
- Town cleaners were introduced in the centre of Bangor, Caernarfon and Porthmadog. Their daily presence means that cleanliness issues are addressed sooner, creating a more welcoming town centre for residents, businesses and visitors.
- The work of transferring the Council's fleet to green vehicles continues with 89 cars or vans being electric or hybrid by the end of the financial year. Comparing 2024/25 with 2025/26, there is a 6.1% reduction in fuel consumption or 102,525 litres less fuel. The decrease is due to the transition of many vehicles from traditional fuel to electric vehicles. Favourable weather also means that there is less use of gritting vehicles etc. during the year. This reduces emissions and supports cleaner public services across Gwynedd.
- Improvements have been completed on Lôn Las Ogwen, and a new multi-use footbridge has been installed over afon Ogwen. This improves access for pedestrians and cyclists, and strengthens links between communities, recreational paths and local attractions.
- The Waste and Recycling service manages to collect 99.8% of bins accurately and on time, reflecting a high level of operational performance. During the period between 2023/24 and 2024/25 a significant reduction of over 8,200 complaints was recorded, equating to a reduction of 44%. There was a further decrease of 1,600 (15%) of complaints between 2024/25 and 2025/26. The continued decline reflects significant improvements in the department's operating arrangements.

Case Study - Further studies can be found on the Council's performance website [link]

Recycling Centres

To modernise Gwynedd's recycling centres and reduce waste, many practical improvements were introduced during 2025/26. Two main challenges existed: the cost and the waste that was associated with the removal of half-full paint pots, and the fact that many recyclable materials were being thrown into black bin bags with residual waste instead of being recycled.

In response, a plan was submitted to re-use leftover paint in recycling centres, enabling residents to take paint from the recycling centres for free. This has helped to reduce waste, save money for residents and the Council, and ensure that useful resources are being reused instead of thrown away. In addition, a plan was submitted to open black bin bags in recycling centres to identify and separate recyclable materials before they are disposed.

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These improvements have been beneficial to residents and the environment. The paint scheme has received extremely positive feedback from the public, with less paint being disposed of at the same time. Similarly, the plan to open black bin bags has led to a significant reduction in the amount of recyclable material going to the residual waste stream, increasing recycling rates in the centres. The initiative is an example of how simple but effective changes can reduce waste, improve environmental performance and make a better use of local resources.

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An Efficient Gwynedd

An Efficient Gwynedd is focused on ensuring that the Council makes the best use of its people, finances, technology and assets to provide good, fair and sound services to the residents of Gwynedd:

- Promote a culture of open and inclusive working which always puts the needs of the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do.
- Provide adequate and suitable staffing resources for delivering services.
- Be an organisation that looks after our workforce's well-being and embeds the principles of equality naturally in all parts of the organisation.
- Make the best use of all financial resources.

Projects

- Workforce Planning
- Develop the Council's Culture
- Ensuring fairness for all
- Women in Leadership
- Manage the impact of national budgetary cuts
- Digital Plan
- Strategic review of Health and Safety management
- Adopt a Property Asset Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for working in the future.

An update on the projects

Workforce Planning

Workforce planning work has focused on ensuring that the Council has an adequate supply of qualified staff to enable it to provide services to the residents of the county, as well as staff with the right skills to continue to provide essential services to residents: The following was achieved during the year:

- By collaborating with Council departments and services to produce workforce plans, a draft Workforce Plan was produced, with the intention of consulting on it during 2026/27. The plan will help the Council to better prepare for future staffing needs and to maintain stable services for the people of Gwynedd, by identifying key posts assessed on the basis of risk to continuity of service, analysing the workforce profile of the teams, producing action plans and establishing review arrangements for the plans.

Develop the Council's Culture

The Council's culture development work has continued to embed a way of working that puts the people of Gwynedd at the centre of decisions and services:

- We continued to implement a work plan to develop the culture of the Council, with a particular focus on listening to staff, strengthening communication and supporting managers in their leadership role. The 2026 Staff Voice Survey was conducted, with the results shared and discussed with the Corporate Management Team, departmental management teams and the Managers' Network. Departmental response plans were

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developed to ensure that staff feedback leads to practical action and to strengthen trust that staff views make a difference.

- We continued to use the Managers' Network as a key way to discuss organisational culture, share findings from the Staff Voice Survey and promote the expectations of the Council's leadership. This contributed to strengthening managers' ownership of the culture agenda and supporting better communication and collaboration across departments.
- In addition, new governance arrangements were established for the work of Staff Voice, including cross-departmental groups to monitor progress, share good practice and identify corporate improvements. This supports the ambition to foster a culture where staff feel their voice is being heard and the organisation is continually learning and improving.

Ensuring fairness for all

Fairness work has focused on ensuring that Council decisions are evidence-based and consider their impact on different people and communities. The achievements during the year were as follows:

- A core dashboard of data on Gwynedd was created to support impact assessments. This will help the Council to make more informed decisions and ensure that policies and procedures are fairer for all.
- A new electronic system for equality impact assessments is ready to be promoted, and awareness-raising work has begun with management teams. Raising managers' awareness of the need to undertake an assessment will ensure that the Council complies with the Equality Act 2010 to improve policies and procedures, and ensure that equality issues are duly addressed when making any changes.

Women in leadership

The Women in Leadership work has continued to support women to develop their confidence, networks and opportunities to lead:

- Two series of the 'Sgyrsiau Dros Baned (A Cuppa and a Chat)' forum were held, with the sessions continuing to be popular. They provide an opportunity for women in leadership roles as well as women in external organisations to share their experiences and backgrounds and be a means of building confidence and supporting each other within the workplace. It is a friendly and informal forum.
- A video was produced to celebrate International Women's Day and the achievements of women within the Council. This raises the profile of women in leadership and encourages others to consider development opportunities. The sixth series of the developmental programme came to an end, with 13 women taking part this year and 71 having taken part since it was established. This strengthens the leadership development pipeline and supports more women to consider and advance to senior positions.
- No specific event has been held directly to raise awareness among men of the opportunities of the Women in Leadership programme, but opportunities are used to promote the project's work in various networks and meetings.

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Manage the impact of national budgetary cuts

Work on managing the impact of financial cuts has focused on monitoring the Council's financial position and planning savings responsibly:

- Performance was monitored and reported to the Cabinet and the Governance and Audit Committee during the year. This ensures clear oversight over progress and helps make transparent financial decisions.
- Following the establishment of the Medium Term Financial Plan Programme Board, information on savings and cuts for 2025/26 was provided. This will help the Council to plan better and minimise the impact on services for residents where possible.

Digital Plan

The Digital Plan has focused on improving systems, strengthening cyber resilience and making services more efficient for staff and residents:

- The work of improving the Council's telephone provision was completed with everyone moving to the new provision. This includes 3 Contact Centres, 1719 softphones and 1539 desk phones which are now live. It strengthens the ability to connect with the Council's services in a more reliable way.
- A new supplier has been selected for the introduction of a new Payroll and Human Resources system, with the aim of paying salaries through the new system in December 2026. This will modernise internal processes and support a more efficient service for staff.
- A Cyber Resilience Officer has been added to the IT team, and work continues to develop and test an incident response plan. This will strengthen the security of digital services and help protect the information of the people of Gwynedd.

Strategic review of Health and Safety management

The Health and Safety review has focused on creating more consistent and proactive arrangements to manage risks across the Council:

- The first phase of a new Health and Safety Information Technology system has been completed which is an electronic form to report accidents, incidents and near misses. A planned pilot was carried out, alongside a structured programme for managers, adopting a 'train the trainer' approach. Over 450 managers have received training, highlighting efficiency, consistency and improved reporting quality.
- The corporate risk register was strengthened to map legislative requirements across the Council. This will help to prioritise audits on the basis of actual risk and to manage health and safety more effectively over the long term.
- Progress was made on an action plan to introduce an integrated model for Health and Safety management. This will reduce risks, improve workforce well-being and support safer and more reliable services for residents.

Adopt a Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for future working

Work on property assets has focused on ensuring that Council buildings are suitable, accessible and support modern ways of working:

- Office needs were identified at Ffordd y Cob and Penarlâg and feasibility work was commissioned for the Penarlâg site. This will help the Council to make better use of its sites and to plan workplace locations that are suitable for the future.

- The Well-being Space at Headquarters was completed and is now operational, and is being used during lunchtime, to hold meetings and for individual use. Funding was also secured to improve equality and accessibility provisions, creating a more inclusive working environment for staff and visitors.
- Plans were also made to make adjustments to Penrallt Offices to relocate PP/YGC officers from Cibyn offices and centralise children's services.

Some of our key achievements

- Savings of almost £7 million, representing 93% of the revised savings schemes since 2015/16, have now been realised.
- Since November 2025, 100% of payments have been made by BACS. The drive to move more to BACS has been completed and means that we have been able to move away from paying with cheques entirely. This will modernise the payment process, eliminating the need for cheques and creating more efficient, secure and reliable arrangements.
- Through the Care Academy, 65 work placements have been arranged, and 6 new trainees have been appointed in 2026, and there are now 11 trainees involved in the Academy. The scheme provides a range of opportunities to work with experienced people within the Council enabling participants to develop skills to ensure a long and successful career within Cyngor Gwynedd's Care services.
- A Staff Voice Survey was carried out during the year, and the results are being used to identify the needs of our employees and how the Council can improve further.
- Cynllun Yfory and the Apprenticeship Scheme contribute to strengthening the Council's workforce by developing in-house talent, attracting new people into key areas and supporting succession planning across services. For 2026, a total of 30 new jobs are available, namely 22 apprentice jobs and 8 graduate jobs with most already filled.

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Case Study - Further studies can be found on the Council's performance website [link]

Trainees - Apprentices and Graduates

Since 2019, the Apprenticeship Scheme has given 103 individuals an opportunity through an apprentice contract which is one of the highest numbers in Wales compared to the population and size of other Councils. Similarly, since 2017, the Graduate Scheme, namely Cynllun Yfory, has given opportunities to 47 professional trainees.

There are several examples of success, with various participants have gone on to secure promotions and permanent posts within the Council. For 2026, a total of 30 new jobs is available, namely 22 apprentice jobs and 8 graduate jobs with most already filled. The work areas vary - from new areas such as land 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.

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Contribution to the 5 Ways of Working, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

	Long-term	Prevention	Integration	Collaboration	Involvement
TOMORROW'S GWYNEDD					
Transform education for children in their early years	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Modernise buildings and the learning environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promote the well-being of children and young people and reduce the cost of sending children to school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Extend opportunities for play and socialising for the county's children and young people	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Formulate and implement a 10-year strategic direction for education in Gwynedd	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Review and improve the range of inclusion provisions in Gwynedd	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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A PROSPEROUS GWYNEDD					
Promoting our culture and a sustainable visitor economy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regenerating communities and town centres	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creating the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for community enterprises and businesses to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Keeping the Benefit Local	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A HOMELY GWYNEDD					
Increasing the supply of housing for local people	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tackling the energy cost and fuel poverty crisis	✓	✓		✓	
To ensure that no one is homeless in Gwynedd	✓	✓		✓	
Managing second homes and short-term holiday lets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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A CARING GWYNEDD					
Modernising our care resources to meet future needs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Using more technology to improve the ability of Gwynedd residents to access support and care	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure that timely and full support is available to support people to be able to live at home with their families	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Working with Health Services to enable people to live their best life in the community	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Developing training and employment opportunities for individuals in need of support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Llechen Lân	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Supporting People's Well-being		✓	✓	✓	✓
Autism Plan	✓	✓		✓	✓
Develop a residential provision for looked after children in small group homes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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A WELSH-SPEAKING GWYNEDD					
Modernising and extending the immersion provision to teach Welsh to children	✓	✓			
Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Review Gwynedd's Education Language Policy and conduct an evaluation of the Immersion System to ensure that all the education policies and services provided to children and young people in Gwynedd set a firm foundation for the Welsh language	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A GREEN GWYNEDD					
Acting on flood risks	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Waste and recycling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Climate and Nature Emergency Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Active Travel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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New Local Development Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clean and Tidy Communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
AN EFFICIENT GWYNEDD					
Workforce Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop the Council's Culture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensuring fairness for all	✓	✓		✓	
Women in Leadership				✓	
Manage the impact of national budgetary cuts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategic review of Health and Safety management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adopt a Property Assets Management Plan to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose for future working	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

https://www.gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales

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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

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

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- 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.

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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 recommendations. In 2025, a new arrangement was introduced where departments have a maximum of 12 months to act on the recommendations of external auditors.

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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.
  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;
        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.

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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 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:

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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
- 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

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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 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 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

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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 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.

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- 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 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.
- 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.

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- 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 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 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

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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 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.
- 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.

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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.
- 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.

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A Homely Gwynedd

Strengths

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

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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.
- 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.

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- 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.
- 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.

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Conclusions of the Self-Assessment

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 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

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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 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	• 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.

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integrated with our corporate planning work.	• 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 current in light of the experiences and developments of recent years.	• 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 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.

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