

THE COUNCIL THURSDAY, 6 JULY 2023

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**Present:** Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes (Chair)  
Councillor Beca Roberts (Vice-chair).

Councillors:- Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Glyn Daniels, Dafydd Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Alan Jones Evans, Dylan Fernley, Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Jina Gwyrfai, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Iwan Huws, Elin Hywel, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gwilym Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Kim Jones, Linda Ann Jones, June Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dafydd Meurig, Dewi Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Llio Elenid Owen, Gareth Coj Parry, Nigel Pickavance, Rheinallt Puw, Arwyn Herald Roberts, Elfed P. Roberts, Gareth A. Roberts, Meryl Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Dyfrig Siencyn, Ioan Thomas, Peter Thomas, Menna Trenholme, Rob Triggs, Rhys Tudur, Hefin Underwood, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Sasha Williams.

**Officers:** Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Dylan Owen (Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Services), Dewi Morgan (Statutory Finance Officer), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Ian Jones (Head of Democracy Services), Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Anwen Davies, John Brynmor Hughes, Linda Morgan, John Pughe, John Pughe Roberts, Angela Russell, Einir Wyn Williams and Eirwyn Williams.

**2. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on 4 May 2023 as a true record.

**3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received.

**4. THE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Condolences were extended to the following:-

- Councillor Angela Russell and family following the loss of her sister;
- Councillor Gwynfor Owen and family following the loss of his father-in-law.
- Dafydd Gibbard, the Chief Executive, and the family on the loss of his mother.
- The family of Joshua Lloyd Roberts, 19 years old, who died in tragic circumstances in Caernarfon recently.
- The family of Gareth Fôn Jones, Headteacher of Ysgol Dolbadarn, Llanberis (the son of the former Chair of this Council, former Councillor Eric M Jones), who died last week. The Chief Executive paid tribute to him.

It was also noted that the Council wished to sympathise with everyone in the county's communities who had recently lost loved ones.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect and remembrance.

The following were congratulated:-

- Rachel Atherton from Dinas Mawddwy on her global success in the mountain biking field by winning the first round of the World Championships in Switzerland following a four-year hiatus because of an injury.
- Everyone from Gwynedd who had been successful at this year's Urdd Eisteddfod in Llanymddyfri recently, particularly Gwydion Rhys from Rachub, the Main Composer, and Tegwen Bruce-Deans from Bangor, who won the Chair.

Best wishes were extended to the Llŷn ac Eifionydd National Eisteddfod which would be held in Boduan next month.

## **5. URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

## **6. QUESTIONS**

*(The Cabinet Members' written responses to the questions had been published in advance.)*

### **(A) A question from a Member of the public**

**Question from Mr Ieuan Wyn (on behalf of Cylch yr Iaith) (address provided in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution)**

"Given that the Council's Education Department and the Cabinet have permitted a situation where -

- children are immersed in the language immersion units for 20% less of the time than they were previously, due to cutting the time the children are at the units from five days a week to four;
- cutting staff at the immersion units from two teachers to one;
- immersion units having to close at times due to staff absences and a shortage of qualified supply teachers;
- and this reduction also limiting the capacity of immersion unit staff to go to the schools to provide guidance and support,

is it true to say that the Council's Education Department and Cabinet have been responsible for weakening the quality and the effectiveness of the immersion provision, and that the situation needs to be rectified?"

### **Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"First of all, in response to the individual points, since this new vision for the immersion system became operational, teacher assessments note that children's attainment is consistent with the former system, and that they are receiving a service that is as good, if not better, than the previous system. Also, the headteachers' comments note that children appreciate being able to maintain contact with their mother school, and I suspect that this system will make it easier to convince parents to send their children to the immersion centres. Of course, we do not have the right to force any family to send their children there, and I believe that it is natural for parents to worry about a child losing contact with their peers, at a time, possibly, when the child has just moved to a new area and is trying to make friends.

In terms of the staffing structure, the new system creates an opportunity to create one team that collaborates and is able to develop on an ongoing basis, and permanent contracts, of course, provide assurance and consistency. No immersion unit has had to close because of the absence of lack of competent teachers. The staff go to mainstream schools every week and they also spend periods at the end of each course providing support and after care to the children.

On a general point, our priority at all times is to place the child at the centre and at the heart of any plans to ensure that every child is in the best possible place to learn and acquire the Welsh language, something that all of us in this room wish to see I'm sure. Also, it is worth nothing that a full team of Estyn inspectors have been inspecting the Authority last week and one of the things that they were specifically scrutinising was the field of Welsh, including the immersion field, and the findings of this inspection will be made public in September. I am very much looking forward to read it in detail, and I would encourage everyone else to read it when it is published."

**Supplementary Question from Mr Ieuan Wyn (on behalf of Cylch yr Iaith)**

"Considering that assistants are able to visit schools to provide guidance on the fifth day, when they have not followed a course in the immersion method or language refresher, and that it will not be possible for the six immersion units in the county to ensure effective transition between the units and the schools on the fifth day, particularly when there is only one teacher in each unit and when there are 79 primary schools and 14 secondary schools in the county, and since the Education Department does not have a structure to ensure supply teachers, so that Llanybi Immersion Unit, for example, has had to have over 6 different non-trained supply teachers in one term, surely the model of the new system should be reconsidered and the shortcomings rectified?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"I believe that it is appropriate first of all to draw attention to the fact that you were involved in the initial introduction of this system, and we are very grateful for the efforts of all who have been involved with the system over the years. I welcome your obvious passion for this critical field, but what saddens me is that the tone of this questioning undermines the utterly heroic efforts of the team that works with these children, undermines the support of their families and undermines the astounding successes of the children themselves, who are managing so excellently to pick up the Welsh language in a short space of time.

As you know yourself, what is achieved in these centres is very praiseworthy. I think of children like Chloe from Lanzarote, who is a fluent Welsh speaker after only starting with us last September. The immersion system is a priority for us in the Council Plan, as you can see. The Welsh Government wishes to roll-out our system nationally, as it is such good practice. Innovative and important strategic work is being done to ensure that the system is always developing and modernising, as those of you who took the opportunity to visit Aberwla [virtual village] over lunch.

The suggestion that we are intentionally weakening the system that we take such pride in and are so passionate about truly saddens me, and could not be further from the truth, because if we did not develop and improve, we would not have the opportunity to launch Aberwla at the Eisteddfod this year as something new and innovative. With those few words, I can only invite everyone who is here today to pop by the launch on the Tuesday during the Eisteddfod, and may I also encourage everyone to read the Estyn inspection report on the immersion provision. I am sure that we will have conversations after that, once you also have

the opportunity to read it, and I am always open to have conversations about the minor details and about your concerns."

**(B) Questions by Elected Members**

**(1) Question from Councillor Dewi Jones**

"Does the Council consider the levels of deprivation in a community when it decides how much provision a community receives from the Cyngor Gwynedd Youth Service?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"A very important question. As part of the process of remodelling the Youth Service, a piece of work on the Equality Impact was completed, of course, and at the time, the importance of maintaining an office and a centre in the two most deprived communities in our county, namely Caernarfon and Maesgeirchen, was noted. The service continues to be free, and there is a presence at every school. The services have reached 42 communities across the county, including, of course, deprived communities. Having said that, I am always open to hear ideas about how to reach young people in more effective ways. These are not difficult to reach people, as they are called, of course, but rather people who are, possibly, not always reached effectively by services.

Indeed, I wish to take the opportunity to thank the member and the other county and town councillors in Caernarfon for the work they do at Porthi Dre, which is an evening for young people which offers a meal, a warm and welcoming space and an opportunity to socialise. I would say that it is a no-frills night, but it is going from strength to strength. As it happens, I popped by last night to say hello and to see what was going on, and it is obviously a night that it really appreciated by the group of young people who were there. I wish to praise Geraint, the 'chef' for the food, for the 'banging chicken nuggets' according to the young people who were there last night, and for the cakes with the hidden vegetables. So, thank you guys, for your work.

You will also be aware that this is a priority for us in the Council Plan - Extend Opportunities for Play and Socialising for the Children and Young People of the County. I believe that this notes our desire to get this work right. Data and views will be collected from all stakeholders and this will give us some guidance in terms of what needs to be developed and improved, and we will welcome the input of people such as the Member, to this process when this is done."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Dewi Jones**

"Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that the press and society in general often forgets about young people, and is guilty of depicting them in a bad light, and that we need to celebrate the successes of young people much more often in an attempt to change this image, which is often wrong?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"I could not agree more, to be honest. I often think that young people are seen as a problem, which is a disgusting perception to be honest, and the words '*hard to reach*' are often heard. Words are so important in every context, but particularly so in this context. For example, we often hear about a *gang of youths*, but why use the word *gang*? You would never say a *gang of pensioners* or a *gang of fifty-year olds* would you? Then, I think that the way that the press depicts young people

often creates more of a problem than there is in reality, until young people are seen as a problem, which is not true.

Years ago, I was involved with a project called Cegin Cofi in the Peblig ward, led by the Town Councillor, Kenny Khan. I know that the image that people have of young people, of groups of young people, of young lads in *hoodies* and so on, it is incorrect and very often a wrong image. What we must now also remember is that this age, the teenage years, is one of the groups that has been affected worst by Covid. Therefore, we need to place a consistent and detailed focus on our young people, who are in their formative years, and who are trying to find themselves in the world, at the same time, very often, as they are battling against factors that we have not got the slightest idea about. To that end, I welcome anything that maintains this focus on young people and highlights their voices, and I know that I have said this before here, but I would like to draw attention to Prosiect 15. There are 3 winners in this project - voices that inspire young people. It appears on Facebook, Instagram, etc. - Prosiect 15 - 3 young people are speaking. Yes, let us highlight the voices of our young people."

**(2) Question from Councillor Huw Rowlands**

"What plans are being implemented to improve the refuse collection arrangements in Gwynedd, in order to overcome the current deficiencies, so that collections happen on time and in accordance with the statutory requirements?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Dafydd Meurig**

"Thank you for the question. As some members will be aware, work is currently underway to transform the waste collection service, and we are working closely with the workforce, supervisors and unions to change the way of working.

High levels of sickness and historical arrangements meant that the service was unable to maximise productive working hours in the past. It is likely that our residents did not see much difference in their collections as additional resources were provided in an attempt to overcome these problems. Historically, this led to significant expenditure, indeed, Cyngor Gwynedd was the second most expensive county in Wales in relation to expenditure per household on waste services last year.

In an effort to deal with this, we, over the past months, have been going through the process of re-designing the collection service, and this is the main reason why missed collections have been happening, particularly in the Arfon area.

However, the work of setting the managerial foundation has been completed and heads have now also met and corresponded with every member of staff to confirm expectations. The new arrangements that have been implemented appear to be coming to fruition, and we expect Gwynedd's residents to hopefully see an improvement in their collections soon.

The service may not be perfect at the start, but if the crews miss a collection on the usual day, every effort will be made to collect on the following day. When things go wrong, we have started a new system of communicating with the communities by providing timely information on social media and to local members, and I am sure that several of you will have started to receive this note to say that the collection has been missed and that an attempt will be made to collect on the following day.

In terms of staffing, two new jobs have been advertised recently, which will help overcome any short-term staffing problems. The service is also re-examining its

fleet, to ensure that we have the most suitable and reliable vehicles. We will also invest in technology to assist the team leaders to manage the circuits more effectively.

Therefore, we apologise for the inconvenience that this reorganisation has caused Gwynedd's residents, but we are confident that the service provided to residents will soon once again be a source of pride to us, our staff and the residents."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Huw Rowlands**

"Is the Cabinet Member confident that the new arrangements and the steps being taken to improve the service are proactive enough and powerful enough to ensure that improvements are made sooner rather than later?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Dafydd Meurig**

"I agree with the frustration that has been regarding the service. It has affected the majority of us, and myself in my own ward, as the rest of us. Yes, I am confident that these changes will come to fruition, but as with every change, it will take time to settle down, but I hope, as soon as possible, that we will see a real difference."

**(3) Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen**

"As the one who represents two of the best beaches in the world, namely Llandanwg and Harlech beaches, whilst I also state that numerous other beaches in our county fall into the same category, I wish to declare my disappointment that the Council did not apply for a Blue Flag status for any of our beaches this year. Can I ask why the Council did not apply?"

**Response - The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for the Economy, Councillor Nia Jeffreys**

"We have sent a written response to the member, and it is available to all other councillors in your papers. I will respond by referring to the final paragraph. As it states, Cyngor Gwynedd, Anglesey Council and Conwy Council all decided not to submit applications for the Blue Flag award. Cyngor Gwynedd has not celebrated Blue Flag Awards in two of the last three years, and despite that, our beaches have been about as busy as they have ever been. The Blue Flag is only an accreditation scheme that evaluates beaches based on various criteria, which do not necessarily celebrate the special features of Llandanwg and Harlech beaches to which you refer.

Our beaches are as clean, safe and popular as they have ever been. Water quality is measured regularly, with many beaches reaching the highest quality, i.e. 'excellent'. Our beaches continue to be among the best in Wales, or the world, and they will continue to attract thousands of visitors and locals again this summer."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen**

"May I ask for reassurance from the Cabinet Member that the work of monitoring our beaches will continue as if we are applying for the Blue Flag, and of course, goes much further with some aspects?"

**Response - The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for the Economy, Councillor Nia Jeffreys**

"I can give assurance that the work of monitoring and publishing the quality of bathing waters along the coast continues in the same way, and I also wish to ensure that the Department will consider relevant opportunities to achieve continuous improvements in the future."

**(4) Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfai**

"In cooperation with Keep Wales Tidy, many Gwynedd communities are seeking to reduce refuse. The 'Tidying Team' are installing additional bins in strategic locations.

However, the refuse problem is often exacerbated, albeit inadvertently, by this Council because:

- i) Refuse/recycling lorries discharging refuse as they speed through the area;
- ii) Grass cutting contractors leaving the cuttings and rubbish which has been uncovered along the road verges.

I would like to know what measures are afoot to improve this situation?"

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal and Gwynedd Consultancy, Councillor Berwyn Parry Jones**

"The written response has been shared, but I will refer to one or two points. In the first instance, I wish to thank Councillor Dafydd Meurig and the Environment Department for providing the response to the first part of the question which relate to the refuse collection lorries. As you can see, this has been a historical problem and that the cartgylchu at the back of the lorries that are used are not the best and so the Department is looking to have some that are more suitable to the work. Also, there is a tendency, of course, among some of the workforce, to move on from one location to the other without closing the doors. The officers will remind the workforce to ensure that the back doors have been closed before moving on.

Moving on to the second part of the question, which is the responsibility of the Highways Department, many have suggested that the contractors who cut the grass should also pick-up any rubbish that is uncovered after the cutting, but this is not included in the contract, and adding this would lead to substantial additional costs. What should happen is that the grass-cutting contractors let the officers know where they are cutting, and then our gangs should follow them to pick-up the rubbish. We will inform the contractors that they will have to comply with this. Of course, the problem is worse in the summer when the visitors are here. Therefore, I hope that we will soon be given the right to charge a Tourism Tax, so that an additional resource is available to deal with the situation, and many other similar situations, since it is unfair that the taxes of the people of Gwynedd are used to pick-up the extra refuse that derives from visitors to the county.

To close, I wish to emphasise the final paragraph, namely education. I am always hearing things such as "*why doesn't the Council pick-up the rubbish that people throw from their cars more often*" I never hear people asking why people throw rubbish out of their cars in the first place, and this is the way forward in the long-term; educating people. We will collaborate with the Welsh Government and Keep Wales Tidy and re-start to visit schools in order to get the message across that it is unacceptable to throw rubbish out of the car window."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfai**

"I would like to know whether the new plans will include collaborating specifically with schools and Keep Wales Tidy, because Keep Wales Tidy have a new

scheme, namely Zero-Waste Schools, and it was disappointing to hear that only two schools from Gwynedd have signed up to the scheme to date."

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Municipal and Gwynedd Consultancy, Councillor Berwyn Parry Jones**

"Indeed, there is work to be done with schools, and as I mentioned earlier, education is the way forward. I will ensure that the Department contacts the schools and Keep Wales Tidy to promote this project."

**(5) Question from Councillor Elin Hywel**

"With a substantial increase in the prominence of the use of Vapes amongst young people, specifically young people of secondary school age, what steps are the Council taking to support our secondary schools in order to address this new and concerning challenge?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"Thank you for the question. Yes, it is something that raises its head very often. It is a growing problem, to be honest, in our secondary schools, and who knows, it may be a problem that will start to arise in primary schools as these things tend to pan out. When I attend headteacher meetings, it is one of the things that is regularly picked up as we raise our concerns."

There are things that schools can do, of course, such as review processes, etc., and adapting the curriculum to address the concerns and educate, but support is also required from the Authority as well, and we are awaiting confirmation of grant funding to support the field and commission a piece of work in an attempt to see what can be done. This would happen jointly with the Be di'r Sgôr Service, the Youth Justice Service and the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service.

Of course, as this is a new field, research and data is scarce, but we will try to be proactive in our efforts to take advantage of any new guidance or research that emerges in the field, but I can reassure you that we are taking this subject seriously and I am hearing this from all directions myself as well."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Elin Hywel**

"As it is not possible for us to know what the long-term effects of vaping are on health, and how easy it is to vape in any area, indoors or outdoors, what steps has the Education Department taken to educate teachers, pupils, but also parents, on the substantial risks of vaping?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"Again, there is work to be done on the educating element, but again, the information is relatively scarce at present, but I believe that we must proceed proactively to find out as much information that is out there for us."

You are making the point about how easy it is to vape, whether indoors or outdoors. This is certainly the case, and this is another conversation that we have had at the headteacher meetings regarding school toilets. That is a location where children and young people tend to go to vape. Then, we have committed to carry out a piece of work which looks at whether there is anything we can do in terms of the style of toilets, how open they are, so that groups of children who go to the toilets to vape, are easier to see. So, there is a small piece of work that will be done by us as a Department regarding all vaping locations."



Also, in terms of the rubbish that Vapes creates, I am sure that any councillor who litter picks has seen these small pieces of plastic everywhere. This is not environmentally friendly either is it? But again, I wish to reassure the member that work will be done on this."

**(6) Question from Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts:**

"Considering:-

- As no substantial change has been made to the Gwynedd Welsh education policy over the past twenty years in an attempt to counteract the ongoing language shift and fraying, from Census to Census, of the remaining Welsh-speaking society,
- and after it has emerged that the Education Department does not monitor the medium of the education in the county's schools,
- and in light of the uncertainty regarding the exact number of pupils in the county who are educated through the medium of English

is it not time to grab the reins and give serious consideration, from anew, to increase the provision at every secondary school in Gwynedd that were formerly in category 2A or 2B so that they equate to the provision in 3P Welsh-medium schools (i.e. 100% of the children undertaking at least 90% of their education through the medium of Welsh), and introducing a suitable monitoring system at once to guarantee that?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"I am going to start by referring to my response to a very similar question that I was asked by Councillor Rhys Tudur at the previous Full Council, and if I may, I would like to note that our Education Language Policy is a local matter for us, that the categorisation process is merely an administrative framework and that we intend to move to update the Language Policy in order to reflect the changes that have occurred in the field of education since the Language Policy was set.

We are serious about the provision in this county, and that is why we are updating the Language Policy. The fact that we are so serious about this provision is evident, I feel, in the fact that we are updating the Language Policy, that we are gathering information within the Department about the Welsh medium and bilingual provision across the county and that we have established the Gwynedd Schools Welsh Provision Task-force to look at the exact things that the member is referring to. To that end, I look forward to see the fruits of the labour of those who are participating in these pieces of work, many of whom are in this room, and to see the resulting recommendations."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts**

"Considering that this matter relates to our continuation as a people, and considering that the matter is relatively simple, despite the technocratic complexity around the system, would the Cabinet Member be prepared to express how desirable it would be to have an education system where 100% of the children in the county undertake 90% of their education through the medium of Welsh, i.e. how desirable in her eyes would it be to designate the schools in the county as 3P schools as is the case in other counties?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"I have stated many times my views on 3P schools and why I believe that they are not suitable for this county, and I will not bore everyone in the room by repeating this again.

I think that what we have here is perhaps a cultural clash or a clash of styles. I believe that, fundamentally, we both wish to see the same things, i.e. improving, empowering and expanding the Welsh provision for our continuation, as you have clearly stated. I may be saying this slightly tongue in cheek, but it appears that you want to approach this all guns blazing, whereas I want to approach things in a way, that will, ultimately, I believe, be more successful, by collaborating, being inclusive, by influencing and taking everyone with us on this journey. I know that you will now think that encouragement and supporting and collaborating, etc., are soft and fluffy terms, but what lies amid these complexities are the people, the families of Gwynedd, and all of us as human beings are one muddle of worries, uncertainties, aspirations and also prejudices - let us all be honest, we all are!

Things like changing category also - you talk about technicalities - changing category changes the percentage of provision, etc., and they all request a full consultation with schools and all types of statutory processes around the school organisation act, with recruitment challenges being a problem. What you are asking for opens the door to challenges that we would not, possibly, be thankful for. Even then, after removing all obstacles and issues, I am not in favour of taking an all guns blazing approach. That does not mean that I am going to be *soft* in my aspirations, which is basically the same as your aspirations, which is to empower the Welsh provision, and thus empower the Welsh language in this county. However, whilst I am fortunate enough to be holding this role, I will never do anything that would disrupt the ability of every child in this county to access a Welsh education, and my greatest aspiration at all times is to see the rest of Wales becoming more similar to Gwynedd, and producing Welsh speakers who are proud of their language and who use it.

However, since I know that you are not a fan of soft and fluffy things, I do have something slightly harder, namely data from our classrooms and from our secondary schools. This has only reached me recently, so just in case I get anything wrong, I will read directly from the e-mail, if I may. "*From looking at the whole-school figures across the county, in line with the definition of the categorisation system, over 70% of the secondary children in Gwynedd undertake at least 70% of their curricular and extra-curricular school activities through the medium of Welsh. Without the two transitional schools, the 3T ones, over 90% of Gwynedd secondary children undertake at least 70% of their curricular and extra-curricular school activities in Welsh.*". I am very proud of this, and I believe that it is something that we should all take pride in. We should be supporting any efforts to disseminate this practice across Wales. That is not to say that we are complacent. There is always work to be done and this is why we have created the task force to do the work that they are carrying out, and that is why we are gathering data in the Department, and why we will continue to work for the Welsh language in Gwynedd at all times."

**(7) Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur**

"Considering the criticism the Council received in an article on Cymru Fyw '*Teithio Llesol: Siom nad yw rhai Cyngorau â diddordeb* ("*Active Travel: Disappointment at the lack of interest in some Councils*")' which related to Active Travel path grant applications beyond the core annual pot of £500,000 per annum, to what extent has the Council succeeded to obtain Active Travel grants beyond its core pot for rural areas over the past 5 years, and to what extent does the Council need to improve its staffing structures to have more success in making future applications?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Dafydd Meurig**

"Thank you for the question. Yes, improving the walking and cycling infrastructure in the county is one of the Council's priorities and over the years, Cyngor Gwynedd has achieved work that I would argue is innovative in this field, and has established 116km of walking and cycling paths across the county.

However, obviously this work is extremely costly and makes the Council very reliant on its ability to attract grant funding in order to achieve any substantial change.

The demand for this Welsh Government funding is very competitive, and in order to succeed, there is a need to submit evidence on how any scheme would address the Government's criteria. Unfortunately, meeting the criteria is more challenging in less-populated rural areas.

This year, Cyngor Gwynedd submitted an application for funding to construct three schemes, namely:

- A walking and cycling path between Tywyn and Aberdyfi, to the value of £1.6m;
- A walking and cycling path in Bangor, to the value of £1.2m;
- A walking and cycling path in Caernarfon, to the value of £350,000.

Only one of these applications was successful, namely an Active Travel Path along Penrhos Road, Bangor. Good news for the members of Bangor, of course, as well as for the people of Bangor, but disappointing for the rest of us. From another fund, namely Safe Paths in Communities, £280,000 has been secured to improve the walking and cycling provision near Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn, Y Bala.

Over the past five years, the Council submitted applications for projects to the value of approximately £10.5 million; however, only £1.5 million was received from the two funds, namely Active Travel and Safe Paths in Communities.

Despite this, we have also benefited from using the core funding to develop schemes that have enabled the Council to attract funding from different sources, which include £2.6 million to introduce improvements to the Brynrefail roundabout and we have also managed to secure £1.8 million for improvements to Lôn Las Ogwen.

Looking ahead, officers are discussing with Transport for Wales how we can strengthen other schemes to secure additional funding. Officers are using a proportion of the £500,000 Active Travel core funding that has been received to develop schemes in other areas, with the intention of being able to submit grant applications to realise schemes in the coming years.

Whilst accepting that capacity challenges have faced the Service over the past year or two, I am confident that the worst is behind us. In addition, the Council's Paths and Access Unit has joined the Traffic and Projects Service over the past months, and I am confident that the close collaboration across the field will strengthen our efforts in the field of Active Travel in the future."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur**

"Considering that a number of cumulative service requests relating to roads and traffic have doubled from December to Easter, and considering that the Department that deals with active travel is going to have the burden of dealing with

matters such as changing speed limits in villages to 20mph, and also as active travel path development, such as in my area, has been delayed for over a decade, I wish to ask, if the Department is already on its knees, is it not essential that we recruit more staff so that we succeed to obtain more active travel funding and ensure that there we do not see many decades of delays before seeing new paths that are desperately needed?"

**Response - Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Dafydd Meurig**

"In terms of paths in the member's area, namely the Afonwen area, I believe that the Department has submitted an application for a path in this area on three occasions, which has been refused three times, and this shows how flawed are the Government's criteria, which favour populated areas instead of rural areas. We cannot submit applications repeatedly, only to see them being refused, when we could better respond to the criteria by submitting applications for places that are more likely to succeed. It is a battle with the Government in that respect, in order to get them to extend their criteria to favour rural areas such as Gwynedd.

In terms of capacity, I accept that there has been capacity challenges over the last few years. The change to 20mph, of course, is swallowing substantial resources, and this will hopefully end when the 20mph restriction is introduced in the autumn. I am aware that discussions have been held between the Head of Environment Department and the Chief Executive about dealing with capacity in the transportation field, therefore I hope that we will see progress in that respect in an attempt to meet the needs."

**7. THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

Mr Eifion Jones, Chair of the Standards Committee, was welcomed to the meeting to present the committee's annual report for 2022/23.

The Chair noted that it had been a privilege for him to be elected as Chair of the Standards Committee in February this year, and that he wished to sincerely thank his predecessor in the Chair, Dr Einir Young, who had provided her service and guidance to the Committee over her 10-year period as a member.

When submitting the report, the Chair drew attention to the new statutory duty on the leaders of political groups and thanked the three Leaders for their collaboration on the initial steps that had been taken to deal with the duty. He emphasised the importance of keeping a close relationship between the Leaders and the Monitoring Officer, noting that the full Standards Committee would arrange a meeting with the Leaders in the near future.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Chair of the Standards Committee for his work during the year.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions.

It was asked how the senior officers of the Council, such as the Monitoring Officer, were moderated. In response, it was noted that:

- The role of the Standards Committee was to look at public conduct and the way elected members behaved as a part of their work.
- That there was a Members' Code of Conduct and an Officers' Code of Conduct, and that everyone adhered to this to the best of their abilities, at all times.
- That there was a completely separate performance management procedure for matters relating to officer performance in respect of their work, and that this was a completely separate matter to the remit of the Standards Committee.

- That the role of Monitoring Officer was a statutory role and that the post holder was accountable and responsible for this function to the Full Council. Should any party wish to lodge a complaint against the Monitoring Officer, they would be required to raise the matter with the Chief Executive.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

**8. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATUTORY DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES 2022/23**

The Statutory Director of Social Services presented his annual report regarding the performance of the Social Services in Gwynedd during the 2022/23 year.

The Director thanked his predecessor in the post, Morwena Edwards, for her thorough work before her departure in summer 2022, and to Lois Owens (Senior Executive Officer) for her assistance in preparing the report.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions.

The Leader thanked the Director for the inspired presentation which highlighted the guidance he was providing, and for the easy-to-read report which included real and wonderful examples of the work that is happening. Furthermore, he noted that the statistics on the front page of the report were astonishing, but again highlighted the importance of the work, and he emphasised that the members were incredibly grateful to the committed staff who made miracles within tight budgets.

The Leader's gratitude was echoed by many other members, and the following matters were raised by individual members:-

Hope was expressed that the next Annual Report would include the protocol being developed by the Department at present on how to help people who suffer a fall and are unable to access an ambulance for hours.

The work being done to ensure dignity and respect for young carers was welcomed and it was asked how many of them had received the ID card, and whether there was potential for this to be expanded? In response, it was noted that it was likely that the vast majority of the 121 young carers who were in receipt of support were using the card, but that he would contact the member with the exact figure.

It was asked how much collaboration took place between the Council and the organisations that support people with mental health problems in the countryside, such as the DPJ Foundation and Tir Dewi. In response, it was noted that he could not provide a definitive answer, but that he could get back to the member with the information. Nevertheless, it was confirmed that the Service attempted to work in partnership with any organisation that promoted mental health, particularly in the countryside.

Referring to paragraph 24 of the report, it was enquired what was the impact of the 9 social worker posts that were vacant at the beginning of January. In response, it was noted that:

- That the Council employed around 150 social workers and 30-40 occupational therapists, and that the exact figures could be provided for the member.
- That the vacant posts created a challenge for the Service in terms of reaching people who demand a service and an assessment, but that this was managed to be done with the social workers, since we had no other option.

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- That all types of other things were going on in the background, such as the situation regarding training and the number of students who went on to train as social workers.
- That it was a huge challenge to get students to go to Bangor University to follow the social work course, as was the case with the Occupational Therapy course.
- That the Council currently had 4 occupational therapy trainees as well as approximately 6 social work trainees at any given time. This went part of the way to fill the gap, but the demand on the service was increasing.
- As the Department's ability to provide assessments was becoming more challenging, it was decided to invest slightly more in workers without the qualification, but who work with eligible practitioners and who are able to carry out some of the lighter duties to ensure that people could be seen sooner and safeguarded.
- That the challenges to recruit carers was even more profound and this was the reason why the number of vacant posts were so high in the Adults Department. Despite the recent increase in carer salaries, fewer people were available in Gwynedd to do this type of work, and it would not be possible to provide care for every person in Gwynedd for the years to come.
- That there was a need to look at alternative ways of providing services in the future, such as Direct Payments, use of technology and robotics, promoting small community enterprises and promoting people and communities to look after themselves.

It was noted that they looked forward over the coming months to see how the work of evaluating how the new domiciliary care model was working.

It was noted that the report provided a good picture of the Service, but that the role of councillors was to go after the things that were not in the report. Concern was expressed about the 40 complaints received about the service, and although it was acknowledged that this was a small number in comparison to the volume of work completed, it was asked how the Department dealt with those complaints. In response, it was noted that:

- He disagreed that the report conveyed a flawless and perfect picture of the Service and that the astonishing figures had been included there to draw attention to the challenges. There was no room to take pride in some of the statistics. There was a need to do more, and Social Services in general had committed to do more.
- That there was a statutory complaints procedure in place to ensure that we received feedback and respond to any concerns so that we did not repeat mistakes.
- That two officers worked specifically in the field of complaints - one in the Children's Department and the other in the Adults Department.
- That an annual report was being prepared on the complaints, and that this could be shared with the members.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

### **9. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

The Chair of the Scrutiny Forum, Councillor Beth Lawton, submitted the scrutiny annual report for 2022/23. She thanked the scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs and all scrutiny members for their work during the year. She also thanked the Service officers for supporting the members and drawing up the report.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. The following matters were raised by individual members:

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It was asked whether there was a reference in the report to the Audit Wales inspection of the effectiveness of scrutiny in Gwynedd. In response, it was noted that the report was yet to be published, and that it would be available in early October.

It was noted that the Annual Report did not show the effectiveness of the scrutiny, i.e. how the observations of the scrutinisers on reports or draft strategic plans had influenced the final reports / strategic plans. It was questioned what the purpose of the Annual Report submitted was, and it was asked when the members would receive a report which genuinely looked at the effectiveness of the scrutiny. In response, it was noted:-

- That only one improvement proposal was being identified in the draft version of the Audit Wales report was this exact point, i.e. tracking the impact of the scrutiny that happens.
- That it was proposed to conduct an internal review of scrutiny arrangements in the autumn. A draft timetable for conducting the review would be submitted to the Scrutiny Forum by the end of the month, and indeed, tracking the impact of scrutiny would also be a part of the consideration during this review.

As the Annual Report listed some of the comments made by members when discussing various matters, it was suggested that it would be sensible to use those comments as a starting point for the work of the following year, so that the departments could return in six months or a year with updates on the main matters raised by the scrutinisers the year before. In response, it was noted that:

- Such comments were always helpful, and if the members had any different ideas on how to get better value from reports, the officers would indeed take those into account next year.
- It was agreed that there was room for improvement, and that there was a need to make better use of the '*Matters arising from Overview and Scrutiny*' standing item on the Cabinet meetings' agenda, and report back to the scrutiny committees on the outcome of the Cabinet's discussions.

It was noted that one got the feeling that the current scrutiny system had been created in order to keep the powers in one place, and although scrutinisers were free to discuss various issues, the link between those discussions and policy changes was not visible. In response, it was noted that the new members on the Council had been able to add a great deal to the scrutiny system, and in the autumn, the members' ideas and comments could be gathered, as well as the comments of Audit Wales, to see whether there is a way to improve the golden thread between the scrutiny and the decision-making.

The former chair of the Care Scrutiny Committee noted that he believed the Committee did make a difference, and he referred to the work done to attract staff and highlight shortcomings in the Ambulance Service and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board as examples of what the Committee had achieved over the past two years.

It was asked how many changes had occurred as a result of scrutiny over the past year. It was also suggested that we should not have to wait for Audit Wales to get back to us, and that the data should be readily available to us. In response, it was noted that:

- An exact figure could not be provided there and then, but changes had occurred as a result of scrutiny, although this may not have been formally reported back through the scrutiny system.
- That members needed to be informed how scrutiny had made a difference, and that the information would be collected and shared with the members.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

**10. AMENDING OFFICERS' DELEGATED RIGHTS SCHEME**

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer detailing amendments to the Delegation Scheme approved by the Cabinet.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

**11. NON-ATTENDANCE OF CYNGOR GWYNEDD MEMBER**

Submitted - a report by the Head of Democracy Services requesting that the Council approve the absence of Councillor Eirwyn Williams from the authority's meetings due to ill-health, in order to enable him to continue to be a member according to his wish.

**RESOLVED to approve the absence of Councillor Eirwyn Williams from meetings of the Council for six months from this date because of personal circumstances, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, enabling him to continue to be a member of Cyngor Gwynedd.**

**12. NOTICES OF MOTION**

**12(A) NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR ELFED WYN AP ELWYN**

Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn in accordance with Section 4.20 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-

The Council calls on Westminster Government to devolve powers over justice (the Courts, Prisons, the Police, the Probation Service and other associated powers) and create a Welsh Legal Jurisdiction.

The member set out the context to his motion, noting that:-

- Wales is the only country with the ability to create legislation, but without its own legal authority, and that the complications that arise from this arrangement means that difficulties arise between the Senedd and Westminster, with the policies crossing on key matters, and the Senedd using its budget to pay for services it doesn't have power over, as well as expensive court cases.
- That many negative changes had been regarding the legal system in Wales over the last ten years, with 23 crown / magistrate courts closing, which meant that more people had to travel further for justice, especially people living in rural communities and areas. Also, cutting the legal support for people in need means that many were suffering from health and mental health problems from worrying about court cases, and this, with time, has led to more stress for the National Health Service.
- That devolving the powers over justice and creating a new system would mean that Wales could take a different route to develop a better legal service for the people of Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own legal authority, as well as the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey; even areas in England have more power over elements of the law than Wales. It is time for our nation to have the same powers to move forward in order to diminish the complicated situation that currently exists.
- It was believed that it was important that the Councillors push these national matters for the benefit of the people of the country, and by bringing these matters before the Council, we start key discussions, that move our communities forward and create systems that work for us.

Many other members expressed support to the notice by noting:-



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- That this was a basic error in the way Wales was operating and that it was essential that our legal system reflects our values and who we are as Welsh people.
- That we needed the power, not only over this, but everything, and that there was a need to look after ourselves as a country and get independence for Wales.
- That the notice by Cyngor Gwynedd calling for independence over different systems / administrations was a certain and necessary step forward.
- That it was not unusual, under the current arrangement, for court cases to be moved at short notice from the court in Caernarfon to Chester.
- That we have the infrastructure, the courts, and so forth, in Wales, but that the old system was managing it all in England.
- That the statistics prove that the justice system managed from Westminster was not working at all, i.e.:-
  - Number of people who re-offend soon after leaving jail - 25% - 30%
  - Number of people who re-offend after being in jail for less than 12 months - 54%
  - The group most likely to re-offend - young males 15-17 years of age
- That research by the Wales Governance Centre highlighted serious inequality between the justice field in England and Wales. It was also believed that there was less offending, but more imprisonments in Wales, especially women, for some reason.
- That the Youth Justice Service was undertaking excellent work keeping the young people of Gwynedd out of jail by supporting them in their communities, but that their work was subject to 2 sets of rules - England regulations / procedures and Wales also.
- The recent Inspectorate that was reviewing the Youth Justice System were not Welsh, and that the only answer, to respect our rights, our language rights, respond to language needs and the needs of others in our communities in Wales was to have one justice system for Wales.

**RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-**

**The Council calls on Westminster Government to devolve powers over justice (the Courts, Prisons, the Police, the Probation Service and other associated powers) and create a Welsh Legal Jurisdiction.**

### **13. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS NOTICES OF MOTION**

Submitted for information - a letter from the Welsh Government in response to the notice of motion by Councillor Huw Rowlands at the meeting on 1 December 2022, regarding improving the train services in Gwynedd.

The Chair noted that he appreciated the letter, but was disappointed at the length of time it had taken to receive a response.

The meeting commenced at 1.30 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm

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**CHAIR**