

## THE COUNCIL, 28/07/23

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

**Councillors:-** Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Glyn Daniels, Anwen J Davies, Dafydd Davies, Elwyn Edwards, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Alan Jones Evans, Dylan Fernley, Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Jina Gwyrfai, Annwen Hughes, John Brynmor Hughes, Louise Hughes, 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, June Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Dewi Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Gareth Coj Parry, Nigel Pickavance, Rheinallt Puw, Arwyn Herald Roberts, Elfed P Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Meryl Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Angela Russell, 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), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Ian Jones (Head of Democracy Services), Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department), Carys Fôn Williams (Head of Housing and Property Department), Steffan Jones (Head of Highways, Engineering and YGC Department), Ffion Madog Evans (Assistant Head of Finance Department - Accountancy and Pensions), Debbie Anne Jones (Assistant Head - Education Corporate Services), Rhys Glyn (Head of Gwynedd's Immersion Education System), Vera Jones (Democratic and Language Services Manager), Sion Huws (Propriety and Elections Manager), Dewi Jones (Council Business Support Service Manager), Gareth Parri (Commissioning Team Leader - Housing and Property) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

### 1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Craig ab Iago, Iwan Huws, Linda Ann Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Llio Elenid Owen, Gareth A. Roberts, Einir Wyn Williams and Eirwyn Williams.

### 2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council, held on 6 July, 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 Louise Hughes and family due to the loss of her mother during the summer.
- Mrs Sharon Warnes, Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee and family following the death of her husband recently.

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It was also noted that Councillor Pete Prendergast, Chair of Denbighshire Council had passed away last week, and condolences were expressed to his family and to fellow councillors at Denbighshire Council.

It was also noted that the Council wished to express condolences to everyone within the county's communities who had lost loved ones recently.

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

Best wishes were expressed to Mrs Sharon Warnes, Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, who was unable to attend this meeting due to hospital treatment.

The following were congratulated:-

- Everyone who had been successful at the Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod in August, especially Rhys Iorwerth from Caernarfon, Alan Llwyd, Treforys, but originally from Abersoch and Alun Ffred, former Leader of this Council, for winning the Crown, the Chair and the Daniel Owen Memorial Prize. Everyone who had helped at the Eisteddfod were also thanked.
- Rhodri Jones, Democracy Services Officer, on recently being elected Senior Member of the Year for the Eryri Federation of Young Farmers.
- Football referee Cheryl Foster, originally from Bangor, for being the first female referee to take charge of a match in the Welsh Premier League. On 9 January 2023, FIFA appointed her to the administration pool for the FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup competition in Australia and New Zealand, and back in May of this year, she had been named as the referee for the final of the 2023 WEFA Women's Champions League between Barcelona and Wolfsburg on 3 June 2023.
- O Ddrws i Ddrws on celebrating 20 years of service in Dwyfor and Eifionydd. It had also been given to understand that the O Ddrws i Ddrws Board was eager to thank Cyngor Gwynedd for its support during those years.
- Councillor Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn on walking 206 miles from Bangor to Cardiff to promote the campaign to reopen railway lines from Aberystwyth to Caerfyrddin and from Bangor to Afonwen. It was also noted that a petition on this matter had succeeded to attract more than 13,000 signatories.

### 5. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

### 6. QUESTIONS

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

#### (1) Question from Councillor Gruffydd Williams

"Following the announcement that Barclays will close more of its branches including Pwllheli, may I ask why the Council has not considered threatening to change banks because the Council banks with Barclays? Were the Council to threaten to move to another bank and also ask other county councils to follow suit, it could be possible to persuade them not to close branches."

#### Response - Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Ioan Thomas

"I believe that it is true to say that each one of us is saddened when a bank branch is closes, but the number of visitors and users of these banks have reduced significantly. The Which company notes that 5,838 branches have closed since 2015. This is an

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average of 54 branches closing every month since 2015, and far more than 300 branches have closed in Wales since 2015.

The Council does not have an account with a specific branch of Barclays bank, it has a corporate agreement instead, and the agreement is in place until September of next year. It will begin to negotiate for agreements and of course, other banks will be welcome to submit a price for their service to the Council. However, I must note that only a very small number of banks deal with councils and authorities such as Gwynedd, and therefore it is possible that not many will apply for it, but this process will begin at the beginning of the year."

### **(2) Question from Councillor Dewi Jones**

"What steps will Cyngor Gwynedd take following the publishing in August of the Bevan Foundation's report on poverty in Arfon?"

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

"Thank you to the member and his fellow councillors for the work you do in Arfon from day to day. I share the member's passion on this subject, and I also know that the Leader of the Council and every Cabinet Member also appreciate the importance of this subject. We have prioritised this work. We have invested in the work and it is taking place across all departments of the Council. The solutions for this are not always apparent, for example, the Finance Department, and I wish to thank them in particular for their innovative work in this field. Thank you again for raising the question and highlighting this matter at the Full Council. If any councillors have suggestions on what we could do in the field, please contact me, because, otherwise, why are we here as councillors or officers, if we cannot help the most vulnerable people in our society in Gwynedd?"

### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Dewi Jones**

"At the brink of what will be another difficult winter for many, does the Deputy Leader agree with me that austerity has been a complete failure and that the British Government is guilty of driving some of the most vulnerable people in society deeper into poverty?"

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

"Yes, I agree 100%. I have recently learned a new term from my friend and fellow Cabinet member, Councillor Craig ab Iago, namely '*compensatory measures*'. We know of all the hard work councillors, officers, volunteers and the third sector do to support neighbours and vulnerable people with pride in their communities, but what we are really doing in this situation is stepping in, stepping into a gap that has been created elsewhere. We are able to iron out a bit of the sharp edges that affect people, despite the cuts that we have been facing in Cyngor Gwynedd year after year, and I have to say for another year again. But the decisions affecting people in terms of their tax etc. are made very far away from Gwynedd, in fact, very far from Wales, by the Tory party in Westminster. They are the ones who determine benefit payment levels, they are the ones who determine things such as the 'bedroom tax' and also the despicable rule about the third child - decisions that have a real impact on the people of Wales and Gwynedd, by a party, by the way, that has never won a majority of votes in Wales. I'm sure that this is an argument for another day, but I would like to confirm that the member and I are on the same page."

### **(3) Question from Councillor Louise Hughes**

"Everyone accepts the 20mph restriction in front of schools and in densely populated areas. However, given the public outcry and the unprecedented numbers signing the online petition to the Senedd, the confusion over signage etc. and bearing in mind people who use their vehicles for work (care workers, the emergency services, delivery drivers, postal workers, buses etc), are we as a Council happy with the new legislation and will we be using the discretion afforded to individual Local Authorities to exempt the 20mph limit in specified areas?"

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

"In terms of the first part of the question, I am satisfied with the legislation, and it is a Plaid Cymru policy to support the legislation in Senedd Cymru. In terms of the second part regarding the use of discretion, we as a Council have used the discretion to make exceptions, and I am taking this opportunity to praise Cyngor Gwynedd officers who have done excellent work in identifying which zones should be exempt from going from 30mph to 20mph. There are 85 exemptions here in Gwynedd. We have all as members had an opportunity to scrutinise them. Back in March/April we received a list of them and a map asking for our opinion, and this morning as it happens, there was an article in the Daily Post praising Gwynedd for the way it has dealt with the exemptions. There are more exemptions in Gwynedd than there are in the remainder of Welsh counties put together, therefore I'm very satisfied with how we have dealt with this matter."

**Supplementary Question by Councillor Louise Hughes**

"Will it be possible for local community councils to petition the Transport Department to change speed restrictions?"

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

"Anyone can write to me or the officers if they are unhappy with any part of the network, and if there is a case for change, the change will be made. Contact us if you think we have got it wrong somewhere."

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

"To what extent does the Authority and the Schools monitor the success of immersion for us to know how many children go on to study at least half of their subjects through the medium of Welsh after they have attended an Immersion Centre?"

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

"There is continuous monitoring of the immersion system, from the initial baseline assessment to the formative assessments to support learners from day to day - individual learners - ending with the summative assessments. The details of how exactly this is done are included in the written response you have read; therefore I will not go into too much detail.

Individual reports are made to the mainstream school, and the successes and general position of the immersion system are reported to me every term as part of the Department's performance challenging process, where I have the opportunity to question and challenge as needed. I feel that very detailed discussions take place there which considers every nook and cranny of the immersion service.

After the children transfer to their mainstream school, it is then the school's responsibility to continue to track along the language continuum, as part of assessment arrangements. The immersion system tracks the progress of latecomers who have attended immersion centres, and who follow Welsh First and Second Language GCSE

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courses. The Authority collects data regarding the number of Key Stage 4 learners who follow 5 GCSE subjects or more, through the medium of Welsh. It is the responsibility of the schools to track the language paths of individual learners, including the children who are latecomers, and who follow at least half of their subjects through the medium of Welsh.

As some of you know, Estyn has been inspecting the Department very recently, and in their report, they note that the provision in the secondary schools for learners to sit exams through the medium of Welsh is a reflection of the Authority's policy and vision to develop bilingual learners. The extract from the Estyn report is in the written response, a report which, coincidentally, was very positive about our Welsh provision.

I wish to thank the immersion system for the incredible work they do because it is truly incredible, and I'm very pleased that the high standard of this work is reflected fairly in Estyn's report. I would like to thank everyone involved in the service, including the children, for the outstanding work and the excellent process being made, which is a credit to everyone involved."

### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur**

"Is it not true then that the Authority does not know how many children have even gone through a period of early immersion and who then go on to follow a proportion of their education through the medium of Welsh? Is it true that the Authority does not know the statistics for this?"

### **Response – Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"I have just explained in terms of how the data is being gathered by the system, by the Authority and at the schools. There is detailed monitoring of those children and where they reach in terms of their education. I have been at performance challenging meetings where there is detailed data for every child and I have been able to delve down – a '*deep dive*' if you will, to the situation of individual children on their journey through the system. Therefore I feel that a very close eye is kept on these children in terms of them as individuals, and which is reported back to me also.

It is obviously important that the children ultimately follow as many of their subjects and exams through the medium of Welsh as they can. As a child of non-Welsh speaking parents myself, I feel that the most important thing in terms of immersing someone in Welsh (not that I went through immersion myself) is that someone is able to attend their school, join in conversations on the yard with peers through the medium of Welsh i.e. that they can join in all the cultural opportunities that are available to children. Of course, it is terribly important that children are able to reach their potential to follow as many subjects as possible through the medium of Welsh, but I would argue there is so much more to immersion than this."

### **(5) A question from Councillor Delyth Lloyd Griffiths**

"Electors in my ward have raised the matter of under-occupancy in the social sector recently.

A high number of individuals are living in social housing in villages where there are only a small number of social housing left.

What are the Council and the Housing Associations doing to assist individuals who are under occupying homes in the social sector to move to homes that are suitable for them?

Is it possible for the Council and Housing Associations to identify the need in Gwynedd?

By identifying the need, is there a way of establishing or improving the existing service that is available for residents who are eager to move to a new home?

We ask the Council to work with all Housing Associations to identify the practical support that is available for individuals who are eager to move house but who need practical support with the process of moving."

**Response from the Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, in the absence of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago**

"The Service is of course aware that under-occupancy can be a barrier for some individuals and families, and consequently there are already arrangements and processes in place in the Common Housing Allocation Policy that facilitate arrangements for housing associations where individuals and families wish to move due to under-occupancy matters, and there is reference to the common Housing Policy in the written response.

We are prepared to raise the points the Member has noted with the housing associations at the Housing Partnership Board, where there will be an opportunity to discuss existing arrangements and to research the cases of under-occupancy to identify specific opportunities to offer additional support."

**Supplementary Question by Councillor Delyth Lloyd Griffiths**

"Will the Council allocate staff time to collect the data, and also to ensure that every association provides an equal service to everyone in Gwynedd?"

**Response - The Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

"I can confirm that the service will provide the resources needed to address this question and there is regular dialogue between the Service and all of the housing associations through the Housing Partnership Board."

**(6) Question from Councillor Angela Russell**

"On behalf of the Independent Group, I would like to know what process the Council followed in reaching a decision to correspond with Gwynedd residents on Article 4. We as members feel that we have been left in the dark, especially when the consultation was held over the summer period, and that this will not be a true representation."

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

"To be perfectly honest, I do not accept that the Independent Group have been left in the dark. There have been regular bulletins to members, and as soon as the Cabinet made its decision to consult on the Article 4 Direction, an awareness raising session was held for all Council members. I think I'm right to say, of the 23 independent members on the Council, that 13 of them were present, further, of the 10 who were not there, 4 of them are members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee, and Article 4 has been submitted to that committee twice. I accept that not everyone is able to attend these things for a variety of personal reasons, holidays and that type of thing, but that engagement session was recorded and members have been reminded on several occasions that the recording exists so that they can familiarise themselves with Article 4. Therefore, no, I do not accept that the Independent Group have been left in the dark."

**Supplementary Question by Councillor Angela Russell**

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"As you refused a public meeting, what methods, apart from a written response, has Cyngor Gwynedd offered older people, underprivileged people, people who are not on the internet? Have we done everything to satisfy the Equality Act, and when did the Council consult with the mortgage lenders etc. in all of this? How do 10 Plaid Cymru members on the Cabinet get to make a far-reaching decision for us in Pen Llŷn when there are 69 of us councillors? And why has this not come before the Full Council?"

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

"Legislation from Cardiff determines how the Council makes its decisions. In terms of the other matters, I think that the responses to these questions are all included in the written response."

### **(7) Question from Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts**

"To what extent has the failure to inspect and enforce planning conditions that restrict the operational periods of touring caravan sites and the period a caravan can be kept on a pitch lead to an increase in permanent and continuous use?"

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

"This is a specific question, and I do not know whether there is a particular matter in the ward that is behind this, but I refer the member to the written response. Of course, one important thing to say is that the Council does not have teams of people going around making sure that everyone adheres to planning rules. That responsibility lies with those who make the applications and who obtain planning permission, of course. It should also be noted that enforcement powers are discretionary and that we do this by issuing enforcement notices, where there is robust evidence to justify this. Of course, local intelligence which is usually what brings planning breaches to the officers' attention."

### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts**

"To what extent have priorities and processes within the Department been amended to target the matter after the matter was raised 4-5 years ago by Aled Evans, the former councillor for Llanystumdwy ward?"

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

"I have no information about any specific cases here, therefore you are welcome to send this to me, or to the planning officers. You can do this any time. There is no need to wait until the Full Council to do this."

### **(8) Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfa**

"Non Welsh-speaking children who are immersed in the language Centres spend one day a week back at their schools, to maintain contact with the teachers and children. The likelihood is that they are still using English to play and communicate. Is the Education Department assessing the impact this is having on the language use of the remainder of the children, and on the schools' Welsh ethos?"

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

"Ensuring continuous contact with the mainstream school is a key element I think of ensuring the well-being of the children who are latecomers to the county, in addition to being a means for them to immerse naturally in the company of their peers and teachers, which is what we are all aiming towards, of course. The children are prepared for these bridging days by practising specific language patterns and simple questions and answers that they can take with them to their mainstream schools to practise their

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Welsh. This is extended from week to week as they develop skills and confidence, etc., and a member of staff is provided for the children on their immersion days to support and encourage them, as speaking Welsh outside the safe environment of the centre is quite a challenge. It is then the school's responsibility to provide appropriately for every child, which includes any needs in terms of the Welsh language, both formal and informal, and support for the immersion system continues for them in that sense. If I may quote Estyn again:-

*"The use of the Welsh language in informal situations in primary and secondary schools is encouraged appropriately through Welsh Language Charter activities. This contributes to improving pupils' Welsh language skills and Welshness, in addition to supporting cooperation between primary and secondary schools."*

But as the immersion system in its new guise has only been operational for two terms, there is a willingness to hold an evaluation of the system to see exactly how the children procure Welsh and how they then immerse back at their schools, and how this impacts them and other children. Of course, it is the well-being and potential of every child that is at the heart of what is being proposed and we will obviously wish to see every child reach their potential, and to feel happy and comfortable with what is happening. Then that is an important question, thank you"

### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Jina Gwyrfai**

"When and how will this assessment work be done, should we include assessing the impact of the bridging day on all of the children?"

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

"I certainly think there is a value in doing this. In terms of Gwynedd Education Language Policy, of course, it has been divided into 4 parts - the medium of education, social use, recruitment and appointing and administration and communication. Therefore, we are taking about the social element here, which is crucial I believe, and that that where it should be done, in my opinion.

The schools are expected to develop a positive attitude towards the Welsh language and to generate pride amongst all the children. I think that the Ein Llais Ni project has made an important contribution. The Language Charter training is also a key factor and £96,000 has come from the Welsh Language Grant for catchment-area projects, and training is a core element of these grant conditions.

Out of interest, I would like to give you a taste of the activities that happen in our schools with a view to raising awareness and pride in their Welshness, because I think that it is interesting and heartening to hear about it to be honest. This is a snapshot of the type of activities that take place:-

- Drama workshops with the author Mared Llywelyn on local fables, gathering and using local place-names and then rapping them with Ed Holden;
- Work with the Urdd to teach Welsh language school yard games;
- Ignite Welshness - raise awareness of Welsh bands, such as Bwncath, etc.;
- World Cup theme - commentate with Meilir Emrys; create an anthem with Elidyr Glyn;
- Training for assistants in the catchment-area to develop the use of informal language by introducing activities on the school yard;
- A presentation on Welshness by Ameer Davies-Rana to inspire learners and staff;
- Creative workshops with Osian and Branwen Candelas;
- Clog dancing fitness with Tudur Phillips;
- Singing workshops with Catrin Toffoc;
- Pod-cast creation workshops, football commentating with Marci G;
- Working with Cwmni'r Frân Wen, Hunaniaith, Menter Iaith Bangor, Ein Llais Ni;



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- Train sixth form pupils to lead walks under the guidance of Rhys Mwyn by educating them about the history of their area and encouraging them to enjoy their own square mile.

I love seeing these school yard language elements, and as I was saying in response to Councillor Rhys Tudur's question, what I would like to see is immersion children being able to be part of a large group of local children on the yard, and the language does not have to change for their benefit, and I think that this is what's crucial. I did not follow all my GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh, but I was able to make friends with Welsh children, go to Glan-llyn and attend Welsh gigs. Therefore, I think that the social element is crucial, and I loved seeing everything that is happening. I hope that this gives people a sense of the excellent work that is happening in our schools and we would like to thank the schools again for all the work they do in terms of supporting the Welshness of every child, the latecomers and the indigenous children."

### 7. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022-23

Submitted - the report of the Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, asking the Council to approve and adopt the Annual Performance Report and Self-assessment 2022/23.

The Leader thanked the Council's Supporting Business Service Manager and the Team for their work in preparing the report. He then referred to the very difficult financial situation facing the Council, noting:-

- It did not bode well for the councils' settlement across Wales for the coming year, and although Cyngor Gwynedd was in a strong financial situation, and that we had taken pride over the years in the fact that we were effective in dealing with Council money, this Council would also have to make some very difficult decisions this time.
- That most of the Council's money was spent on education, adults and children, namely those fields that nurtured the future of our children and care for the most vulnerable in our society, and if they wished to protect those services, where would the additional cuts come from?

All of the members were encouraged to attend one of the three savings workshops arranged for October.

The Leader then referred to some specific matters, noting:-

- The reduction of 4,500 in Gwynedd's population, with 1,400 fewer households in the County (according to the figures of the last Census) was a cause for concern for him as this was having a direct impact on the £1.6m settlement. More-so, there were very significant economic considerations to a lower population, which placed greater importance on our work in seeking to develop the economy, attracting high quality jobs to the area and attracting young people back to Gwynedd.
- The education system in Gwynedd was innovative and set the standard across the whole of Wales, e.g. the new immersion system, and he did not agree with the public criticism there had been of Gwynedd's education system.
- The Article 4 Direction was one of the interventions the Council had in housing to seek to gain control of the influx of second homes and short-term lets that were damaging our communities and contributing to the depopulation seen in the Census. Nevertheless, it was not believed that Article 4 would have as much of an impact as people believed, neither was it believed that it would be that effective in gaining control of second homes. It is acknowledged there is concern regarding Article 4, and the Council would look very carefully at those concerns when analysing the responses to the public consultation, seeking additional legal advice, if required, to ensure that we were going in the right direction. The work

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of analysing the outcomes of the consultation would take place from now to the end of the year, with a report submitted to the Community Scrutiny Committee early in the New Year.

- There was a significant problem in terms of the intensive care provision across the county, and that the development in Penrhos was one of the excellent innovative schemes the Council had, jointly with the Health Board and the Clwyd Alyn Housing Association, to address this.
- As a significant number of members were concerned whether the Common Housing Policy truly prioritised local people, he had instructed the Service to arrange a meeting to understand exactly what the current housing policy had to offer. He added that he would encourage any members who were concerned to attend the meeting, as this would be the opportunity to understand what is happening, and possibly to be able to bend policies.
- There was also concern about the problems seen in our communities in terms of the recycling arrangements, and that the Council was holding discussions at the highest possible level to go to the root of the problem and to seek a quick resolution to the situation.

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

- The Leader was asked whether he supported the proposal to increase the number of Senedd members in Cardiff to 96, at an estimated cost of £17.8m a year. In response, the Leader noted that he supported it 100%, because if we were serious about governing our own country, we needed plenty of people to do the work, and the Government, jointly with Plaid Cymru, had identified the need for these additional members to do the work of scrutinising the Welsh Government. He also noted that the Westminster Tory Government's 'Levelling Up' money did not level anything up; Wales did not receive the money that was owed to it from HS2 and the 'Shared Prosperity Fund' did not involve sharing wealth at all. This was Wales' money, money that came from Europe, but Westminster Government was paying Wales less than it had pledged. He also noted that Labour in England was no better, and that it was also intent on undermining Wales's rights.
- Referring to Improvement Priority 4 - Access to suitable homes, it was asked where the 173 social housing units that had been constructed across Gwynedd since the start of the Housing Action Plan had been built. In response, the Chief Executive noted that the houses had been constructed through the Social Housing Grant over a period of 2, or possibly 3 years now, and he would be happy to share detailed information about the 173 units with the member.
- It was noted that the number of referrals under the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards procedures were increasing again, and it was asked why the Council had to bring in people from outside to help them with assessments, as it was understood that we had trained internal staff to do the work. In response, the Chief Executive noted that there were internal staff doing the assessments, but because of a backlog of work, that there was further training taking place, and possibly there would be a need to bring in more people to deal with this work also. He noted that he would be happy to discuss the matter further with the member.
- It was asked whether it had been considered what would happen in Pen Llŷn, where there would be, possibly, fewer buses running as a result of the 20mph speed limit. It was noted that the area did not have a cycle path network either, yet the residents had to face the 20mph speed limit. Concern was expressed about the carers and it was noted there was a shortage of taxis in Pen Llŷn to take people home after socialising. It was noted that the Leader had already referred to the reduction in Gwynedd's population, but people were leaving the countryside as there was nothing left there for them. Services were being cut and were getting farther away from the rural population, and rather than having more

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Senedd members in Cardiff, it would be better for those who were already there to make things better. Cyngor Gwynedd had been weakened by having to reduce from 75 to 69 members, with the 10 cabinet members making the decisions. In response, it was noted that should the 20mph speed limit save only one life, it would have been worth introducing the legislation.

- Concern was expressed that the police did not enforce the 20mph limit in some areas, particularly in the west of the county and outside schools, and it was asked whether the Council could apply pressure in relation to this. In response, the Chief Executive noted that the policy of the Police and the Government across the country at the moment in terms of new speed limits was there would be a period of educating first, before moving to enforcement. They wished to see the police seeking to prioritise more scarce resources for this field. There were conversations taking place about this and the Chief Executive confirmed that he would pass the message on at the next conversation also.
- In response to a question about Welsh place names under 'The Welsh language and Public Services' section of the report, it was confirmed that the Council's policy was to use on the Welsh language every time.
- It was expressed that the Council did not give enough attention to young people. Reference was made to an example of a local young couple who had submitted a planning application for a three-bedroom house, but who received permission to construct a two bedroom house only and were advised to come back with an application for an extension to the house later on to get the third bedroom.
- A member expressed her concern that she had not received a paper copy of the agenda for this meeting noting that it was not possible for her to work on-line due to a lack of signal in her home. In response, it was explained that a decision had been made recently to move towards a paper-free Council in terms of the information that was shared with the members, but that an exception had been made in the case in question for the reasons noted. It had been given to understand that this had already been communicated with the member, and she would receive paper copies of meeting agendas from now on.
- The overview of the year at the beginning of the report was welcomed as it provided a snapshot of some of the Council's main achievements. It was noted that the five Tidying-up Teams were doing excellent work, and the 2 teams who were working hard in Llŷn were thanked for their excellent work in tidying up the streets and villages. It was also noted that it was pleasing to reach the milestone where all the street lamps had been exchanged for LED technology. Nevertheless, it was suggested that the overview was slightly misleading at times, e.g. it was noted that 104 empty houses had been brought back to use, but that was a three-year figure.
- The fact that the report underlined the successes without hiding the weaknesses was welcomed as it provided a fair and honest picture of the performance during the year.

**RESOLVED to approve and adopt Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report and Self-assessment 2022-23.**

### **8. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE 2022-23**

Submitted - the Annual Report of the Governance and Audit Committee 2022/23. In the absence of the Chair of the Committee, Mrs Sharon Warnes, due to ill-health, and also as it had not been possible for the Vice-chair, Mr Eifion Jones, or any of the other lay members to attend at short notice, the report was submitted by Councillor Paul Rawlinson, as an elected member of the Committee.

Councillor Paul Rowlinson noted that it was a pleasure to submit the Chair's first report, based on Welsh Government's statutory requirements, outlining how the Committee had considered the difficult factors the Council had faced over the period along with the Committee's observations on how the Council has responded firmly to those risks.

All the officers who had been supporting the Committee's work in a thorough and professional manner were thanked and also both Elected and Lay Members for their key contribution to the Committee's work.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

## **9. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION**

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer inviting the Council to adopt a series of changes to the Constitution as listed in the report and its attachments, regarding:-

- (i) The Functions of the Full Council;
- (ii) Panel Performance Assessment;
- (iii) Timetable for Members' Questions; and the
- (iv) Financial threshold for sealing contracts.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. In response to questions from individual members regarding the Independent Panel that would assess the Council's performance, it was noted:-

- That the guidelines referred to around 4-5 people on the Panel. It had been given to understand that the Welsh Local Government Association gathered a pool of applicants with relatively substantial local government background (principal officers and members) that the Council would have to appoint a panel from, and the Panel would have an independent chair.
- The process was not similar in any way to the local development plan process. The Panel's recommendation would have to be submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee and to the Cabinet also, it seemed. The Panel would not act as regulators, their roles would be to provide an opinion and present recommendations for the Council to consider and respond to.

**RESOLVED to adopt the amendments to the Consultation as listed in the report submitted to the Council and the appendices relating to:**

- (i) The Functions of the Full Council;**
- (ii) Panel Performance Assessment;**
- (iii) Timetable for Members' Questions; and the**
- (iv) Financial threshold for sealing contracts.**

## **10. NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **10(A) NOTICE OF MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR GRUFFYDD WILLIAMS**

Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Gruffydd Williams, under Section 4.19 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-

*"We note the increasing threats to farmers and the farming world from unelected supra-national bodies that want to force them off their land.*

*This was seen at work recently in the Netherlands, Ireland and other places, and now the Welsh Government wants to transform 10% of agricultural land in Wales into woodland. This reduces our organic food supply once again even though nearly half the population here are living in poverty.*

*In light of all this, I call on Cyngor Gwynedd to commit to support the Welsh family farm that contributes so much to the Gwynedd economy, which is also a way of maintaining the unique linguistic and cultural identity of the county, and that Cyngor Gwynedd calls*

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*on the Welsh Government to reconsider the decision to transform 10% of agricultural land into woodland."*

The member also noted that the reference to 'organic food supply' in the English translation of his motion should be corrected to read 'locally sourced food supply'.

An amendment to the proposal was proposed, as follows:

*"That Cyngor Gwynedd commits to support the Welsh family farm that contributes so much to the Gwynedd economy, which is also a way of maintaining the unique linguistic and cultural identity of the county, and to call on the Welsh Government to reconsider its decision to insist that every agricultural unit has to assign 10% of their lands as forests."*

The reasons for the decision were noted as follows:-

- The two first paragraphs of the original motion referred to some sort of international conspiracy by supra-national bodies, and it was not believed that they were relevant to the motion at all, and therefore they should be deleted.
- Having been given to understand by the farmers' unions that around 7.5% of land that was currently being farmed was woodland, that reaching 10% was not difficult work, but there was a need to be flexible in terms of the 10% as not all farms had land that was suitable for tree planting.
- It was important to plant the right trees in the right place, and a blanket policy would make it difficult for farmers to implement.
- As tenants would not be able to turn farming land into woodland without the landlord's approval, this could also be problematic.
- It was therefore suggested that the Government should be asked to reconsider its decision to insist that every agricultural unit has to allocate 10% of its land as woodland.

The amendment was discussed. Support was expressed for the improvement by some members on grounds of:-

- That the 2 first paragraphs linked the motion, which in essence was quite sensible, to some extreme right-wing Anglo-american conspiracy theories, which significantly weakened the seriousness of the remainder of the motion. It would be repugnant for the Council to be associated in any way with the poisonous international politics that believes that we are controlled by undemocratic bodies, etc. Steps had been taken in Ireland and the Netherlands, namely the two countries with very substantial carbon emissions deriving from agriculture, but it was not supranational undemocratic bodies that were doing this, rather the sovereign governments of those two countries.
- The wording of the amendment was clear and it was obvious what the intention was and what needed to be done. On the contrary, it was believed that the information in the first paragraphs of the original motion were unclear. E.g. it is noted that nearly half the population live in poverty, but it is not clear whether that refers to the population of Gwynedd or the whole of Wales.

Other members expressed support to the original motion noting:-

- It was believed that the first two paragraphs included valuable background information regarding why the motion had been submitted.
- That unelected supra-national bodies did exist and it was felt that the amendment would do more harm to farming in Gwynedd.
- It was felt that some reading between the lines and imagination were needed to claim that the two first paragraphs linked the motion to extreme right wing conspiracy theories.

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- That it was a shame to see good farming land being turned into forests and standing there doing nothing.

A member noted that they were not ready to make a decision there and then on such an important matter and suggested that a more detailed discussion was needed before deciding on the way forward.

The Chairman noted that there was a motion on the table, along with an amendment to the motion, and the Council had to reach a decision.

In his closing comments, the proposer noted the original motion:-

- That he had intended to include as part of his motion that Cyngor Gwynedd would commit to offering local meat on school menus, but unfortunately, he had left this clause out of his motion as an oversight.
- He was astonished to hear that he was associated with the extreme right for trying to put forward a motion to help agriculture.

A vote was taken on the amendment and it was carried.

A further amendment was proposed, namely:-

*"In line with the spirit of the motion, that the Council commits to supporting local producers by ensuring that meat and other local produce remains on our school menus."*

In response, the Monitoring Officer explained:-

- That the aim of the notice of motion was that the Council published the notice before hand.
- That an amendment to a motion could only add to or change the wording, and an entirely separate matter could not be brought into the discussion after providing a notice of motion.
- As the school menus etc. was an operational matter, he would advise that it was out of order to bring a new matter in at this point.

In light of this explanation, the member amended his further amendment, namely:-

*"In line with the spirit of the motion, that the Council commits to giving local producers practical support." (without providing examples of that support).*

The Chief Executive noted that he believed that the further amendment asked for a commitment to support the family farm, and that this was part of the amendment that had already been accepted.

As the amendment had been accepted, the Monitoring Officer explained that the original motion had been amended and that a further vote was needed on the wording of the amendment, rather than the wording of the original. The majority voted in favour of the amended motion.

**RESOLVED to adopt the amended proposal, namely:-**

**That Cyngor Gwynedd commits to support the Welsh family farm that contributes so much to the Gwynedd economy, which is also a way of maintaining the unique linguistic and cultural identity of the county, and that Cyngor Gwynedd calls on the Welsh Government to reconsider its decision to insist that every agricultural unit has to assign 10% of their lands as woodland.**

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The meeting commenced at 1.30 p.m. and concluded at 3.50 p.m.

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**CHAIR**