Complete Agenda

Meeting
EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time
10.30 am, THURSDAY, 8TH JUNE, 2023
NOTE: A BRIEFING SESSION WILL BE HELD FOR MEMBERS AT 10.15AM

Location
Multi-location Meeting - Siambr Hywel Dda, Council Offices, Caernarfon / Virtually on Zoom
* NOTE
This meeting will be webcast
https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core/l/en_GB/portal/home

Contact Point
Eirian Roberts
01286 679018
eirianroberts3@gwynedd.llyw.cymru
(DISTRIBUTED 31/05/23)

www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP (18)

Plaid Cymru (12)

Councillors

Jina Gwyrfai	Iwan Huws
Dawn Lynne Jones	Dewi Jones
Gareth Tudor Jones	Olaf Cai Larsen
Gwynfor Owen	Llio Elenid Owen
Huw Rowlands	Paul John Rowlinson
Rhys Tudur	Sasha Williams

Independent (6)

Councillors

Elwyn Jones	Gwilym Jones
Beth Lawton	Dewi Owen
John Pughe Roberts	Richard Glyn Roberts

Ex-officio Members
Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

With a vote on education matters only

[vacant seat]	Church in Wales
Colette Owen	The Catholic Church
[vacant seat]	Meirionnydd Parent/Governors Representative
Karen Vaughan Jones	Dwyfor Parent/Governors' Representative
Manon Williams	Arfon Parent/Governors' Representative

Without a Vote

[vacant seat]	
Dylan Huw Jones	NASUWT

A G E N D A

1. **CHAIR**

   To appoint a Chair for 2023/24.

2. **VICE-CHAIR**

   To appoint a Vice-chair for 2023/24.

3. **APOLOGIES**

   To receive any apologies for absence.

4. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

   To receive any declarations of personal interest.

5. **URGENT BUSINESS**

   To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chair for consideration.

6. **MINUTES**

   The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 23rd March, 2023 be signed as a true record.

7. **REGIONAL EMERGENCY PLANNING SERVICE**

   Cabinet Member – Councillor Menna Trenholme

   To consider a report on the above.

8. **GWYNEDD TOWN CENTRES**

   Cabinet Member – Councillor Nia Jeffreys

   To consider a report on the above.

9. **EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITEE FORWARD PROGRAMME 2023/24**

   To present the Committee's draft forward programme for 2023/24 for adoption.

10. **CORPORATE SUPPORT AND LEGAL PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE MEETINGS**

    To nominate a representative to attend the Corporate Support Department and Legal Service Performance Challenge Meetings.

Agenda Item 6

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23/3/23

Present:

Councillors: Beth Lawton (Chair)
Cai Larsen (Vice-chair)

Councillors:- Iwan Huws, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Gwilym Jones, Dewi Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Llio Elenid Owen, John Pughe Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson and Rhys Tudur.

Co-opted Members: Colette Owen (The Catholic Church) and Manon Williams (Arfon Parent/Governor Representative).

Officers in attendance: Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

Present for item 5: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Council Leader), Hedd Vaughan-Evans (Operations Manager - Ambition North Wales), Henry Aron (Energy Programme Manager - Ambition North Wales) and David Mathews (Land and Property Programme Manager - Ambition North Wales).

Present for item 6: – Councillor Beca Brown (Cabinet Member for Education), Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Debbie Anne Jones (Assistant Head – Corporate Services) and Rhys Meredydd Glyn (Head of Gwynedd's Immersion Education System).

Present for item 7: Councillor Menna Jones (Cabinet Member for Corporate Support), Ian Jones (Head of Corporate Support Department) and Huw Eurig Williams (Human Resources Advisory Services Manager).

1. **APOLOGIES**

    Apologies were received from Councillors Jina Gwyrfai and Sasha Williams.

2. **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

    No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. **URGENT ITEMS**

    None to note.

4. **MINUTES**

    The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 2 February, 2023 as a true record.

5. **NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL - QUARTER 3 2022/23 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Leader and Ambition North Wales officers were welcomed to the meeting.

Submitted – the report of the Leader on the Quarter 3 2022-23 performance of the North Wales Growth Deal, following the committee's request.

The Leader outlined the context by providing a brief update on the work of the Growth Deal, some of the background of establishing the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, along with details of different schemes that were relevant to Gwynedd. The Operations Manager then provided an overview of the Growth Deal and the main highlights of 2022-23.

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

It was enquired how the Ambition Board intended to draw up a language policy for the Trawsfynydd project to ensure that the development and the workforce would not Anglicise the area. In response, it was noted:-
- That this was a project that wholly relied on UK Government investment, and that there was no certainty on that.
- In terms of a language policy, the Egino company would soon hold a workshop to examine the social benefits, including the linguistic benefits.

It was noted that the greatest risk in terms of delivering the objectives of the Growth Deal was ensuring public and private sector investment, and it was enquired what steps it intended to take should the capacity of those sectors to invest reduce over the next few years due to the current financial situation. In response, it was noted:-
- That economic circumstances had changed immensely since the Growth Deal was agreed in 2010, and that the financial crisis was a challenge that faced us on a regular basis where there was a contribution from the private sector.
- The Business Delivery Board, which had representatives from the private sector, was meeting to discuss projects regularly, under the guidance of Askar Sheibani, who ran his own global digital business and who was very enthusiastic for the whole of north Wales.
- The only assurance that could be given at present was that this was a matter that was being addressed, and it was believed that there was a desire among the private sector to invest, provided that the circumstances were right.
- The North Wales Ambition Programme Office worked very closely with the private sector on specific projects, and that the sector was currently looking to invest.
- It was acknowledged that there was a risk that the capacity to invest could change over coming years, and the Programme Office worked very closely with both Governments on this. More public sector investment would possibly be required should the private sector investment not be there but, at present, the situation seemed quite positive.
- The Programme Office was developing a strategy with the Business Delivery Board to ensure that it was possible to bring this strategy forward, and one of the specific things that had been undertaken as part of the demand for new projects to the £30m fund was to place a strong emphasis on the ability of businesses to invest as part of this process.
- This was a large percentage of what the assessment would be so that it was possible to ensure that any projects coming forward could proceed quickly to

deliver. It was hoped that this would reduce some of the risks, but the greatest risk to be able to deliver the benefits of the Growth Deal was bringing the funding forward to invest in these projects, and this would be a risk during all of the deal's period.

It was suggested that the Growth Deal seemed to be the A55 Deal and it was enquired whether Meirionnydd would benefit from any schemes, with the exception of the Trawsfynydd project.

In response, it was noted:-
- It was certainly not the A55 Deal and the fundamental aim was that any wealth generated from the Growth Deal would be shared across the whole region.
- Although some schemes were geographical and that a number of these projects were digital, and that this was essentially important to rural areas in terms of easy access to digital services.
- There were no other specific schemes in Meirionnydd under the Growth Deal, but there were other more local funds that rural areas could take advantage of, such as the Community Energy Fund.

It was noted that the Leader would certainly ensure and fight to obtain jobs for Dwyfor and Meirionnydd and best wishes were extended to every project.

Referring to the Tracker Table - Overview of delivery (December 2022) on page 32 of the agenda, a request was made for more details and more certainty regarding exactly how many jobs had been created thus far.

In response, it was noted:-
- That the table indicated the individual targets for the projects that created the new jobs towards the target of 4,200.
- The only live project so far was the Digital Signal Processing Centre, which had led to six new posts in Bangor University.

It was noted that one of the greatest risks facing the Ambition Board was that project costs increased and it was enquired how much of the additional funding to this £30m would be realised in north-west Wales. It was suggested that there was an opportunity for Gwynedd to propose innovative projects as a result of withdrawing the Bodelwyddan Key Strategic Site and the Llysfasi Net Zero Farm projects from the Growth Deal, and it was enquired whether a discussion was being held about this.

In response, it was noted:-
- After the application submission period ended on 27 March, the Programme Office Team would score the projects based on practicality, how soon they could be implemented and how many jobs would be created.
- It was already known that one or two projects would be submitted for Gwynedd and more would certainly become apparent by the closing date.
- The method of assessing applications did not refer to their geographical site. It was hoped that the projects would span all counties in north Wales, but the tension between the regional benefit and the locally specific benefit was part of a difficult discussion that the six Leaders would have to hold in order to reach some political consensus on the matter.

The fact that the Bryn Cegin Park Bangor project was finally progressing was welcomed, but as hopes had been raised so many times during the past twenty years, it was enquired whether there was now a real plan to attract good jobs to the units that would be constructed on the site. It was also enquired whether the entire plan was now at risk in light of the recent announcement about establishing a Free Port in Holyhead.

In response, it was noted:-
- It was frustrating that there had been no development at Bryn Cegin Park so far, but good progress was being made with the Welsh Government in terms of the joint venture.
- The financial risk had been mitigated with provisions in the agreement that the Welsh Government would make an additional financial contribution should the construction costs exceed a specific level.
- The Welsh Government would go out to tender within the next week to appoint a professional team to lead the work.
- It was anticipated that there would be planning permission on the site by the end of the year, with the Final Business Case on the way to be finally approved by the Board.
- It was expected that the main contractor would be on the site by the end of Quarter 1 in 2024, or possibly early in Quarter 2 of 2024, with the construction work being completed towards the end of 2024 or early in 2025.
- It was believed that there was considerable demand for this type of units by local businesses and small and medium enterprises mainly in the north-west Wales area. It was believed that there is demand from companies that wished to expand, therefore, on the whole, many of the jobs that would be created would be high value jobs.
- It was aimed to create jobs that would offer good salaries and good training opportunities, with benefits from the construction work and the jobs created on the site mainly focused in the Bangor area.
- £6m of Growth Deal funding was being invested in Bryn Cegin Park but as construction costs had been so unsettled during the past two years, and to mitigate the financial risk to all partners, it had been provided in the agreement that the Welsh Government would make an additional contribution towards capital funding.
- It was currently difficult to anticipate what impact the announcement about the Free Port would have, but it was not expected that this would be a direct threat to existing businesses in the Bangor area, as it was more likely to affect external investment.
- Although we had supported the Free Port bid, the question regarding losing businesses to Anglesey, due to the improved environment that would be there, was a clear question and a matter that needed to be monitored.

On a point of clarity, a request was made for confirmation that the total expenditure in Bryn Cegin Park was £6m, and that there was no match funding, with the exception of additions should the costs be more than expected. Also, although it had been noted that it was not believed that the Free Port would be a threat to existing businesses in Bangor, there was concern that any new investment would go to Anglesey. It was also asked whether the expenditure profile of the Growth Deal had been examined and what

were the implications for councils regarding payments to serve any loans that would have to be given.

In response, it was noted:-
- That the UK Government would pay over ten years, rather than over the 15-year period originally agreed. This greatly assists the expenditure profile, and is a matter that comes up when discussing the finance of the Ambition Board.
- £6m was the contribution of the Growth Deal to the developments in Bryn Cegin Park and one of the greatest risks seen in recent years was the increase in cost. It was hoped that those costs were now beginning to settle but it had been a substantial threat to a number of projects, and this was why additional funding had to be given to three projects.
- The expenditure and loans profile of councils was reviewed annually and there was a number of factors that could affect the borrowing costs for partners.
- The costs would be divided between the councils and other partners, and also the universities and colleges.
- We were financially benefiting from the situation at present as there had been a delay in the expenditure profile. The funding that had come from both Governments was earning interest, which would help with the risk of increasing costs over the coming years. While moving from a situation where we have money in the bank to a situation of needing a loan, we would feel this in terms of higher costs but the situation was currently slightly more positive than what had been modelled at the beginning of the Growth Deal in 2020 as the funding was received sooner from the UK Government, and due to the delay and accumulated interest. The situation was being reviewed annually with the intention, if possible, to keep any borrowing costs for our partners as low as possible.

Referring to the Smart Energy Scheme, it was noted that much more investment was needed in infrastructure before being able to implement such projects.

In response, it was noted:-
- It was agreed that the restrictions in terms of the grid, or costs to connect to the grid, were one of the main obstacles to enable such schemes to be brought forward.
- In theory, the investment made here could be used to provide infrastructure to enable projects to happen in a method similar to what was being invested in the Morlais Project to support the infrastructure that enabled the tidal energy to be captured.

It was enquired to what extent it could be comfortable that the density of jobs deriving from the Growth Deal would be jobs for local people, rather than providing opportunities for a population from beyond the area. It was also suggested that training and career paths needed to be planned on a micro level, so that we almost examine the careers of individuals here.

In response, it was noted:-
- That the indigenous community were full of entrepreneurs despite the general tendency to think that rural Welsh speakers could not innovate themselves and be enterprising.

- There was a need to create the opportunities for those entrepreneurs to thrive, and from a skills' viewpoint, that this almost came down to the micro, and was being provided by people who were very local. There would be no people here to speak Welsh if opportunities were not given to people. There was a need to be confident for the future and it was hoped that our indigenous people would seize the available opportunities.

It was noted that there was no mention of the Ambition Board anywhere, e.g. Business News of the Daily Post, Golwg, Gwynedd News etc. and it was suggested that Ambition North Wales needed to do more to market itself to Gwynedd residents. It was also enquired whether there was a panel of successful business people objectively examining the Board's plans to provide a professional opinion on the viability of schemes.

In response, it was noted:-
- That the Business Delivery Board challenged the projects in detail.
- It was difficult to gather the opinions of micro businesses and that maybe more innovative ways of contacting those small businesses should be considered.

At the end of the discussion, the Leader noted:-
- That Cyngor Gwynedd accommodated the work of the Ambition Board, but the work of the Board would soon transfer to the Corporate Joint Committee, and he greatly hoped that the work of the Board would not be impaired in any way as a result of that statutory move.
- The role of Ambition Board Chair was more than chairing Board meetings only, and that he/she was seen as the representative of north Wales at regional and national meetings.

The Chair thanked the Leader and officers noting that everyone was pleased to see some of the projects beginning and coming to fruition. He also noted that it would be interesting to see what new projects would be submitted before the Programme Management Team next week, and he expressed his hope that there would be schemes of benefit to Gwynedd, and to South Meirionnydd.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

6. **EDUCATION AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE: A NEW VISION FOR THE IMMERSION EDUCATION SYSTEM TOWARDS 2032 AND BEYOND**

The Cabinet Member for Education and officers from the Education Department were welcomed to the meeting.

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Education, at the committee's request, presenting background information about the vision of the immersion education system, along with providing answers to the questions of the scrutinisers received in advance about the arrangements for the immersion education provision in Gwynedd.

The Cabinet Member set out the context by noting that the two schemes in the Bangor area, namely the Bangor Catchment Area Foundation Phase Immersion Project and the Years 5 and 6 Learners' Support Pack to encourage them to choose a Welsh-medium Education route as they transfer to secondary school in the Bangor catchment area,

were important and far-reaching pieces of work for the children of that area. She expressed her admiration of the work in the language centres and officially thanked the staff for the work.

A short video was shown to the members, giving a taster of the ABERWLA Scheme.

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

It was enquired on what basis the conclusion was reached that it was beneficial not to immerse children early, and it was suggested that bringing the children who were being immersed back to the mother school for one day per week undid the immersion that took place in the language centre for the other four days.

In response, it was noted:-
- That the headteacher in the ABERWLA video mentioned the clear advantages of having children returning to the mother school for one day per week.
- The pandemic had highlighted the importance of well-being as children had gone through long periods of not being able to mix with their peers. It was concluded that it would be a good idea for the children being immersed to have an opportunity to catch up with their peers at the schools for one day per week, and the immersion occurred in a different context to an extent in the mother school, and increasingly thereafter as the child went through the system.
- Secondary school headteachers now reported that it was easier to persuade parents to send their children to immersion centres as those children maintained some contact with their peers.
- The fifth day at the mother school was a new project and, as well as advantages in the context of well-being, there were also educational advantages.
- The relationship between school staff and staff of the centres who visited the mother school on a weekly basis had strengthened further as a result of sharing immersion practices, sharing resources and discussing how to overcome any challenges the children faced back at school.
- Visits to the mother school varied with some teachers requesting staff of the centre to remain in class to support the activity. This encouraged a discussion on gathering effective immersion methods and there were also situations where children received one-to-one attention, or in a small group, and that other children also benefited from the experience.
- Despite the advantages, it was acknowledged that there were also challenges, and by nearing the end of the first term of the new system, it was intended to gather the opinions of stakeholders, by weighing up and evaluating the new system, and reviewing the arrangements if required.
- Two parents who have had children participating in the former immersion system, as well as the new system, praised the new system in the context of well-being, with one mother mentioning that her child developed confidence when returning to his peers once a week.
- The children had the scaffolding and support in the unit but, as this was not as prominent at the school, returning to school gave them an opportunity to practise what they had learnt in the unit without the scaffolding, and it was also an opportunity for the children to develop confidence and independence when becoming new speakers.

- The Service measured the progress of children at the centres and it was also intended to compare progress under the new four-day arrangement against the previous progress under the former five-day arrangement.
- In terms of the question regarding nursery-aged children, research showed that once an individual has established a pattern of communicating in one language, it was very difficult to change it afterwards. The foundation phase classes immersed children who came from multilingual, non-Welsh backgrounds, and very often non-verbal children. Therefore, immersion techniques were gathered and the system had held training for all clusters within Gwynedd based on an individual cluster with staff of the centres.
- Focus was placed on effective immersion principles in the foundation phase specifically and a follow-up to this training was being prepared as more and more traditional Welsh classes with more complexity in a linguistic context became apparent.
- The training had been held in September at the beginning of the academic year and it was intended to revisit the situation and see how things have been after that training, to see what the needs are and to tailor courses, in the hope of also extending to year 3 classes as part of that.

It was suggested that moving children back to the mother school for one day a week created challenges for the school, creating streams in the class, which could then affect the practice of Welsh within the class. It was enquired what were the criteria in terms of the ability of foundation phase teachers to immerse children, and what training was available to them.

In response, it was noted:-
- It was not accepted that moving children back to the mother school for one day created a stream within classes, and that teachers and schools praised the system.
- Immersion occurred naturally in all of the schools, except one school, throughout the foundation phase, and that children completed their education through the medium of Welsh at the end of their period in Year 2. The outcomes of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan indicated this, and it must be borne in mind that immersing in the Welsh language was not the only task of a teacher in the early years, and that they also dealt with the Curriculum for Wales across the expanse of all subjects.
- Immersion in the mainstream occurred continuously throughout the foundation phase, and this called for an investment of time and investment of enriching cross-curricular experiences so that children acquired the Welsh language naturally.
- The ten weeks at the language centre did not fully equip children to cope with all aspects of the curriculum through the medium of Welsh. This was the beginning of the journey and the mother school had a responsibility to develop and extend the child's ability and grasp of the language.
- Every teacher at the school was a language teacher as all teachers regularly modelled language and, therefore, there was an emphasis on teachers in primary schools to do so, as the language of children developed by listening and practising the language at the school.
- It was believed that the new system excelled the former system of sending a child to the language unit for a full 10 weeks, as there was now working in

- partnership, developing a relationship and collaboration as everyone had an input to the children's linguistic development.
- This grading facilitated the journey and equipped the child to develop independence and confidence, and also helped the teachers to forward plan and ensure that the child remained on the journey to acquire a language.
- The training provided to foundation phase teachers on immersion methods was effective and successful, and was based on a series of principles included in a report by Estyn based on evidence throughout the whole of Wales. A specific presentation on those principles was created, illustrating each one of them, e.g. how to do it, what is the best practice to reinforce a pattern etc.
- The Head of Gwynedd's Immersion Education System was a member of a national immersion network that had recently been established by the Welsh Government, which was an opportunity for everyone involved with immersion on a national level to get together on a termly basis to share good practices.
- It was not alleged that the situation was perfect and it was noted that much could be done to empower and improve by listening and sharing good practices, holding staff meetings and planning strategically.

Support was expressed to the system of returning to the mother school on the fifth day on the grounds that the class teacher could assess the child's development over the period, and that losing contact with the class teacher for ten weeks was difficult for the children. It was also believed that the fact that staff of the immersion centre came to the school with the child on the fifth day was an opportunity for teachers at the school to share ideas and good practice. As nearly all primary schools in Gwynedd were entirely Welsh, it was also noted that immersion in the foundation phase occurred completely naturally.

In response to a question regarding the situation of Our Lady's School in Bangor, it was explained that this school was in the transitional category. An additional resource had been invested there to enhance and develop the language further and it was noted that there had been a transformation at the school as a result of this.

On a point of clarity regarding the reference to the 'non-statutory schools' term in the second paragraph of clause 4.2 of the report, it was confirmed that this referred to the Government's guide, and not to Our Lady's School.

In response to an observation regarding the reference to changing the image and culture of Our Lady's School, it was noted that it was fully accepted that this would be the responsibility of the Governors and the Diocesan Trustees.

Although it had to be accepted that image and culture would be different in a Catholic school, it was noted that this did not mean that the school could not move towards a more Welsh direction. Ysgol Santes Helen, Caernarfon had a Catholic image and culture, and also used Welsh as a medium, but it was emphasised that sensitivity was needed when using these types of terms.

It was noted that the observation was fully accepted and that the Service would act on this in future.

It was noted that ABERLWA was an excellent and very exciting scheme, and it was enquired whether there was an opportunity to extend the virtual reality technology to the rest of the curriculum, working with the animation company to attract more investment.

In response, it was noted that this could be excellent in an ideal world. It was believed that latecomers in Gwynedd were the first children in the world to use this type of technology to acquire a language, and the Welsh Government praised what had taken place in Gwynedd.

A suggestion was made that the best way of encouraging parents to choose Welsh education for their children was by asking other parents, who had already chosen that path for their children, to share in a video why the decision had been a good one, instead of having teachers or Council staff encouraging Welsh education.

In response, it was noted:-
- It was agreed that insistence and setting limitless monitoring standards was not the way to attract people, and that persuasion and highlighting the economic advantages of being multilingual in Wales worked best with children and their parents.
- It was a struggle to convince parents that their children were confident in Welsh and that the Service worked with Nyth and Cwmni'r Fran Wen in Bangor on developing a two-year project, which was based on research by Schools Without Walls, where one cohort of children during their period in years 5 and 6, acquired a language by means of enriching creative experiences.
- The Service would share information with parents about the development and the experiences children receive through the medium of Welsh, and attempt to show parents how confident their children are to be working through the medium of Welsh.
- As part of the scheme, there would also be an opportunity for parents to see their children putting on performances and presentations confidently through the medium of Welsh.
- Advantage could be taken of those opportunities to persuade parents and having other parents sharing their experiences in a video would be worthwhile and certainly persuade and influence.

It was noted that:-
- There was concern in relation to confirming linguistic practices early, and that clause 4.2 of the report referred to an exceptional scheme in the foundation phase. As demographic changes continued over a period of decades, the immersion system would clearly have to adapt to deal with this, and it was believed that the type of scheme in question was relevant, or would be relevant, in a number of schools throughout the authority at present, and in due course.
- It was believed that the report focused too much on those who went through the immersion system and their parents, and that there was no consideration to the rest of the children and their parents.
- Clause 3.2 mentioned the blended education provision, which was recognised as an excellent practice by Estyn, but there was concern that there was a risk of creating an unintentional divide between the Welsh virtual digital world and the real-life English world, i.e. that Welsh would be the language of the computer, but English would be the language of the schoolyard, contrary to the real world

where Welsh was the normal face-to-face language in society and English was the language related to electronic and digital media.

In response to the observations, it was noted:-

- That the Bangor Catchment Area Foundation Phase Immersion Project (clause 4.2 of the report) was a scheme to develop the language of the workforce in a unique situation, and that it would not be needed in other situations as our teachers spoke Welsh.
- It was not believed that the report placed the well-being of one cohort ahead of another cohort at all, and that it was all based on everyone's well-being.
- The concern about creating a division between the Welsh virtual world and the real world was not shared, and it was required to ensure an education and system that was appealing to children of the twenty first century.
- It was essentially important to ensure the goodwill of non-Welsh speaking parents as this changed lives.
- Giving children the opportunity to practise their Welsh in a safe, virtual space before stepping into the real world, was very valuable.
- In terms of the situation in Bangor, maybe more schools needed the support and provision, and the Welsh Language Team examined and analysed data in terms of the confidence of children's language regularly, and identified schools that, maybe, needed additional support.
- With the exception of Our Lady's School, three other schools in the Bangor area also received support, which was on the basis of data analysis in terms of the children's confidence in discussions with the schools.
- An attempt was made to immerse years 2 to 9, to offer after-care support to the children on bridging days and teacher training. The Service did not have the capacity to do much more than this, and although nursery-aged children could be immersed, it was not believed that anyone would recommend bringing young, foundation phase children to an immersion centre, as they were safe at their schools and being immersed in the foundation phase in every primary school.

The opinion was expressed that the new scheme excelled the former scheme in many ways, i.e. immersed more children, a more enriching and interesting provision, more locations, better governance arrangement, creating consistency and more considerations to the broader needs of the child being taught. However, the former system was effective in releasing children who could return to the mainstream and be taught through the medium of Welsh. In the report, nothing could be seen in the new provision that would make it less likely for the new system to be a success, but it was enquired whether we had a way of measuring that the new system was, at least, as good as the former system.

In response, it was noted:-

- That there were specific measures in the internal performance challenging system with regards to the success of the system. In due course, it would be possible to compare the outcome with the outcomes under the former system but it was agreed that the new system was more modern and relevant to children's lives today.
- Children's progress was currently being measured based on National Curriculum levels, but of course they would transfer to become a measure in terms of progression step 1 and progression step 2.

- Interpersonal linguistic development was examined such as the confidence of children when using the language socially in terms of communicating, and a curricular assessment was also undertaken, i.e. in terms of how children cope with the curriculum in terms of subject terminology in secondary school etc.

In response to a question regarding the flexibility of the new system in terms of accepting children, it was noted:-
- That flexibility still existed although the system was clearly more formal. Course dates and a referral form were shared with primary and secondary headteachers on a termly basis, before the admission forum considered and prioritised children. It was emphasised that no child had been refused.
- There was more demand in the Autumn term as more latecomers arrived during the summer, but at less busy times a place was offered to children who were not latecomers, but who wished to improve and regain confidence in the language.
- Consideration was also given to establishing short courses to improve and regain confidence during the last fortnight of the summer term (as the usual ten-week course was finished by then) and during September (before the ten-week course started in October) along with five-week courses for children who needed additional support.

Although every teacher was a language teacher, it was noted that whatever subject they taught, not every teacher was an immersion teacher and that special skills were needed to teach a language to a child. It was enquired whether the opinions of innovative immersion teachers had been sought about updating and modernising the provision. It was also enquired how the Service marketed and sold the scheme to parents. It was further noted that it appeared that support for the learner back at the mother school on the fifth day was inconsistent, and that there was no support scaffolding at school in terms of immersion and acquiring a language. Rather than spending four days at the language centre and one day back at school over a ten-week period, it was enquired whether it would be better for the children to be immersed less but more intensively at the language centre, say for five days over a seven-week period, as this would be less confusing for the pupil.

In response, it was noted:-
- That the new system had only been operational for a term and that the Service was still examining the provision. However, it was believed that there was no evidence at all that anything was unsatisfactory.
- Although accepting that there was a difference of opinion among members, stakeholders, whether as children, parents and teachers, praised the new four-day system. It was essentially important for children to have contact with the mother school and their peers, and it was believed that this defeated any argument about keeping them in a centre for five days.
- Gwenan Ellis Jones (Gwynedd and Anglesey Primary Schools Welsh Language Charter Coordinator) collaborated with the Service on immersion principles, and the Service would appreciate a conversation with other similar experts, and receive their input.
- In terms of marketing, pamphlets, a letter and presentation had been provided to the schools to share with parents, and it was intended to extend the provision by producing a video that conveyed the new-look system.

- In terms of the observation regarding the inconsistency of support at the schools on the fifth day, the situation varied from school to school according to what those schools would consider as the best support for the child. This did not happen at random - it had been forward planned intentionally and it occurred in consultation with staff of the language centres.

A request was made for more information on how the Service persuaded parents to choose a Welsh education route for their children when transferring to a secondary school in the Bangor catchment area (clause 4.3 of the report) and the objective of the short courses that bridged between primary and secondary (clause 5.1).

In response, it was noted:-
- In terms of persuading parents, as well as collaborating with Nyth and Cwmni'r Fran Wen, a relationship had been established with the Hunaniaith Team, which already worked in the area, and meetings had been held, e.g. at the centre in Ysgol Tryfan for parents of children who attended the centre.
- It was hoped to extend this and create a strong link with primary schools in the catchment area by collaborating with staff and Cwmni'r Fran Wen.
- The Service also worked with Sbarduno, and developed scientific opportunities for the children. Workshops had already been held for every child in years 5 and 6 in Bangor to develop the children's confidence in the Welsh language on a cross-curricular basis, especially in the sciences, and very positive feedback had been received about this.
- A Chwarae yn Gymraeg workshop had been held with the Urdd, using the Welsh Government's Late Immersion Grant to train children in years 5 and 6 in Bangor and Tywyn to develop a play project with the younger children at the schools.
- By collaborating closely with the schools and by promoting the projects, it was hoped to be able to show parents that their children had the ability and confidence to follow a Welsh education route. It was also hoped to show parents that further immersion support was available for their children if they chose a Welsh-medium route, and the language centre at Ysgol Tryfan would be a valuable resource for this.

It was noted that the statistics of the number of children who went to improve language (clause 3.6 of the report) were in percentages, and it was enquired what were the exact figures. In response, it was noted that 73 learners had attended the language units in the 2022 Summer Term, 65 in the 2022 Autumn Term and 53 in the 2023 Spring Term.

It was suggested that there was no consistency in the staffing structure of the different language centres, and that fewer specialist teachers were in the centres than in the past. There was a concern that staffing decisions were financial cuts rather than something of benefit, not only for the children being immersed but for the other children as well. It was added that clear evidence could not be seen from reports that the system was a success, and there was concern that the quality of the service was at risk of slipping.

In response, it was explained:-
- That staffing decisions were not financial decisions, and the argument that there must be two teachers in one centre was not accepted.
- The workforce and the system were flexible to go to the location where the demand was greater.

- In terms of the workforce, the new structure provided a head and deputy for the system, along with a teacher and level 4 assistant at every centre, and that the assistants had also been immersed in the principles.
- Under the former system, staff were very isolated, but under the new system there was one structure, clear guidance, a work programme, an opportunity to share good practice and to undertake continuous professional development.
- Staff at the centres now operated as a school with a strategic plan and improvement plan in place, and there were specific actions to ensure that we presented the most effective immersion methods in the system.
- The service had not been downsized and we now had more centres, which served more children. Also, as a result of reviewing the system, it was now possible to run the immersion system during three terms a year, where it had not been possible in the third term in the past.

It was noted that one looked forward to seeing the centre in Tywyn opening soon.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

7. **WORKFORCE PLANNING**

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Support and officers from the Corporate Support Department were welcomed to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member set out the context and the Human Resources Advisory Services Manager provided a summary of the content of the report, which gave an overview of the Council's situation in relation to staff recruitment and retention, referring to the challenges over the last few months and the steps already being taken to address the situation, and provided an overview of the Council's long-term objectives to plan the workforce.

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

It was asked whether priority was given to fill statutory posts over other posts. In response, it was noted:-

- That there was certainly an element of prioritisation and that this was a regular discussion between the Human Resources Service and the employing department.
- It was not believed that market price was the solution to every problem, but cost would become an inevitable part of that if there was a number of statutory posts to fill.

The member noted that he accepted that the situation was difficult but failure to employ, e.g. enforcement officers, led to a situation where the work accumulated over a period of time.

In response, it was noted:-
- That identifying priority posts also worked through the Apprenticeship Scheme, which examined where the gaps had been, and encouraged apprentices in those fields for the future.

It was noted that the report was concise, purposeful and honest, that clearly showed where the shortage was. A request was made for examples of creative methods of attracting workers, information about how many apprentices had remained with Cyngor Gwynedd, and what had worked, and not worked, in terms of the Work Experience Scheme.

In response, it was noted:-

- In terms of what had worked, and not worked, that the old way of working was thinking that there was one solution to every question and that one method could tackle each problem. It was now realised that communication was needed with different audiences in different ways, e.g. even more use of social media with some cohorts, and more use of local recruitment or using the website with other cohorts.
- The Council was currently developing a new recruitment website and that there was much more evolution in the content of the website than what was currently available, with the intention of drawing on the experiences of current staff, and seeking to use their experiences as a method to sell the Council.
- In terms of the Work Experience Scheme, the intention was to try to open the eyes of children and young people to what the Council had to offer as an employer, and provide worthwhile experiences for individuals.
- There was a lot of work to respond to and learn about different methods as every employer was looking for the best solution at the time.
- The different apprenticeship and trainee schemes were certainly creative schemes, and that considerable support was given to individuals who had registered with those schemes so that they could fully develop in their roles and develop careers with the Council.

A suggestion was made that there was an excellent opportunity to sell Gwynedd at the National Eisteddfod in Boduan, and it was assumed that information about available opportunities would be available on the Council's stall, as well as posters near the entrance to the Maes, in the car park and Maes B to raise the profile of Gwynedd as a good place to live and work.

In response, it was noted:-

- That it was agreed that the National Eisteddfod was a golden opportunity to sell Gwynedd, and that marketing and using various marketing techniques were absolutely key.
- The new recruitment website would be launched before the Eisteddfod.
- 80 young people had attended a very successful jobs fair recently, and it was intended to arrange more similar events across the county.

It was noted that the Council had commendable schemes in terms of recruitment etc. but it was enquired whether there was a strategic plan to procure posts that coordinated all this with data, and monitored how many were awarded posts etc. and that engagement was undertaken with schools on a micro level.

In response, it was noted:-

- That this was ultimately the purpose of the project, namely, to ensure a long-term strategy that drew all of these elements together, and which highlighted the

objectives for the next 5-10 years based on the research mentioned throughout the report in terms of what would be the future needs in terms of skills and knowledge.

- Considerable good work was ongoing to communicate with children via some of these schemes, and one important part of all this was developing the marketing so that we had good selling points to show children. The language was a good selling point and there was a need to use this to ensure that people chose to come to work for Cyngor Gwynedd and live locally.

In response, the member noted that this plan was the Council's future, and the future of keeping young people in the county and, should funding for it be challenging, there was a need to earmark specific funding for this purpose.

In response, it was noted:-

- That the strategic plan was a priority project within the Council Plan, and that it would also be in the new plan.
- We had now come to the end of the current funding cycle of the Apprenticeships Scheme and Cynllun Yfory, and it was intended to submit a bid in the autumn to fund the next cycle.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Service engaged with colleges, as well as schools, and targeted students with marketing materials etc.

It was noted that exit interviews were important in order to understand why people chose to leave the Council, but it was suggested that this was too late in terms of employees who were leaving, and it was enquired if there were arrangements that allowed individuals to share concerns etc. during their employment.

In response, it was noted that staff members and managers were encouraged to hold open, honest and private discussions on a regular basis. It was understood that staff and managers in a number of departments held 1:1 conversations on a monthly basis at least, with an opportunity for a totally informal conversation at any time, and this would allow managers to respond to concerns in time.

It was noted that Cyngor Gwynedd expectations in terms of language skills could make it more challenging to recruit staff, and it was suggested that contacting the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol would be of assistance regarding this.

In response, it was noted that this was where this project would go next, and that contacts needed to be established with organisations such as the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol as the technology now offered us a labour market that was beyond the boundaries of Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy.

It was asked whether it was known where staff shortages within the Council were having the most impact on the service, and whether we had a strategy to respond to this.

In response, it was noted:-

- That the recruitment problem was not mainly responsible for any service continuation problems, and that the issue of absences was a factor regarding this.

- In some services, we had a good overview in terms of what was the level of absence and the level of lack of appointment. Both things would sometimes go hand in hand, and the absence element would sometimes have more of an impact.
- This was part of the work being undertaken to ensure that these projects intertwined, that the recruitment system monitored the absence element, and whether there was a correlation between both things.
- Turnover could be a healthy thing as not every post was suitable for everyone, and that a new workforce with a high level of enthusiasm for the post could be attracted.

Cynllun Yfory was praised on the grounds that it was an excellent investment to attract young people back to Gwynedd to receive work experience.

Attention was drawn to the fact that there was a number of vacant posts in the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department. It was also noted that it was understood that some private companies paid higher salaries than the Council, and it was enquired whether there was a risk that we invested in workers who leave the Council soon after receiving training / different permits etc.

In response, it was noted:-
- As part of the training agreement, anyone who was part of Cynllun Yfory was expected to remain with the Council for a specific period after qualifying, so that the Council also received value for money from the investment.
- No such agreement existed in relation to other Council employees, but the Council's employment package included 28 different benefits, which included a pension scheme, and work was being undertaken continuously to draw the attention of employees to all of the available benefits of working for Cyngor Gwynedd.

It was suggested that not holding exit interviews with the employee's former line manager was a risk that we would not be provided with the full picture, and it was enquired whether this could be done on an entirely independent basis via the Human Resources Service.

In response, it was noted:-
- That the system had to be optional, but employees leaving the Council could complete a questionnaire or have an exit interview.
- There was an option for the employee to have an interview with a member from the Human Resources Team, which had access to data deriving from the discussion to be able to hold a discussion with heads of department regarding anything that would become apparent.

Subject to resources, it was suggested that the Human Resources Team could hold informal small forums with groups of the front-line workforce to discuss the satisfaction officers get from their work, and any problems that arise, so that a relationship was developed over time where people feel comfortable about providing an honest opinion about the work.

In response, it was noted:-

- That the idea was welcomed and that the Manager would discuss it with the Team.
- Team members visited front-line teams, in residential homes for example, and although those were conversations mainly with the management teams, there was also an opportunity for conversations with staff.
- It was also possible for staff to contact the service via union officers, who worked closely with front-line service staff.
- As part of another priority project, there was an intention to engage with staff by means of a questionnaire regarding their general well-being, and this would highlight any problems.
- The Council had a team to raise the awareness of front-line staff about available benefits, including all aspects in terms of the health, well-being and financial well-being of the workforce.

It was noted that it was important to ascertain whether approximately 1,600 Council employees who were in the age ranges of 55-64 and 65+ were staff on low-level salaries, or staff on high-level salaries, as the Council could face a serious problem if the majority of them were on a higher salary and decided to retire as they knew that they would receive a generous pension from the Council.

In response, it was noted:-
- It was likely that employees in the 55+ bands were a combination of employees on high-level and low-level salaries, and that preparations had to be made for the day when we would lose those skills, experience and expertise.
- It was probably fair to say that staff in the adult care sector tended to be older in general, and that this fed into the recruitment problem that was already seen in that field.

Although the report referred to attracting and retaining staff, it was noted that we did the opposite as far as home carers were in question, as they did not know if their jobs would be with the Council for years to come, or whether the Council would externalise all services to private companies.

In response, it was noted that it was very difficult to answer this particular point, but that this was part of the work of the Domiciliary Care Project Team.

The importance of being able to attract and retain those staff on low-level salaries was emphasised. To highlight the point, it was suggested that should an employee on a high-level salary take annual leave, the public would not notice, but should an employee on a low-level salary take annual leave, and nobody replaced them, that this would have a serious effect on the public.

It was noted that the recruitment problem was much broader than what had been noted in the report as there was a shortage of education staff in general across the county, including classroom assistants and assistants in special needs' schools. Therefore, the Council needed to examine the whole matter in its entirety in terms of how to attract and award staff on the low-level salary, who provided invaluable service to the Council.

It was enquired whether figures were available in terms of how many people had managed to be recruited, who lived far from Gwynedd, but worked remotely, as well as

how many Council staff had got jobs in other parts of the country while still living in Gwynedd.

In response, it was noted:-
- That there was no quantitative data available to answer the question unfortunately, but there were staff who had taken advantage of the hybrid way of working, and staff who did not live close to Gwynedd anymore, but who still worked effectively for the Council.
- The ability to work remotely worked in the Council's favour in terms of attracting new staff, as well as retaining current staff, but it was also possible that the Council had lost some staff who had gone to work virtually for bodies far away from the county as the salary was possibly higher.
- A specific piece of work could possibly be commissioned to examine this, but currently, from the experience of the Corporate Support Department in particular, it was believed that we benefited, rather than suffered, from the situation.

It was asked whether there had been progress in discussions about packaging part-time posts in different departments to be able to offer one full-time post.

In response, it was noted:-
- An attempt had been made to link different parts of the workforce together, especially in terms of education assistants and carers, so that it was possible for the post-holder to work as an assistant during term time and as a carer during school holidays.
- An attempt had been made to take steps to build on this in one specific area of the county but the work had not yet come to fruition.
- People were possibly slightly scared of change, or some teams were scared of losing people to another field within the Council if the Plan progressed and, therefore, more work needed to be completed in an attempt to make progress.

In response to a question regarding where the Council advertised jobs, it was noted:-
- That more and more use was being made of social media. There were now very good Welsh websites, such as Lleol.cymru and Swyddle and Golwg 360 was also a good medium to advertise through the medium of Welsh.
- In terms of creativity, maybe there was a need to look again for different ways, and maybe it would be possible to collaborate with members locally in specific areas in an effort to recruit in some fields.
- It was also important to use specialist and professional networks such as Linkedin for some specific posts.
- Every job was advertised on the Council's website.

It was noted that an education assistant's job used to be a well-paid job and that schools had lost professional assistants who had gone on to work for other organisations for double the salary. In terms of the Council's image, it was also noted that there was a tendency to think that there was a need for a degree and to be middle class to work for the Council and it was asked how the Council could be sold to working class young people in our deprived areas, and not only the low salary jobs.

In response, it was noted:-

- It was fully accepted that the Council could create that type of image but there was a need for the workforce to reflect the society we lived in, and the best ambassadors in this regard, were the staff who worked for us. By supporting and equipping them with the knowledge and skills, they could be the best marketing material within our communities.
- The Council had a close relationship with communities in the county through schools etc. and that it was excellent that so many young people had recently attended the Jobs Fair.
- The officers had a responsibility to sell each post that was advertised, to describe the opportunity in a coherent manner and not to give vague titles to posts.

It was enquired whether use was made of algorithms to advertise on Facebook or Instagram in order to target people specifically.

In response, it was explained that the Council had done so in specific circumstances where it had been considered that paying a bit more to take advantage of a specific algorithm would provide value for money, but that it did not happen regularly.

It was suggested that the May/June period was a good time to attract young people to come and work for the Council, as they left school and colleges, and it was asked whether it would be possible to post a link to Council jobs on Instagram to target young people specifically.

RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.

8. **FINANCE PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE MEETINGS**

Submitted - the report of the Scrutiny Advisor inviting the committee to nominate a representative to attend the Finance Department's performance challenge meetings in Councillor Elin Hywel's place, who had stepped down from being a committee member.

Councillor Paul Rowlinson's name was proposed. Councillor Paul Rowlinson noted that he was willing to be nominated, provided that the committee nominated another representative to attend the Corporate Support Department's performance challenge meetings in his place.

As many members had left the meeting, and others were absent, it was suggested to contact all committee members after the meeting to enquire about a representative to attend the Corporate Support Department's performance challenge meetings, and to formally nominate that member at the next meeting.

RESOLVED to nominate Councillor Paul Rowlinson to attend the Finance Department's performance challenge meetings, and to contact all committee members to enquire about a representative to attend the performance challenge meetings of the Corporate Support Department in Councillor Paul Rowlinson's place.

At the end of her period as chair, Councillor Beth Lawton thanked all members for their cooperation over the last two years.

The Vice-chair, Councillor Cai Larsen, thanked the Chair for chairing the meetings in such a positive and constructive manner, and the Chair thanked the Vice-chair for all his support.

The meeting commenced at 10:30am and concluded at 3:20pm.

MEETING	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
DATE	8 June, 2023
TITLE	Regional Emergency Planning Service
AUTHOR	Ian Jones, Head of Corporate Support / Helen Kilgannon, North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service Manager
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Menna Trenholme

Why does it need to be scrutinised?

To ensure that sufficient arrangements are in place regarding emergency Planning within the Council and specifically:

- How does the regional service contribute to resilience and security of communities in Gwynedd?
- What is the current work programme of the Service?
- What is the structure within Cyngor Gwynedd to respond to a crisis or Emergency?

1. Background

The Council has duties for emergency planning and response under the Civil Contingencies Acts 2004, the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001, and the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996.

In September 2010, following some deliberation of the benefits of taking a more collaborative approach to the Emergency Planning Support function, the North Wales Chief Executives commissioned a piece of work to develop a collaborative model which would establish a single regional emergency planning service. An appraisal of the previous arrangements undertaken by the emergency planning community demonstrated the arrangements exhibit:-
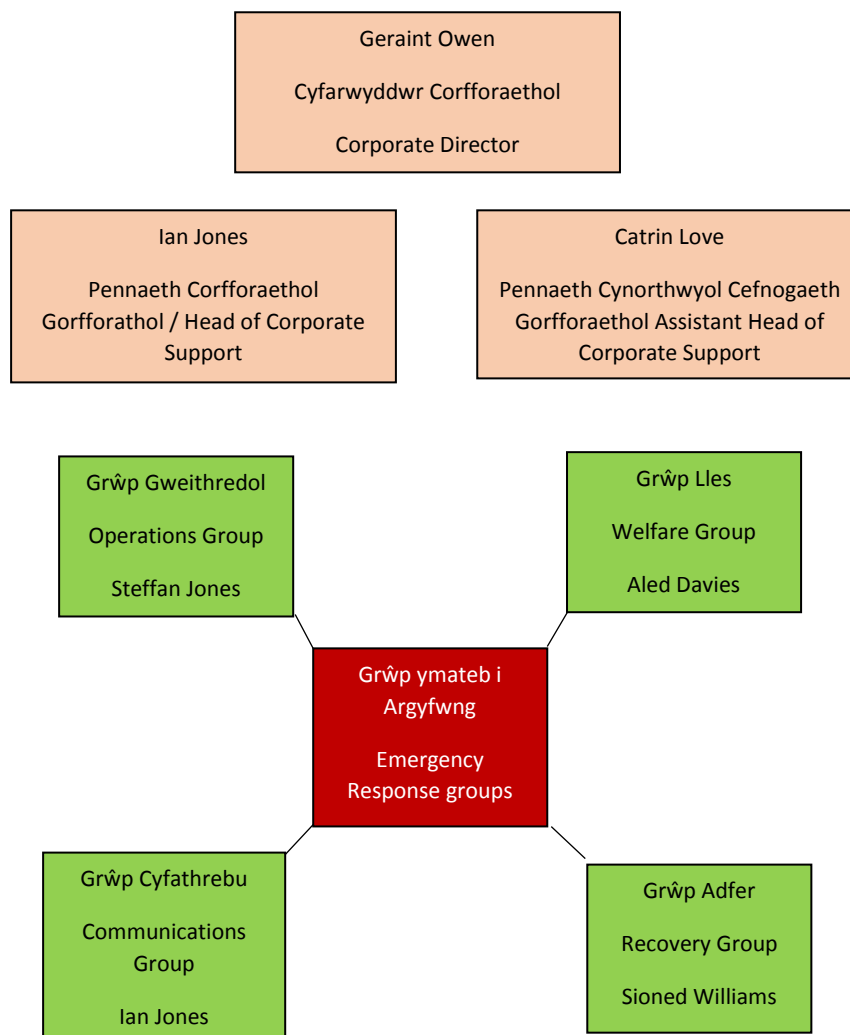
- Duplication and repetition of tasks;
- Lack of harmonisation and resilience;
- Inconsistency of response (suggesting a lack of systematic dissemination of best practice); and
- Lack of integration and interoperability.

Following consultation and ratification through the political process in each Local Authority, Emergency Planning functions for all 6 local authorities in North Wales were amalgamated into one service in 2014. North Wales is the first region in Wales to form a fully integrated service to support all councils to fulfil their duties. It is supported by an Executive Board comprising representatives from the six Councils. The representative from Cyngor Gwynedd is Geraint Owen, Corporate Director.

The arrangements are underpinned by a Service Level Agreement and an Inter-Authority Agreement. The service is currently hosted by Flintshire County Council.

Within the Council, responsibilities for emergency planning and response are shared across services and nominated service representatives are identified within the Emergency Management Response Team structure.

The following diagram details the current structure within the Council. The Corporate Director is the Chair of the Group whilst the Head of Corporate Support together with the Assistant Head are responsible for managing the day-to-day relationship with the Regional Service.

Geraint Owen

Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol

Corporate Director

Ian Jones

Pennaeth Corfforaethol Gorfforathol / Head of Corporate Support

Catrin Love

Pennaeth Cynorthwyol Cefnogaeth Gorfforaethol Assistant Head of Corporate Support

Grŵp Gweithredol

Operations Group

Steffan Jones

Grŵp Lles

Welfare Group

Aled Davies

Grŵp ymateb i Argyfwng

Emergency Response groups

Grŵp Cyfathrebu

Communications Group

Ian Jones

Grŵp Adfer

Recovery Group

Sioned Williams

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 a major emergency is defined as:

- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom,

- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom, or
- War, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

The Regional Service will be notified of a major emergency or incident:

- as soon as assistance is required from the local authority
- when one of the agencies' resources are overwhelmed
- the incident is likely to be ongoing and may impact the local authority

Once alerted to an incident the Service will contact the oncall contact at the Council to discuss the issue and consider the setting up of one or more of the above response groups. For example, we have had several fires recently which has required local authority support for road closures but also rest centres to ensure people have somewhere safe to shelter while waiting for the fire to be put out. In this circumstance we may want to consider standing up the welfare group to ensure the ongoing needs of people are met.

2. Regional Activity

The Service provides the primary link between the Council and North Wales Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF is a multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from local public services. It is responsible for planning and preparing for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies and responding to them.

For example, the Service reviews and renews the North Wales 4 x 4 Service Agreement. This is a formal agreement between the six authorities and the 4 x 4 Wales Service to provide assistance and describes the mechanisms to be followed should any authority need support in delivering services. The service has proved to be an invaluable partner in assisting in severe weather where they have assisted with evacuations during floods and transporting care staff to remote areas not accessible by car following heavy snowfall.

The service also coordinates mutual aid for the six local authorities. As not all incidents will affect all local authorities, we have the ability to ask other local authorities to assist in times of need. This includes rest centre staff and response staff for severe weather incidents. Whilst this has not been required by Gwynedd Council to date, it has been utilised in Eastern Counties successfully in supporting a flood incident and the manning of a reception centre for evacuees.

Following the pandemic and the change in how people work, the Service has diversified to ensure staff continue to be competent in their emergency planning and incident response roles. The Service has designed and implemented a range of e-learning

modules including, Strategic Management, Tactical Management and Rest Centre staff Training. These are currently available via Gwynedd's internal Learning Pool portal.

The Service continues to provide out of hours support to the local authority and blue light services in response to queries and incidents 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To test responses within local authorities NWC-REPS carry out Exercise Cooper quarterly to test both the contact details we hold and the out of hours availability of key staff. In Cyngor Gwynedd's case, the response over the course of the year demonstrated an 80% response rate over the quarterly tests however we would expect this will improve following the implementation of the on-call rota arrangements.

Whilst much progress has been made, work is underway to further consolidate how the activities provided by the service are undertaken, particularly by strengthening performance management and training delivery. Our host Authority, Flintshire has recently purchased the in-phase performance management system and the service has obtained a licence to be able to use the system. This will allow the Manager to provide improved reporting methods and data to the Executive Board and Local Authorities.

This will also enable the service to effectively prioritise areas of work and resource allocation and ensure that councils benefit fully from the range of expertise in the service.

3. Activity within the Council

Learning from COVID –19

Key Members of the Operations group and Strategic Panel were keen to reflect on the pandemic and identify any learning to ensure resilience and effective response to any future requirements. In order to do this, work has been progressed in the following areas:

Structures

The Emergency Management Response Team structure within the Council facilitates the coordination of incidents with Business Continuity implications for the authority. The Strategic Panel is the group established within Cyngor Gwynedd, The group comprises the Corporate Director, various department heads, the Lead Officer of the Regional Service for Cyngor Gwynedd and the Regional Manager. The Panel meets quarterly where the progress of the sub-groups is reviewed and multi-agency work is summarised. This is also the forum for the Regional Service to share their activity, any changes to legislation and share best practice. Training opportunities are reviewed for the coming quarter and staff are nominated to attend.

The Strategic Panel meetings have been effective in keeping all members informed on current events, rising time events and an overview of risks allowing workstreams to be broken down into sub-groups -

The Council has recently incorporated the following four sub-groups into its strategic panel, including –

- Recovery
- Operations
- Welfare
- Communications, IT and Training

All groups have established memberships and hold regular meetings. Workplans for these sub-groups are being developed, along with training and exercise opportunities.

The Strategic Panel and Sub-Groups provide a robust mechanism for the delivery of planning and response functions and include a number of critical staff and service areas to ensure resilience and proper response.

Training and Exercising

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Local Authorities as Category One Responders have a duty to undertake training and exercises with partners on a regular basis. This requires local authorities to exercise scenarios every 12 months with Live exercises every 3 years.

Gwynedd staff have attended the following –

Following the development and roll out of the Regional Emergency Rest Centre Plan, three training events took place to ensure the embedding of the plan. These were carried out in Q3 2022. Training of Rest Centre staff is being further supported by the addition of e-learning.

- Power outage contingency training and a scenario run through were undertaken to accompany the UK Government Guidance on Power Outage Rota Disconnection. This was further exercised as part of the Uk Wide Power Outage Exercise (Exercise Mighty Oak) in March 2023.
- Officers from Cyngor Gwynedd have also attended nationally recognised Wales Gold and Silver Courses namely:
  - Wales Gold - Chief Executive, Steffan Jones, Geraint Owen, Huw Dylan Owen, and Sioned Williams
  - Wales Silver – Ian Jones, Catrin Love, Rhion Glyn, Ceri Thomas and Adrian Williams

These are multi-agency courses which allow professionals to rehearse working together effectively and provide insight into what is expected.

New on call structure

The Council has introduced a seven week on-call structure for senior officers to improve resilience and response when dealing and responding to incidents. This rota is shared with the Emergency Planning on call officers and cuts down time on the previous system of best endeavours. This further reduces the risk of single point of failure. This is seen as best practice for local authorities and has worked effectively since its introduction locally.

Recently, Officers from Cyngor Gwynedd contributed to the emergency response for the following incidents:

Extreme Weather – There were 70 weather warnings for Gwynedd in 2022/23 (67 were yellow / 3 were Amber which led to a response from Cyngor Gwynedd and the standing up of a Tactical Coordination Group)

There was also Tactical Co-ordination Groups held for the first time last year regarding the trisk of heatwaves which Cyngor Gwynedd staff also attended.

Hirael Fire – Staff were integral in the response to the large-scale fire at a former builders' merchants in Bangor. Road closures and safety measures were put in place to protect the public.

Service Continuity

Gwynedd has worked closely with the Regional Service over the last six months to develop an improved template for business and service continuity. This is being finalised and rolled out over the coming months in order for all service areas to mitigate the shared risks within the Council.

Community Risk Register

As part of the work of preparing for emergencies across the region, key partners work together to prepare the North Wales Community Risk Register.

The Risk Register is compiled by the North Wales Resilience Forum which is made up of representatives of the main agencies involved in responding to emergencies – the emergency services, local authorities, health, environment and utility organisations.
The overall purpose is to ensure representatives work together to achieve an appropriate level of preparedness to respond to emergencies that may have a significant impact on the communities of North Wales.

The main risks for North Wales communities are identified as follows:

- Flooding
- Severe Weather
- Pandemic
- Terrorist Incidents
- Industrial Incidents
- Loss of Critical Infrastructure
- Animal disease
- Pollution
- Transport Incidents

The full document is attached at appendix A.

4. Future Priorities

- The Regional Service is currently reviewing its priorities, given changes to Legislation and to ensure we are working to mitigate the risks on the National Risk Register.
- Martyn's Law – Following the Manchester Arena attack, the mother of Martyn Hett who was a victim in the incident, has campaigned for changes to the law to protect people by increasing security at public events. The general debate on the Bill has not yet been scheduled but preparatory work is being undertaken as this will impact the Public Safety and Protection Group and other Health and Safety Advisory Groups held by the Council. This work will be undertaken in conjunction with a review of the findings in relation to the Manchester Arena report.
- Training and Exercising - During lockdown, with people working in a more agile nature, time was invested in preparing and developing e-learning packages. We now need to focus on delivering face-to-face training and exercises in order that attendees benefit from shared learning and networking opportunities.
- Recovery Plan - A full review of the Recovery Plan is underway to eliminate duplication and also incorporate learning from Covid.

5. Finance

The funding for the Regional Service is calculated on the basis of population. Cyngor Gwynedd's annual contribution to the service is £106,177 which equates to 17.979% of the population of North Wales. The Service has realised a saving of over £300k per annum across the region since its inception and a full service review is underway to identify any possible savings.

Local Authority	Annual Contribution %
Isle of Anglesey County Council	10.472%
Conwy County Borough Council	16.940%
Denbighshire County Council	14.865%
Flintshire County Council	19.348%
Cyngor Gwynedd	17.979%
Wrexham County Borough Council	20.396%
Total	100%

Appendix A

PDF

NWCRR A5 Booklet
E.pdf

North Wales
PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

Fforwm Cydnerth Gogledd Cymru

North Wales Resilience Forum

Contents

INTRODUCTION

As part of the work of preparing for emergencies across the region, key partners work together to prepare the North Wales Community Risk Register.

This document provides information on the biggest emergencies that could happen in the region and includes the impact on people, communities, the environment and local businesses. These risks are regularly reviewed and listed on the regional Risk Register.

The Risk Register is compiled by the North Wales Resilience Forum which is made up of representatives of the main agencies involved in responding to emergencies – the emergency services, local authorities, health, environment and utility organisations.

The overall purpose is to ensure representatives work together to achieve an appropriate level of preparedness to respond to emergencies that may have a significant impact on the communities of North Wales.

North Wales Area Profile

Located on the west of the British Isles, North Wales is bound on the north and west by the Irish Sea, to the east by the border with England (specifically the counties of Cheshire and Shropshire) and to the South by the border with mid-Wales (specifically the counties of Powys and Ceredigion).

The land area of North Wales is approximately 6,172 square kilometres (which equates to 29% of the total land area of Wales), and the coastline is almost 400 kilometres long.

North Wales is divided into six counties - Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.

North Wales has a total resident population of 694,826 (2016 Office for National Statistics data), which is largely concentrated in the more industrial and urbanised areas of the North East and along the North Wales coast. The population increases significantly during summer months. Less than a quarter (22.32%) of the total Welsh population lives in North Wales.

Over the following pages, we will look at the key risks we face in North Wales; explain what the agencies involved in responding to emergencies are doing to plan for these risks and provide advice on how you can prepare.

FLOODING

Flooding has been identified as a very high risk for the North Wales area, with 53,860 properties across the region at risk of flooding.

Storm surges which raise high tide levels can affect many coastal communities and lead to overtopping of existing sea-defences. This results in the flooding of residential and commercial properties.

There is also a risk of river flooding caused by excess rainfall.

As well as the immediate effect on people's daily lives when flooding hits and the possibility of evacuation is imminent, the work of recovering from wide scale flooding can last long after water levels have subsided.

With climate change projections indicating that we can expect to see more frequent and severe storms and an increase in sea levels, it is likely that coastal flooding will become more common in years to come.

Consequences:

The predicted impacts could include:

◆ Risk to life (people and animals).
◆ Damage to property, businesses, agricultural land, roads, structures and infrastructure.
◆ Pollution and contamination of local environments.
◆ Long term damage to tourism, businesses and agriculture.

What are we doing in North Wales?

◆ Monitoring forecasts and providing timely warnings to those at risk.
◆ Strategic planning to protect the areas at risk and maintaining sea defences.
◆ Working together to help minimise disruption to critical services.
◆ Working with partners to raise awareness of flood risk and steps they can take to prepare themselves for flooding.

What should you do?

◆ Find out if your property is at risk of flooding.
◆ Sign-up to receive flood warnings by phone, text or email.
◆ Consider how you can protect your own property. If there's time and it's safe for you to do so, fit any flood protection products you have available.
◆ Check with your insurance company that your policy covers flooding.
◆ Where possible, move valuable items to upper floors during times of flood risk.
◆ Check forecasts and heed any warnings.
◆ If it's safe to do so, check on vulnerable neighbours and relatives.
◆ Visit www.naturalresources.wales/flooding for advice and guidance.

SEVERE WEATHER

Severe weather can cause significant problems and disruption to our everyday lives.

The main types of severe weather that we plan for include storms and gales; low temperatures with heavy snow or ice; and heatwaves.

North Wales has experienced most of these during the past few years and forecasters suggest that severe weather events are likely to become more common in the future.

Consequences:
- ◆ Travel disruption.
- ◆ Vulnerable / older people can suffer from the effects of cold or excessive heat.
- ◆ Disruption to utilities.
- ◆ School closures.
- ◆ Slips / falls.
- ◆ Collisions.

What are we doing in North Wales?
- ◆ Monitoring the forecasts all year round.
- ◆ Working together to help minimise disruption to critical services.
- ◆ Designing and planning our services to be resilient.
- ◆ Gritting and ploughing of designated routes.

What should you do?
- ◆ Check weather forecast and heed any warnings.
- ◆ Plan your journeys / activities accordingly.
- ◆ Check on older neighbours and relatives.
- ◆ Take action - keep warm or keep hydrated.
- ◆ Avoid non-essential journeys during times of severe weather.

A PANDEMIC

A pandemic occurs when a virus emerges which is able to spread from person to person. Most people don't have immunity, and the virus spreads across the world.

Large numbers of people may become infected by this new virus over a relatively short period of time.

Unlike a normal flu virus, which occurs during the winter months, a pandemic can occur at any time in one or more waves, possibly weeks or months apart.

The spread of the Covid-19 Coronavirus has demonstrated the unpredictability of the impact of pandemics. This virus has impacted upon the lives of millions of people across the globe and has led to the death of hundreds of thousands of people.

Consequences:

Many millions of people around the world can become infected by a pandemic. Up to half the UK population may become infected and between 50,000 and 750,000 additional deaths may occur by the end of a pandemic. Normal life is likely to face wide disruption, particularly due to staff shortages affecting the provision of essential services, including production and transport of goods.

What are we doing in North Wales?

◆ As the Covid-19 pandemic has shown, the NHS has arrangements in place to work with a wide-range of partners to manage increased demand on health care services.

◆ Partners work to distribute medicines and vaccinating those at risk, as soon as an appropriate vaccine is produced, in the event of a pandemic.

◆ Plans and procedures are tested and reviewed and improvements identified and implemented.

◆ Plans and procedures are tested and reviewed and improvements identified and implemented.

Things you can do:

◆ In the event of a pandemic, follow the latest guidance from health authorities.

◆ Keep healthy - a healthy lifestyle is a great defence against flu and other illnesses.

◆ Identify a flu friend - somebody who is well who would help you if you caught pandemic flu by collecting your medication, food and other necessities for you.

◆ If eligible, have your free seasonal flu vaccine every year.

◆ Flu vaccinations may also be available for those who aren't eligible for a free vaccine. Details will be available at your local community pharmacy.

◆ To avoid spreading flu germs, cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze and wash your hands.

TERRORIST INCIDENTS

Over recent times, the issue of terrorist attacks has regularly been in the news. But it's been on the agenda for the police and security service for much longer. They have been working constantly to foil terrorists for many years.

Whilst the probability of getting caught up in a terror attack is very small, the threat from terrorism is very real.

Terrorists work to damage communities. However, by working together communities can tackle the problem so that everyone can go about their everyday lives freely and with confidence.

NPCC
National Police Chiefs' Council

IN THE RARE EVENT OF
a firearms or weapons attack

RUN

HIDE

TELL

RUN - to a place of safety. This is a better option than to surrender or negotiate. If there's nowhere to go, then...

HIDE - Remember to turn your phone to silent and turn off vibrate. Barricade yourself in if you can.

TELL - the police by calling 999 when it is safe to do so.

www.npcc.police.uk/staysafe

Consequences:

◆ Whilst attacks of this nature are still very rare in the UK, recent events at home and abroad have meant that people are understandably concerned about firearms or weapons attacks.

◆ The impact and consequences of a terror attack would be wide ranging and irrevocable.

◆ Mass fatalities, widespread injury, fear and worry and damage to property or infrastructure are all possibilities.

What are we doing in North Wales?

◆ The police lead all planning in relation to counter terrorism but key partners work with them to help reduce the risk and ensure the protection of the public by supporting the national Counter Terrorism Strategy.

Things you can do:

If you see or hear something that could be terrorist related, trust your instincts and call the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789321.

◆ In the unlikely event of getting caught up in a terrorist incident, use the **Run, Hide, Tell** advice:

◆ Run to a place of safety. This is a far better option that to surrender or negotiate.

◆ If there's nowhere to go, then hide. It's better to hide than confront the attackers.

◆ Remember to turn your mobile phone to silent and turn off the vibrate setting.

◆ Barricade yourself in if you can.

◆ Then finally, and only when it is safe to do so, tell the police by calling 999.

If you are asked to evacuate – follow all instructions from the emergency services.

INDUSTRIAL INCIDENTS

Industrial accidents can occur on regulated sites or can involve vehicles or vessels transporting industrial materials through the North Wales area.

Incidents may involve industrial explosions and major fires, toxic or radioactive release or have the potential to cause serious injuries to the public and damage the local environment.

There is a range of legislation in place to manage the risk:

◆ Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 2015 aim to prevent major accidents involving dangerous substances and limit the effects on the public and the environment.

◆ North Wales hosts two former nuclear power stations, with Radiation Emergency Preparedness & Public Information Regulations 2019 (REPPIR) in place to manage potential risks.

◆ Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996 also enforce regulations that relate to the high pressure Major Accident Hazard Pipelines (MAHP) that cross through North Wales.

Consequences:
◆ Health risks to the public.
◆ Pollution of natural environment.
◆ Possible damage to property and the local area.
◆ Possible impact on tourism and local businesses.

What are we doing in North Wales?

◆ Working with site operators to develop off-site response plans and specific information to neighbouring communities on what to do in the event of an incident.

◆ Facilitating regular exercises to rehearse on site and off site response arrangements identifying sites which may pose a risk and developing multi agency response procedures.

What should you do?

◆ Be aware if you live near an industrial site and take note of any communications you may receive from site operators. Follow those instructions and wait for further advice.

◆ If you hear a warning of an emergency incident, go indoors, close all windows and doors and tune into local radio/ social media for further advice.

◆ Co-operate with the emergency services fully. They are there to help. Stay calm and listen to their instructions if you are evacuated from your home for any reason.

LOSS OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Critical Infrastructure is the name given to the services we rely on as part of modern life and a modern economy; these include electricity, gas, drinking water, telecoms, oil and fuel.

With increasing reliance on utilities such as electricity, water and gas for so many aspects of our lives, even localised losses can have a significant impact on those affected.

Consequences:

◆ Lack of drinking water.

◆ Homes without electricity / gas / oil limits people's ability to prepare food and stay warm.

What are we doing in North Wales?

◆ Working with utility companies to manage interruptions to supplies.

◆ Developing multi-agency plans to manage longer term interruptions to services.

◆ Identifying vulnerable residents who may need additional support.

What should you do?

◆ Make a note of contact numbers for the utilities companies.

◆ Find out where and how to turn off the water, gas and electricity supply in your home.

◆ Keep an emergency kit ready.

◆ Check on neighbours and relatives.

ANIMAL DISEASE

Animal diseases that present the most concern are those which are highly contagious, cause high fatality rates amongst livestock or have the possibility of infecting humans.

There have been a number of significant animal disease outbreaks in the United Kingdom; Foot and Mouth Disease, Bluetongue, Anthrax and Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) being the most notable recent examples.

Consequences:

◆ Impact on agriculture, food chain, rural economy and tourism.

What are we doing in North Wales?

◆ Production of multi-agency contingency plans for managing animal disease outbreaks.

◆ Raising disease awareness amongst farmers and farm workers.

What do you need to do?

◆ If an outbreak is declared then follow any guidance from the government at the time to protect your livestock and limit the spread.

◆ Vaccinate livestock where possible.

◆ Make sure to follow the Countryside Code when you're out and about.

◆ If an outbreak is declared, follow advice from relevant authorities in order to help limit the spread of disease.

POLLUTION

Pollution of our coastline, rivers, reservoirs, land or air could have serious impact on health, the environment and the local economy. Pollution can take the form of an oil spill, a chemical leak or smoke from a large fire.

Consequences:

◆ Health risk to local residents and visitors.

◆ Damage to environment and wildlife.

◆ Impact on tourism or agriculture.

What are we doing in North Wales?

◆ Maintaining multi-agency plans for the clean-up of spills or leaks to minimise impact.

What should you do?

◆ If you become aware of a potential incident of pollution, report the matter to your local county council in the first instance.

◆ Follow the advice given by the organisations responding to the incident. e.g. stay indoors, close windows.

◆ Tune in to local radio / follow trusted social media.

TRANSPORT INCIDENTS

The vast majority of us rely on transport links in our everyday lives – to travel to and from work or to access essential services. Therefore, when an incident or accident affects key transport links, such as the A55 and other trunk roads, the consequences can be far-reaching and could endanger lives.

Transport emergencies can be the result of accidents or disruption caused by severe weather such as snow and floods. Key partners including emergency services, the Welsh Government, North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency, county councils, rail and ferry companies work together to provide information on transport accidents and put diversions or alternative transport arrangements in place where necessary.

Consequences:

◆ Disruption to normal travel capabilities.
◆ Injury or risk to life and possible delays in emergency services reaching people.
◆ People stranded in vehicles in possibly severe weather conditions.
◆ Environmental impacts if hazardous materials are spilled / released into local environment.
◆ Possible damage to buildings or infrastructure.
◆ Impact on local businesses due to delays.

What are we doing in North Wales?

◆ All relevant highways authorities work together to plan for major incidents and keep all major roads accessible during times of disruption.

◆ Work with railways, ports and ferry companies to plan for incidents affecting passengers.

What should you do?

◆ Plan your journey in advance and listen to the local radio.

◆ Have an emergency kit in your car.

◆ Ensure your vehicle is in a roadworthy and safe condition and abide by the rules of the road.

◆ Avoid non-essential journeys during times of severe weather.

BEING PREPARED IN THE HOME

What can you do to be better prepared in your home?

In the case of most major emergencies, the simple advice is to go inside, stay inside and tune into local radio, television and trusted social media.

Planning for an emergency:

To prepare for an emergency, you should take time to find out:

◆ Where and how to turn off water, gas and electricity supplies in your home

◆ The emergency procedures for your children at school

◆ The emergency procedures in your workplace

◆ How your family will stay in contact in the event of an emergency

◆ If any older or vulnerable neighbours might need your help

◆ How to tune in to your local radio station.

At home in an emergency:

Gather the following as an emergency kit:

◆ A list of useful phone numbers, e.g. for your doctor and close relatives

◆ House and car keys

◆ Toiletries, sanitary supplies and any regularly prescribed medication

◆ A wind-up radio or battery powered radio with spare batteries

◆ A first aid kit

◆ Mobile phone and charger

◆ Cash and bank cards

◆ Bottled water, ready to eat food.

A template to help develop a Home Emergency Plan is available from www.nwc-reps.org.uk

Leaving your home in an emergency:

In certain situations, you may be asked to leave your home by the emergency services. If this happens, leave as quickly and calmly as possible.

If you have time:

◆ Turn off electricity, gas and water supplies, unplug appliances and lock all doors and windows

◆ Take your emergency kit

◆ If you leave by car, take bottled water and blankets

◆ Take your pets (with suitable carriers or leads) and pet food

◆ Tune in to local radio / trusted social media for emergency advice and instructions.

Listen to the advice from emergency services or local authorities about any specific actions which you must follow when it is safe to return home.

BUSINESSES BEING PREPARED

If you own or are responsible for a business or organisation, have you considered the impacts from external emergencies?

How would your organisation cope with:

◆ A sudden and significant reduction in staff.

◆ Denial of access to a site or geographical area.

◆ Unexpected loss of mains electricity.

◆ A temporary disruption to gas supplies, water mains and sewerage.

◆ Significant disruption to transport.

◆ Loss of telecommunications.

Make sure your business has a continuity plan.

1. Understand your business.

   What parts of the business are critical and what priority would you allocate to restoring functions if they fail?

2. What risks does your business face?

   Consider these risks within your business risk assessment. What can you put in place to reduce the likelihood of the risks and/ or the impact of them?

3. Consider the resources needs of each of your business functions

◆ People

◆ Premises

◆ Equipment

◆ Information

◆ Communications

◆ External suppliers/contractors

4. Document information in a user-friendly format about your business critical functions and the resources required including alternatives / back-ups for each.

5. Train and test your staff in activating the continuity plan and the roles and procedures within it.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES IS AVAILABLE FROM:

Isle of Anglesey County Council
01248 750057
www.anglesey.gov.uk
🐦 @angleseycouncil
📘 /IOACC/

Conwy County Borough Council
01492 574000
www.conwy.gov.uk
🐦 @ConwyCBC
📘 /ConwyCBC

Denbighshire County Council
01824 706000
www.denbighshire.gov.uk
🐦 @DenbighshireCC
📘 /denbighshirecountycouncil

Flintshire County Council
01352 752121
www.flintshire.gov.uk
🐦 @FlintshireCC

Gwynedd Council
01766 771000
www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru
🐦 @CyngorGwynedd
📘 /CyngorGwyneddCouncil

Wrexham County Borough Council
01978 292000 / 01978 292055
www.wrexham.gov.uk
🐦 @wrexhamcbc
📘 /wrexhamcouncil

North Wales Police
101 or 0300 330 0101
www.north-wales.police.uk
🐦 @NWPolice
📘 /NorthWalesPolice

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
01745 535 250
www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk
🐦 @NorthWalesFire
📘 /Northwalesfireservice

Welsh Ambulance NHS Trust
01745 532900
www.ambulance.wales.nhs.uk
🐦 @WelshAmbulance
📘 /welshambulanceservice

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
01248 384 384
www.bcu.wales.nhs.uk
🐦 @BCUHB
📘 /bcuhealthboard

H M Maritime and Coastguard Agency
01407 762051
www.dft.gov.uk/mca/
🐦 @MCA_media
📘 /MCA

Natural Resources Wales
0300 065 3000
www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
🐦 @NatResWales
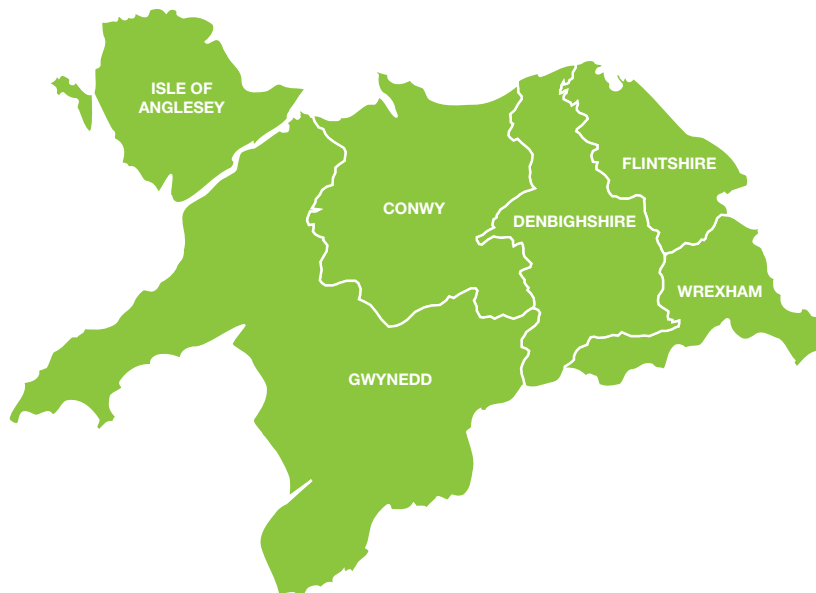📘 /NatResWales

Public Health Wales
02920 227 744 /
general.enquiries@wales.nhw.uk
www.publichealthwales.org
🐦 @PublicHealthW
📘 /PublicHealthWales

Traffic Wales Service
0300 123 1213
www.traffic.wales
🐦 @TrafficWalesN

North Wales Resilience Forum
🐦 @NWRF2012
📘 /North Wales Resilience Forum

ISLE OF ANGLESEY

CONWY

FLINTSHIRE

DENBIGHSHIRE

WREXHAM

GWYNEDD

USEFUL CONTACTS

Power Cuts:
105

Gas Emergency:
0800 111 999

Dwr Cymru / Welsh Water:
0800 052 0130
www.dwrcymru.com

Hafren Dyfrdwy:
0800 085 8033
www.hdcymru.co.uk

NHS Direct Wales:
0845 46 47
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Floodline:
0345 988 1188
www.naturalresources.wales/flooding

LOCAL MEDIA

BBC Radio Wales:
103.9 FM

BBC Radio Cymru:
92.4 - 94.6 FM

HEART North Wales and West:
103.4   96.3 & 103 FM

Dee106.3 FM:
106.3 FM

Môn FM:
102.5 FM

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.gov.uk

www.gov.wales

www.traffic.wales

www.metoffice.gov.uk

www.gov.wales/wales-resilience-forum

www.bbc.co.uk/wales

In the event of an emergency dial 999.

NOTES

Page 51

Agenda Item 8

Meeting	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date	8 June 2023
Title	**Gwynedd Town Centres**
Author	Esyllt Rhys Jones, Regeneration Programmes Manager, Economy and Community Department Llyr B Jones, Assistant Head of Economy and Community
Cabinet Member	Cllr. Nia Jeffreys

Details to be scrutinized

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the following in the context that an element of the "Community and town centre regeneration" project in the Council's Plan 2023-28 is to prepare Placemaking Plans for individual towns:

- The arrangements for preparing action plans;
- Who is involved in their development?
- How is it intended to measure the impact of the action plans?

1.   Background and Context

1.1.   Town centres and high street areas are in a period of change. Challenges from online stores, changes in social patterns and customer expectations have been intensified by COVID and are forcing places to adapt more quickly.

1.2.   More recently, wars and the energy price crisis add to the uncertainty for businesses and as a result, to the future of town centres. Centres that are able to evolve and diversify are more likely to succeed and prosper. In March 2022, 16% of high street shops in Britain were empty, with one in 20 having been empty for 3 years.

1.3.   There are many challenges facing town centres including:

- Increase in online purchasing - in May 2022 its value was around 33% of all sales. It is predicted that the pattern will continue as it is convenient, offers choice and a lower cost/price;
- Change in social patterns - over the last twenty years there has been an increase in spending on experiences, and less spending on goods.

- Number of retail units - with the increase in online shopping, many town centres offer more retail units than can be sustained. This has led to an increase in empty units - which impacts the viability of the high street. Also, many retail units are too large for the market's requirements, and therefore difficult to install with many being empty for a long period, their condition deteriorating and disrupting the environment in prominent areas within our towns.
- The growth of supermarkets - over a period of several decades there has been a significant increase in grocery sales in supermarkets, also extending to goods.
- Shops or developments on the outskirts of towns - the 1980s and 1990s saw a significant increase in shops and developments on the outskirts of the main towns which are usually more accessible locations, offer free parking, and are often under one roof. (Note that sites like these also face similar challenges to town centre areas).
- Business rates and rents - businesses argue that business rates - which are based on property value rather than turnover - are higher compared to locations on the outskirts of towns or businesses that sell online.

1.4. There are also opportunities for town centres, and especially Gwynedd's town centres as a number of our towns provide a diverse offer such as:

- Unique streets with a high percentage of independent shops and markets;
- Diverse opportunities, events and experiences through the medium of Welsh;
- Attractive environments and landscapes with World Heritage statuses within our towns.

1.5. With all the changes afoot, it is a real challenge to repurpose town centres and to develop and implement interventions with the intention of trying to make them lively, attractive centres and nice places to live, work and spend time in.

2.   Strategic context

2.1. The trends in Gwynedd are common to those throughout the country and policies and programmes at all levels, from UK Government to local programmes, have been developed to try to respond to these challenges.

2.2. In recent weeks, Welsh Government published a Town Centre Position Statement which outlines the challenges and how they will support them to regenerate. The Town Centre First Principle and their Transforming Towns Regeneration Funding Programme is an example of their commitment to regenerating our urban areas.

2.3. At a Regional level, town centre regeneration also plays a central role in the North Wales Regeneration Strategy (2018-35). The vision notes: *"[in] 2035 North Wales will experience less inequality, increased employment, regenerated town centres, better quality housing, a stronger visitor economy, a resilient rural economy, and better health for local people"*.

2.4. Locally, the work of drawing up the Gwynedd Regeneration Framework, and engagement to draw up 13 Area Plans within the County, has highlighted concerns across the County about the future of town centres, and the need to support the viability of town centre businesses. As predicted, from the initial consultation, town centre challenges are identified in most Gwynedd Area Plans.

2.5. Gwynedd has a large number of towns of different nature, function and size. The definition of a town can be interpreted in many ways. Through the Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan 2011-2026 and Eryri Local Development Plan 2016 - 2031, towns are interpreted on many levels, as follows:

Sub-Regional Retail Centre	Bangor
Urban Retail Centre	Caernarfon, Porthmadog, Pwllheli
Local Retail Centre	Abersoch, Barmouth, Bethesda, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Cricieth, Llanberis, Nefyn, Penrhyndeudraeth, Penygroes, Tywyn
Local Service Centre*	*Dolgellau, Bala*
Service Settlement*	*Aberdyfi, Harlech*

* Eryri Local Development Plan 2016 - 2031

2.6. Town centre work has been based on the above since 2020. Having said this, more recently, a different interpretation can be seen within the North Wales Town Centre Regeneration Priorities Report (Hatch 2022).

Sub-Regional Centre	Bangor
Market Town or Commute Hub	Dolgellau, Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Caernarfon
Traditional Coastal Town	Barmouth, Cricieth, Tywyn
Rural Centres	Bala, Nefyn, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Bethesda, Penrhyndeudraeth, Penygroes
Visitor Centres	Abersoch, Llanberis, Harlech

3. **Prosperous Gwynedd (Gwynedd Lewyrchus): Regeneration of communities and town centres**

3.1. In response to the initial consultation through the Gwynedd Regeneration Framework arrangements, the Regeneration of Communities and Town Centres has been included as a priority project under the theme Gwynedd Lewyrchus in the Council's Plan 2023-28. The Economy and Community Department is currently preparing a Project Plan and operational steps.

3.2.   The Project Plan will be a 5 year plan which will develop and implement interventions to support town centres with the intention of making them lively and attractive centres once more, which will be nice places to live, work and spend time in. It is anticipated that the plan could include the following milestones during Year 1:

- Setting a baseline for the current situation of towns in Gwynedd;
- Placemaking Plans commissioned for Bangor and Caernarfon;
- Financial applications and a programme in place for the preparation of other Placemaking Plans such as, Bala, Pwllheli, Porthmadog, Dolgellau and Barmouth;
- Consider options for reviewing the current plans / strategies of world heritage towns - Bethesda, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Penygroes, Llanberis, Tywyn and Harlech;
- The Bangor City Centre Investment Plan has been drawn up and agreed with key partners including the Welsh Government, Bangor University, and the Health Board; Implementation of a programme of interventions to support town centres as a result of Programme investments such as the Levelling Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund;
- Invite town centre regeneration projects from external organizations to be considered as part of the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns.

3.3.   The preparation of Placemaking Plans for a number of towns is key. The purpose of these is to identify and agree on action plans and priorities for individual towns. The Placemaking Plans would give specific attention to high street areas, and offer an opportunity to address issues such as:

- Residential units (for example empty space above shops);
- Support (grants/loans) for the restoration or conversion of empty properties;
- Infrastructure and green spaces;
- Improving public places and spaces;
- Markets and events;
- Support for town centre businesses;
- Digital Towns (provision and use of technology);
- Transport and green travel;
- Facilities within town centres;
- Promotion and marketing of local centres;
- Local enterprises and enterprising communities.

3.4.   The work of drawing up a Placemaking Plan has already been commissioned in Bangor and Caernarfon. The work started in the two towns as they identified them as towns of need in the North Wales Regeneration Strategy. The Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 was the basis of this analysis. The process

of securing a budget from Welsh Government is underway for other towns such as Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Dolgellau, Barmouth and Bala.

3.5.   There are specific requirements from Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales when drawing up an effective Placemaking Plan. In towns where plans or strategies are already in place, consideration will be given to options for updating and revising these to avoid duplication. This applies to towns such as Blaenau Ffestiniog, Bethesda, Llanberis, Penygroes, Tywyn and Harlech.

4.   The process of developing Placemaking Plans

4.1.   Drawing up a Placemaking Plan is an inclusive process. The initial discussion with Local Members is to highlight the arrangements, opportunities and challenges in the town. In the same manner, conversations will be held with the relevant Council Departments in order to highlight the intention to undertake the work, and outline the process.

4.2.   Securing resources to undertake the work is the first step. Welsh Government has a revenue fund to support this. This is followed by procurement arrangements to commission specialist consultants.

4.3.   The initial role of the consultants is to familiarise themselves with the town, to understand priorities and challenges together with any current local research and consultation work. The work also includes identifying the town's current situation as a basis for measuring any improvements against it.

4.4.   Consultation is a key part of the process. This work will include a series of engagement and consultation sessions with Members, organisations, groups and stakeholders in the towns. The type of consultation varies depending on local requirements and recent consultations within the town.

4.5.   Although the Economy and Community Department is leading on the Plan, several Departments/Services across the Council provide services, plans or improvements within town centres. The Placemaking Plans will offer a cross-departmental tool to co-ordinate the Council's efforts. More broadly, the Placemaking Plans are an opportunity for other agencies to share their vision for towns. It is essential that the engagement work reflects this.

4.6.   There will be an opportunity to present findings to Members, before sharing with the wider community. An Action Plan will be linked to each Placemaking Plan which will outline what the town's priority plans are, who will lead and what funding opportunities are available.

5.   Operating Arrangements

5.1. The opportunities that have been identified highlight the need to coordinate the efforts in order to ensure that the plans contribute towards the same vision. Developing the Placemaking Plans is a perfect way to do this.

5.2. It is foreseen that the operating arrangements will include the Project Board, in order to include main stakeholders in towns. Regular contact with Local Members is envisaged to develop, implement and monitor the Placemaking Plans.

5.3. Within the Council, cross-departmental arrangements are anticipated, with relevant departments, in order to share information about plans that will be developed and implemented in Gwynedd towns.

6.   Related Regeneration Programmes and Plans

6.1. It is anticipated that there will be opportunities to regenerate town centres by interlinking the work of creating a strategic direction with the funding programmes and plans already available. Some examples of opportunities like this are:

UK Government Schemes

6.2. The UK Government has established a series of funds to support the regeneration field. The table below outlines these:

Fund Title	Description
Levelling Up Fund	A capital programme with 3 themes; Town Centre Regeneration, Infrastructure and Culture. Opportunities for budgets up to £20m for mature and strategic plans.
Shared Prosperity Fund	A programme combining capital and revenue funding focusing on three priorities namely Community and Place, Supporting Local Businesses, and People and Skills.
Community Ownership Fund	A fund for community groups to seek funds to purchase and/or renew assets and facilities for the benefit of the community.

6.1. The Llewyrch o'r Llechi scheme was approved in the <u>Levelling Up Fund's</u> second round. The scheme will invest to maximise benefit from the recent designation of the North-West Wales Slate Valleys World Heritage Site. The £26m package includes a package of plans and specific developments in the town centres of Llanberis, Bethesda and Blaenau Ffestiniog.

6.2. A number of potential opportunities have been identified through the <u>Shared Prosperity Fund</u> to support town centre regeneration. Project plans and financial applications are being prepared for the schemes below:

- *Gwella Profiad Canol Trefi Gwynedd (Improving the experience in Gwynedd Town Centres)* - a series of cross-departmental interventions to improve image, upgrade facilities and promotional campaigns to increase excitement.
- *Diwyllesiant* - a plan promoting culture and a sustainable visiting economy for the benefit of Gwynedd's communities, environment and businesses.
- *Datblygu Busnes Gwynedd* (*Gwynedd Business Development*) - a series of funds and opportunities to support businesses to establish, develop and thrive.
- *Key Funds* - Funds to support communities and businesses to develop plans for the benefit of the County's communities.

<u>Welsh Government Programmes</u>

6.3. There are a number of opportunities through Welsh Government programmes. The main programme is Transforming Towns where there is financial support for mature plans. Town Centre Plans are essential to ensure investment.

6.4. There are further programmes and funding opportunities from the Welsh Government such as:

- Town Centre Loans;
- Smart Towns (Digital Towns Plan);
- Circular Economy Fund;
- Brilliant Basics Fund;
- Active Travel Scheme.

There are several other sources of funding such as the National Lottery that could support schemes in town centres.

6.5. There are wider opportunities and plans which include supporting third party partners to develop, apply for budgets and implement their plans for the benefit of the regeneration of the County's towns.

6.6. There are several programmes within the Council's departments which contribute towards the vision and these include the Housing Development Plan, the 'Ardal Ni' Tidying Up Team and various plans from the Environment Department in developing an urban fabric.

7. Recommendations

7.1. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and provide comments on the following:

- Comments on the proposals and initial steps in preparing a Project Plan for the Gwynedd Lewyrchus theme: Regeneration of communities and town centres
- The arrangements for preparing Placemaking Plans;
- The basis for prioritising the regeneration of Gwynedd's town centres in response to the categories and types of towns specified in 2.5. and 2.6.

Mi allwch ddarllen y ddogfen yma yn Gymraeg hefyd. Ewch nôl i'r dudalen we, a chliciwch ar y botwm iaith ar dop y dudalen.

MEETING	EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	8 June 2023
TITLE	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee Forward Programme 2023/24
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	Present the Committee's draft work programme for 2023/24 for adoption
AUTHOR	Bethan Adams, Scrutiny Advisor

1. During the Committee's annual workshop on 25 April 2023 possible items to scrutinise during 2023/24 were considered. Items were prioritised bearing in mind the purpose of scrutiny in Gwynedd, namely:

> **CONTRIBUTE TO DRIVING IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICES FOR THE PEOPLE OF GWYNEDD**

> This will be done constructively by:
>
> - Investigating concerns regarding the quality of our services
> - Acting as a Critical Friend, and ensuring that appropriate attention is given to the citizen's voice
> - Identifying good practice and weaknesses
> - Holding the Cabinet and its members to account
> - Reviewing or scrutinising decisions or actions that are not the responsibility of the Cabinet

2. Members were asked to respond to an online question regarding their top five priorities from the list of possible items provided in advance prior to the workshop. Six main priorities emerged from the responses to the question, namely:

   1   Education Strategy
   =   Transforming education for children in their early years
   =   Gwynedd Economy Plan
   2   Post-16 Education Project in Arfon
   =   Attendance and behaviour of pupils in Gwynedd Schools
   =   Beach Management

3. Members discussed in smaller groups the top priorities as well as what else from the list should be scrutinised during 2023/24. When identifying their priorities members were asked to consider:

- ❖ *Does the matter affect a vast proportion of the population?*
- ❖ *Can scrutiny make a difference / have an influence? (People / service / performance)*
- ❖ *Is it timely to scrutinise the matter?*
- ❖ *Is the matter a priority for the Council?*
- ❖ *Are we clear about what we are trying to improve?*

4. Following reporting back from the groups, items to scrutinise were prioritised and the relevant Heads of Department and Cabinet Members were invited to note any additional matters that needed consideration in terms of the items prioritised by Members of the Committee as well as provide observations on the timing of the scrutiny.

5. The Committee's draft work programme is attached as an appendix to the report. An effort was made to prioritise a maximum of three items per meeting in order to ensure that due attention was given to matters and that scrutiny would add value. This was not always possible on every occasion with four items programmed for one meeting. All members are expected to ensure their attendance for the morning and afternoon session.

6. Two items were identified in the workshop as possible items to be scrutinised at the first meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in 2024/25. Namely, 'Immersion Education System' and 'Youth Service'.

7. The scrutiny forward programme is a live programme which will be reviewed regularly during the year to ensure that the correct matters are addressed. Consideration will be given to prioritise matters that will arise during the year e.g., matters from performance challenge meetings and items on the Cabinet's forward programme.

8. **The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee is asked to adopt the work programme for 2023/24.**

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DRAFT FORWARD PROGRAMME 2023/24

08/06/2023
• Emergency Planning • Town Centre Vibrancy

14/09/2023
• Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation Report • Education Strategy • Digital Plan

09/11/2023
• Education Annual Report • GwE Annual Report • Byw'n Iach Company • Beach Management

25/01/2024
• Attendance and behaviour of pupils in Gwynedd schools • Post-16 Education Project in Arfon • Gwynedd Economy Plan

21/03/2024
• Transforming education for children in their early years • Free School Meals • North Wales Economic Ambition Board

Items to be programmed in 2024/25:

Immersion Education System

Youth Service

Mi allwch ddarllen y ddogfen yma yn Gymraeg hefyd. Ewch nôl i'r dudalen we, a chliciwch ar y botwm iaith ar dop y dudalen.

MEETING	EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	8 June 2023
TITLE	Corporate Support and Legal Performance Challenge Meetings
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	To nominate a representative to attend Corporate Support Department and Legal Service Performance Challenge meetings
AUTHOR	Bethan Adams, Scrutiny Advisor

1. Performance challenge meetings are held every other month (apart from April and August), per work field of the Council's departments. Developments of Departmental projects included in the Council Plan, the day-to-day performance measures as well as the risk register are considered.

2. An invitation is extended for representatives of the scrutiny committees to attend the meetings twice a year.

3. The scrutiny committees' representatives are invited in order to:

   ➢ Have a flavour of what grasp the individual departments have of performance matters.
   ➢ Identify, if required, any performance matters which could merit the attention of a formal scrutiny committee in due course.

4. Representatives are expected to report back to the first informal meeting of the relevant scrutiny committee following these meetings. See attached as an appendix to the report, a performance challenge guide for scrutiny members.

5. At the Committee meeting on 23 March 2023, Councillor Paul Rowlinson was nominated to attend Finance Department performance challenge meetings. Following the meeting, members of the committee were given the opportunity to show interest in representing the committee in Corporate Support Department and Legal Service performance challenge meetings instead of Councillor Paul Rowlinson. Councillor Huw Rowlands already represents the committee in meetings to challenge the performance of the Corporate Support Department and the Legal Service.

6. No name was received to represent the committee at these meetings instead of Councillor Paul Rowlinson at the time of writing the report.

7. The time and dates set for the 2023/24 meetings, where the committee representatives will be present are:

Corporate Support Department	Legal Service
1.00 – 3.30, 18 September 2023	1.30 – 2.30, 12 September 2023

2.00 – 4.30, 11 March 2024	to be confirmed – March 2024

8. **The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee is asked to nominate a member to represent the committee at the Corporate Support Department and Legal Service Performance Challenge meetings.**

Challenging Performance:
A Guide for Scrutiny Members

'Putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do'- If we are to achieve this, then we need to manage our performance, know how well we are performing and how we can improve on it.

Performance Challenge Meetings

WHEN?

Bi-monthly except April and August. A timetable for these meetings can be found below.

WHO ATTENDS?

All meetings
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive or Corporate Director
- Head of Department / Assistant Head
- Senior Managers / Service Managers

Twice a year
- Shadow Cabinet Member
- Representatives from the Scrutiny Committees

The Leader of the Council will attend **one meeting a year for each department** in order to have an overview of issues, risks, and performance across the Council.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Head of Department will chair the meetings.
- The Department will arrange the meetings.
- The Department will be expected to share a report (which includes an update on the priority projects within the Council Plan, the 'day to day' measures and the risk register) with you at least 3 days before the meeting.
- The Department will arrange a record of the main action points.

WHAT INFROMATION WILL BE DISCUSSED IN THE MEETING?

- Developments of Departmental projects included in the Council Plan
- Performance of Departmental measures (ie day to day work)
- Departmental Risk Register

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE MEETING?

Cabinet Members will need to report to the Cabinet twice a year (see the timetable).

During April / May, the Department will be collecting information on the previous year's annual performance. This information will feed into the Council's Annual Performance Report. The Report should be balanced, highlighting what has not been achieved as well as what has been achieved.

Your role as representatives of the Scrutiny Committee

Representatives of the Scrutiny Committee are invited in order to:
- ◊ Have a taste of what grasp the individual departments have of performance matters.
- ◊ Identify, if required, any performance matters which could merit the attention of a formal scrutiny committee in due course.

Representatives of the Scrutiny Committee should:
- ◊ Feel free to contribute to the meetings by asking questions but respect the fact that this is the Cabinet Member's meeting and that it's mainly an opportunity for the Cabinet Member to discuss performance matters with the service managers.
- ◊ Observe these meetings and form an opinion about the Cabinet Member and the Head's grasp of performance within the services for which they are responsible.
- ◊ Form an opinion on how likely the services discussed are to continue to be able to improve and provide good quality services.

Representatives of the Scrutiny Committee will be responsible for reporting back on what they have observed. Scrutiny members are expected to report back to the first informal meeting of the relevant scrutiny committee following the Performance Challenge meetings.

2023 - 24	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	November	December	January	February	March
Date of the Cabinet Meeting	No Performance Challenge Meetings			11	No Performance Challenge Meetings	19	10	7	28	19	23	20	12
Departments to present the Cabinet Report				Children Adults		Highways, Engineering & YGC Environment	Education Finance	Economy Corporate Support Housing	Children Adults	Highways, Engineering & YGC Environment	Education Finance	Economy Corporate Support Housing	
Schedule the Performance Challenge Meetings		Children Adults Finance Education	Highways, Engineering & YGC Environment Corporate Support Legal Economy Housing	Children Adults Finance Education		Highways, Engineering & YGC Environment Corporate Support Legal Economy Housing	Children Adults Finance Education	Highways, Engineering & YGC Environment Corporate Support Legal Economy Housing		Children Adults Finance Education	Highways, Engineering & YGC Environment Corporate Support Legal Economy Housing	Children Adults Finance Education	Highways, Engineering & YGC Environment Corporate Support Legal Economy Housing
The Leader to attend the Departmental Performance Challenge meeting		Children	Highways, Engineering & YGC	Adults		Environment	Finance	Corporate Support Legal	Education	Economy		Housing	

Page 68

* Red – Meetings to include the Shadow Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Committee Representatives