



# Complete Agenda

Democracy Service  
Swyddfa'r Cyngor  
CAERNARFON  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1SH

Meeting

**EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date and Time

**10.30 am, THURSDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 2023**

**NOTE: A BRIEFING SESSION WILL BE HELD FOR MEMBERS AT 10.15AM**

Location

**Multi-location meeting - Siambr Hywel Dda, Swyddfeydd y Cyngor, Caernarfon  
and virtually on Zoom**

**\* NOTE**

**This meeting will be webcast**

**[https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core//en\\_GB/portal/home](https://gwynedd.public-i.tv/core//en_GB/portal/home)**

Contact Point

**Eirian Roberts**

**01286 679018**

**[eirianroberts3@gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:eirianroberts3@gwynedd.llyw.cymru)**

(DISTRIBUTED 01/11/23)

# **EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **MEMBERSHIP (18)**

### **Plaid Cymru (12)**

#### Councillors

Jina Gwyrfai  
Dawn Lynne Jones  
Gareth Tudor Jones  
Gwynfor Owen  
Huw Rowlands  
Rhys Tudur

Iwan Huws  
Dewi Jones  
Olaf Cai Larsen  
Llio Elenid Owen  
Paul John Rowlinson  
Sasha Williams

### **Independent (6)**

#### Councillors

Elwyn Jones  
Beth Lawton  
John Pughe Roberts

Gwilym Jones  
Dewi Owen  
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

Elise Poulter	NEU
Gwilym Jones	NASUWT

# **A G E N D A**

## **1. APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence.

## **2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

To receive any declarations of personal interest.

## **3. URGENT BUSINESS**

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

## **4. MINUTES**

5 - 19

The Chair shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 14th September, 2023 be signed as a true record.

## **5. ESTYN REPORT ON EDUCATION SERVICES IN CYNGOR GWYNEDD** 20 - 47

**Cabinet Member – Councillor Beca Brown**

To submit a report on the above.

## **6. BYW'N IACH**

48 - 53

**Cabinet Member – Councillor Nia Jeffreys**

To submit a report on the above.

## **7. GWYNEDD BEACH MANAGEMENT**

54 - 63

**Cabinet Member – Councillor Nia Jeffreys**

To submit a report on the above.

## **8. AUTISM PLAN TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

64 - 66

To elect two members to serve on the Autism Plan Task and Finish Group.

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**EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**14/09/23**

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**Present:**

**Councillors:** Elwyn Jones (Chair)  
Paul Rowlinson (Vice-chair)

**Councillors:** Jina Gwyrfai, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Gwilym Jones, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dewi Owen, Gwynfor Owen, John Pughe Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands, Rhys Tudur and Sasha Williams.

**Co-opted Members:** Manon Williams (Parent/Governor Representative for Arfon) and Elise Poulter (NEU).

**Officers in attendance:** Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Bethan Adams (Scrutiny Advisor) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

**Present for item 5:** Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member – Finance), Dewi Morgan (Head of Finance Department) and Huw Ynyr (Assistant Head of Information Technology).

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

**Present for item 7:** Councillor Beca Brown (Cabinet Member for Education), Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Debbie Anne Jones (Assistant Head: Corporate Services), Gwern ap Rhisiart (Assistant Head: Primary) and Gwyn Tudur (Assistant Head: Secondary).

**Present for item 8:** Councillor Beca Brown (Cabinet Member for Education), Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Ffion Edwards Ellis (Assistant Head: Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion) and Ellen Rowlands (Education Department Inclusion Manager).

Elise Poulter, NEU, was welcomed as the new representative of the teachers' unions on the committee.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Iwan Huws and Llio Elenid Owen, and also from Colette Owen (The Catholic Church).

**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 committee meeting held on 8 June 2023 as a true record.

## 5. DIGITAL PLAN – 2023-28

The Cabinet Member for Finance, the Corporate Director, the Head of Finance Department and the Assistant Head of Information Technology were welcomed to the meeting.

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Finance presenting the Digital Plan in its draft form for the purpose of pre-scrutiny, and to receive observations and feedback on the proposed content of the work programme.

The Cabinet Member set out the context, the Corporate Director explained his role as Chair of the Digital Transformation Board and the Assistant Head of Information Technology further detailed the content of the plan. Members were then given an opportunity to ask questions and submit observations.

It was noted that one of the recommendations of a report published by the Bevan Foundation recently, as a result of looking at the poverty situation in the Arfon area in particular, was that Cyngor Gwynedd should ensure that all application forms for grants and allowances for which it had administrative powers were available digitally. It was noted that it was clear from this research, and also from speaking to people facing poverty and to the various organisations that supported them, that this was a problem, and it was asked whether there were plans to address the situation. In response, it was confirmed that offering more digital provision was part of the Plan, but that there was no intention to discontinue the option of using paper forms either.

In response to a further question, it was confirmed that the forms would be digital online ones, rather than documents to be downloaded.

While accepting that the initial costs of establishing the new arrangements would be high, it was asked whether the Department was confident that the new systems would save money over time. It was also asked whether the Department was satisfied that all aspects of the digitisation were essential, and that there were no elements included for cosmetic reasons. In response, it was noted that:

- Nothing cosmetic was included and that the focus was on the things that were essential and which would improve the Council once they were embedded.
- There would be significant work taking place over the next six weeks not only to identify the costs, but also the opportunities to make savings.

Reference was made to a letter sent out by the Council recently which gave people the opportunity to respond by going to the website, phoning or texting, and concern was expressed that those few people who did not have a computer or telephone were being left behind. In response, it was noted that:

- The officers needed to know about those examples, but that the digital technology was not being introduced at the expense of the other channels, and the intention was not to leave anyone behind.
- It was important to recognise that there were still people who needed a face-to-face conversation, and although the Council wanted as many people as possible to use the digital methods, it had not completely discarded the paper element, nor the face-to-face element.

It was suggested that digital technology increased the distance between the two people who communicated with each other. There was a danger of losing sight of flesh and blood

aspects as these developments progressed, and it was possible that a lack of empathy and lack of understanding could flourish because of this distance. In response, it was noted that the comment was acknowledged and that this was something to consider.

It was noted that the members were missing face-to-face contact with the Council's staff since the Covid period, and by going further down that road, there was a danger that the Council's accountability to the members, and ultimately to its electorate, would move further away too. In response, it was noted that:

- The intention was to submit a report to Cabinet on 19 September on the establishment of a long-term Hybrid Working Plan for the Council's staff which would mean that all officers who were able to work hybridly would be expected to attend the office with their colleagues for at least two days a week, every working week.
- There was a wish to emphasise that this was a minimum of two days, and that it did not mean that people would only be in the office for two days.
- This would enable us to continue to support and get the best from our staff in order to provide the best possible services for the people of Gwynedd.

It was noted that if the Council intended to use artificial intelligence, it was important that the members received training explaining exactly what it entailed, and how it would be used. In response, it was noted that there was room to educate people about this, but that the Council would not rush into using artificial intelligence, and that any use of the technology would be undertaken in a responsible way.

The teachers unions' representative noted that the Trades Union Congress had recently discussed artificial intelligence in the workplace and that she could share the relevant documents, which included the trade unions' position on this, with the Council. In response, it was noted that the officers would welcome the information and that it would be an important contribution to any future discussion.

The intention to create new systems was welcomed, instead of trying to build on systems that already existed, but, to ensure effective collaboration, the importance of ensuring that the Council's systems could work with the systems used by other organisations such as the Health Board, the Fire and Rescue Authority and the other county councils, was emphasised. In response, it was noted that Cyngor Gwynedd could not do this single-handedly, and as stated in the Plan, the Council would be a willing and ready partner to support measures and initiatives to abolish digital barriers to enable collaboration with strategic partners, which would include the Health Board, neighbouring councils and the third sector, etc.

It was asked if the Council had a programme to train people in the use of computers and tablets. In response, it was noted that paragraph 9 under the 'Administration and Business Systems' priority field stated that the Council would continue to support the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership to improve digital skills in the county, as well as the improvement programmes that were part of the Digital Gwynedd programme campaign to increase digital inclusion. However, perhaps more emphasis needed to be placed on the fact that the Digital Gwynedd programme went out into the community to deliver training to users.

It was asked whether the Council would be in a position to respond quickly enough if new developments came onto the market during the Digital Plan period. In response, it was noted that:

- There was complete agreement that it was necessary to be alert to new developments in the digital field, even revisiting the priorities within the lifetime of the Plan.
- There was also an intention to carry out work in terms of improving people's digital thinking, which meant that digital developments could be rooted in the Council sooner than was currently possible.
- The Council would be in a position where it would be possible to adapt to whichever social media would be in place in the future.

The Digital Transformation Board was wished well in its work and the aim to *'carve out a bold path on our journey to becoming a digital County'* and *'capitalising on opportunities to innovate and embed digital technology to improve our residents' standard of living, work together better with partners and strengthen and improve our services' responsiveness to our customers' needs and expectations'* was welcomed. Reference was made to the list of key headings in the report when aiming for a digital council, and it was noted that the first and most important of all was *'There is a clear place for the Welsh language in all digital developments'*. It was noted further that the report acknowledged that contacting the Council on the phone remained a popular choice among customers, and the Council was praised overall for responding to phone calls. It was noted that the IT Department itself led in that respect and that their highly effective and efficient mode of operation was a model for the rest of the departments.

The member was thanked for his kind words, and it was noted that the message would be conveyed to the Service's staff.

It was enquired what was the time-scale in terms of establishing a sub-group to act on digital developments among the workforce. In response, it was noted that:

- Although the sub-group had not yet been established, the work of planning for what the sub-group would be required to lead on in due course was already underway.
- The Organisational Learning and Development Manager was a key part of that, and contributions would also be needed from other people who had already been identified.
- Although the group had not yet been established, that would certainly happen within the next couple of months.

In response to a request for more information regarding the intention to create a data warehouse, it was stated that:

- The Council currently had around 300 systems, which collected all kinds of different information.
- The majority of systems addressed certain things that were common across everything, such as names and addresses, and the more systems we had, the greater the reach of the accuracy of the data.
- The data warehouse would be a medium, not only to be able to report from it, but also a medium to clean and be more accurate in terms of the data.
- The resource would also provide more of an overview across the Council's services, so rather than having a one-sided report from one system, it would enable us to look at a range of services and trends in relation to service users across a number of services.
- This would put the Council in a position to make evidence-based decisions and be able to predict how best to shape the services for the future.



The intention to have a system where it would be possible for a customer to raise an enquiry and receive constant updates on where the Council was in dealing with that enquiry was welcomed, and it was noted that it was hoped that the same enquiry tracking system would be available for councillors too. In response, it was noted that the observation was fully accepted and that the officers would note this.

At the end of the discussion, the Cabinet Member emphasised that the Digital Plan would not be a document that stood still, and that it would be continuously reviewed.

**RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.**

## **6. GWYNEDD CATEGORY 3 SECONDARY SCHOOLS SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION REPORT**

The Cabinet Member for Education, the Head of Education Department, the Assistant Head: Corporate Services, the Assistant Head: Secondary and the Head of Gwynedd's Immersion Education System were welcomed to the meeting.

The Chair of the Investigation, Councillor Paul Rowlinson, presented the final report of the Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation and members of the scrutiny committee were asked to consider the content, make observations and ask any relevant questions, proposing any amendments and approving the report.

The Chair of the Investigation suggested that the section on GwE should not be discussed in detail, as it was understood that GwE disagreed with some of the issues identified, but it was emphasised that Recommendation 17 only requested further discussion between the Education Authority and GwE.

The Chair of the Investigation thanked the Investigation Team, and especially the Lead Officer, for their work, and thanked the staff, pupils and governors of the three schools for giving of their time to present the evidence.

The Chair thanked the members of the Investigation for their work. The members were then invited to ask questions, offer observations, or propose amendments to the report.

Special thanks were given to the pupils of the schools for their willingness to speak extremely openly with the members of the Investigation.

It was emphasised that there was a need to give more support to organisations that helped children and young people to speak Welsh socially, such as the Young Farmers and the Urdd, and to present them in a positive way in the schools. It was noted that Cyngor Gwynedd had lost its youth clubs and that it was necessary to find out what social opportunities were available to encourage the use of the Welsh language.

It was suggested that the figures in Appendix 5 seemed incredibly good, and it was asked where the data was obtained from. In response, it was explained that the data was submitted to the Authority by the schools. In response to a further question on the same matter, it was confirmed that the members of the Investigation had not challenged the figures in any detail, and that they had accepted the data submitted by the schools.

Concern was expressed that the three schools selected did not give a picture of the situation in all Gwynedd schools, as all three of them were mostly in indigenous Welsh communities, and it was suggested that there were other schools in Gwynedd that would have reflected a very different scenario.

Concern was expressed at parents' ability to refuse Welsh-medium education for their children, thereby depriving their children of the opportunity to have a good career and live in the area in the future. It was also noted that it became evident during the Investigation that the schools were under great pressure to offer English-medium provision, as parents threatened to move their children to Ysgol Friars or Ysgol Tywyn (which were category 3T schools) otherwise. It was believed that it was necessary to look in more detail at this influence and the impact of the option of going to Ysgol Friars or Ysgol Tywyn on other schools in Gwynedd. Sadness was expressed that some parents and pupils did not have confidence in our language, and it was suggested that it was high time that the Education Authority, the schools and the headteachers took a very strong stance and refused parents to move their children to the category 3T schools, and insisted that the Welsh language was sufficient in our schools as a medium. It was also suggested that it might be easier for the schools to refuse requests from parents to move their children if this was sold as the Authority's policy, rather than the school's policy.

With regard to those parents who refused Welsh-medium education for their children, it was asked what affordable and accessible provision was available for them to learn the language themselves, so that the problem did not arise in the future. In response, it was noted that:

- With regard to the parents who were committed to their children attending the centres for latecomers, there was a Welsh for Adults tutor present at every open morning in order to show parents the provision available for online and face-to-face learning, together with the resources available for them to help their children.
- These arrangements had now been running for over a year and a half and many had registered for Welsh lessons with their children.
- The Service organised a face-to-face meeting and a virtual meeting with Hunaniaith to promote social events in the different areas in order to encourage parents to take advantage of opportunities to practise their Welsh with their children.

It was noted that it was encouraging to witness and feel the commitment of the staff and pupils to Welsh-medium education and that this gave reason to be optimistic about the future.

It was stated that the members' respect and admiration for the sincerity of the vast majority of the schools' staff, and the Council's officers, who committed to trying to get the children completely bilingual, should be noted. If there were complaints about anything, it was certain that no one was complaining about individuals, but there were possibly a few systems, sometimes within our control and sometimes outside of our control, that let us down.

It was noted that the report gave the impression that everything was on track in terms of the data, but also highlighted a number of problems, possibly anecdotal at the moment, and perhaps more data and hard facts were needed, rather than just anecdotes.

The opinion was expressed that some recommendations needed to be strengthened, e.g. the Language Policy. It was believed that mentioning bilingualism opened the door to considerable ambiguity, and if we were in favour of Welsh-medium education, then Welsh-medium education for it, with English being taught as a subject to the highest possible standard. Otherwise, we opened the door to complaints and requests. In terms of the data regarding the Welsh-medium provision, it was emphasised that this should be a standing item on the agenda of every meeting of the Secondary Headteachers' Forum, instead of us requesting for this to happen once a year, as stated in the recommendations.

It was noted in the recommendations that there was a need to strengthen collaboration with agencies. There was mention of the Curriculum for Wales, GwE and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, but what about Careers Wales?

It was noted that no data had been seen regarding the number of latecomers who entered the secondary schools in year 10 or 11, and therefore had not attended the language centres. It was suggested that a separate study was needed on that, looking at methods of including young people and providing additional support for them, such as half an hour of immersion in Welsh at the beginning of each school day.

It was noted that it must be borne in mind that the schools could only do so much in the current financial climate, but that our language was suffering due to austerity and budget cuts in Westminster.

It was noted that the data suggested that parents and learners wished to change the medium of education from Welsh to English as the learners approached GCSE and A Level, and it was asked, as well as the marketing campaign for the parents of the children who arrived at the schools, whether it would also be beneficial to run a separate campaign for the learners themselves. Such a campaign could be carried out in conjunction with key partners such as the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and Careers Wales, encouraging the learners to follow their courses through the medium of Welsh by making the link between the Welsh language and better-paid jobs. Examples of successes could also be looked at, e.g. individuals from non-Welsh-speaking households who now worked through the medium of Welsh.

The Cabinet Member was invited to respond to the main findings and recommendations of the Investigation, and was asked to confirm whether or not she accepted the recommendations. The Cabinet Member noted that:

- The discussion and the report were extremely valuable, and she wished to reiterate the thanks to the members of the Investigation and the schools that had participated.
- There were many very encouraging aspects to the report, as well as aspects that needed to be looked at further.
- There was a clear overlap in places with the Education Strategy and the work that needed to be done on the Education Language Policy, and this was to be very useful as it would shed light on a few other pieces of work where it was possible to draw things together.
- The reference to the social opportunities to use the Welsh language, and that the schools were part of their communities, rather than existing in a bubble, was welcomed.
- The reference to defining bilingualism was extremely important as the way Gwynedd operated was very different, and there may be a lack of understanding of that by some individuals/organisations.
- She felt very passionate about the work to support the transitional schools, and very much welcomed anything that drove that forward.
- Any move to strengthen the method of data collection was going to help the Authority with its strategic work.
- The reference to promoting the offer from the Welsh Government to provide free Welsh lessons for teachers who wished to develop their Welsh skills was a very important request.
- She welcomed the fact that there were parents of latecomers who chose to learn Welsh alongside their children as that could change the whole linguistic shape of a family.

- She was extremely passionate about anything that strengthened the opportunities for people to acquire a language, and welcomed the many references to that in the work.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member confirmed that she accepted the recommendations of the Investigation in principle and wished to take the report to the Cabinet for discussion due to the overlap with the Education Strategy and the Education Language Policy, and the likely need for a resource to realise certain pieces of work, such as strengthening the linguistic provision/support for latecomers who joined in year 10 or 11.

After the committee had formally approved the report, and also decided to receive an update from the Cabinet Member on implementation per recommendation at the meeting of 21 March 2024, the Chair noted:

- During the period of the Investigation, at its meeting on 4 May 2023 the full Council adopted the following notice of motion presented by Councillor Rhys Tudur:

*In order for the Council to be innovative in its method of monitoring the implementation of Welsh medium education and progress in detail and effectively in our schools, I ask the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to consider the most appropriate way of gathering data and monitoring the Welsh-medium provision in every secondary school against the baselines of the categories in which the schools are included.*

- Considering the work of the Investigation, and specifically Recommendations 1 and 2, the committee needed to come to a conclusion on whether there was further work to be done, or whether what was presented by the Investigation met the requirements.

As what was requested in the notice of motion was being addressed through the recommendations of the Investigation, and the Cabinet Member and the Department were considering whether action would be taken, it was agreed that there was no further work for the committee to do at present to respond to the notice of motion.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) To approve the Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation Report.**
- (ii) To receive an update from the Cabinet Member on the implementation per recommendation at the meeting on 21 March 2024.**
- (iii) To accept that what was undertaken by the Investigation answered the requirement in terms of the notice of motion presented by Councillor Rhys Tudur to the Full Council on 4 May 2023.**

## **7. GWYNEDD EDUCATION STRATEGY TOWARDS 2032**

The Assistant Head: Primary was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Education, at the request of the committee members, and members were asked to submit observations on the vision and objectives of the Education Department noted in the draft Education Strategy towards 2032 and beyond, and also submit observations on the Equality and Well-being Impact Assessments.

The Cabinet Member set out the context and the members were then given an opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

With regard to the comment in the report that the document was a living one that could be visited regularly over the period of the Strategy, it was asked how easy it would be, and what the timetable would be for introducing any changes, because if it was a matter of years, or even a matter of months, it could not actually be called a living document. In response, it was noted that:

- The document would be reviewed internally on a regular basis.
- As education was an area where policies could change quite quickly in different areas, the Department would respond positively to any change by having the document evolve and change as necessary.

It was noted that the report did not contain much mention of additional learning needs, apart from a reference to the Additional Learning Needs Act, and concern was expressed regarding three specific issues, namely:

- Gwynedd's education strategy on ALN in the mainstream for the next 10 years.
- Overcrowding in the two ALN schools in Gwynedd.
- The number of children in the mainstream who could not cope with the mainstream education system.

In response, it was noted that:

- The Education Strategy was a high-level education strategy for all children in the county and that the comment regarding special education children who had additional and inclusion needs was implicit in Objective 3 - learner health and well-being, which referred to all learners.
- The Strategy also referred to the duty the Authority had to review the school stock in the context of special schools, should it be necessary to do so.
- Under the high-level strategy, the Authority had a Schools Modernisation Strategy for Band C which would be submitted to the Welsh Government in due course.
- There were a number of policies and strategies in the layers below the high-level strategy, and that was where the detail would be.

The opinion was expressed that the Strategy, possibly, did not take into account the work of the Gwynedd Category 3 Schools Scrutiny Investigation (item 6 above), as the members of the Investigation emphasised the difficulties that arose as a result of the emphasis on bilingualism. It was noted that the second objective of the Strategy was to '*Extend and strengthen our Welsh-medium and bilingual provision*', but that '*bilingual*' could not mean anything other than English-medium provision in this context, as Welsh had already been addressed within the objective. Therefore, it was recommended that the Education Strategy should be re-examined in the light of the scrutiny Investigation report, and specifically in terms of how bilingualism was dealt with. In response, it was noted that:

- This was a great example of how the Strategy was a living and evolving document.
- The objective in the context of the Welsh language and bilingualism was a reflection of the situation as it was at present.
- There was already a commitment to review the Education Language Policy, and the outcome of that would then inform this document.

It was suggested that deleting every example of '*bilingualism*' and '*bilingual*' from the document was a convenient way of ensuring that the document said what it was expected to do and corresponded to some of the Council's other objectives and strategies.

It was noted that one of the values that was stated in the columns on the second page of the document, as a basis for the way we would set about shaping the education system in Gwynedd for the future, was to prepare young people for the world of work. Although that was very commendable and to be expected, there was also a wish to see a reference here to preparing young people to be citizens. In response, it was noted that the comment was very much welcomed, and that it was probably implicit in the first column in terms of the curriculum and learning experiences, but it was agreed that it should be clearer in the document.

It was enquired whether it would be possible to remove the references to '*bilingualism*' and '*bilingual*' from the objectives in the report, as it was clear that the aim was to increase the Welsh-medium provision.

It was noted that there was not much reference in the Strategy to responding to the change in demographics, although the Cabinet Member noted, in response to a recent question in the full Council, that the Strategy stated how we would develop the system to the future and responded to the demographic challenges. There was mention of the need to ensure that we were ready to respond to demographic changes, but no explanation as to how that was intended to be achieved. It was noted that the question was asked in the context of the closure, or the possibility of the closure of Ysgol Felinwnda. That was a matter of concern, not only about closing a school, but concern in the catchment area overall about schools and rural communities in general, and the feeling that a clear strategy was needed from the Council so that parents and people in the community knew, and to some extent understood the Council's mindset, if small schools had to close because of demographics. In response, it was noted that:

- The Authority was committed to looking at demography and the problems it caused in some communities.
- This was, probably, implicit in column 5 of the values, which mentioned the development of the right type of educational establishments in moving forward.
- As already stated in response to other comments, there were a number of very detailed strategies in the layers below this high-level strategy.
- We were very much aware of the problem we already had, but even more so on the horizon, in terms of demography, and therefore the Department's work and strategies in relation to reorganising our system would focus on what was noted in the fifth column of the values as a sub-strategy to be able to achieve that.

The concerns expressed earlier in the discussion regarding special education provision were reiterated. It was noted that there was a desire for the Strategy to include a specific section regarding the special education schools as the difficulty of gaining admission to those schools meant that children with profound needs had to remain in the mainstream schools, which were completely unsuitable for their needs. In response, it was noted that:

- As already stated, this was a high-level strategy, and the Authority had a strategy for moving forward to look at this.
- A satellite unit had been opened in order to expand the provision.
- The challenges facing the special education sector were not confined to Gwynedd, and there were a number of factors behind that.
- Before the new school in Hafod Lon was built, there were a number of children with very intense needs attending mainstream schools, possibly due to parents' perception of the old resource. More wanted to send their children to the new school, and that was to be welcomed.
- As medical techniques and medical care evolved over recent years, many children and young people were surviving who would not have done so previously. That was

excellent and something to be extremely grateful for, but it was not without its pressure on the sector.

- The Department would carry out a piece of work to look at the special education strategy in order to make sure that we had sufficient space, and that the resources were there.
- The commitment of the staff of the two special schools to the care, well-being and education of the children with profound needs was totally extraordinary.

It was questioned whether the use of the words 'more able and talented' in relation to the Seren Network was suitable in this context as all learners were talented and had different strengths. In response, it was noted that there was no disagreement with that, but that this was a recognised national term for a cohort or group of children.

It was noted that the Strategy specified a commitment to reduce the impact of poverty on the progress and achievements of learners, and it was asked how it was intended to do this. In response, it was noted that:

- This was an obvious priority and that the Cabinet Member had already committed in the Council's Plan to carry out a piece of work to look at the cost of the school day.
- There was a need to think sophisticatedly about poverty, as poverty was more extensive than financial poverty alone.
- The purpose of the piece of work was to look at the barriers that prevented children from reaching their educational potential, and to do whatever could be done to remove these.

It was asked whether we knew anything about the social background of the 'more able and talented' children in general. In response, it was noted that:

- We were talking about 'more able and talented' in an academic context in the case in question, but that able and talented was wider than that, and according to Welsh Government guidance, was more than just an academic measure.
- Seren had been challenged on the question of attracting a wide enough social cross-section, and had taken steps to ensure they were more open.

Concern was expressed at the significant increase over the summer in school transport costs for families who were not eligible for free transport for their children. In response, it was noted that the Authority was unfortunately bound by the policy, but that it would be interesting to look at this in the context of the Cabinet Member's piece of work on the cost of the school day.

**RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.**

## **8. PUPILS' ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR IN GWYNEDD SCHOOLS**

The Assistant Head: Special Educational Needs and Inclusion and the Education Department Inclusion Manager were welcomed to the meeting in addition for this item.

The report of the Cabinet Member for Education was presented providing information on attendance levels and exclusions across Gwynedd schools, including an outline of the main reasons for absences and exclusions. Committee members were asked to consider whether any other aspect of attendance and exclusions needed to be scrutinised, along with the impact of the provision offered to encourage improvement in the attendance and behaviour of Gwynedd pupils.

The Cabinet Member provided the context, the Inclusion Manager detailed the content of the report and then the members were given the opportunity to ask questions and offer observations.

It was asked what accounted for the fact that behaviour and attendance problems following the COVID-19 pandemic continued, as you would have expected the children to become re-accustomed to going to school as time progressed, and for the figures to decrease. In response, it was noted that:

- Several of the exclusions related to violence against peers and members of school staff.
- There was also a significant increase in drug use, with many children now carrying drugs into school to sell, or for their own use. It was noted that there was a case at the moment where the Service was very concerned about one pupil in Year 6.
- Everyone expected the first year following the pandemic to be challenging, but unfortunately, things had deteriorated since then.

It was asked whether children with additional learning needs were more likely to be affected by this, and if so, to what extent. In response, it was noted that:

- Data was collected monthly, with an officer recording each exclusion and noting whether they were children with additional needs, whether they had an individual development plan and whether they were children who received free school meals.
- There was no definite pattern of children in these categories, and some of the children also came from backgrounds that we would not have expected to manifest as problematic within the schools.

It was asked whether there was evidence that efforts to improve attendance, by writing to parents and making threats, etc., led pupils to disengage from the system altogether. In response, it was noted that:

- The number of children who were de-registered had increased, and that, in itself, was a concern for the Service.
- The Service had welfare officers who supported families.
- The Authority fined or prosecuted parents only as a last resort as there was no desire to lead to a greater increase in the number of pupils being home educated.
- The Service had a specific team within the Department that looked at home educating and checked settings and the progress and standard of the education the children received.

It was noted that Gwynedd's permanent exclusions figure for 2022/23, i.e. 48, was alarming and it was asked what exactly the Authority intended to do differently from what it had done in the past, and what it intended to put in place anew to ensure that this figure would fall by September 2024. It was asked what the figures were in other counties similar to Gwynedd, such as Anglesey and Ceredigion, over the same period. It was also asked if there was a school (without naming it) that almost never excluded, and what could be learned from that good practice, and also was there a school (again without naming it) that excluded more regularly than similar schools. In response, it was noted that:

- It was agreed that the figures were alarming and the schools were thanked for reporting so transparently and honestly on the number of permanent exclusions.
- The Service was fully aware of the work that needed to be done, and it was intended to commission a piece of work over the next year by a former Estyn inspector, who



specialised in inclusion, looking at the use of inclusion funding in schools. This work would start in the next two months and would provide a framework on how to improve the service for the future.

- The Department also had teams that supported schools in the primary and secondary sectors, in order to model positive behaviour and put strategies in place, etc. and it was intended to appoint additional officers to these teams within the next few months.
- The Department had been successful in attracting a significant amount of funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) which would be used to offer programmes to schools in terms of specialist services relating to behaviour. There was no guarantee that this would make a difference, but it would highlight the type of support that was needed.
- Regarding figures for other counties, the ALN&I Service operated for Gwynedd and Anglesey, and the service also collaborated with its peers across the counties of the north, and it was clear that those counties too faced the same challenges.
- The Service was concerned about the high levels of exclusions in five schools mainly in the Arfon area, and that the schools that rarely excluded were in the south of the county.
- It could be misleading to look at the individual numbers of pupils that schools excluded and it was more accurate to look at that as a percentage of the school's population.
- It was essential to look at reconciling the reasons for excluding pupils across the county, considering whether there was a difference in levels of tolerance among schools; what strategies did some schools use to prevent the type of behaviour from escalating into something that merited exclusion, and was there a specific period, reasons, behaviour or factors that were acceptable in one school, which would not be acceptable in another school.
- Funding followed a child who transferred to another school as a result of an exclusion, or for whatever reason, so that the school admitting the child found it easier to provide for that child.
- In view of the current situation, it was no surprise that Estyn had chosen inclusion as one specific area to look at in detail as part of its recent inspection of education services.

It was asked if the Admissions and Exclusions Panels still existed, and if so, why had there been no further contact with those lay members who had attended two days of intensive training in the field before the pandemic. In response, it was noted that:

- The Panels continued to exist, but few requests were received for independent hearings.
- That discussions had been held with the Legal Service regarding the need to train new and experienced governors in order to draw attention to their responsibility when a child is excluded. In addition to discussions with the Assistant Resources Officer, who was responsible for co-ordinating training for governors, in order to re-visit the matter, a specific training package for new governors had been adapted so that it was appropriate and current.
- It was appreciated to have people volunteer on the panel because it was extremely important that the voices of children and families were heard by a group of individuals who were completely independent of the school.

It was asked how likely the children excluded for a fixed period were of being excluded again, time and again. In response, it was noted that:

- The Service had a database that tracked every individual who was excluded.
- In accordance with Welsh Government guidelines, an individual could be excluded for more than 15 days, or over a period during an academic year, and then a behaviour panel had to be held with the governing body, the parents and the individual in order to avoid progressing to a permanent exclusion.

It was noted that several studies clearly indicated that young people were one of the groups most affected by Covid, and it was felt that young people were being forgotten. It was noted that leisure provision for young people outside of school, such as youth clubs, etc. had a very beneficial effect on the mental health of individuals, and it was asked if the Department, in conjunction with the Youth Service, considered this as a way of trying to tackle the problems. In response, it was noted that it was agreed with the observation and that it was necessary to look at how the resource that the Council had within the Youth Service was used in order to take full advantage of it.

Referring to fixed-period exclusions that occur repeatedly to the same child, it was noted that it was evident that the strategies did not always work, and that children were sometimes identified with special needs in terms of behaviour and got an individual plan and were treated differently, and did not get further exclusions as a result. It was asked if those numbers increased in the same way, and were they successful. In response, it was noted that it was important to look at that too, and it was believed that headteachers were committed to doing so.

The fact that the funding followed a child who moved school due to an exclusion was welcomed, but in addition to the usual cost of educating the child, these children, very often, needed much more support, and it was asked whether putting a premium on the funding that was transferred to the schools that accepted children under these circumstances would be considered. In response, it was noted that a sum of around £1.1m went to the secondary sector to assist with this type of issue, and although it was not suggested for a moment that the money was not being used properly, perhaps it was necessary carry out a piece of work to look at what exactly the schools were doing with this money.

It was noted that the solution to these problems did not lie with the Education Department and the Council alone and that we had to look at the picture as a whole in terms of the young person's home, community and health, especially in view of the major cuts the agencies that support families and the health sector had faced in recent years. It was emphasised that all the agencies should sit around the table to ensure the best outcome for the young person, but because every department and every field received cuts, everyone was holding on tightly to their own purse strings. It was noted that it was necessary to look at more than the bare figures and to look at what was the real reason that a young person displayed this type of behaviour. There was a lot of work to be done, and a challenging time lay ahead of us, but through plans such as these, etc., it was greatly hoped that the figures would start to decrease, but there was a need for other agencies to be around the table too.

It was noted that only after everything else had failed was the difficult and painful decision taken to exclude a pupil permanently and that the decision had to be for the benefit of the staff and other pupils, and also for the benefit of the pupil who was about to be excluded.

Referring to the reasons for excluding pupils, it was noted that the report and committee's discussion had placed the focus on those that were excluded, but that the rest of the class, who were affected by the 'persistent disruptive behaviour' had to be borne in mind too. It was asked to what extent 'threatening and violent conducts' were on the increase, and to

what extent 'persistent disruptive behaviour', which affected the majority of other pupils, was on the increase. In response, it was noted that:

- The reason behind each exclusion was recorded.
- An increase in violence was seen, and there was also an increase in refusing to conform to school rules, disrupting the class regularly and being verbally abusive to staff and peers.
- The use of e-cigarettes was also a big problem in schools.
- Each school had its own behaviour policy, and the Authority could not influence those policies.
- Some schools undertook internal exclusions, where a child who disrupted the class was moved to another class where a key person was available to conduct recovery discussions with them.

The members' appreciation was expressed of all the work carried out by the staff involved with vulnerable pupils who found it difficult to cope in school for whatever reasons.

**RESOLVED to accept the report and to note the observations.**

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

Submitted - the committee's forward programme for 2023/24.

The committee was asked to accept the request from the Education Department to consider programming an additional item and re-schedule some items that needed to be scrutinised during 2023/24, as detailed in the report.

It was noted that Additional Learning Needs in the mainstream and special schools had been denoted as a potential item for programming during the year, and calls were made for the item to be scrutinised in the March 2024 meeting in view of some of the comments that had arisen during the discussion on the Education Strategy (item 7 above). In response, it was noted that it would be timely to scrutinise the item in March so that the scrutinisers' comments could be fed into any capital investment programme in the field in the future.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) To accept the request from the Education Department to programme an additional item and re-schedule some items that needed to be scrutinised during 2023/24.**
- (ii) To scrutinise the item on Additional Learning Needs in the mainstream and special schools at the meeting in March 2024.**
- (iii) To adopt an amended work programme for 2023/24.**

The meeting commenced at 10.30 a.m. and concluded at 2.55 p.m.

Chair

# Agenda Item 5

Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Estyn report on education services in Cyngor Gwynedd
Date of meeting	9 November 2023
Relevant Officer	Debbie A W Jones, Assistant Head: Education Corporate Services
Cabinet Member	Councillor Beca Brown

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Estyn carried out an inspection of education services at Cyngor Gwynedd during the week commencing 26 June 2023. The report on Estyn's findings following the inspection was published on 20 September 2023. The report can be seen in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to present the Estyn report on education services at Cyngor Gwynedd for discussion before the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

## 2. A SUMMARY OF THE ESTYN REPORT. (June 2023)

- 2.2 The summary of the Estyn report on education services in Cyngor Gwynedd states that:
  - education is a clear priority in the Council's plans;
  - the Authority's staff embrace the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd and strive to embed these principles in their day-to-day work;
  - the inspection outcomes of Cyngor Gwynedd's schools and other education settings are strong;
  - authority and GwE officers have a good knowledge of providers who can support them;
  - intervention to support schools that are a cause of concern is very effective, but in a very few cases, it has not been timely enough;
  - the well-being of children and young people in Gwynedd benefits from the support provided by the Youth Service, this is especially true for vulnerable pupils who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training after they leave school;
  - Gwynedd's school attendance rates do not currently compare favourably with national rates;
  - provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs has strengthened, however, neither the status of, nor the steps for accessing the behaviour support hubs, are wholly clear;

- promoting the Welsh language is a clear priority for the authority and the education service;
- the immersion centres are particularly successful in enabling latecomers to the language to acquire Welsh, together with developing an innovative virtual resource to practise language patterns and vocabulary and dedicated podcasts on the benefits of learning Welsh;
- a strong feature of the authority's work with regard to the Welsh language is the range of valuable Welsh-medium resources that the authority's staff have developed for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and their families;
- the authority provides a wide range of post-16 courses that respond to the linguistic and economic needs of the county, however, the process of reviewing Arfon's post-16 education arrangements has been slow;
- positive examples of leaders implementing beneficial strategies that have led to improvements e.g., the authority's digital strategy, work on modernising schools and strengthening immersion provision;
- safeguarding arrangements within the education service are generally sound;
- the local authority has a good understanding of the financial situation within the education service.

### 3. GOOD PRACTICE - CAMEO OF ESTYN'S REPORT

#### 3.1

##### **Cameo – The Well-being Festival**

In response to the wishes of young people, youth workers supported them to lead on planning a well-being festival to promote the mental health and well-being of young people and provide access to information and support from a range of services. The festival developed to become a week-long event across the county. There were 31 organisations involved with the festival and 49 varied sessions were held during the week. More than 700 well-being boxes were also distributed to young people.

#### 3.2

##### **Cameo – Using digital technology to encourage use of the Welsh language**

Leaders and teachers are working with a local commercial company to create an innovative virtual resource based on their new Welsh language immersion scheme. The scheme is based on the imaginary village of Aberwla and the virtual equipment provides an excellent experience for pupils to practise language patterns and vocabulary. They also make effective use of promoting the benefits of learning Welsh and share good practice through dedicated podcasts, for example by interviewing former pupils from language centres and their families to share their experiences of learning the language.

#### **4. CASE STUDY - ESTYN REPORT**

##### **4.1 Cyngor Gwynedd's work in developing Welsh-medium resources for pupils with additional education needs and their families, and for language immersion.**

###### **Information about the Local Education Authority**

Gwynedd Local Education Authority has a clear vision in the context of Welsh-medium education for learners throughout their time in education. Gwynedd's Welsh Language Policy aims to develop confident bilingual learners and citizens. In Gwynedd, the Welsh language belongs to everyone, and the policy sets a direction and clear accountability for all schools.

Cyngor Gwynedd's Education Department is committed to contributing to national strategies and legislation in terms of promoting and increasing the use of the Welsh language. To this end, the department has prepared and introduced a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, which outlines the vision for Welsh-medium education within the authority over the next ten years. In line with the statutory requirement, under section 44 of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011, the Council has produced and published county-wide strategies which outline how they will contribute to the national aim set in the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy, Cymraeg 2050, to increase the number of Welsh speakers across Wales and increase the opportunities for people to use the Welsh language on a daily basis. Gwynedd's county-wide Welsh Language Strategy (Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd 2018-23) sets the commitment and vision for the whole county, and the work of the Education Department and the aims of the WESP contribute to the objectives of that county-wide strategy.

##### **4.2 Developing Welsh-medium resources for learners with additional learning needs and inclusion.**

The Authority, in partnership with Cyngor Ynys Môn, have invested in a central Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (ALN&I) service. This service is available to all education providers within the county to provide support and advice for learners with ALN&I needs or to prevent these needs from developing. This is by providing resources, training and direct input for schools and learners.

The ALN&I service provides a fully bilingual service, with all members of staff within the service being able to provide through the medium of Welsh. The need for provision through the medium of Welsh is emphasised within the recruitment process.

Developing resources through the medium of Welsh is an integral part of this work and the training provided by the team is available through the medium of Welsh. There is a wide range of appropriate resources that are developed continuously to correspond to

the identified need and to align with the provision that is offered. This includes areas of behaviour, well-being and mental health support, specific learning needs (literacy and numeracy), communication and interaction, and sensory, medical and physical needs. A specific website has been set up to be used by parents and carers, and a specific website for school staff which enables them to download resources, in addition to an online classroom for specific learning needs resources. Everything on the website is available bilingually: [www.adyach.cymru](http://www.adyach.cymru). The online Individual Development Plan is also fully bilingual so that it can be completed in the family's preferred language.

The above means that ALN&I provision aligns with the ethos and teaching provision within the county and promotes learners' skills and bilingualism from the outset. It also means that parents and carers can contribute to their children's person-centred discussions through the medium of Welsh or English with staff who are able to speak both languages.

#### **4.3 The Immersion Education System**

In order for the authority's Welsh language policy to be inclusive, a specialist service is provided within the county, namely the Immersion Education System. Since being established in its new form in January 2023, there are six strategic settings across the county, which provide a service for latecomers to acquire the Welsh language.

To ensure modern and up-to-date opportunities for learners to practise vocabulary and language patterns in our immersion centres, staff at the Immersion Education System have worked with individuals and an external company to create an innovative virtual village. This project has been developed with Welsh Government revenue grant funding. This new scheme is based on an imaginary village called Aberwla and it incorporates specific language patterns within the language continuum in the Curriculum for Wales. It is a scheme that is relevant to the twenty-first century and reflects modern day Wales. The project enables latecomers to step into Aberwla on a virtual platform to practise language patterns in various locations around the village. On this digital platform, learners are given an opportunity to play games with each other e.g., when filling their basket in the supermarket or by reading instructions and following a shopping list. They also meet different characters and creatures from the usual at Tyddyn Swillyd Farm and stay at the Glamping Ground for a couple of nights. They can also spend time at the leisure centre, the museum or help Ceri the mechanic at the garage. It is also possible to borrow a drone from the gadget shop to fly above the village to practise command patterns and directions e.g., right and left, forwards and backwards.

Welsh Government officials are very keen for Gwynedd to share this resource nationally and have released funding to facilitate this. The local authority is proud of the opportunity to share the resource for the benefit of learners and to support the Government's aim in Cymraeg 2050 across Wales. All authorities in Wales are welcome to use the resource by contacting [canolfaniaith@gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:canolfaniaith@gwynedd.llyw.cymru).

Multimedia resources to reinforce language patterns and vocabulary are valuable, particularly virtual digital resources that appeal to children and young people. This resource is a means to reinforce the skills necessary to enable learners to use the Welsh language in a formal and informal context.

What is becoming clear is the interest learners have in the resource. It is very appealing to latecomers from primary to secondary schools. The virtual element is a means of enabling learners to immerse themselves in the activity and, when they step onto the platform, they are happy to try to communicate through the medium of Welsh. The element of fun and enjoyment attached to the resource certainly has a positive influence on their development and is a means of normalising the Welsh language and making it contemporary in the virtual and digital arena.

Another innovative resource that is worth sharing nationally in the context of Welsh-medium education is the podcast 'Am filiwn', which deals with aspects of the world of a teacher that leads to increasing and developing pupils to become Welsh speakers and aims to create a million Welsh speakers. This podcast goes under the skin of immersion education and what happens in our language centres within our Immersion Education System. In the podcast, some learners and their parents share their experiences of attending the Welsh language immersion units in Gwynedd to learn Welsh. In addition, an experienced teacher also talks about the main immersion principles that have proved successful within the Immersion Education System in Gwynedd. This is a valuable resource for students following a teacher training course, for newly qualified teachers or for teachers at the beginning of their career to raise awareness and learn about effective immersion principles and strategies. The 'Am Filiwn Podcast' (ypod.cymru) was developed in a series of podcasts for ITE, Bangor University in collaboration with Initial Teacher Education institutions in Wales, sponsored by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

## **5. ESTYN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Ensure that leaders act strategically on all aspects of their work and that they have suitable oversight and full consideration of risk regarding important aspects that have arisen during the inspection.
- 5.2 Improve arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and promoting pupils' attendance.
- 5.3 Strengthen provision to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and ensure arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of that provision.



## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to:-

- provide observations on the contents of the Estyn report on education services in Cyngor Gwynedd;
- consider any arrangements to scrutinise the progress against the report's recommendations in a timely manner.



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales



## **A report on education services in**

**Cyngor Gwynedd**

**Council Offices  
Shirehall Street  
Caernarfon  
LL55 1SH**

**Date of inspection: June 2023**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and  
Training in Wales**

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Cyngor Gwynedd

Cyngor Gwynedd in north-west Wales has a total population of around 117,000. The local authority maintains 95 mainstream schools. There are 79 primary schools, 12 secondary schools and two all-age schools. The local authority also maintains two special schools. The Chief Executive took up the post in April 2021 and the Head of Education was appointed in November 2017. The Leader of the Council has been in post since May 2017 and the Cabinet Member for Education took up this role in May 2022.

The local authority's last inspection was conducted in 2013. Cyngor Gwynedd is one of six local authorities within the north Wales regional school effectiveness and improvement service (GwE). In 2022-2023, the local authority's net education budget is around £121,488,000. The delegated school budget per pupil in 2022-2023 is £5,277, which is higher than the Welsh average of £5,032.

Inspectors take account of a wide range of information about the local population when evaluating outcomes and the quality of education services. They consider this information alongside information about the national population. Some of the most useful information about children and young people in Gwynedd is noted below:

- Over a three-year-period, 13.5% of pupils aged 5 to 15 have been eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the Welsh average of 23%. Eight point two per cent (8.2%) of pupils aged 5 to 15 come from ethnic minorities, which is lower than the Welsh average of 13.3%
- A total of 275 children are looked after by the local authority
- Eight point two per cent (8.2%) of pupils aged 5 to 15 have additional learning needs or special educational needs (School Action)
- Eight point eight per cent (8.8%) of pupils aged 5 to 15 have additional learning needs or special educational needs (School Action Plus)
- Two point seven per cent (2.7%) of pupils aged 5 to 15 have additional learning needs or special educational needs (Statemented)
- One point one per cent (1.1%) of pupils aged 5 to 15 have additional learning needs or special educational needs (Individual Development Plan)
- One point four per cent (1.4%) of pupils aged 5 to 15 have English as an additional language (A, B or C)
- Sixty-two point 3 per cent (63.4%) of pupils aged 5 or over are fluent in Welsh, which is higher than the national average of 15.6%

## Summary

The aim of the leaders of Cyngor Gwynedd is to ensure the best start for the county's children and young people. Education is a clear priority in the Council's plans and putting the needs of the county's residents at the heart of the authority's work is a core part of the 'Gwynedd Way' of working. The authority's staff embrace the principles of the 'Gwynedd Way' and strive to embed these principles in their day-to-day work.

On the whole and over time, the inspection outcomes of Cyngor Gwynedd's schools and other education settings are strong. The authority works productively with the north Wales regional school effectiveness and improvement service (GwE) to support providers and authority and GwE officers have a good knowledge of them. They have recently strengthened their systems for gathering and sharing information and this has improved the quality of discussions about individual providers. GwE's priorities are based on the priorities of schools in the region. This helps the service to respond suitably to the needs of providers and ensures that professional development provision is appropriate. Overall, intervention to support schools that are a cause of concern is very effective, but in a very few cases, it has not been timely enough.

The well-being of children and young people in Gwynedd benefits from the support provided by the Youth Service. This is especially true for vulnerable pupils who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training after they leave school. Historically, Gwynedd's school attendance rates have been strong, but they do not currently compare favourably with national rates. This is partly because there is not enough of a strategic focus on monitoring or promoting attendance, particularly the attendance of groups such as pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs has strengthened over recent years. There is now more capacity to support these pupils and management arrangements are clearer. However, neither the status of, nor the steps for accessing the behaviour support hubs, are wholly clear. Senior leaders also do not have a strategic overview of the outcomes or nature and quality of this provision.

Promoting the Welsh language is a clear priority for the authority and the education service. The authority is investing heavily to ensure access to Welsh-medium and bilingual education and experiences for all children and young people in the county. The immersion centres are particularly successful in enabling latecomers to the language to acquire Welsh. The staff in these centres also provide beneficial training for staff within schools and mainstream settings on how to support these pupils.

A strong feature of the authority's work with regard to the Welsh language is the range of valuable Welsh-medium resources that the authority's staff have developed. In response to the general shortage in this area, they have developed Welsh language resources for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and their families. This includes developing or adapting resources that are appropriate to the authority's context, as well as securing translation rights for international resources. The staff of the immersion system have developed an innovative virtual resource to practise language patterns and vocabulary and dedicated podcasts on the benefits of learning Welsh.

The authority provides a wide range of post-16 courses that respond to the linguistic and economic needs of the county. The Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium works together effectively to provide a range of courses for pupils across a variety of locations. This can cause travel challenges for pupils and the authority provides a free travel pass to mitigate this. The authority has been reviewing Arfon's post-16 education arrangements for some years, but this process has been slow.

There are positive examples of leaders implementing beneficial strategies that have led to improvements. These include the authority's digital strategy, work on modernising schools and strengthening immersion provision. However, leaders have not been strategic enough in addressing all aspects of their work. In particular, their improvement work has not been effective enough in terms of provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, improving attendance and reviewing the post-16 provision in Arfon.

Safeguarding arrangements within the education service are generally sound. Officers understand their roles and responsibilities in this area and work effectively with children's services officers. Providers are given valuable support in terms of safeguarding and the quality of implementation of Part 5 of the Welsh Safeguarding Procedures is very thorough.

The local authority has a good understanding of the financial situation within the education service. Historically, the authority has succeeded in protecting the service from cuts, but this has proved to be more challenging in light of the current financial challenges.

## Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that leaders act strategically on all aspects of their work and that they have suitable oversight and full consideration of risk regarding important aspects that have arisen during the inspection
- R2 Improve arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and promoting pupils' attendance
- R3 Strengthen provision to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and ensure arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of that provision

## What happens next

Following the publication of the inspection report, the local authority should update its plans to address the recommendations and to take account of shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority should update its plans within three months of the publication of the inspection report.

Estyn will invite the provider to prepare case studies in relation to its work on developing Welsh-medium resources for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and their families, and for Welsh language immersion. The study will be shared on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Outcomes

We were unable to provide a full evaluation of outcomes. This is as a result of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the inspections of schools and most other education providers to be suspended since March 2020. It is also a result of the lack of data on outcomes that can be compared over time because the pandemic caused changes to the way that qualifications were awarded. This also affected most of the other data that we consider when making evaluations, such as school attendance, school exclusions and post-16 learner destinations, but we have recently begun to receive this type of data again. Any evaluations that follow provide context by reporting pre-pandemic outcomes or relate to more recent outcomes where the evidence base is valid and reliable.

On the whole and over time, the inspection outcomes of schools in Gwynedd are strong. Between September 2017 and March 2020, we inspected 46 settings. This included 35 primary schools, nine secondary schools, one all-age school and one special school. On the whole, inspection outcomes were positive, particularly in primary schools. Of the primary schools, follow-up activity was judged to be needed in only three of them. Of the secondary and all-age schools, follow-up activity was judged to be needed in four of them, including statutory follow-up in two of these schools. One school was judged to be in need of special measures, another school was judged to be in need of significant improvement and two schools were judged to be in need of Estyn review. Following improvements, none of these schools are now in need of follow-up activity. From September 2019 (when the procedure for inspecting the sector was changed), we inspected 11 non-maintained settings, but none were placed in a follow-up category.

Since February 2022, when we resumed school inspections following the pandemic, 25 settings have been inspected. This includes nine primary schools, one secondary school and 15 non-maintained settings. Overall, outcomes are positive and no settings were judged to be in need of statutory follow-up activity. There was no follow-up for the nurseries or seven primary schools. Two primary schools and the secondary school were judged to be in need of Estyn review.

Between 2017 and 2019, the performance of a majority of secondary schools in Gwynedd was better than, or similar to, what is expected in many of the performance indicators in key stage 4. The performance of a minority of secondary schools was lower or significantly lower than expected. Pupils in Gwynedd who are eligible for free school meals performed consistently better than the Welsh average in many key performance indicators between 2017 and 2019. The performance of this group of pupils in the indicator for 5 A\*-A grades at GCSE or equivalent was slightly lower than the Welsh average over the same period.

The judgement on well-being and attitudes to learning was good or better in most Gwynedd inspections during the inspection cycle from September 2017 to March 2020. Of the 46 schools inspected during this period, well-being and attitudes to learning were good or better in nearly all schools.

Historically and before the pandemic, school attendance rates in Gwynedd were strong. However, the current attendance rates, particularly in most of the authority's secondary schools, do not compare favourably with national rates. This is partly because there is insufficient focus by the authority on the tight and clear processes that were in place to promote attendance prior to the pandemic. The authority has recognised the need to re-establish the strategic work to promote attendance. Overall, leadership has been slow to recognise the need to re-prioritise this work. Officers analyse and report on attendance per school, but they do not analyse or monitor attendance data forensically enough. For example, they do not analyse the attendance of specific groups of learners and, as such, they do not have a secure grasp of the trends and patterns of attendance of groups, such as pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

In three of the five years up to 2021, the rate of permanent exclusions was lower than, or similar to, the national rate. Over the same period, the rate of exclusions for five days or fewer increased gradually from being significantly below the national rate to being very similar in 2021. The rate of exclusions over five days was higher than the national average in three of the five years during this period.

There are occasional opportunities for pupils to contribute to corporate decisions. For example, children were consulted in the recent review of education and children's services. The youth service also seeks the views of young people on their needs and provision that is available to them and adapts and develops the services as a result. The authority's officers have begun to develop more formal and regular methods of seeking the views of children and young people.

The youth service promotes and supports pupils' well-being through a variety of beneficial activities. Through this work, young people make positive contributions to their local communities and their peers. For example, they organised a 'Well-being Festival' to promote the mental health and well-being of young people.

### **Cameo – The Well-being Festival**

In response to the wishes of young people, youth workers supported them to lead on planning a well-being festival to promote the mental health and well-being of young people and provide access to information and support from a range of services. The festival developed to become a week-long event across the county. There were 31 organisations involved with the festival and 49 varied sessions were held during the week. More than 700 well-being boxes were also distributed to young people.

Youth workers are based in each secondary school for specific periods each week. They work with other agencies to identify and support vulnerable pupils by providing access to activities and valuable advice. They support these young people by providing access to more intensive and personal support. Their work contributes to ensuring that pupils in Year 11 progress appropriately to the next steps in terms of their education, employment or training. The number of young people who are not in

education, employment or training at the end of Year 11 has been below the national average in 4 of the last 5 years.

## Education services

### **How thoroughly does the local authority challenge the performance of schools and ensure that they receive appropriate and timely support to help them improve?**

Gwynedd education department works closely and effectively with the north Wales regional school effectiveness and improvement service (GwE) to improve provision offered by the authority's schools. There is a shared understanding of everyone's roles and officers work together closely and productively as one team.

Officers from the education department and GwE have a positive mindset based on supporting schools to improve by working alongside their leaders to evaluate provision and plan for improvement. They make effective use of activities that derive from first-hand evidence, such as scrutiny of books and lesson observations to form a view about the quality of provision and identify successes and areas for improvement.

Over time, the authority's officers have received useful information about the performance of schools and, on the whole, have used this information suitably. GwE officers have recently strengthened information-sharing processes by using specific software. This has enabled the authority's officers to have easy access to a comprehensive range of up-to-date information about all schools. As a result, the authority's education officers have a good knowledge of the authority's schools. They identify schools' main strengths and areas for improvement accurately. GwE provides a comprehensive range of relevant support for schools in Gwynedd and there is an individual support plan for each school that draws on this offer. It also organises additional intervention as necessary.

Authority officers and GwE officers meet regularly to discuss individual schools, clusters and overarching themes. They discuss the needs of schools at different tiers during meetings of the Needs Identification Board, the School Support Board and the County Quality Board. They make effective use of specific thresholds and triggers to escalate schools where concerns are increasing. Through the County Quality Board, senior officers and the cabinet member for education contribute to these discussions and challenge officers on the effect of their work to support schools. The new information-sharing arrangements have contributed to a recent improvement in the quality and incisiveness of discussions at these meetings. However, in a very few cases, intervention to support schools that are causing concern has not been timely enough. In addition, authority officers do not always make strategic enough use of information about pupils' attendance, including groups of pupils, to challenge schools to improve this aspect.

GwE identifies suitable high-level priorities through its Regional Business Plan, which is based on its identification of the needs of individual schools. This plan is approved annually by the Joint Committee, which includes the Gwynedd Local Authority



Cabinet Member for Education and the Management Board, which includes the authority's Head of Education. As a result, the authority can ensure that what GwE offers responds closely to the authority's local requirements.

In a very few cases, the authority identifies additional local priorities, which are aspects where it requires additional support beyond what is available through GwE's central offer. In the case of Gwynedd, the authority has identified that the difficulties in recruiting leaders means that it is necessary to identify potential future leaders sooner and plan succession in leadership at all levels and across the sectors. Recently, GwE has planned appropriate actions to support this area, which go beyond the wide range of training for leaders that is already in place.

GwE has a comprehensive professional learning offer for the teaching workforce. It also promotes school-to-school collaboration effectively, for example as primary schools work closely together in clusters and as secondary schools and special schools work together with others across the region in 'alliances' of schools that have a similar context. They have established useful partnerships to develop leaders' evaluation skills, for example as they scrutinise pupils' work jointly with colleagues from other schools.

The authority holds the region to account appropriately for the quality and effect of its work through the Management Board and the Joint Committee. Elected members challenge GwE officers suitably through scrutiny meetings.

### **How well does the authority support young people to receive suitable post-16 education or training?**

The local authority's aspiration is to ensure high quality post-16 education where there is a wide choice of courses and qualifications that respond to the needs of the local, regional and national economy for all learners in Gwynedd. The Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium was established to implement this vision. The consortium includes schools with a sixth form, a further education college that has sites in Bangor, Glynllifon, Pwllheli, Dolgellau and Llangefni, and Gwynedd and Anglesey local authorities. This valuable partnership work means that a wide range of courses are available to learners. Suitable work training is also provided through the work of the further education college to facilitate apprenticeships and job growth schemes. The two special schools work with a range of partners, such as Antur Waunfawr, to meet the needs of their post-16 learners. They organise visits and experiences to support learners to access a range of opportunities, such as opportunities to develop social skills and life skills. In 2018, Cyngor Gwynedd began a consultation process on post-16 education in the Arfon area. Although the authority has resumed this process after the pandemic, the next steps in terms of Arfon's post-16 education systems remain unclear and the process has been slow.

The way in which post-16 education is provided within the consortium varies. Most schools in the Meirion and Dwyfor areas do not have a sixth form. Academic and vocational courses are provided at all levels by the further education college. Ysgol Godre's Berwyn has a small sixth form. It works with 'Esgol' and further education colleges to provide A-level courses and vocational subjects, such as agriculture. All secondary schools in Arfon have a sixth form where A-level courses are provided, in the main. There is valuable partnership work between these schools, the further

education college and Anglesey schools to expand the level 3 offer for their learners. Learners in Arfon who want to study access, level 1 or level 2 courses transfer to the further education college. The variations in provision and the geographical size of the authority mean that some learners have to travel a considerable distance to access their chosen courses. The authority ensures a free travel pass for post-16 learners to facilitate this.

The consortium has a comprehensive management structure. It includes a manager on behalf of the local authority, a lead board which includes representatives from the authorities and the further education college, a strategic group of secondary headteachers and the Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd curriculum delegate groups. Information is shared effectively between partners by using the consortium's website. For example, once schools have identified the names of pupils for partnership courses, the authority's transport department uses this information to organise transport. The lead board and strategic group evaluate the quality of the courses that are provided through the partnership appropriately. They produce reports that consider learners' outcomes, completion measures and qualitative descriptions of the provision. In the few best examples, reports include comments about the quality of teaching and learning from lesson observations. This information is used appropriately to decide whether a course should be offered or not. However, the consortium does not seek the views of post-16 learners about the quality of provision and their experiences specifically enough.

The authority's schools have appropriate arrangements to help pupils choose their post-16 pathways. They work jointly with partners, including the post-16 education consortium and Careers Wales, to provide independent advice. In the best examples, schools and the college hold a range of valuable activities, such as careers fairs and opportunities to sample courses through visits for the further education college. The consortium also produces a useful prospectus for partnership courses. The authority has recognised that it is difficult to view the complete offer in one place and is working to develop a website to address this.

There is valuable partnership work between the consortium and the youth service's post-16 team to support vulnerable learners to transition to post-16 education. The authority invested money to ensure the continuation of a plan to support young people who are at risk of becoming disengaged from education, training or employment which was originally funded by the European Social Fund. As a result, the youth service's post-16 education team provides dedicated support to help young people move on to education, training or employment. A multi-agency panel meets regularly to broker support for these learners. For example, they ensure practical support to visit the sites of the further education college and well-being and mental health support. As a result, the number who are not in education, training or employment is low.

The authority appointed a post-16 additional learning needs (ALN) quality officer to establish and develop processes to support the implementation of the new ALN Act. The officer works productively with the secondary schools and the further education college to plan support for the first pupils who will transfer to post-16 education within the new procedure in September 2023. Information is shared easily with the college through the authority's dedicated digital platform. This means that any arrangements for supporting post-16 ALN pupils are developing appropriately.

## **How effectively does the authority meet the needs of learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)?**

Over time, the strategic and operational processes of Gwynedd education services to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties have improved significantly. The vision of leaders to strengthen provision for these vulnerable pupils is now clear and suitable.

Senior managers have re-organised the additional learning needs (ALN) and inclusion service appropriately. They have identified the need to provide more specifically for supporting vulnerable pupils and to identify relevant managers to lead different aspects of the service. This includes appointing an inclusion manager and increasing the role of ALN quality officers to support pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The authority has also increased capacity within the outreach behaviour support service to support mainstream schools with pupils from reception age up to Year 11. These changes contribute well to ensuring that the number of pupils who are in education other than at school (EOTAS) is low.

The authority has a range of purposeful procedures to plan provision and review the progress of pupils with ALN. These include the ALN and inclusion panel, the profound panel, the review panel and the ALN and inclusion moderation forum. On the whole, the purpose and remit of many of these procedures, together with the access to services protocol, are clear to schools. However, the steps that should be followed at school or the interventions that should be put in place before applying for a pupil to access the behaviour support hubs are not as clear.

Valuable information about pupils with ALN across the county is freely available to relevant stakeholders through a dedicated digital platform. This enables schools, experts, parents and pupils to play an active role in planning provision, monitoring and reporting on progress.

The ALN and inclusion service provides appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers and learning assistants to support them to provide beneficial interventions for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This includes training on attachment and the effect of trauma on children and young people. A range of relevant resources and intervention programmes are provided for schools to support the well-being of pupils across the age range. For example, the education psychology service has prepared valuable resources, such as beneficial mindfulness resources, to try to have a positive influence on pupils' well-being. The authority has also invested significantly to ensure that Welsh-medium resources are available to schools and this is a strong feature.

The authority's 'managed moves' protocol and arrangements are appropriate and lead to positive outcomes for pupils in a majority of cases. Arrangements for supporting pupils with serious medical needs are strong.

Suitable support is provided for most pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs within mainstream schools. The local authority provides specific support to meet the social, emotional and behavioural needs of a few pupils in four alternative settings. The status of these settings is unclear as they are not registered as pupil referral units, although that is how they operate. The 'Llechan Lân' Centre in

Penygroes is a short-term education setting for pupils in Years 5-8. Provision at Llechan Lân is purposeful and support for pupils when they return to their schools is very effective. This is because the specialist staff there share their expertise successfully with staff in the mainstream schools to strengthen their ability to support pupils with behavioural difficulties. As a result, pupils who have attended this resource re-engage successfully in their mother school in most cases.

Since September 2021, the authority has improved its provision for older pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties by commissioning two secondary schools to run hubs in three areas across Gwynedd. There are now three alternative education hubs for Year 9-11 pupils in Bangor, Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog. Overall, pupils who attend the hubs are happy and engage positively with their learning. Staff at the hubs take pride in their work and in the provision offered. They commit themselves to the responsibilities with great purpose and goodwill to provide pupils with positive learning experiences. They foster a positive and supportive relationship with pupils and their parents and this is an excellent feature. They work creatively to try to provide curricular experiences that are of interest to pupils and work purposefully with a wide range of relevant external agencies. This includes Careers Wales officers, youth workers, school nurses and police officers to support pupils and plan carefully for the next steps in their life. Suitable provision is offered, under the guidance of the subject teachers at the commissioning schools, for pupils to continue with their examination courses in Welsh, English, mathematics and some elements of science and a few other subjects or areas. Nearly all pupils in Year 11 sit a GCSE or other suitable qualification in the core subjects and a very few other subjects.

The social, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils who attend the individual hubs vary. As a result, tailoring provision to meet the specific needs of individual pupils within these hubs is challenging. Staff strive to create an appropriate supportive environment for learning and to support pupils to thrive emotionally at the hubs. However, there is too much variation in the suitability of the accommodation and the range of learning resources in the hubs to provide specialist education that supports the well-being and behaviour of vulnerable pupils.

Although a range of relevant officers are part of the initial arrangements for placing pupils in the hubs, there is insufficient contact between them and the hub managers to support their work and provide them with the necessary guidance. This includes inconsistency in monitoring, quality assurance and risk assessment arrangements. As a result, senior officers in Gwynedd education services do not have a strategic overview of the outcomes or the nature or quality of provision at the hubs.

### **How effective is the authority's Welsh language provision in terms of meeting the needs of learners and in terms of realising the WG vision of a million Welsh speakers by 2050?**

The authority has a clear vision in terms of ensuring access to Welsh-medium education for pupils and young people in Gwynedd throughout their time in education. This is based on establishing a 'Welsh and bilingual education system which puts the needs of all of our learners at the heart of our provision'. Gwynedd's Welsh Language Policy, along with a range of other relevant policies, is a cornerstone of all of the authority's work and ensures opportunities for pupils and

young people to be confident bilingual learners. For example, the priorities of the 'Gwynedd Gymraeg' plan and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) reflect suitable key aspirations and targets over the medium and long term.

The Education Welsh Language Forum meets on a termly basis to monitor progress against the priorities and targets in the WESP and plan for improvement. This helps to ensure that leaders in the education department and elected members have a sound understanding of the priorities. The WESP sets a clear direction for developing the Welsh language across all sectors, which includes providing more opportunities for pupils and young people to learn and use the language confidently and as a normal part of everyday life. The plan identifies appropriate targets for this, which includes identifying challenges for the future. For example, it identifies the need to maintain and develop the Welsh language skills of the workforce by collaborating with a variety of strategic partners and external agencies.

The authority has a good working relationship with external agencies and umbrella organisations such as Mudiad Meithrin. They work together to promote the Welsh language in the early years by ensuring access to education and care. 'Gwynedd Yfory' projects state the importance of working with stakeholders to ensure that best start for all children in the county. For example, the authority has established Welsh-medium Flying Start centres in specific areas to support children and families. Successful co-operation with partners helps to ensure that nearly all children who attend non-maintained settings transfer to Welsh-medium education in schools.

Leaders and officers prioritise developing the Welsh language by investing in improving learning facilities. For example, they use the Gwynedd Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme to invest in new school buildings to provide early education and childcare through the medium of Welsh. They also use Welsh Government capital grants effectively to improve the quality of the Welsh language immersion centre buildings, in addition to building new settings to support primary and secondary pupils who are newcomers to the Welsh language. This also reduces the distance between pupils' homes and these centres and provides them with a good range of resources and facilities.

Fairly recently, the authority revised its Immersion Education system to ensure that the language policy is inclusive and supports latecomers, including pupils who have English as an additional language, to acquire the Welsh language. Under the purposeful guidance of new leaders, the service offers beneficial provision for primary and secondary pupils in six settings across the authority. The intensive ten-week course supports pupils to acquire beneficial linguistic skills that enable them to join their peers in their local schools and use the language formally and informally within their communities. The service also provides useful support and guidance for teachers and teaching assistants to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. For example, it has trained nearly all teachers and teaching assistants who work in foundation learning classes on good practice in terms of immersion methods.

A very positive element of the Gwynedd Immersion Education System's work is the effective use of digital technology to enrich pupils' experiences and motivate them to learn Welsh in a fun way.

### **Cameo – Using digital technology to encourage use of the Welsh language**

Leaders and teachers are working with a local commercial company to create an innovative virtual resource based on their new Welsh language immersion scheme. The scheme is based on the imaginary village of Aberwla and the virtual equipment provides an excellent experience for pupils to practise language patterns and vocabulary. They also make effective use of promoting the benefits of learning Welsh and share good practice through dedicated podcasts, for example by interviewing former pupils from language centres and their families to share their experiences of learning the language.

A clear priority is given to ensuring that provision and services for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and their families are available through the medium of Welsh. All members of staff within the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service are fluent Welsh speakers and are able to provide bilingually. The authority also works effectively with other agencies, such as the Local Health Board, to ensure that specialist support is available in Welsh to meet the needs of ALN pupils and their families.

The use of the Welsh language in informal situations in primary and secondary schools is encouraged appropriately through Welsh Language Charter activities. This contributes to improving pupils' Welsh language skills and Welshness, in addition to supporting cooperation between primary and secondary schools. The regional project, 'Ein Llais Ni', in cooperation with external partners such as Bangor University, helps to develop skills in teaching and learning oracy skills.

Schools provide many GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh and a large number of pupils sit an examination in GCSE Welsh first language. This reflects the authority's vision and policy to develop pupils who are fully bilingual and promotes the advantages of studying through the medium of Welsh.

The authority has robust procedures to identify the linguistic skills of the workforce. This ensures that it identifies training needs and provides support as necessary. The partnership between the authority and other stakeholders, such as Bangor University and GwE, supports this work by providing specific courses for the full range of staff including teachers, learning assistants and administrative and catering staff.

### **Leadership and management**

The authority's leaders have a clear vision for education in Gwynedd, with the aim of ensuring the best possible start for the county's children and young people. This vision includes a firm focus on ensuring that children and young people have equal access to education through the medium of Welsh.

The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Education are keen to mitigate the effects of poverty and promote equality in terms of access to education. This is highlighted clearly in the Council's Plan (2023-2028) with priorities which, for example, focus on reducing the cost of sending children to school, extending opportunities for children and young people to play and socialise and expanding the

availability of free school meals for pupils. Leaders are also trying to promote young people's access to post-16 education. For example, after considering the views of young people, the authority ensured travel passes for them so that they could reasonably reach their places of learning.

The Chief Executive believes strongly in the principle of continuous improvement. He has been central to the work of establishing a culture and ways of working that place residents at the heart of the authority's work, namely 'Ffordd Gwynedd'. The vision of 'Ffordd Gwynedd' has been shared effectively with the authority's officers and they strive to uphold 'Ffordd Gwynedd' in all aspects of their work. The Chief Executive promotes and maintains an effective working relationship with officers and staff across the authority and holds regular sessions to welcome their views and listen to their ideas. He also has a beneficial overview of the strengths and areas for improvement in different aspects of the Council's work and has established clear purposes for the work of departments and teams across the authority. Through this, he gives a clear direction to the work of leaders, teams and individuals within the education service.

The Head of Education and other leaders, such as the assistant heads, understand their roles and are aware of what they are aiming for in order to achieve their specific purposes within the education service. They set high expectations for their teams, by modelling and promoting professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to supporting schools and facilitate effective co-operation with other providers and partners. Stakeholders, such as school headteachers and relevant external partners, appreciate the open communication between leaders and officers of the education service. They appreciate the fact that they listen to their ideas and opinions, for example in different forums.

The authority continues to strengthen the alignment between the education service's plans and the revised Council Plan. The alignment is not currently wholly coherent. For example, there is a clear priority in the Council Plan in terms of mitigating the effects of poverty, but the authority does not monitor the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Plans with partners, such as the regional school improvement service, are sound and support Gwynedd's ambition for education of the highest standard for its learners.

When planning for improvement, the authority's leaders weigh up the strengths and areas for improvement and identify clear 'purposes' for the education service's main areas of work. These purposes focus partly on the council's corporate priorities and partly on the normal activities of the education service. Metrics that accompany these are set sensibly, on the whole, and reflect the most important areas for improvement, although not all are incisive enough or focus clearly enough on learners' outcomes, where applicable. In some improvement plans, there are productive strategic actions to address priorities, for example as within the school modernisation programme, but they are less prominent in other improvement plans and areas. Leaders have recently provided additional resources in a timely manner to meet the needs of learners in a few areas, for example ALN and the Welsh language. However, the focus on improving learner attendance outcomes across Gwynedd is not firm enough.

On the whole, the authority has a strong track record of implementing beneficial strategies that have a positive influence on learners and improve provision for them. The digital strategies of the education services are a good example of an improvement that resulted from officers responding purposefully to the voice of school practitioners and leaders. The Council has planned purposefully and thoroughly to introduce modern school facilities in Bangor and Bala. There is also successful strategic planning to maintain and extend immersion provision to promote the Welsh language across Gwynedd. Recently, the education service has planned purposefully to agree on intervention thresholds with the regional school improvement service. Leaders have also thought flexibly to offer solutions to challenging situations within the authority. For example, the authority is facing recruitment challenges in different areas of the county and has begun to consider how more attractive jobs could be created.

Despite these positive examples of effective strategic planning, leaders have not been strategic enough in approaching all aspects of their work. They have not been strategic enough in ensuring consistency in provision to meet the needs of learners with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties or ensured sufficient supervision or oversight of the quality of the existing provision. Although the authority has conducted a number of reviews on suitable post-16 education or training, leaders have not yet set a clear enough strategic direction for transforming this provision. In addition, leaders have not resumed the work of promoting and monitoring better attendance in schools purposefully enough.

The authority has recently reinforced its systems for monitoring and challenging performance, by setting firm principles within its self-evaluation system. For example, there are valuable sessions for ensuring timely progress, which include the Cabinet Member. A healthy culture of challenging performance is developing and beginning to lead to further action.

The Council considers risks regularly. Risk assessments cover detailed considerations across a number of services in the education department. Overall, leaders mitigate risks promptly and sensibly. However, the department has not tackled some risks relating to the well-being and success of learners wholly successfully.

Within its work programme, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee considers a range of relevant issues that face the education service, such as the developments of the new curriculum and the strategy to promote the Welsh language. Joint planning between the Cabinet and the scrutiny committees to co-ordinate work programmes that support decisions is now improving. There is a productive relationship between the authority's leaders and officers and the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the information that is prepared and shared with the committee is now more manageable and clearer. However, the scrutiny committee's consideration of the work of the projects within the Council Plan is currently limited.

The Council has consistent procedures and policies for managing staff performance internally. These include the principle of personal responsibility on individuals to develop professionally in a supportive environment. The Council provides a good range of internal training, internal secondments and opportunities to benefit from



leadership development offers and coaching and mentoring programmes from Academi Wales. The authority has introduced a valuable training offer to develop the workforce in relation to Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The regional school improvement service provides well for the professional development of practitioners and leaders in Gwynedd's schools.

The head of education and his senior management team undertake their statutory role to protect and safeguard children robustly and effectively and relevant leaders at all levels understand their roles and responsibilities. There is a robust procedure for strategic and operational meetings in relation to safeguarding issues. The representation of the education services in these processes and as part of the Corporate Parenting Panel is consistent and influential. Leaders at all levels have developed a mutual understanding with corresponding officers in children's services. As a result, they work together intelligently and productively for the benefit of the authority's children.

The corporate safeguarding policy is appropriate and the Education Services department provides a beneficial standardised safeguarding policy for schools, together with a large number of other relevant policies and guidelines. Clear guidance and valuable and beneficial support are given to headteachers and designated persons in schools by relevant officers, such as the designated safeguarding officer for education. Training arrangements for school staff at all levels, including governors, are robust. School headteachers welcome recent developments where the designated officer visits to check the quality and challenge the safeguarding arrangements of their schools. This has had a positive effect on strengthening the culture of safeguarding across schools in Gwynedd.

The quality of implementation of Section 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, when there are allegations against professional staff, is extremely robust and very thorough. The support and challenge given to schools by other departments in the authority on safeguarding and health and safety issues is valuable and effective. This includes clear guidance from the property and personnel departments on specific issues and risk assessments. However, the authority has not considered risk carefully enough for the inclusion hubs. Safe recruitment arrangements are robust and consistent.

The authority has a good understanding of the financial situation within the education service and officers are aware of the financial risks. The Council has a clear understanding of budgetary challenges but is not using the information sufficiently well to guide the use of its resources in the medium and long term. The local authority does not make full use of comparative data to compare the costs of its education services with other authorities.

The authority has funded the salary settlements of school staff in full, except in 2022-23, when electricity costs and the salaries of support and administrative staff were higher than expected when the budget was initially set. These additional costs were funded from school balances.

In the past, school budgets were protected from cuts compared with other services within the authority, but due to the current financial challenges, schools have been

asked to make a total of £1.966 million in savings during 2023-24 and 2024-25, which corresponds to 2.25% of the annual budget.

The net education budget per pupil was in the highest quartile of authorities in Wales in 2020/21, which is the last year for which data is available. In the same year, the budget per pupil in special schools was in the lowest quartile in Wales. Despite the Council's expenditure being above the Standard Expenditure Assessment, the budgeting of the education services was slightly below the baseline assessment for the education service.

School balances, as in other authorities, increased significantly from £4.3 million in 2019-20 to £16.7 million at the end of 2021-22. Four point eight million pounds (£4.8 million) of balances were used in 2022-23, reducing the balances to £11.9 million. At the end of 2022-23, three of the 96 schools have a deficit in their financial balances compared with the situation in the previous year, when all of the authority's schools had a surplus. Plans are underway to review and respond to the deficit. The authority has arrangements to accept plans from schools for using the surplus balances and recovering deficits.

The authority provides good support for the management and financial planning of schools and schools are positive about the support given. The School Finance Forum considers relevant issues, including setting the authority's annual budget. However, the forum has not discussed funding formulae recently and these have not been reviewed comprehensively since 2014. The authority has a range of service level agreements and, overall, a large number of schools take advantage of these. Service level agreements and contracts are reviewed periodically.

## **Appendix 1 – Cyngor Gwynedd case study**

### **Cyngor Gwynedd's work in developing Welsh medium resources for pupils with additional education needs and their families, and for language immersion.**

#### **Information about the Local Education Authority**

Gwynedd Local Education Authority has a clear vision in the context of Welsh-medium education for learners throughout their time in education. Gwynedd's Welsh Language Policy aims to develop confident bilingual learners and citizens. In Gwynedd, the Welsh language belongs to everyone, and the policy sets a direction and clear accountability for all schools.

Cyngor Gwynedd's Education Department is committed to contributing to national strategies and legislation in terms of promoting and increasing the use of the Welsh language. To this end, the department has prepared and introduced a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, which outlines the vision for Welsh-medium education within the authority over the next ten years. In line with the statutory requirement, under section 44 of the Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011, the Council has produced and published county-wide strategies which outline how they will contribute to the national aim set in the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy, Cymraeg 2050, to increase the number of Welsh speakers across Wales and increase the opportunities for people to use the Welsh language on a daily basis. Gwynedd's county-wide Welsh Language Strategy (Welsh Language Promotion Plan for Gwynedd 2018-23) sets the commitment and vision for the whole county, and the work of the Education Department and the aims of the WESP contribute to the objectives of that county-wide strategy.

#### **Developing Welsh-medium resources for learners with additional learning needs and inclusion**

The Authority in partnership with Cyngor Ynys Môn have invested in a central Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (ALN&I) service. This service is available to all education providers within the county to provide support and advice for learners with ALN&I needs or to prevent these needs from developing. This is by providing resources, training and direct input for schools and learners.

The ALN&I service provides a fully bilingual service, with all members of staff within the service being able to provide through the medium of Welsh. The need for provision through the medium of Welsh is emphasised within the recruitment process.

Developing resources through the medium of Welsh is an integral part of this work and the training provided by the team is available through the medium of Welsh. There is a wide range of appropriate resources that are developed continuously to correspond to the identified need and to align with the provision that is offered. This includes areas of behaviour, well-being and mental health support, specific learning needs (literacy and numeracy), communication and interaction, and sensory, medical and physical needs. A specific website has been set up to be used by parents and

carers, and a specific website for school staff which enables them to download resources, in addition to an online classroom for specific learning needs resources. Everything on the website is available bilingually: [www.adyach.cymru](http://www.adyach.cymru). The online Individual Development Plan is also fully bilingual so that it can be completed in the family's preferred language.

The above means that ALN&I provision aligns with the ethos and teaching provision within the county and promotes learners' skills and bilingualism from the outset. It also means that parents and carers can contribute to their children's person-centred discussions through the medium of Welsh or English with staff who are able to speak both languages.

### **The immersion education system**

In order for the authority's Welsh language policy to be inclusive, a specialist service is provided within the county, namely the Immersion Education System. Since being established in its new form in January 2023, there are six strategic settings across the county, which provide a service for latecomers to acquire the Welsh language.

To ensure modern and up-to-date opportunities for learners to practise vocabulary and language patterns in our immersion centres, staff at the Immersion Education System have worked with Anni Llŷn and Animated Technologies to create an innovative virtual village. This project has been developed with Welsh Government revenue grant funding. This new scheme is based on an imaginary village called Aberwla and it incorporates specific language patterns within the language continuum in the Curriculum for Wales. It is a scheme that is relevant to the twenty-first century and reflects modern day Wales. The project enables latecomers to step into Aberwla on a virtual platform to practise language patterns in various locations around the village. On this digital platform, learners are given an opportunity to play games with each other e.g., when filling their basket in the supermarket or by reading instructions and following a shopping list. They also meet different characters and creatures from the usual at Tyddyn Swnllyd Farm and stay at the Glamping Ground for a couple of nights. They can also spend time at the leisure centre, the museum or help Ceri the mechanic at the garage. It is also possible to borrow a drone from the gadget shop to fly above the village to practise command patterns and directions e.g., right and left, forwards and backwards.

Welsh Government officials are very keen for Gwynedd to share this resource nationally and have released funding to facilitate this. The local authority is proud of the opportunity to share the resource for the benefit of learners and to support the Government's aim in Cymraeg 2050 across Wales. All authorities in Wales are welcome to use the resource by contacting [canolfaniaith@gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:canolfaniaith@gwynedd.llyw.cymru)

Multimedia resources to reinforce language patterns and vocabulary are valuable, particularly virtual digital resources that appeal to children and young people. This resource is a means to reinforce the skills necessary to enable learners to use the Welsh language in a formal and informal context.

What is becoming clear is the interest learners have in the resource. It is very appealing to latecomers from primary to secondary schools. The virtual element is a means of enabling learners to immerse themselves in the activity and, when they

step onto the platform, they are happy to try to communicate through the medium of Welsh. The element of fun and enjoyment attached to the resource certainly has a positive influence on their development and is a means of normalising the Welsh language and making it contemporary in the virtual and digital arena.

Another innovative resource that is worth sharing nationally in the context of Welsh-medium education is the podcast 'Am filiwn', which deals with aspects of the world of a teacher that leads to increasing and developing pupils to become Welsh speakers and aims to create a million Welsh speakers. This podcast goes under the skin of immersion education and what happens in our language centres within our Immersion Education System. In the podcast, some learners and their parents share their experiences of attending the Welsh language immersion units in Gwynedd to learn Welsh. In addition, an experienced teacher also talks about the main immersion principles that have proved successful within the Immersion Education System in Gwynedd. This is a valuable resource for students following a teacher training course, for newly qualified teachers or for teachers at the beginning of their career to raise awareness and learn about effective immersion principles and strategies. The Am Filiwn Podcast ([ypod.cymru](http://ypod.cymru)) was developed in a series of podcasts for ITE, Bangor University in collaboration with Initial Teacher Education institutions in Wales, sponsored by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

## Evidence base of the report

Before the inspection, inspectors:

- consulted the local authority on the local inspection questions to be used during the inspection, based on the authority's self-evaluation, strategic plans and relevant data held by Estyn
- analysed the outcomes from open questionnaires, including the views of learners, parents, school staff and governors, local authority staff, regional consortium staff, elected members and general public
- carried out a preliminary visit to the local authority to meet with a range of relevant partners to education services, such as learner representatives, headteachers and governors, and leaders from statutory and third sector agencies working with children and young people

During the inspection, inspectors:

- met with the leader of the council, elected members responsible for education services, elected members responsible for the scrutiny of education services, the chief executive, the director of education, other leaders and managers in education services, other relevant staff in the local authority, the managing director of the regional consortium for school improvement and other relevant staff from the regional consortium
- looked closely at the local authority's self-evaluation processes
- considered the local authority's strategic and operational plans for improvement
- scrutinised a variety of documents, including information on learner outcomes, information on the performance of schools and other education settings, including information from the regional consortium for school improvement, minutes from a range of meetings, reports presented to council or scrutiny, information relating to the safeguarding of learners and other information relevant to the local authority's education services held by Estyn

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- reviewed the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, standardise and ensure the quality of the inspection
- provided a draft copy of the report for the local authority to note any concerns with factual accuracy, and made amendments where necessary

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the local authority and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

The report was produced in accordance with Section 38 of the Education Act 1997, the Children Act 2004 and the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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Publication date:20/09/2023

## Report to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

<b>MEETING</b>	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
<b>DATE</b>	09/11/23
<b>TITLE</b>	Byw'n Iach
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Amanda Davies (Byw'n Iach.cyf) / Sioned E Williams
<b>CABINET MEMBER</b>	Cllr Nia Jeffreys

### **1.0 Title of Item: Update on the Performance of Byw'n Iach Cyf. Company Contract**

#### **2.0 Why does it need to be scrutinised? :**

The period of the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the income of Byw'n Iach centres, which are run by the company.

The matter is included on the risk register because of the risk that Byw'n Iach might fail to continue to provide services in Gwynedd leisure centres, due to the impact of Covid-19 and the increase in the cost of living, on their income.

#### **3.0 What exactly requires scrutiny?**

- Is the company delivering services in accordance with the contract?
- Is Cyngor Gwynedd's contribution adequate considering the change in circumstances?
- What steps are taken to try to increase income?

#### **4.0 What is the background and the relevant contract management arrangements?**

4.1 On 1 April 2019 the responsibilities for providing leisure services in the 12 Cyngor Gwynedd Leisure Centres were transferred to Byw'n Iach Cyf. Byw'n Iach is a company limited by guarantee, in the ownership of Cyngor Gwynedd which ensures that it always operates for the benefit of the county's residents.

4.2 The general contract requirements for Byw'n Iach Cyf is to provide:

- A varied programme of leisure, sport and community activities that is accessible to all, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups
- Consistently provide high-quality customer experiences and customer care.



- Ensure effective cooperation between stakeholders and partners across the sports and physical activity sector in the County
- Support the development of activities and promote participation by community organisations, clubs / groups and schools
- Continuously review and enhance the range and scope of the provision, always being aware of customers' needs and increasing visitor numbers and customer satisfaction, especially among the hardest to reach.
- Sustain high levels of hygiene throughout the properties.
- Market and promote the Service, the Building and activities in an accessible, attractive and professional manner which also targets those least likely to participate in sport, with the aim of increasing participation and user numbers
- Encourage more Gwynedd residents to take part in physical activity, sport and cultural activities, especially those residents with greater health needs.
- Subject to the leasing conditions, maintain the quality of the properties.
- Work continuously to improve efficiency in service provision, reduce the cost of the service to the Council, and aim to reduce the current contractual sum.
- Seek opportunities for grant funding to support business development and continuously improve services.
- Provide qualified fitness staff that are sufficient to ensure compliance with all aspects of the contract at all times.

It is also an expectation of the contract that Byw'n Iach Cyf. demonstrates in its Business Plan how it contributes to the Council's Strategic Vision as included in the Gwynedd Plan for 2018-2023. The vision is to:

- 'support all the people of Gwynedd to thrive and live full lives in their community, in a county which is one of the best counties to live in.'
- putting the welfare of Gwynedd citizens at the forefront of all its activities
- commit to the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in order to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Gwynedd communities.
- ensure that Gwynedd citizens can "enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives."
- The Council's vision for its leisure centres and agreed programmes is to "Collaborate with partners locally, regionally and nationally in order to inspire, support and enable Gwynedd residents to be active and live healthy lives."

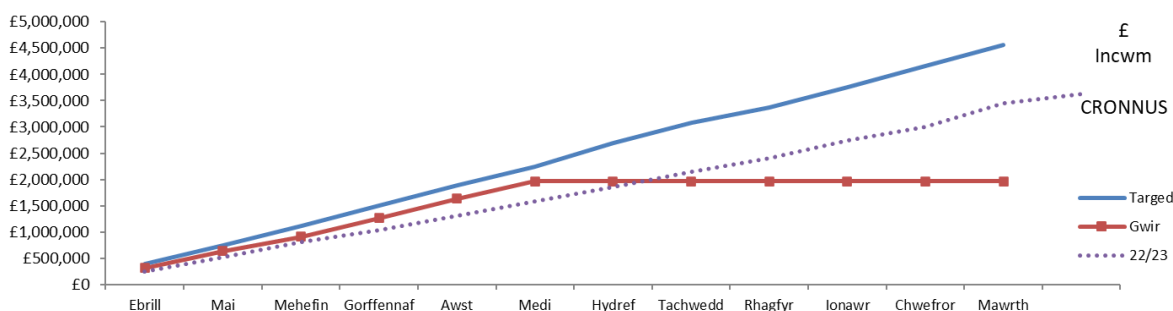
4.3 In each financial year, and as part of the annual report noted in Part 3 of Schedule 5 of the contract, Cyngor Gwynedd will hold monitoring meetings to see whether the objectives of the Approved Business Plan and the overall contract requirements are delivered.

## 5.0 The Company's Recent Performance

5.1 At the beginning of the current financial year, Cyngor Gwynedd agreed to provide additional financial support to Byw'n Iach Cyf. at a level that exceeded the Contractual Sum. This commitment was made based on the company's Business Plan, which illustrated a best-case scenario of a £437k deficit, a medium case scenario of a £655k deficit and a worst case scenario of £873k deficit. The Business Plan illustrated a best-case scenario for 24/25 with a deficit of £0. The commitment of additional support was crucial, as it formed the basis of the Company's External Auditors reporting that the company was legally trading.


5.2 Cwmni Byw'n Iach's Quarter 2 Monitoring Report explains that the performance has been positive since the beginning of the year and exceeds what had been outlined as the best scenario in the Business Plan which was presented to the Council back in February 2023. As a general indicator, by the end of quarter 2 of this year there were 434,000 visits to the centres, which is an increase of 45,000 compared to quarter 2 last year. We now estimate a deficit of £346k at the end of the year compared with £551k at the end of 22/23. The projected deficit is approximately £90k better than what was included as the best scenario in the Business Plan. This is also an improvement of £30k compared to the Quarter 1 Monitoring Report.

The graph below illustrates the income from the centres this year compared to the target and the 22/23 performance.



5.3 The income has regrown faster in some fields than others. Swimming in general is a sector that has seen a strong recovery and work has been carried out across the county to increase the level of income from swimming lessons to its highest level ever. Currently, the number of children receiving swimming lessons is 16% higher than the pre-Covid level. This has been possible due to the high level of demand that has resulted from the Covid years as well as significant efforts by the company to recruit and train new swimming instructors.

5.4 Fitness income continues to increase year on year, and follows the sector's usual seasonal pattern. The membership level is now at 86% of the pre-Covid level (compared to 75% this time last year). When the centres were closed in March 2020, the level of Direct Debit membership was at an all-time high and had risen due to a significant investment in new equipment. That level had been reached as a result of annual growth over a decade. The pandemic led to the end of regular payments and provided an opportunity for members to decide whether they wanted to remain members immediately upon re-opening. A percentage of the population was naturally concerned at that point and decided to suspend their



contracts, at least temporarily. Therefore, it is natural to expect that it will take some years to rebuild this element of the business, taking advantage of the usual "uplift" that happens each Spring. The recent performance is even more positive in light of the fact that the latent demand in the county has reduced by 668 customers in the period since before Covid and this year. This is based on a series of factors including demographic changes and the number of competitors.

5.5 The Company has prioritised growth and the income recovery processes in their Business Plans over the past two years. Here are examples of some of the "Improvements" that have been delivered in order to achieve this:

- Re-designing the programmes of the Wet Centres in order to extend the programme of swimming lessons and introduce additional classes.
- Recruitment and training of 80 new swimming instructors
- Recruitment and training of over 30 new fitness instructors and upskilling a further 31
- Appointment of a Fitness Coordinator to specifically focus on increasing the fitness income
- A series of successful marketing and communication campaigns to promote membership e.g., 12 Days of fitness and 12 Days of Summer, Introduce a Friend scheme, Holiday Fitness etc.
- Recruited 24 new employers to the Corporate Scheme (compared to 8 pre-Covid)
- Creation of a new Personal Training Offer
- Attracting grants to improve users' experiences e.g., create a new fitness studio at Plas Ffrancon and a new weightlifting room in Bro Dysynni, and improve the changing spaces for disabled people and families in several centres.
- Attracting grants to increase capacity e.g., re-design the changing rooms in Bangor
- Launch of the Join@Home offer in order to facilitate the membership process
- Development of a new App and growth of the community through various social media e.g., over 11k followers on FB (the largest number of followers amongst north Wales leisure providers)
- Collaboration with Alliance Leisure, to prioritise schemes to create additional income streams (bids for funding have been submitted for developmental work)

## 6.0 Challenges and Investment Needs to Support Recovery

6.1 The Company continues to work hard to recover, but it is also important to note that many challenges remain, including the cost-of-living crisis. This puts pressure on the ability of local residents to spend on non-essential services, such as leisure. The growth that has taken place so far has come about during an extremely challenging period for households and the sector.

6.2 Wage inflation in the public sector and beyond is an additional challenge. Traditionally the Company / Service has increased fees to close the gap for wage inflation. Since establishing the company, the method of dealing with wage inflation has been different, which is inevitable because of the nature of an arms-

length body compared to a service within the Council. The Council service budgets receive annual increases to address the inflation affecting wages, but the arrangements with the company are different as a specific decision needs to be made by the company regarding salary scales. Estimating inflation on wages is an essential part of the budgetary process in order to reflect the budgetary situation and to identify the financial gap. If it remained as an internal service, steps would have to be taken to address the gap, as Council services have already done. In accordance with the contract between Cyngor Gwynedd and Byw'n lach, Byw'n lach has no automatic right to inflation, and the company must make a request for this as part of the annual business planning procedure, as the rate of inflation was far lower when the contract was established. A Bid (worth £49,170) for this purpose has been submitted this year. Although it will provide support in relation to the challenge of fees inflation, it will not be sufficient to close the gap entirely. If this bid is successful, we anticipate the need to increase fees by around 7.5%. Increasing fees at any level will pose an additional challenge in relation to our ability to serve all the county's residents, especially those on low incomes. Any significant increase in fees carries the risk of stifling or preventing the growth process that is crucial to recovery.

6.3 An additional challenge is the age and condition of the fitness equipment. A recent internal review has identified numerous examples of equipment in poor condition. It appears that the intense cleaning processes during the Covid period accelerated the deterioration of the equipment, due to the use of more powerful cleaning chemicals than usual. Under the terms of the contract, Cyngor Gwynedd is responsible for renewing the main sports and fitness equipment in the centres. A request has been submitted to include an investment of £1 million to renew the fitness equipment in the centres in the Council's next Asset Management Plan. This investment is crucial in order to maintain future income and growth. This year's Customer Satisfaction reviews have shown progress in all areas, but there is an obvious pattern, with the highest levels of satisfaction relating to staff, and the lowest levels relating to the equipment and facilities.

6.4 It is also important to note that inflation is not included in the main grants which are transferred to the company, in order to target people who require additional support to be active e.g., the Exercise Referral Programme. Recently, the new Sports Wales funding model has suggested that Gwynedd (unlike the other north Wales counties), may see a significant decrease in its grant to deliver the North Wales Actif strategy This could lead to a decrease in the service levels that can be targeted towards areas such as deprivation, disability and other inequalities.

The following bids, submitted to the Council this year, involve supporting the recovery of the companies and compliance with health and safety and data matters.

Title	Value	Observations
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Bid for CPI on the Contract Sum	£49,170	Permanent bid to contribute to the higher level of inflation in wages. Could contribute to restricting the fee increase by 1% (e.g., an increase of approximately 7.5% instead of 8.5%)
CCTV System Bid	£72,000	One-off bid to install a new CCTV system across all the company's sites. The current system is deficient and carries a risk of failing to comply with health and safety, insurance and data management requirements.

## 7.0 Recommendation

7.1 The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee is invited to scrutinise the arrangements of Cyngor Gwynedd and Cwmni Byw'n Iach to provide leisure services in Gwynedd.

## Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee Report

<b>Date of meeting:</b>	9 November 2023
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Nia Jeffreys
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	Llŷr B Jones, Assistant Head, Economy and Community Department Bryn Prichard-Jones, Maritime Service Manager
<b>Department / Service:</b>	Maritime Service, Economy and Community Department

### 1. TITLE OF ITEM

Gwynedd Beach Management

### 2. WHY IT NEEDS TO BE SCRUTINISED

- The matter is included on the Economy and Community Department's risk register. The main risk is people's safety in the sea where there may be dangers to life, together with dangers from structures and objects on the beach.
- The arrangements for the management of beaches, specific management where there is a higher safety risk could be scrutinised.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Beach management in itself is not a statutory function for local authorities in Wales.
- 3.2 Uncertainty about the legal responsibilities of beach management was highlighted in a report to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in 2019 "Review of the legal responsibility for beach safety", which is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-legal-responsibility-for-beach-safety>. The report states that the legal framework for safety on the foreshore is unclear with various duties which are not aligned. The possibility of a legal *lacuna* in terms of responsibilities in the field is also noted, leaving organisations or local authorities with land adjoining the foreshore to operate to a large extent on a moral or social responsibility, rather than a legal requirement.
- 3.3 Nevertheless, Cyngor Gwynedd's beach management arrangements are provided by the Maritime Service, Economy and Community Department. Beach management arrangements and responsibilities can vary according to location, depending on the characteristics and specific factors of the location. There is also a range of other responsibilities involved with land ownership and management issues which mean that the Council has a responsibility towards those using public facilities and land. These main responsibilities include:
- a) Beaches owned by Cyngor Gwynedd: the Council has responsibilities for lands or sites in its ownership or management. By owning land or beach for public use, the Council has an obligation to ensure that the health and safety of beach users is effectively considered and managed, safely assessing and managing risks as far as practicable.

- b) Coastal Lease with Crown Estate: The Council is also responsible for managing a large part of the county's foreshores which are subject to leases with the Crown Estate. Many of the leases have come to the end of their lifetime, but remain on a 'carry-over' arrangement.
- c) Beach Byelaws - Byelaws enable local authorities to respond to concerns or problems on specific beaches. Byelaws are required to be ratified by a Secretary of State, and the main byelaws in Gwynedd include:
- Beach Byelaws prepared by Dwyfor District Council dated 8th January 1990
  - Beach Byelaws prepared by Meirionnydd District Council dated 1st May 1986
  - Promenade (Barmouth and Towyn) Byelaws made by Meirionnydd District Council dated 1st May 1986
  - The Seaside Pleasure Boat Byelaws prepared by Dwyfor District Council dated 28th November 1978 (including the beaches of Morfa Bychan, Cricieth, Abererch, Pwllheli, Llanbedrog, Abersoch, Aberdaron, Porth Oer, Porth Dinllaen, Nefyn, Trefor and Aberdesach.
  - Pwllheli Harbour Byelaws prepared by Dwyfor District Council dated 2nd January 1980
  - Aberdyfi and Barmouth Harbours Byelaws prepared by Meirionnydd District Council dated November 1986

Gwynedd Council is responsible for implementing and managing the above Byelaws.

ch) Bathing Water Direction - Detailed information on the quality and profile of bathing water is required to be publicly available at all designated bathing water sites. Each local authority that manages bathing waters must display the bathing waters classification given to it by Natural Resources Wales. In some sites it is also required that the Council provide information to warn users if poor bathing water instability is anticipated.

- d) Protection of Public Places (Control of Dogs) Order - The Public Space Protection Order 2021 relates to:
- Failing to clear or pick up dog faeces (Land fouling by dogs Order)
  - Permitting a dog to enter land from which dogs are excluded (Dog prohibition order)
  - Failing to put a dog on a lead, and keep a dog on a lead when the person is asked to do so by an authorised officer (Dogs on Lead by Direction Order).

The chief officers of the Maritime Service are authorised to issue penalty fines to offenders.

#### 4. BEACH MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN GWYNEDD

- 4.1 The Gwynedd coast is the longest among local authorities in Wales, and has a number and variety of beaches. The coastline is a dynamic environment that attracts a significant number of users and visitors each year.
- 4.2 Current beach management can be summed up in three main intertwining aspects, which are considered in turn:
- A. Risk Assessments and risk mitigation measures
  - B. Registration and management of activities
  - C. Promoting beach safety and information

**A : Risk Assessments and risk mitigation measures**

- 4.3 The Maritime Service prepares a specific Risk Assessment for each beach under its management or ownership. The Risk Assessments incorporate information on the main features of the beaches, hazard information, type of associated risks, along with relevant and practical measures for mitigating the risks.
- 4.4 When trying to identify and consider arrangements for different types of beaches, there are a number of considerations that influence different aspects of responsibility, the level of risks and the intensity of management measures for specific locations. Examples of factors that vary from location to location include Cyngor Gwynedd's responsibilities for the site (land ownership / management), the number of users visiting the beach; the range of different users and activities on the beach; and access features and launching facilities.
- 4.5 Operational arrangements for beach management are based on risk mitigation measures that have been identified within the Risk Assessments. The Maritime Service will appoint around 40 seasonal beach wardens to assist with the implementation of safety measures and beach management arrangements. The duties of wardens and the range of security measures are very broad, and include:
- Providing advice and information to beach users about local risks and informing them of weather and tidal information.
  - Provision of leaflets, safety signs and noticeboards (safety signs on our beaches are prepared in conjunction with the RNLI)
  - Locating beach buoys on beaches with specific launch areas and prohibited areas or areas where power outages have a speed restriction.
  - Providing a first aid service for minor injuries and calling for assistance from emergency services as required.
  - Supervising vehicle movement and control vehicular access to beaches by locking barriers (if applicable to the location).
  - Conducting regular patrols to supervise activities on the beach.
  - Supervising water activities and enforcing navigation rules by patrolling main beaches with the Service's patrol boat or personal watercrafts.
  - Ensuring beach activities comply with byelaws, or other regulations (including dog prohibition zone)
  - Maintaining and inspecting beach safety equipment (including lifebuoys and emergency phones)
  - Clearing entrances and slipways to ensure accessible access to users



- Carrying out any maintenance as necessary
- 4.6 Beach wardens will also assist with the Service's arrangements for registering activities on the beaches.

**B: Registration and management of activities**

- 4.7 All power boats or personal watercrafts (jet-ski) must be registered with Cyngor Gwynedd before using or crossing a section of the coast owned, or controlled by, Cyngor Gwynedd. Before registering or renewing a permit, applicants must read and sign receipt of 'Vessel / powerboat rules in ports and on the Gwynedd coast'; and confirm that the vessel is insured up to £3 million third party. There is a daily fee for launching from Gwynedd's beaches or public slipways. As an alternative it is possible to purchase an annual launch permit (which includes a registration fee) which allows launching without paying the daily launch fee.
- 4.8 A copy of the Gwynedd vessel / powerboat Rules is included as Appendix 1.
- 4.9 In addition, the Service has established arrangements for the management of activities on the coast including
- Requests for hosting events - Event organisers wishing to use a beach (or part of the coastline) are asked to contact the Maritime Service to consider event requests. The Service will be required to consider safety arrangements and other amenities and users before a land use permit can be released. For events where more than 500 are expected to be in attendance, the Service will strongly encourage organisers to register the event with the Gwynedd Health and Safety Group (SAG).
  - Requests from TV companies to film on beaches - companies are asked to submit such requests to the Maritime Service. Such requests often provide an opportunity to raise the profile of the area but will also require consideration of the safety arrangements and amenity of residents and other users.
  - Beach Cleaning Arrangements - as part of their duties, Beach Officers, including Seasonal Wardens, collect rubbish daily off designated beaches during the main summer season. The Service conducts an annual review with the Municipal Department and agrees the arrangements and cost of the litter bin and recycle bin emptying service provided for the bathing season. The bin emptying period starts on the 1st of April to the 30th of September. Beaches do not receive a cleaning service during the winter months. The service's chief officers are authorised to introduce penalty fines for individuals who fail to dispose of their rubbish or fly-tip.
  - Responding to incidents of pollution - the service has arrangements in hand for responding to pollution. The service has proper provision to respond to suspicious palm oil and container cases, and the service's chief officers have been properly trained to handle such cases. A number of cases arise where the public reports that an animal has died or is on the coast. The service aims to dispose of the body within a reasonable period of time if it is possible to access the animal. The Service also works with specialist organisations to deal with any live animals found injured on a beach.
  - Commercial Concessions – the Maritime Service advertises and invites commercial concession proposals or considers individual applications by consulting on individual applications with the Local Member and the local Community/Town Council. A

concession includes plots of land on a number of beaches. Where appropriate, the tender for the concession will be advertised every 5 years.

- Inclement Weather – the Service responds as required in cases where the weather forecast is extreme. Arrangements are in place to close and erect high tide barriers at several beaches along the coast and arrangements are in place to prevent public access to beaches in the event of a concern for user safety.
- Memorial Benches – the service receives a large number of applications annually for the placement of memorial benches on beaches. A number of agreements are already in place to locate and maintain memorial benches.
- Volunteers - the service works closely with volunteers across the county to carry out beach clean-ups. The Council lends rubbish collection equipment and disposes of all material collected by volunteers.
- Collaborate with outside companies / organisations - The service collaborates with beach owners to mitigate risks. The Service locates speed zone buoys and launch areas on the sites and a fee is charged for this provision.

### **C : Gwynedd Beaches Safety Campaign**

4.10 In recent years, the Council has also developed a dedicated campaign to raise awareness of coastal dangers and promote safe and responsible behaviour.

4.11 The campaign is based on raising awareness of coastal dangers, and include main messages that could reduce a large number of accidents on the Gwynedd coast.

#### ***MAIN MESSAGES***

- ***Prepare and make a plan - look at the weather forecast, tide times and read local signs and warnings***
- ***Keep a close eye on your family - on the beach and in the water***
- ***Do not allow a member of your family to swim or bathe alone***
- ***Do not use inflation equipment without anchoring a safety cord on the shore. Wear a buoyancy aid if you are not a strong swimmer***
- ***Do not swim or venture to the sea if a red flag or any other sign advising against swimming is displayed. Always take notice of local signs and warnings***
- ***In an emergency, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard***

4.12 The Gwynedd Beaches Safety Campaign consists of 4 work packages, namely

- i) Communication and general awareness raising (including social media, press releases, beach wardens in action videos)
- ii) Communicate safety messages at specific sites/beaches (including beach information sheets)
- iii) Tourism messaging / marketing working with the Tourism Unit and sharing coastal safe enjoyment messages via the Snowdonia Mountains and Coast platform)
- iv) Provide information and raise awareness within the business community (including sharing information using networks and connections with local businesses.

4.13 As part of the communication and awareness-raising workstream, the Maritime Service has collaborated with the Corporate Communications Unit on a plan to create coastal characters including a dolphin, starfish and octopus. These characters have bespoke

costumes, and Service staff visit local schools, and arrange beach attendance to promote beach safety among children and families.

## 5. BEACH MANAGEMENT BUDGETS

5.1 In recent years, there have been significant changes in Maritime Service Beach Management budgets. This reflects tremendous pressure on the Council's budgets, and the Service's response to identifying and implementing efficiency savings.

5.2 Table 1 below shows a summary of beach management budgets for the period 2016/7 to 2023/24.

Table 1: Summary of Beach Management Budgets, Maritime Service

	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
Employees	£149,020	£148,140	£157,920	£164,540	£170,250	£175,030	£245,420	£349,760
Property	£40,660	£36,770	£39,400	£40,520	£41,200	£41,770	£43,200	£46,910
Transport	£24,350	£17,800	£17,160	£18,160	£18,580	£18,330	£20,740	£23,460
Supplies	£12,010	£22,820	£34,290	£35,220	£29,460	£29,870	£113,290	£77,480
Internal Refund	£112,260	£112,920	£109,640	£112,630	£115,010	£116,500	£120,560	£129,620
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£338,300</b>	<b>£338,450</b>	<b>£358,410</b>	<b>£371,070</b>	<b>£374,500</b>	<b>£381,500</b>	<b>£543,210</b>	<b>£627,230</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>£200,380</b>	<b>-£210,160</b>	<b>-£216,800</b>	<b>-£280,960</b>	<b>-£325,930</b>	<b>-£326,030</b>	<b>-£470,660</b>	<b>-£580,020</b>
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>£137,920</b>	<b>£128,290</b>	<b>£141,610</b>	<b>£90,110</b>	<b>£48,570</b>	<b>£55,470</b>	<b>£72,550</b>	<b>£47,210</b>

5.3 Key changes during the period include:

- Net budget (the cost to the Council) has reduced from £137,920 in 2016/17 to £47,210 in 2023/24
- The Service's income target has increased from £200,380 in 2016/7 to £580,020 during 2023/24. This has meant increasing fees including registration fees, launch fees and beach entry/parking fees such as Morfa Bychan and Abersoch; and includes beach concessions (such as selling ice cream),
- The budget for employee costs has increased for 2022/23 and 2023/24 due to increased business on the coast. This has meant increasing the number of beach staff and wardens and extending the employment period of seasonal staff.

5.4 It is important to note that despite the increased income generated by the Service, this income is committed to address the budget and the Council's financial strategy; rather than being resources available to the Service.

5.5 Beach management budgets are considered extremely tight, and dependent on meeting a challenging income target. Nevertheless, the Service has sought to identify opportunities to increase income and thereby contribute to reducing net expenditure while protecting onshore provisions and services.

## 6. MANAGEMENT DATA AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

6.1 In recent years the Maritime Service has identified and collects management and performance management data. Data relevant to beach management functions include:

	<b>Data / Measures</b>	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
i	Number of registered Powerboats / Personal Watercraft	1,680	2,434	2,509
ii	Gwynedd Beaches Customer Satisfaction % ('Satisfactory' 'Good' or 'Very good')	-	-	75%
iii	First Aid Incidents	180	197	85
iv	Number of Lost Children	59	95	35
v	Number of serious accidents	4	2	3
vi	Number of fatal accidents	2	0	0
vii	Number of accidents dealt with by staff	41	26	42

6.2 During this year, the Maritime Service put in place arrangements for collecting feedback and comments about the beach management service. QR signs have been installed at locations at each beach where feedback can be submitted about the quality of provision. The information used during the first year is useful and it is intended to build on these arrangements in the future.

6.3 Customer satisfaction percentage for 2023 included Very Good (59%), Good (16%), Satisfactory (12%), Poor (7%), Very Poor (5%) and No response (1%). Positive comments were received about beach wardens, beach safety and in particular effective management of power boats, accessibility, cleanliness and bathing water quality. In terms of comments from users who were not satisfied, it was noted that dogs on beaches were problematic, that there was a lack of litter bin provision at some sites and that the cleanliness quality and condition of some public toilets needed to be improved.

## **7 MAIN OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE**

7.1 Recent years have seen changes in circumstances (including COVID) and an increase in how busy the beaches and coast have been and the service has sought to respond positively to these changes. There is an ambition to seek continuous improvements despite the financial climate currently facing local authorities. The following have been identified as opportunities or issues needing further attention during the period 2023 - 2028:

### a) Crown Foreshore Lease

The majority of foreshore leases across the County are now coming to the end of their period, but remain on a 'carry-over' arrangement. It is considered that there is an

opportunity to review and update the existing agreements and consider a county comprehensive agreement with the Crown Estate

b) Further Development of Beach Safety Campaigns

Important steps have been made over the past two years establishing Gwynedd's beach safety campaign programme. It is considered that there is an opportunity to build on this, extending and developing the campaign over the next few years.

c) Consider the provision of Lifeguards in specific locations

The Council does not currently organise lifeguard provision, and it is hoped that there will be an opportunity to consider future opportunities particularly for locations such as Barmouth and Tywyn. One model could be to commission the RNLI to provide such a service by agreement. Local authorities commissioning the provision will usually pay a fee for doing so, which could be between £20k and £30k per beach (depending on the period covered, hours, number of staff etc). The concept of a Tourism Tax has come up recently, and such an arrangement might be a means of identifying additional budgets to extend existing provision. Here in Gwynedd, a Tourism Group has recently been set up to consider potential opportunities and priorities attached to such a tax.

d) Blue Flag Beach Awards

Blue Flags awards guidance now states that an independent assessment is required to consider lifeguard provision, and in this regard the Council's risk assessments no longer apply.

Recent changes to the Blue Flag Awards guidance have been the subject of discussion with other North West Wales local authorities. Concerns were highlighted that increased requirements were expensive, onerous and contrary to established management arrangements, and therefore it was decided that Cyngor Gwynedd, Anglesey Council and Conwy Council will not submit applications this year. Cyngor Gwynedd has not celebrated Blue Flag Awards in three out of the last four years, and despite that, our beaches have been about as busy as they have ever been. In line with other trends within the visitor economy, we may be paying more attention to raising awareness and promoting safe and responsible coastal behaviour rather than traditional marketing activity.

e) Gwynedd Beach Byelaws

As can be seen from part 2.3 of the report, a large part of Gwynedd's beach Byelaws date back to the 1980s. It is considered that there would be an opportunity for reviewing and updating relevant Byelaws to ensure they are up to date and fit for purpose for managing activities on our beaches. It is envisaged that this would be significant work and would require a dedicated and additional resource for undertaking the task. We have seen an increase in new technology being used on the coast in recent years, such as the use of drones, hovercrafts and hydrofoiling and there is currently no corporate policy in place in terms of managing their use on Council land.

f) Access and Equality

The Service will be undertaking an Equalities Assessment in respect of access to beaches, and consider opportunities to improve and extend facilities. For the 2024 season, we intend to provide specialist wheelchairs at some some beaches and preparatory work being undertaken.

ff) Visitor Economy Plan

Gwynedd beaches attract thousands of users and visitors each year and contributes to economic activity locally. The beaches were identified as important assets in a number of coastal areas during the Our Area 2035 work, and could contribute to new Gwynedd Visitor Economy Plan. It is also hoped that beach facilities could form part of local destination plans

## **8 CLOSE AND RECOMMEDATIONS**

- 8.1 The coast is an important part of life in Gwynedd, and offers important resources for recreational use, supporting the local economy, improving the well-being of Gwynedd residents who have and are contributing to the history, culture and identity of coastal communities.
- 8.2 Gwynedd's coastline stretches approximately 300km and offers resources and facilities that attract thousands of users and visitors each year. 'Beach management' functions are also very complex and extensive, with individual beach characteristics varying from location to location.
- 8.3 Cyngor Gwynedd provides beach management functions via the Maritime Service. The report outlines the main arrangements of the Service, which have been developed to provide public and safe access to beaches and coastal resources, for local residents and visitors thereby facilitating activities to boost the local economy and contribute to the well-being of our communities.
- 8.4 Recommendation
- (i) The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee is invited to scrutinise the beach management arrangement in Gwynedd.

### **APPENDICES:**

Appendix 1: Gwynedd power vessel/powerboat regulations



- 1 Every Powerboat or Personal Watercraft user that uses / crosses Gwynedd Council owned, or managed coastal areas, must register the craft with Gwynedd Council. Craft less than 10hp also need to register.
  - 1.1 To obtain registration, a fee shall be paid, and the owner shall confirm valid insurance to a minimum insurance cover of £3 million Third Party.
  - 1.2 The appropriate registration permits must be displayed in a visible position on the port and starboard side of the craft above the waterline - other registration numbers will not be accepted. Craft not displaying the registration permits will not be authorised to launch.
  - 1.3 Access for Powerboats or Personal Watercraft will not be allowed to any of the Council's harbours or beaches if the owner has not registered with Gwynedd Council or if the registration has been withdrawn.
  - 1.4 Launching fees will be payable at all designated launching areas.
- 2 **Age Requirements:**
  - 2.1 Must be at least 18 years of age to operate a Powerboat or Personal Watercraft.
  - 2.2 Be aged 15 to 17, and possess a R.Y.A. Certificate of Competence for Personal Watercraft, or the RYA Powerboat Level Two Award. The RYA certificate must be available for inspection at all times.
  - 2.3 Be aged 12 to 14, and possess a R.Y.A. Personal Watercraft Certificate of Competence or the RYA Powerboat Level Two Award and operate under direct adult supervision. The definition of "supervision" is such that the adult, as defined in 2.1 above, is present **on board the craft**. The RYA certificate must be available for inspection at all times.
  - 2.4 Under 12 yrs - not permitted to operate a Powerboat or a Personal Watercraft.
- 3 **Speed Restrictions:**
  - 3.1 A wakeless speed shall be maintained within **50 metres** of another Personal Watercraft, boat, dock, swimmer, skier, angler, fishing equipment, or shoreline.
  - 3.2 Gwynedd Council speed restrictions must be complied with in all designated areas. Where there is no specified speed limit, the maximum speed is **4 KNOTS** within 100 metres of the coastline (from the low water mark) and within all harbours.
  - 3.3 Power craft are not permitted within the Craft Exclusion Zones.
  - 3.4 Power driven vessels are prohibited from entering any beach safety zone unless using a designated launch area at the specified speed limit.
- 4 Boating under the influence of alcohol, or drugs is illegal.
- 5 **It is an offence to disturb wildlife.** Vessels navigating coastal waters shall not disturb dolphins, porpoises, sharks or other wildlife.
- 6 Vehicles and boats are brought onto the beach **at the owner's own risk**. Boat owners must ensure that the launching area is suitable for their craft and suitable for the launching vehicle before attempting to launch. It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that the terrain and conditions are suitable for launching and recovering. The requirements and directions of Gwynedd Council officers must be adhered to at all times.
- 7 Vehicles must keep within the **10MPH** speed limit whilst on the beach.
- 8 Trailers must only be parked in the designated trailer parking area. It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure that the trailer and any equipment is securely parked.
- 9 Navigation of power driven vessels in a responsible manner and with due regard to good seamanship is a requirement. **International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea** shall be strictly adhered to at all times.
- 10 The helmsman of the vessel shall ensure that the approved '**Killcord**' is secured to the engine and is secured in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations. No craft should be under way or making way unless the '**Killcord**' is properly secured. The information symbol indicating that a '**Killcord**' be used correctly at all times **shall be** permanently displayed on the console, or a prominent part of the craft at all times.
- 11 Water skiing without an independent observer will not be permitted. The towing of inflatable equipment is not permitted within harbour areas, craft exclusion zones, or within 100 metres of the coastline. A minimum of two people shall be onboard towing vessel at all times.
- 12 Any vessel found displaying imitation permits will be reported to the Police immediately.





# Agenda Item 8

<b>MEETING</b>	EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
<b>DATE</b>	9 November 2023
<b>TITLE</b>	Autism Plan Task and Finish Group
<b>PURPOSE OF THE REPORT</b>	To elect two members to serve on the task and finish group
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Bethan Adams, Scrutiny Advisor

1. Following a presentation and update on the Gwynedd Autism Plan presented to the Care Scrutiny Committee on 20 April 2023, the committee resolved to establish a task and finish group to gain further understanding. It was also resolved to request representatives from the Education Department and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to be present to answer concerns.
2. It was further resolved to invite representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee to be part of the Task and Finish Group, as the work concerns the two committees. The Scrutiny Forum supported the way forward at its meeting on 17 July 2023.
3. The Care Scrutiny Committee adopted a brief for the work at its meeting on 21 September 2023. The brief is included as an appendix to this report.
4. A maximum of 5 members can be part of the task and finish group and in accordance with the Council's Constitution, the membership must include representation from no less than two different political groups.
5. As the work concerns the work areas of two committees, three representatives from the Care Scrutiny Committee are members of the Task Group, and two members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited to become members.
6. An email has been sent to Committee members informing them of the invitation from the Care Scrutiny Committee, with an opportunity for them to express an interest in representing the committee on the Task Group.
7. **The Committee is asked to elect two members to serve on the task and finish group.**

## **TASK AND FINISH GROUP AUTISM PLAN BRIEF**

### What matter is being considered?

An update on the Gwynedd Autism Plan was presented to a meeting of the Care Scrutiny Committee on 20 April 2023. An update was submitted on the ongoing work, including an update on staffing, awareness raising steps, training and working in partnerships. In addition, the Cabinet Members responsible for Children and Adults Services submitted the priorities for the coming six months.

There were responses provided to several issues raised during the committee meeting, but some additional issues arose about the individual's experience when awaiting a diagnosis, frustration in the community regarding diagnosis waiting lists and a lack of clear understanding of the support available in schools following receiving a diagnosis.

The committee decided that they were keen to establish a task and finish group to discuss the matter further and requested that representatives from the Department of Education and the Health Board should be present to answer their concerns. It was also decided to extend an invitation to representatives of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee as the work bridges the work areas of both committees.

The purpose of the work is to ensure an understanding of the implementation of the Gwynedd Autism Plan as a whole, including:

- an understanding of the support available to individuals and their families when awaiting a diagnosis, and whether there are any barriers on the road to a diagnosis and
- following diagnosis, in particular the support available for children within our schools, and whether there are any barriers.

### Actions

- Care Scrutiny Committee to receive the brief and identify three Members to participate. (21/09/2023)
- Invite representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee (two members) to participate. We will correspond with members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee by email following the Care Scrutiny Committee's decision on 21/09, formally confirming membership at the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee meeting on 09/11/2023.
- Hold a meeting for the five members with representatives from the Children, Adults and Education Departments, and a representative from

- the Health Board. (Exact date to be confirmed following a discussion with key partners - anticipated end of 2023/beginning of 2024).
- Report back to the Care Scrutiny Committee - 1 February 2024 (depending on the date of the above meeting).

### Key officers

A meeting will take place with the five members identified to take part in the task and finish group and the following key officers:

<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>KEY OFFICER</b>
Children	Aled Gibbard, Senior Operational Manager
Adults	Helen Fôn Owen, Senior Learning Disabilities Manager
Education	Delyth Gibbard, Senior Communication and Interaction Teacher Dr Einir Peters, Senior Communication and Networking Educational Psychologist
Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	To be confirmed.