



Scrutiny Annual Report 2016-17

SCRUTINY IN GWYNEDD



Geraint Owen, Head of Democratic Services

The purpose of the scrutiny role in Gwynedd is to improve services for Gwynedd residents. The scrutiny members will work with you, Gwynedd residents along with Members of the Cabinet, relevant Officers and other agencies.

Scrutiny makes a difference by keeping the services at arms length by praising them for the work achieved in addition to holding them to account for their performance and challenge them when required.

This is done in various ways including public challenges in formal committees or conducting more intense investigations into specific matters and reporting the recommendations back to the scrutiny committees and the relevant Cabinet Member.

During 2016/17, a review was conducted into the scrutiny arrangements in order to try to improve what we do. As a result of this review, the scrutiny committees' fields of work will change in 2017/18 in order to improve the work balance and ensure appropriate attention to the various fields.

I would like to thank all members of the scrutiny Committees for their hard work over the past year, and especially to the Chairs for leading the work forwards. In addition, I also want to thank everyone who has contributed during the year, your cooperation is appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geraint Owen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Scrutiny Chairs and vice-chairs 2016-17

Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair - Councillor Beth Lawton

Vice-chair - Councillor Eirwyn Williams

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Chair - Councillor Jason Humphreys

Vice-chair - Councillor Roy Owen

Communities Scrutiny Committee

Chair - Councillor Caerwyn Roberts

Vice-chair - Councillor Dilwyn Morgan

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Improving Support Services for Unpaid Carers

Although the Council provides good support to many carers in Gwynedd, the situation is unclear.

Who and What is an Unpaid Carer?

Following conducting a Scrutiny Investigation, the Cabinet Members who are responsible for supporting carers who are children and adults intend to conduct work to better identify Gwynedd's unpaid carers. Regular people like you and me, but special people who ensure that their loved ones, friends and acquaintances are given care and encouragement. The support is sometimes relatively easy yet important, such as taking someone for a walk or shopping. On other occasions, it could be much more intensive such as helping an ill partner throughout the day and night.

How many carers are there in Gwynedd today?

12,433?
1,033?
165?



There is no simple answer to this question! The 2011 Census stated 12,433; the Carers Council list states 1,033 and the Council's RAISE system shows 165 carers.

This is a very difficult task, but a new Welsh Government Act states that the Health Board and the Council must offer an assessment to every carer in Gwynedd.

This is a monumental task as there are many people who care for their loved ones and friends who do not consider themselves as carers.

The first challenge set for the Cabinet Members who are responsible for supporting carers who are Children and Adults was to identify who are these special people that care for people without pay.

£5,820,000

The Value of Unpaid Carers

In addition to providing an essential service, the unpaid carers save a substantial amount of money for Gwynedd Council and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board each year.

One survey conducted by the Carers Council noted that if the Council and the Health Board were to maintain the services provided by the unpaid carers, it would cost an additional £5,820,000 each year.

Another problem is that the cuts in funding enforced upon the Council since 2007, have had a negative impact on the support services for carers and, even though the Council is making short-term financial savings, it is likely that this will lead to greater costs for the Council in the future.

The third challenge set for the Cabinet Members was to discover the additional costs the Council must pay for now and for the coming years by making the cuts.

££££££££££££££££

How can we support the Carers?

After becoming more familiar with the carers, services that are most suitable for carers need to be offered along with the support they need.

A lack of support can have a very negative impact on the health of carers and on their ability to care.

Approximately a 100 volunteer groups and groups of workers employed by the Council along with the Health Board offer various services for carers.

The second challenge set for the Cabinet Member was to learn more about these services to identify which ones work best, and how the Council can



Travelling more independently

Some people who need transportation to use care and support services can receive support from the Council to pay for the transportation.

In order to be fair to everyone (and meet the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014), the Cabinet intends to adjust the Adults, Health and Well-being Transportation Policy by:

- Conducting an assessment of transportation needs as part of the general assessment of the individual's needs;
- Considering four aspects:
 - * Mobility Allowance/Support
 - * Not considering distance as a factor
 - * Not arranging on behalf of residents of residential homes, care homes, extra care housing or those who live with support.
 - * The Assessor to conduct a risk assessment and impose mitigation measures.



Members of the Scrutiny Committee agreed with the above proposals but asked the Cabinet to consult widely on the proposals and to address to the following matters before adopting the new policy:



1 Ensure that taxis and Council buses are used effectively

2 Provide further details in the policy about the Appeals Process

3 Carefully consider the effect of additional costs on the individual

4 Facilitate and coordinate transportation arrangements in every part of Gwynedd

5 Consider whether there are lessons to be learnt from arrangements in other counties

Working with Health at Ysbyty Alltwen



In Ysbyty Alltwen near Porthmadog, officers from Gwynedd Council's care services in the Eifionydd area and health officers from the Betsi Calwaladr University Health Board are working together closely.

They do this in order to provide the best service to the person who's receiving treatment or support be that in the hospital or in the community.

Seven councillors who are members of the Services Scrutiny Committee have been assessing the progress,... here are the main points...

Main Findings

- The collaborative work between the Health Board and the Council is generally very good and between senior officers to an extent, but more commitment is needed at the highest levels.
- There is also room to improve in terms of collaborative working with surgeries and third sector groups.
- Another weakness is that there is no clear way to fully measure how successful the work is but this is currently being addressed.

Main Recommendations

- Improve the understanding and commitment of senior managers at the highest levels.
- Conduct a Customer Satisfaction Survey and Questionnaire with the Users.
- Assess existing measures and set out a baseline and target for each one.
- Maintain a better system to receive and process phone calls.
- Provide a full integrated service between 8.00 in the morning and 8.00 in the evening every day, including weekends.
- Establish one integrated electronic system for the work.
- Establish a procedure of weekly reporting on Residential, Nursing and EMI beds available in each area in Gwynedd.
- Expand the Alltwen Scheme integrated work model across the County at once.

Learning Disabilities in Gwynedd

An inspection to learning disabilities services in Gwynedd was conducted by external Inspectors during February and March 2016. The main focus of the work was to assess how well the Council's arrangements and performance were and to make recommendations for improvement.

The Inspectors' assessment noted many good aspects about the service, such as good collaboration with the Health Board at an operational level, and that the services for the Users were well coordinated on the whole.

The main points that needed attention were: to modernise and draw up a commissioning plan, improve cooperation at a higher strategic level and the need for the Director of Social Services to give urgent attention to officers' roles and responsibilities in regards to quality practice arrangements in terms of protecting vulnerable adults.

The Inspectors presented seven recommendations for the Council to implement.

In September 2016, members of the Scrutiny Committee asked for an update from the Cabinet Member on implementing the recommendations. Here is a summary of

- A new Service Structure was drawn up which came into effect in May 2016 and a Senior Manager was appointed to lead the Service in addition to four new additional senior managers/ practitioners.
- A newsletter was established in August 2016 to improve communication with Service Users
- A Modernising Forum was arranged for October 2016 to improve joint planning with partners and providers.
- There was an intention to establish a Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit soon, including addressing safeguarding the rights of people who are in danger of being deprived of their liberty.
- A procedure was established to ensure that learning disabilities staff receive professional supervision from a Senior Manager.

The Members were happy with the progress as a whole, and the Service was asked to hasten with the work of dealing with the waiting list for assessments.



Returning home from the hospital

How appropriate and effective are the arrangements for discharging patients from Hospital to their home in Gwynedd?

Members of the Services Scrutiny Committee were concerned that the collaboration between the Council's care services, health and the third sector were not working effectively in terms of placing the needs of the patient at the centre as patients leave the hospital and return home or to the community.

Two investigations were conducted by an enthusiastic group of Committee Members by presenting 15 detailed recommendations on how to improve.

The Recommendations were accepted by the Adults, Health and Well-being Cabinet Member and Chair of the Health Board in June 2014 and June 2015. An update was provided by the Cabinet Member and the Health Board's Director for the Western Region in January 2017.

The Cabinet Member and Director were congratulated for succeeding to achieve most of the recommendations including:

- Reviewing the Discharge Protocol with our key partners and collaborate across boundaries when discharging patients from Ysbyty Bronglais to south Meirionnydd.
- Improving communication with the service including short term beds, Llys Cadfan's EMI project, Ffordd Gwynedd Eifionydd, seven day working and 24/7 area nursing.
- Placing the user at the centre by conducting joint assessments in the form of a "What's Important" conversation with Health and the third sector partly.
- Plans to address the shortage of doctors and nurses.

The Cabinet Member and Director were encouraged to continue with the good work and to further address introducing care/nursing homes (dual registration) as soon as possible and to ensure the interests of Welsh speakers while being assessed and receiving treatment and care.



Performance of the education system in Gwynedd

The success and fulfilling the potential of our children is one of the county's most important matters; and during the past year, the Services Scrutiny Committee has addressed this more than once by looking at the Education Service's annual performance and the Summer Examination results. The Committee welcomed some findings and saw that others needed improvement



THINGS TO WELCOME

- ☺ Substantial increase in the main TL2+ indicator (65.9% in the Summer of 2016 compared with 61.1% in the Summer of 2014)
- ☺ A substantial improvement in Key Stage 4 across a range of indicators
- ☺ KS3 results remained firm (in second place this year) especially in the core subject indicator
- ☺ Foundation / Key Stage 2 results were relatively stable and some work is required in terms of thresholds in these ages to identify good practices
- ☺ Increase in learner attendance in secondary and primary including at Key Stage 4
- ☺ Improvement in the performance of Free School Meals pupils and the gap between them and other pupils has reduced

MATTERS REQUIRING ATTENTION

- ☹ Key Stage KS3 / KS4 in the fields of Welsh, English and Mathematics
- ☹ Improve the quality of the provision and standards of achievement in KS5
- ☹ Immediate attention to the Foundation Phase
- ☹ Improve performance in Welsh language at every key stage
- ☹ Continue to improve performance of Free School Meals learners
- ☹ Improve performance of post-16 learners in specific courses



Welsh Education

Gwynedd Council's commitment to the Welsh Language is one of the Council's cornerstones and the success of the Welsh Education Policy is key that, especially in a world where there are so many influences militating against indigenous languages.

During 2015/16, the Services Scrutiny Committee conducted an investigation into Welsh Education within the county to look at its implementation at a grass roots level at individual schools and to what extent the provision helped to promote the use of the Welsh language socially amongst children and young people.

A comprehensive report with 24 detailed recommendations was compiled and accepted by the Cabinet Member, and in 2016/17, the Committee enquired into what progress had been achieved with implementing those recommendations.



The report of Councillor Gareth Thomas, the Cabinet Member, stated that 14 recommendations had been fully implemented and nine partly implemented with one being a matter for the Committee itself.

The committee accepted the thoroughly detailed report by experts in the field who had assessed the situation across the county and made recommendations.

The committee was grateful for the report and approved all recommendations, but concern was expressed about the implications of implementing one recommendation of categorising schools according to the language of the teaching and learning under one category, namely bilingual schools.

This will therefore need attention in 2017/18 and feedback should be given on all the Scr-

The support of GwE

GwE (Regional School Effectiveness & Improvement Service for North Wales) has an important role in assisting the county's schools to improve pupil outcomes.

This was identified at a scrutiny investigation into the standard of education in 2013/14, but concern has been expressed recently about GwE's work.



QUESTIONS AND THE COMMITTEE'S CONCERNS

The Services Scrutiny Committee raised a number of points:-

- Nature and cost of the agreement between the Council and GwE.
- Analysis of the school to school model as there are doubts about its effectiveness.
- Concern that there is too much focus on schools in the red/amber categories and the need to keep an eye on the green schools in case they slip.
- Concern that headteachers and teachers were moving to work for GwE and depriving local schools of staff and as a result impacting on the authority's education standards.

By the end of the year, the Committee had welcomed the fact that an investigation had been conducted into GwE's effectiveness and that there were firm recommendations for improvement under the leadership of our former Head of Education, Arwyn Thomas.

The Members were also glad of the opportunity that was given to them of shadowing GwE officers at some of the county's schools in order to learn more about their work.



Arrangements for supporting schools

The Education Service's front line is at the schools, and that's where its priority lies. However, it must be ensured that firm arrangements are in place to support that work.

During the year, the Services Scrutiny Committee has considered three different things:-

- The need to establish an area office structure to support Schools
- Alternative Models for Leading Schools
- Sufficiency of the Support Service offered by GwE, Cynnal and the Education Authority itself.

AREA OFFICE

The Services Scrutiny Committee had looked at how establishing area offices could re-lease headteachers and other front line staff to concentrate more on the quality of education in the classroom.

Whilst welcoming the model, the committee had observations on the details of the model and concerns about its funding and the danger of creating more bureaucracy.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MODELS

The Scrutiny Committee has looked at the challenge of developing new models to guide schools in the future and has accepted an assessment of up to six different models.

It was agreed that what works best in every local situation must be considered and that local discussions were needed to understand the best solution in those situations.



SUPPORT SERVICES

The Scrutiny Investigation has been actively looking at:-

- If the support service needs to be change, in order to achieve their purpose and be sustainable for the future.
- What other models are available to provide these services?

This work will be completed in 2017/18.

Contacting the Council

Many people need to contact the Council at different times, and the Council also often needs to collect the views of Gwynedd residents.

The Committee looked at three specific elements of 'contacting the Council'. Many people contact the Council by phoning Galw Gwynedd on 01766 xxx000. During the year, a slippage in the phone answering performance was seen.

There was an opportunity to discuss with the service, and it was discovered that they had already responded to the slippage in performance. Members of the Scrutiny Committee agreed that specific steps were being carried out to improve the performance, including developing the self service system (see below) and arrangements to raise staff awareness of phone answering arrangements in the Council's services.



The exciting development of self-service is part of the solution to improving phone answering performance.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

The people of Gwynedd will be able to order and pay for services on-line in the near future.

Members of the scrutiny committee offered ideas for the service and advised that attention should be given to this service when ready.

The members also looked at how the Council consulted with the people of Gwynedd.



Generally, the surveys created by the Council are good. However, the members noticed that too much "Council language" was used, and suggested that the Council should use simple, understandable language.

"look after" - √, "maintain" - x. "other plans" - √, "alternative plans" - x

Council Tax on long term empty homes and second homes

The Scrutiny Committee looked at the benefits and risks of increasing the council tax premium on long term empty homes and second homes before the Cabinet and Council considered the matter.



This was consideration work looking at both sides before presenting the committee's recommendations to the Cabinet Members.

Facts which were considered:

- 4841* second homes in Gwynedd
 - 1411* long term empty homes
- * figures at the time of undertaking the work

Part of the debate for increasing the premium on long term empty homes and second homes was to ensure that empty homes are brought back into use as there is a shortage of affordable homes for young people to buy in Gwynedd.

The possibility of increasing the premium on second homes was discussed which could mean that some may try to change their property to be a 'self-catering' property and avoid paying the tax, although there are specific rules to try to ensure that this does not happen.

Different options were also considered for increasing the premium, by considering options such as increasing 100%, or gradually increasing the premium every year, e.g. increasing the premium 25% every year.

The members recommended that the council tax premium should be increased 50% on long term empty homes and second homes.

The members also asked for specific consideration into how the additional money would be used (although they did not want to confine the new Council). Consideration should be given to:

Assisting owners of empty homes to repair in order to use them as residences

The Council has adopted the recommendation to increase the premium

Keeping the Benefit Local

The Council is a business with a budget of over £386million, buying services and resources.

It is very important for the Council that we try to contain expenditure within Gwynedd and north Wales whenever possible.

38% of the Council's expenditure goes to companies within the county *

56% of the Council's expenditure goes to companies from north Wales and 63% within Wales

55% of the Council's expenditure goes to companies with their headquarters or branch within the county



In such an important field, the committee believed that the following should happen:

Raise awareness with agencies of the work that is in progress with direct payments so that they can assist.

Agree that work should be undertaken with companies who have not won tenders in order to assist them to better prepare in the future.

Continue with the work that is being undertaken with the main companies who win tenders to attempt to discover the possibilities of sub-contracting with smaller, local companies.

It was seen that the Council's internal arrangements had changed. Although the members believed that everyone had 'bought into' the arrangements, 17-18 should be looked at again to see if the departments take their responsibilities seriously.

A contracts programme needs to be developed which is regularly updated so that local companies have plenty of time to prepare. Need to keep an eye on this.

Need to ensure that the quality of the work by the companies who win the contracts is good enough.

* there is a reduction in the figure in 15-16 as providers from outside of Gwynedd have succeeded in winning a high percentage of large projects in the construction fields e.g Wynne Construction Company (from Denbigh) who have won the majority of the "Schools in the 21st Century" construction contracts. £3.4m has been brought back to Gwynedd through sub-contracting the construction work of Ysgol Hafod Lon alone.

Developing sustainable services

Over the past few years, the Council has had to make savings across all of its services and more savings will be needed again in the future. All of this means changing the shape of some services, and the Communities Scrutiny Committee has considered two specifically



THE HEALTHY LIVING SERVICE

The Communities Committee looked at the sustainability of the county's Healthy Living Centres. There is an agreement that another model must be considered for the service and the Committee heard an assessment of different options that are in the pipeline for the future.

The committee noted that the centres were important for the health and well-being of residents, but there needed to be better use of the resources, especially when considering ways of mitigating losses, attracting more people through the doors, maybe through additional activities and considering the centres as a business rather than a service.



THE LIBRARIES' SERVICE

The Libraries' Service had to be restructured as part of the "More than Books" strategy.

The Communities Committee considered a motion suggesting a pattern of catchment libraries and community libraries in addition to a mobile library and community links.

The Committee's wish in supporting this model was that it would offer a pattern

Respond to savings

As the Council has to implement a program of savings and cuts, the scrutiny committee has considered how this will be done in order to mitigate the effect on residents.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee has looked especially at public toilets, green waste collection arrangements and managing beaches.



PUBLIC TOILETS

The Communities Committee has approved a plan to collaborate with town and community councils in the county to keep up to 50 public toilets, that would otherwise have closed, to remain open.

BEACH MANAGEMENT

The Communities Committee has highlighted some concerns as the Council implements the necessary cuts to the Beach Management Budget.

Specifically, concerns have been expressed with regards to implementing the cuts on the beaches of Nefyn and Morfa Nefyn, and request made for a report at the end of the holiday term on the full effects of the savings.

GREEN WASTE COLLECTION

In December 2014, the Council committed to a saving of £750,000 to the waste budget by changing green waste collection arrangements.

Looking at the options, the committee decided to accept the recommendation to charge a fee for collecting garden waste for 12 months a year, however concern was expressed on the effect this would have on recycling levels, the cost to residents, and the need for the Welsh Government to include compostable material in their measure.



Implementing following investigations

The Communities Scrutiny Committee has completed a number of important Scrutiny Investigations where members have looked at subjects in great detail and presented a number of recommendations to the Cabinet Members.

The Cabinet Members have accepted all the recommendations but the Committee is continuing to press to see them implemented for benefit of residents.



POST 16 EDUCATION TRANSPORT

In 2014/15, a Scrutiny Investigation was conducted into Post 16 Education Transport.

Unfortunately, this happened at a time when there was a need to impose an increase in the cost of travelling tickets because of the Council's programme of savings.

It was therefore important for the Committee to continue to press to have the Investigation's full recommendations implemented and the most important amongst them was guaranteeing flexibility for students to travel at convenient times for their learning patterns. The Committee was glad to hear that this was now possible, although it had taken a number of months.



HOMELESSNESS

There was an Investigation in 2015/16 which looked at the Council's responsibilities and suggested 16 improvements to the Council's arrangements. Implementation must be ensured.

In May, 2016, the Communities Committee expressed their satisfaction that most of their recommendation had by now been implemented, or were at least in the pipeline.

This year's investigations

During 2016/17, two scrutiny investigations were completed by the Communities Committee, one into street enforcement and the other a quick investigation to try to offer improvements to the Council's Planning Procedure.

STREET ENFORCEMENT

Street cleanliness is one of the factors that residents most worry about. The committee realises that the available resources for this field is dwindling.

A detailed analysis of the work and nine recommendations were presented including giving a greater priority to the work, the need to think creatively when responding to cuts, better collaboration with other departments and the community, and trial a more stern attitude towards enforcement.

The Committee are looking forward to seeing this being imple-



THE PLANNING PROCEDURE

The planning procedure affects a large number of the county's residents and everyone has an opinion about it.

The Planning Scrutiny Investigation was established to understand the procedure, challenge some prejudices and make recommendations for improvement.

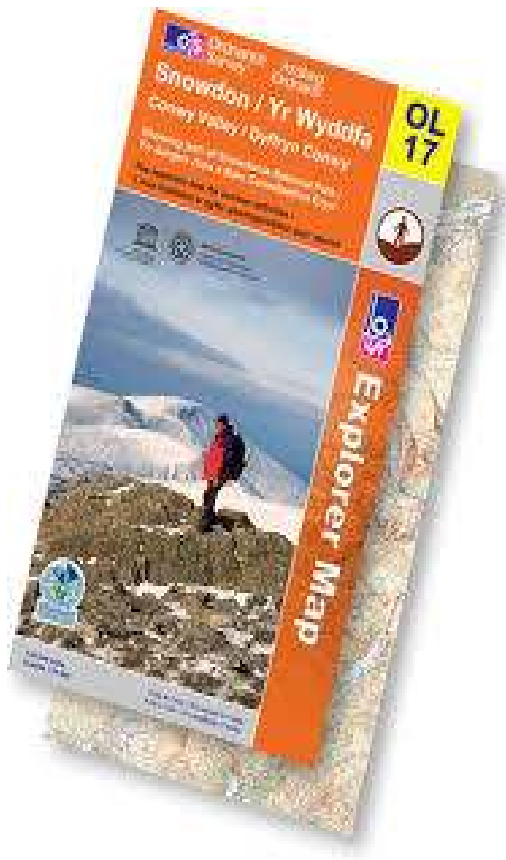
The Investigation completed its work quickly and effectively and six recommendations were presented on matters such as monitoring the effect of the new Local Development Plan, reforming the Delegation Plan, giving more prominence to economic considerations and continue to consider the arrangements through the customer's eyes.



Rights of way

Convenient access to footpaths and rights of way are extremely important in a county like Gwynedd which has a network which is approximately 3,500km long.

The Council is required to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan which manages, develops and promotes the rights of way network.



The purpose of the Plan is to report on:

- The extent to which the local rights of way satisfy the public's requirements now and in the future.
- The opportunities offered by local rights of way for physical exercise and other recreational activities and to enjoy the outdoors in the authority's area.
- How accessible local rights of way are for blind or partially sighted persons and for others with mobility difficulties?
- Evaluate the condition of the network and the extent to which the previous RoWIP was achieved
- Opportunities to contribute to the objectives of Active Travel, Well-being objectives and towards achieving other plans and priorities.

During the past year, the Communities Scrutiny Committee has considered this and has placed emphasis on trying to reach a wider audience when engaging on the plan and in collaborating with the National Park in terms of resource needs.

It was also emphasised that more resources needed to be found and to welcome creative ideas and the use of technology and also the need to consider increasing the Council's powers in the field.

