

MEETING	Full Council
DATE	1st December 2022
TITLE	The Local Government Act 2021 – Gwynedd Council Self-Assessment 2021/22
PURPOSE	To approve and adopt Gwynedd Council Self-Assessment for 2021/22
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Dyfrig Siencyn
CONTACT OFFICER	Dewi W. Jones, Council Business Support Service Manager

1 Introduction

- 1.1. This is a report presenting the council's first Performance Self-Assessment looking back at 2021/22. The report is identified as a new statutory request under the **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021**.
- 1.2. The Act provides for a new and reformed legislative framework for local government elections, democracy, governance and performance. It replaces the duties of the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009.
- 1.3. The Act requires that a council must produce a self-assessment report in respect of each financial year. The report must set out its conclusions on the extent to which it met the performance requirements during that financial year, and any actions it intends to take, or has already taken, to increase the extent to which it is meeting the performance requirements. The performance requirements are the extent to which:
 - it exercises its functions effectively;
 - it uses its resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
 - whose governance is effective to achieve the above.
- 1.4. At its simplest level, a self-assessment relates to how the council meets the performance requirements and responds to the following questions:
 - How well are we doing?
 - How do we know that?
 - What can we do better and how?
- 1.5. There is a duty to publish a report setting out the conclusions of the self-assessment once in relation to each financial year and to complete the work "as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year in which it relates."
- 1.6. A duty to consult at least once in a financial year with local people, local businesses, council staff and trade unions is also stated. These consultations should be used to obtain feedback on the extent to which the authority is fulfilling the performance requirements.
- 1.7. The council already collects much of the evidence and publishes

documents containing the type of information that we're expected to include within the self-assessment. This includes documents such as (but not limited to) annual reports for Performance, Equality, Director of Social Services, Annual Statement of Accounts and Governance Statement. As a result, we have tried to keep the self-assessment document relatively concise with reference towards a number of the documents where further information can be obtained to try to avoid duplication.

- 1.8. The Governance Group has led/taken an overview of the process within the council to ensure that the work is owned and led at a strategic level.
- 1.9. The guidance issued by the Government suggests that the seven corporate areas common to the corporate governance arrangements of public bodies (as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) should be used as a framework for the self-assessment, namely:
 - Corporate planning
 - Financial planning
 - Workforce planning (people)
 - Procurement
 - Assets
 - Risk management
 - Performance management
- 1.10. A draft of the self-assessment report needs to be submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee before it is finally published to give them an opportunity to submit any comments and recommendations. If the council does not make a change recommended by the committee, it must set out the recommendation and the reasons why the council did not make the change in the final self-assessment report.
- 1.11. At its meeting on the 17th of November the Council's Governance and Audit Committee proposed the following recommendation:
 - i. Consider including a reference to the support and training given to Elected Members under the heading Corporate Planning?

The Cabinet agreed to this suggestion at their meeting on the 22nd of November and therefore the following statement is contained on page 4 of the self-assessment which you are asked to adopt:

A programme to present information and training to all Councillors was undertaken at the start of the term following the election. The programme was prioritised to include general information about the Council and its services along with the main training sessions necessary for any Councillor to take on their role e.g. code of conduct, corporate parent. In addition, there were specific sessions for Councillors before they took on roles on different committees e.g. Cabinet Members, training for all scrutiny members as part of the workshops before members began their scrutiny work, and a number of other committees such as Planning, Licensing and

Audit and Governance. The training programme will continue in 2023/24 based on the priorities being identified by members of the Democracy Services Committee. In addition, there will be an opportunity for a personal development interview for each Councillor to identify specific developmental areas.

- 1.12. As we've already outlined this year is the first time we have conducted the self-assessment and this time it will be published as a stand-alone document. For the future we intend to integrate the work with the Council's performance challenge arrangements and include the self-assessment within the Annual Performance Report so that all information is within the same document. This document is normally prepared during April/May for submission to a meeting of the Full Council for approval at the beginning of July.
- 1.13. Failure to publish a Self-Assessment would likely result in statutory recommendations from Audit Wales, which would have implications for the reputation of the Council

2 Reasons for Recommending the Decision

- 2.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 The Council's Governance and Audit Committee has discussed Gwynedd Council's Self-Assessment report for 2021/22 and has had an opportunity to submit comments and recommendations. The Council Cabinet has discussed the report, seen in **Appendix 1** at its meeting on the 22nd of November, and recommended that the Council adopts the report.

3. Next steps and timetable

- 3.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the document will be circulated to the following list of recipients within a four-week period following this meeting:
 - i. Auditor General for Wales
 - ii. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales
 - iii. Welsh Ministers.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Council is requested to approve and adopt Gwynedd Council's Self-Assessment report for 2021/22

5. Views of the Statutory Officers

5.1 Views of the Monitoring Officer

The report emphasises that the performance assessment process is comparatively new and that incorporating these statutory arrangements into performance management arrangement continues. There are elements of the statutory requirements which still need to be developed and strengthened and I acknowledge the intention to ensure that these requirements are addressed in full for the next assessment.

5.2 Views of the Head of Finance Department

This is the first year of preparing Gwynedd Council's Self-Assessment in accordance with the requirements of the 2021 Act. I am satisfied that the contents of the self-assessment are a fair reflection of the Council's position, whilst recognising that the arrangements for the preparation of self-assessment will develop over the next few years. This includes the aspects of assessing the effective, efficient and economic use of resources, and the services within the Finance Department will contribute as appropriate to this work.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Gwynedd Council Self-Assessment Report 2021/22.