



Policies, strategies, procedures and processes that, according to the Local Code of Governance, support:	Its Impact on our ability to achieve	Reason for the score	How effectively does it help us to achieve?	Reason for the score
The Council's Culture	10	Our values define the Council's culture for both members and staff. The values have been established for some time now. If we achieve the correct culture, this can override everything else that affects our ability to achieve.	4	<p>The Council's values were developed by means of the work of the Managers' Colleges and the Council's values have been included on vehicles, letters and signs in offices.</p> <p>It was reported in the past that evidence is scarce that our staff and members live these values and there is evidence – from system reviews – showing that the values have not in reality filtered down to mean better services for Gwynedd people.</p> <p>However, Ffordd Gwynedd work has already started in 6 work places within the Council with further significant work ongoing to spread the change in culture throughout the Council.</p> <p>There are now continuous signs that the values attached to Ffordd Gwynedd are taking root in the discussions that arise within the Council. This steady progress means that we can increase the score.</p>
Integrated Public Services	9	The willingness of public sector bodies, including Gwynedd Council, other neighbouring unitary councils, the Police, the Health Board and others to collaborate in order to deliver public services jointly will have a substantial and visible effect on the People of Gwynedd.	5	<p>The Partnerships Unit has been established with Anglesey County Council, and the Council was among the signatories of a Statement of Intent that has been agreed with the Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board for an integrated service.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that work remains to be done to develop the Local Services Board, but a Plan has been developed during the last year and a review by the Wales Audit Office in 2015 has reported that the Board is moving in the right direction.</p> <p>In addition, system review work in the Care field, which includes close collaboration with stakeholders from external bodies, is showing promising signs. Work is taking place to identify schemes that should be commissioned for the future and also to start to prepare for the changes in the Local Services Boards arrangements.</p>
The Council's Strategic Plan	9	This is the high level statement that outlines what the Council aims to achieve during the life of the current Council.	6	The Strategic Plan is an important guidance for achieving on behalf of the People of Gwynedd. The Wales Audit Office has identified improvements in the way that the Council is providing its services. However, the Council recognises that the nature of the current Plan means that it is not easy to interpret from it what constitutes the core work of the Council. The Plan in its current form is a catalogue of things that need to be changed within the Council and in the Gwynedd area, rather than a business plan for the Authority. Work is ongoing to see how this can be changed with a view to changes during 2016.

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Financial Strategy	9	<p>The Financial Strategy sets the key context for everything the Council does.</p> <p>The financial projections for the Council suggest that substantial savings must be identified in the years to come. The Financial Strategy establishes how we will achieve this and, therefore, it is a very important statement that outlines how the Council will deal with the situation.</p>	8	<p>The Strategy has been praised by the Wales Audit Office, in a previous assessment, as an example of sound planning. It was seen again during December 2015 that the forecasts made in the Financial Strategy were very close to reality.</p> <p>However, there is a need to be aware that the Strategy, even though it is based on the best available information, is also subject to changes of which we are not yet aware.</p>
Engagement	9	<p>Clear engagement with the People of Gwynedd, to establish clear communication and to get a true understanding of their needs, is one of the most important elements of the governance arrangements.</p>	5	<p>The Engagement Strategy adopted by the Cabinet on 28 January 2014 was the result of a self-assessment that highlighted that the Council's engagement arrangements were not as good as they should be for the new climate ahead.</p> <p>In the context of the this climate, the Gwynedd Challenge initiative, to discuss the financial situation with Gwynedd residents, has been given priority in the last year, and therefore other parts of the strategy have not progressed as expected.</p> <p>However, analysis by the Group Engagement shows that the Gwynedd Challenge exercise has been extremely successful and attracted over 2,000 responses from Gwynedd residents which will enable us to make rational decisions regarding future priorities in light of the views of the people whom we serve. Whilst there is a need to ensure that we promulgate good practice among all Council departments, the score now reflects improvement seen in this area in view of the Gwynedd Challenge and work done in the field of waste in particular.</p>
Leadership Programme	9	<p>Leadership sets the standard that every member and employee in the Council follows. Therefore, its impact is great – good Leadership can overcome everything else, whilst poor Leadership can destroy what the Council is trying to achieve. This underpins the Council's culture.</p>	7	<p>There is evidence that Leadership skills within the Council has improved after the Council invested in leadership training for its Senior Officers and members.</p> <p>However, the Ffordd Gwynedd self-assessment shows that there is a need to take this to the next level now and ensure that all the Council's leadership are unanimous in implementing the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd if it is to be successful. The work of doing this remains part of the Council's Strategic Plan but has not yet reached the end of its journey.</p>

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Information Governance	9	Having the right information is essential if the Council is to provide the right services to the right people in the right way. The information that is collected and stored must be current and relevant, not only to comply with the Data Protection Act but also to ensure that the services we provide are those that doing the right things. Good Information Governance is the foundation of good decision making.	5	<p>Despite efforts to improve Information Governance, the Council continues to hold vast amounts of information, and we need to continue working to ensure that it does not hold more data than is needed. There is no evidence that the Council, overall, has improved its ability to use its information to make appropriate decisions as effectively as it could. It is expected that the EDRMS project will contribute to a significant improvement in this regard.</p> <p>There were occasions during 2014/15 where there was a failure on behalf of the Council to secure the information in its possession as expected, which showed that our arrangements are less effective than we thought when undertaking the 2014 assessment. This has highlighted the need to retrain staff appropriately on Data Protection issues, and improve attitudes in this area. This work remains part of the Council's Strategic Plan, and is showing progress.</p>
Risk Management Arrangements	8	Our risk management arrangements are an integral part of the Authority's management arrangements. Robust, correct and proportionate risk management arrangements support innovation and do not inhibit it.	5	<p>Arrangements are now in place for every department to maintain a departmental risk register and there are also cross-departmental registers in place with protocols to support them. Nevertheless, the take-up of risk management amongst individual business units is inconsistent and the general perception is that risk management is a hindrance rather than a help in achieving aims.</p> <p>Also, apart from Health and Safety risks, systems tests show that not all the workforce is aware of the risks that could prevent achievement for the people of Gwynedd and take ownership of them – risk management tends to be seen as a matter for Managers.</p> <p>Substantial work has been undertaken in the field of Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, to better prepare the authority for unforeseen events.</p> <p>Arrangements to deal with the risk surrounding Safeguarding Children and Adults continue to receive attention, in order to maintain the progress made since 2013.</p>
Local Code of Governance	8	The Local Governance Code is the foundation of the Council's governance arrangements. It encompasses a large number of elements which need to be in place to enable the Council to achieve on behalf of the people of Gwynedd.	7	<p>The Local Code, as the focus of all individual elements of the governance framework, operates effectively in achieving its objectives. This is the core of our assessment of governance arrangements.</p> <p>However, it could be reviewed more regularly than in the past but the Audit Committee and the Governance Arrangements Assessment Group are addressing this.</p> <p>We recognise the need to simplify and rationalise the code, since 31 headings seems excessive.</p>

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The Constitution	8	As the official guidance for the manner in which the Council operates, it is inevitable that the Constitution, by definition, has a significant impact on the way in which the Council achieves on behalf of the people of Gwynedd.	9	<p>The Constitution received a comprehensive review by a Working Group of the Audit Committee during 2014, with the new Constitution being adopted by the Council in July 2014.</p> <p>The Constitution is subject to ongoing review, and robust arrangements are in place to keep it up to date.</p>
Performance Management	8	This is the Council's business planning and performance management system. Consequently, the effect of the system on the Council's ability to provide services on behalf of the people of Gwynedd is crucial.	4	<p>It was reported in 2014 that a self-assessment of the 'Cyflawni' system shows that there are still shortcomings in our arrangements, including a lack of real ownership by units within the Council of performance information and its use for improvement, although arrangements had improved on previous years.</p> <p>Systems tests and the self-assessments undertaken for Ffordd Gwynedd show that more clarity is needed regarding what is a performance indicator and what is management information – this is not always clear to everybody.</p> <p>The 2014 Statement reported that a review was ongoing to reconcile the procedure with Ffordd Gwynedd. This review has been completed, and work is ongoing to promulgate the new method for establishing measures based on the purpose of units, which has started to become embedded in every service.</p>
The Scrutiny Process	8	The scrutiny procedure is the process that is in place to ensure that the Council's Cabinet implements its policies in accordance with its pledges and for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd. It is therefore a very important part of the governance framework.	3	<p>The 2014 Statement reported that a revised Scrutiny Strategy was at a draft stage and ready to be published. The Strategy was published during 2014/15.</p> <p>Following the improvements reported in 2014, some further examples were seen during 2014/15 of scrutiny having a positive impact on services, but there is still some way to go until scrutiny maximises that objective.</p> <p>The work that has been done during 2014/15 to use Scrutiny to help us set the direction rather than looking back post-decision has improved the working relationship between the Cabinet and Scrutiny function. Nevertheless, during the year an External Auditor report stated his opinion that there remain significant problems, and an internal Council 360° Review has also confirmed that a number of elements within the scrutiny system need further attention in order to improve them. Consequently the Audit Committee will look at his conclusions and establish a plan to improve the situation.</p>

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Staff Appraisal, Training and Development	8	To ensure that the Council is in a position to provide services that always place the residents of Gwynedd in the centre, there must be continuous staff training, their performance must be monitored and their talent fostered and developed. Staff training arrangements are an important method of promoting and dissipating Ffordd Gwynedd thinking across the Council and of course it is vitally important that the Council has officers with the skills to carry out their duties.	4	<p>Difficulties in filling some senior posts within the Council suggest that there is a need to improve our ability to create progression at least for senior posts. This has been identified as a basis for developing internal talent.</p> <p>The formal appraisal procedure has been suspended within the Council whilst a review of its contribution to the Ffordd Gwynedd culture is undertaken.</p> <p>Evidence collected during exit interviews shows that many officers appreciate the training and development that they have received from the Council.</p> <p>In addition, a Senior Managers Group has been established and will continue, and a 360° process for heads in in progress.</p>
Protocol for Member/Officer Relations	7	It is important that officers and members act together to achieve for the people of Gwynedd, in a way that shows respect to each other. This Protocol is a document that formalises this and set out in writing what should be happening naturally.	8	There is good working atmosphere, in general, between officers and members. Although issues arise periodically, the Protocol for Member and Officer Relations is working effectively, and there have been no occasions that have caused concern in this context. A review was undertaken by the Internal Audit service during 2014/15, which awarded an 'A' opinion, since internal controls are in place and are working effectively.
Members Code of Conduct	7	This is the code that incorporates the statutory, legal requirements on members of the Council into the Constitution. Although it is therefore an important document, it does not impact as much as the culture that is embedded in the Values.	8	There is evidence that the Members Code of Conduct has operated effectively on those rare occasions where a member's conduct has fallen short of expectations.
Officer Code of Conduct	7	This is the code that incorporates the statutory, legal requirements on Council staff into the Constitution. Although it is therefore an important document, it does not impact as much as the culture that is embedded in the Values.	9	All staff are aware of the behaviour expected of them, and this has been and this has been coordinated with the Council's disciplinary procedures, if behaviour falls below the expected standards.
Audit Committee	7	An Audit Committee is being recognised as being an important part of the Council's governance arrangements, as it is responsible for ensuring that they are working effectively.	6	<p>Gwynedd Council's Audit Committee has been established since 1999 and it has agreed terms of reference.</p> <p>It was reported in 2014 that the Audit Committee is very effective in achieving some of the functions that it has undertaken for some time, but its capacity to deal with new responsibilities pursuant to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 continue to develop. There is no evidence to suggest that the situation has changed in the last year.</p>
Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption policy	7	The current Policy was adopted in January 2013. It outlines clearly that the Council has an attitude of not tolerating fraud, and the Fraud Response Plan sets out what staff are expected to do if they suspect that fraud is occurring.	9	Where fraud has been discovered by officers, appropriate and timely steps have been taken to address the issue.

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Response to External Auditor's annual report	7	The annual letter receives attention by the Council and the local media as an independent assessment of how the Council provides services for People of Gwynedd.	5	<p>Whilst the report includes constructive criticism, the Council will try to implement the matters raised but sometimes there may be conflict between what the Council feels should be addressed and some matters raised in the letter in terms of the effort required to be given to them and the level of risk they represent. However, these examples are not significant; there were no recommendations in the most recent report and in general the messages are positive.</p> <p>The effectiveness score of 5 reflects the delays in receiving the letter, which means that its ability to assist the Council to improve will be less effective than it could be.</p>
Internal Audit	7	Internal Audit is seen as a key part of the authority's governance arrangements, because of its role in conducting independent assessments of the Council's governance, internal control and risk management.	6	The effectiveness of the Internal Audit system is under continuous review and although the service satisfies the professional standards in accordance to expectation, there is a need to consider further whether it reviews the right things and if it operates in a manner that is compatible with Ffordd Gwynedd. The service's capacity has decreased significantly since 1 April 2015, down from 10 to 7 full-time officers. It is expected that the adoption of Ffordd Gwynedd principles will ensure the effectiveness of the service will be maintained, but there may be some reduction in the short term.
Procurement Strategy	7	The potential for clear and robust procurement is an opportunity to act in a more efficient way that provides a focus on value for money.	6	<p>The Procurement Strategy has been in place for several years, but it was reported in 2014 that there is some evidence that its principles do not filter through to the Council consistently and that there is room for changes in the arrangements to reflect new methods of working. In response to this, the Procurement Project in collaboration with Denbighshire and Flintshire councils has led to a new Strategy that will be presented for scrutiny during 2015/16.</p> <p>Category Management was introduced during 2015/16. It has already been introduced in the People area, but not enough progress has yet been made to increase the score.</p>
Gwynedd Council's Performance Report	7	This is a retrospective report, in order to report to the public on the Council's achievements in the previous year, and what needs attention in the coming years.	7	<p>The Council's Improvement Report is published annually in accordance with the expected timetable. The Report notes that the Council has undertaken its duties of reporting on improvement that is a requirement under the measure, but it could comply more fully with guidance from the Welsh Government.</p> <p>Although this is a report that achieves its purpose there is a risk that it is a report that is produced to satisfy statutory requirements, rather than achieving the objective of providing a complete picture for the People of Gwynedd. It is hoped that the report will improve as we improve the quality of our Strategic Plan.</p>

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The Standards Committee	6	The Standards Committee holds members accountable for their behaviour. In that regard, it is helpful in ensuring that Council members act primarily for the benefit of People of Gwynedd.	7	The Standards Committee is in place and operates with agreed Terms of Reference. Minutes of the Committee show that it examines specific cases as it undertakes its work. The Committee itself has also conducted a self assessment. The Committee fulfils its policing role well, but there is room for improving its activities of promoting good standards. The Committee received a presentation on its role within the governance framework in October 2015.
Decision Notices	6	These are the official documents that record that the operational decisions of the Cabinet - or its members acting alone in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation - have been made in an appropriate manner, with the input of the Statutory Officers.	10	The Cabinet Support Service ensures that each notice is duly completed before a decision can be implemented, and the notices appear on the Council website in a timely manner. Nothing needs to be done to improve their effectiveness, which justifies a score of 10.
Statutory Officer Protocols	6	The Statutory Officers play a key role in ensuring that the Council takes appropriate action on behalf of the People of Gwynedd. These Protocols are in place to protect the status of these officers within the internal arrangements of the authority.	9	All statutory officers confirm that they have been able to carry out their duties in line with expectations as set out in the protocols.
Member Inter-relationships	6	Fostering good relations between members helps to ensure that the Council is working effectively. However, because of the inherent political nature of the Council, examples of tension and disagreements are to be expected.	4	There is some evidence of tension in the past between members as the new Cabinet arrangements were implemented within the Council and the resulting changes in roles, and there is no evidence to suggest that those tensions have disappeared with the recent External Audit report on Scrutiny confirming this view. However, there are signs that the tensions are starting to reduce. Tensions are inevitable during times of significant changes and to be expected.
Whistleblowing Code of Practice	6	The arrangements have been shared with all Council officers. Efforts to maintain awareness are continuing, and it is seen as an important tool to draw attention to inappropriate activity, but little use is made of the arrangements and therefore their impact on the Council's arrangements is limited.	7	Although very little use has been made of the procedure, the disclosures that have been made have been the subject of thorough investigations in accordance with the Code of Practice. The arrangements have been reviewed recently by the WAO as part of a national review. Evidence from the national review, and a review of awareness by Internal Audit, has demonstrated that the procedures are generally effective, and justify the score given.

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Member Training and Development	6	There is an expectation on all Council members to be trained and developed in order to properly perform their duties. Nevertheless, the training programme is relatively limited in introducing arrangements that put the People of Gwynedd in the centre.	5	Steps have been taken in the period since the 2012 election to draw up a training programme for members with the Democratic Services leading on the work. Personal Development Interviews were introduced during 2014/15, with 20 members taking advantage of them.
The Complaints Process	6	Taking complaints seriously, and investigating them thoroughly, is an integral way of achieving for the People of Gwynedd, as is responding when the expected service standards have not been met.	5	It was reported in 2014 that the main weakness of the complaints procedure was a lack of arrangements to allow the Council to learn lessons from investigations into complaints. During 2014/15 new arrangements were introduced to deal specifically with this. A new Corporate Complaints Procedure was introduced, and a Service Improvement Officer was appointed to ensure that we learn lessons from complaints, and avoid repeating mistakes.
Equality	7	The Council's aim is to place the People of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. Equality arrangements are essential in order to realise this, because if there is no equality, then by definition there will not be consistent treatment of all residents. However, in an era of cuts, there may be greater impact on some groups, and awareness of this must be maintained.	6	Although an Equality Scheme is in place, there is evidence that awareness of equality is not as rooted as it should, and that the mentality has not yet spread throughout the Council. For example, there is no evidence to show that the Council is thinking of conducting Equality Impact Assessments routinely when making its decisions. This will receive attention in our new Equality Scheme.
Statement of Accounts	5	The statement of accounts is the document that informs the people of the use that Gwynedd Council has made of its resources. However, since it is such an unwieldy document, in order to meet international and national accounting standards, this document has very limited impact on the People of Gwynedd.	9	The Council publishes its financial statements on time, and they have been given an unqualified audit opinion, every year. When the external auditor has identified issues of concern when reviewing the accounts the Council deal with the matter immediately. The Appointed Auditor's Annual Letter testifies to this. The Wales Audit Office received a challenge to the Accounts from a member of the public during 2015. The opinion of the Appointed Auditor was that there was no basis to further investigate the accounts.