

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL 4/5/23**

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**Present:** Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes (Chair)  
Councillor Beca Roberts (Vice-chair).

Councillors:- Craig ab Iago, Menna Baines, Beca Brown, Stephen Churchman, Glyn Daniels, Elwyn Edwards, Elfed Wyn ap Elwyn, Alan Jones Evans, Dylan Fernley, Delyth Lloyd Griffiths, Jina Gwyrfai, John Brynmor Hughes, Iwan Huws, Elin Hywel, Nia Wyn Jeffreys, Anne Lloyd Jones, Berwyn Parry Jones, Dawn Lynne Jones, Dewi Jones, Elin Walker Jones, Elwyn Jones, Gwilym Jones, Gareth Tudor Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Linda Ann Jones, June Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Cai Larsen, Beth Lawton, Dafydd Meurig, Dilwyn Morgan, Linda Morgan, Dewi Owen, Edgar Wyn Owen, Gwynfor Owen, Llio Elenid Owen, Gareth Coj Parry, John Pughe, Rheinallt Puw, Arwyn Herald Roberts, Elfed P Roberts, Gareth A.Roberts, John Pughe Roberts, Meryl Roberts, Richard Glyn Roberts, Huw Llwyd Rowlands, Paul Rowlinson, Angela Russell, Dyfrig Siencyn, Ioan Thomas, Peter Thomas, Menna Trenholme, Rob Triggs, Rhys Tudur, Hefin Underwood, Einir Wyn Williams, Elfed Williams, Gareth Williams, Gruffydd Williams and Sasha Williams.

**Officers:** Dafydd Gibbard (Chief Executive), Geraint Owen (Corporate Director), Dylan Owen (Corporate Director and Statutory Director of Social Services), Dewi Morgan (Statutory Finance Officer), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Ian Jones (Head of Democracy Services), Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department), Aled Davies (Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department), Sion Huws (Propriety and Elections Manager), Sandra Thomas (Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Manager), Hawis Jones (Commissioning, Contracts and Projects Manager), Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Democracy Services Officer).

**1. CHAIR**

Two names were proposed and seconded for the post of chair, namely Councillor Beth Lawton and Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes.

**RESOLVED to appoint Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes as Chair for 2023/24.**

Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes read and signed the declaration accepting the post of Chair of Cyngor Gwynedd for 2023/24, in the presence of the Chief Executive.

**2. VICE-CHAIR**

Two names were proposed and seconded for the post of vice-chair, namely Councillor Beth Lawton and Councillor Beca Roberts.

**RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Beca Roberts as Vice-chair for 2023/24.**

Councillor Beca Roberts read and signed the declaration accepting the post of Vice-chair of Cyngor Gwynedd for 2023/24, in the presence of the Chief Executive.

**3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Anwen J. Davies, Dafydd Owen Davies, Annwen Hughes, Louise Hughes, Kim Jones and Eirwyn Williams.

**4. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of the Council held on 2 March 2023 as a true record.

**5. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

The Leader, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, declared a personal interest in item 11 - Senior Salaries, on behalf of those members who currently received senior salaries.

He was not of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and those members did not leave the meeting during the discussion on the item.

**6. THE CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Condolences were extended to the following:-

- Councillor Glyn Daniels and his family on the recent loss of his young granddaughter.
- Councillor Alan Jones Evans and family following the loss of his father;
- The family of Alison Evans, a member of the Council's Procurement Team.

It was also noted that the Council wished to sympathise with everyone in the county's communities who had recently lost loved ones.

The Council stood in silence as a mark of respect and remembrance.

It was noted that several Council staff had retired over the past few months, and they were all wished a long and happy retirement.

Councillor Menna Trenholme was congratulated on her recent marriage.

**7. URGENT ITEMS**

None to note.

**8. QUESTIONS**

*(The Cabinet Members' written responses to the questions had been published in advance.)*

**(1) Question from Councillor Beca Brown**

"In 2019 as a Council we declared a Climate and Nature Crisis accepting that the extreme changes in the climate are having a negative impact on our communities, and across the world. Climate change risks are very real risks for a number of Gwynedd residents - from flooding to landslides, and extreme hot and cold weather - the cost of ignoring the climate change is increasing. How much Carbon has the Council saved since the start of our work to reduce carbon emissions with Cyngor Gwynedd's Carbon Management Plan, can you elaborate on how much money these changes have saved for the Council?"

**Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

"This is one of the most important subjects that we as a Council face and I will read the written answer in full as we believe that this is such an important matter.

It is true that as a Council we were committed to reducing the environmental impact of our activities long before we declared a Climate and Nature Emergency in 2019. Back in 2010, we adopted a Carbon Management Plan in order to

manage and reduce our carbon footprint. Since its introduction, we have saved 103,757 tonnes of carbon from the emissions created through energy use in our buildings (schools, leisure centres, residential homes, libraries, offices and more), our streetlights, our fleet and use of vehicles, and our waste.

After a decade of taking action and succeeding in the energy conservation field, the annual carbon footprint of our direct activities were 43% less than before we began this journey.

Since 2010, we have worked tirelessly to try and take advantage of any possible opportunity to reduce our carbon footprint, including investing £7.4M in projects such as 613kWp of solar panels on 55 of our sites to generate our own electricity, upgrading lighting and lamps to the most current technology, insulating our buildings to retain heat, covering swimming pools overnight, and much more. Our dedicated energy team also regularly monitor the energy consumption patterns of our buildings in order to identify waste and to ensure efficiency and use software which enables them to manage energy use in various buildings across the county from the team's office in Caernarfon.

In fact, Cyngor Gwynedd's Energy Team has received national recognition for their work as they won the 'Public Sector Energy Management Team' award at the UK's Energy Managers Association Awards in 2020.

This work has led to a financial saving of £14.75M for the Council since 2010.

I would also like to draw attention to the astonishing financial benefit that we are gaining from today, due to our success over the last decade. If we had continued to use the same amount of energy as we did in 2010, our energy bills would have been £4.3M higher last year. If we had had to pay this additional cost, it would have resulted in £4.3M more cuts in frontline services, or increased Council Tax by 5.4% in addition to this year's increase.

To conclude, it's worth emphasising that we as a Council have prioritised this agenda long before declaring a Climate and Nature Emergency back in 2019, and that over the years we have succeeded in making a difference by managing our direct carbon footprint as a contribution to protecting our environment for generations to come. This work continues and evolves so that we try to reach the Welsh Government's goal of being net zero carbon by 2030. We will need to be aware of the fact that the next period will be even more challenging, as we tackle carbon emissions arising from our procurement activity, commuting to work etc."

#### **Supplementary Question from Councillor Beca Roberts**

"What is the Council doing to support and inspire the people and businesses of Gwynedd to take the same steps so that they address the climate emergency?"

#### **Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

"As we were establishing the Climate Change Board some years ago now, following the decision to declare a climate emergency, our priority at the time was to ensure that our activity as a Council, and what we had control over, reached the aim. I believe that the next step facing us is reaching out to our communities and businesses, so the Climate Change Board will consider those steps from then on, as well as seeking to reach the 2030 net zero goal. This is quite a challenge indeed, and it also comes at a cost, but getting and inspiring our communities to be involved in this important project is going to be a priority for the work of the Climate Change Board as we move forward."

**(2) Question by Councillor Rhys Tudur**

"Other than forming a taskforce at the request of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee, what proactive steps has the Education Department taken to update the Gwynedd Schools Language Policy so that it is more compatible with the new categorisation procedure for Welsh medium education provision which has been operational since September 2022?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"As you can see, the written answer refers to a number of county successes in respect of the Welsh language in education, we are not boasting when we say this, and we need to bear in mind that what happens with the Welsh language in Gwynedd is the subject of admiration and envy in nearby counties and across Wales. As it happens, I was recently reminded of that at a meeting with the Welsh Government, where they were astounded at our ability to sustain the position of the Welsh language.

The question refers to the categorisation procedure, but our Language Policy stands on its own feet and is not driven by the categories procedure since the category for us is merely an administrative issue, of course, our aspiration here in Gwynedd is substantially higher than what is noted in the category. However, the important point when saying that is that the Policy, of course, is important, as the question notes, and I am glad to be able to say that there is an intention to update the Language Policy in order to reflect the changes that have occurred in the education field and to respond to our aspirations in terms of promoting the Welsh language in Gwynedd; aspirations that are, of course, as ambitious and innovative as ever.

As well as forming the taskforce, the Department has been gathering information and data about the bilingual provision across our schools and this, as well as the research findings of the scrutiny taskforce, will assist us as we update this Policy for the better, and build on the historical successes; some of which are referenced in the written answer."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Rhys Tudur**

"The current Language Policy promotes the introduction of an English medium education. Has there been any significant change to the Gwynedd Schools Language Policy over the past 30 years in response to the demographic changes and language shift in society?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"We offer a bilingual education in this county, of course, and Welsh is available to all, and everyone receives Welsh. There is no avoiding Welsh here in the county. We know that work is being done with two schools, but a bilingual education in Welsh and English, of course, with the emphasis on Welsh, is what happens here. I am unaware of recent changes to the Policy, but in fairness, the Policy has been very successful and has operated on the clear principle that Welsh is available to all, and that everyone receives it.

However, we are aware from seeing the Census statistics, that there are challenges in terms of the population, etc., and this means that we need to look at those new challenges. Also, several changes have occurred in the education field, therefore it is timely for us to address those and new challenges in terms of the population, and this will arise in another question later on.

Without dwelling on the past, what matters is what is happening now, and what is going to be happening, and what is happening now is that we are looking at the Policy and are going to update and strengthen it, and that this will, hopefully, be in line with our aspiration, which is always ambitious in this county."

**(3) Question by Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts**

"A new provision in the field of care is to be welcomed, but is it appropriate to express unconditional approval and support, in advance, to plans that bind that said provision to a housing development of a scale that is not necessarily commensurate with the local need for housing and which clouds and obscures these matters, care and housing, until efforts to balance the potential social impact of these plans are undermined beforehand?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan:**

"Thank you for the question because it gives me an opportunity to raise awareness and share good news about an innovative and very exciting plan for us here in Gwynedd, and I am glad of the Member's support to this new provision.

The background to the partnership that is collaborating on this plan is us, of course, Cyngor Gwynedd, the Housing and Property Department and Adults, Health and Well-being Department, and I may give the opportunity, with the permission of the Monitoring Officer, to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Craig ab Iago, to also contribute to the answer, should there be a supplementary question. The other partners are Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Clwyd Alyn Housing Association and the local community, and this is really important, since this includes the local pharmacists and doctors, as well as members of the wider local community of Llŷn and Eifionydd.

I am going to answer the question as the Chair of the Penyberth Site Redevelopment Programme Board, a board which, by the way, retains the absolute right to approve or refuse every decision regarding this site. Whilst I am grateful for the question, I must disagree and confirm that "expressing unconditional approval and support in advance", as noted in the question, is not factually correct. Therefore, I must disagree with the Member on that, but again, I genuinely welcome the Member's support to this care provision which will, of course, include a mix of care homes, nursing beds provision, dementia provision, and much more. And I will finish by stating that any member of the Council is welcome to contact me on any matter regarding Penyberth, and more broadly in terms of the Adults Department, and I am always available. Thank you again for the question and for the opportunity to raise awareness of the Penyberth site."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Richard Glyn Roberts**

"The final paragraph of the written response would have been a sufficient response to a paragraph of a question. Why do you feel the necessity for the preamble?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being, Councillor Dilwyn Morgan:**

"I think I have answered the supplementary question at the beginning. I have emphasised that this is such an innovative and exciting plan that we as a Council must take advantage of any opportunity to get the message out there. It is such an important message, not only for the residents of Llŷn and Eifionydd, but for our

rural areas, and so that is the reason for the comprehensive response, and I am very proud of the answer and the opportunity to get the message out to the public."

**(4) Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen**

Following a meeting with Lee Waters in Cardiff on Wednesday, 26 April 2023 to discuss concerns about the safety of Llanbedr roads, may I ask the Leader to report to the Council on the outcome of those discussions?

**Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

"It was a meeting that could be described as historical, i.e. the Deputy Minister and I have not been on the best of terms since he declared that the Llanbedr Bypass scheme would not be going ahead, and we have had words since that time. However, I had an opportunity to attend the meeting with the Deputy Minister as well as representatives from a Group of Llanbedr People, and our Member of the Senedd, Mabon ap Gwynfor, and our Member of Parliament, Liz Saville Roberts.

Before we got the chance to say anything really, the Deputy Minister declared that he supported plans for a road, but not a bypass, but a low-speed relief road for Llanbedr as a part of the broader Green Corridor scheme. I had attended a meeting a few days earlier, where there had been a lot of talk about developing the Green Corridor. We are very eager to develop the Green Corridor along the Arudwy coastline, but without the relief road, the Green Corridor was not going to work.

This is a major step forward and is very encouraging and the local residents are overjoyed after hearing the announcement, as we know. However, we must issue a minor health warning - there has been no confirmation of funding for the scheme, therefore, there are no assurances at present that any scheme will be funded. We are also unaware of the timetable that the Government has in mind, therefore, we look forward to any further discussions with the Deputy Minister and his officers in order to move the project forward.

Before I finish, can I also thank the people of Llanbedr for their perseverance with this matter and for working so hard to secure the Government's ear. It was having a serious impact on the lives of the people of Llanbedr, and I would like to personally thank them very much for their efforts."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Gwynfor Owen**

"Can the Leader report what he anticipates that the Council and the Welsh Government will need to do from now on to realise the scheme?"

**Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn**

"The first steps that will have to be taken is to go through the whole process of preparing the new plans, obtaining permissions from the regulators, planning permission, undertaking all local consultations, etc., and the Government is going to be collaborating with our Environment Department to develop those plans. So that is the work that will be happening next. This could take considerable time. I would assume that there will be at least a year or two before we get those plans in place, and there is a cost involved as well.

The Government has offered financial aid to develop those plans. Can I just say that I am not celebrating as much as others because I know that no money has been earmarked. As we know, of course, money had been earmarked. We were about to go out to tender regarding the original plan, before the Deputy Minister

made his statement, so everything that was in place, including European funding, has now been lost. You will also recall that we submitted a bid to the Levelling Up fund, which was unsuccessful, so the only financial source we have left is the Welsh Government.

Therefore, the task for us, it seems, from now on, when developing the plans, is to press on the Government for their commitment to fund the plan, and it will be a broader plan, extending beyond the road around Llanbedr. I was very concerned about the attitude in the original report which stated that the Llanbedr airfield site was not suitable for economic development, as it was in a rural location. For me, that is a very serious policy statement for rural areas. These are the exact type of sites that we need to develop in order to offer quality employment outside agriculture and tourism. Therefore, I am very pleased that there has been some kind of development, in the hope that this will proceed."

**(5) Question from Councillor Huw Rowlands**

"The demographic for Gwynedd school pupil numbers shows a decline for the coming years.

In light of this, what strategy does Cyngor Gwynedd have to cope with this challenge, especially in the context of small and rural schools?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"This is a very important question that raises matters that we should all be fully aware of. One of the most striking things for me as I prepared the written response was, in terms of the number of primary schools we have, that Gwynedd is fourth highest of all Welsh Authorities with only Cardiff, Carmarthenshire and Rhondda Cynon Taf, with a higher number of primary schools than us. In terms of the number of secondary schools, Gwynedd is the third highest (jointly with Swansea) of all Welsh authorities, with only Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf with more secondary schools than us. However, there are around 20,000 more primary learners, and 20,000 more secondary learners in Cardiff compared to Gwynedd, and that speaks volumes.

It is also striking that the birth rates have been reducing, and that the Welsh Government's projections suggest a further decline of around 16% in the number of 3-18 year old learners by 2038.

Therefore, obvious and substantial challenges lie ahead. In response to this very concerning picture, the Department is in the process of drawing up a new Education Strategy that will note the Department's vision, aim and objectives in order to address these major changes that are afoot in terms of our county's population."

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Huw Rowlands**

"How will you develop the Strategy and with whom will you consult when developing the Strategy?"

**Response from the Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Beca Brown**

"It is slightly premature for me to be able to give you many details, but a draft will be submitted before the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in September this year, and I look forward to hearing the impressions of the scrutinisers on the draft. Of course, a consultation will be held with stakeholders, and the draft Strategy will be pre-scrutinised. In general, I believe that it is

essential that there is *'joined-up thinking'* in terms of forward planning for the huge challenge we have, and that this happens across many departments; Economy, Housing and Education, because this is a matter for communities fundamentally, and how we attract and retain families here, and maybe attract them back from places such as Cardiff.

There is a lot of work to do, and we are often battling against factors that are beyond our control, but that is not to say that there is nothing we can do either, and I would like to think that there are things that we can do, and indeed, I believe that this is one of the most important pieces of work that we will do, so I thank you for the question."

**9. GWYNEDD AND ANGLESEY PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD WELL-BEING PLAN 2023-28**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, presented the report, inviting the Council to adopt the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023-28, and the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Programme Manager elaborated further on the content.

The Leader thanked the Programme Manager for all of her work in preparing the plan.

Members were given an opportunity to make observations and ask questions. The following matters were raised by individual members:

It was noted that concern had already been expressed at the Communities Scrutiny Committee regarding the concept that the Welsh language was a golden thread that ran through the whole plan, instead of being a clear objective in a box, and assurance was sought that the officers had acted on that feedback before submitting this report to the Council.

In response, the Leader noted –

- That whether placing the Welsh language in a box strengthened or weakened the language was a matter of opinion.
- That the Welsh language was an integral part of every field that the Board was involved with, and that the Welsh language did not need to be placed in a box. He therefore believed that it was stronger, and he could guarantee that there would be no change in viewpoint regarding the Welsh language.
- That all partners had made a financial contribution to projects, under the leadership of the Chair of the Board, Aled Jones-Griffith, relating to the use of Welsh across all organisations in their receptions, and he believed that there was more money to come for future projects regarding the Welsh language.

The Programme Manager added that the same comment had arisen when discussing with the other groups, and that she hoped that the current plan was quite different to the original draft, after the language aspect had been strengthened.

It was asked what the situation would be as a result of a future change in leadership, without any language policies or protection.

In response, the Leader noted that the Welsh language was not a personal matter for him, and that the Welsh language was a priority for Cyngor Gwynedd as an organisation. To that end, whoever would be representing the Council on the Board in the future would clearly set out the Council's perspective in terms of the Welsh language.

The Programme Manager added:-



- That the Board's terms of reference stated clearly that the work of the Board was done in Welsh.
- That she believed that the most effective projects that the Board had been involved with related to the Welsh language, where all partners had committed to them.
- That there was a new project in the pipeline to look at difficulties in appointing to posts where Welsh was essential, within the different organisations.

With reference to paragraph 2.9 in the front report, it was noted that the specific actions in relation to Welsh were obvious in Well-being Objective 2, where reference was made to transferring the language, but that there was a wish to have examples in Well-being Objective 1 and Well-being Objective 3, where there was no exposure to the Welsh language at present.

In response, the Programme Manager noted:-

- That she agreed that it was clearer in Well-being Objective 2, but that it permeated through the plan.
- In terms of Well-being Objective 3, that there was more work to be done over the summer, and members could be reassured that the Welsh language would be included in the action plan in due course.

It was suggested that saying that the Welsh language was a golden thread that ran through the plan were empty words, unless it was made a measurable objective or criterion.

In response, the Leader noted –

- That he disagreed with the comment and deplored the accusation, and that they were not empty words.
- That he did not believe that a special project for the Welsh language was needed in Gwynedd.

It was suggested that a comment needed to be added, although the Welsh language was organic and the mother tongue of the communities on the whole, that the Census figures across the decades showed that the position of the language was not particularly secure here in Gwynedd either, and that we were following a similar trajectory to a number of other areas.

It was noted that a recent article noted that Gwynedd had the biggest gap between the percentage of the population who are able to speak Welsh in general and the percentage of the population from ethnic minority backgrounds who are able to speak Welsh. It was suggested that the Gwynedd education system, possibly, did not offer the same opportunity for some from ethnic minority backgrounds to grasp the Welsh language, and therefore qualify for jobs to the same degree as the general members of society, and it is believed that this is relatively damning and suggests that we should change our education policy, etc.

Astonishment was expressed that the plan did not give more priority to the current crisis in the health field.

In response, the Leader noted –

- That he accepted the comment and that he was aware of the crisis in the health field.

- Although the Health Board was mainly responsible for the health field, consideration could be given to ways to resolve the health problem by means of the Board's partnership.

It was noted that people were unable to get an ambulance, doctor or dentist, and that poverty was worsening in our communities because of the cost-of-living crisis. Also, the lack of public transport confined people to their communities, and it was believed that the plan did not address all these matters.

In response, the Leader noted –

- Although he accepted the point, the plan could not address everything. The role of the Public Services Board was to look for ways to add to the work of the councils and individual organisations, and not do this work for them.
- That there was a point regarding health which referred to something that was cross-boundary and cross-organisation, and it was believed that there was something for the Board to look at.
- That poverty, like climate change, was a very complex field and we had very little control, and the Welsh Government had very little control or tools in terms of poverty, as the tools lay with the Westminster Government.

It was suggested that the shift towards carbon net zero would send more people to a situation of poverty. Most of the world's population was reliant on food produced by using fertilizer and companies from outside the area were buying our land in order to plant trees to off-set their carbon footprint. It was not possible to reach carbon net zero in the countryside. Farmers needed diesel for their tractors and workers needed fuel for their vehicles to commute to the towns.

Disappointment was expressed that only 499 responses to the questionnaire had been received regarding the plan and it was noted that any collaboration between Gwynedd and Anglesey disregarded South Gwynedd.

In response, the Leader noted, as well as the questionnaire on the website, that engagement work had also happened by using the Council's engagement work in the context of Ardal Ni.

The Programme Manager added:-

- That 499 responses were high compared to the responses to other questionnaires.
- That most face-to-face engagement sessions had been carried out in South Gwynedd and that a very good response had been received.

Disappointment was expressed that older pupils in secondary schools had not been engaged with.

In response, the Programme Manager noted that the timings had not worked in relation to that, but that a further agreement was obtained to go out to secondary schools in turn, and that 4 schools had already signed up to that.

The Leader added that the Programme Manager was the only consultation resource that the Public Services Board had and that was why we also made use of the Councils' engagement work.

It was noted that the Leader's comment that we had very little control over poverty matters was very honest, and it was suggested that the wording of a few paragraphs and clause in the report should be more modest and practical, by noting '*we will thrive ...*' instead of '*we will...*' As an example of that, it was noted that the plan referred to

ensuring success and fairness to young people, but the schools had been pared down to the bone financially, and within those restrictions, only so much could be done. The same thing was true about the comments of Cylch yr Iaith, and it would be nice to express that there were structural barriers that we can do nothing about them.

In response, the Leader noted that he did not share the member's negativity in this respect.

**RESOLVED to adopt the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Well-being Plan 2023-28.**

**10. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL BALANCE**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report on the annual review of the Council's political balance.

The Independent Group Leader noted that she wished to ensure that the allocation was calculated correctly and that the chairpersonships of both scrutiny committees would go to the Independent Group as they should.

**RESOLVED**

- To adopt the list of committees and sub-committees to be established for the 2023/24 municipal year, as noted below, and to adopt the allocation of seats as noted.**

**ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES**

<b>A</b>	<b>Plaid Cymru</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Labour Liberal*</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Care Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Governance and Audit</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>

<b>B</b>	<b>Plaid Cymru</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Labour Liberal</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Democratic Services</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Planning</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Central/General Licensing</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Language</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chief Officers Appointment</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Employment Appeals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Number of seats</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>148</b>

C	Plaid Cymru	Independent	Labour Liberal	Total
Pensions	4	2	1	7
Local Joint Consultative Committee	7	4	0	11
SACRE	4	3	0	7

<b>Total seats</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>173</b>
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\* Labour/Liberal Democrats Group

2. To delegate the authority to the Head of Democratic Services to make appointments to the committees based on political balance, and in accordance with the wishes of the political groups.
3. To adopt the chairpersonships of scrutiny committees based on political balance, as follows:

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee - Independent Group  
 Communities Scrutiny Committee – Plaid Cymru Group  
 Care Scrutiny Committee - Independent Group

#### 11. HIGHER SALARIES

The Head of Democracy Services submitted a report inviting the Council to adopt higher salaries for 2023/24.

**RESOLVED** to adopt the following higher salaries for 2023/24:

- Leader
- Deputy Leader
- Up to 8 other Cabinet members
- The Leader of the largest Opposition party\*
- Committee Chairs:
  - o Scrutiny Committees (x3)
  - o Planning Committee
  - o Licensing Committee (the Central and General Licensing committees count as one Committee)
  - o Pensions Committee
- Civic head (Chair of the Council)
- Deputy civic head (Vice-chair of the Council)

#### 12. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR TO THE DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Council was invited to appoint a chair for the Democracy Services Committee for 2023/24.

**RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Dewi Owen as Chair of the Democracy Services Committee for 2023/24.

#### 13. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRACY SERVICES 2022/23

The Head of Democracy Services presented his annual report on behalf of the Democracy Services Committee in respect of support for members. The Head thanked the Chair of the Democracy Services Committee, Councillor Dewi Owen and the members of the committee, and also his predecessor, Geraint Owen, and the officers within the service, which provided day-to-day support.

The Chair of the Democracy Services Committee thanked the officers and noted that he was looking forward to working with the Head and Democracy and Language Services Manager over the next year. He added that one of the main matters facing the committee was member safety, and that it would be useful to have a phone number for members to report any concerns regarding that.

The Department was thanked for the clear and timely information for new members following the 2022 Elections.

**RESOLVED to adopt the report for information.**

#### **14. GWYNEDD ADULTS POPULATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being submitted the report inviting the Council to approve the Gwynedd Adults Population Needs Assessment and adopt the recommendations in the report to be incorporated in the Council Plan.

The Cabinet Member thanked the Commissioning, Contracts and Projects Manager and the Team for their substantial work in preparing the document.

The Chair of the Care Scrutiny Committee for 2022/23, Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams, noted that he wished to personally thank the Cabinet Member for his work during the past year. He noted, as a result of closing the inpatient ward at Tywyn Hospital, that the Gwynedd Older People Department had found a place for nearly all the patients locally at care homes in Tywyn, instead of them having to go to Dolgellau Hospital, and he thanked the Cabinet Member and the staff for their hard work.

The Cabinet Member gave thanks for the support, noting at the same time that it was the Department's staff who needed to be thanked for the work.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. To approve the Gwynedd Adults Population Needs Assessment.**
- 2. To adopt the recommendations in the report in order to incorporate them in the Council Plan.**

#### **15. NOTICES OF MOTION**

- (A) Submitted - the following notice of motion by Councillor Rhys Tudur in accordance with Section 4.20 of the Constitution, and it was seconded:-

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.

The member set out the context to his motion, noting that:-

- This was not the original notice that he had wished to submit before the Council, and that his notice had been changed as suggested by the Monitoring Officer.
- That his original notice asked the Full Council to gather data and monitor the Welsh-medium education provision against the baselines of the national categories, and although he accepted the counsel, that it was disappointing and surprising to him that it was not possible for a member to submit a notice asking the Council to gather data.
- That the notice did not go straight for the aim as he had hoped, but instead, crawled slowly towards the aim by calling for the Education and Economy

## THE COUNCIL Thursday, 4 May 2023

Scrutiny Committee to look at the data gathering method. We should not be crawling towards the aim with the Welsh language, but instead we should be leaping and innovating.

- That the significance of the proposal essentially was that the Welsh-medium education provision should be measured in line with the national categorisation.
- As the baseline for Welsh-medium schools notes that 60% of the children undertake 70% of their education through the medium of Welsh, it is assumed that measuring how many children undertake 70% of their education through the medium of Welsh would be important to measure, along with the way in which the schools fit into the category's baselines. In the absence of that information, it was not known how the schools fit into the category and how they were improving.
- That the Council's current measure in terms of Welsh-medium education provision was the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) in terms of how many children undertook 5 or more GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh.
- That the Council, had not only failed in the objective of increasing the number that undertook 5 or more subjects through the medium of Welsh, but had also slipped over the years, and so the WESP had failed in terms of that aspect.
- It was hoped that we will collect data thoroughly from now on in order to reach our objectives and innovate for the benefit of Welsh.
- That the national guidelines had been in force since September 2022 and that it would be very sad should Cyngor Gwynedd of all people refuse to measure in line with this categorisation.
- That he was calling on all his fellow members to support the notice as it would empower us with information, and this was the most important step to move the Council forward on the language continuum.

In response to the observations of the proposer, the Cabinet Member for Education noted:-

- That she fully accepted the point regarding the importance of being able to measure and obtain data, and that she had mentioned that in her response to the questions previously.
- That work was currently on-going in the Department to do exactly that, which was to gather data to obtain a comprehensive picture of what exactly was going on in the classrooms of our schools in terms of the Welsh language and bilingual education.
- That a Welsh measure was being introduced to the performance challenging meetings and that representatives from the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee were being invited to some of those meetings.
- That Gwynedd was not subject to the baseline in the category and the fact that the guidance was non-statutory was important since the baselines could either change or disappear completely.
- That the notice therefore asked us to measure against something that would not exist in due course, but of course, we were required to measure against what we wish to see here, and any aspiration we have would be substantially higher than the category's baseline.
- That this Council, and not the national framework, set the local Language Policy. The Welsh Government fully understood this and appreciated that our situation in Gwynedd was unique.

Other members expressed support to the notice.

In his closing comments, the proposer noted:-

- That he welcomed the fact that work was currently happening in the Department on an additional measure, but that he could not see that his notice was creating a difficulty in terms of referring to the baselines.
- Should the baselines change in the future, we would measure in line with what those baselines would be in the future.
- That he welcomed the fact that there was an objective to give a better baseline than what the Government proposed, but the Council measured poorer than the baseline currently allowed, and the only fairly detailed measure we had was the number of children undertaking 5 or more GCSE subjects through the medium of Welsh, 50% in reality, or fewer possibly if the child undertook 11 GCSE subjects.
- That he strongly recommended that we measure in line with what the categorisation proposes, non-statutory or not, and that disregarding national guidelines on increasing Welsh education, considering that we are innovative, is something quite foolish to do.

**RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-**

**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.**

- (B) The following notice of motion was submitted by Councillor Elin Walker Jones, in accordance with Section 4.20 of the Constitution and it was seconded.

Wales has a laudable ambition of being the first Nation of Sanctuary in the World. Gwynedd has acted in line with this ambition by offering sanctuary to refugees from across the world. Despite the ambition of Wales, the Westminster Government are introducing an Illegal Migration Act which endangers the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and criminalises the act of reaching the British Isles in search of asylum. This conflicts with the principles of the Refugees Convention 1951, and our ambition here in Wales. Considering the fear that the unwelcome messages of the UK Government may create, this Council confirms its ambition to assist refugees, in order to alleviate some of this fear.

The member set out the context to her motion, noting that:

- That we, in 2023, are still living in a cruel world, that is full of injustice and violence, despite the United Nations Statement on Human Rights call for freedom, justice and world peace.
- That Article 14 stated that everyone had the right to seek and to receive sanctuary from persecution in other countries.
- Nevertheless, the United Kingdom had introduced policies over the years to make it less attractive for asylum seekers to come to Britain, including barriers on being able to work and apply for benefits, and holding asylum seekers in retention centres where they have no status or any idea when their application will be processed.
- That the stories of individuals showed that this caused stress, depression and anxiety and even physical and mental health problems, bearing in mind that asylum seekers were already vulnerable.
- The Illegal Migration Bill would make things worse for these vulnerable people, but the new legislation would not prevent refugees from fleeing, or seeking asylum, or coming to Britain, and the numbers would continue to increase.
- That people seek asylum in the UK as people spoke English, or possibly they already had family or friends here.

- That the new legislation referred to sending people back to their homeland, but even the Westminster Government acknowledged that asylum seekers could not often be sent back to their country, as it was not safe for them to return.
- That the legislation referred to sending people who cannot return to their homeland to Rwanda, but the system had not yet commenced, and what about Rwanda's capacity to receive the asylum seekers?
- If asylum seekers could not return home, or go to Rwanda, they would be kept in retention centres in the United Kingdom (which are already over-full), without status, without a hope of their asylum application being processed, without a safe place to call home, without an adequate place to live or sleep, without sufficient health care, and that for an unspecified period of time.
- That we in Wales had an ambition of being a nation of sanctuary, and we in Gwynedd have a long tradition of extending a warm welcome to asylum seekers.
- We know about people who have fled from violence, torture and indeed, fled death, and who have reached the shores of the British Isles in search of members of their families, for work, for accommodation and for a new life. We are proud in Gwynedd that we have, and continue, to support our fellow man from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, etc. and we have voluntary organisations in Gwynedd that support people, such as Croeso Menai, Pobl i Bobl, Cefn, etc.
- Despite our praiseworthy ambition in Wales, which values the lives of all individuals, the Illegal Migration Act, which is currently being debated at Westminster, is inhumane, cruel and causes further trauma to people who have already experienced horrific trauma. This new legislation is contrary to our aspirations as the people of Gwynedd, and as the people of Wales.
- That she called on her fellow councillors to support the motion and show their objection to this cruel and inhumane legislation.

Many other members expressed support to the notice.

A member noted that the subject highlighted the fact that it was perfectly acceptable to the UK Government and the media to tarnish migration by the most deprived, but people cannot dare condemn migration by the economically privileged, who affect areas such as Gwynedd.

**RESOLVED to adopt the motion, namely:-**

**Wales has a laudable ambition of being the first Nation of Sanctuary in the World. Gwynedd has acted in line with this ambition by offering sanctuary to refugees from across the world. Despite the ambition of Wales, the Westminster Government is introducing an Illegal Migration Act which endangers the rights of refugees and asylum seekers and criminalises the act of reaching the British Isles in search of asylum. This conflicts with the principles of the Refugees Convention 1951, and our ambition here in Wales. In considering the fear that the UK Government's unwelcoming messages may create, this Council confirms its ambition to assist refugees, in order to alleviate some of this fear.**

## **16. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS NOTICES OF MOTION**

Submitted for information - a letter from the Welsh Government in response to the notice of motion of Councillor Huw Rowlands at the meeting on 1 December 2022, regarding improving the train services in Gwynedd.

The Chair expressed his disappointment and discontent at the lack of response from Transport for Wales to the notice of motion, and he asked the officers to follow this up.



**THE COUNCIL Thursday, 4 May 2023**

The meeting commenced at 1.30pm and concluded at 4.20pm.

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**CHAIR**