

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

This statement meets with the requirement to produce an Internal Control Statement in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (Wales) 2014.

Part 1: SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Gwynedd Council is responsible for ensuring that it conducts its business in accordance with the law and to proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Gwynedd Council also has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions, having regard in particular to strategic effectiveness, service quality, service availability, fairness, sustainability, efficiency and innovation.

In discharging these overall responsibilities, Gwynedd Council is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk and adequate and effective financial management.

Gwynedd Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework, *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. A copy of the code is available on our website, or may be obtained by writing to Gwynedd Council, County Offices, Shirehall Street, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1SH. This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 5(5) Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 in relation to publishing a statement on internal control.

Part 2: THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads its communities. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate and cost effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to enable the Council to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks that are relevant to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework described above has been in place at Gwynedd Council for the year ending 31 March 2023 and remains applicable up to the date of the approval of the Statement of Accounts.

Part 3: GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

- 3.1 The **Governance Arrangements Assessment Group** monitors matters of governance continuously in a disciplined manner, raising a wider awareness of these, and promoting a wider ownership of the Annual Governance Statement. The Group comprises the Corporate Director, the Monitoring Officer, the Section 151 Officer, Head of Corporate Support, Assistant Head of Corporate Support, Assistant Head of Finance, the Risk and Insurance Manager and the Council Business Service Support Manager.
- 3.2 To reflect the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework - *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*, the local framework is set out in the form of a Governance Risk Register that is part of the Corporate Risk Register, identifying 24 areas of governance risks.
- 3.3 An outline is given of the Governance Areas, the relevant risks and the Council's arrangements to deal with these, and the effectiveness of these arrangements, in the remainder of this section of the Annual Governance Statement.
- 3.4 For each Governance Risk, a current score is shown, which is the score following an objective assessment of the control arrangements that are currently in place. Consideration is given to two factors:
 - The **Impact** of the risk in the event of it being realised
 - The **Likelihood** that it will occur.
- 3.5 Impact scores vary from 1 (Visible impact) to 5 (Catastrophic impact), and the Likelihood scores from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (occurring now). The risk score is calculated by multiplying the impact score and the likelihood score.
- 3.6 The comparative level of the risks is calculated as follows:

Score 20-25	Very High Risk
Score 12-16	High Risk
Score 6-10	Medium Risk
Score 1-5	Low Risk

Culture

Risk: Inappropriate culture within the Council can hinder our ability to do the right things in the correct manner

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **High** risk, because:

- The six-day training programme for Service Managers on the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd (including robust performance management principles) has been delivered since the summer of 2017. All service managers have now followed this training with a programme to ensure all new managers receive the training into the future.
- The Managers Network has been re-established and held its first series of meetings in March 2019. The early signs are encouraging with the encouragement for managers and their teams to undertake reviews within their own services rather than the previous focus on intensive reviews.
- A new job description was circulated to each manager/senior manager outlining the behaviours expected of them and agreed generic content to a new job description for heads and assistant heads. A final version of a revised job description for team leaders and the remainder of Council staff, which confirms the expected behaviours, has been agreed.
- A review of Ffordd Gwynedd's progress across the Council has been carried out in collaboration with Cabinet members and a Task and Finish Group from members of the Governance and Audit Committee. That resulted in a new 5-year Work Programme to 2028 which was approved by Cabinet on 7 March 2023. The Plan identifies nine areas we will focus on to further embed the "way of working".

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
4	3	12

Conduct

Risk: Lack of integrity, ethics and respect in the conduct of members and officers, undermining the public's confidence in the Council

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- The Council has adopted codes of conduct for its members and officers, based on national regulations (codes such as the Member/Officer Relationship Code, Members' Code of Conduct, Officers' Code of Conduct, Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Policy and the Whistle-blowing Code of Practice) and these together set the foundation to ensure integrity and ethics. There is evidence of action when it appears that these codes of conduct have been breached.
- There is clear evidence that the Council gives due consideration to the Ombudsman's reports as part of the work of the Standards Committee, which works effectively.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	2	4

Lawfulness

Risk: Ignoring the rule of law, which means that the Council is open to challenges from the courts

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- Statutory Officers (the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Finance) have to offer comments on any formal decision, as part of a comprehensive constitution that is regularly reviewed.
- There are formal protocols in place in order to safeguard the rights of statutory officers.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
3	1	3

Being open

Risk: A Council that is not open, meaning that it is not possible to hold it accountable for its decisions

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- Only the minimum of Committee reports are exempt
- Publicity is given to the decision notices of individual members, with procedures to ensure that this occurs.
- Background papers are published with committee reports in order to ensure that the decisions are made with full information.
- Many committee meetings that make decisions are web-broadcast.
- The Cabinet regularly considers performance reports as part of its meetings that are open and the Council publishes its Corporate Plan, Annual Performance Report and Self-Assessment and the Statement of Accounts to seek to give as much information as the residents need for us to be accountable.
- Various other methods are also used such as the website, 'Newyddion Gwynedd' and social media to try to ensure that Gwynedd residents are aware of what is happening within the Council.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	1	2

Stakeholders

Risk: Weak relationship with institutional stakeholders, ending with sub-optimal services

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- The willingness of public sector bodies, including Gwynedd Council, other neighbouring unitary councils, the Police, the Health Board, the third sector and others to co-operate for the joint delivery of public services can have a significant, visible impact for the People of Gwynedd.
- Work has been undertaken to create a Well-being Plan and the relationship between organisations has matured.
- The Council is committed to the Public Services Board.
- The Public Services Board is not the only vehicle for working with other agencies and there is a risk that the wide range of joint working structures can hinder the whole objective of working together, creating confusion.
- The Council has had Partnership Criteria in place for several years, so that Gwynedd Council only enters partnerships where it is in the interests of the people of Gwynedd.
- Collaboration also occurs at a regional level which is not always as effective as it could be due to the footprint size and the difficulty of building a relationship with such a large number of people. There are some examples of success (e.g. North Wales Economic Ambition Board).

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
3	3	9

Engagement

Risk: Failure to engage effectively with service users and individual citizens leads to prioritisation and poor decision making

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- A range of corporate engagement procedures have been put in place to ensure that we receive opinion from the public and other stakeholders as appropriate. These include arrangements to ensure that the Council's corporate engagement exercises reach groups and cohorts such as young people, LGBT+ people, ethnic minorities, refugees, adults with learning disabilities and Gwynedd businesses.
- During 2022/23 the engagement exercise for the Council's Regeneration Framework was used to:
 - undertake an engagement exercise which benefited several Departments, Services and key projects including the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Wellbeing Survey, Population Needs Assessment (Adults Department), Local Housing Need Survey (Housing and Department), Clean and Tidy Communities (Highways and Municipal), Sustainable Tourism Principles (Economy and Community);
 - piloting the use of new engagement software ("Bang The Table" software);
 - develop a new brand for the engagement area ("Ardal Ni" brand);
 - trialling a new way of engaging at 13 local area level rather than the whole of Gwynedd.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
3	3	9

Direction and vision

Risk: Direction and vision that is not rooted in the outcomes for individuals and therefore does not realise the needs of the People of Gwynedd

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- The Council is effective in setting its priorities and managing expectations because of the culture of concentrating on what is important to the people of Gwynedd, with the performance measures that are used across all services derived from this.
- The Council Plan 2023-28 was approved by the full Council on 2 March 2023. The plan includes a series of projects for the next five years under seven priority areas.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
3	2	6

Sustainability

Risk: Failing to comply with the five principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- The Council has acknowledged the importance of acting in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act and, jointly with its partners on the Public Services Board, has done initial work to identify what needs to be done to operate in accordance with the five principles - Long term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration and Involvement.
- The Council is already complying with all the principles but to different degrees. The Management Group decided that the best way would be for Departmental Management Teams to pay attention to the principles when planning ahead. It is recognised that an assessment is needed if this way is successful or not. Reports coming before Cabinet are submitted in advance to the Corporate Support Department for review to keep track of situations where perhaps appropriate attention has not been given to the principles. By doing this we hope that we will embed the principles naturally rather than ticking boxes but time will tell if we will be successful.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
3	3	9

Decisions

Risk: Unwillingness to make decisions on action, which means a delay in achieving the outcomes for the people of Gwynedd

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- Over the last few years there is evidence that Gwynedd Council is willing to take difficult or unpopular decisions, e.g. schools, externalising Council houses, acting on the difficult results of the Gwynedd Challenge, changing the Youths arrangements and taking steps to ensure implementation principles within Education.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	2	4

Planning Operations

Risk: Intervention without sufficient planning

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- The Council strives to maintain a suitable balance between Project Management procedures and working efficiently. As such, the Council is already maintaining robust project management arrangements for the largest projects, and uses a less comprehensive version for other projects, but based on the same principles.
- To ensure that the right things are measured each service's delivery measures are based on achieving a purpose and trying to ensure that any action improves our ability to achieve that.
- The Council tries to strike a balance between the need for order and the need to deliver as soon as possible by doing as little paperwork as is consistent with this, encouraging simple, brief reports that set out the main key points.
- The Council has a Medium Term Financial Strategy, with annual budgets based on this. The Council's work on financial planning is regularly praised by the external auditors, and the Governance and Audit Committee takes a leading role with financial scrutiny.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	2	4

Reviewing Outcomes

Risk: Failure to review the outcomes of our actions, which means that we do not learn lessons by continuing to do the same things incorrectly

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- The Council's arrangements for risk assessment, formulating a Corporate Plan and project management will ensure that the intended outcomes to be achieved are clear at the start of any project.
- The annual performance report will try to focus on assessing to what extent these outcomes have been achieved. There are good examples of where this has occurred and the situation is improving.
- Discussions continue to seek to ensure that the Improvement Priorities in our Corporate Plan are more clear in terms of outcomes, with the Self-Assessment assessing the extent to which those outcomes have been achieved.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
3	2	6

Property Assets

Risk: The Council's property assets not used to their full potential

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- A new Asset Strategy for the 10 year period from 2019/20 to 2028/29 has been developed and was approved by the full Council on 7 March 2019.
- The result is that a number of buildings that were no longer needed have been disposed of.
- In terms of vehicles, a plan has been implemented to try and make better use of the Council's fleet that has already presented some financial savings and is likely to achieve more.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	2	4

Information Technology Assets

Risk: The Council's Information Technology assets not used to their full potential

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- Work is ongoing to develop a new Digital Plan for the period 2023-28. It is expected that it will be presented for scrutiny by the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in September 2023 before it will be formally approved by Cabinet in November 2023.
- The digital channel is an ongoing development and new services are constantly being released. There are several internal developments to improve internal administration, including a lengthy list of staff self-service developments and significant improvements to training arrangements. The self-service channels (internal and external) are not the only developments. Around fifty new systems are developed annually and these are tailored around the requirements of the services rather than having to adapt a service to meet the needs of a particular system. While there are many examples of where we have used technology to improve how we deliver services to the residents of Gwynedd, it is not happening at the pace that we would like it to happen and several applications remain for resources to develop them.
- In extending the use of technology we face further risks in terms of security and cybersecurity, with this element being an essential assessment of any new development or review of an inherent solution.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
3	3	9

Workforce Planning

Risk: Failure to plan the workforce in terms of attracting, developing and retaining staff

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- To ensure that the Council is in a position to deliver services that always put the People of Gwynedd at the centre, we must ensure that we have the right staff in the right place with the right skills. A Project Group has been established and short-term and longer-term objectives are in place. The Human Resources Team has attended training on the relevant skills needed to plan the workforce effectively. The main focus at the moment is on solving the short-term recruitment problems the Council is experiencing, but the most important and longer-term objective is to improve how we attract and retain staff, planning our staffing needs some years in advance while reducing the risk of having problems in attracting staff in the future.
- The development of the Council's data handling capacity to plan staffing needs is being addressed, including the development of a system of using exit interviews.
- The programme of attracting apprentices and professional trainees has been well established, to meet the need for officer development in specialist areas.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
3	3	9

Leadership

Risk: Deficiencies in the Council's leadership means that we are not doing the right things

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- There is an element of evidence (through self-assessment) that leadership within the Council is improving with numerous examples of transformational leadership on display rather than transactional leadership. The increased emphasis placed on "leading" rather than "managing" within the Ffordd Gwynedd culture is another firm indication of the great strides being made with Cabinet members taking a leading role in promoting good leadership by committing to their development as leaders.
- The definition of leadership within Cyngor Gwynedd was agreed upon and that definition is reflected in revised job descriptions for each headteacher and manager in the Council. The commitment at a political and operational level demonstrates that these positive actions have come to fruition and that the need and ability to lead is taking root as the norm within the Council.
- The re-establishment of the Management Network, with the emphasis on developing leadership skills, is another key step in the shift in emphasis from a "management" to "leadership" culture within the Council while the Managerial Review and revised job descriptions have also contributed to clarity around the expectation of leadership. In light of all this, this work is seen as remaining key but recognising that it is not as much of a risk as it has been in the past.
- To reflect that, this work has been incorporated within the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan's programme of work rather than standing as a stand-alone project although a specific project continues to have a high improvement priority in relation to Women in Leadership within the Council. The Council recognises that the number of women performing a managerial function within the Council is disproportionate with the ratio of the whole workforce and therefore seeks to boost the number of women applying and reaching senior positions within the Council.
- The Corporate Management Team is committed to its development, with each team member having completed a personal profile and also attending an initial workshop as an activity to strengthen the team for the future.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
4	2	8

Risk Management

Risk: Weaknesses in our risk management arrangements that increase the threat of something going wrong or failure to take an opportunity to improve

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- There are strong arrangements for monitoring our compliance with certain types of operational risks.
- Each risk in the Corporate Risk Register has been considered from the perspective of the risk to the people of Gwynedd, not from the Council's introverted point of view.
- A new Corporate Risk Register was launched on 6 March 2021. The new system has proven to be a convenient facility for users in every department as they consider their priorities and identify what needs to be done, and to assist members in challenging performance and ensuring that the expected action has been taken.
- Lessons have been learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic which have been valuable in subsequent crises, e.g. the war in Ukraine.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
5	2	10

Performance

Risk: Weaknesses in our performance management arrangements mean that we cannot take appropriate steps to achieve our purpose

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- The Council's Performance Management system focusses on ensuring that business units achieve their purpose and this is done by continuously reviewing if we are measuring the right things.
- Regular meetings take place with Cabinet Members and managers to assess the latest performance, with members of the relevant Scrutiny Committee also present to challenge. Regular performance reports are submitted by Cabinet members on their areas of responsibility to Cabinet meetings. Clear arrangements have been put in place for 2023/24.
- The Auditor General also observes our performance in different areas by publishing various reports and the Governance and Audit Committee takes an overview that any recommendations receive attention.
- The new Corporate Complaints Procedure continues to work well. The Services Improvement Officer ensures that we learn lessons from any complaints, and try to avoid repeating mistakes.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	2	4

Internal Control

Risk: Unsuitable internal control arrangements which means that we either do not protect ourselves from risks, or waste resources on over-control

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- The Audit Manager's annual report confirms that the Council's internal controls can be relied upon.
- Reviewing and adapting internal controls so that they are proportionate to what is necessary is central to the goal of placing the people of Gwynedd at the centre of to everything we do, by removing overly bureaucratic tasks. The removal of barriers is part of everyone's work, leading to a suitable level of internal control.
- The efficiency of the Internal Audit system is under continuous review and self-assessment indicates that the service satisfies professional standards in accordance with expectation.
- Gwynedd Council's Governance and Audit Committee has an agreed terms of reference. There is evidence that the Governance and Audit Committee is very effective in delivering its functions.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	2	4

Information

Risk: Failure to maximise the potential of information in supporting Council business and failure to meet statutory requirements

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **High** risk, because:

- The 2021-2026 Information Plan includes a number of schemes for addressing the information management and data use risks. Sixteen of the 45 projects within the scheme have already been completed with the rest in progress.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
4	3	12

Finance

Risk: Weaknesses when controlling public finance

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- The Council has effective financial planning and management arrangements, including internal accountants and auditors, led by the chief finance officer.
- Internal auditors have a focus on effective arrangements and controls in financial systems, while the accountants work closely with the departments and encourage management ownership of their systems, performance, and financial propriety.
- The review of expenditure against budgets, and monitoring that savings have been achieved by all Council departments, ensures that services operate efficiently.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
5	2	10

Accountability

Risk: Poor reporting, without transparency and unsuitable for the audience

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Low** risk, because:

- The Council has provided guidelines on preparing reports and on making good decisions, in order to ensure that the reports available to the public are clear.
- As well as formal reports for making decisions, the reports produced also include the Annual Performance Report, the Council's Plan (which includes departmental business plans) and the Annual Governance Statement produced in accordance with the CIPFA/Solace framework.
- The Council produces regular reports on its financial position.
- Monitoring of Cabinet reports will continue naturally with the Chief Executive taking a look at each one.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	2	4

Assurance

Risk: Lack of assurance and accountability that raises suspicion amongst the public regarding what the Council is doing

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **Medium** risk, because:

- There are many ways available within the Council to provide independent assurance that the Council's governance arrangements are working as they should. Statutory officers ensure that matters comply with the law and the procedures in the Constitution, whilst the Chief Executive and the Director continually challenge whether or not the departments are doing the right things. Cabinet members also meet often to challenge each other regarding developments.
- The Governance and Audit Committee keeps an overview of the governance arrangements as well as the implementation of the external auditor's recommendations.
- Supporting this is the Internal Audit Service that operates in accordance with the statutory professional standards, namely the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.
- However, formally it is the scrutiny procedure that should continue to hold the Cabinet to account. There is transparent and objective scrutiny and challenging of decisions and policies; however, there is uncertainty regarding how effective this is.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk score
2	3	6

Health, Safety and Well-being

Risk: Inadequate arrangements and action by Council Services to manage health and safety risks effectively

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently a **High** risk, because:

- A detailed programme of work has been prepared starting with competencies and training on those competencies for Council leaders.
- All Cabinet members have received training, and a series of sessions for elected members have been held. A training session for Council Management Team has taken place on 13 February 2023.
- Work is underway to take a closer look at core / mandatory training and the governance process the Council has in place to ensure staff attend essential training.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score
4	4	16

Customer Contact

Risk: Lack of timely response to queries

Assessment:

We have assessed that this is currently **High** risk, because:

- Detailed analysis completed and presented to Members in October 2022 with a programme of work identified and the risk added to the corporate governance risks.
- Calls related to planning matters are received directly by the Planning Service since the 1 April 2023 and a short training module has been trialled for all staff who deal with enquiries.

Current Risk Score:

Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score
3	4	12

We have been advised on the implications of the result of **the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework** by the Governance and Audit Committee, and that the arrangements **continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework**. The areas that have already been addressed and those which the Council will address specifically have new ongoing action plans and are outlined below.

Part 4: SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

4.1 The above scores indicate that none of the 24 areas of governance presents a very high risk. There are 4 high risk and 11 medium risks.

4.2 Actions for the areas that are a high or medium risk are noted below.

HIGH RISKS

Governance Area	Response Arrangements	Department Responsible
The Council's Culture	<p>A Lead Group (with the entire Corporate Management Team as members) has been formed and met for the first time in June 2023. The Group will retain an overview of the implementation of the Work Programme and provide guidance on embedding the culture within the Council.</p> <p>An annual report will be submitted to Cabinet on the progress of the work into the future with the content partly based on self-assessments carried out by each Department.</p> <p>A dedicated officer has been identified for driving each of the nine work streams within the Five Year Plan.</p>	Corporate Support
Information	<p>Continue with the action plan contained in the Information Plan.</p>	Corporate Support
Customer Contact	<p>A draft plan for Working for the Future will be provided for adoption during October 2023 along with changes to online self-service back office arrangements that will allow officers to identify operations directly on the accounts of enquirers. The Council's new Digital Plan to include a bid for funding to fund a stick system integrated with <i>Microsoft Teams</i>.</p>	Leadership Team and Legal
Iechyd, Diogelwch a Llesiant	<p>A detailed work programme has been prepared.</p>	Corporate Support

MEDIUM RISKS

Governance Area	Response Arrangements	Department Responsible
Stakeholders	<p>There are ongoing efforts in various areas to try to simplify a complex working relationship. However it must be acknowledged that there is only so much that can be done and there is room to question that the solution now is to try to find ways to work around the legislative barriers that have been set by the Government. We are already doing so quite successfully.</p>	Leadership Team and Legal
Engagement	<p>During 2023/24, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to develop and strengthen engagement across the Council; • continue to highlight the opportunities and support individual services to proactively engage with the people of Gwynedd; • continue to develop our arrangements for ensuring that we engage effectively with groups that we as a Council are struggling to reach; • complete work on an engagement project that is part of the Council's Equality Plan. 	Corporate Support
Direction and vision	The risk is accepted at its present level.	Corporate Support
Sustainability	<p>We will look at our planning arrangements (including the Council's Plan, Annual Performance Reports and the corporate self-assessment that needs to be undertaken) to try to ensure that we have more regard to the principles of the Act while also reporting on progress.</p> <p>We will consider how awareness of the principles can be raised by relating them to the operating principles of Ffordd Gwynedd.</p>	Corporate Support
Reviewing Outcomes	The risk is accepted at its present level.	Leadership Team and Legal
Information Technology Assets	The Council's Digital Plan 2023-28 to be approved during 2023/24 (Cabinet November 2023).	Finance

Governance Area	Response Arrangements	Department Responsible
Planning the Workforce	<p>To lay the foundation for long-term plans, we will commission a piece of research that will give the Council long-term direction on its staffing needs, looking at the type of skills and jobs we will need in a few years' time. This work will lead to a long-term staff attraction and development scheme.</p>	Corporate Support
Leadership	<p>A specific Potential Development Programme has been developed for women as part of the Women in Leadership Project. A Mentoring Scheme women girls has also been approved and specific training for the first cohort of "mentors" has been undertaken. We will continue to hold "break-time talks" for leaders and potential leaders across the Council and also for female councillors in the new Council.</p> <p>We will also develop the leadership behaviours expected of managers generally primarily through a combination of training relating to the "way of working" and by challenging the behaviours as part of the ongoing evaluation being promoted as part of establishing the culture.</p> <p>We will continue to experiment with an alternative approach to the management network sessions by establishing groups of 12 managers who will be able to host and support each other.</p>	Corporate Support
Risk Management	<p>Work still needs to be done to ensure that all Council departments maintain the routine of recording their main risks and reviewing them regularly.</p> <p>The Insurance and Risk Service will support all departments to ensure that the use of the Corporate Risk Register is consistent across the Council, and that risks are continually updated. The procedure of considering the inclusion of risk registers in monitoring the performance of departments will develop further.</p> <p>The Risk Register to be regularly submitted to the Governance Group to carry out quality checks, before regularly submitting information to the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	Finance

Governance Area	Response Arrangements	Department Responsible
Finance	<p>After a long period of discovering and delivering savings, over £35m in the period since 2015/16, the plans are now so much harder to realise with efficiency projects far more work than cutting services.</p> <p>A series of new savings worth £6.4m, largely to be realised over the next 2 years, were approved by Cabinet in February 2023.</p>	Finance
Assurance	<p>The Scrutiny Team will continue to work closely through the Scrutiny Forum with the Chairs to take forward the scrutiny programmes over the coming year.</p>	Corporate Support

Part 5: OPINION

We are of the opinion that the governance arrangements described above offer assurance that our governance arrangements work well overall. However, we intend to take measures to deal with the matters noted in Part 4 above during next year in order to improve our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these measures will deal with the need to improve as identified in the effectiveness review, and we will monitor their operation as part of the next annual review.

DAFYDD GIBBARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, GWYNEDD COUNCIL

Cllr. DYFRIG SIENCYN
LEADER, GWYNEDD COUNCIL

DATE:

DATE: