



Cyngor Gwynedd Annual Performance Report and Self Assessment 2022/2023



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Foreword by Council Leader



It is a pleasure to publish this report which describes and measures the Council's work during the year. This is the last performance report of the Council's Plan 2018-23, and therefore a golden opportunity to look back, reflecting specifically on what was achieved during 2022/23.

The past few years have been difficult for the people of Gwynedd and the world today is very different to how it was five years ago. With Covid-19 and its impact on our communities, we have changed the way we work to protect residents, businesses, and our employees. Who, for example, would have ever imagined that we would hold our first ever hybrid multi-location Full Council meeting last May, with Councillors joining from every corner of the county?

I am proud of our ability as a Council to adapt quickly, time after time, for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd. This year, the cost-of-living crisis bit hard and even those who had never known financial hardship found themselves navigating uncharted territory. In response we invested in two new roles to provide practical money-saving advice to residents, and there was further collaboration with community partners to establish nine local hubs, where people can receive support with a wide range of issues.

Undoubtedly, the cost-of-living crisis, the ill-fated Westminster mini-budget of September 2022, and Brexit have affected some projects. In December, the cost escalation of the Cricieth school construction came to light. Whilst the Cabinet approved extra funding to ensure a first-class learning environment for pupils, a delay in opening the new building is inevitable.

However, against this backdrop of challenges there are many examples of success and innovation thanks to our dedicated staff and partners. During the year, eight houses were bought to let, over 100 empty houses were brought back into use and land was bought to build houses for local people - the first scheme of its kind in 30 years. Along with planning and tax measures, it is good to see our Housing Action Plan come to fruition in order to address the impact of second homes and short-term holiday accommodation on our communities.

A highlight of 2022/23 was our progress towards a Gwynedd Autism Plan. A program is now in place to raise awareness and increase the support available to families and individuals living with a neurodevelopmental condition. It is also commendable that positive steps have been taken towards realising our ambitious project to develop a nursing home on the Penyberth site, so that residents who need intensive care receive it as close as possible to their home and families.

We can't forget the importance of doing the little things either. Come rain or shine, the Tidying Up Teams are becoming more prominent in our areas, and there are now five teams working across the county to beautify our communities and create a sense of local pride. Another small, but significant change, was the adoption of the Council's updated Language Policy in October 2022, and the decision to use "Cyngor Gwynedd" only in our writing and our corporate identity. We are glad to have since seen a flurry of other organisations following our example, helping to promote and increase the visibility of the Welsh language.

Our influence as a Council is far-reaching, but our main aim is to support residents and respond to the needs of Gwynedd's communities. It is hard to believe that in a time where there has never been a greater need for robust, high-quality, local services, that we are once again facing a threat to our budget. I will continue to spread the message to Westminster and the Welsh Government that there is a need to invest more in Local Government and not squeeze the budget as has happened for many years.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dyfrig Siencyn'.

Introduction



The Council published its 'Cyngor Gwynedd Plan for 2018-2023' in March 2018, in which our ambition and priorities were set for the five years in question. This report outlines what the Council achieved during 2022-23 and is also an opportunity to look back on the final year of the Council Plan for the five years from 2018-23.

The first part of the report covers our performance per Improvement Priority. These are the eight different fields that we've been working on to make a positive difference to the lives of the people of Gwynedd.

The second part of the report covers the rest of the Council's work - mainly the day-to-day work done by the departments, for example caring for the elderly, recycling service, and education. These are individual chapters on the performance of each of the Council's departments.

Also, this year, the last part of the report will incorporate our self-assessment for 2022-23. This is Cyngor Gwynedd's second self-assessment as expected under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

As was outlined in recent annual reports, the pandemic significantly affected the Council's services, but there was a change during 2022-23 when most restrictions were relaxed. Of course, Covid-19 continues to have a visible effect in many fields to this day, and there is no doubt that the way we work and provide services has changed because of the pandemic.



A significant increase was seen in the cost of living during the year with the prices of goods and services, and especially energy costs, rising very quickly. The Council responded to this in many ways, including offering a wide range of support to the residents of the county with their living costs.

There was also increased pressure on the Council's budget during the year as the high levels of inflation, the likes of which have not been seen in decades, affected the cost of goods and services that the Council buys. In addition, since 2015-16 the Council has realised over £33.5 million savings, so despite all the efforts made, it is inevitable that savings of that kind together with incremental costs effect some services.

Despite these financial challenges, the Council is constantly innovating whilst trying to find better and more efficient ways of providing services. This includes investing in new capital projects, such as improving our schools' buildings for example. Indeed, although this is a report at the end of the financial year, the process of measuring the success of our work, and challenging our own performance, occurs continuously throughout the year.

As part of our performance arrangements, we hold a series of performance challenge meetings, this is an opportunity for us to see what kind of progress the departments have made in their day-to-day work as well as the Improvement Priorities projects. This Annual Performance Report is based on the findings of these performance challenge meetings.

These are balanced findings, therefore the report doesn't draw attention to only the good things but gives a fair and honest picture of our performance during the year. In doing so, we have been able to celebrate our successes and see which aspects of our work needs further attention, to assist us in providing the best possible service for the residents of the county within the resources we have.

The Report is presented to the Council's Cabinet and the Full Council meeting for approval.

In line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, the Council has adopted Well-being Objectives that contribute towards seven national well-being goals. The objectives are based on the well-being assessment carried out by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and engagement sessions held when developing the Plan.

The need to act in accordance with the five sustainable development principles has also been noted, through:

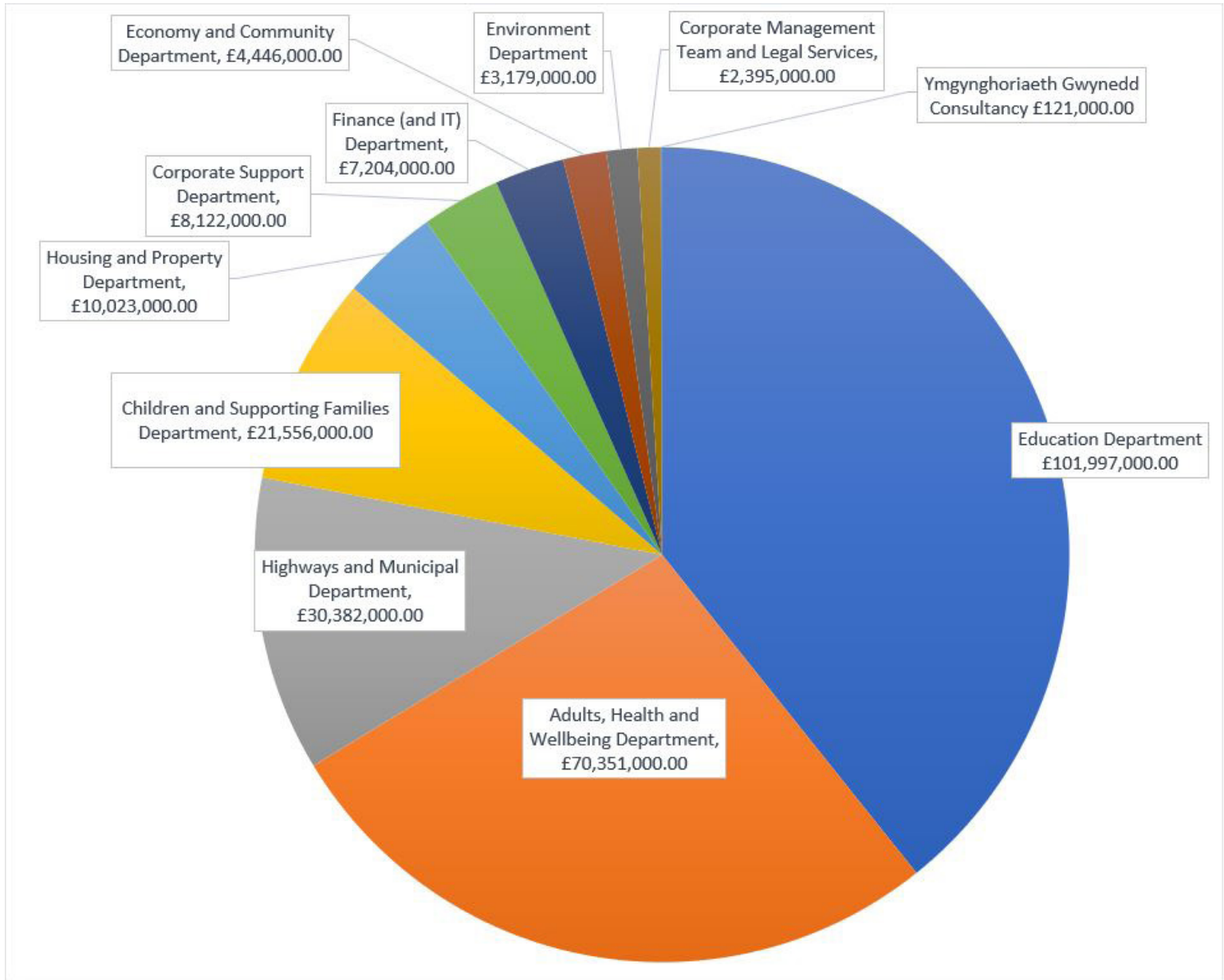
- considering the long-term
- prevention
- integrated working
- working collaboratively
- and being inclusive of people of all ages.

We are expected to report on our contribution to the principles of the Act, and information about many of these activities can be found in the body of the report.

Listed at the end of each chapter are the Well-being Objectives to which the projects and the day-to-day work contribute.

Cyngor Gwynedd Well-being Objectives	National Well-being Goals						
We will ensure that the residents of Gwynedd:	Prosperous	Resilient	Healthier	Equal	Cohesive Communities	A vibrant culture where the Welsh language is thriving	Globally responsible
Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives							
Live in quality homes within their communities							
Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support themselves and their families							
Receive education of the highest quality which will enable them to do what they want to do							
Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible							
Live in a naturally Welsh society							
Take advantage of the beauty of the County's natural environment.							

Our Expenditure



Highways and Municipal and YGC budgets were not adjusted in the accounts, we continued to report on the budget position of the old structure. They have changed for the 2023/24 budget.

Part 1

Improvement Priorities

Eight Improvement Priorities have been identified within the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023. These are the key fields within which we believe we need to take action in order to make a positive difference to the lives of the people of Gwynedd.

Under the eight Improvement Priorities there is a description of the projects which will contribute towards realising the ambition outlined. On the following pages, a report is provided on the progress of those projects during 2022/23 against what we said we would do in the Gwynedd Council Plan: 2022/23 Review.

Further information on what we will do in the future in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 can be obtained by visiting www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/councilplan

Improvement Priority 1

Create a viable and prosperous economy.

Ensuring that there are suitable jobs available in the county that pay salaries that enable people to support themselves and their families is the foundation to allowing the people of Gwynedd to thrive. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- North Wales Growth Deal
- Keeping the Benefit Local
- Create High Value Jobs (£31,300+ salary)
- Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig
- Promoting Town Centres
- Implementing the Gwynedd Slate Heritage
- Businesses Receiving Support to Prosper
- Tourism - creating a sustainable tourism plan
- Regeneration: Creating regeneration plans for our areas

What did we promise to do?

A lack of growth is a weakness in the economy of the whole of north Wales, and particularly the north-west. In an attempt to overturn the situation, the six counties in north Wales, and other stakeholders such as education institutions in the region and the private sector, came together to establish the North Wales Economic Ambition Board.

The Board's main scheme is the 'North Wales Growth Deal' and in December 2020 an agreement was signed between the Ambition Board, the Welsh Government and UK Government, which paves the way to delivering the Growth Deal. The bid will lead to an investment of £945m in the north Wales region over the next 15 years and create up to 4,000 jobs across north Wales.

As a member of the Ambition Board, our aim as a Council is to ensure that the people and businesses of Gwynedd maximise the benefits from this financial investment, especially at a time when there will be a need to respond to the side-effects of Brexit and Covid-19.

In 2021/22 the Programme Office prepared and submitted business cases that are required by the two Governments for the 21 growth deal projects across the region.

In the future, we will continue to contribute to the Ambition Board's work programme, which will include supporting a programme to improve the availability of fast broadband across Gwynedd; supporting smart local energy networks across the county; safeguarding and creating new jobs at the Trawsfynydd Power Station site; supporting the development of a pioneering new science campus in Bangor and developing a Rural Innovation Centre in Glynllifon.

We will also contribute to the development of the North Wales Economic Framework, which is being prepared by the Welsh Government to identify the main regional investment programmes to the future.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

Scheme development costs have increased significantly, and this affected the progress of some projects. Each programme had to be reviewed and revised prior to proceeding with their detailed plans.

The Bangor Digital Signal Processing Centre scheme is in its second year of operation, developing skills and pioneering global research, and has created joint working opportunities for commercial firms in the region.

The Glynllifon Rural Economy Plan is in the process of preparing a planning application for creating a new centre on the site.

Cwmni Eginio have been awarded a formal collaboration agreement with the NDA who own the Trawsfynydd site, and development options are being prepared.

Good progress was seen in the Smart Energy Scheme to support local energy initiatives across the region. Good progress was also seen with the Bryn Cegin Park Scheme, with a Joint Initiative Agreement in place with the Welsh Government for the development of the site.

A decision has now been made that three schemes, namely the development of the Bodelwyddan site, the Llysfasi centre of excellence development and the development of a Bangor Energy Centre will not proceed as Growth Bid projects. This means that £30 million of the fund has not been allocated. The Ambition Board has agreed on arrangements to identify new transformational projects that will contribute to the challenging targets that are a part of the Bid for creating new jobs in the region and attracting investment from the private sector over the next 12 years of the programme's life.

Please see more details [here](#) Annual Report of the Ambition Board.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.

What did we promise to do?

The Council is responsible for procuring, or purchasing, a number of goods and services and is eager to try to ensure that local businesses can compete for and win these contracts in order to ensure that as much of the Council's expenditure as possible remains local.

The local market cannot always respond to opportunities due to restrictions in terms of size or other existing barriers. This then leads to businesses losing the desire and ability to compete for work, and consequently, it is not possible to maximise the Council expenditure that is kept locally.

We are seeking to support local businesses with the changes to procurement rules as a result of leaving the European Union, taking advantage of the opportunities to procure locally.

During 2022/23, we will:

- Share our learning from the 'Social Value Project' project that assesses tenders based on price, quality and local value, recommending any changes to the way that the Council procures goods and services
- Provide plans to develop the market's ability to win the Council's procurement contracts, responding to the questions of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in tenders, support to gain the necessary accreditations or any developments in the field
- Create a 'map' of local businesses in order to maintain an image of the local market. This will identify opportunities for businesses to apply for work or identify delivery gaps.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

A project has been completed in order to assess the practicality of introducing a social benefits assessment methodology for Gwynedd, i.e. altering the method of assessing tenders that is currently used by measuring Price and Quality, so that it becomes one that measures Price, Quality and Local Value.

As part of the project, two further pilot schemes were completed during the year by using tender assessment methods that are based on social benefits. This included an air systems maintenance contract and a waste service vehicle framework agreement. Although we did not proceed to award one contract and there were a lack of submissions with the other, we have now learnt more about the assessment method.

The Social Value Portal company has been commissioned to complete a Local Needs Assessment which has highlighted the social needs of the County. To this end, we have tailored social measures to focus on these matters in our contracts. Training sessions were held to understand and learn to use the arrangements for officers and local businesses. Collaboration work has taken place in order to share our experiences through various networks such as the North Wales Social Benefits Network and the National Procurement Network, by giving a presentation on what we have been trialling in Gwynedd.

In terms of plans to develop the market's ability to be awarded the Council's procurement contracts, respond to the Well-being Act questions in tenders, and support to gain health and safety accreditations, arrangements have been made to offer 1:1 tendering support, workshops, and refer to Business Wales over the year. Specific support has been offered in the fields of Highway Equipment Hire, Quarry Materials, Bus and Taxi Service, Care Services including Domiciliary Care, Nursery and Supported Housing. A Business Wales officer has provided support such as how to use the appropriate websites, the best practice when tendering and revising applications.

Ongoing work is being done to support businesses to respond to the tender requirements as a result of any developments in the field, such as gaining accreditations or responding to the needs of the Well-being Act.

A sustainability workshop was held jointly with Business Wales for providers in the fields of Transportation and Construction in order to improve their processes as well as measuring their carbon footprint and taking simple steps to reduce and measure their environmental impact. The Council's Transportation and Property Services have included a clause within contracts which makes it a requirement for providers to take advantage of the support from Business Wales to create a Carbon reduction plan. A Social Care Carbon Reduction Group was established in the Council during the year. This Group will look to identify the steps we can take to encourage and assist care providers to reduce their environmental impact.

In terms of assessing opportunities to award tenders to local companies post-Brexit, and the freedom to act outside the European procurement regulations, the national contract rules are currently under review. The intention is to introduce the new regulations in 2023/2024. Tenders cannot be awarded to local companies within the current regulations. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned methodology is a step towards awarding contracts to businesses that deliver local benefit, whether they are environmental, social or economic factors.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

What did we promise to do?

Salaries in Gwynedd are among the lowest anywhere in Britain. Weekly pay in the county was the lowest in Wales in 2020 (£500 on average) and the low pay is at its worst in our rural communities (£418 - the lowest in Britain). Low salaries will inevitably lead to higher levels of poverty and rural depopulation, which in turn affects our communities, the future of our young people, and the Welsh language as a healthy community language.

The Creating High Value Jobs project has already taken steps to improve the situation, securing European funding to realise a plan to develop space for businesses to base themselves at the Eryri Aerospace Centre in Llanbedr, implementing a scheme to increase the number of school pupils who study the subjects desired by businesses within well-paid sectors, and influencing the decision to continue with the decommissioning work on the Trawsfynydd Power Station site and work with the Welsh Government to establish the Eginio company to regenerate the site.

In future, we will continue with these schemes, and we will also lead on other schemes such as supporting the development of the creative and digital industries sector, supporting the development of the low carbon sector and the health and medical sector. We will also be working with Gwynedd businesses to understand future needs for skills for higher-value jobs and promote these opportunities locally.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The STEM Gogledd scheme, which prepares our young people to take advantage of jobs in scientific, technological and engineering fields, has continued throughout 2022/23. During the year 165 school pupils throughout Gwynedd benefited from the scheme. STEM Gogledd will cease in June 2023, having supported over 640 young people in Gwynedd to capitalise on high-value job opportunities in the county.

The work of safeguarding and creating new jobs on the Trawsfynydd and Llanbedr sites has also continued, but the bid for resources from the UK Government Levelling-Up Fund to improve the access to Llanbedr Airfield was unsuccessful. Despite this, the Council is continuing to work with the site's owners to secure further investment that will create new jobs for local people.

The team has developed and submitted a bid for funding from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and has attracted a £450,000 investment to Gwynedd to support the recovery of local businesses, to support Gwynedd residents into work and to ensure that the residents and businesses of Gwynedd can benefit from proposed investments in Trawsfynydd and Llanbedr.

Over the past year, the resources of this project team have also been directed towards supporting efforts to formulate a system and proposals for a UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment for Gwynedd and North Wales. The work will lead to an investment of over £24 million in Gwynedd, up until the end of March 2025.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

What did we promise to do?

The nature of our rural economy means that 80% of Gwynedd's businesses are sole proprietors, and there are too many jobs within sectors that don't pay well. This leads to threats in terms of the sustainability of our rural communities with these challenges having increased because of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit.

The Council is seeking to strengthen the foundation of the rural economy by encouraging local enterprises to develop and creating and maintaining jobs across Gwynedd. A financial package has been identified via Europe to implement the Rural Development Programme in the area, which includes a package of projects to promote enterprise.

Ensuring digital connectivity for our rural communities, and that the workforce and rural businesses have the skills to take advantage of them, are matters that have already been addressed. We have carried out a pilot scheme to provide public WiFi in eight rural towns, and to increase access to computer equipment. We have also been involved in the ARFOR programme, a Welsh Government investment to create more and better jobs in areas of west Wales where a high percentage of the population speaks Welsh.

In the future, we will continue to extend the digital provision in communities and will work with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and the private sector to establish a rural innovation hub in Glynllifon, giving particular attention to the food and drink sector, and we will also work to develop the baseline economy and support our rural businesses to adapt.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

On 10 October 2022, the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru confirmed that £11 million will be provided for the second phase of [ARFOR](#) until the end of March 2025. The programme will continue to operate across Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire, in order to support the communities that are Welsh-language strongholds to thrive by means of economic interventions that will also contribute towards increasing opportunities to see and use the Welsh language every day.

The [Digital Platform](#) scheme which is part of this project has supported 65 businesses over the past year to develop their use of technology by attending specialist training sessions and being supported by digital mentors to develop their business.

The project has also ensured that free Wi-Fi is now available in 12 of the county's main towns and destinations. As well as offering internet access, the equipment produces valuable information about the numbers that visit the high street. [Patrwm](#)

The European LEADER Programme that funds [Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig](#) will end in June 2023. The Department is working closely with Menter Môn which administers LEADER in Gwynedd to research opportunities to continue with the work through sources such as the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund. Information about the range and impact of the work of Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig can be seen [here](#) and a handbook highlighting examples of the work has been published.

Over 6,600 of Gwynedd residents will have participated in 90 Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig pilot activities during the life of the programme, ensuring firm foundations for the future.

During the past year the project has also attracted £4.6m from the Welsh Government to support the development of the circular economy in Gwynedd, which will bring economic and environmental advantages to the county. Cyngor Gwynedd has received support in principle to the bid, but is awaiting confirmation of the funding to support a package of activities over the next three years. It includes the Adra Cyf. De-carbonisation Hub in Penygroes and further support for the network of maker-spaces – under the Ffiws banner – that have been established across Gwynedd to increase residents and businesses' access to equipment.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.

What did we promise to do?

Lively town centres are able to make substantial contributions to the economic and social success of local areas and offer a broad range of services to our communities.

However, the "high street" areas of our town centres are currently facing substantial challenges with a number of national chain stores closing and trading being restricted as a result of Covid-19. There is a need to promote and support the development of town centres to ensure that they are able to adapt and thrive in the future; to maintain and create employment, provide a broad range of goods and services required by residents and visitors and provide new residential units.

During 2020, a cross-departmental group was established to develop a programme of short-term improvements and measures in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

We managed to attract grants from the Welsh Government to implement a programme which included environmental improvements, signs, landscaping and traffic management measures. A fund was established to assist businesses to adapt their arrangements so they could welcome customers safely. A pilot was established to develop digital infrastructure in town centres offering Wi-Fi, marketing and e-marketing opportunities, and there are arrangements now in place to extend the scheme to all the towns in Gwynedd.

We will continue with this work and develop a package of interventions to improve and promote town centres, based on what matters to residents within the communities. We will collaborate with and support a broad range of business groups and local regeneration organisations to promote and attract investment to town centres. We will also continue to collaborate with businesses in Bangor and Caernarfon where Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have been established.

In the future, we will continue with efforts to regenerate town centres, paying particular attention to targeting empty properties. We anticipate that there will be an opportunity to develop a series of schemes to improve town centres across the County as part of the Regeneration Framework and we will attract grants, such as the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Regeneration Programme to implement projects.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

During the past year, new arrangements were established to target the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns funds to develop and implement a range of town centre regeneration projects. By the end of March 2023, we managed to claim grants worth £2m for projects in Gwynedd, and the operation and monitoring work continues.

We also managed to secure financial support from the Welsh Government to develop town plans for Bangor, Caernarfon and Y Bala; and bids have also been submitted for Pwllheli and Porthmadog. Further bids will be submitted based on the priorities of the Local Regeneration Plans.

During the first quarter of the year priority was given to preparing financial bids for the UK Government's Levelling-Up Fund. The 'Llewyrch o'r Llechi' bid was approved, securing an £18.8m capital investment to the slate communities of Gwynedd.

The work of developing the Bangor City Centre Regeneration Scheme is also continuing. A bid for resources from the UK Government's Levelling-up Fund was submitted, and although unsuccessful, developmental work on projects such as the Bangor Health and Well-being Hub is continuing. A Regeneration Manager for the Bangor Regeneration Programme was appointed in November 2022. The role will coordinate and support regeneration efforts in Bangor, focusing on plans in the City Centre and the High Street specifically.

During the period we celebrated the official opening of the Cei Llechi development in Caernarfon by Galeri Cyf. and the Caernarfon Harbour Trust. The Cei Llechi scheme was an investment of over £5m to regenerate a key site, and was part of a £12m financial package that the Council secured as part of the Caernarfon Town and Waterfront Regeneration Initiative.

A Cross-departmental Empty Properties Group was established, which brings together various services that deal with empty properties. An Action Plan has been prepared, together with an empty properties priority list.

Well-being Objectives :

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

What did we promise to do?

In July 2021, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee announced that the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales had been inscribed as a World Heritage Site. The designation gives us an opportunity to recognise the contribution of the traditional slate industry on an international platform, and to celebrate and preserve the Welsh culture associated with those areas.

We have already used the World Heritage Site nomination as a tool to regenerate our slate communities and to increase the value of the tourist industry by developing six Community Destination Plans for six areas. The Community Destination Plans identify local regeneration priorities and opportunities to capitalise on the designation for the benefit of communities and the historic landscape. Through this work we saw several interpretation panels being erected across Gwynedd together with art works and murals, as well as other schemes to raise communities' confidence in their area, such as educational projects and a Business and Young Ambassadors scheme. £1m of additional resources have been attracted to the county through the Heritage Fund, Welsh Government, the European Union and Eryri National Park through the LleCHI project.

In future, we will work alongside the slate communities, via the LleCHI project, to create a programme of regeneration activities in these areas that will improve the appearance and look of communities, improve the quality of the visitor's experience, and will lead to an increase in residents' ownership of their heritage, language and culture.

We will review the site's structures and management arrangements to implement the Management Plan and to continue engaging and collaborating with communities, landowners, businesses and partners to ensure that we take advantage of the opportunities that emerge from the designation for the benefit of the people of Gwynedd.

What progress was made in 2021/22?

Successful bids were submitted to the Heritage Fund, the Eryri Fund, the Welsh Government, Cyngor Gwynedd and the UK Government which have led to attracting over £27m of additional resources to support regeneration through heritage in the slate valleys.

A subsequent LleCHI bid has been approved by the Heritage Lottery Fund worth £129,000, for the development of an engagement, interpretation and regeneration project worth over £1m over five years if it is successful. A project officer has been appointed to carry out the development work.

New governance structures have been established to secure support from strategic partners, landowners and communities, including the opportunity for potential developers to present ideas for consideration by the designation's partners.

The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales Supplementary Planning Guidance has been approved by Cyngor Gwynedd and the Eryri National Park Authority. A document titled 'Caring for our Slate Landscape' was published during the past year.

A strategy and plans were developed to target resources to support the the value of the World Heritage site designation in the future and continue with the LleCHI programme to support the communities to capitalise on the status.

Joint working arrangements were established to carry out the Levelling-Up Bid with partners in Dyffryn Ogwen, Dinorwig and Blaenau Ffestiniog.

The area has been invited to present in several meetings on good practice in developing a nomination with local communities and securing a voice for local communities.

We successfully obtained funding from Cadw to implement the first stage of interpretation across the World Heritage Site as well as funding to employ a Northwest Wales World Heritage Site Coordinator.

There was collaboration with Bangor University on a research project to study the effect of the designation on communities.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.



What did we promise to do?

As a result of Covid-19 and Brexit, it is a period of uncertainty and change for businesses. Cyngor Gwynedd is determined to help local enterprises to adapt and respond to the challenge and we have already supported local businesses by providing financial aid, advice and support.

The county's businesses work with many Council departments or receive a service from them, including rates, planning, trading standards, building control and procurement. We will continue to prioritise resources and efforts to support our local businesses, ensuring that all parts of the Council consider how they can offer assistance to support businesses to thrive.

We are also encouraging Gwynedd businesses to make the best of the support available by communicating regularly with the 4,200 businesses that receive our information bulletins.

We are supporting and working with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board's Programme Office on a package of Growth Deal projects to create opportunities for businesses within Gwynedd's economy in the future. We are also running a campaign to encourage the residents and visitors of Gwynedd to support local businesses.

As well as continuing with the above, in 2022/23 we will evaluate the plan's activities and review our priorities for developing the economy in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and leaving the European Union.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

As the businesses in the county are still under some strain, the project has focused on ensuring that our businesses have the information they need to respond and are aware of the support available from the Council and other organisations, paying particular attention to support for reducing overheads. The Council's weekly business bulletins continue to be a key feature of our efforts and over 4,200 local businesses receive them regularly. Alongside this, the team has worked to improve our use of social media to share information with our local businesses and enhance the methods that are available to make contact, including the use of WhatsApp and the Council's website.

The project has also addressed improving the Council's efforts to maintain a dialogue with the business community and better understanding their needs. To achieve this, the team has introduced a programme of visits, workshops and research with local businesses over the year.

The team has presented a case to establish a financial fund to support businesses and is preparing to launch it in 2023/24.

The Council has decided to develop 10 new work units in Penrhyndeudraeth; the first investment of its kind by the Council since the start of the century. The new units will contain solar panels and a heating system that will reduce the tenants' operating costs.

Over the past year, the project team's resources have been diverted to lead on establishing arrangements for managing the Shared Prosperity Fund in Gwynedd and across the North Wales region. A significant effort has been made in 2022/23 to establish the appropriate arrangements which would enable businesses and enterprises in Gwynedd to take advantage of the funding.

Establishing a new team has had some impact on the progress of outcomes from this project over the past year, but we anticipate that the new team and the new support packages that will emerge in light of the investment will bring more benefit to the area over the next two years.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.

What did we promise to do?

We have concerns that the people of Gwynedd do not benefit as much as they should from tourism, and the Covid-19 crisis has underlined how the negative impacts of the industry can sometimes outweigh the advantages.

Work has been done to understand the change in tourism trends over the years and identify the benefits to Gwynedd, along with the risks, including the impact on the communities, language and culture of the area and second homes.

Over the past year, work has been done to draw up sustainable tourism principles for Gwynedd and Eryri, upon which a future management plan will be based. A memorandum of understanding has also been signed between the Council and Eryri National Park Authority to work jointly in this field.

We will complete the work of establishing a vision and principles for tourism in the future and will develop the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan 2035 and an Action Plan in cooperation with communities and the sector, to secure the greatest benefit for the people of Gwynedd from visitors.

The Plan and Action Plan will set a direction for policies and activities across the Council's departments in future, but they will also acknowledge the short-term need to respond to the impact of Covid-19.

As part of the cross-departmental and inter-authority work, and following thorough consultations with communities, businesses and motorhome owners, the Environment Department will lead on a project to improve management of motorhomes. This will include regulation and where possible enforcement, as well as developing a pilot 'aire' scheme for up to 5 sites across Gwynedd during 2022/23. This work will form part of the Action Plan that accompanies the Sustainable Tourism Plan.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Eryri National Park Authority and Cyngor Gwynedd for future joint-working in this field.

A structure has been established and implemented with the Partnership Board, Sub-groups and Task and Finish Groups jointly with the Council and the Park.

Several discussions and workshops have taken place to confirm the principles, the content of the plan and the operating structure, including representatives from businesses, communities and strategic partners.

A Strategic Plan, indicators and a strategic action plan have been developed and approved by the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet and Eryri National Park Authority in February 2023. The Plan will set a direction for future policies and activities across the Council's departments and the Park, and the work will need to be integrated across departments e.g., into the Review of the Local Development Plan and the Regeneration Framework.

Discussions are continuing with officers from Conwy Council in terms of their input to the work.

Elements of the Strategic Plan are already being implemented through specific projects e.g., Aros-fan, the 'Ardal Ni' Tidying Teams, the Gwynedd and Eryri Ambassador scheme etc.

Discussions have been held with the Visit Wales research team on conducting a pilot in Gwynedd to find the views of the county's residents about the visitor sector. It is anticipated that the survey will be carried out in June 2023.

The project has led to close collaboration with Bangor University on research into the effect of the visitor economy on our communities.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

What did we promise to do?

There is a risk that every service implements its own programmes in accordance with grant guidelines, but possibly does not respond to the actual needs and regeneration opportunities of Gwynedd.

We have established the Regeneration Board with the intention of developing a Regeneration Plan for the county's communities. The Programme will incorporate cross-departmental activities, along with the Council Plan's priorities.

We will establish a new Regeneration Framework and develop action plans for 13 catchment areas across the County.

We will consult with stakeholders to gain an understanding of how communities wish to see their areas develop in the next 10-15 years and identify local priorities. These schemes will give particular attention to the needs of town centres and the future of the 'high street' across Gwynedd in the future.

We will ensure that activities across the Council's departments contribute to the development and implementation of these schemes, as well as the participation of local organisations and groups, and key partners.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The 'Ardal Ni 2035' engagement exercise was arranged between mid-February and June 2022, seeking the views of Gwynedd residents about their community, and the main issues or priorities locally together with a series of workshops and sessions to ask opinions. Over 3,600+ questionnaires were returned, and a report was produced on the results for each of the 13 local regeneration areas across the County.

A series of local workshops was held in every area during October and November to report on the results of the engagement work, and to identify local projects and activities.

A Working Document has been prepared for each individual area that records a range of local projects by various organisations. It is intended to use these documents as a basis for preparing a Local Regeneration Plan for individual areas during 2023/24.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Improvement Priority 2

Every pupil is given the opportunity to achieve their potential.

If we are to take advantage of any opportunities that may arise, it is crucial that Gwynedd has a sustainable quality education system in place, which gives our residents the skills to take advantage of those opportunities. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- Post-16 Education Provision in Arfon
- Bangor Catchment Area
- Cricieth Catchment Area
- Meirionnydd Collaboration
- Free school meals for primary pupils
- Transforming the provision of Additional Educational Needs and Inclusion
- The Gap in Welfare and Attainment of Children and Young People
- Digital Learning Strategy

What did we promise to do?

The variety in the quality of the education and experiences of learners across the post-16 education system in Arfon affects outcomes and learning pathways.

The Cabinet has already given permission to commence engagement with stakeholders to discuss the vision for post-16 education in Arfon. The informal engagement was held during the Autumn Term 2020.

We are continuing to hold informal discussions to discuss and air potential options with the profession using these discussions to determine how best to continue to keep momentum going with this important project.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

During 2022-23, we re-visited the case for change, updated data and information that underpinned this project, including any relevant new considerations due to the pandemic.

A report was submitted before Cyngor Gwynedd's Cabinet on 7 March 2023 seeking permission to carry out further work with stakeholders forming the Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium to develop possible models for the post-16 education system in Arfon. We agreed to report back on this during the Autumn, 2023 term.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



What did we promise to do?

Despite the pandemic the new Ysgol y Garnedd building opened its doors in October 2020 becoming the new educational home for up to 420 primary age learners in the city of Bangor. The school site also offers a nursery education and wrap-around childcare provision in a bespoke environment with the best possible resources. Also, space has been planned carefully for specialist units on the site to further support child development. This project kept within the budget that had been earmarked for it.

The project was nominated for three Constructing Excellence in Wales 2021 awards and came out top in two, namely: Digital Construction Award and Client of the Year Award. We will arrange an official opening with the school when it will be safe to do so.

As part of the arrangements in the Bangor catchment area Ysgol y Faenol also received a substantial extension. Although there was a slippage in the schedule as a result of the pandemic, completion was soon achieved in 2022. The school is able to admit 315 learners as a result of the extension, which is an increase of 129 learners. The building has also been planned to act as a hub for the local area, with a new community centre and space for the early years being built as a part of the development.

In light of the recent investment in Ysgol y Garnedd and Ysgol y Faenol, the Council recognises the need to invest further and to improve resources and the learning environment at Ysgol Hirael also. This will be a means to improve the learner's experience and enable the school to provide education and the curriculum in the 21st century.

The Council has already recognised that Ysgol Tryfan does not have the resources we would like them to have and that this affects the learner experience. Furthermore, the Council will consider the options available to improve secondary resources in the city of Bangor to ensure a world-class learning environment together with buildings and resources to be able to deliver education and curriculum in the 21st century.

What progress was made in 2022/23?**Ysgol y Garnedd**

Work has been ongoing during the year to arrange an official opening for the school, as this was not possible previously due to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. A date for the opening has now been confirmed for 18 May 2023 and the Minister for the Welsh Language and Education, Jeremy Miles AM will officially open the school.

Ysgol y Faenol

The Ysgol y Faenol building was completed during the year, and the school's capacity has now increased to accommodate up to 315 learners. However, legal issues regarding land transfers and a lease remain between the Council, the Church in Wales and the Community Council, therefore it is not possible to move forward and demolish the Community Centre and create a dedicated car park for the school until these issues have been resolved.

Ysgol Hirael

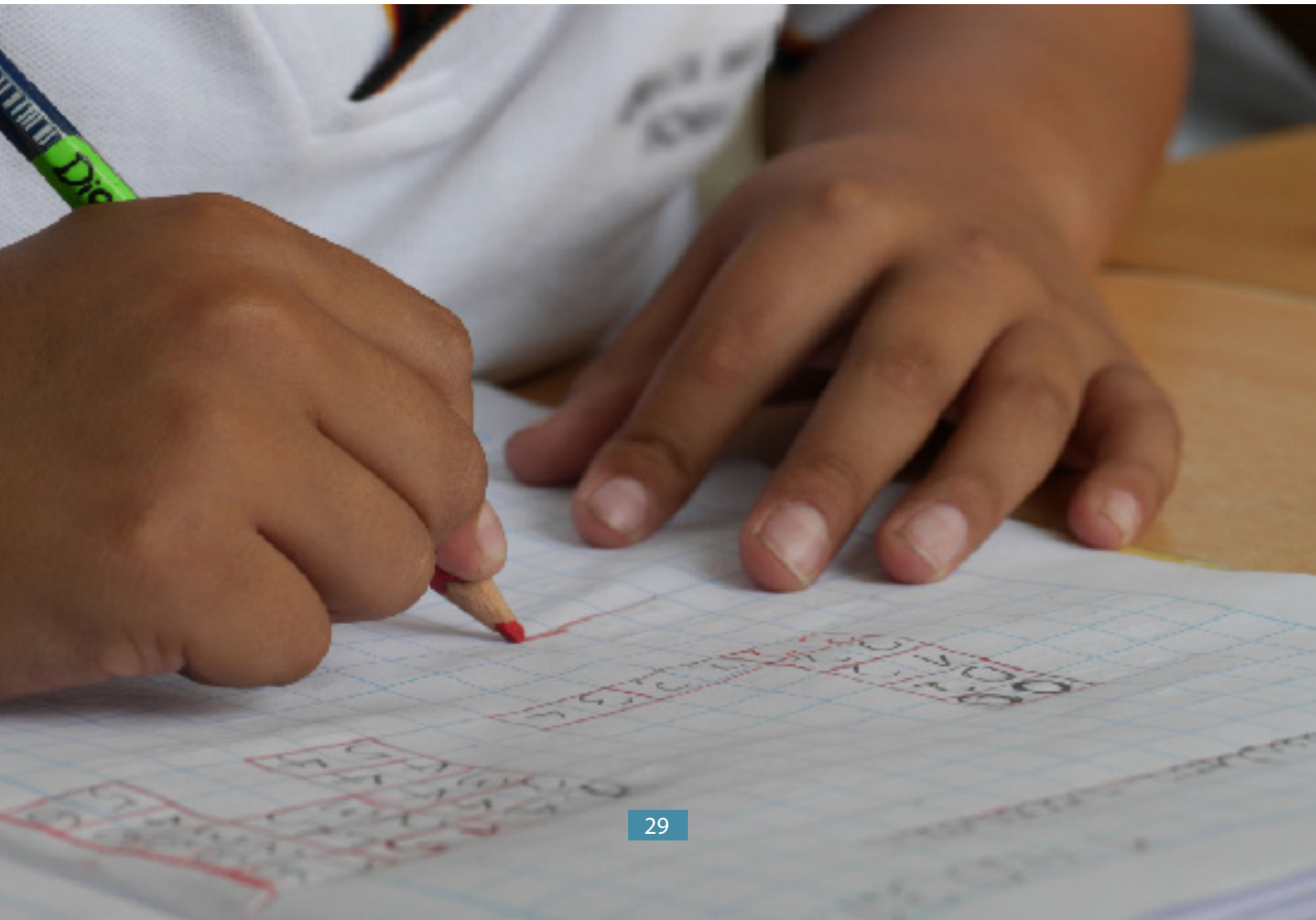
In order to improve the resources and learning environment at Ysgol Hirael, on 14 February 2023, the Cabinet allowed £3m of a total budget to be set aside from Bangor's Phase 2 budget for the Sustainable Learning Communities Programme (Band B) to invest in Ysgol Hirael. This in addition to a commitment to confirm a £1m contribution from the Council's Asset Management Plan for 35% match funding for the realisation of the project at Ysgol Hirael. Following the Cabinet, approval was received from the Welsh Government to transfer the budget from Phase 2 Bangor to Ysgol Hirael as well. However, the budget for Ysgol Hirael is subject to making a successful business case to the Welsh Government and the work of making the business case will continue in 2023-24.

Ysgol Tryfan

Informal discussions were held about the possible options available to strengthen and improve secondary resources in the Bangor area.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



What did we promise to do?

The condition of the current building and learning environment at Ysgol Treforthyr is poor, affecting the learner experience. We will therefore build a new school in Cricieth to improve the learning environment and ensure the best resources for learners to thrive.

In 2021/22, a statutory notice was issued and the Cabinet confirmed the final decision to relocate the school. We have engaged on plans, and confirmed a budget towards securing an Early Years Unit on the site. We have also appointed a contractor and a geophysical inspection of the site has also been carried out.

In 2022/23, as a result of land purchase and receipt of planning permission, it is intended to commence the work of building the new school, aiming for the school to open on the new site in September 2023.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

A planning application was submitted for the development of the new school at Cricieth, and before planning permission could be granted archaeological inspections of the site were required as well as further work carried out on safe routes to the school. A safe routes to school survey was carried out and the report was submitted to the Planning Unit. Archaeological work was carried out at the site and a chest grave was discovered, following which further archaeological work was carried out resulting in delays in the timetable for the development of the new school. Consequently, the planning application was approved.

As a result of a significant increase in building materials costs and the impact of Brexit and Covid-19 it emerged that the costs of building a new school in Cricieth had increased significantly, and in December 2022, the Cabinet approved increasing the budget for the project to £8.1m, following which approval was also received from the Welsh Government to increase the budget for the project.

The contractors started on site on 20 February 2023 and they are making good progress. A turf cutting ceremony was held on the site of the new school on 6 March 2023. As a consequence of the delay in the timetable, Ysgol Treforthyr Governing Body agreed to change the opening date for the new school to 1 September 2024.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

What did we promise to do?

There is a risk that matters relating to the current procedure affects the experiences of Meirionnydd learners, e.g., the Meirionnydd secondary schools find it difficult to recruit teachers, middle managers and leaders. If there is no resolution to the situation, the impact on the resilience of the education system and leadership conditions in the area will continue.

The obvious challenges of the Covid-19 period and busy nature of secondary schools as a result have impacted the progress of this priority.

During 21/22, we have gathered the views of Headteachers and representation from the Governors of each secondary school on the potential challenges facing them in terms of providing a quality secondary education in the Meirionnydd area. During this work, we paid particular attention to identifying the challenges facing the schools from the perspective of recruiting teachers, middle managers and leaders.

By the end of 2021/22, we will have gathered the views of pupils and parents on the quality of the experiences that children have in these schools, as well as the views of staff on the experience of working within these schools. To ensure a fair comparison we will ask the same questions to the staff, parents and children in the Dwyfor and Arfon schools as well.

The direction and actions of this priority for 2022-23 will be based on the views of all key stakeholders. Should a situation arise where no substantial concerns have been highlighted, we will consider the propriety of this priority as part of the Council's Future Plan.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

When the project was started back in 2019 there was concern that there could be issues with the current set-up affecting learners' experiences in Meirionnydd e.g. Meirionnydd secondary schools are struggling to recruit teachers, middle managers and leaders – particularly in some subjects. The project was designed to look at the challenges this area faces (if any) and model possible options for meeting these needs in the future.

Progress on this project has been slow and has been impacted by the obvious challenges of the pandemic and the busy nature of secondary schools. Several changes in the leadership of Meirionnydd secondary schools also affected the progress of the project. Nevertheless, we were able to gather the views of headteachers and representatives of all the governing bodies of every secondary school on the potential challenges they face in providing quality secondary education in the area, such as teacher recruitment, middle managers and leaders. We also circulated and analysed a questionnaire to try to establish the views of learners, staff, parents and headteachers.

As a result of opinion-gathering, the headteachers did not highlight obvious concerns in providing quality secondary education in the area. In addition, representation of the governors from each secondary school did not highlight obvious concerns in the provision of quality secondary education in the area.

The analysis of the education services questionnaire did not highlight any aspects that would merit further research either. This was mainly because the response from the secondary sector was less than expected and particularly so from the Meirionnydd area.

Since no significant concerns were highlighted, Meirionnydd will not continue as a priority in the Council's Plan from April 2023 on, although the Education Department will continue to work with the secondary schools in Meirionnydd to ensure the future resilience of the system.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



What did we promise to do?

It November 2021 the Government announced its intention to provide free lunches to all primary pupils. While the scheme is welcomed, considerable work needs to be done in terms of the practicality of the scheme.

No detail has reached us yet in terms of the timetable for realising the scheme, but the agreement between the Labour party and Plaid Cymru is in place for a period of three years, therefore it can be assumed that priority will need to be given to this project over the next three years.

On average, approximately 50% of primary pupils choose school dinners with the other 50% bringing a packed lunch from home to school. This scheme will potentially double the number of primary pupils choosing school dinners.

During 2022/23, we will consider what providing free school meals to primary school pupils will mean for the Council and what will need to be done to deliver on the commitment while carrying out scoping work.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

A review of the kitchen space of all primary schools in Gwynedd was carried out identifying which kitchens needed upgrades to their major appliances such as ovens and dishwashers as well as lighter appliances. As of July 2022, 38 combi ovens have been installed and 20 washing machines.

Since July 2022, the following schools have received an extension to the kitchen/dining space:

- Ysgol yr Hendre
- Ysgol Bethel
- Ysgol Bro Lleu
- Ysgol Maenofferen
- Ysgol Llanrug

In addition, Scottish Power upgraded fuses at some sites where electricity supply was insufficient, but this work continues, with the timetable largely in the hands of Scottish Power. Since 1 September 2022, all Reception and year 1 learners at Gwynedd schools receive free school lunches if they wish.

Since 1 January 2023, all year 2 learners at Gwynedd schools receive free school lunches if they wish. This offer will be available to years 3 and 4 in June and to years 5 and 6 in September 2023.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.**

What did we promise to do?

There is a risk that we will be unable to make suitable provision for each pupil with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) because no resources were received from the Government to meet the increase in the need for statutory provision (ALN and Tribunal Act (Wales) 2018).

It is also possible that children and young people will not have the correct access to specialist staff (e.g., Bilingual Educational Psychologists, Sensory Teachers) and key statutory roles within the code (Early Years Lead Officer, ALN Coordinator), due to the combination of recruitment and funding difficulties and an increased workload.

During 2021/22, we have:

- developed the co-working processes with the Health Service by co-working with the Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO) within the Health Board
- held several stakeholder training events
- implemented the necessary systems to identify needs early in the early years, and preparation in the post-16 sector continues
- the development of a working curriculum and assessment link between the mainstream and the Special Schools
- continued innovative work in the system's use and ongoing development of the on-line Individual Development Plan system, with the system driving the entire process for the schools, parents, external agencies and other education provisions (e.g., the early years)
- looked at funding mechanisms for the Additional Learning Needs provision in the mainstream continues to take concrete steps towards September 2022, along with national collaboration on ensuring the training and recruitment of specialist bilingual staff (e.g., Psychologists).

Elements of the Legislation have been live since September 2021, but with a three-year transition period up to September 2024. During 2022/23, we will:

- continuously review the implementation processes to ensure systems are as simple and useful as possible
- continue to develop suitable systems for legislative change with a focus on the post-16 partnership with parents and agencies, and the most suitable funding mechanism for the legislative requirement, working closely with the Further Education Colleges
- establish a funding method - review the funding method to obtain a model that provides better stability of provision
- continue national discussions and continue to pass on the message about the concern regarding training and recruiting specialist staff.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The purpose of this project was to transform the additional learning needs and inclusion service, so as to ensure that children and young people who need the service receive the most suitable support to enable them to fulfil their potential. The project also focused on preparing towards the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (2018). This Act came into effect in September 2021, but with a period of three years to transform, up to September 2024.

During 2022-23, the Welsh Government's ALN Act Readiness Review showed very strong progress in the Authority's preparations for the Legislation. The Authority ensured that the requisite statutory posts were in place since January 2021 and operated effectively. The collaboration with the Health Service has progressed well through collaboration with the Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO). Several stakeholder training events were held to detail specific aspects of the Final Code. There has been work on the dispute resolution pathways to ensure these are operational. In the early years sector the necessary systems for early identification, and the establishment of clear processes have been achieved, and preparatory work in the post-16 sector continues. Also, the development of a working link, curriculum and assessment between the mainstream and Special Schools has developed and continues to develop.

Innovative work continued in terms of the use and continuous development of the on-line Individual Development Plan system, with the system driving the whole process for the schools, parents, external agencies and other education provisions (e.g., the early years).

Given that the new legislation came into force in September 2021, by 2022-23 Gwynedd was firmly placed in terms of implementing the new requirements, and therefore this ceased to be a project in the Council's Plan from September 2022 as it has now been fulfilled and the requirements attached to the legislation have now been transferred into the day-to-day work of the Education Department.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

What did we promise to do?

There is concern that some children and young people can be left behind in terms of their educational attainment, and some will need extra help to close that gap along with support with their wellbeing. Parents are concerned about sending them to school or they decide to home-school, and there is an increase in safeguarding concerns.

We are aware that the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown have exposed the vulnerability of the early years sector, and beyond school we also realise that the 16-24 age group has been disproportionately affected by the crisis, more than any other age group.

During 2020/21 we have established project boards for the Early Years area and for the post-16 young people's support area. The project boards have identified the priority areas and clear work plans have been drawn up for the majority of them. We have also focused our efforts for the 5-16 age group by supporting the schools to implement the Accelerated Learning Programme with funding from the Welsh Government. This will enable us to respond to the impact of lockdown on the wellbeing and attainment of certain groups of learners.

Work has been undertaken to address the wellbeing of pupils aged 3-16 and as a first step, discussions have commenced with a range of partners, including the health service, to map out in detail who is supporting and responding to a wide range of wellbeing needs of our young people.

In 2022/23, we will have introduced a strategy for the early years field, which will secure the best start for families and children aged 0-5 years in Gwynedd.

We will also have updated our engagement framework for our post-16 learners and devised a strategy to provide them with wellbeing, mental health and homelessness support. We will have agreed the most effective support model for supporting the wellbeing of school-aged pupils.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The work of forming a strategy for Early Years progressed during the year with agreement on the main work streams. As part of that, we consulted internally with key officers on the basics of our strategy.

During the year a detailed assessment of demand for pre-school care and play provision was completed, together with a detailed assessment of the agreements / leases that are currently in place with providers.

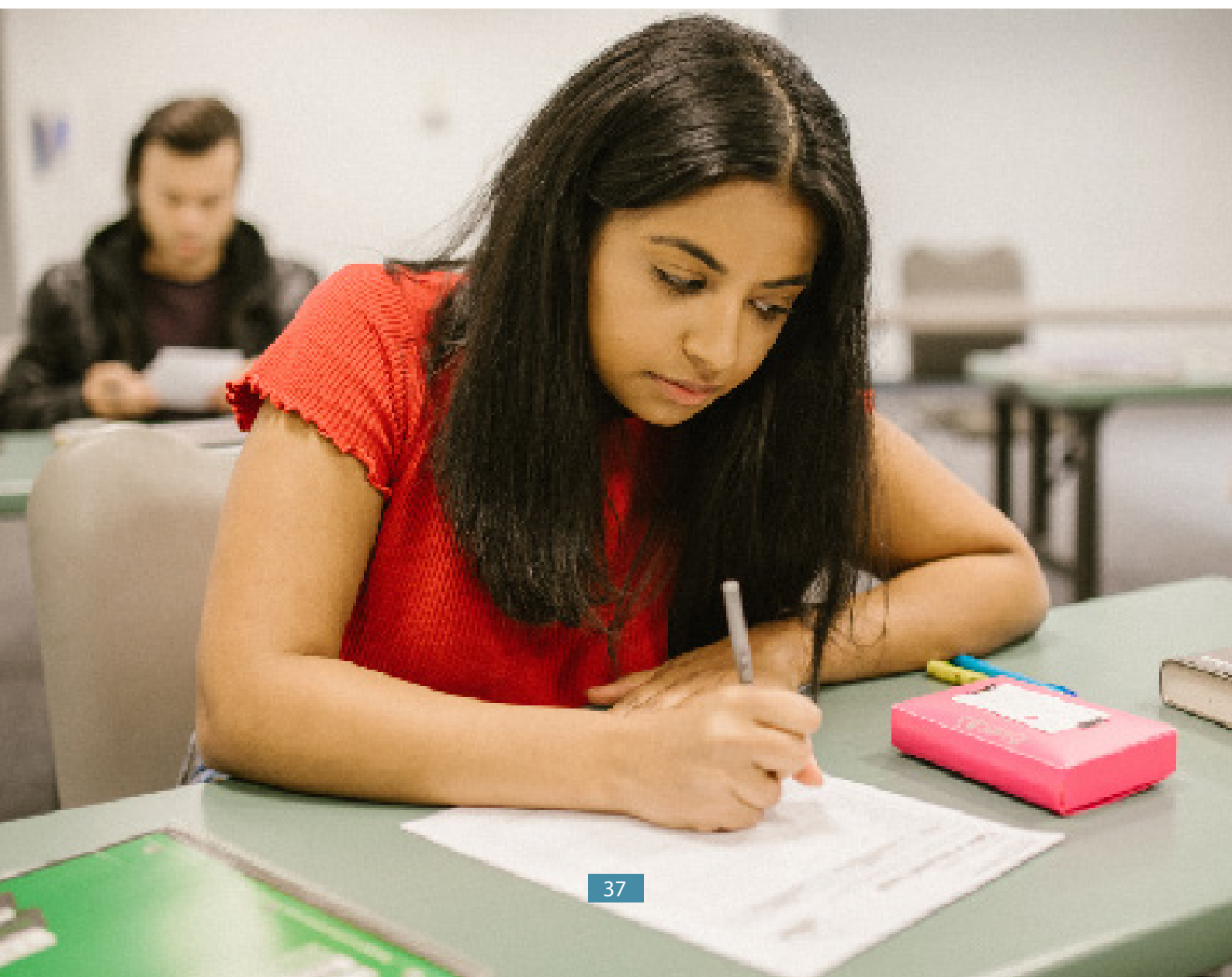
We also modelled the running costs of quality provisions, along with modelling funding models for our care and play and education provisions across Gwynedd.

We carried out detailed multi-agency mapping to highlight areas of need that require attention and sub-groups have been established to address specific aspects. There was a delay in the formulation of a revised engagement framework, this was as a result of the guidance from the Welsh Government that reached us late in the year. We have however responded to the requirements of the engagement framework particularly for homeless young people and low-level mental health needs.

We have come up with a new strategy for responding to the needs of a learner at risk of disillusionment from education, training or work. Accompanying the strategy is an application to the Shared Prosperity Fund for funding of a scheme that would provide practical support to our young people based on good practice evidenced through TRAC schemes.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.



What did we promise to do?

There is a risk of providing a sub-standard education for the children of Gwynedd due to a failure to maximise the opportunities afforded by digital learning. The aim of the strategy is to give the best digital provision to support our learners and teachers to foster a range of skills to use technology confidently, creatively and critically.

In light of revising the curriculum, digital competence is a statutory responsibility across all learning areas and needs to be considered in all aspects when designing and introducing the curriculum. The quality of school networks and the quality and number and availability of devices for teachers and learners is varied. There is a varied understanding of the medium amongst teachers. The procedure of maintaining the equipment does not ensure seamless access.

The Digital Education Strategy has been approved and the work of implementing it has progressed considerably during 21/22. Key work on the infrastructure across all of our schools has drawn to a close, with new devices distributed to the majority of our learners in the primary and special sector. A new support model has been drawn up with the work of establishing it about to commence so that it becomes fully operational from April 2022 onwards. An agreement has been reached on a sustainable funding model in order to ensure that the digital devices do not become dated, without a way of updating them, which is co-funded by the Council and the schools.

Our priorities during 2022/23 will be to establish the support system and move to introduce devices to every teacher and the majority of pupils in the secondary sector.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

Put simply, the strategy, when implemented fully, will provide all children from year 3 to year 11 with a suitable device each to enable digital learning. Gwynedd will be one of the first authorities in Wales to do this, and it is something we can take pride in.

Considerable work has already been achieved, including upgrading the schools' network in accordance with the education digital standards, and also transforming web-filtering methods. A little over £1.3m has been invested in the network.

A significant number of devices have been distributed in line with the strategy, with plenty of i-Pads distributed to provide one to every four learners in the Foundation Phase, enough Chromebooks have been distributed so that all learners in years 3 to 6 have one device each. Windows 10 devices are also being prepared and shared with all pupils in years 7, 10 and 11, and every teacher in Gwynedd has received a standard device via the strategy.

As a result of the decision to internalise support for all devices, and because of a recruitment process, the Schools Digital Services team has now been established and is already operational and providing digital support to our schools. The hope is that these devices will further spark imagination, ingenuity and effectiveness in aspects of digital learning across the sectors.

Considering that the devices have now been shared with the learners and teachers at our schools, and that the Schools Digital Service has been established, the aims of this project have been completed by the end of September 2022 and following that the work has been transferred as part of the day-to-day work of the Education Department and ICT.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



Improvement Priority 3

Reduce inequality within the county.

It must also be recognised that, currently, not everyone in our society has the opportunities to fulfil their potential. Certainly, as in every county in Wales, inequality exists within the county at different levels, with inequality created by poverty high in terms of the damage which is caused.

It is obvious that poverty can also have a significant devastating effect on well-being, and in particular on the future offered to children. Whilst we have services which endeavour to mitigate the effects of poverty, it is our responsibility to consider if there is more we could do.

We also have a responsibility to maintain a good standard of services to look after those children who find themselves in situations where there is a need for the Council to take responsibility for them. Ultimately, none of them wants to be in such a situation. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- More Gwynedd Residents to Play a Full Part in the World of Work
- Supporting People's Well-being
- Women in Leadership
- Implementing the Equality Plan (Ensuring Fairness for Everyone)

What did we promise to do?

It has been an ever-changing year in the world of work in Gwynedd. A high number of people were unemployed during the first half of the year, and then a substantial number of employers were reporting recruitment challenges during the summer, with a more mixed picture towards the end of the year.

Unemployment and a reduction in household income can affect the health and well-being of individuals and families and increase the demand on public resources. Preventing this is a key part of the anti-poverty agenda. There are direct benefits from being in work in terms of increasing earnings, but there are also wider benefits in terms of health, children's life opportunities and pride in communities.

We have already diverted priorities to be able to respond within existing resources by:

- extending the Communities for Work programme to support more unemployed individuals who have been referred by Government agencies to receive support to overcome barriers to work
- working with employers, especially within the tourism industry, to ensure that more Gwynedd residents benefit from the employment opportunities available, and support the residents of Gwynedd to foster the digital skills required to access work
- supporting workforces that are made redundant to access the relevant information by various services, and this during a period of Covid-19 restrictions.

In the future, we will continue with the above plans and work closely with our partners across North Wales and with the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions to improve the coordination of our services. We will provide a programme to offer work experiences to unemployed young people in businesses across Gwynedd and an established task force will consider whether there are further steps that Cyngor Gwynedd can take to respond to the challenge of supporting the people of Gwynedd back into work and supporting local businesses to secure the workers that they need.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

Employers are continuing to report that they are facing recruitment challenges, which hinders their ability to maximise their income. In response, the Council's Gwaith Gwynedd team have continued to work over the past year to ensure that as many Gwynedd people as possible are part of the labour market and – increasingly – to help working residents to increase their skills.

In 2022/23, nine job fairs were arranged and arrangements were made for another two in the spring.

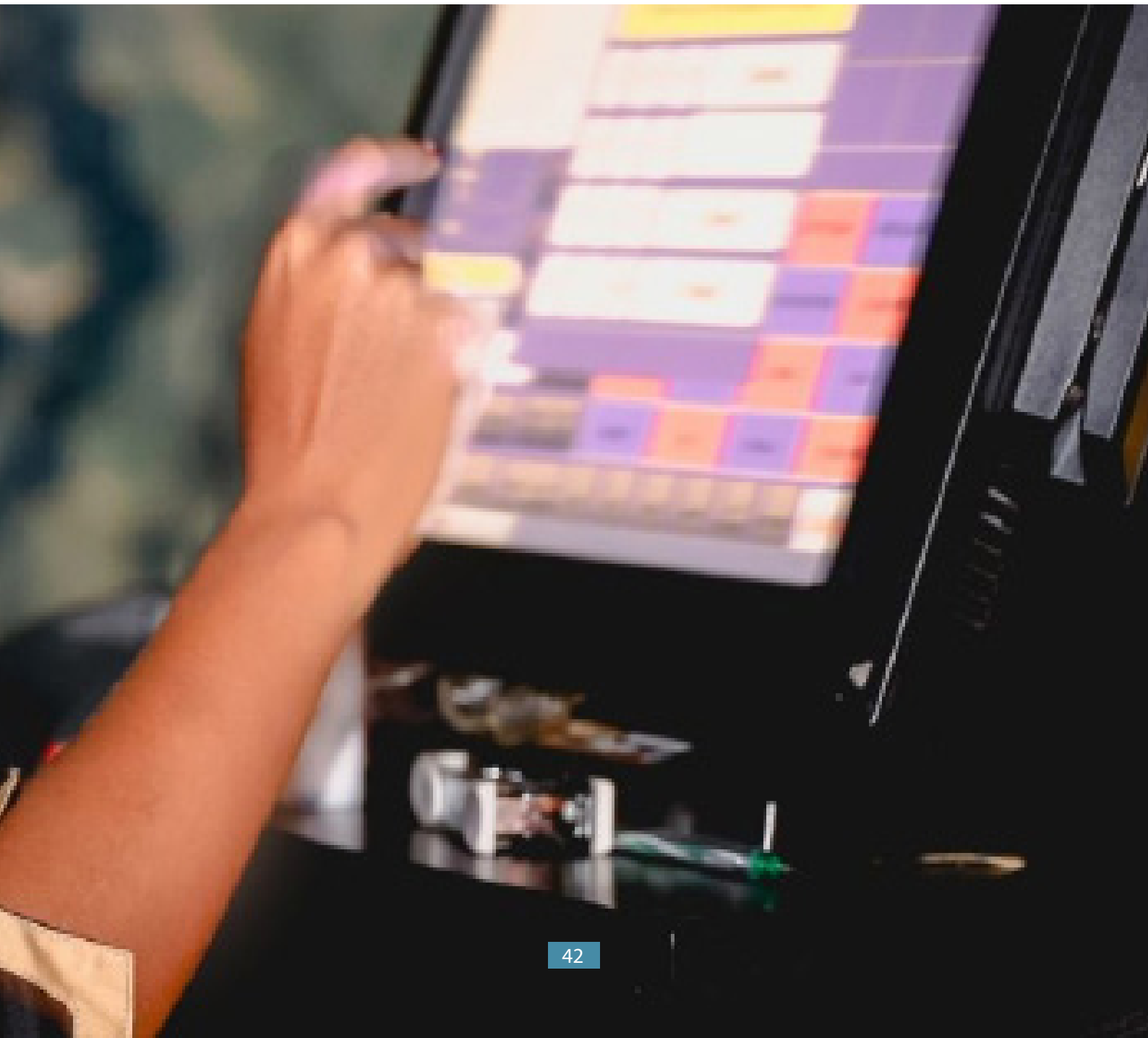
The work to help people return to employment is continuing, with 141 people having secured jobs because of the support they have received during the year.

Funding has also been secured for a new post to support residents to increase their earnings. One of the programmes that funds the work of the Gwaith Gwynedd team, namely the Communities for Work Programme, is ending soon as it was funded by Europe. There are arrangements in place to ensure that the impact of this will be reduced, including an increase in the funding being received from the Welsh Government. The team have also formed a bid for the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund to increase the support that is available to prevent idleness, to support the people of Gwynedd to return to employment, and to increase their earnings.

Firm foundations have therefore been set to continue with the work of targeting cohorts of Gwynedd residents who are currently unemployed and support them into work.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



What did we promise to do?

Some residents are finding it difficult to cope with life challenges as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, and the vulnerable situation of some other residents has worsened during the crisis. These residents need support to cope, to thrive, to be safe and to be healthy.

Residents find it difficult to gain access to services and to find information about what is available to assist them, particularly through virtual and on-line media and therefore face being socially and economically excluded.

Some residents are facing financial hardship, losing their job and losing their home. Residents are finding it difficult to obtain the help they need to deal with these challenges and maintain their well-being, both locally and in a timely way.

We have a broad and extensive network throughout the county's communities which helps and supports residents to cope and respond to their various needs. That network needs support to sustain that voluntary effort.

The long-term nature of this plan when seeking to tackle poverty, complex social challenges, and working across numerous services, means that we are continuing a journey to deliver the plan's objectives.

During 2022/23, we will:

1. Prioritise our efforts and focus on supporting residents:

- who are facing homelessness by building on the work that has been completed in this field under the Housing Action Plan, reshaping homelessness prevention services through the Housing Support Grant, expanding on the support to prevent homelessness amongst young people, and to support people with mental health needs who face homelessness
- who are unpaid carers to their loved ones through delivering the Gwynedd Carers Action Plan to promote information rights and assessments to unpaid carers of every age; and to develop provisions to support carers with respite and well-being support
- who are facing financial poverty and food poverty through ensuring resources to improve collaboration across partners and to increase our financial advice support and promote benefits amongst residents
- who are digitally excluded through identifying our residents' needs and planning to address any gaps with our partners.

2. We will work across services and with our partners on:

- well-being interventions for children, young people and people of all ages
- support communities
- maintaining the resilience of communities and supporting volunteers/community spirit

3. We will also look at models to ensure that residents obtain access to the broad and new range of support available in a timely, coordinated, and local way.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

We have invested in two new roles to respond to this priority during 2022-23, especially to support Gwynedd's people to cope with the challenges of the cost of living crisis. We have a new Inclusion and Tackling Poverty Coordinator and Officer to lead on developing and providing costs of living support. The work of supporting people with the cost of living during 2022-23 has included: establishing a "Warm Spaces" campaign to have community locations throughout the county where people could visit to have a warm place to have food, a chat and help; hold a number of "Help With Bills" events with our partners to help residents with home bills; develop a new section on the Council's website that draws together information about the available cost of living support; establish and administer grants for food and community feeding schemes; organise a maximising income training programme for front line workers and volunteers; commission Citizens Online to assist Gwynedd's residents to develop skills to go online and have free access to computers and tablets.

We have also continued with our work to establish Supporting People's Well-being Hubs in communities. The hubs are local sites that people can visit to take part in events and activities, and to have support with a wide range of matters. In 2022-23, we have worked with 9 community partners that lead on coordinating a network of over 30 services and projects that residents can have access to and help from nine local hubs.

We have continued to work with the Homelessness Service and the Preventing Homelessness Partners to ensure that people have access to support on housing matters through the hubs.

We have also shaped a new Supporting People's Well-being Service which will provide support to those residents who need help to engage with activities, events, projects, and people within their communities. We are looking forward to launching this service jointly with our partners in the third sector during 2023-24.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

What did we promise to do?

Although it is firm that it pays an equal wage, the Council acknowledges that the number of women who undertake a management role within the Council is not commensurate with the distribution within the whole workforce - i.e. 70% women 30% men.

Thus far, we have managed to introduce the programme for developing potential for women, review a number of policies and working practices and we have created forums for female leaders and prospective leaders in the Council.

During 2022/23, we will:

- arrange further awareness raising sessions for male managers in the Council
- consider the suitability of the constitution of appointment panels for posts
- introduce a specific monitoring programme for women in the workplace
- review the success of the programme for developing potential for women
- continue to advise on a review of work conditions in relation to women in leadership

What progress was made in 2022/23?

A virtual event for male managers in the organisation was held in June 2022. The event was held as a panel conversation with panel members consisting of internal and external speakers. During the event, the panel was asked about their experiences and attitudes towards women in leadership and there was a further opportunity for the audience of 30 to ask questions and contribute.

A package of schemes to adapt recruitment and appointment arrangements is currently being drawn up for piloting, initially, later this year. A full consultation was held with the Project Group when the existing Recruitment and Appointment Policy was reviewed in 2021 but this package has a view to:

- Review and revise the wording of job advertisements and further details;
- Experiment with the introduction of anonymous manager application forms for drawing up short-lists;
- Ensure there are two female members on every appointment panel for leadership and management posts within the Council;
- Ensure that our arrangements for future working do not place women at a disadvantage when they consider applying for management posts;
- Invite team leaders (where women are in the majority), to join the managers network in order to promote and support the aim of ensuring better balance between men and women on senior management levels in the future.

The Developmental Programme was launched as a part of the project offer on International Women's Day 2022. The Programme has been drawn up to offer guidance, support and the opportunity to network with other women within the Council who wish to take advantage of the provision and this fresh encouragement to apply for, and achieve, leadership roles.

Since 2022, two series have been held and the third series was launched in March 2023. Of the 22 women who have already completed the Programme, five of them have secured a promotion during, or as a result of that, and each one, without exception, have noted that the Programme was particularly helpful to them.

In order to intensify the experience and add a fresh perspective, some of the modules are led by external speakers. This has led to current discussions, at the request of the external contributors, for the Council to consider collaborating with them in order to offer the Programme to other organisations in Wales. Arrangements are already in place to commence a further series of the Development Programme in the Autumn 2023, and many women have already been in contact to express an interest in this opportunity.

The 'Sgyrsiau Dros Baned' arrangements have been established as a part of an ongoing arrangement with 80 women taking advantage of these conversations during the past year and plans are in the pipeline to hold further conversations during the year to come. In terms of introducing a mentoring programme for female leaders and prospective leaders in the Council, individuals who are a part of the Project Group have attended an introduction to mentoring but no specific programme has been presented to date.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.



What did we promise to do?

In order to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do, we must first identify any barriers that some people face when looking for, or receiving services from the Council.

Therefore, our intention is to undertake a thorough investigation of the opinion of Gwynedd residents who have protected characteristics (as noted in the Equality Act 2010) about the services offered by the Council. Engagement took place during 2020/21 as a part of the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan but it has been extended to 2021/22 due to the need to identify new ways to engage.

During 2022/23, we will:

- create a further Action Plan based on the evidence that we will receive from the engagement work, which will include a training programme and awareness raising and steps in order to improve the information we have regarding the field
- provide a new process for assessing the impact of changes in policies and procedures on the residents of Gwynedd, whilst continuing to offer support and facilitate the ability of managers to carry out those assessments.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

An Equality e-module was made mandatory in June 2022 and the number of staff who have completed it has increased substantially (however, numbers do fluctuate considerably from one Department to another).

Face-to-face and on-line training was held for Elected Members in November and December 2022, and very positive feedback was received. Further research has been carried out in order to provide specific training on Equality for Managers, especially in the field of Anti-Racism. Work was also done to establish an intranet site for Managers' resources, including new Manager induction, specific training and other resources. In this site, specific resources on different aspects of equality will be available, but the subject will also be included as a part of other resources, e.g. staff recruitment.

The Council requires all staff to complete an equality data questionnaire so that we can better understand the equality characteristics of our staff and improve the support they are given and promote diversity within the workforce. This information is voluntary and it has emerged that fewer front-line staff fill it in compared to office staff, since they cannot access a computer as easily. Discussions have taken place with some of the Departments in order to improve the situation.

Having analysed the questionnaires received as a part of the engagement on the barriers facing people with equality characteristics when they engage with the Council, it was found that the majority of issues raised related to operational matters to be passed to the services. The work programme to act on the findings of the questionnaire is progressing, including the training work outlined.

Arrangements were made to re-launch the Equality Core Group, namely the representatives of organisations from the field who provide assistance to the Council in ensuring fairness for all, in April 2023.

Work has commenced on preparing a new questionnaire, this time on the Council's equality objectives.

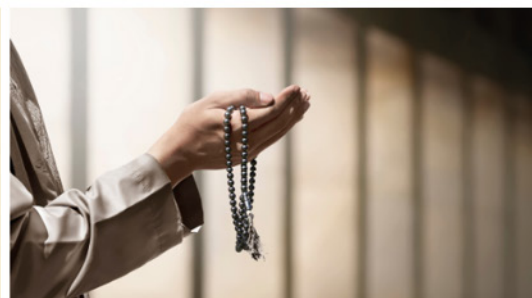
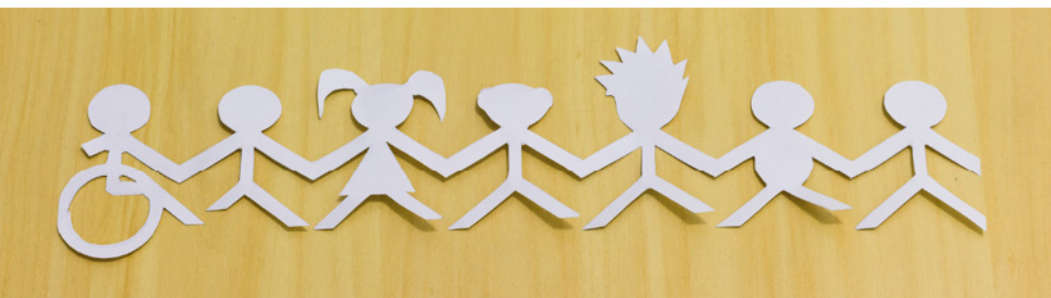
As part of the recent savings regime, Equality Officers provided observations on the equality matters that needed to be considered.

An independent audit on equal pay within the Council has been held, with the final report published late in December 2022. The purpose of the work was to consider whether there was any unlawful discrimination based on gender in our pay systems. The report concluded that there are no concerns about unlawful discrimination, and that the Council's equal pay defence seems robust. As a further general observation (and outside the primary focus of the audit), the report draws attention to the fact there is a gender pay gap.

The work of gathering and introducing information in order to receive feedback from Inclusive Employers regarding our inclusivity as an employer has been completed and was presented before Christmas 2022 and we are awaiting feedback. This will be fed into the action plans for the years to come.

Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.



Improvement Priority 4

Access to suitable homes

The Housing field has a vital role in helping the Council fulfil its ambition. We know that having a suitable, high quality home leads to better health, more resilient communities and a population that can contribute fully to society. It is important that we develop varied, innovative and green housing proposals - houses that people can live in for their whole lives - and also offer early support to those in need.

As a Local Authority, we will intervene to encourage a range of support and accommodation options to respond to the needs of the population today, and for future generations. Alongside this, we must ensure that the steps taken respect the culture of the county's communities. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- A shortage of suitable homes for the people of Gwynedd: Implement and realise the projects of our Housing Scheme in order to increase the opportunities for local people to have a suitable home within their communities
- Easy and clear access to enquiry services and advice on housing issues: Establish 'one front door' and help-desk for the public to help them with housing problems
- Managing the use of dwellings as holiday homes and second homes

What did we promise to do?

In order to reach the ambition in our Housing Strategy of "Ensuring that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable home of a high standard, which is affordable and improves their quality of life", we have adopted a Housing Action Plan which contains over 30 specific schemes and an investment of £77 million.

These schemes will aim to fulfil the following objectives:

- No one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Social housing available to all who need one
- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd housing are environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd

During 2021/22, we will start to implement these plans in order to increase the opportunities for local people to have suitable homes within their communities.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The highlights of the Housing Action Plan over the past year include:

- Buy to Let Scheme: Eight houses have been purchased and after carrying out essential repairs/upgrade work, there is potential for up to 32 individuals to benefit from these houses. Five other purchases are in the pipeline, and another four have been identified for purchase, with continuous work taking place to identify further suitable properties. The Department managed to attract a grant of approximately £3m from the Welsh Government to use towards the purchase of these houses.
- Homebuy Scheme: This brand new scheme was launched in September 2022. 4 families completed a purchase and 15 applications were approved.
- Empty housing schemes: 104 empty houses came back into use across Gwynedd as a result of support from various empty houses grants. The scheme which offers an additional exception of one year for first-time buyers to carry out essential refurbishment work on empty houses has assisted at least 120 people.
- Construction of social housing: Since the commencement of the Housing Action Plan, 173 social houses have been erected across Gwynedd, and the Council has allocated all of the 2022/23 budget (valued at £12.3m) for different social housing construction schemes.

The Department has collaborated with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to establish a provision to support individuals who are at risk of becoming homeless due to mental health issues, to continue living in their homes. Two officers were appointed during 2022/23 - one working for the Health Board, and the other working for the Council, who have successfully assisted five individuals over the past months, and are currently supporting 40 other individuals.

It is important to note that only the highlights of last year are noted above, and that the Housing Action Plan is a plan that includes over 30 projects across five key areas and officers are working continuously on several plans. Examples of other projects that have seen progress over the past year include:

- Tŷ Gwynedd Scheme (the first scheme to build our houses for 30 years) - the necessary background work has been completed on our first project on the site of the former Ysgol Coed Mawr, Bangor and it is nearly time to commence the construction work.
- Supported housing schemes for the homeless, that have a number of developments in the pipeline and will be completed over the next year, e.g. 35 College Road, Bangor (3 units), Ala Road, Pwllheli (2 units), site of former Ysgol Glan Wnion, Dolgellau (5 units) and 137 High Street Bangor (12 units).
- Our new energy service, which has helped hundreds of Gwynedd residents with advice about their energy situation, and helped 1,671 people with energy vouchers worth £81,773.
- Carried out 319 housing adaptations valued at £2.3m to allow disabled people to continue to live independently in their homes.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.**
- **Live in quality homes within their communities.**
- **Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.**
- **Live in a naturally Welsh society.**



What did we promise to do?

Currently, there are many points of contact within the Department for the public to access various services within Housing and Property. Our Housing Action Plan includes a project for establishing a single point of contact by creating a Housing Help Desk.

We have researched different models of providing a help desk and commenced the work of establishing a Housing Help Desk that can advise the public on how best to resolve their housing needs. This has included consulting with stakeholders to ensure that the support aligns with the housing services that are offered by external providers.

We have appointed an officer who is currently coordinating the work of establishing the innovative One Stop Shop to ensure that the residents of Gwynedd have a single point of access to specialist support for their housing enquiries.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

During 2022/23, the Housing and Property Department has been researching how a One Stop Shop could provide an effective service across all housing enquiries received by the Council. This has included:

- organising and analysing a questionnaire for the county's residents to better understand the priorities of individuals and identify opportunities to plan the service in a manner that improves the customer's experience.
- identify the relevant factors associated with the challenges of fuel poverty
- prepare statistics regarding the number and type of enquiries received in order to identify the appropriate resource

Engagement sessions with key partners (e.g. housing associations and third sector organisations) have been held during the year to identify whether current arrangements need to be adapted.

The structure for the One Stop Shop unit has been agreed and some members of the team have been appointed. This includes two officers who have the duty to assist Gwynedd residents to gain access to appropriate services that are involved with housing and to prevent homelessness. It is intended to pilot the new system internally initially, before officially adopting it for all providers. Joint work has also been completed with the IT Service to assess what are the requirements to ensure that the new One Stop Shop system is tailored for the requirements of the service, which include identifying the best phone system for the unit. Discussions have also commenced on preparations to adapt the website of the Housing and Property Department to incorporate the new arrangements of the One Stop Shop.

Project 4b

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



What did we promise to do?

The substantial number of houses in Gwynedd that are being used as holiday homes (as short-term holiday lets and second homes) is a major concern with the side-effects including an increase in house prices, which is a major barrier to local residents being able to live in their communities. As the housing crisis is one of the Council's main priorities, research on holiday homes was commissioned by the Cabinet, in order to gather evidence to see what could be done to better control the situation.

The Council has been putting pressure on the Welsh Government for years to introduce changes to have better control of holiday homes, and in December 2020, the Council's research, namely "Managing the use of dwellings as holiday homes", was published and submitted to the Welsh Government, putting pressure on them to implement the recommendations. The research has been significant to the statements by the Welsh Government in November 2021 to consult on modifications to the regulations and to planning policy, which recognise the need to have better control of holiday homes.

The consultation on Legislation and planning policy for second homes and short-term holiday lets was announced on 23 November 2021 and will be open until 22 February 2022, and the Department is co-ordinating the Council's response to the consultation. A key step as we move forward in 2022/23 will be to consider what reaction the Welsh Government will have to the Council's (and others') response to the consultation, which will then influence the next steps the Council could take to have better control of holiday homes.

The Department is also providing input to other consultations that the Government has involving holiday homes, including local taxation for short-term holiday lets, a registration and licensing scheme for housing and a housing scheme for Welsh-speaking communities. Again, the main work in 2022/23 will stem from our response to the consultations and, of course, the response and intention of the Welsh Government thereafter, and we will work with several departments within the Council to accomplish this.

It is also noted that the Council will continue to put pressure on the Welsh Government to change Section 66 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 in order to regulate the transfer of domestic homes into self-catering holiday units that are subject to non-domestic rates. The vast majority avoid any local taxation as they receive small business rate relief, which consequently reduces the investment of income received from the Council Tax premium in our Housing Action Plan.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The Department has led on the work of preparing the Article 4 Direction in order to gain better control of the 3 new planning use classes that were introduced by the Welsh Government in October 2022, namely main home, second home and short-term holiday let. This included preparing a strong evidence base to clearly show that second homes and/or short-term holiday lets are having a detrimental effect on an area(s) in Gwynedd, which justifies introducing the Article 4 Direction. A report outlining the work was submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2023 and it was decided:

"To recommend to the Cabinet to approve the favoured option in terms of introducing the Article 4 Direction, namely Option 4: The whole of Gwynedd (Gwynedd Local Planning Authority Area)."

We aim to report to the Cabinet in June 2023 for approval to move forward with the process to present the Article 4 Direction.

The Environment Department also contributed towards consultations by the Government, specifically the consultation on a Statutory Licensing Plan for holiday homes and we await the Government's feedback to the consultation.

Since it remains a priority for the Council, the field has been included as a priority in the Council's Plan for the 2023-28 period.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Improvement Priority 5

Living lives through the medium of Welsh.

One of the unique features Gwynedd has as a county is its Welshness. Gwynedd Council itself is dedicated to working through the medium of Welsh, but that in itself is not sufficient if we are to keep the unique nature of the county alive. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's services
- The Welsh Language in Public Services
- Native Welsh Place Names
- Promoting the Use of Welsh by Children and Young People

What did we promise to do?

Gwynedd Council has been prominent in terms of ensuring that services for residents are available through the medium of Welsh as we operate through the medium of Welsh internally. It is continual work to promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's Services, and we are aware that there is a need to continue to maintain our staff's language skills.

The work of gathering self-assessments on linguistic ability from staff, to a large degree, is now self-sufficient. This is because we have put systems and arrangements in place, for example:

- the questionnaire is available to complete via the Self-service system
- a message is sent to staff who are appointed via the central system
- the questionnaire is a part of the process of inducting care staff.

This means that we can somewhat change the project's main focus. Whilst the main focus to date has been on gathering the self-assessments, the feeling now is that more attention should be given to the follow-up step, namely responding to needs and extending the provision.

During 2022/23, this will include:

- responding to the needs of staff who do not fully meet all language designations for their posts
- responding to the needs of other members of staff who have noted that they would like to receive language training
- marketing the opportunities that are available more regularly
- extending the internal provision of language training.

The work of gathering self-assessment will also continue, but will focus on:

- continuing with the current campaign with staff in the Highways, Engineering and YGC department
- continuing to work with care homes
- developing the work of collaborating with community care staff.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

A total of 2,902 staff members have been assessed against their post's language designations with 91.5% (2,640) achieving or exceeding the requirements. This means that 244 (8.5%) staff members have been identified who do not meet their post designation.

Over 97% of staff in 5 out of the 10 central Departments have now received a language assessment (Finance, Housing and Property, Economy and Community, Corporate Leadership and Corporate Support). Specific work has taken place with the following Departments in order to gather more information about the language levels of staff: Environment, Corporate Leadership Team, Byw'n lach, Highways, Engineering and YGC, Finance, Economy and Community and Housing and Property.

For the services that include many front-line, casual and seasonal staff, efforts were made to gather basic information from line managers about the language levels of staff (i.e. does the individual meet the language designation of the post or not). It can be challenging to ensure that these members of staff complete the language self-assessment questionnaire. Collecting this information is a good starting point and is a way to identify where we should focus our efforts when supporting staff to develop their language skills.

Many specific learning and development events in the language field were arranged and held over the past year.

The Dafydd Orwig Memorial Prize has been re-established and an awards ceremony was held in April 2022. The Cyfeillion Cymraeg scheme continues to grow with 5 new volunteers on the scheme and 6 members of staff taking advantage of the support.

The Welsh Tip of the Month continues to be successful and is a way to influence people outside the Council as well, due to the collaboration with Nant Gwrtheyrn. The tips received an excellent response from the public on social media sites such as Facebook, particularly the tips in August and September 2022. The tip will be a way to ensure that staff receive information about grammar and language technology after the project ends.

The internal Language Site is now fully developed and is being updated regularly with information on courses and new resources, providing a specific place for staff to find information about language training as well as useful resources that managers can turn to for assistance.

A Quarterly Report continues to be sent to the head of every Department and to the Department's representative on the Language Designations Forum. The report is a way to update heads of department about the progress on data associated with the project and about staff who attend the language training.

In 2022-23, more contact has been made with the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agent as we coordinate Welsh lessons. It is nice to see that the project's success has had a positive influence on some of the organisations being hosted by the Council.

Well-being Objectives:

- [Live in a naturally Welsh society.](#)



What did we promise to do?

At present, there is inconsistency in the provision of bilingual services by public bodies in Gwynedd, which means that it is not always possible for residents to use the Welsh language naturally when communicating with public bodies.

Public organisations in Gwynedd and Anglesey estimate that fewer people choose Welsh-medium services compared to the number of Welsh-speakers in both counties. By working with our partners who are a part of the Welsh Language Sub-group, Public Services Board, we have commissioned a study of traditional receptions, that will investigate this.

During 2022/23, we will:

- consider how we can encourage more people to engage with us in Welsh, and to be comfortable to do so, based on the conclusions of the study in the first place
- act on plans based on those considerations.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

Cwmni Iaith Cyf was appointed on behalf of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board to carry out some research into the reasons why people choose whether or not to use Welsh when receiving first contact services. Observation work was carried out in ten Receptions in Gwynedd and Anglesey during May and June 2022 and focus groups were subsequently held between Iaith Cyf, and the staff who had participated, in order to confirm the findings from the observations.

A consultation session was held in October 2022 with a selection of front line Managers in order to obtain their views on drawing up a resources and training pack for staff. Two sessions of the final 'Customer Care and the Welsh Language' training were held for Managers in February 2023. The purpose of the session was to introduce the guidance and advise Managers on how to encourage staff to use the Guidance effectively. The Guidance includes a list of recommendations for staff to follow in order to provide the active offer.

Good feedback was received to the training and resources from other public bodies such as Natural Resources Wales and the Fire and Rescue Authority, and it was noted that it will be a valuable resource to encourage staff to motivate service users to use their Welsh. Ongoing work is being done to encourage the staff of public organisations to use the new resources and the Welsh Language Sub-group is looking forwards to continue to collaborate when the Board's new Well-being Plan for 2023-28 is operational.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Live in a naturally Welsh society.**

What did we promise to do?

We are concerned that native Welsh place names are disappearing from the landscape of Gwynedd as a result of a lack of use of Welsh names and an increase in renaming places in English.

The work programme has been drawn up and prioritised. During 2022/23, we will:

- deal with internal matters that are within the Council's control for initial attention
- raise public awareness and interest in native Welsh place names
- collaborate with other organisations to protect Welsh names within the county.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The project has been implementing a work programme which has been split under the following headings:

1. Council Names
2. Housing and Businesses
3. Streets/housing estates/industrial estates
4. Villages and settlements
5. Geographical features - mountains, beaches, etc.
6. Influence external partners - Royal Mail, Emergency Services, OS, etc.

We have managed to make progress against each of the fields in the above-mentioned work programme.

Council Names:

The Council's new Language Policy has been published during October 2022 and includes many new clauses relating to the protection of Welsh names. This includes providing guidance to staff to use the Council's Welsh name only, and to use the Welsh versions of street names and villages only when corresponding with the public.

The Information Technology service has created a list of easy-to-use addresses so that staff can check Welsh street names with ease, and a review of Information Technology systems has been commenced by the unit to check that every system that sends correspondence automatically can use only Welsh addresses.

House Names:

The project officer has worked closely with Building Control officers to offer advice and support when processing applications to change house names. Have consulted on 43 house name change applications during the year. Simple guidelines have been created to explain the process and expectations in terms of using the Welsh names for the public and a training session are in the pipeline to develop staff expertise in terms of advising the public on using the Welsh names.

Names of streets, villages and settlements:

A long-term work programme has been drawn up to look at the opportunities to increase the visibility of Welsh on the county's streets, and to be able to install more Welsh-only signs. Initial research has been carried out to map the processes in detail and to understand what is legally possible. Over the coming months, we will be trialling small schemes with community councils in order to assess what changes can be made on a county level.

Geographical features:

A Place Names interactive Map was launched in September 2022 to record local, dialectal and informal names of geographical features. An activity pack was developed to coincide with the map and the officer has been holding workshops at local schools - mainly in the Dwyfor area - to collect and record the local names. Since launching the map, 9 schools have held workshops. In February 2023, an article was also shared with 'papurau bro' (regional papers) in the county, inviting contributions from individuals and interested community groups. Consequently, almost 550 names have been recorded on the map to date.

Local Names Map

A number of activities are being arranged for the National Eisteddfod, which will highlight place names, and to the broader collaboration that is taking place between the Council and other authorities and Welsh Government in the field of place names.

Influencing partners:

This work is of key importance to the project, and is a field where the public has high expectations. We are aware that the Council is expected to act and influence, e.g. to try and get partners such as the Ordnance Survey to amend maps, but it is also a field where there is a need to convince and develop a joint understanding, instead of enforcement. A number of constructive meetings have been held with key partners, including the Ordnance Survey, the Welsh Language Commissioner and Welsh Government. For example, as a result of the discussions with the Language Commissioner and Welsh Government, we managed to secure the right for villages and towns to have a Welsh only 'Croeso' sign for the first time! The meetings with Welsh Government officers has led to the establishment of a national forum led by Welsh Government, which will share good practice and encourage collaboration in order to develop work in the field on a national level.

General / Awareness raising:

The project has been receiving considerable attention publicly, with the project officer holding a number of conversations on Radio Cymru to raise awareness of the work and sharing light snippets about place names in posts on social media - such as collecting examples of names that include numbers in them. We have also been working to raise awareness amongst Council staff, in a light-hearted and fun way, of the meaning of local names, with a regular item entitled 'Yr Enw a'r Hanes' (Name and History) being published on the intranet.

Well-being Objectives:

- [Live in a naturally Welsh society.](#)

What did we promise to do?

The skills and confidence of learners (more specifically in non-Welsh-speaking homes) in Welsh have deteriorated as a result of lockdown and Covid-19.

In 2021/22, we have succeeded to establish a baseline of the current situation of the Welsh language as a result of the impact of lockdown and Covid-19 and we have started to support schools to draw-up a Strategy and Action Plan to respond to the situation.

During the process of setting a baseline, we also saw that concern was highlighted about the oracy skills and confidence of pupils in Welsh. We will respond to these concerns as a priority in 2022/23 by assisting schools to support pupils' oracy skills and confidence. We will provide additional training or support for teachers and assistants and collaborate with individual schools to draw up action plans to respond to the needs.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

During the year there was the formulation, consultation and publication of the Welsh Language in Education Strategic Plan which became effective from 1 September 2022 for a period of 10 years. In January 2023, an Action Plan was submitted to the Welsh Government detailing the actions for each outcome.

The non-statutory categorisation of schools by Welsh-medium provision has been introduced in September 2022 with a view to reporting through the PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census) in January 2024, as has been done with the previous categories that have existed since 2007. Schools will receive more detailed guidance on what is required in the context of reporting on this from the Welsh Government in due course. It is stressed that identifying the category is effectively an administrative process for schools.

During the year the Department worked in partnership with Ysgol Friars to support them to increase their Welsh language provision and support staff to develop and improve their skills in Welsh. A Welsh teacher has been appointed at Ysgol Friars to provide the support, and as a result of an initial appraisal of progress, the Department is happy that the School is making progress. This partnership will continue for the next two years subject to acceptable progress by the school.

An experienced teacher has been appointed to work with 3 primary schools in the Bangor catchment to improve and empower Welsh language provision in the Foundation Phase. The teacher collaborated with Foundation phase staff at Ysgol Ein Harglwyddes, Ysgol Hiracl and Ysgol Glancegin to plan for the development of the Welsh language within the principles of Foundation Phase learning and teaching. Although the resource has only been in place since 1 January 2023, so far, the feedback from the schools to the scheme has been very positive.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Live in a naturally Welsh society.**
- **Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.**

Improvement Priority 6

Helping people who need support to live their lives as they wish.

As a Council, we provide direct care to children and their families and to adults who need specialist support, but our vision is that everyone of all ages receives the support they need in the most suitable and convenient way for them.

As the needs of each individual and family are bound to be different, in order for them to continue to live their lives as they wish we need to adapt our services to be more closely tailored to the real needs of those who need our support. To succeed, we will need to continue to work with other providers, such as the Health Board, always remembering to put the needs of the individual at the centre. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- A Suitable and Sustainable Care Provision for the Future
- Re-designing our Care Services
- Keeping Families Together Strategy
- Ensure a specialist appropriate local provision for children with the most complex needs
- Ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive

What did we promise to do?

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted several factors that can affect our ability to continue to provide suitable care services for the people of Gwynedd.

In 2021/22 a task group was established to look at the 'actual cost of care' and the initial information has highlighted a financial gap; between the current fees the Council can offer and the fees of nursing and residential homes that means that residents cannot be offered an extensive choice of care homes in their communities. During the year we have also conducted a joint planning consultation for a Nursing care site at Penrhos, construction of an additional Dementia Unit at our Barmouth Care Home and commencing the work to modify Canolfan Dolfeurig for individuals with learning disabilities in Dolgellau.

To ensure that we can continue, in 2022/23, we will:

- seek to understand the "actual cost of care" to consider possible options for our future care commissioning arrangements
- continue to proceed with the Penrhos Site project to address the need for Nursing beds provision in Pen Llŷn. Jointly with the Health Board, we will, during the year, be clear on the options we have in terms of the possible provision models that would enable us to have a direct role in the provision of Nursing care on the site.
- work towards further increasing the number of dementia beds in the county
- consider whether our support services, e.g., day care and respite continue to be suitable to address the needs of the people of Gwynedd, or whether there is a need for us to do something differently
- adapt our care provision buildings to be able to meet additional infection control measures.

We have also committed to improve the quality of our care provision across the county. During 2022/23, we will:

- open a bespoke dementia unit that has been completed at Llan Ffestiniog, but has not been able to open due to the Covid-19 crisis
- open a bespoke dementia unit in our care home in Barmouth
- make use of the adaptations carried out in our care home in Dolgellau to offer bespoke care for individuals with profound physical needs.
- open the Extra Care Housing provision in Pwllheli, and continue with the work of identifying opportunities for similar developments in other parts of the county, with priority given to Dolgellau and to the wider Meirionnydd area
- strengthen our quality assurance services to ensure sufficient support to care providers to assist them to maintain quality services for the residents of Gwynedd.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

We were part of the work to prepare a residential and nursing homes fee for 2023/24. We then came to a decision on our standard fees and communicated these to the care homes, however, these included higher fees than the regional suggestion to try and address the lack of dementia/nursing placements. We are currently conducting an 'open book' exercise with providers who refuse our standard fee and are working together to try to reach a solution.

The Cabinet and the Health Board approved a strategic business case to develop joint nursing care beds at the Penrhos site near Pwllheli. We have submitted the business case to the Welsh Government in order to receive confirmation of their contribution towards the scheme.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to deliver all our plans in terms of the provision of dementia beds:

- we need to complete building work to be able to open our units in Barmouth and Bangor
- a lack of sufficient staffing levels in our care home in Llan Ffestiniog has meant that our dementia unit there remains unused. We have made considerable efforts to recruit in the area and we are part of the Workforce Planning corporate project to ensure specific attention is given to the care field as part of this work. We have also re-evaluated jobs across the care area to give our staff a pay rise in the hope that this will help.

We will continue to address this work as part of our priorities for 2023/24 and in the meantime, we are considering the options of using some beds as residential beds to make use of them. We are also eager to take any opportunities offered because of empty units to be able to complete upgrading work on the older sections of our care homes as well.

The respite care provision has re-commenced in our residential care homes, and the day centres have re-opened in Bangor and Tywyn. We have also managed to adapt the space in our home in Pwllheli for day care provision. However, the day centres have not re-opened in Ffestiniog and Cricieth and we will look again at the provision and a workshop has been organised to discuss and agree on a work programme.

Our learning disabilities residential homes in Pwllheli received work to be able to meet with the additional infection control measures. The work included an extension and a green area.

By now we make use of the adaptations in our home in Dolgellau, however, it should be noted that problems continue in this care home because of the failure to attract suitable companies to complete the work to repair the lift. This means that it is not possible to gain access to five bedrooms. We are continuing to work closely with the Housing and Property Department to complete the work and to give regular attention to this matter as part of our performance challenge arrangements.

In relation to Extra Care Housing, there has been a significant delay with the building work in Pwllheli and currently there is no clarity about the time schedule to open the building. We have been in discussions with Adra during the year on the extra care model and we agree that Light Extra Care Housing is most suitable for this site.

We will also look to develop full Extra Care Housing for this area on the Penrhos site. In addition, following a piece of work to update the areas of priority for such developments we are also aware of the need to develop in Dolgellau and Caernarfon. We continue to work closely with the Housing and Property Department to identify a suitable site in Dolgellau, and work on the parcel of land identified as the site in Caernarfon has commenced.

Due to the scarcity of jobs and finance it is challenging to reach all the providers and to continue to monitor the situation following identifying defects. We have worked to strengthen reporting arrangements on the service performance of this service to enable informed decisions on the future effective structure and teamwork. All the above projects have continued to be within our improvement priorities for the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.



What did we promise to do?

The county's care needs are changing, and we have been collaborating with the Health Board to transform our community services. We need to facilitate the ability of our staff and Health Board staff to collaborate as one team within specific areas. This will lead to ensuring that individuals who require health and care support in the community have one point of contact, to ensure the best results and a seamless service. We are also working to change our way of providing domiciliary care across the county to facilitate our ability to ensure that care has been tailored based on what matters to the person.

In 2021/22, several Council domiciliary care teams were transferred to work shift patterns and the work of training staff commenced for them to be able to administer medicines, which offers better stability to staff and flexibility to the persons who receive care. In addition, the Community Mental Health Hub in Pwllheli has reopened following its forced closure due to the Covid-19 crisis, and we have established well-being hubs in Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog, to give emotional and practical support to individuals up to 25 years of age.

During 2022/23, we will:

- continue to equip the integrated teams (teams that include care staff as well as health staff), to be able to achieve what matters to the adults of Gwynedd. This will include looking at appropriate training and removing any technological barriers
- implement and establish a new home care model and begin to experience the advantages of the change for the benefit of Gwynedd residents.
- continue to strengthen our Occupational Therapy service, including developing a specialist manual handling service to enable persons to live as independently as possible
- add to the network of community hubs that support and create opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities by commencing the construction work to adapt Canolfan Dolfleurig in Dolgellau
- agree on the most suitable way to meet the well-being needs of individuals in a preventative way in Caernarfon, that will be a community provision for all adults in the area.
- experience the benefit of having well-being hubs for people aged up to 25 years in Caernarfon and Blaenau Ffestiniog. The provision available will offer emotional and practical support to individuals.
- add to the suitable accommodation options for persons with Learning Disabilities to encourage independent living instead of funding expensive out-of-county placements.
- undertake an initial appraisal of mental health provision provided by the Council as a basis for a review of what will be required in the context of an increase in demand and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- collaborate with Health and third sector partners to ensure consistency in terms of access to suitable mental health services across the County so that persons receive timely support.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

We have been collaborating with Social Care Wales to organise a comprehensive training programme for our integrated teams, and two collaborative training sessions were presented between January and March 2023. Further training sessions in terms of advocacy and safeguarding procedures have been organised early in 2023/24 and we have planned workshops per team to agree on a work programme to move the agenda forward.

We have managed to transfer to the new Domiciliary Care model in several areas, however recruitment difficulties have hindered efforts in a few areas. By the end of the financial year, we had organised a series of sessions to start fostering a working relationship between prominent community groups / social enterprises and the local teams.

We have been able to appoint three occupational therapy trainees and have appointed to jobs in the manual handling service. However, we have also lost experienced therapists to other organisations during the year and therefore vacant posts have continued within the service. In order to contribute towards the gap, we have appointed temporary social work practitioners to support with less complex assessments.

A planning application was submitted to the National Park to modify Canolfan Dolfeurig, Dolgellau in February and on the whole positive feedback was received from service users and their families, staff and the area's residents in an engagement session held regarding the plans.

We have re-modelled the community hubs provision in the Arfon area to try and satisfy the well-being needs of persons in a preventative way; establishing a training and work opportunities hub at Cegin Arfon (Canolfan Byw'n Iach Arfon) and we maintained the Galwch Acw shop for groups and activities which included creation and the sale of goods. In addition, we have recommenced groups in the Plas Hedd day centre and make regular use of the Tŷ Prysyr site to provide 1 to 1 support to develop the skills of the individuals.

Following seeing an increase in the ICAN well-being hubs due to the cost-of-living crisis, the Health Board intended to develop well-being hubs for persons up to 25 years old, and there was also a scheme in the pipeline to develop a hub specifically for individuals in the agriculture sector. We hope to see funding being provided for these developments during this year.

Several options have been identified during the year to add to the suitable accommodation options for persons with Learning Disabilities: including sites in Arfon, Meirionnydd and Llŷn. At the end of March 2023, we commenced work to modify property in Groeslon and we are continuing to discuss possibilities in Nefyn, Tywyn, Penrhyndeudraeth, Harlech and Dolgellau. It is also proposed to provide long-term accommodation for persons with learning disabilities as part of the Extra Care Housing provision in Caernarfon.

Work was commissioned to undertake an initial appraisal of our mental health provision and following the receipt of a report on possible options and conducting discussions in relation to planning the work, an options paper was prepared for discussion with Cabinet members early in 2023/24. A report to offer the way forward will be the subject of a report to the Care Scrutiny Committee in June 2023.

We have reviewed our agreements with the mental health centres to place emphasis on the well-being of persons rather than only mental health matters. Work has also been planned to conduct further reviews of how the support has changed during and following the pandemic.

Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.



What did we promise to do?

Some families need specific support at times to help them bring up their children so that those children can stay with their family, to thrive, to be healthy and to be safe. No children are brought into care unnecessarily in Gwynedd and we wish to ensure that this does not happen.

Sometimes, it is inevitable that a child is brought into our care as it is dangerous for them to remain at home. Our arrangements and decisions when that happens are based on the risk and needs of the family. When a child comes into care, every effort needs to be made so that the child receives appropriate, suitable and local care; and that the child and his/her family are supported so that the child can return to his/her family.

During 2022/23, we will:

- mainstream the learning from the Effective Child Protection project as a part of our workers' practice across our services, namely holding collaborative conversations with families that focus on the change needed to decrease the risk of significant damage; support practitioners to continuously reflect on their practice
- implement the improvements we have identified via the Ffordd Gwynedd exercise to improve what we are doing and how we work, to provide the required support to families. We will be focusing on communication arrangements between services, strengthening collaborative procedures and review the processes that we have identified as ineffective
- review our procedures jointly with our partners to move towards a 'No Wrong Door' approach whilst responding to children and young people's emotional well-being and mental health needs ("No Wrong Door" - A Regional Community Strategy for children and young people's mental health 2022-2027).

What progress was made in 2022/23?

During 2022-23, we have ensured external funding to continue with the "Effective Child Protection" programme to help workers to develop their skills of holding collaborative conversations with families to help them make the change that is needed to safeguard their children. The intention was to collaborate across other counties in North Wales to assist them to adopt the programme, but there continues to be recruiting challenges with the Practice Mentor role.

Families have told us what would improve the support and we have listened to them and made those improvements. We have also proceeded to work with other services within the Council and beyond to improve understanding of referral arrangements.

We have been working with several partners through a series of workshops to establish "right door" principles in our services. We will agree on local procedures to the "right door" strategy during 23-24 to ensure that children and young people with emotional well-being needs have access to the support that they require in a timely way.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.**
- **Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.**
- **Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.**
- **Live in quality homes within their communities.**

What did we promise to do?

Some children and young people who come into our care have complex and severe needs. Some of these children have to receive care and support in an expensive placement outside Gwynedd or Wales, far from their family and community. We wish to ensure that we have a variety and sufficient number of suitable placements available locally, and that we have specialist workers and support locally to address these children's needs.

During 2022/23, we will:

- evaluate the multidisciplinary team that has been created jointly with partners to support children with complex needs and their families
- act on the options appraisal to identify the residential provision available locally for children with complex needs
- take advantage of Maethu Cymru's campaign to increase the numbers of foster carers by recruiting and providing resources to assess carers to secure a sufficient number of placements.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

We have completed an evaluation of the Multidisciplinary Team that co-existed with the Isle of Anglesey Council and the Health Board to support children with complex needs. By now, we have learnt from that team's successes and have established additional roles within our own services to add value to the support that we can offer. The remaining jobs are being developed whilst considering our discussions and plans regarding our response to the 'Right Door' strategy.

We have started the work of establishing Small Group Homes to ensure that children with complex needs can stay within their communities to receive the care and support they require. We are in the process of identifying appropriate property. We will proceed to complete necessary work that will lead to a registration of the service as a children's home.

Since the national Foster Wales campaign launch in 2021-22 we have continued to promote and support that campaign locally to attract and recruit new foster parents. We have also used different media to celebrate and raise awareness of the benefits of fostering and foster parents here in Gwynedd.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.**
- **Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.**
- **Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.**
- **Live in quality homes within their communities.**

What did we promise to do?

Children and young people with autism and high skill abilities, and children with autism and no learning disability, find it difficult to access the specialist support that they require. The experiences of these children and their families show that there is room to improve our current assessment arrangements; that there are gaps in the provision and that they require help during the transitional period to other services such as adults and health.

During 2022/23, we will:

- adopt an Autism Plan that demonstrates how we will improve our collaboration arrangements and move to fill the gaps identified.
- monitor the implementation of the plan via the Local Autism Multi-agency Board, which brings together the Health Board, third sector partners and Council departments
- secure resources to create the roles identified through the plan to support autistic children and young people during the transition age from childhood into adulthood, and during the period when they are awaiting an autism assessment
- introduce a training programme for workers in general and specialist services to raise awareness of autism and the local plan

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The Autism Multi-agency Board has developed and adopted an Autism Plan, and proceeded during the year to deliver the work programme. We have appointed an Autism Co-ordinator to lead this work. The work programme for the year included developing and providing a training programme for workers, a series of local events for families by North Wales' Autism Service, and visits from the Autism Bus to different parts of the county. There are also arrangements to appoint four posts to the team which will strengthen our ability to respond to the population's needs.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.**
- **Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.**
- **Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.**
- **Live in quality homes within their communities.**



Improvement Priority 7

Placing the people of Gwynedd at the heart of everything we do.

As previously noted, the Council already provides a wide range of activities which seek to ensure that we achieve our vision. However, there is always room for improvement. We recognise that there are examples where we do not always look at things through our residents' eyes, and we need to ensure that this happens everywhere within the Council.

Of course, this does not mean doing everything for everyone, as our resources do not permit us to do that. It means that we prioritise those things which are of most importance to our communities, and ensure that the limited resources available contribute to doing what is most important to the people of Gwynedd (whilst accepting that prioritisation could mean not achieving everyone's aspirations).

This consideration will also have to take place at a time when the funding available for services is significantly reduced. In that respect, there will be a need to ensure that the funding available is used to deliver the most important things. The projects that will contribute towards realising the ambition are:

- Implement the Ffordd Gwynedd Work Programme Plan (Empowering Units to Implement "Ffordd Gwynedd")
- Ensuring that managers practice their Health and Safety role effectively
- Planning the Workforce
- Realising Savings
- Strengthening Communication and Engagement
- Clean and Tidy Communities
- Public Protection Capacity

What did we promise to do?

As a Council, it is our responsibility to ensure, as we provide our services, that it is the needs of the people of Gwynedd which steer how we will offer those services. In doing so, we should avoid any unnecessary working arrangements. We are already challenging service teams to reflect on their current working arrangements, to challenge whether they are placing the people of Gwynedd centrally and whether there is room for improvement.

Managers were supported to understand the close link between the Ffordd Gwynedd culture and the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and amended job descriptions have been agreed for managers and team leaders, as well as all remaining Council staff which confirm the behaviours expected of them.

During 2022/23, we will:

- review the results of the self-assessment of how work methods and the culture are embedding, identifying a work programme to drive that culture forward even further
- re-start those service reviews that have been delayed as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

Last year, a self-assessment was carried out in each Council department of the extent to which the Ffordd Gwynedd principles are actioned and the barriers when attempting to action them. Based on the information gathered, a new Ffordd Gwynedd strategy was created for the 2023-28 period, and it was approved by the Council Cabinet on 07.03.23. The document builds on the content of the previous Ffordd Gwynedd strategy (2019-22), but includes an amended work programme which is structured around nine development streams.

The nine development streams are:

1. Learn, Experiment and Act to Improve
2. Leadership
3. Understand and Improve Performance
4. Support and Develop
5. Digital Transformation
6. Workforce Planning and Talent Development
7. Continuous Appraisal
8. A Satisfied and Healthy Workforce
9. Customer Contact

The nine work streams include a series of projects which contribute towards the culture. In order to put the Ffordd Gwynedd strategy into practice, three groups have been established:

The Lead Group: The purpose of this group is to consider the progress of the nine development streams and review the strategic direction as needed. It includes members of the Corporate Management Team.

The Officers' Group: The purpose of this group is to undertake service reviews, lead and steer the nine development streams, and promote the culture change that is in the pipeline. This group is responsible for realising the strategic direction, and to this end, it acts on the changes/modifications agreed upon by the Lead Group. It includes the leaders of the nine development streams.

The Practitioners' Group: The purpose of this group is to share and record experiences, good practice and lessons learnt when carrying out service reviews. It will be an opportunity for those who already implement Ffordd Gwynedd to offer support and useful contacts for those who are not as familiar with the culture. It includes officers who already carry out reviews, prospective practitioners, and Ffordd Gwynedd advisors.

The Ffordd Gwynedd advisors also continue to support Ffordd Gwynedd reviews in various services

Well-being Objectives:

This project changes the way Council staff plan and provide services for the people of Gwynedd and is therefore essential to the delivery of all well-being objectives.

What did we promise to do?

We need to ensure that our arrangements for protecting Health and Safety are robust and whilst we have mature arrangements within the Council, we are concerned that there are pockets where there is an opportunity to improve operational arrangements.

During 2022/23, we will look at specific aims for the following elements, that will, when combined, be at the core of the framework for the effective management of health and safety, namely:

- clear and visible leadership on health and safety matters
- have effective and proportionate systems where live and rational data can be produced to support the management of health and safety and to support innovation
- get the workforce (on all levels) informed and competent for their roles and trained in the risks they face at work, ensuring availability of timely competent advice to advise on particular risks/latest developments in the field
- create a network, structures and a community to consult, communicate and make decisions on health and safety matters, not only internally, but also among stakeholders such as the third sector, contractors and suppliers
- establish an effective procedure to monitor, learn from mistakes, and develop and evolve on a continuous basis.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

This project was one that slipped from the 2021-22 work programme due to work pressures when responding to the pandemic, and the same was true regarding the first months of the 2022/23 year. Nevertheless, we have re-grasped the project and we have been moving on with the project's main work streams over the past year.

A brief has been prepared for a corporate health and system software system and we have gone out to the market for three prices. This has been the main work stream to date since the shortcomings in the current system hinder the ability to produce substantial data to drive improvement and target intervention where needed.

A review of the competency level of everyone within the Council including the Elected Members, Corporate Management Team, and Managers has been carried out. Many courses have been held for Elected Members. A Safe Management course has been held with the Council's Corporate Management Team and as a result of that course a review is being carried out of the procedures for Departmental Health and Safety Forums.

A review of the training of every Manager in each Department is currently being carried out. This (jointly with the delay in the training programme over the Covid-19 period) has meant that there has been a substantial increase in courses.

A draft Well-being Strategy has been drawn up. A conference on mental well-being was held for 180 Managers at the beginning of the year, where mental well-being management training courses for Managers were launched. The conference has achieved the aim of launching these sessions and every course that has been programmed for the next months are full.

Well-being Objectives:

This project changes the way Council staff plan and provide services for the people of Gwynedd and is therefore essential to the delivery of all well-being objectives.



What did we promise to do?

To ensure that the Council is in a position to provide services that always place the residents of Gwynedd in the centre, we must ensure that we have the right staff in place with the correct skills.

Although Covid-19 has highlighted an effective and committed workforce, this period has also highlighted the challenges of attracting and retaining staff across the Council.

Recruitment to areas of care and family support specifically have been difficult, causing risks in terms of our ability to meet statutory responsibilities on behalf of the Council in the safeguarding, care and support field.

We must ensure that we have sufficient employees with the necessary skills to cope with the increasing need that is likely to arise in the future.

This means that we need to continuously look at our recruitment practices, train staff, evaluate their performance and foster and develop their talents.

Long-term stability was established for the Apprenticeships Scheme and Cynllun Yfory (the Council's Graduate Scheme), during the past year, and the internal Talent Development Plan has been drawn-up as a framework for the future.

During 2022/23, we will:

- extend the Apprenticeship Plan to include a higher number of apprentices, in collaboration with local external employers to provide work experience
- implement the internal Talent Development Plan across all Council departments
- continue to carry out local recruitment campaigns #GalwGofalwyr across the county, as well as trialling new ideas and methods
- close collaboration with the departments' management teams to agree on established arrangements and identify gaps in skills and expertise anticipated over the next 5-10 years and to take pro-active steps to address these
- look specifically at the recruitment situation in the children and adults care fields, looking at ways to increase capacity and the resilience of our workforce.

As part of the work to recruit, train and foster staff talent, during 2022/23 the Corporate Support Department, Children and Family Support Department and the Adults and Well-being Department will work together to deliver this priority.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The work of extending the Apprenticeships Plan and implementing the Talent Development Plan continues. The Talent and Apprenticeships Team has started the latest cycle of attracting apprentices to Council services and has commenced work to attract 5 new trainees to the workforce via the Cynllun Yfory scheme. Initial work has been completed on the development of a new work experience scheme, and the general direction of travel has been supported by the Project Group.

Substantial work has been carried out to obtain a better understanding of the nature of the recruitment problems faced by the Council. The pilot scheme on developing practices and resolving long-term workforce planning matters within the Planning Service continues.

Three job fairs were held jointly with the Economy and Community Department and there are plans in the pipeline to hold at least two further general fairs.

Work is continuing on creating content for a bespoke Careers website, but the original timetable has slipped somewhat.

After resolving technical difficulties, new arrangements to use questionnaires and exit interviews across the Council are about to be launched. Further information to Managers and staff regarding this will be available over the next months.

Data is currently being collected from job applicants who did not complete their application through the standard application process. We are collecting this information for the purposes of gaining a better understanding about the views of prospective applicants on their experience of applying for a job.

Well-being Objectives:

This project changes the way Council staff plan and provide services for the people of Gwynedd and is therefore essential to the delivery of all well-being objectives.

What did we promise to do?

The Council has good financial planning arrangements, which have already identified many efficiency savings in order to reduce service cuts for the residents of Gwynedd.

The work already achieved over a number of years suggests that we have harvested a vast proportion of the available efficiency savings, but we need to continue to monitor the approved plans of all Council departments to ensure that the bulk of the proposed savings are achieved.

After a long period of identifying and realising savings, which are over £32m in the period since 2015/16, plans are now so much more difficult to realise with efficiency projects being much more work than service cuts. Back in January 2021, the savings schemes were reviewed to assess which historic schemes were now unachievable, and an amended programme of savings was drawn up. Furthermore, the saving schemes for 2022/23 were reviewed in January 2022 in order to assess the schemes that were practical to realise by abolishing and re-profiling some of the schemes. Through the robust arrangements we have to monitor how departments deliver savings, we will ensure that this amended programme is delivered.

There are uncertain financial projections for 2022/23, as expressed in the 2022/23 Budget Strategy to the Cabinet on 28 September 2021, as a result of changes to the financial and economic climate, as well as a lack of information. In light of the uncertainty, the improvement priority of delivering savings should be kept for 2022/23. A further review of the savings will be undertaken when establishing the 2022/23 budget to assess plans that are not delivering and those considered to be difficult to deliver that have been programmed for 2022/23. We will also support departments with transformation costs, as they introduce new work arrangements.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The Finance Department has continued to review the situation regularly throughout the year. Formal reports on the Progress of Realising Savings Plans were submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee on 13 October 2022 and 26 January 2023, and to the Cabinet on 25 October 2022 and 24 January 2023.

In addition, the progress of the Saving Plans was considered when identifying the authority's financial gap for the period 2023 - 2025, and when drawing up steps to recover the situation.

95% of 2015/16 - 2022/23 saving plans have been realised. In financial terms, that is £33.5 million in savings, in comparison with the planned total of £35.4 million. £595,000 worth of savings were included in the programme for 2022/23 and even though £132,500 of these were achieved during the year, £450,000 worth has slipped into following years with a risk in terms of achieving a proportion of these savings.

In addition to this, of course, we will have to present a new cycle of savings as we deal with the financial deficit that is facing us over the coming years. When setting the budget for 2023/24, the Council has acknowledged the Cabinet's recommendations to introduce £6.4 million worth of savings (excluding schools) that are to be introduced over 3 years, starting in 2023/24. That is additional to the £0.95 million of savings that were identified during previous years, and slipped into 2022/23. It is very likely that there will be a need to identify further savings as the scale of the financial deficit for 2024/25 and beyond becomes clearer. The Finance Department will continue to play a leading role in working closely with members and officers all across the Council whilst revising progress on the new schemes.

Well-being Objectives:

This project changes the way Council staff plan and provide services for the people of Gwynedd and is therefore essential to the delivery of all well-being objectives.



What did we promise to do?

The Highways and Municipal Department is very visible with aspects of the services reaching each resident throughout the County. Value can be added to the department's work by means of effective communication and engagement plans; for example, campaigns to prevent littering or dog fouling, or campaigns and guidelines to encourage re-use, re-purposing and reducing waste. It is also crucial that residents are confident in the department's services and that their concerns and enquiries are dealt with effectively.

We will ensure that timely and meaningful response arrangements are in place and we will:

- review current arrangements for communicating and responding to enquiries
- highlight where there are shortcomings/places for improvement
- establish a task group with representation from officers together with Galw Gwynedd
- identify measures for monitoring

What progress was made in 2022/23?

A Task Group was established, with representation of Galw Gwynedd officers since reviewing our response to customer enquiries arrangements.

It is important that residents are confident in the Department's services and that their concerns and enquiries are dealt with effectively and timely. We are in the process of launching the Services Mapping Project, where the department's assets will be public on the Council's website. The first assets to be placed on the interactive map will be our street lamps/salt bins with the intention of expanding to include a wide range of other assets/services soon.

Benefits to the Customer:-

- An easy way of identifying and choosing a specific asset in a layer on a map
- You will be able to click on the specific asset if you wish to report a problem
- See the maintenance schedule and the asset in question
- Able to see if the problem has already been reported - and whether the Council is aware of the matter
- Able to determine whether there is a real need to continue to report the problem

This work is expected to be completed before the Winter Maintenance period. For example our salt bins live on the interactive map to ensure that our communities are able to report any deficiency.

We are also currently holding an internal review of the street cleaning fields where we will map out the current processes to ensure that the processes reflect the work arrangements today. It is a crucial matter that we remove any unnecessary steps and therefore can respond to the enquiries of the residents of Gwynedd within a reasonable time.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.**

What did we promise to do?

We will collaborate with the residents and communities of Gwynedd by engaging in order to develop an Action Plan to correspond with this priority by expanding and developing community partnerships to improve the quality and appearance of the county, e.g.

- Clean and tidy streets
- Roads and walking paths in a good condition
- Local work teams to complete the work
- Discussion about the principles and actions by engaging with the community and staff
- Draw up an action plan and identify aspirations and possible stakeholders on a community level.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The Tidying Up Teams were launched back in March 2022. The attached video outlines the principles of the 'Tidying up Team' Tîm tacluso Ardal Ni - [English subtitles - YouTube](#)

The 5 Tidying Up Teams undertake work that contributes to improving the appearance of our streets and our environment, and by doing this, enhancing the County and making a visual difference.

It is possible to organise work by submitting the digital form identifying the desired work that needs to be carried out by the members. We receive several requests and the Project Officer/Team Leader is responsible for responding to them and forwarding them to the relevant Teams' portable tablets. The portable tablets enable the team to update requests by attaching pictures of their work whilst out working within our communities.

A new development was introduced within the members portal that's a 'hub' for the Teams. The digital form will be uploaded there as well as the teams' routes on an interactive map. We have also added to this hub by setting up a customer satisfaction questionnaire along with photos/details of the teams' work.

The work of the teams will go a step further than the department's maintenance work and will focus on 'deep cleaning' that includes cleaning streets and removing chewing gum as well as cleaning graffiti by using a specialist machine.

Since they were established we have been promoting the work of the Teams on social media. We intend to expand on this work in order to demonstrate the value of the Teams and the difference they make within our communities.

Well-being Objectives:

- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

What did we promise to do?

As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, the importance of our Public Protection Services has become increasingly apparent, in their role of protecting the health of our communities, as well as advising and supporting the county's businesses.

The experiences during the emergency period have highlighted the lack of resilience in the Public Protection Services as a result of years of cuts.

During 2021/22, a review of Public Protection Services structures was undertaken in order to assess the need in full. The review has identified 4 actions to address the needs of the Services, namely:

- provide a temporary budget to facilitate the continuation of the Test, Trace and Protect Service
- employ 3 public protection trainees for a temporary period of 3 years for the purposes of succession planning
- provide a permanent budget to create Team Leader (x6) posts within the current staff capacity; in accordance with the principles of the Council's management tiers
- raise the salary levels of 13 eligible environmental health / public protection / trading standards officers so that they are more comparable to the salaries of similar posts in other north Wales authorities.

During 2022/2023, the financial bids will be submitted and if successful they will be implemented in order to increase capacity to support and protect the residents and businesses of Gwynedd.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The Environment Department continued to carry out the Test, Trace and Protect Service on behalf of the Council up until June 2022 as part of the corporate response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following securing successful bids to increase capacity and planning for future succession for the field, 3 trainees have been appointed in the Public Protection Services. It was possible to appoint one trainee to each field: Food and Safety, Pollution and Licensing, and Trading Standards with a work programme in place for the trainees.

Team Leaders' post evaluations were held, and the Department has appointed to the posts.

13 of the Public Protection Officer posts were evaluated and their salaries are now comparable to those of neighbouring authorities.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.**

Improvement Priority 8

Respond to the Climate Change emergency.

At its meeting on 7 March 2019, the Council considered a motion relating to climate change and it was resolved to do our utmost to ensure that the county remains a vibrant, viable and sustainable home for our children and their children for generations to come. We do this by means of:

- Declaring a Climate Emergency;
- Committing to taking decisive action to reduce carbon emissions and strive for a zero-carbon future;
- Looking for innovative means to achieve zero carbon targets;
- Reporting back within 6 months on positive steps the Council has taken to reduce carbon emissions; and
- Call on Welsh Government and the Westminster Government to provide the requisite powers and resources to achieve the target of a carbon-free Gwynedd by 2030.

Only one project will contribute towards realising the ambition, which is:

- Climate Change Action Plan

What did we promise to do?

After the Covid-19 crisis interrupted this work, the Cabinet decided at the start of 2021 to provide one-off finance to appoint a Climate Change Programme Manager for an initial period of 12 months to lead on the work of bringing this plan together.

A cross-departmental Climate Change Board was also established to steer the work. The Board has been working to identify where we can achieve the biggest impact when reducing our impact as a body on the environment and to identify any gaps in our work to date.

A meeting was held with members of the Council by virtual means so that they could propose their ideas and it is expected that we will have adopted an Action Plan by the end of March 2022.

In 2022/23, we will start to act in accordance with the pledges noted in the plan.

What progress was made in 2022/23?

The Cabinet's approval was received to adopt and implement the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022/23-2029/30 at its meeting on 8 March 2022.

The Climate and Nature Board has continued to meet regularly during the year to provide strategic guidance for the work programme, and to challenge the performance and progress of the Plan.

There are a number of projects listed in the Plan, and their progress is as follows:

- Agreement to invest £2.8M in a Solar PV Panels scheme - Phase 4. This extends the work of installing solar panels that have already been completed under schemes phase 1 to 3, and we will install additional solar panels on 54 of our buildings.
- Adoption of Green Fleet Plan 2023-2029, and purchase of 15 electric vehicles.
- Transfer the Council's energy supply agreement to be receiving electricity that has been generated from renewable energy.
- Receive a grant of nearly £0.5M to improve our woodlands and maintain grounds.
- Collaborate with Transport for Wales, Eryri National Park, Conwy Council and the Welsh Government to extend the Sherpa'r Wyddfa service to reduce the use of personal vehicles and to mitigate parking problems.

Well-being Objectives:

- **Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.**

Part 2

Departmental Work Performance Reports

Education Department

In addition to the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition. One of the Council's main priorities is to ensure that the children and young people of Gwynedd are all given the same opportunities and have the best possible education and experiences.

We cannot provide a full appraisal of the educational outcomes of pupils. In accordance with the Minister for Education's statement on 21 June 2021, the Authority does not use qualification awards data to report on the attainment outcomes at a school, authority or regional consortium level. This is because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to halting the inspections of schools and the majority of other education providers since March 2020.

As a result of these aspects the categorisation of schools is not operational nor are the usual performance indicators. The inspection profile of the post-pandemic period is consistently good with only two primary and one secondary school falling into the category of monitoring by Estyn.

All schools make intelligent use of teaching, learning and assessment data and information to appraise standards and identify priorities for further improvement. The authority and regional consortia are working in partnership with schools to provide them with the support they need to improve and successfully implement the Government's ambitious reforms.

Safeguarding

The safeguarding of Gwynedd children and young people is a key priority for the Department and the Council, and even more

so of course as a result of the pandemic. The Department has created a new training package in Welsh for Child Protection Designated Persons in schools and education centres, in conjunction with the Welsh Government's Safeguarding in Education Group. The Education Department and the Council's Learning and Development services have collaborated to develop a training package in the field of domestic violence. The Ask and Act package has been jointly developed and continues to be presented to Education Department staff.

The Immersion Education System

The immersion system for newcomers to Gwynedd has been established in its new guise since January 2023. As a result of a £1.1m capital grant from the Welsh Government, the Eifonydd immersion education site has received significant investment to improve the resources and the learning environment there, and a new immersion education site has been established in Bangor, with work also underway to develop an immersion education site in Tywyn. The investment in these sites is in line with Cabinet's vision, of ensuring a world-class learning environment with the facilities enabling the delivery of a Curriculum to Wales in the classroom as well as the outside area. They are also within reasonable reach of facilities such as Gwynedd Libraries, Byw'n Iach Centres, shops, clubs and social enterprises. Visiting these places is a great opportunity to broaden learners' experiences and bring the Welsh language to life for them.



Gadgets shop, and this resource will be shared nationally in due course.



At the Cabinet's meeting on 19 July 2022 unanimous support was received to proceed to submit a full business case before the Welsh Government to secure an additional £1.1m funding from the Welsh Medium Education Capital Grant to reconcile capacity and improve the learning environment of the remaining primary Language Centres, namely Maesincla, Llangybi and Dolgellau and this work is currently proceeding.

In addition, a great deal of exciting work in the field of Welsh has taken place in the context of the Welsh Government's revenue grant funding. The system's staff have been working closely with author Anni Llŷn to write a new Immersion Plan for the language units that will bridge learners within the primary and secondary sector. This new scheme is based on an imaginary village called Aberwla and incorporates appropriate language patterns within the language continuum in the Curriculum for Wales. To support the scheme, we in collaboration with a company 'Animated Technologies' have developed a virtual element for the village. This is an innovative project that enables our latecomers to step into Aberwla on a virtual platform to practise language patterns in various locations in the village. As a result of additional revenue investment from the Welsh Government, other village locations will be developed, namely Fferm Tyddyn Swllyd, Glamping Field, Leisure Centre, Museum, Garage and

Taking an intensive immersion course for a period of ten weeks equips learners with the skills necessary to enable them to blend in and thrive back in our schools in a formal and informal context within Gwynedd's Welsh and bilingual education system.

Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (ALN&I)

The purpose of the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion service is to ensure suitable provision and support for our most vulnerable learners in school. There is a continued focus on responding appropriately and in a timely manner, supporting well-being, developing workforce skills to enable inclusive response. It is true to note that needs have increased because of the pandemic, and we continue to extend the interventions being offered. We remain in a transitional period in terms of the ALN and Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 which has been in effect in part since September 2021, and the transition period will end in September 2025.

The Service continues to provide:

- Whole School input to develop the provision offered
- Specialist resources on the website (www.adyach.cymru). Use of the website has been very high. Also, we provide tailored training according to need.
- Training in Mental Health and Wellbeing e.g. Seasons for Growth (dealing with loss and

grief), Mindfulness, Training and supervising ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) Assistants and supporting vulnerable pupils.

- Direct input for supporting learners, to support them to access the education provision offered.

The transition from the former SEN Legislation to the new ALN Legislation continues to keep momentum and is on track, and the use of new Criteria has been further extended to enable wider reporting on children's progress, as demonstrating the progress of children and young people with ALN requires holistic approaches.



Due to the pandemic, and extended periods of distance learning, learner attendance rates have not returned to what they were before the pandemic, which is a common pattern across Wales. The wellbeing service supports schools to promote attendance and attendance difficulties can be due to a range of factors e.g., behavioural, emotional and/or social development difficulties, as well as increased cost of living. Provision for learners where Welsh and English is their additional language has been developed, with the team supporting a number of asylum seekers.

Welfare

Following the lockdown periods and the Covid-19 pandemic, schools continue to prioritise the Welfare and Attainment of all learners. In returning to a 'normal' period all schools' action plans continue. They implement support for specific groups of

young learners bridging and extending already established provisions.

All Gwynedd schools have received guidance and support in self-assessment, planning and implementing a whole-school approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing. The aim of this - by developing a culture, ethos and environment that fosters the health and wellbeing of learners - is that each individual will realise their potential, be able to cope with the normal stresses of life, be able to work productively and prosperously and to contribute to their community in a constructive and positive manner.

Looked After Children

To ensure that the health and education of every Looked-after Child in Gwynedd is addressed effectively further Personal Education Plans are created on an electronic platform. By working with the regional service and the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service, the schools make effective use of grants to ensure training and support for the Authority's Children in Care provisions.

Modernising Education

During the year there was an opportunity for the Council to apply as part of the Sustainable Schools Challenge for a 100% investment from the Welsh Government to construct a new primary school that would be sustainable and environmentally friendly in all aspects of its development and day-to-day operation. The 22 authorities had the opportunity to apply, with a budget of up to £15m available from the Welsh Government for the winning authority to make the aim a reality.

A bid was submitted for the establishment of a new environmentally friendly school on the existing Ysgol Bontnewydd site, and it was confirmed that the application we submitted had been successful. The building will be innovative with the aim of reducing carbon, and maximising the re-use of materials from existing buildings while also prioritising the use of materials local to the area. Ysgol

Bontnewydd learners and the community as a whole will play a key role throughout the process of establishing the new building. Learners will be involved in the design process and will have exciting opportunities to learn about construction, architecture and sustainability; and all of this will enrich their experiences and address Curriculum for Wales learning areas. We look forward to seeing this development come to fruition over the next few years.



During the year an additional learning needs capital grant was received from the Welsh Government to improve accessibility and remove barriers that prevent learners from fully accessing education in the same way as their peers. This grant was used to make improvements to 3 secondary schools in the county to remove barriers and promote full access to education for all learners, with work including:

- Building ramps and installing lifts to assist physically disabled learners.
- Suitable lighting and painting schemes to support learners with visual impairments.
- Adjust spaces in the schools to create a hygiene/therapy room.
- Install a platform lift to gain access to the stage.

In addition, all main entrances in all Gwynedd schools are accessible, and at least one primary school in each secondary catchment area is fully accessible and more, along with all new schools built and all new extensions are accessible.

Also during the year a local schools capital grant was received from the Welsh Government. This grant was intended to support schools to open their doors as a community resource and facility beyond school hours, and making school site facilities available to the community is more important than ever to promote the well-being of children, young people and families as a result of the pandemic, as well as providing opportunities and facilities for families who find it difficult due to the increased cost of living. As a result of this capital grant, we managed to support 37 schools to open their sites to the community beyond school hours, and here are some examples of the type of schemes supported:

- adapting the school access and hall to facilitate safe and effective use of the facilities,
- improving exterior lighting (sports grounds),
- investing in playing fields and play park equipment for the community,
- creating allotments for the community,
- buying a shed on some school sites for the community to store sports/gardening equipment,
- alterations to changing rooms and toilets to facilitate community use,
- safety measures to separate areas from the perspective of school and community use of the facilities.

Resources Unit

The Education Department's Resources Unit encompasses a number of services that support schools. The Contracts and Salaries Team ensures the processing of employment

details of all Gwynedd school teaching staff, around 3,000 staff in total. They also process any applications related to retirement and illness.

Support is available to all Gwynedd governors from the unit. They provide training, guidance and advice on various school governance issues, and are available to support subcommittees with administration, processes and policies.

The data unit ensures that all relevant county education data is safe and up to date and available to help the Department make strategic evidence-based decisions. The Department also processes all access applications to county schools.

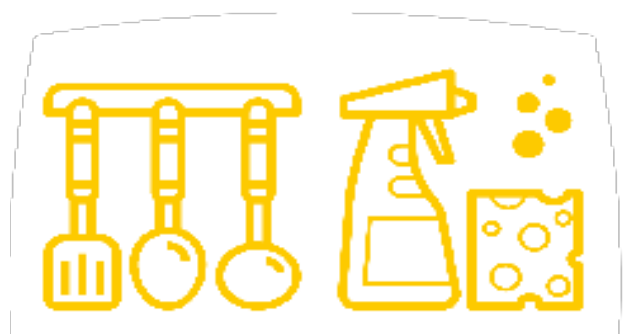
The Catering and Cleaning unit provides lunch for children in our schools and ensures the buildings are kept clean. Lunch intake in primary schools has now increased following the free school lunch offer for children up to year 4 with further work being undertaken to prepare the offer for year 5 and 6 children by September.

Ensuring that learners eligible for transport to schools or colleges in the county are transported safely and in appropriate vehicles is also part of the Department's work in conjunction with the Environment Department.

The resource unit is also responsible for processing a number of applications for financial support from a number of funds that are in the care of the Department for Education and Gwynedd schools. These funds vary from offering financial assistance to students who shine in specific subjects to sick children or to young mothers.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do
- Live in a natural Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.



Adults, Health and Well-being Department

As well as the work to realise the Improvement Priorities, the remainder of the department's 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition by providing the timely support necessary to allow the people of Gwynedd to live their lives as they wish.

In terms of reporting on performance, over the past year the department has invested to develop our measures to ensure the availability of appropriate data to highlight the trends in our performance and to steer our work and priorities over time. As a result, we will be reporting on several measures for the first time and it will not always be possible to provide data for the whole year or compare with the previous year.

During 2022/23 our statutory social services for adults received 4,558 contacts in total, with 2,098 of those being new contacts. On 31 March 2023 there were 2,470 adult care plans in place. We should note that these figures are only the statutory services, and we also provide other services to support individuals' health and well-being to enable them to live independently within their communities for longer. Cooperation with our partners in the Health Board locally and across the third sector is essential to enable this support.

One of the main challenges in the sector during 2022/23 was the shortage of care staff and addressing this is a main priority. A Marketing and Development of Care Careers Officer was appointed in 2021/22, and has been a valuable resource to get to grips with the recruitment agenda. The officer has been leading on a recruitment campaign called SOS #Dare2Care in Gwynedd and we have released a new recruitment video during 2022/23. We have also held face to face recruitment events in some locations including Bethesda and Penygroes. Between

September 2022 and March 2023, 88 individuals were referred on to Adults and Children care services through the campaign.

Older People, Physical and Sensory Disabilities

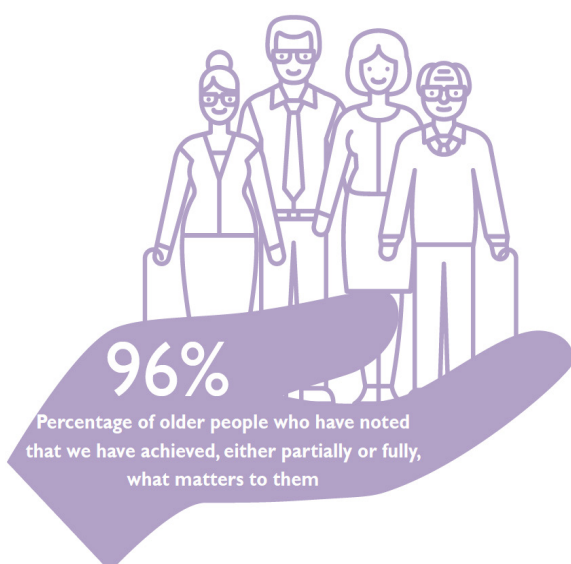
On the whole the service has coped well with the demand for care needs assessments, managing to carry out 101 assessments every month on average between April 2022 and February 2023. We were beginning to see a gradual increase in the demand following Christmas time, which is normal for this service, but we saw a significant increase in March 2023 when 144 assessments were completed.

On 31 March 2023 there were 11 individuals waiting for a Social Work assessment. Four of those had been on the list for over 30 days. This is usually because of a lack of capacity of social workers but the service is working with the individuals and key partners to ensure support until they can be assessed. In the Llŷn area we encountered difficulties in recruiting a Practice Lead and Social Worker into vacant posts, and this has affected the team's ability to assess on time.

The number of individuals having to wait over 30 days for an occupational therapy assessment is higher. The number of individuals requiring this type of assessment is also higher – there were 71 individuals waiting for an occupational therapy assessment on 31 March 2023 and 37 of those had been waiting longer than three months. Recruiting and retaining staff in this field has been incredibly challenging and you can see an outline of our efforts to address this problem as part of our update on our priority project 'Redesigning our Care Services'. However, two full-time occupational therapist posts remain vacant, therefore to tackle the waiting lists we

have increased the Social Work Practitioner resource in the short term and are looking at the possibility of up-skilling the practitioners to be able to support further.

We measure the quality of our services by conducting reviews that consider whether the individual being supported is able to achieve what matters to them. During 2022/23, 569 reviews were conducted and the data shows that we achieved this fully in 79% of those cases (up from 76% in 2021/22 and 71% in 2020/21). We managed to partly achieve what matters in 17% of the cases, which unfortunately leaves 4% (23 individuals) where we were unsuccessful (increased from 15 individuals in 2020/21). It should be noted that this data arises from the reviews made of cases of individuals who are in receipt of out care services. Because of pressures on services and lack of staffing capacity, unfortunately there are a number of people who are on waiting lists for care services - of course, we are not managing to support these individuals to achieve what is important to them. However, these individuals' views are not reflected fairly in the above statistics.



Although there has been an overall improvement since 2021/22, we can see that there has been an increase in the

cases where individuals cannot achieve what matters to them. The main themes that emerge among the reasons relate to issues such as unpaid carers not being able to continue caring for various reasons, a lack of social opportunities or individuals losing confidence to participate in their local communities, and frustration because they need support rather than being able to cope independently. The priorities identified under the [Caring Gwynedd heading in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28](#) include a number of projects to try to address the matters which we can influence. These include leading on a Carers Plan, publishing a programme of activities to promote individuals' well-being, remodelling the domiciliary care and respite provision, extending our options of suitable accommodation and a wide range of other projects to enable individuals to live independently in their own communities, such as telecare and direct payments.

Domiciliary Care

On 31 March 2023, there were 9,478 domiciliary care hours per week being provided/commissioned across the county, with around half the hours being provided by us as a Council and the other half being commissioned through private domiciliary care providers. These hours provided for over 900 individuals.

Unfortunately, however, we have a waiting list for receiving domiciliary care, and at the start of the financial year we saw a significant increase when the numbers who were waiting for care for the first time increased from 90 on 30 April 2022 to 169 on 30 September 2022. This coincided with a period of change for the service (more about this below) which required the transfer of care packages to new providers etc., and when this is added to the recruitment difficulties that affect the sector, it is very likely that the increase came about due to the combination of all these factors. The numbers remained fairly high over the winter,

but we began to see a decrease by the end of the year, and the figure was 141 by March 2023. As a result of the demand, we have also seen a significant increase in the number of days on average that an individual is on the waiting list; 78 days in March 2023 compared with 34 in March 2022.

The domiciliary care provision in Gwynedd has moved to a patch-based model, as is outlined in our update on the project 'Redesigning Care Services'. The early signs in April 2023 suggest that the new model is starting to impact on the numbers that are on the waiting list, and we expect that this will continue and that we will be able to report a different story next year.

Residential and Nursing Care

As a Council we have 11 residential homes for older people which provide a little over half the residential care in the county alongside the private sector, and we commission all our nursing care from private providers.

We have seen how the implications of the recruitment challenges have heavily affected this field. In several of our residential homes we have failed to operate at full capacity and have seen more beds empty than we would have wished. On 31 March 2023 our bed occupancy rate for our older people residential homes was 79%. It should be noted that the 21% of unoccupied residential beds include beds that cannot be used because of problems with the building, or construction work in four homes. Excluding these figures, the occupancy rate would be 88%.

There is more information about the developments in our residential services in the section of the report covering the progress of our improvement priorities during 2022/23.

We supported a number of private residential and nursing care homes during the year who were facing challenges on matters

such as management and leadership or financial issues. Although the increase in care workers' salaries by the Welsh Government to correspond to the Real Living Wage is to be welcomed greatly, it has partly contributed to the challenge faced by local authorities across Wales (especially across North Wales) in terms of the standard fees that are paid to care providers to look after our residents. A lack of provision of some types (for example, nursing beds for adults with dementia) is leading to commissioning problems, and we will continue to work together with providers to gain a better understanding of the actual cost of providing care, and offer options on the way forward which would contribute to the sustainability and stability of the market in future.

Learning Disabilities

This service also conducts reviews of cases, measuring individuals' ability to achieve what matters to them. 140 reviews were carried out during the year, and the data for 2022/23 shows that 92% of our cases have reported that we have fully achieved what matters to them, and a further 7% reported that they are able to partially achieve what matters to them. This is an increase on the data for 2021/22. We should note that roughly 23% of the individuals we support are reflected in these figures, and we are currently considering the best way of developing this measure so as to ensure we portray the full picture.

We are aware that the reasons for failing to achieve what matters to individuals were often related to a lack of opportunities for employment and socialising, and a lack of suitable accommodation options.

We have a specific project in place to try to address the accommodation needs of individuals with learning disabilities. The project strengthens our joint working with multidisciplinary teams to prioritise placements that become available, to

complete minor alterations in properties to make them suitable for individuals who are on the waiting list, and to train staff and develop specialist skills to enable them to support individuals with more complex needs who are currently living outside Gwynedd. Back in October 2022 there were 24 individuals on the list with accommodation needs within the next year. By March 2023 the figure had decreased to 16. One of those individuals has been moved to a sheltered house, one to a residential home and one to supported housing. We have also been able to review the case of one individual who lives outside Gwynedd and ensure that the placement now meets his needs, and others have been identified for a suitable property. Most of the individuals on the waiting list require a supported housing model, and there are several projects currently underway to try to meet those needs in Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd. This is expanded upon in our report on the progress of our improvement priorities for 2022/23.

We also have a project running to try to increase the employment opportunities available to individuals with learning disabilities, wherever they are on their journey. In October 2022 there were 17 individuals in paid employment and by March 2023 the figure had increased to 25. Some who are a part of the project are in paid employment, but others are receiving support to develop their confidence and plan ahead. The number of individuals who are part of the project by having support, training, volunteering opportunities etc. or paid employment is increasing regularly (54 in October 2022, 57 by March 2023), and we are working with the Regional Transformation Team to up-skill the employment mentors and with schools and colleges to offer suitable opportunities to develop skills and offer work experiences to individuals who reach the age where they would transfer from the children and young

people's services to adults services. We are also working with employers including the Council to raise awareness of the benefits of offering work opportunities. The project has also secured an agreement with Caernarfon Town Council which will create work opportunities for several individuals moving forward.

Residential, Support and Community Care

As a Council we have two residential homes and seven supported housing units for individuals with learning disabilities, but we commission over three quarters of this provision privately and we have offered support to providers on many issues during 2022/23. We also have a community-based support service and our Shared Lives Scheme (which offers support to adults in the homes of individuals or families in the community).

At the end of 2022/23 there were no empty beds in our learning disabilities residential homes, but there were two bedrooms in a supported housing unit that could not be filled because the house, which is over three storeys, is not suitable for individuals with complex needs or a physical disability. We are reviewing the care model of this house as part of the accommodation project in order to ensure the best use of our services.

The day services provision links closely with our efforts to secure useful and developmental opportunities for individuals as part of our employment opportunities project.

Mental Health

The Mental Health Service is a joint integrated service led by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. During 2022/23, 428 referrals a month were received on average; the figure was highest in February 2023 with over 500 referrals. We have seen a significant increase in the number of referrals over the past few years; the average figure for new referrals per

month in 2019/20 was 362.

This pressure on the team leads to long waiting lists, and at the end of the financial year there were 76 individuals waiting for a care manager. Nevertheless, the team has coped well given the circumstances and the increased demand, and at the end of the financial year 441 individuals had received a care plan and were receiving a service. As a result of the increase, we have had to prioritise cases based on risk and ask GPs for more information where required before making a decision on offering an assessment.

We have experienced challenges with data collection in recent years because the Health Board does not use the same system for recording cases as the Adults Department. Furthermore, integrated working poses challenges to our ability to discharge our responsibilities towards individuals' well-being because of differences in legislation that guide both bodies, and there is a project in place to address this which is outlined in the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28.

Preventative Support

At the end of March 2023, there were 1,019 individuals in Gwynedd paying weekly for the telecare service (please note that this is not the total number of telecare users in Gwynedd as a certain percentage of individuals receive the service free of charge for various reasons). This was a reduction of 39 individuals since March 2022. Several things may have contributed to the variation in the numbers; but they were mainly errors in the historical recording system, and the effect of the cost-of-living crisis on individuals' ability to pay for the service. Work had begun during the year to reconcile the data for the service and develop the service being offered, with a project manager leading the work. New digital equipment which is more suited to the future is being procured, and the work of starting to provide and promote this equipment will happen over the coming months.

The percentage of individuals receiving a service from the department through direct payments has remained fairly consistent at an average of 13% over the year. The figure is low compared with other counties/best practice, and a task group has been established to look at the entire service and to consider a new model for the future which will enable us to promote the model as a preferred option for the county's residents. This will be addressed as part of the department's priority projects during 2023-28.

We also support individuals by assessing their financial situation to consider any potential contribution towards their care, and we assist adults to ensure that they get the benefits they are entitled to. We gather feedback from a small sample of the individuals we support, and the feedback has been positive during 2022/23 where 100% of the individuals who were questioned were satisfied with the service.

Unpaid Carers

We commission the Carers Outreach service to offer support and assistance to adults who are unpaid carers in Gwynedd, and we also provide funding for a 'Well-being' fund as part of this support. We know that 316 carers in Gwynedd registered with Carers Outreach during 2022/23 and were referred to various projects for support on matters such as well-being, benefits and dementia support.

Unpaid carers are entitled to a carer's assessment under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Carers are currently supported by our social work teams who offer them an assessment, either independently or jointly with the person they care for. The carers are not always keen to receive a formal assessment, and the numbers recorded on WCCIS are relatively low. Advice and support are often provided beyond the formal procedure of course, but at the moment we cannot record this in a way that enables us to report the situation. We are

working on understanding this and we have a Data Group and a Carers' Action Group who have prioritised the work.

We have also started on work to ensure closer joint-working between us and our partners on a scheme for this area of work, based on the four national strategic priorities. The Carers Scheme has been identified as a priority for the department for 2023-28. As part of this work, we will prioritise the assessment aspect as well as other fields, including ensuring that the carer's voice is heard and recognising the role of unpaid carers.

Dementia

During 2022/23 a Dementia Coordinator was appointed to lead on the support in Gwynedd, and the Department is responsible for one Dementia Active service which is currently being evaluated.

Dementia Active has continued to provide face to face and on-line support during 2022/23 for a large number of individuals living with dementia and their families across Gwynedd. During 2022/23, 6,550 visits were made to Dementia Active sessions, with 5,771 of those being face to face. The Boccia Gwynedd tournament was resumed, and new activities and partnerships were developed in Bethesda, Bangor and Llanberis.

Work has also begun to look at the services commissioned from the third sector, and how we can work better with our partners to ensure more efficient services and more value for money.

Quality of Care

As an authority we have a responsibility to ensure that the care being provided is safe and of a high quality. During 2022/23 we managed to monitor 34 care providers out of 62, and the emphasis was on monitoring and supporting nursing and residential care. During January, February and March 2023, the data shows that reactive visits that must

be prioritised because of factors such as the escalating concerns procedure or a safeguarding referral, take up 70% of the team's monitoring capacity, and that only 30% of their activity constituted a proactive and formal effort to monitor the provider. As the figures show, the team's capacity to achieve the work programme remains challenging, as was noted last year.

Safeguarding

During 2022/23, 664 safeguarding enquiries were received (compared with 484 in 2021/22), and 91% of them were completed within 7 days. Although 9% of enquiries were not completed within 7 days, it should be noted that the main reason for this is our partners' ability to contribute timely to our enquiries. It should be noted that work is undertaken within the 7 days to ensure that individuals are safe and that risks are managed in each case, but that the enquiries cannot always be completed within the timescale.

**of all the adults
protection referrals
completed during
the year, we
managed to
control the danger
96.60% of the time**



324 referrals were received under the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards procedure during 2022/23. Due to a lack of resources, we rely on grant funding to be able to commission an agency to assist us in authorising the referrals, as we receive more than double the number of requests that we are able to authorise, almost every month. There are over 300 individuals on the waiting list for an assessment at present, and we must

prioritise emergency and complex cases. Data recording and storing has also been difficult because of the shortage of capacity, and work has begun to address this during 2023/24.

Community Safety

In order to address crime and disorder, we are working with the Police, the Probation Service, the Fire Service and the Health Board as part of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership. The Partnership's plan for 2022/23 has been achieved, and any outstanding action has been included in the new plan for 2023/24.

The number of hate crimes has reduced according to data by the Police during the past year. The numbers of violent crimes have increased significantly over the past year, and this also represents domestic violence. This is priority work for the Partnership. We are working together regionally with Violence against Women and the Serious Violence Duty, which will be a statutory duty in January 2024. Both of these feed into the Domestic Homicide Reviews work. The Council is also working towards a White Ribbon

accreditation. One of the priorities in terms of training for Council staff is Ask and Act.

A number of other areas have been addressed during 2022/23 and they will continue to be addressed during 2023/24 – including, modern slavery, counter-terrorism and misuse.

Summary

During another challenging year, the Department's performance has been good overall, but it will take time for the new indicators to mature and for us to be able to make meaningful comparisons. The main matters that will need addressing further during 2023/24 and beyond are:

- Ensuring a robust workforce for the future, continuing with our efforts to recruit and develop staff.
- Building on our supportive provisions to promote individuals' independence within their communities
- Achieving all our priority projects for 2023-28.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Children and Supporting Families Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

This year, once again, has been a very different year for us all, with the cost-of-living crisis affecting the resilience and well-being of children and families. We have changed our way of working and the range of support in order to respond once again to our families' needs to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of children and their families during this challenging time. At the end of a year such as this, it is good to be able to look back and state that our practice and performance generally across the children field have remained strong. As a department we are proud of the efforts of all our staff in succeeding to keep in contact with children and families. This contact, alongside the professionalism and the untiring efforts of our staff has meant that we have been able to support families, have maintained the stability of families and placements, and ensured every possible support to keep families together during this challenging time.

The department managed to continue to support and safeguard children and keep children and their families together in a context of changing restrictions on the usual ways of working. Now, we have managed to restore the contact and face-to-face support with children and their families across the whole area of work.

We have seen many partner services and external agencies fully re-starting since the pandemic which has, in turn, led to improvement in the contact between other agencies with children and families; and improving face-to-face contact with families.

This has led to families and children being identified and referred to us for support earlier, and ensures everyone's ownership to safeguarding children in Gwynedd.

We have come into contact with 7175 families during 2022-23 who required information, advice, support and/or care. The range, nature and number of families requiring our help is a reflection of the challenge to families in bringing up children in the current climate.

We have continued to offer early support to families when needs are highlighted - from providing advice and information via our Families Hub, to providing direct support for matters such as parenting skills, dealing with challenging behaviours of children, conflict in families and development delay in children. We have escalated and adapted our existing programmes such as Flying Start, Families First and the Play and Childcare Offer to maintain our preventative services and to build the resilience of families.

In addition to our preventative services, we have also collaborated with partners to expand our provisions to promote the well-being and resilience of children, young people and their families. We have continued to offer new programmes such as Haf o Hwyl and the Child Development Programme to provide opportunities to build resilience in children and young people and to promote their emotional well-being. The Youth Service has focused on providing a variety of opportunities in communities and at school that promote the 5 Ways to Well-being amongst young people, and have provided specific interventions such as Well-being through Art and FRIENDS Resilience Groups for vulnerable young people aged 16 years and over.

When a family needs support to deal with several matters that they are facing, our Team Around the Family co-ordinates support for them. 106 families received support from a co-ordinator during 2022-23 compared with 92 in 2021-22.

As part of their day-to-day work, the Social Work Teams offer timely support and intervention for children and their families and draw on more specialised interventions if appropriate.

The Trobwynt Team works intensively with vulnerable children and families, and children who are on the verge of going into care. They are able to support families with matters such as parenting, counselling, substance misuse, meetings to bring in members of the extended family, mediation, family therapy, and support to cope with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). We are continuing to develop this specialist support within this team in response to the needs and feedback of families. Our expert projects include the "Adlewyrchu" programme which offers support to parents with children who are in the care system permanently; and "Emrallt", which seeks to reduce the number of cases of harmful sexual behavior that are referred to statutory services following an incident of abuse.

The success of collaboration between families and our services means that a number of children have been able to stay at home with their families, some have been able to return home from foster and residential care, as well as ensuring that vulnerable foster placements have been substantially stabilised.

At the end of March 2023, there were 281 children in the Council's care (including 15 refugees seeking shelter), and 65% of these received care in a foster placement, with 36% of foster carers being friends or family and

22% of looked-after children placed with their parents and therefore remaining at home.

Number of children in the Council's care



2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
281	273	281

We see that our Strategy to Keep Families Together has a positive impact on children and families, and so this strategy has now been intertwined into the department's day-to-day work in order to continue with the aim of reducing the number of children coming into care.

Children and young people come into our care under highly challenging circumstances, but we are as ambitious for these children as we would be for our own children. We have Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) who monitor the care plans of each child and young person we look after, and they assure us as a Council that the interests of the child are safeguarded throughout their time in care.

Our ability as a Council to place children with foster parents is a key part of the service for children. As a Council we are extremely proud of our foster parents, and the Fostering Team continues to ensure that we have enough foster parents to meet the needs of children who cannot reside at home. Since launching "Foster Wales" in 2021-22 we are proud to be

a part of the national campaign, and have continued to promote fostering opportunities and recruiting and attracting foster parents locally throughout 22-23.

The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit provides assurances to the Council that our safeguarding arrangements are robust. In 2022-23, 282 child protection 'conferences' were held.

The percentage of case conferences where the risk assessments were considered to be of a high standard: 98%

This consistently high performance shows the impact of our investment in practice to ensure good decisions that protect the rights of children and their families. We have realised our innovative project on Effective Child Protection.

Hearing and listening to the voice of the child has remained a priority for us over the past year. The Corporate Parent Panel has been working to strengthen this aspect of its work so that it maintains close links with what matters to the children in our care.

One of the highlights of 2022-23 is the progress that we have seen in our aim to have an Autism Plan for Gwynedd jointly with our partners. The awareness raising programme and training for front-line workers is progressing well, as well as the collaboration with North Wales Autism Service to hold local events to support families.

A decision was made to review and remodel the intention to establish a multidisciplinary team alongside Anglesey Council and the Health Board. The team would have provided intensive, short-term support for families with profound and complex needs. Instead, we have taken the opportunity to build our local ability to respond to the needs of children and families in Gwynedd by adding roles to the department's present teams in order to offer a wider range.

Once again this year we are very fortunate of our workforce and the willingness and flexibility of our staff to respond to these staffing needs and challenges that have hindered us throughout the year, again showing their continued commitment to the service and to the vulnerable families of Gwynedd.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

Economy and Community Department

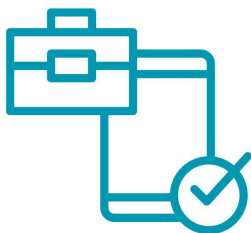
Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

Developing Gwynedd's Economy

It continued to be a difficult period for Gwynedd's businesses and employers in 2022/23. Inflation disrupted business costs and customers' willingness to spend; lack of availability of suitable workers continued to be a challenge for many and the increase in interest rates made it harder for businesses to invest.

The Economic Development Service has continued to take proactive measures during the year to try and assist local businesses to stabilise and develop, and support local residents to return to the world of work and earn more wages.

During 2022/23, 114 businesses received direct support from the Department and over 4,200 businesses receive weekly information through our business bulletins. Despite the challenges, the demand from businesses for more suitable land and property has continued. In response, the Council has invested £2.9 million to build 10 new work units in Penrhyndeudraeth. In response to business recruitment difficulties, the Council held nine job fairs across the county during the year and has supported 141 individuals to secure work.



114 businesses received direct help from the Department and over 4,200 businesses receive weekly information

Town Centre Regeneration

The demand to concentrate and prioritise efforts on town centre regeneration was identified because of consulting work through the Gwynedd Regeneration Framework. A programme is in place to develop Town Centre Plans for towns in the County that will identify a vision and a priority plan, as well as operational partnerships. Town centre regeneration plays an important role in UK Government and Welsh Government regeneration programmes. A range of plans were developed over the year to meet this, with a 'Llewyrch o'r Llechi' scheme, the biggest scheme to receive financial support. The aim of this £26m package is to maximise the benefit to communities due to the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site designation. Strong aspects of town centre regeneration will be linked to implementing this scheme.

Tourism, Marketing and Events

The tourism industry is a key employer in Gwynedd. With an economic value of over £1.3 billion, over 18,000 people work in the county within this field. During 2022/23, the service continued to support businesses and communities to recover following Covid-19. Ninety-four bulletins were distributed to advise businesses, and responsible destination and visiting safely messages were shared on the Eryri | Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website with over 951,613 having visited the website. 77,852 people engaged with us via our social media accounts. Twenty-two events were supported in 2022/23, contributing around £5.8 million to the local economy and over 99,600 attended. A Gwynedd Ambassadors scheme was launched in 2022/23, which is a package of modules that can be completed on-line and reach a gold level accreditation after completing 9 modules. Over 200 have

registered for the scheme.

Following detailed research in 2022 to the county's motorhomes situation, the 'Aros-fan' project was developed to trial up to 5 specific sites for motorhomes to stay overnight in Gwynedd. A successful application was submitted to Visit Wales to support this vision through the Brilliant Basics fund to develop proposals for the pilot sites and submit planning applications to deliver the infrastructure to be operational for the summer of 2023 wherever possible.

A review of tourism priorities in the area was also completed in 2022/23 and a Visitor Economy Plan was adopted jointly with Eryri National Park Authority for the period until 2035.

Maritime

The Department manages 301km of the Gwynedd coastline including urban and rural beaches, 4 harbours and 2 marinas. In response to the increase in the number of visitors to Gwynedd's beaches, the number of beach wardens and their contract lengths was also increased for 2022/23 to reflect the extended visitor season. The safety and cleanliness of beaches remained a priority over the year with a new water safety campaign promoted.

During the last year, new management arrangements were established for the Pwllheli Hafan and Harbour Service. Hafan Pwllheli's moorings continue to be at capacity and dredging work for the harbour has been programmed.

Supporting Communities

The Community Support Service has continued to support voluntary groups during 2022/23, as well as supporting new groups which have formed in order to offer support to vulnerable individuals in their communities. This period has been challenging for

community groups and the service has been assisting them to overcome some of the challenges they face.

The Council's Community Support Fund has funded 39 projects this year, attracting £208,753 in funds to the county. Also, during the year the Enterprise Community fund (CRF) was implemented, offering £357,313 in grants to support 33 groups and community enterprises across the county.

Libraries

Thirteen of Gwynedd's Libraries have remained open throughout 2022/23 with Pwllheli Library benefiting from self-service opening hours following an investment in Neuadd Dwyfor. Neuadd Dwyfor opened in March 2022 because of a successful project worth nearly £1m to upgrade and improve the facilities. Unfortunately, the Neuadd had to close again in the same year to make further improvements to the building. A successful application for a grant of £36,000 was made to the Arts Council of Wales to develop a programme and work on growing and engaging with audiences in 2023/24.

Permanent changes were made to the Mobile Service in the last year, offering an on demand, free home delivery service to Gwynedd residents rather than through the old method of the Mobile Library vehicle calling at locations within villages once a month. This change has proved to be popular, and it was an essential option for those people who were shielding or were vulnerable for health reasons. Also, the Home Library monthly home delivery service (House-bound) was continued, and the arrangement where users can order books - often specially selected by library staff - to be collected from the Library, providing a number of options for users to access library service.

During 2022/23, 293,653 books were borrowed (a 58% increase on last year's

figures) with 33,084 of Gwynedd's people being members of the Library service. In addition, 71,991 e-books, audio e-books, e-magazines and newspapers were borrowed, an increase of 21% on the previous year. Orders for 27,328 specific books were made (another increase of 21%). In addition, 190 Support sessions on a 1:1 basis were held at the request of Gwynedd residents.

293,653 books were borrowed in 2022/23



Over the last year, around 130 activities were held for adults and children through an advanced ticket, with over 1200 attending. These events were additional to the drop-in story times. Two Annual Lectures were held, and a partnership started with Welsh for Adults to provide opportunities to read and speak Welsh in the Libraries. We collaborated with a number of Partners on reading and literacy schemes, creating and distributing packs to promote books and reading to children in the Early Years and Foundation Phase. A Warm Spaces offer was developed in the Libraries responding to the cost-of-living crisis. A new Public Computers management system was installed in every Library which can offer cloud printing to our users. Penygroes Library was upgraded through a Transformation Capital grant and a new well-being garden was created in Dyffryn Ogwen Library, Bethesda.

During the year, the Council approved the

new Libraries Plan until 2028 - Living Libraries.

Museums and Arts

Following the challenges from the Covid period, the Department had to respond to further challenges in Storiell and the Lloyd George Museum - in Storiell due to display cases safety and Lloyd George Museum because of a broken water pipe. Storiell's museum galleries were closed from August 2022 until January 2023. The Lloyd George Museum has been closed since December 2022 and it is hoped to re-open in July 2023.

In 2022/23, over 340,000 people engaged with the museums and galleries either physically or digitally; an average of 94 artists were supported each month in Storiell and average customer satisfaction was 94.6%. A number of activities were arranged through the Fusion Scheme, working with numerous partners, and reaching 212 children and young people to support an improved attitude towards learning; supporting 130 hours of volunteering for young people and engaging with 107 families.



In 2022/23 over 340,000 engaged with the museums and galleries

Gwynedd children and adults were supported by 19 Community Arts projects such as Art on Prescription, Sgwrs a Chân, Fi di Fi, Fa'ma, Clwb Enfys, Craft for Well-being, sessions for Dementia Carers, Criw Celf for 57 young people; Carers Festival including concerts; SHEP programmes for the schools.

Number of Byw'n lach Centre users during 2022/23 920,805



The Ynys Blastig project supported health and well-being in schools through the arts. A fortnight of Well-being for Me activities was held with 88% experiencing an improvement in their well-being. Eighty art packs were distributed to the County's Young Carers, working with Action for Children; 100 creative packs were distributed and 13 community grants were allocated.

Archives

As a result of the re-wiring work in Caernarfon Archives, the site closed between June 2022 and May 2023. This had an effect on the number of visitors - but the service continued to respond to enquiries, research work and continued with the work of cataloguing and digitisation of collections.

During the year, the Service responded to 2,919 enquiries, 13,570 used our on-line catalogues, and 9,029 documents were digitised. In addition, we provided 5,589 documents to customers. The Education Officer visited schools within the county, with 2,341 pupils receiving the service.

Leisure and Country Parks

The Department is responsible for a network of 12 Byw'n lach Centres across Gwynedd. Since 2019, these centres have been managed through an agreement with Byw'n lach Cyf. company. The service and facilities have fully re-opened following the Covid period and over the last year, there was an increase in the number of customers compared with the previous year, namely 920,805 in 2022/23 compared with 284,994 in 2021/22. But this continues to be a reduction on 2019/20 visits, which was 1,204,641. Plans are in place to regain the number of customers over the next year and the Company is working hard to adapt the offer to respond to the new demand.

During 2022/23, Cyngor Gwynedd also invested in a number of Byw'n lach sites, including a synthetic pitch in Brynrefail, Arfon Leisure Centre's hall ceiling, Bro Dysynni Leisure Centre's lights and pitch, the roof at Dwyfor Leisure Centre, Glan Wnion Dolgellau's synthetic pitch and Blaenau Ffestiniog's swimming pool.

The Department is also responsible for two Country Parks - Parc Glynllifon and Parc Padarn. During 2022/23, both parks were busy with the number of visitors increasing, continuing to create pressure on the parks' facilities. An investment was made in a programme to improve the facilities of both Parks, ensuring resources to uncover a mosaic in Parc Glynllifon and restore the steps to the Quarry Hospital in Parc Padarn. In 2022/23, a Parc Padarn activities programme also restarted and an investment was made in a new events area for organisers in the Park. A substantial grant investment was also ensured to re-surface Y Glyn car park and introduce measures to improve safety near the lake.

Local Priorities - The Council's Plan

One of the local priorities noted in the Council's Plan is the desire to attract more long-term, highly-paid jobs. Members in the Porthmadog, Ffestiniog and Penllyn areas noted this as a high priority for their areas. The Create High Value Jobs project has been set up in order to respond to the problem and it focuses on opportunities which will bring benefits to these communities (see Part 1 of this report).

Improving the poor connectivity of mobile phones and broadband in the Dolgellau area is another local priority, and we are pressing on the Welsh Government to prioritise the County for plans in the field, thus adhering to the principles of Digital Gwynedd together with working enthusiastically with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig to meet the need.

Due to concerns around the future of the Ffestiniog Community Centre, the regeneration team recently conducted a review of public buildings throughout Gwynedd. This review showed that public buildings in Blaenau Ffestiniog, including the Community Centre, were used ineffectively and this identified an opportunity to improve resource sharing in future.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in quality homes within our communities.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.

Highways, Engineering and YGC

This last year has seen quite a change within the Department since the Waste and Recycle Service moved to the Environment Department, and the Gwynedd Consultancy Service (YGC) joined the Department. As a result of the change there was a chance to take a second look at the Department's name and it is now known as the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department.

During the year, we have been working on developing and introducing the Tidying Teams, completing work on converting streetlamps to LED ones along with introducing a Green Fleet Scheme for the Council. This scheme is very exciting and presents an ambitious and long-term vision to convert our fleet to vehicles which will be a combination of low carbon to introduce electric vehicles along with other alternative developments such as Hydrogen.

By presenting this report, we would like to offer our thanks to the diligent team of officers, for their dedication and support throughout the year.

TIDYING TEAMS

Come rain or shine, our Tidying Teams are becoming better known in our areas, as they begin to do those little things that make a big difference.

There are 5 Teams working across the County to beautify our communities, creating a feeling of regional pride. During the last year, we have established a 'hub' for our Tidying Teams that allow local members to:

- Create an application for work
- Get access to the work programme/routes of the Teams
- Receive details on the increase/work of the Teams
- Present feedback on the work of the Teams

The Teams' routes are based on the 12 regenerative areas/'Our Area' areas where we will be visiting approximately every other month. Therefore, it's likely by now that you

have seen the teams working in your local communities.

The feedback has been very positive and proves the value of the teams' work.

The things the team can do are.....

- Cut/move urban weeds or overgrowth
- Clean street signs/street names
- Clean street furniture
- Paint or fix street furniture
- Clean, repair or renew street and dog fouling bins
- Clean graffiti/stickers or posters from Council property
- Deep cleaning - cleaning streets and removing gum.



STREET SERVICES

The local environment is extremely important, and a major element of this is seeing our streets and lands being clean, tidy and safe. No-one likes to see litter on our streets, and so our Enforcement Team encourages the residents of Gwynedd to refrain from harming our environment by disposing their waste responsibly. During this year a Dog Enforcement Warden was appointed who works specifically on dog control across the County, including visits to our beaches.

By reminding people of the best option, and making that option as easy as possible, we can change behaviour in order to achieve long-term environmental benefits.

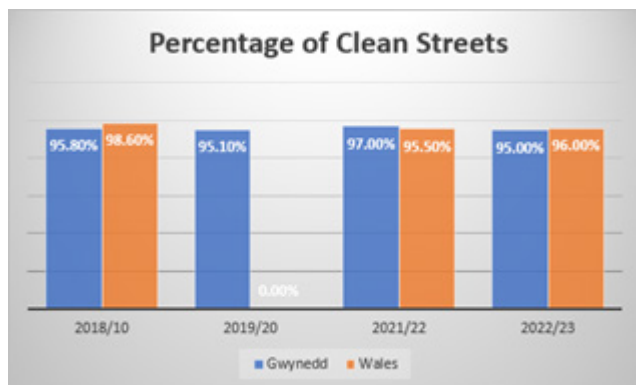
Educating our children is essential in order to raise awareness of the effects of littering on our environment. Our teams are busy preparing a school visits programme.

The input of volunteers is very important and there are already campaigns underway across the County for picking-up small items of litter and arranging events for clearing items that have been disposed of unlawfully.

STREET CLEANING

Our recurring cleaning circuits are an essential part of maintaining our streets' cleanliness standard. During the last year we have been very busy responding to the increase of tourists and different waste collection arrangements and this work will continue with a review of our circuits' efficiency.

We have used a measure called the 'Cleanliness Index' (a combination of external and internal assessment) in order to assess the cleanliness and appearance of streets. The graph below reports on the percentage of clean streets in Gwynedd in comparison to the national percentage:



Street cleaning is something that happens throughout the year and the activities include:

- clearing litter
- disposing of dead animals
- cleaning dog-fouling remains
- removing anything that has been fly-tipped
- emptying litter bins and dog fouling bins
- removing anything else that has been dropped
- cleaning public places
- sweeping roads and pavements.

We are also eager to ensure that there are suitable bins located all over the County to promote recycling litter and to give residents and visitors appropriate opportunities to take part - everyone has a responsibility to dispose

of their waste responsibility.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

During this last year the Grounds Maintenance Service has been working towards a policy of cutting and collecting grass when possible and when the resources allow it. The purpose of this will be to promote biodiversity and wildlife needs.

We are proud to report that in partnership with the Environment Department, we have succeeded to secure funding through the Welsh Government's Local Nature Partnership scheme to conduct a review of our grass-cutting routine in order to find out if we could ensure better control of our current arrangements in order to promote the benefits of biodiversity. The review will run concurrently with the Environment Department's projects to invest in some of the Council's public open spaces in order to connect our residents with nature.

With the Department's engineers' input, they identified eight suitable areas on the A497 and A499 in Dwyfor to conduct the trials. If it becomes clear that the trials are successful, then the data and the experiences gained will be a catalyst for the Department to apply for further grant funding in order to extend the trials to Arfon and Dwyfor.

We will be raising awareness of the trial on the Council's stall at the Llŷn and Eifonydd Eisteddfod in August 2023. This will run concurrently with the promotion of the Environment Department's 'Gwynedd Wildflower Meadows' scheme for all primary schools in the catchment area of the Eisteddfod in order to establish a network of wildflower habitats. Each of the trial sites are located on the highways that lead to the Eisteddfod. Consequently, it is hoped that they will be thriving by the time the Eisteddfod is held so that they can present a warm, colourful and natural welcome to visitors.

Through the Local Nature Partnership's grant funding, we received specialist grass-cutting

and collecting machines that will allow the Department to undertake the operational work from now on.



The open grounds and playing fields' maintenance work has been completed in accordance with the recurrent programme.



CCTV

The CCTV Service has now been upgraded to a digital system and works very effectively. There was an opportunity to add to the provision in the Hirael area of Bangor via the Safer Streets project, which was led by the police. Through this project, we have installed 41 additional cameras and upgraded 12 street lighting columns in order to install

the cameras. The cameras in Bethesda, along with the public spaces' cameras in Bangor, Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Pwllheli will be available for North Wales Police to view from their stations 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

The Department has continued with its commitment to extend the system to depots, which are currently working on installation in Afon Wen. The service is also preparing to start installing extra cameras, by extending the scope to include Pendalar Homelessness service (Pods) in Caernarfon that recently opened.

FLEET SERVICE

The Council's Green Fleet Scheme was adopted by the Cabinet on 23 January 2023. The aim of the Green Fleet Scheme 2023-28 is to reduce carbon emissions that derive from use of the Council's Fleet.

The Council's Fleet assists the Council's departments to provide a wide range of services for the people of Gwynedd from waste collection to care visits, from Highway maintenance to school pupil transport. Indeed, most of the Council's services make use of vehicles in one way or another and this was led through the Fleet Service.



The Climate and Nature Emergency Plan has set an ambition that "Gwynedd Council will be net-zero carbon and ecologically positive by 2030", which corresponds to the Welsh Government's target for the public sector in Wales to be net-zero carbon by this date.

By using data about our emissions, it illustrates the difficult task facing us to convert our Fleet.

We are also looking at different opportunities within the de-carbonisation field that will include the use of hydrogen within heavy goods' vehicles.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

It is important that residents, businesses and visitors in Gwynedd can move with ease within the county. To ensure this, we maintain 2,697km of County Roads along with 199km of Trunk Roads (namely highways of national importance, on behalf of Welsh Government).

While the condition of our County's roads remains fairly stable, unfortunately some class C roads highlight the highest percentage that require attention. There is significant pressure on our budgets to maintain our roads in good condition and our teams have been under pressure whilst prioritising the work programme. The impacts of climate change are also a matter that is considered permanent by now as we see increasingly hard winters and floods affecting road surfaces. We had multiple landslides last year that was an extra cost and pressure on the budget. The Department will continue to monitor and consider the situation when prioritising the county road maintenance programme.

As a highway authority, we have a duty to comply with statutory duties under the Highway Act 1980. A new code of conduct for highway maintenance was introduced in October 2016 that provides guidance that is expected of highway authorities to use when drawing up a method of managing highway maintenance work. Over the last year the service has worked on updating the Highway Asset Maintenance Plan in order to address the changes proposed in the new code of conduct. In order to monitor repair needs and the condition of our assets, our road inspection procedure takes place regularly with the timing / frequency depending on the

road's category.

One process that is vital to protect the life of the road asset is tar and chip surfacing maintenance work. This kind of maintenance work is early prevention that reduces the costs that would arise as a result of road failure.

A diagram showing a perpetuity costs strategy for our road network can be seen below:



The surfacing/tar and chip process repairs the road's surface texture by sealing the surface from water and preventing any deterioration e.g. cracking.

This picture shows the highway maintenance service undertaking tar and chip work.



STREET LIGHTING

By now, all our streetlamps have been changed to LED technology that contributes to a reduction in our carbon footprint and energy costs. Any new development will include the LED technology and lighting maintenance work will still exist in accordance with existing guidelines/instructions.

In addition to this, in order to ensure that we provide an energy/carbon efficient service, we are also dimming the lights within the County's estates/villages to use 25% less kwh per hour between 10:00pm and 6:00am.

Looking ahead, we will be reviewing our work in order to benefit from any further opportunity to reduce our emissions and use of energy within the service. This may include:-

- Review of the dimming procedure
- Review of on-street vehicle charging
- Further developments in the lighting field

ASH DIEBACK DISEASE

An Ash Dieback Disease specialist team was established in September 2021 to deal specifically with the disease on Cyngor Gwynedd roads and highways.

The remit of the team includes conducting surveys of ash trees and drawing up a work programme to deal with those that pose a risk to public safety. The team is also available to offer advice to all Council departments in relation to the disease. Another important role for the team is to contact private landowners if their trees cause a safety risk to users of Council land. In some cases, the team needs to follow up on private matters with a legal notice in order to ensure that the public are protected.

The team's first full work programme was created in 2022/23 to trim and fell some of the trees that were identified as dangerous ones during the survey that was carried out by contractors in 2020. The trees were prioritised based on the greatest risk to the public e.g., the ones on busy roadsides, frequently used

grounds and so on. Important lessons were learnt during the implementation of this work programme that led to the team forming a new strategy to use the revenue funding that is available more efficiently.

The team has also started to re-visit the sites they visited during the 2020 survey in order to discover whether some of the trees' condition have deteriorated and, accordingly, deserving of treatment by now.

The team would record their inspections and their work programmes on software that was built for them by the Council's Information Technology Service. However, even though it was effective during the primary stages of the work, it was recognised that a more comprehensive software package was needed to store all the team's findings. Consequently, the team transferred all their recent data to a commercial trees assets management package of industry standard. The package provides more resources for managing survey data and recording private trees. This also releases the team's time to concentrate on the operational work of surveying and felling infected ash trees.

The team's priorities during 2023/24 will be to continue to survey infectious ash trees on the Council's roads as well as private grounds and include them on work programmes as required.

BRIDGES/STRUCTURES MAINTENANCE

We maintain 631 bridges throughout the county. They include 338 arched bridges and 96 that are listed and have additional requirements. In addition, we have 1,618 retaining walls throughout the county that are also maintained by the Department.

Bodfal Bridge was closed in January 2019, but the new bridge has been opened across Rhyd-hir river on the A497 road between Nefyn and Pwllheli.

The old Bodfal Bridge was closed in January 2019 following a storm when it became apparent that the foundations had suffered significant damage and deterioration. Unfortunately, traffic had to be diverted by eight miles to Ffôr for a short period of time whilst emergency work was undertaken to install a temporary bridge and fix the old bridge.

We had to see if it was possible to expand the old bridge to make it suitable for today's network traffic needs, but following discussions with Cadw and conservation officers, it became apparent that this would not be possible and the long-term project of building a brand-new bridge commenced.

An official opening for the new bridge was held on May 3 2023, and it was newly named by a child from a local school.



PLAYING FIELDS

We know that playing fields are important for children, parents and childminders, but as play equipment is expensive and funding is scarce, maintaining them so that they are safe for children and young people to enjoy is challenging.

This year, we contacted groups and other partners within the community that would be interested in establishing partnerships with the service.

Through this engagement work, we received grant funding in order to:

- Introduce a roundabout that is suitable for children who are wheelchair users in the playing fields of Trehwfa, Coed Mawr, Bangor; Rhiwlas; Llanberis; Pwllheli and Tywyn recently through Welsh Government grant funding.
- Introduce a multi-purpose climbing frame in Bethel before the end of the financial year in partnership with community groups/the local councillor.



PUBLIC TOILETS

The Council has 66 public toilets in Gwynedd with two recently reopened due to the demand from our communities.

To date, we have upgraded ten toilets by means of grant schemes and there may be potential to upgrade 4 other toilets next year via grants namely Cricieth, Aberdyfi, Pwllheli and Glyn Llanberis.

You may have visited an upgraded toilet in Morfa Nefyn during this last year:



Key to all this was the willingness of staff to work flexibly and to cope and adapt to working from home. We have made successful adaptations to the service, and we will continue with some of these arrangements in the future.

Performance of the Water and Flooding Unit
The Service protects the people of Gwynedd from flooding and coastal erosion. In accordance with national requirements, the service will provide a Local Flood Strategy by October 2023.

Multiple plans were developed during the last year by attracting grant funding to be realised. During 2022/23 many of our water and flood plans have progressed from outline designs to detailed designs. By now, some plans are ready to move on to the construction phase in 2023/24, as noted below.

The flood prevention project includes (note the number of buildings that benefit from a reduction in flood risks):

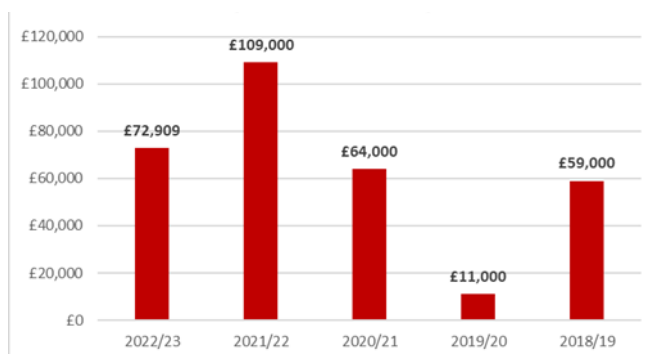
- Viaduct Gardens, Barmouth (33) - Finished detailed design and starting construction in spring 2024.
- North Promenade, Barmouth (712) - Started the process of detailed design that will take over two years.
- Hirael Bay, Bangor (82) - Construction work will commence summer 2023.
- Porthdinllaen (18) - Construction work has been completed.
- Aberdyfi Wharf (11) - Completed the construction work.
- Gwyrfai River (54) - Preparing a detailed design and full business case for the individual plans within the catchment - Continuing
- Ogwen Catchment (95) - preparing a detailed business case to carry out improvements along the catchment area to manage and reduce flooding risk - Continuing

The Service is facing several challenges in terms of increased use and in some cases, anti-social behaviour that has increased in recent years. By looking to the future, it is intended to examine different income generating methods via new technology with fee charging doors.

Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC)

Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC) operates commercially in the engineering and construction field in order to secure high-quality jobs within the County and seek to generate a profit to assist with the Council's financial position.

During the period, the financial performance of YGC has been excellent, and we managed to generate a profit that exceeded our target. This has been possible by completing the design and construction work, and to continue to work on plans throughout North, Mid-Wales and Pembrokeshire. The final target income set for 2022/23 was £8.09 million.



Red = underspend

Monitoring Assets

The Service has completed coastal asset investigations and land drainage in the County and the maintenance work that derived from these inspections is completed. Of the 209 coastal assets there are 25 that do not reach the condition target, these assets are a part of the Council's capital work programme.

Flooding Investigations

We continue to gather information about the level of flood risk within the County and have developed specific maps and databases for this purpose. During 2022/23, it was recorded that 35 residential properties and 5 commercial premises had suffered from internal flooding, which is when water enters the building.

We continue to collaborate with the public sector, and other bodies, by raising awareness of flood risks and coastal erosion.

Regulatory

During 2022-23 we have processed 21 applications for work in common water courses across the County. The consultancy service offered means that each request received during this period has been acceptable, with an average response time of 22 days within a permitted response period of up to 2 months.

The purpose of the ordinary watercourse consent process is to manage specific activities that may have a detrimental impact on flooding. During the last year, we have also been discussing the requirements of the new land drainage by-laws with various developers. This is in order to ensure that they are aware of the implications on future developments. This process of raising awareness will continue.

During 2022-23 we have reviewed over 300 planning applications to ensure that the flooding threat and coastal erosion for new developments were highlighted and acceptable, and that the application details complied with national policies.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The service has received 52 applications during 2022/23 and the application approval time has decreased from 77 days in 2021/22 to 33 days in 22/23.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.

Housing and Property Department



In addition to the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

The front-line and corporate nature of the services we have means that the Department's role is extensive and key in making a difference to the people of Gwynedd, be that in response to the increasing challenges in the field of affordable housing, responding to the homelessness crisis that now faces all parts of the country, or to ensure that Council buildings are safe and conform to national requirements.

The impact of Covid-19 on the Department's work

Some Services continue to see the impact of Covid-19, specifically the Homelessness Service. During the pandemic, a statutory requirement was imposed on local authorities to house anyone presenting as homeless, whatever their circumstances, to avoid anyone from having to sleep rough on the street. This requirement is now permanent and consequently the Service supports the highest ever number of individuals and families. The Housing Options Team is also continuing to deal with a high number of applications for the social housing register. The after-effects of the pandemic can be seen in the development and construction fields as well - we continue to see challenges to attract companies to tender, or there are higher costs when tenders are received on top of generally higher costs relating to construction and house purchasing. Although the market has stabilised, it is estimated that building costs have increased by around 30%, this has had an impact on several of the work streams including schemes on the Housing Development Programme and the Tŷ

Gwynedd plan in the Housing Action Plan.

The Offices Unit is part of the discussions to plan for the programme 'Working in future' of the Council that looks at the use of our office space and the changes that need to be undertaken because of changes to the work patterns of our staff.

Property Service

Since adopting the Carbon Management Plan in May 2010, in response to the challenges that arise from climate change and to ensure that Gwynedd communities are prepared for the future the plan has meant a significant investment in the Council's efforts to reduce carbon emissions from its activities, as well as contributing towards the wider aim of a low carbon Gwynedd.

The nature of such plans is integrally measured over a long period of time, with small differences between monitoring periods having a cumulative impact over a more extensive period.

An Energy Framework was established in partnership with Beond to run from April 2020-2030. There are currently a number of suppliers on our Framework, and the arrangements included within it, namely 'reverse auction technology' are unique in the energy field. A number of local authorities and organisations across Britain will use the Framework, including: North Wales Fire Service, North Wales Police, Portsmouth Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, Buckinghamshire Council and the Peabody Trust (housing association that owns 104,000 homes). As a result of this arrangement, the Council is gaining a good reputation in the field and generates an income from the arrangement, namely £24,926.15 in 2020, £18,800.13 in 2021 and £33,976.22 in 2022 and at least £103,674 is

anticipated over the next three years. This income in turn will assist us to invest further in our services, e.g. the funding is available to help community groups.

In addition, because of our innovative purchasing methods, we have managed thus far to save approximately £1.4m for the Council.

In November 2022, the Council authorised an investment to the value of £2.8m in phase 4 of the PV Panels Scheme to generate electricity for the Council. It is anticipated that the investment will lead to an annual revenue saving of over £500,000 and the planning work is afoot to move this project forward over the next few months.

The responsibility of ensuring that all our schools, care homes, leisure centres etc., are safe to be used by the county's residents lies with the Property Safety Unit. This work includes undertaking safety inspections such as asbestos condition surveys and fire risk reviews in our buildings.

The time taken by the Maintenance Unit to complete calls has seen an increase in the average times over the last three years - 2020/21 - 8.3 days, 2021/22 - 10.8 days, 2022/23 - 20.71 (April 2022 - January 2023). We do not wish to see an increase like this, and the Service has already investigated the reasons behind the increase. It can be explained mainly as a result of the delay in gaining access to some sites during the Covid-19 pandemic. Between September 2022 and April 2023, the Service undertook an intensive exercise to ensure the accuracy of the system to record calls, that led to closing some calls that had been open for some time. We know, via the feedback received through our customer satisfaction surveys, that the service we give is consistently good with on average 92% of customers over the last 12 months completely satisfied with the service. This reinforces the consistent praise the internal maintenance workforce receives.

The customer satisfaction of the Pest Control Team has also been very high throughout 2022/23, with great praise for prompt and effective work. We gather customer feedback on a monthly basis and between April 2022 and January 2023 on average 93% of customers were completely satisfied with the service that they received from the Unit. Communication matters was the reason that customers gave for not being completely satisfied with the service, however, the matters raised were addressed immediately and any problems were resolved.

The Cleaning and Offices Unit has been busy ensuring that our offices continue to be clean and safe for staff as they return to the offices.

We measure the customer satisfaction of the users of our offices and the Cleaning Unit. Thus far, the results are very positive with 97% of staff completely satisfied with the service they received from the Offices Unit, and 92% of the Cleaning Unit customers completely satisfied with the service.

Our Estates Service continues to receive full marks for the service given to customers however, we continue to face difficulties to recruit officers to this field. To this end, we advertised for a trainee in this field at the end of last year, in the hope that we will be able to appoint in the next few months. The unit has also now become responsible for the Council's industrial units and enterprise centres. They continuously examine the efficiency of the provision and have already achieved savings without affecting the quality of the Service offered to tenants. This Service continues to play a key role in the objectives of our Housing Action Plan, by assisting with land and property purchases, property surveying and offering advice on leases and Council property.

During 2022-23, the Housing Development and Property Service has managed to continue to drive our capital projects forward, despite the challenges faced because of

Covid-19 and the instability of prices in the construction market. In terms of housing projects, the work of developing the former Ysgol Glan Wnion, Dolgellau, into units to support the homeless with their tenancies is nearly complete and the work of renovating and upgrading the Noddfa Hostel has been completed. The Service is working on several other schemes as part of the Housing Action Plan including our scheme to build the first houses for 30 years at Coed Mawr, Bangor. Other projects have been completed during last year, such as work on the Language Centres of Arfon and Dwyfor and developments for early years services at the schools of Maesincla, Maenofferen and Hendre. Up to January 2023, 100% of these projects were proceeding in accordance with the current expected time-schedule.



The former Ysgol Glan Wnion is about to receive a new stone face.

Housing Service

The main challenge facing the Housing Service is trying to contribute to increasing the supply of housing for local people and the housing options available to the people of Gwynedd.

The Department is responding to this challenge via its Housing Action Plan for 2020/21-2026/27, with the aim of:

“Ensuring that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable home of a high standard, that is affordable and improves their quality of life”

There are 5 main streams to achieve this,

namely to ensure that:

- No one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Social housing is available to all who require this
- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd's Housing is environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd

Within the Plan over 30 specific projects are outlined that will lead to a capital investment of £77m in the housing field in Gwynedd over the next 6 years.

Number of new units developed with the Social Housing Grant over the past 3 years



The Council uses the Social Housing Fund from the Welsh Government to facilitate the Housing Associations' ability to construct more houses for local people. Our Housing Action Plan aims to provide 500 new social houses, over the Plan's lifetime. Although there has been a decline in the number of houses developed in 2021/22 due to difficulties with the procurement of materials and contractors, and a delay with utility companies, we had anticipated an increase last year as the above problems were resolved little by little during 2022/23, and this is reflected in the data. It has to be noted that this increase, despite a significant increase and instability with building costs, has a continuous impact on tendering processes and appointment of contractors. We expect that the number of units will increase even more in the next two financial years.

The Homelessness Service operates to prevent homelessness but also provides support for families or individuals who find themselves homeless. It is known by now that the service has faced the highest number of calls ever over the last three years and support the highest number of individuals in emergency and temporary accommodation. In 2022/23, there was an increase of 34% in the number who presented homeless (compared to 2018/19 - the last full year prior to the pandemic). Although the number of presentations at the end of the 2022/23 year demonstrated a small reduction compared with 2021/22, the pressure on the service and its resources remains very high.

Number of people the Homelessness Unit helped during the year



The increase in presentations have placed huge pressure on our use of temporary emergency accommodation and the demand for accommodation is much higher than the available housing stock. Consequently, we have to make too much use of bed and breakfast establishments as emergency accommodation that we would wish. However, although the requirement to house everyone who present themselves as homeless continues, financial assistance was received from the Welsh Government Hardship Fund for the first two years of the pandemic and the financial assistance ended at the end of the 2021/22 financial year. This in turn has led to an over expenditure of approximately £6m on our emergency accommodation budget, and although we have found a short-term solution to address some of the financial gap, the situation is

not sustainable and a task group has been established to look at how the expenditure can be reduced in the short and long term. At the same time, work is being undertaken to produce a Rapid Re-homing Strategy, based on the principle of trying to move people into permanent accommodation as soon as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods. It will be key that we collaborate with our housing partners to realise this Strategy.

What is obvious is that the Council does not have enough temporary accommodation to address the demand and continuing to use bed and breakfast accommodation is not a long-term solution. Our Housing Action Plan has identified the need for approximately 50 supported accommodation units and several projects have been completed (Tŷ Adferiad, Porthmadog and the Pods in Caernarfon) and several other projects are in place (such as developing property on College Road and High Street, Bangor and re-purposing the old Ysgol Glan Wnion in Dolgellau). There are other schemes that will lead to reducing our dependency on temporary accommodation, e.g., encouraging more private landlords to lease their property to the Council via the Leasing Scheme Wales: Gwynedd which is in place and has managed to attract 19 properties in the 2021/22 financial year.

The tireless work of the service to prevent homelessness despite the pressure on officers has led to preventing 33% of homelessness cases over the last year. We note that the number of cases we have managed to prevent is a little lower in 2022/23 than the average compared with 2021/22, and we believe that this is due to the higher number of homeless presentations, that meant the officers' workload was higher and that opportunities to prevent homelessness are reduced. We have already increased the team's capacity to bring the workload of officers closer to the level recommended by the Government, however, we recognise that

it continues to be higher than the desired level.

The Housing Support Grant is £6.8m a year, and its purpose is to prevent homelessness and support people to possess the ability, the independence, and the confidence to get hold of a stable and suitable home to live. During 2022/23 the projects funded via the Grant has given support to over 2200 persons to prevent them from becoming homeless, to stabilise their situation in terms of housing, and assist those who may become homeless to find accommodation and retain it.

A key front-line service within the Department that faces the demand that has increased greatly over the last three years is the Housing Options Team. A new local allocation policy was adopted during the first lockdown, which prioritises people who have a Gwynedd connection. We are happy to report that on average 97% of the social housing allocations over the last year have gone to a local person with a connection to Gwynedd (in accordance with the new Allocation Policy). During 2022/23, 1450 applications were received (this continues to be at the same level as 2021/22) to be included on the General Housing Register, and the team was able to process the applications easily within the 10 day target (7.7 days on average). The high demand is reflected in the latest data regarding the number of days on average that individuals are on the waiting list, namely 703 days between January 2022-23, an increase of 30 days compared with January 2021-22. It is acknowledged that this is much too high and reflects the shortfall in the number of social housing we have in the County.

The Housing Grants and Projects team is an important unit within the Department on the front-line of our efforts to bring empty homes back into use in Gwynedd. Although they saw

the impact of the pandemic on the number of empty houses we managed to bring back into use during the last three years, it is pleasing to note that in 2022/23 the number increased again to 63, and the empty houses grants schemes is going from strength to strength.

Number of empty homes brought back into use over the past 3 years



The Team has also continued to work on delivering adaptations to the homes of disabled people and children with 167 adaptations completed during 2022/23.

Number of houses modified for people with disabilities



The average number of days taken to complete adaptations to the homes of people with disabilities has significantly decreased this year compared to last year. Although we saw the impact of Brexit and the pandemic on the availability of specialist products in the past, this impact appears to continue to decrease. However, we continue to face

challenges of a lack of contractors tendering for work, although we have started to see this stabilise now and we hope that this pattern will continue.

Average number of days taken to complete adaptations for disabled people Enabling Grants



The Housing Enforcement Unit continues to conduct 'customer satisfaction' surveys and the feedback is always very positive, with every response received being positive nearly every time. It is also pleasing to note that customers give constant recognition to the standard of the service and the staff. Receiving feedback from a sufficient number of customers during some months in 2022/23 has been challenging for different reasons, however we are confident via verbal feedback that officers receive, that the service continues to be effective and we can respond to any problems pro-actively when, and if they arise.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.

Environment Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

Many of the Environment Department's priorities over the last few years have been related to matters regarding Covid-19. With 2022/23 being a recovery period following the pandemic, many of the Department's Services have been working to deal with the work backlog that occurred as a result.

During the year, operational responsibilities about waste collection and handling and recycling have been transferred to the Department, which meant a change in work area and a substantial increase in staff that have been transferred.

Following a review of performance measures during the previous year, many new measures were presented and reported by several Services within the Department in 2022/23. The main intention of the measures is to challenge and monitor performance in areas that are important to Gwynedd's residents, and this will continue as the waste and recycling field's performance is reported during 2023/24.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

Food and Safety Service

Because the Food and Safety Service's officers have been focusing their efforts on the work of preventing the spread of Covid-19, there was a backlog of food safety inspections by councils throughout Wales. As a result, the Service acted on a Food Standards Agency Recovery Plan during 2022/23. In accordance with the plan, food safety inspections (food hygiene and food standards inspections) followed a system where some new businesses and high-risk businesses were

given initial priority.

We managed to meet all the plan's targets except that it was not possible to inspect 21 hygiene risk category C premises before the end of the year, as they are seasonal businesses and are therefore not open for most of the year. These properties will be inspected whilst they trade during 2023/24.

A food sampling programme was recommenced, and we took part in a national food standards sampling project focusing on allergies and acrylamide. The Service took over 200 samples and analysed them during 2022/23, promptly dealing with unsatisfactory samples.

Although there is a backlog due to Covid-19, 99.12% of Gwynedd's food businesses that are part of the food hygiene rating scheme roughly complied with the requirements (a score of 3 or more) on 31/3/23. Officers attempted to revisit every premises that had not reached this standard as soon as possible, and at least within 3 months to ensure that the standards had improved.

The Service also provided health and safety information and advice to many businesses, including 168 new food businesses during the year. 57 accidents in the workplace reports were received during the year, with 15% of these being subject to formal investigations by officers.



Trading Standards Service

During 2022/23, all 49 inspections to high-risk category businesses programmed by the Trading Standards Service were completed. In addition, as part of the annual agreement with the Food Standards Agency, 196 animal feed establishments were inspected as part of the year's programmed work. By combining all Trading Standards work areas, a total of 1,054 business inspections were undertaken, recording breaches in 267 of the inspections.

1,915 service requests were received, and we succeeded to complete 1,824 of them, which is 95% of the total. As is true of other Councils across the country, many challenges have been brought to our attention, including an increase in surveillance claiming the availability of illegal tobacco and e-cigarettes in shops, as well as the merchandise being sold to under-age children (i.e., under the legal age of 18). The Service has responded to the challenges and have confiscated the merchandise in Gwynedd, and the campaign to prevent the availability of illegal goods will be one of the service's priorities in 2023/24.

Due to the seriousness of the case, the Trading Standards Service prosecuted one business from Gwynedd in the Magistrates Court during 2022/23 this related to the safety of the product sold. The defendant pleaded guilty, receiving a fine including legal costs of £11,211.

Licensing and Pollution Control Service

During 2022/23, the Licensing Unit succeeded in extending opportunities for requests to be presented electronically through the self-service system on the Council's website. Although there was a processing delay in some cases as the industry got used to the on-line system with incomplete or incorrect documents being uploaded, this development has meant that the average time for processing a licence

request has generally accelerated as well as dealing with requests.



Recently, the Welsh Government has consulted on far-reaching changes to the way local authorities licence the taxi industry. It was not possible to proceed to review and create a new unitary taxi policy without fully incorporating what will be the new requirements deriving from White Paper: Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles Bill (Wales). It is intended to proceed with the work on the review once the Welsh Government has finally published the content in the new Legislation.

During the year, the Service recommenced the private water supplies risk assessments, that had not been carried out at all since the pandemic started. A total of 387 private water supplies sampling visits were held, including revisits as required during the year. We have 339 private water supplies in the sampling and risk assessment programme; and the service succeeded to sample 95% of these supplies in the period in question. As part of the risk assessment programme, the Unit's officers have managed to receive statutory accreditation through training to undertake the work. A specific programme will start in 2023 following training new officers to review risk assessments, and to carry out assessments on new supplies that are brought to our attention.

TRACING SERVICE

This service made a key contribution to safeguard the people of Gwynedd since becoming operational in June 2020, ensuring

that Gwynedd's residents receive the right support and advice in relation to Covid-19 infections. The purpose of this service was to lead the county out of the pandemic by improving health surveillance in the community, contact tracing and supporting people to self-isolate where needed.

Finance was provided from the Welsh Government for the county contacts tracing teams until June 2022, following substantial changes to the guidelines, with businesses and services returning to normality, and with the Welsh Government's long-term plan announcement for living safely with coronavirus: Together for a safer future. The Council's Tracing Service continued to act with lower levels of staff as the tracing work reduced because of the changes to Covid-19 regulations, with responsibility for the area provided on a national basis led by Flintshire Council from July onwards.

The team did tremendous work in helping to break the chain of transmission and supporting people who faced the challenge of having to self-isolate, as well as essential work to help safeguard the people of Gwynedd.

PLANNING SERVICE

The Planning Service facilitates and manages sustainable developments within the Gwynedd planning authority area (that does not include the National Park area), and in 2022/23 the Service continued to facilitate housing developments to meet our communities' needs, with 38% (58 units) approved being affordable housing.

Over recent years, we have been measuring our customers' level of satisfaction. Work is progressing in response to the comments received, specifically around arrangements for contacting the Service and communication difficulties. The business Unit within the Environment Department now

receives all the planning calls and receives payments over the phone. Because the arrangements started within the fourth quarter of the year, there is no formal assessment of customer satisfaction at the moment, but from the informal feedback we have received, customers seem to be much happier with the new arrangements. A formal assessment of customer satisfaction will be held during 2023/2024.

During 2022/23, 1,159 new planning applications were received, and a decision was made on 1,132. During this period, planning applications took 92 days on average to be determined, compared with 103 days in 2021/22. 74% of decisions were on time compared with 40% in 2021/2022. Performance is starting to improve and the backlog of applications that accumulated during the Covid-19 period has mainly been cleared. Despite the positive progress, challenges continue within the service due to recruitment difficulties, that several staff members are reaching retirement age and the number of new planning applications remain high.

The service has a role to investigate and take enforcement steps on developments that have not received planning consent. During 2022/23, 235 new cases were received, and 296 cases have been closed, with several complex cases taking a substantial amount of time to investigate. A substantial backlog of 628 cases remain open and this is mainly due to a lack of staff and the need to prioritise the work of dealing with planning applications. Although the number of cases remain high, it must be noted that the figure is lower than the 686 that were open at the end of the 2021/22 year.

The Service has lost experienced staff during the year and the Department has been trying to recruit and has plans in place to seek to strengthen the resilience of the Service for 2023/2024. The Service is grateful for the

corporate support through the Cynllun Yfory scheme and is looking forward to welcoming professional trainees to the service in 2023/24.

The Planning Service also has statutory duties and a role in Conservation matters, and the service continues to support the work deriving from the World Heritage Site (Slate) designation. The Senior Conservation Officer has succeeded in receiving the right from CADW to make decisions on planning applications on grade II listed building which is an excellent personal achievement and offers more assurance in terms of decisions to the customer and a more efficient service.

JOINT PLANNING POLICY SERVICE

Cyngor Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey County Council decided in July 2022 that the collaboration agreement on planning policy matters should come to an end. This was due to the changes to the national, regional and local planning policy context since establishing the arrangement in 2011, and the objective of both authorities to have separate Planning Policy Services and Local Development Plans which will meet the visions, aspirations and needs of the individual authorities.

Since the Joint Planning Policy Service has been in place, until 31 March 2023, work has continued to establish a new Service (operational from 1/4/23).

The Service presented an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2021/22 to the Welsh Government in October 2022. The report concluded that overall the indicators were performing in line with expectations, and where targets were not being met, this was out of the control of the Joint Local Development Plan (LDP). Although the findings of the AMR on the whole note that the JLDP's policies are performing effectively, it was explained that significant changes had

occurred since the Plan's adoption, and that these changes needed to be considered as a part of the statutory review of the Plan which commenced in July 2021.

The Service has prepared a Review Report in line with Welsh Government guidance, and the Report concluded that a full review of the JLDP was required, which equates to a New Plan. The Review Report has been the subject of a Public Consultation and in March 2022, the report was approved by the full Councils of Gwynedd and Anglesey, so that it could be published and submitted to the Welsh Government.

The Service has prepared and gone out to a public consultation on Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) following the successful designation of the World Heritage Site (Slate), and the SPG was adopted by the Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet in June 2022. As a result of the Welsh Government's decision to amend planning legislation to control the impact of second homes and short-term holiday accommodation, the Service has led on the work of establishing the evidence-base to present the Article 4 Direction to control the change in use from residential dwellings to holiday use (second homes and short-term holiday accommodation). This work contributed to the Council Plan's cross-departmental improvement priorities which relate to access to suitable homes.

The Service is also collaborating regionally in an attempt to influence arrangements for the preparation of a Strategic Development Plan, which is one of the statutory duties of the Corporate Joint Committee for the North Wales region.

From 1/4/23, biodiversity and minerals and waste (planning) aspects will join the service.

BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE

The Building Control Unit works with the public and partners so that our communities have safe buildings, are energy-efficient, provide access and facilities to people with disabilities, and meet the necessary requirements of the Building Regulations. The Service is also responsible for dealing with applications to number streets/properties, property searches and demolition notices.

During 2022/23, the Service determined over 90% of building control applications within the statutory period, and on average, responded to notices of dangerous buildings and structures, ensuring that they are made safe within a day of being notified.

Following a structure review, we managed to recruit two Assistant Building Control Officers, and are continuing with the training and required qualifications to become fully qualified officers. Following a review of the Service and how it has changed over the years, what is highlighted is that the priority has been on the fee-paying work, consequently the resource for non-fee-paying work such as enforcement work has been cut, and the income target has been raised as a result. It is also intended to trial the use of money deriving from the Department's underspend to contribute to the non-fee-attracting work, which is mainly enforcement work.

Following a new Building Safety Act 2022 legislation, the planning department for 2023/24 can act on the statutory requirements of the Local Authority Building Control and the Approved Private Inspectors in terms of competence, where it is required for the officers to register with the Building Safety Regulator as 'Building Inspectors.' This is a threat to the service and the Council

because officers are required to be eligible and registered to be able to practice within the sector, and it is also dependent on the building class that the registration is relevant to (domestic, commercial, high-risk). This is a challenge to the Unit and the Council, and additional responsibilities, resources and training will be required.

COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

With statutory responsibilities for the Council's public footpaths, the work of preparing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan has continued during 2022/23 and following a public consultation, it was formally adopted by the Council's Cabinet. Similarly, the work on updating the Nature Recovery Plan to reflect the requirements of COP15 and the 2030 targets has started in 2022/23. A public consultation began to seek the opinions of Gwynedd's residents about priorities to include in the Gwynedd Nature Recovery Plan and Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Development work will take place in 2023/24 to adopt the Plan. These Plans, to a great degree, will steer the work in the above areas over the next few years.

A new performance measure was presented during the year to monitor the service's response to the public's enquiries regarding rights of way, 'lonydd glas' and access matters. The level of calls has been beyond staff capacity and we will monitor progress in the field during 2023/24.

We will build on the work from the last few years in relation to supporting communities to take care of their local environment, as well as provide access opportunities to nature and strengthen the Active Travel provision.

Funding has been secured from the Welsh Government to continue and establish the

work of the Gwynedd Nature Partnership. Plans that have been operational during the year include creating a wildflower meadow on road verges and in schools in the catchment area of the National Eisteddfod 2023. Substantial work has been undertaken in nature reserves to upgrade thanks to the Local Places for Nature Challenge Fund finance and improvements were made to facilitate access to community woodland in the county.



2022/23 has seen a continuity in the planning applications that require attention from the Biodiversity team as well as enquiries relating to tree matters. Additional responsibilities have been presented to assess the effect of developments on designated water courses, as well as changes expected from the Government's planning policy.

Steps have been taken to deal with the workload, that includes the appointment of staff, including a new permanent Biodiversity Officer.

The Service has continued to collaborate with the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department on the response to ash dieback and provide input to the Land Use work programmes that derive from the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan.

INTEGRATED TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY SERVICE

The public transport sector in Gwynedd continued to face a turbulent period over the last year. This occurred despite receiving

subsidy from the Welsh Government that will be coming to an end in July 2023, and the capacity for bus services in Gwynedd will have to be considered during the next year.

Despite this, it is good to be able to report on the huge success of the Sherpa'r Wyddfa network during 2022-23 in a challenging period with extending the service and a very promising use. Over the past year, we have completed a comprehensive survey of Gwynedd networks in partnership with Transport for Wales and we will begin to integrate the new service into our network in 2023.



Work has proceeded to enable the introduction of electric buses to our network. Although there has been a delay, it is intended to start a new electric T22 service from August 2023, which will service Blaenau Ffestiniog - Caernarfon through Porthmadog.

It was not possible to collect data regarding the punctuality of bus services during the year, but we hope to restart during 2023.

PARKING AND STREET WORKS SERVICE

The last few years have escalated problems such as a shortage of parking spaces throughout the county, as a result of people staying in the UK for holidays instead of venturing abroad, and this has highlighted the need for additional powers to deal with vehicles that create obstructions and better control of motorhomes.

As part of this work, we have been monitoring parking trends jointly with North Wales

Police and Eryri National Park, specifically in the areas of Pen y Pass, Ogwen and Glyn, Llanberis and taking appropriate enforcement steps as required. Parking Enforcement Officers have regularly reported back and the feedback during the year was promising, with the majority of motorists complying with the rules. Every effort is made to continue to monitor locations closely and take appropriate enforcement steps.

The Service has also contributed to a pilot scheme to regulate motorhomes, 'Aros-fan' to develop specific bespoke sites for motorhomes in the Council's parking sites (or parts of the sites) located within the Gwynedd Planning Authority area, to provide facilities for motorhomes to park overnight for a fee, which will go hand-in-hand with management/enforcement measures. To accompany the 'Aros-fan' sites, the service has also been working on presenting specific orders that will prevent the right of motorhomes to park overnight in lay-bys in areas that have seen examples of irresponsible parking and camping over the last few years. When operational, the Council's Parking Enforcement Officers will regularly monitor the sites and take enforcement steps as appropriate.

TRAFFIC AND PROJECTS SERVICE

The Traffic and Projects service deal with matters that relate to any changes to the transportation infrastructure. The main objective is to ensure that the highway is safe for all road users and that it is possible to use the network without obstruction and in a sustainable way. We meet this objective by delivering the following aspects:

- Dealing with applications to introduce parking bans,
- Submitting observations as a statutory consultee on planning applications,
- Dealing with enquiries about speeding,

- Improving and expanding the walking and cycling network, promoting the walking and cycling network, and completing any other duties under the Active Travel Act 2013,
- Leading on projects to improve road safety, improvements in front of schools, improving the transportation infrastructure with emphasis on plans to reduce carbon footprint,
- Ensuring that roads in new estates are built to the appropriate standards so that they can be adopted,
- Administering the highways data and ensuring that the information is up-to-date.

Following a period of staff capacity challenges, we saw a period of stability in the second half of 2022/23 as staff filled vacant posts and team members developed skills and gained experience and expertise.

The Welsh Government's decision to change national 30mph speed limits to 20mph has meant an additional specific workload for the service, and this work will continue as the legislation becomes operational from September 2023.

The Service's work is also involved with developing walking and cycling paths, and work has been undertaken during 2022/23 to prepare plans to secure additional active travel paths. A public consultation was held during the year and this work will support the preparation of annual finance applications to the Welsh Government for new active travel plans for years to come.

The Service also contributed to a scheme to present charging points in locations across the county. Whilst there was an increase in installing charging machines in various locations, there has been some delay in ensuring connection and that the machines are operational. It is expected that charging points will be available to use in various locations over the next few months, and there will be an increase in operational machines throughout 2023/24.

The service will be responsible for rights of way from 1/4/23.

BUSINESS SERVICE [FINANCE]

Category Management

The purpose of this Service is to collaborate and support the Council's services to design and implement a procurement strategy per category. The main aims are maximising value for money and encouraging keeping the benefit local.

As a result of the Council's financial challenges, the team has made a great deal of effort to manage the costs of the corporate categories agreement in question and attract further savings as well as protect budgets from rising costs.

In an effort to upgrade local benefit and the community value of tenders, each team trialled the 'TOMs' (Themes, Outcomes, Measures) portal with mixed results. A report from the procurement service is expected which details the results.

We continue to provide every opportunity to local businesses to tender for work as well as collaborate with Business Wales to provide practical support on how to tender.

As well as the main aims, we align tenders and contracts with the Well-being of Future

Generations Act (Wales) 2015 incorporated in the Council's strategic plans for 2023-28. We hope to make developments in this field as the government develops further requirements and support to businesses in 2023/24 e.g., support to reach net zero and net waste by 2050.

BUSINESS SERVICE [ADMINISTRATIVE]

Land Charges

Gwynedd's Local Land Charges Unit provides searches information to anyone who wishes to purchase property or land within Gwynedd. The year has been challenging with a substantial increase in the number of applications and enquiries. This comes along with the fact that we are in the process of transferring to a national computer system, with Gwynedd amongst the first of Wales' Councils to do this.

As a result, the time to process applications has increased, and on average, has taken 38 days to process over the last year. As the purpose of presenting a new national system to deal with searches is to ensure that the whole process is more efficient, we believe that volunteering to be amongst the first to transfer means that, in the long run, we can process search applications faster.

In the meantime, we have employed casual staff to increase capacity and assist with the work of transferring data to the national system. A substantial percentage of this work has been completed, which begins to allow us to release additional capacity to assist with searches and respond to enquiries promptly. We are confident that we are making every effort to increase the time it takes to complete searches, whilst at the same time, facilitating the work needed to ensure that the whole process is faster and more efficient in the near future.

WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICES

As part of corporate restructuring, the responsibility for collecting and handling waste was transferred to the Environment Department in October 2022. The following months gave us an opportunity to familiarise with the field.

Since the transfer, a national comprehensive review has been in place, and changes to the structure, procedures and process have started and will continue in 2023/24.

We provide recycling and food waste collection weekly to every household in Gwynedd and residual waste collection every three weeks. In addition, we collect garden waste, nappies and medical waste from some households and provide a commercial waste service to around 2,000 businesses or establishments in Gwynedd.

In terms of our recycling performance, we are proud to record that we have recycled, reused or composted 64% of the waste collected during 2022/23.

But with a challenging recycling target of 70% by the end of March 2025, we will continue with the work of reviewing the area and consider the necessary steps needed to reach the new national target.

Moving forward, we will focus on doing 'more than recycling' through developing a circular economy strategy and in particular, look at opportunities to develop and invest in recycling processes that are modern and fit for purpose.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities Make the most of the county's natural environmental beauty.



Finance and Information Technology Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

The Finance Department ensures appropriate support for the Council when managing, protecting and developing its financial position in addition to providing services such as collecting revenue and paying benefits in a fair manner, and paying staff salaries and supplier invoices. The Council's information technology services are also part of the Finance Department, and they offer high quality technical guidance and support which promotes the Council's basic values.

Financial Management and Savings

The Finance Department's financial management and accountants support work is an asset to the Council's departments when delivering for the people of Gwynedd during challenging times. Through conscientious financial management, the department has been successful in helping the Council to keep within its budget every year since 2015/16. Regardless, in 2022/23 we saw specific factors that meant the Council had overspent overall. The main factors behind this were:

- General inflation in 2022/23 reaching levels not seen for decades, with the rise in energy costs especially having a prominent effect
- We came to an agreement on the wages of the workforce (apart from teachers) for April 2022 to March 2023 by agreeing to a rise of £1,925 on each salary point. In accordance with most other local authorities, we had budgeted prudently for an increase of 4%, but the final agreement was higher than what we had budgeted for.

- The ability to realise some historical saving plans continued to be very challenging.
- Significant increase in the demand for service in fields such as adult care, waste, and homelessness fields.
- In previous years, significant grants were being accepted late in the financial year that transformed the financial situation, including grants for winter pressures on social services, schools' budgets and Council Tax arrears. No such grants were received in 2022/23.

A total of £33.5 million savings were realised between 2015/16 and the end of 2022/23, which, over the period, is 95% of the required £35.4 m, and it's inevitable that realising savings of that amount is going to be challenging.

During 2022/23 the Accountants supported the work of identifying the savings for 2023/24 onwards.

Regarding the Council's financial performance for 2022/23, the financial side-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic remains in some fields and is in turn affecting the financial situation.

Internal Audit

The Council's Internal Audit service gives confidence to the citizen and the Council on the Council's management environment and governance arrangements through independent and objective reporting to the Head of Finance and the Governance and Audit Committee.

Until the end of March 2023, we succeeded to complete 98% of 2022/23 annual plan, i.e. when the audit has been closed or the final report has been released. This represents 40 audits out of 41. During the year, some

auditors assisted with other priorities, including assessing self-isolation payments. As well as auditing Cyngor Gwynedd, internal audits were held on behalf of Eryri National Park Authority, GwE, Byw'n lach company and 70 town and community councils.

Pensions

The Pensions Service administrates the Local Government Pension Scheme on behalf of over 40 employers, including Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy councils. The service focuses on operating accurately and promptly on behalf of its members.

2022/23 has been another busy year for the Pensions Service, with the work of preparing for the three-year Valuation of the Fund (situation as at 31/03/2022), in conjunction with the Actuary, having taken place. 12,000 pensioners have been paid promptly each month, and there has been an improvement in the time taken to deal with bereavement cases, retirement estimates and retirement processes. The performance of the service's other duties has remained consistent throughout the year, with the workload having increased compared to 2021/22.

Although we continue to send some documents by post, there has been an effort to decrease our use of paper, and 23,000 members have now registered on the 'My Pension On-line' website. Where possible, the members documents will be uploaded on-line, and there are options for members to upload documents e.g., retirement form to the site as well. This will assist with the process of accelerating the processing of pension benefits. We have also been working on providing the pensioners' pension slips on the 'My Pension On-line' service and this will be operational soon during 2023/24.

By now, the i-Connect system is being used monthly by all Pension Fund employers to update the salary records. This means that the information in the pensions system is as current and accurate as possible.

The Fund's assets had another challenging year with difficult investing circumstances in 2022/23 because of high inflation and uncertainty in the property markets. Our assets managers' performances were not as good as their benchmark (from -1.3%), but variations like this are expected, and because of this we will be assessing performances within the 5-year cycle.

The collaboration work with the Wales Pension Partnership has gone from strength to strength since its establishment in 2017 and by now 83% of the Gwynedd Fund has been co-invested - 56% through the main funds and 27% through passive investments. Through the Partnership, it is possible to access a broader range of funds and asset managers, which improves the resilience of the Gwynedd Fund.

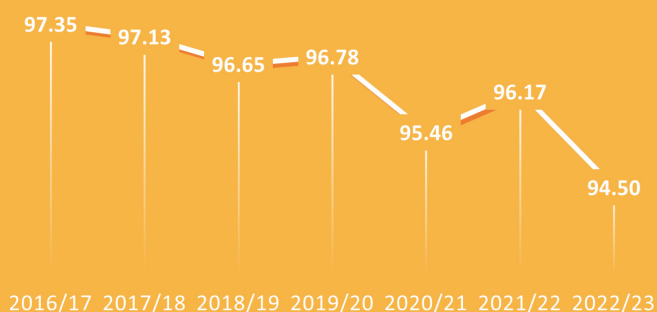
During 2022/23, with funding levels in the fund's valuation being 120%, the Pensions Committee adopted a new assets allocation to minimise the fund's risk level and introduce new types of assets through the Wales Pension Partnership. The Fund has also been operating its Responsible Investment policy with commitments to invest in green energy and sustainable equity fund.

Taxes

By the end of March 2023, the Council Tax collection (i.e., collection during the year) was 94.50%. This was a deterioration compared with the corresponding figure of 96.17% for 2021/22. The figure was 96.78% in 2019/20 (the last year before the pandemic).

The collection rate during the year is the national performance indicator, but it should be noted that the vast majority of the money that is due is collected eventually. During 2022/23 it became apparent how the cost-of-living crisis, especially the unprecedented effect of inflation, had such a significant effect on several of Gwynedd's residents' ability to pay their Council Tax bills.

COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION RATE (%)



Benefits

The purpose of the service is to process applications for Housing Benefits, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Education Benefits, namely Free School Meals and Pupil Development Grant, Discretionary Housing Payments promptly and accurately, in order to give financial assistance to the citizens of Gwynedd to pay their rents and Council Tax bills and to ensure that Gwynedd's children receive the proper support.

The average time taken to process new Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction applications in 2022/23 was 20.29 days, compared to 17.89 days in 2021/22, which is a decline in this measure. Regularity was observed in the performance of average time taken to process a Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction change in circumstances notice as it was 4.27 days in 2022/23, and 4.28 days in 2021/22.

2,827 new applications for Housing Benefits/Council Tax Reduction were processed along with processing 27,254 of our customers' change in circumstances notices.

In addition, the Benefits service has assisted 1,463 families with a financial value of £692,750.00 from the Housing Payments Fund (DHP), which is extra support towards paying rent. In doing so, we have been able to assist a significant number of Gwynedd tenants to remain in their existing homes or move to a

new property.

Additionally, the Benefits service has processed a school uniform grant / pupil development grant (access) with a financial value of £606,920 for 2,622 children (£337,200 / 2,559 in 2021/22) and has assessed free meals claims for 3,567 children in Gwynedd (3,090 in 2021/22).

In addition to the usual work, the service has continued to process applications from the Self-Isolation Payments Scheme for the Welsh Government. Between the beginning of April and the end of the scheme in August 2022, the service paid 1,119 claims worth £561,750.

Additionally, the Department undertook an Unpaid Carers Payment Scheme for the Welsh Government, and processed payments for 883 applications worth £441,500.

On top of this, the Benefit Service has been responsible for the second Welsh Government Winter Fuel Payments scheme. That scheme started on 26 September 2022 and came to an end on 28 February 2023.

12,114 applications were processed to receive payment with a financial value of £2,422,800.

In addition to the work described above, the role of the Benefits Assessors in identifying the needs of residents beyond their benefit claims has strengthened the links with the Supporting People project being undertaken across the Council. Through this work, arrangements have been put in place to allow Benefits Assessors to refer benefit claimants to further support that is available from the Council.

Insurance and Risk

The service has continued to provide advice to all Council departments on insurance matters in relation to several risks and has arranged additional cover as necessary.

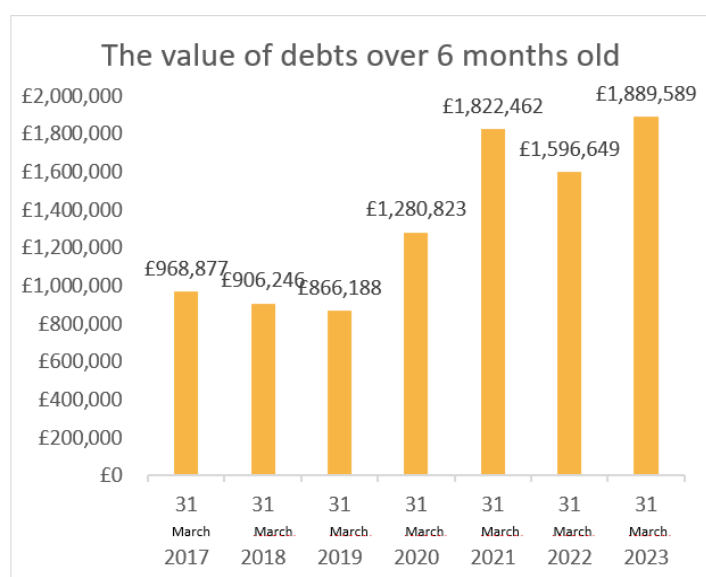
2022/23 was a busy year for the service since significant work was completed while tendering and securing cover for most of our main policies from 1 April 2023 onwards. The service continues to review claims against the Council to identify any patterns in claims that require attention.

With the Corporate Risk Register continuing to develop, and with managers across the Council showing a willingness to use it in order to indicate the Council's situation and prioritise operations. This has assisted members to challenge performance and ensure that the expected steps have been taken.

Income

The Income Service aims to process cash receipts and collect the Council's debts promptly and efficiently.

The value of various debts over 6 months old on 31 March 2023 was £1,889,589, which is a significant increase on the corresponding figure of £1,596,649 on 31 March 2022. The situation was expected to improve as the economy re-opened, but it appears that many of our debtors continue to have great difficulty dealing with their debts.



During 2022/2023, 35,129 invoices were issued with a total value of £50,009,612.67. By the end of the year, £46,570,430.37 had been paid, which is 93.12% (2021/2022's corresponding performance was 90.51%).

Payments

The purpose of the service is to pay the Council's creditors correctly and promptly. As a result of the impact of Covid-19, with Council staff working from home, we have adapted to electronic arrangements, which have proven to be successful. On average, local suppliers were paid within 19 days and other suppliers that weren't local within 29 days, in comparison to 21 days and 28 days in 2021/22 respectively.

Salaries

The purpose of the service is to pay staff correctly and promptly, and to maintain appropriate accounts for external bodies such as HMRC. There were a few cases during the year where the arrangements of working from home during the crisis had led to a failure to send information to the Payroll Unit on time, resulting in having to make amendments to salaries. Despite this, this was a small number and over a period of 5 years, the number of monthly cases which lead to amendments to salaries continues to show a downward trend.

Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) Service provides and supports technology of all kinds to help staff and the people of Gwynedd to gain easy access to information and systems. Multiple IT infrastructure projects were completed successfully, including introducing a secondary connection to the internet from the second data centre in Penrhyndeudraeth to strengthen our resilience, upgrading and rationalising administrators in schools so that they conform to the safety standards, updating the corporate phone system, and introducing a phone connection to 80% of the Council's schools.

Maintenance of the service so that it reaches the safety standards and operates effectively accounts for most of the team's work, but despite this, we managed to explore and operate projects to save energy, preparing for the UK Government's programme to switch off analogue connections and several internet solutions.

We managed to retain our Public Service Network (PSN) accreditation which expresses the UK Government Cabinet Office's satisfaction with the Council's IT services and network in terms of security and reflects the effort and attention given to the maintenance programme. Once again, we succeeded to retain our Gold standard nationally on data standards and cleanliness found in Gwynedd's Land and Property register.

The extremely high standards and consistency in the satisfaction and availability of our services have continued. 34,050 customers contacted for a service through the Help Desk and 99% stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service received, with 1% stating that they were dissatisfied. Our network and core systems' availability remained resilient, with the network showcasing an availability of 99.985% and our core systems 99.99%.

The unit completed 29 new system developments, which is a little less than usual, mainly because the systems that were developed were much larger than the ones developed during the Covid pandemic and additional responsibility of transferring Cynnal's commercial agreements to the

unit. Feedback was received from 15 of the projects, with every single one stating that they were happy with the developments and had no improvements to offer. No feedback stating dissatisfaction or areas for improvement were received.

The Service also supports the Council's departments as they use systems that are hosted externally to the Council. One example of this is the WCCIS system used by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Children and Supporting Families Department. The IT Service has supported national discussions to ensure that any matters that arise with these systems receive appropriate attention from the suppliers.

The Digital Learning Service came into operation on 1 April 2022 with the purpose of leading, supporting and collaborating with our schools to maintain digital learning of the highest quality and ensuring the best opportunities for Gwynedd's pupils. During the April 2022-March 2023 year, 4,660 Window devices were distributed amongst Gwynedd's High Schools' teachers and pupils, and support was given to a total of 12,285 devices that were distributed by the PDG on the new systems, in addition to old devices that remain in the schools.

Corporate Support Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

It has been a year of restoring many of the Department's activities due to the pandemic, whilst also continuing to contribute to national arrangements as a result of the emergency such as Covid vaccination arrangements within the county.

In addition, it has been a year of continuing to develop our new ways of working whilst taking advantage of any aspects presented during the last two years. We also succeeded in identifying substantial efficiency savings during the year as part of the Council's full campaign to present a balanced budget for 2023/2024.

It was a great effort to fulfil all of this while also maintaining key services and this summary of performance for the year reflects the challenges we faced as well as the successes realised.

Customer Contact

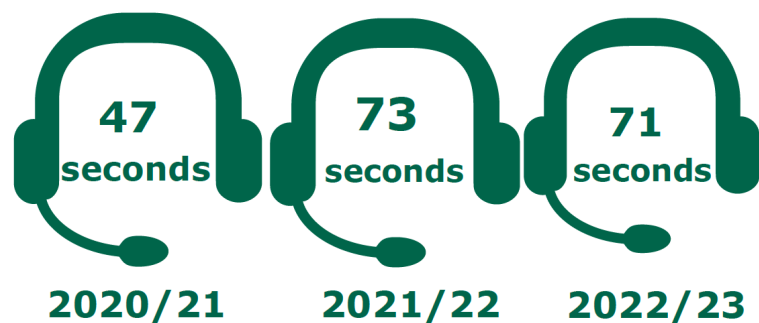
It is possible for Gwynedd residents to access several services on-line, at a convenient time for them, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It also provides a more cost-effective way of contacting the Council.

Gwynedd residents and businesses can now get in touch about 37 matters (an increase of 4 from the previous year) relating to highway matters, ordering and paying for a parking ticket, arranging a visit to a recycling centre, paying for school meals with the 4 new services introduced during the year relating to collecting information on pupils who are attending school for the first time, registering

and launching boats on Gwynedd's coastline, access to school and applications to transfer to a school.

226,343 service requests were presented to the Council using self-service, the website and Cyngor Gwynedd App.

Time taken to answer phone calls in Galw Gwynedd



We provide a face-to-face service through our Gwynedd Shops and by phone through Galw Gwynedd. This year's performance, in terms of the time taken to answer calls, is close to last year's performance, with 3,000 less calls received i.e., from 1 minute 13 seconds in 2021/22 to 1 minute 11 seconds this year. The main reason for the performance was staff turnover and the challenge of attracting workers. We have experienced some success in attracting staff during the second half of the year and are making an effort to improve the performance, mainly through a combination of further promoting self-service and extending on the on-line chat service where 251 queries were answered during the year.

Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths

The Registration Service is currently experiencing national changes, where Medical Inspectors undertake an extra step to prove the cause of death. This has led to some delays with registering deaths during 2021/22 as well as this year, and as a result a decline in

our ability to fulfil the work within the statutory time. We have succeeded in registering 48% of deaths within 5 days during 2022/23 (but that is compared to 83% in 2021/22). 96% of births were registered within 5 days during the year, which is an improvement on the 90% the previous year.

Communication and Engagement



Conducting a two-way dialogue with the people of Gwynedd in order to share information about local services and to hear our residents' opinion is a priority for the Council.

During 2022/23, further improvements were presented to the new engagement platform on the website that enables the Council to hold engagement exercises with the people of Gwynedd and showcase the results of previous exercises. During the year, 18 exercises were undertaken to gather the opinions of the people of Gwynedd on different services with over 8,600 individuals taking advantage of these opportunities to give their opinion.

109 proactive press statements were issued to the press during 2022/23 with each statement on average leading to attention on 4.9 news platforms. In addition, responses were provided to 556 enquiries from reporters on the Council's work.

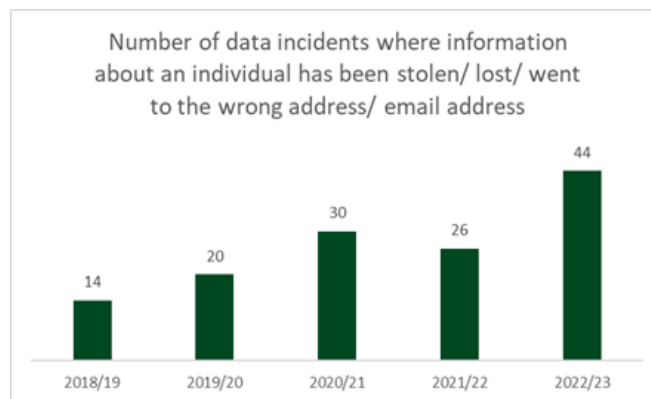
There were 2,988,520 views to the Cyngor Gwynedd website, www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru during the year. 2,398 visitors left satisfied feedback about the website. 83% of these visitors gave a score of 5 out of 5 for their experience using the website.

By March 2023, 39,762 individuals had received video clips, digital images and messages daily through the Council's Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Research and Information

During the year, the Service developed a process of publishing newsletters on the staff intranet and members intranet, to share the latest evidence on different subjects and show staff and members how they can get a hold of more information. Eleven newsletters were published on different current subjects, including the 2021 Census results, cost of living and poverty, and housing prices in Gwynedd. This will support Departments as they work on different schemes and a culture of making decisions based on data and evidence across the Council.

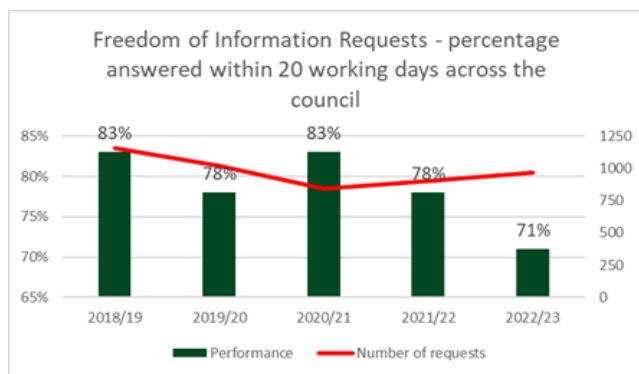
The Service has been supporting many schemes across the Council to gather, analyse and share evidence whilst using new approaches - for example, for the Gwynedd and Eryri Sustainable Visitor Economy project, working with the Economy and Community Department and external bodies to develop a dashboard of measures to measure the impact of the project.



There was a substantial increase in the number of information incidents (i.e. where information went missing or to the wrong person) across the Council and this has caused concern. From analysing the cases, it was seen that 19 of those (which is 43% of the total) was related to sending e-mails - the majority being cases of general carelessness when sending e-mails to the wrong addresses. We have worked with the Information Technology service to develop technical options to ensure such errors are less likely to occur; these have been trialled

in some teams within the Council and we will extend the pilot scheme to include a full Department whilst continuing to assess the success of the changes. We will also increase our efforts to provide training, guidelines and information safety messages to Council staff.

We completed the task of moving the Council's teams to a new version of iGwynedd (the Council's electronic record management system) and there was a positive response from the service to the change reporting that the new system facilitates sharing information and documents.



966 freedom of information requests were received during the year across the Council (an increase of 7% since the previous year). The percentage answered promptly was 71%. The decrease in this performance is disappointing, especially at a time where Departments' response arrangements should have stabilised following the pandemic. We will give attention to this over the next year, targeting those parts of the Council where this seems to be a problem and developing the Open Data field, so the answers to some repeat applications for information are available already on the Council's website rather than having to present a request for them.

Purchasing

Over the last year, we have continued to trial a new method to assess tenders based on social value. This included an air systems maintenance contract and a waste service vehicle framework agreement. In addition to

the work on the 'Keeping the Benefit Local' Improvement Priority, the Procurement Service worked with local businesses to respond to the requirements of the Well-being Act whilst also trying to calculate our carbon footprint in the supply chain.

We have also developed arrangements to assess our procurement performance by completing a self-assessment. Some of the Category Teams continue to respond to the after-effects of the pandemic and are a key part of the arrangements to ensure supplies, distribution, and PPE stock management.

Democracy and Language

The purpose of the Democracy and Language Service is to support the Council's democracy arrangements and to continuously promote the Welsh language. The Service is responsible for three specific fields, namely democracy, translation and language and scrutiny.



During the last year, we have welcomed 69 Councillors, with 25 of them being new Councillors. A full programme of activities was held to welcome them to the Council, to their role as members and present information about the range of areas of responsibility. We had to consider practical matters such as IT provision, as well as key matters such as their responsibilities and the role of different committees. Of course, all had to be done whilst responding to the requirement that Councillors may join remotely if they needed.

We have also succeeded to develop our arrangements and host multi-location committees for the first time, completely bilingually, with the simultaneous translation service available to all attendees. The first annual meeting of the Full Council in May 2022 was the first formal multi-location meeting, and we have built on the success since then. In addition, we succeeded to host full committee programmes for the year and

conduct the Councillors' training sessions as they were being elected. At the same time, we succeeded to respond to the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 by leading on developing and adopting the brand-new Participation Strategy that encourages the public to take part in our democracy arrangements and develop a new Petitions Scheme explaining how the public can present petitions.



Considerable work has been undertaken to promote the Welsh language too, with the Council's Language Policy updated and adopted in October 2022, with work continuing to raise staff awareness of the content and requirements. We succeeded to appoint a temporary Chief Officer to lead on developing the Menter Iaith as an independent entity for the community in the future. This work is rapidly proceeding, with the hope of publishing the next steps in Eisteddfod Boduan 2023. In addition, the Protecting Place Names project is proceeding, collaborating with 9 local schools over the year, and 550 records on the public map, with 1,637 having visited the website.

Of course, we must collaborate with other agencies to promote the Welsh language, and a workshop was held to establish the Gwynedd Language Forum in January 2023. The Forum's purpose is to identify areas to collaborate and avoid duplication, and all to promote the language. The Council's next Language Strategy, to promote the Welsh language in the county, is in the process of being developed, with internal consultation taking place with the Welsh Language Committee and key officers to prepare a consultation draft which will be presented shortly during 2023-24.

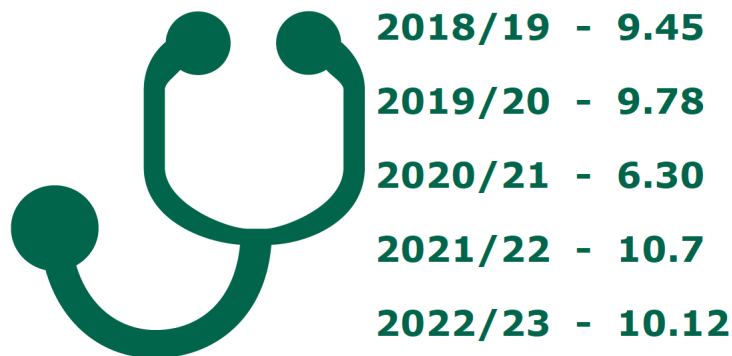
Human Resources

The service leads on the employment field, by developing the work conditions and

advising managers and staff on a broad range of matters associated with working for the Council. It therefore follows that the Service plays a central role in preparing the work arrangements whilst the Council establishes new and more flexible approaches of working following the pandemic.

At the time of writing, the projection is that the number of sick days per staff member during the past year shows a slight increase, from 10.07 days per head last year to 10.12 days per head at the end of March 2023. These higher levels of sick days compared to what was experienced a few years ago is consistent with what is seen in other local authorities, and our task as an employer is to understand the reasons for the situation and take every possible step to ensure that the best possible support is offered to promote the health and well-being of staff.

Number of days missed on average per head due to sickness absence



One employment appeal hearing was held over the course of the year with the Committee's decision supporting the employer's original decision.

This year once again, the Service had a central role when successfully recruiting several principal officers within the Council.

Support Service

The Support Service provides administrative assistance to the Council's managers and staff. Promoting the use of the Staff Self-

service is a priority as it is a communication platform that reaches all Council staff. The Departments' Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as well as the individual's DBS status is available in the system and there has been success in presenting leave cards electronically for many services.

Increased use of technology has led to a reduction in the amount of paper used for printing. We have now extended to collaborating with a food supplier for schools to receive electronic invoices and the process has been successful. We will be moving ahead to collaborate with more suppliers.

1046 vacancies were advertised where 322 of them were vacancies that had been advertised more than once. On average, it took up to 31 days from the post's advertising date until the date that the individual was appointed to the post.

The Customer Satisfaction feedback that we receive confirms that the customer is happy with the service that they receive from the Service.

Organisational Learning and Development

The Learning and Organisational Development service provides a learning and development service for the Council's officers, staff and elected members. The Service leads on schemes to develop leadership, team development, Women in Leadership, Continuous Evaluation, as well as being prominent in supporting the Council's Ffordd Gwynedd culture.

The feedback to the learning sessions have been very positive with a consistent average score of 9 out of 10, when attendees were asked to what extent it had been helpful in their post. Work programmes (staff and Elected Members) are evolving and are regularly revised in terms of titles and learning approaches (traditional/virtual). Following a substantial investment from the

Cabinet, the Service leads on schemes to develop Talent:

The Apprenticeship Scheme has given over 40 apprentices an opportunity since 2019 (which is one of the highest numbers in Wales compared to the population and size of other Councils):

- There are currently 15 apprentices on the Scheme - many located in priority fields such as adults and children care, information technology and engineering
- 7 degree apprenticeships
- 26 apprentices have completed an apprenticeship with 75% of them accepting a post in the Council

The Graduates Scheme (Cynllun Yfory) has given 28 professional trainees an opportunity since 2017:

- There are currently 9 trainees on the Scheme
- 2 trainees on secondment
- 16 trainees that completed the Scheme have been offered a job with the Council

In 2023, we aim to fill up to 35 new posts on the Graduate and Apprenticeship Scheme.

The service is coordinating arrangements to respond to complaints and promoting the lessons learned from the complaints received. The Service presents a customer care training package jointly with the Local Government Ombudsman's Office.

The Staff Benefits Scheme administered by the service is rapidly growing in terms of use and variety since it started 10 years ago. This includes 2716 staff receiving a discount card and 342 have ordered a new bike through the bike Scheme. This also contributed to promoting the Buying Local Project.

Health, Safety and Well-being

After two years of substantial impact on the Service's work due to Covid regulations, 22-23 was a period of trying to re-stabilise work programmes whilst also leading on a

corporate priority project. Having said that, it is fair to say that the after-effects of Covid continue to have an impact on the Service. Referrals to the Occupational Health Unit have been consistently higher since the beginning of the Covid period, and figures were seen to increase again this year to a figure of 639, which is a further increase since the figure of 555 last year. There has also been an increase in the percentage of referrals for mental health reasons. Otherwise, there is substantial work to be done to catch-up on the health surveillance programme that was prevented nationally during the Covid period. This work continues. We also continue to extend the boundaries and following a successful Mental Well-being conference for Managers and Team Leaders, I-Act for Managers courses were launched which teaches them how to protect the well-being of their staff. To date, 84 individuals have been trained. There was an assessment to re-validate the Corporate Gold Standard by the Welsh Government and the Department was awarded the Gold Standard.

The work of catching-up since the Covid period is also true of the Health and Safety Unit. There was a pause in IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) courses for example during Covid, but with courses now recovered, there has been a high demand and the Unit is training more than ever to try and catch up.

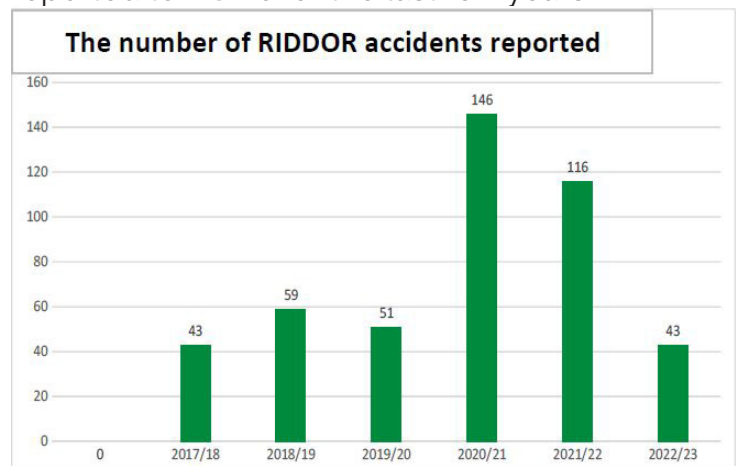
There was a high demand for manual handling training with 22 two-day courses held in 22/23 compared to 13 in the previous year in 21/22. These courses were held throughout the Covid period, but under strict regulation, because of the health care requirements. Developments also continue in terms of E-learning modules with new packages created in fields such as personal safety and identifying risks.

There were programmed audits by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in two schools to

assess the management of asbestos within schools and generally, the auditors were very satisfied with the arrangements, although a letter of a lack of compliance was received about fairly technical matters that the Property Service had already addressed.

The Health and Safety Team has advised and assisted services to adapt to the regular changes in the guidelines as well as advising and researching clusters within workplaces. As part of the pilot on future working that has given staff the choice to work from home, hybrid, or from the office, it has been necessary to undertake a workplace assessment on every individual. Staff received an electronic questionnaire to fill, and whilst monitoring the results, a further, more detailed assessment was required on 206 individuals by the Health and Safety Team. This was undertaken either via Teams or often through visiting the workplace and adapting the equipment there.

The following graph shows the accident rates reported to HSE over the last few years.



This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

Legal Services

The Legal Service provides a full legal service for all the departments within the Council. This includes specialised fields such as employment, commercial property, child protection, litigation and planning and highways. This extends across from the Council Plan projects to implementing matters such as transport orders and 106 agreements.

We moved to a new and simpler system of seeking feedback during the year and now the client satisfaction level, based on a score of 5 out of 5, is 100%. Despite the recruitment challenges, we managed to maintain the service and a score that reflects high levels of satisfaction.

The Team is supporting and contributing to the work of the Departments as it achieves the objectives of the Council and its Strategies. Legal support was provided across the range of Council work, including the Housing Action Plan, purchasing arrangements and implementing specific plans. An increase was seen in child protection cases being represented by the team. In addition, advice and representation was provided for fields such as modernising education, care home fees, Penrhos project, internalisation of Cwmni Cynnal and across a range of Council activities. North Wales Ambition Board was supported with legal and organisational advice on the projects and Growth plans.

Propriety

This responsibility relates to the function of the Monitoring Officer and support to achieve functions regarding the propriety of the Council's operations, maintain the Constitution and the moral framework (Code of Conduct). The work is also shared by delegating functions.

As 2022 was a local elections year, specific attention was given to inducting new members in to the Council's arrangements, as well as updating returning members through training sessions on the constitutional structures and Code of Conduct. The work of the Standards Committee was supported throughout the year and we contributed to national and regional work in the field. Substantial parts of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will come into effect during the year and with some collaboration with Corporate Services, a work programme was delivered to ensure that the Council implemented the Act according to the requirements. This work included adapting the Constitution as required, e.g. Governance and Audit Committee in its new guise and matters such as the Public Participation Strategy.

The Council, Cabinet, Joint Committees, Committees and Sub-committees were supported, and we provided guidance and comments on reports and Constitutional and organisational matters. This included the North Wales Ambition Board and GwE. The Monitoring Officer implements the statutory responsibilities of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) Monitoring Officer, which also includes duties like the Head of Democratic Services. This has involved implementing and providing specialist support on the CJC's constitutional and organisational matters. Initial constitutional documents were prepared, and this work continues, and we also attend meetings to advise.

Elections and Electoral Registration

The Local Elections were held in May 2022 and positive feedback was received from the Electoral Commission regarding this year's arrangements. A review of the arrangements

and work plan for future development and improvement is being prepared and the performance of this election has supported the procedures that are in place to ensure propriety.

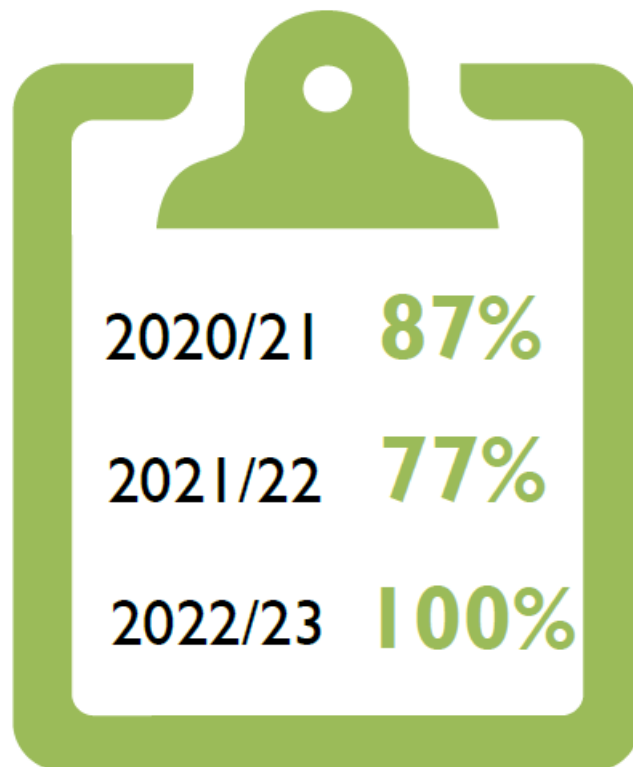
We responded to extend and amend the voting rights, specifically for electors aged between 16 and 18 years old as a result of the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill 2019 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill 2021 by promoting registration and participation in relevant elections.

We created a permanent post, where the duties will include continuing with the work to promote registration specifically amongst this group of electors. This comes on the back of developments in the electoral field on a UK level, such as the need for an ID card and postal voting arrangements. In addition, the Welsh Government have published a white paper on developing and reforming devolved elections. Work programmes will be prepared, which will be a part of the Service's Plan for 2023/24.

Coroner

After a period of uncertainty regarding the Coroner Area, assurance was obtained regarding the future of the area. We proceeded to deal with the arrangements for appointing a permanent Senior Coroner for the area and establish the area on a sustainable basis. During the year, a Chief Coroner was appointed for the North-west Wales Area as well as an Assistant Coroner. It is expected that the service will commence on a permanent basis and that there will be collaboration with the Senior Coroner to set the arrangements on a long-term basis.

Customer Satisfaction Survey - Score of 5 out of 5



Part 3

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Cyngor Gwynedd Self Assessment 2022/23

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 - Cyngor Gwynedd's Self-assessment 2022/23

Background and Introduction

This report reflects Cyngor Gwynedd's second self-assessment as expected under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The Act requires each Council in Wales to keep under review the extent to which it is meeting the 'performance requirements', namely the extent to which:-

- i. it is exercising its functions effectively;
- ii. it is using its resources prudently, efficiently and effectively;
- iii. the Council has robust governance arrangements in place to ensure performance requirements i. and ii.

The intention of the self-assessment process is to encourage honesty, objectivity and transparency about the Council's performance and governance, including its key relationships between political leaders and officers and the way they are managed. An effective approach would be owned and led at a strategic level, but would also involve members and officers at all levels of the organisation and a variety of people across communities and partners.

Although this duty is fairly new, it should be noted that the Council is already preparing a number of documents that contain the type of information we are expected to include within the self-assessment. This includes documents such as Performance, Equality, Director of Social Services' annual reports, Annual Statement of Accounts and the Governance Statement. The Governance Group, which includes officers such as the Corporate Director, Head of Finance, Head of Corporate Support and the Head of Legal Service amongst others, has led/taken an overview of this work within the Council. This is to ensure that the work is owned and led at a strategic level.

In the past, our performance reporting arrangements have focused on the progress of projects under our improvement priorities together with the day-to-day work performance of Services and Departments within the Council. A copy of the Council's Annual Performance Report is available [here](#) on the Council's website.

Last year the self-assessment was published as a stand-alone document. This year we have integrated the work with the Council's performance challenge arrangements including the self-assessment within the Annual Performance Report so that all information is within the same document.

This document is a high-level summary of a strategic self-assessment of the Council's performance during 2022/23 with results based on evidence from the documents listed above. Performance challenge meetings are held at a Departmental level every other month, looking at the progress of priority projects, service performance and the response to the main risks within the Corporate Risk

Register. The information then informs the regular performance reports submitted by each Cabinet Member during the year together with an Annual Performance Report at the end of the financial year.

The document includes an assessment of our governance arrangements using the seven corporate areas that are common to the corporate governance arrangements of public bodies, as suggested within the statutory guidance of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, responding to the 3 performance requirements to which Councils are expected to respond as part of the self-assessment. We have also considered the draft methodology published by the Welsh Local Government Association for Panel Assessments in preparing the self-assessment for 2022/23 and responded to the following questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know that?
- What can we do to improve, and how?

To meet our vision of putting the people of the County at the centre of everything we do, it is important that we monitor and assess our performance as a Council. As part of that work, we gathered views from the county's Residents Panel, Town and Community Councils, Elected Members, Staff and Unions on the services provided by the Council in the form of an on-line questionnaire. 221 responses were received which included responses from a representation of the identified groups.

The self-assessment for 21/22 was our first assessment and steps have been put in place to act on the improvements that had been identified. It is noted that a number of those amendments remain in this document because a number of the amendments are longer-term issues and it was in December 2022 that the self-assessment for 2021/22 was published.

Performance Requirement One: The extent to which the Council operates its functions effectively.

How well are we doing?

In the last year the Council has drawn up and adopted Cyngor Gwynedd's Plan 2023-28. This plan will guide the Council's work for the next 5 years while also setting our aspirations and priorities for the period. As part of the development of the Plan we considered a wide range of issues to prioritise and engaged and consulted with local people, elected members, Town and Community Councils and partners.

The Council is effective in setting its priorities and managing expectations because of the culture of focusing on what matters to the people of Gwynedd, with the performance measures used to challenge performance across all services resulting from this. One part of the work that was instrumental in the development of the Council's Plan was the work of [Ardal Ni](#) which outlines what is good about the area, what is not as good as what needs to be done in order to create a better area by 2035.

It is noted that the Council is involved in several local and regional partnerships such as the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. It would be fair to note that the effectiveness of these partnerships currently varies and we will continue to work to try to ensure that we benefit from these arrangements. Similarly, our relationship with the third sector continues to evolve and the Third Sector Contact Group intends to look at this during 2023/24.

As set out in the last self-assessment our corporate plans are in line with statutory requirements/guidance or relevant legislation but there is scope to strengthen this link. In developing the Council's Plan for 2023-28, steps were put in place to address the specific statutory requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the five ways of working. However, we have little evidence that it has permeated as a fundamental element of direction setting and mainstreamed.

Further work is needed to ensure that the Well-being Act and other statutory requirements are fully integrated within our corporate planning frameworks, rather than doing so in a way that is responsive and fragmented in nature. The role of Statutory Officers needs to underpin setting a direction, and at present, they tend to be involved too late in matters.

During 2023/24 a new template will be introduced for reports submitted to Cabinet which means that a contribution towards statutory requirements such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 will need to be identified. To support this a new Impact Assessment will be introduced to ensure that attention is paid to issues such as Equality Characteristics, the Welsh language, Climate Change and Social Economic Impact.

A training programme for Elected Members was continued during 2022/23 based on the priorities identified by members of the Democracy Services Committee. In addition, each Councillor is offered a personal development interview to identify specific developmental areas. There is an offer for councillors to have specific sessions before they take up roles on different committees e.g. Cabinet Members, training for all scrutiny members as part of the workshops before members begin their scrutiny, and a number of other committees such as Planning, Licensing and Governance and Audit.

In recent years efforts have been made to improve and strengthen the role of Scrutiny Members in Corporate Planning ensuring that the Scrutiny programme is linked to the realisation of the Council's Plan priorities and also holding Cabinet to account over performance. Council Plan priorities are taken into account in setting the scrutiny programme for the year and since the introduction of the new performance challenge regime representation from the Scrutiny Committees has nominated them to attend the departmental performance meetings twice a year.

It is also noted that the Governance and Audit Committee has struggled to attract lay and elected members to be on the committee as required within the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 which means we did not have the expected number of lay and elected members during the year.

Audit Wales published a 'Performance Management Review' at the Council during January 2022. The report notes that our performance management arrangements state that *'... the Council's performance management framework is developing well although implementation is currently diverse, and the reporting process is difficult to navigate'*.

At the beginning of 2022/23 a new procedure was introduced for challenging the Council's performance. In line with the new system all Council Departments hold an internal performance challenge meeting every other month, and report to Cabinet twice a year. The internal meetings are an opportunity to challenge the progress of the Department's improvement priorities projects and service performance measures (that is, the day-to-day work). In addition, in the last year we have put steps in place to respond to the recommendations within the report set out above although it is recognised that there is further work to be undertaken in raising people's awareness of the Council's work and what we are doing together and communicating our performance in those areas more effectively.

In line with the performance consultation requirement we undertook a consultation exercise with our Residents Panel, Town and Community Councils, Elected Members, Staff and Unions at the end of 2022/23.

Residents were given this question to find out their views on performance requirement 1: *"In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Cyngor Gwynedd runs things?"*

48% of respondents indicated that they were very or reasonably satisfied in responding to the question and 21% were not satisfied or dissatisfied. Among the

most common written comments to this question were many stating that the majority of services are good, that there is always room for improvement in services, along with dissatisfaction with the condition of some roads and the time taken to respond to queries.

Something else highlighted was the need for us to be doing more to improve understanding of the Council's areas of work and to better communicate our performance to different audiences.

In future we will look at the easiest way to gather these views while being aware of the need to be vigilant to avoid 'consultation fatigue' as we are already asking our residents' views on a number of diverse topics and plans. Arrangements are underway to establish an engagement group where a forward programme for consultations across the Council is co-ordinated by the Department of Communications.

How do we know that?

The evidence outlined above includes a reference to some of the highlights of issues where we perform well or not so well. Further evidence and detail within the documents/sources are provided below:

- [Cyngor Gwynedd's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#)
- [Cyngor Gwynedd's Diversity Statement](#)
- [Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Equality Performance Report 2021-22](#)
- [Cyngor Gwynedd's Annual Performance Report 2021-22](#)
- [2021/2022 Governance Statement](#)
- [Head of Internal Audit Annual Report 2022-23](#)
- [2021-22 Annual Report of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board](#)
- [Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2022-23](#)
- [Participation Strategy](#)
- [Self-assessment-CG-202122.pdf \(wales.gov\)](#)
- Ffordd Gwynedd Plan 2023-28
- Corporate Risk Register
- Annual Workshop with the Regulators and Cabinet Members
- Performance Reports of individual Cabinet Members.

What needs to be improved?

Improvement
We will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue work to strengthen our internal arrangements to ensure that statutory requirements/guidance or legislation are a core element and better integrated with our corporate planning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue with work to communicate service performance and the Council as a whole more effectively to residents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve understanding and raise awareness of the Council's areas of work amongst County residents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do work to ensure mutual understanding and ownership of the vision and priorities at different levels within the organisation.

Performance Requirement Two: The extent to which the council uses its resources prudently, effectively and efficiently

As has already been noted the Council has developed and adopted the Cyngor Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 in the last year. The Plan is ambitious in an extremely challenging climate. Although consideration has been given to the capacity to deliver what is within the Plan as it is developed, and we did not anticipate a problem delivering, there is no guarantee that this will continue for the whole period. The future fiscal situation could leave ambition unattainable or forced to be reduced.

There are many examples of good collaboration in partnership with a wide-range of external organisations including the care and education field. Care Inspectorate Wales referred to 'Positive working in partnership' and Estyn to '... established collaboration between the authority and the regional consortium for supporting schools, e.g. curricular planning and leader development' at the Risk and Assurance meeting held at the end of February 2023.

The Council has effective planning and financial management arrangements to ensure continuity of service, including accountants and internal 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's ownership of their systems, performance, and financial propriety.

The Finance Department, in close contact with the Chief Executive and Directors, undertakes ongoing reviews of the Council's financial forecasts over the next 3 years, updating the model regularly when new information is received reporting regularly to Cabinet members and to the Corporate Management Team (Chief Executive, Directors and Department Heads).

The corporate planning cycle coincides with the statutory cycle of budget planning and we aim to present the annual update of the Council Plan to the same meeting of the Full Council as the budget.

Each year the Council prepares its [Financial Strategy](#) which ensures a balanced Budget to ensure continuity of service. The Council also publishes a [Statement of Accounts](#) at the end of each financial year showing how annual expenditure is being spent. Reviewing spending against budgets, and monitoring that savings have been achieved by all Council departments, ensures that the services operate efficiently. In September 2021, Audit Wales published a report confirming that the Council's financial management is good. The report can be found [here](#).

However, one recommendation was that it was necessary to look more to the future in order to predict the organisation's financial situation for the next few years. Cyngor Gwynedd's Medium-Term Financial Plan has been under ongoing review since the start of the 2022/23 financial year, as the financial gap facing the Council (like all other local authorities) rapidly increases as the impact of

unprecedented levels of inflation affects the Council's ability to fund its services. A new savings programme has been introduced as one of the Council's top priorities in responding to this financial situation, and the Council agreed a £6.4million savings programme in setting the 2023/24 budget. An Adjusted Medium Term Financial Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in autumn 2023 with spending forecasts for 2024/25 and beyond as the financial gap for the year will be significant.

The Council also needs to give further consideration to how it can involve residents in significant financial decisions. In the past the Council has consulted on its plans to achieve savings sporadically, for example, through the Her Gwynedd exercise in 2016 and the Financial Strategy consultation in 2019. It also holds workshops with Members on the Council tax level and engages on Non-domestic Rates on an annual basis. The Council recognises the need to be more open about financial decisions and engage more frequently, or ensure that the people of Gwynedd have an input on decisions.

The Council's corporate risk register is regularly reviewed and updated by Council officers and the Governance Group conducts an overview.

The Head of Finance has undertaken a self-assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code and updates it at least once a year and the current assessment shows high compliance across all standards.

Measuring value for money is an area currently being addressed, with a view to developing an efficient framework for measuring value for money within our performance challenge regime. It is subject to a working group of officers chaired by the Chief Executive.

The pandemic has seen a significant change in expectations and trends and this is an opportunity to see if we can further improve Gwynedd residents' experience of frontline and back-office services through the use of digital technology, and therefore a Digital Strategy is currently being developed.

Recent years have seen increasing challenges in staff recruitment in a number of key work areas such as social care and education. At the Risk and Assurance Meeting held with external auditors at the end of February 2023 this was confirmed with Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and Audit Wales identifying it as one of the risks we face.

"The challenge of recruiting to jobs in Welsh? Not only in terms of education jobs, but more widely e.g. Support service, health services" Estyn (February 2023)

"Workforce plan to recruit, retain and develop staff to ensure a sustainable workforce" Care Inspectorate Wales (February 2023)

Within the Council Plan 2023-28 the Workforce Planning Project is noted as a priority. The main aim of the project is to ensure that the Council has an adequate supply of qualified staff to enable it to provide services to the county's residents,

and that we can ensure that that supply is in place for the long term. The Council will address the specific problems of staff recruitment in key areas such as social care and education.

The Apprenticeship Scheme has given opportunities to over 40 apprentices since 2019 (which is one of the highest numbers in Wales compared to the population and size of other Councils). There are also examples of the success of the Scheme, with individuals who have embarked on the Apprenticeship Scheme receiving promotions and permanent posts within the Council. Similarly, the Graduate Scheme (Cynllun Yfory) has given 28 professional trainees opportunities since 2017 with a number of them being offered a position with the Council.

As part of the 'Women in Leadership' priority project, a specific Development Plan has been established for women, as they have been identified as one cohort that is reluctant to apply for senior positions. This is evidenced by the low percentage of women performing a managerial function within the Council, which is disproportionate to the whole workforce split, that is, 70% female and 30% male. This scheme continues as a priority in Council Plan 2023-28.

While the workforce planning project brings several departments together to collaborate and tackle the problems of attracting and retaining staff, the Council tends to be responsive in nature rather than plan for the long-term. One weakness of Management (for the most part) is the failure to look forward 5-10 years taking into account the age of current staff and the expertise needed in the future, which has the potential to have a significant impact on continuity of service.

The intention of the Workforce Profiles are to consider whether our staff represent the community and an equality questionnaire is circulated to all staff for this purpose. Unfortunately, as with other public organisations, not enough members of staff have filled out our protected characteristics monitoring questionnaire for us to be able to tell if the workforce is representative of the community. We are working on improving these figures. Objective 5 within the Equality Plan states that we want to improve the diversity of our workforce. We are currently reviewing our policies and procedures to improve that with the help of a company called 'Inclusive Employers'.

[EQUALITY-PLAN.pdf\(wales.gov\)](#)

Staff member feedback shows that the Council is, overall, a 'good place to work', and compared to a survey conducted in 2019, the 2021 results showed an increase in the 'score' of this statement. There is further work to be done, however, in the areas of staff appreciation and fair pay.

The Procurement Team provides advice and support to services and ensures that the organisation adheres to its Procurement Regulations. The team aims to strengthen and develop the procurement expertise within the Council, adopt best practice in the field and support the local market. Category Management (Environment, Corporate and People) arrangements are also in place to look at procurement strategically and place greater emphasis on conducting a thorough market analysis, encouraging greater collaboration.

The Council has already adopted a [Sustainable Procurement Policy](#) that is in line with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. By adopting the Policy, it is intended to consider the potential social, economic and environmental impact that our procurement decisions can have and what steps can be taken to maximise the use of Council expenditure, for the benefit of the county.

A project has been completed to assess the feasibility of introducing a social benefits assessment methodology for Gwynedd, i.e. sharing the method of assessing tenders currently being undertaken by measuring Price and Quality to one that measures Local Price, Quality and Value. As part of the project, two further pilots were completed during the year using the social benefits-based tender assessment method. Although we have not proceeded to award one contract and there were a lack of offers with the other, we have now learnt more about the assessment method.

The 'Social Value Portal' company has been commissioned to complete a Local Needs Assessment which has highlighted the County's social needs. With this, we have tailored the social measures to focus on these issues in our agreements. Training sessions were held to understand and learn to apply the arrangements to local officials and businesses. Collaboration has taken place to share our experiences through different networks such as the North Wales Social Benefits Network and the National Procurement Network delivering what we have been trialling in Gwynedd.

Ongoing work is being undertaken to support businesses to respond to the tender requirements as a result of any developments in the field, such as gaining accreditations or responding to the requirements of the Well-being Act.

The Council has a process to manage risks by having a Corporate Risk Register in place. Arrangements for Internal Audit also exist and an annual workshop on assurance and risks is held with external auditors (Audit Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and Estyn).

To ensure arrangements are in place to respond to any recommendations from audit bodies consideration will be given to quarterly update reports from Audit Wales at meetings of the Governance and Audit Committee. There are also appropriate arrangements to respond to any reports from a Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Note that principal governance risks are rated corporate and at Department level as the level of risk varies. The internal Governance Group has oversight and responsibility for quality assurance within Cyngor Gwynedd.

There are robust arrangements for monitoring our compliance with certain types of operational risks. A revamped Corporate Risk Register was launched in March 2021 and the system has proven to be a user-friendly facility in all Departments. It is now much easier to make a link between the risks as Departments consider their

priorities and identify what needs to be done as a response, and it also assists Members to challenge performance and ensure that the expected steps have been taken to reduce the risk.

The Head of Finance will prepare and promote the authority's risk management policy statement and strategy. The strategy to manage risks is owned at a corporate level through the Governance Group referred to above with the Governance and Audit Committee challenging the governance risk ratings. The Head of Finance, with assistance from the Assistant Head of Finance (Sustainability and Developments) will ensure that a regime exists for measuring the efficiency of the risk management process, and that all discoveries that come from the monitoring regime will be fed back into the risk management cycle.

As part of its service continuity arrangements, the Council has categorised Services from 1 to 4 on the basis of disaster recovery priority. This enabled the organisation to prioritise during the Covid-19 pandemic period ensuring the continuity of 'essential' services. Lessons learned in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis have been valuable in subsequent crises, e.g. the war in Ukraine.

While the future risk management regime and strategies are generally improving and strengthening, the Governance and Audit Committee needs to satisfy itself that arrangements are in place to deal with risks in an appropriate manner.

Based on Internal Audit work completed during 2022/2023, Cyngor Gwynedd's internal control framework during that financial year was deemed to operate at a reasonable level of assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's governance, risk management and internal control framework.

The Council has already published the Corporate Assets Plan 2019/20-2028/29, and it is available for residents to read on the Council's website [here](#). As significant changes have taken place over recent years we are in the process of reviewing the scheme to ensure priorities remain current. It is anticipated that we will be in a position to adopt the new scheme by the end of 2023/24.

Council assets can be divided under two headings namely Land and Property Assets, and Information Technology Assets. One potential risk identified in the [Council's Annual Governance Statement](#) is that the Property Assets are not being used to their full potential. However, this risk score is currently low as a number of buildings that were no longer needed have been disposed of in line with the results of creating the Assets Plan 2019/20-2029. In terms of Council vehicles there is also a plan in place to try and make better use of a fleet which has already resulted in some financial savings and is likely to deliver more in future.

The risk of the Council not using its Information Technology Assets to their full potential is slightly higher. Using technology in an effective way is an essential tool to ensure that services are delivered in a way that meets the needs of residents, while doing so in a cost-effective way.

Work is underway to develop a new Digital Plan for the period 2023-28. The expectation is that it will be submitted for scrutiny by the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee in September 2023 before being formally approved by the Cabinet in November 2023.

Audit Wales published a "Springing Forward" report in June 2022 which looked at how the Council is strengthening its capacity to transform, adapt and continue to deliver services while reviewing the Council's arrangements for managing its assets and workforce. Overall, they found that the Council is actively working on its Future Working Arrangements project and developing the vision and plans across all services but looking further into the future will strengthen the Council's consideration of the sustainable development principle.

As has already been noted, this year the Council engaged with our Citizens' Panel, Town and Community Councils, Elected Members, Staff and Unions to find out their opinion on the Council's performance. Residents were given this question to find out their views on performance requirement 2:

"To what extent do you agree or disagree that Cyngor Gwynedd provides value for money?"

33% responded stating that they either strongly agreed or tended to agree with this statement. 24% neither agreed nor disagreed. It's clear the highest statement here is 41.6% tend to disagree or strongly disagree.

Some of the most common written comments to the question included increasing council tax but services getting worse; better use should be made of the resources available with others believing the Council provides value for money. As with the previous question numerous respondents noted that they did not understand enough about how the council operates to be able to comment. We will pay further attention to these comments in order to try to better understand what exactly is involved

How do we know that?

The evidence outlined above includes a reference to some of the highlights of issues where we perform well or not so well. Further evidence and detail within the documents/sources are provided below:

[Sustainable Procurement Policy and Guidance](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#)

[Employment Information 2021-22](#)

[Statement of Accounts 2021-22](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Assets Plan 2019/20 - 2028/29](#)

[2021/2022 Governance Statement](#)

[2021-22 Annual Report of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board](#)

[Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2022-23](#)

[Head of Internal Audit Annual Report 2022-23](#)

[Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary 2022](#)

What needs to be improved?

Improvement
We will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look to the future in order to anticipate the Council's long-term financial position by preparing a Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the most suitable ways to engage and involve residents in significant financial decisions and implementation (preparing the 2024/25 budget)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue work to review the Council's Assets Plan to ensure priorities remain current in light of the experiences and developments of recent years.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look to develop a way of measuring value for money (efficiency) at service level as part of our performance challenge arrangements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to implement a project to address the current staff recruitment problems the Council is experiencing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to provide guidance and advice to services to establish long-term workforce planning practices, so that future recruitment and retention problems can be avoided.

Performance Requirement Three: The extent to which the council has effective governance in place to ensure performance requirements one and two.

How well are we doing?

The Council generally has a suitable governance system in place. The Council's Constitution is a public document setting out the governance arrangements and guidance is provided to reinforce this. The Governance Arrangements Assessment Group maintains oversight of governance issues within the Council. The Group consists of the Corporate Director, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Head of Corporate Support, Assistant Head of Corporate Support, Risk & Insurance Manager and Council Business Support Service Manager.

In addition, the Council publishes an annual Governance Statement outlining our governance arrangements and their effectiveness following the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.

The Council has previously been carrying out an occasional appraisal of the work of the Governance and Audit Committee. This has not happened following the 2022 Election and the changes that have been introduced due to the requirements of the Local Government Act 2021 but it is intended to ask the Committee during the autumn of 2023 to establish steps to carry out such a self-assessment.

In recent months Audit Wales has been undertaking a 'Review of the effectiveness of scrutiny' and it is anticipated that the report will be published in the autumn.

The roles of Council, Cabinet, Individual Members and Chief Officers, together with a clear delegation plan, are set out in the Council Constitution. Cyngor Gwynedd has also prioritised the development of its Leadership Programme and that is part of the People's Plan adopted by the Cabinet.

There is an element of evidence (through self-assessment) that leadership within the Council is improving with numerous examples of transformational leadership evident. 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. Further it has been agreed on what is defined as leadership within Cyngor Gwynedd and that definition is reflected in revised job descriptions for each headteacher and manager in the Council. The commitment at political and operational level demonstrates that these positive steps have come to fruition and that the need and ability to lead is taking root as the norm within the Council.

The Council has a positive organisational culture which has been supported by "Ffordd Gwynedd" which is the name given to the "way of working" which we have adopted in order to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do. Changing culture, behaviours and mindsets is at the heart of all this and the aim of

realising the ambition across all parts of Council activity is a significant challenge and one that requires a comprehensive programme of support.

During 2022/23 a self-assessment was carried out to gain an overview of how the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd take root across the organisation. It was seen from the responses that considerable progress had been made to change culture but that the process of changing culture and changing the mindset among officers was harder to realise in some services where the development was a slow and difficult one with the need for further work identified to embed change. A number of common themes have been highlighted from these main messages and these, along with action recommendations for the future, are embedded within the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan 2023-28 adopted by the Council's Cabinet on 7th March 2023.

Good internal engagement and communication arrangements are in place with important messages shared with staff in a variety of ways. Similarly, it is important to gather the views of staff and they have the opportunity to provide feedback on what type of employer the organisation is. To this end Staff Voice Questionnaires have been in regular circulation asking about areas related to their job, service and also the Council as an organisation. The results are shared with Headteachers, so that they have the opportunity to respond to the main messages or any particular challenge as well as the whole workforce through the intranet, weekly bulletin and staff self-service. In addition to the corporate survey, some departments have undertaken further work to establish the views of staff on a regular basis.

We have effective budget monitoring arrangements with the Finance Department, employing officers with suitable skills, knowledge and experience to undertake this duty. A formal review of the revenue expenditure position will be undertaken at the end of August and November reporting the results to the Governance and Audit Committee and to Cabinet for approval. An update on the capital programme will also be submitted to the same meetings.

The Council's Treasury Management arrangements have been in place for several years and are under the supervision of independent teams within the Department of Finance. Treasury Management activities are reported to the Governance and Audit Committee twice a year in June and November.

The debate on whether overspending is due to failure to control spending, or due to an inadequate budget is an ongoing one. Work to review provisions in budgets will continue over the next year in the preparation for the 2024/25 budget.

There is a very constructive relationship between the Council and its Governance and Audit Committee, and the internal and external auditors. This can be seen from the minutes of the Committee meeting, and the committee's Annual Report also highlights this.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has created new duties for Political Group Leaders to take an element of responsibility for promoting good

conduct and co-operating with the Standards Committee. A presentation and joint discussion on the new duty was provided by the Monitoring Officer together with each of the Political Group Leaders and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee in the Autumn. The presentation included an explanation of the new duty and a discussion on how it can be implemented and how to collaborate with the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

Agreement was reached on a Draft Protocol to implement the duty in the future which was approved by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 21 November 2022. The Group leaders are aware of the duty imposed on them and have reported on the initial steps that have been taken to deal with the duty.

The improvements identified within the self-assessment will be addressed by specific Departments within the Council and will report back on progress to the relevant performance challenge and support meeting.

As has already been noted, this year the Council engaged with our Citizens' Panel, Town and Community Councils, Elected Members, Staff and Unions to find out their opinion on the Council's performance. To ascertain an opinion on performance requirement three, the question was divided into three parts.

The first part of the question was: *"To what extent do you agree or disagree that Cyngor Gwynedd is open and honest?"*

29.4% strongly agreed or tended to agree with 35.7% stating they neither agreed nor disagreed.

The second part of the question was: *"To what extent do you agree or disagree that Cyngor Gwynedd is well run?"*

28.5% strongly agreed or tended to agree, and 25.3% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The third part to the question was: *"To what extent do you agree or disagree that Cyngor Gwynedd performs to a high standard?"*

186 out of 221 total respondents clarified their responses to question three, and more than one response was able to be given. Some of the most common comments to the question included individuals believing the Council was performing well; did not know enough about Council services/expected standards to comment; that Services were not to a high standard; don't always feel that the Council is open and honest; a lack of correspondence with the public about decisions; time taken to answer queries is too long and not all locations in the county are treated equally. We will look further into the comments and address them if necessary.

How do we know that?

The evidence outlined above includes a reference to some of the highlights of issues where we perform well or not so well. Further evidence and detail within the following documents/sources are provided below:

[2021/2022 Governance Statement](#)

[Annual Report 2022-23 Cyngor Gwynedd Standards Committee Cyngor](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24](#)

[Cyngor Gwynedd's Constitution](#)

[Ffordd Gwynedd Self-assessment](#)

Ffordd Gwynedd Plan

Treasury Management Reports -

[June 2022 \(end 2021/22\)](#)

[November 2022 \(half year 2022/23\)](#)

[Final Accounts 2022/23 – Revenue Out-turn \(wales.gov\)](#)

IIP Assessment - Corporate Support Department and Gwynedd Consultancy
Staff surveys

What needs to be improved?

Improvement
We will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct a staff voice survey (as has been the case in the past) to engage in constant discussion with the workforce and provide them with the opportunity to say what is working well and the barriers they face.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct an appraisal of the work of the Governance and Audit Committee to establish whether it is effective.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to act on the steps already put in place in response to an audit of performance challenge arrangements undertaken by Audit Wales during 2021/22 and continue to look at the success of those arrangements reviewing if necessary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan Work Programme 2023-28 to continue to improve performance and provide the best possible services for the County's residents.