The Local Government Act 2021 -

Cyngor Gwynedd Self-Assessment 2021/22

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Background

This report reflects Cyngor Gwynedd's first self-assessment as expected under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. At its simplest level, the self-assessment is concerned with the way the Council meets the performance requirements, i.e. How well is it doing? How do you know that? And, what can it do to improve and how?

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:

- it is exercising its functions effectively;
- it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively;
- its governance is effective for securing the above.

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 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.

In the past, our performance reporting arrangements have focused on the progress of projects under our improvement priorities, namely:

- Create a viable and prosperous economy
- Give every pupil the opportunity to achieve their potential
- Reduce inequality within the county
- Ensure access to a suitable home
- Help people to live their lives through the medium of Welsh
- Help people who need support to live their lives as they wish
- Place the people of Gwynedd at the heart of everything we do
- Respond to the Climate Change emergency

A copy of the Council's Annual Performance Report for 2021/22 is available here. The self-assessment will mean that we also consider our performance against corporate governance areas.

This document is a high-level summary of a strategic self-assessment of the Council's performance during 2021/22 with the 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 presented by each Cabinet Member during the year together with an Annual Performance Report at the end of the financial year.

In the future, these reports will also address the progress against the issues requiring attention that will be identified within the self-assessment. These are the documents that provide information on how we have performed against our priorities in 2021/22, including progress against our well-being objectives. This year is the first time we have carried out the self-assessment and this time it will be published as a stand-alone document. The intention is to integrate the work with the Council's performance challenge arrangements and to include the self-assessment within the Annual Performance Report so that all the information is within the same document in the future.

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 guidelines of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, as a framework for the self-assessment, namely:

1. Corporate planning
2. Financial planning
3. Workforce planning (people)
4. Procurement
5. Assets
6. Risk management
7. Performance management

It was also decided to include a specific heading about the engagement work that takes place with residents, staff, stakeholders and Trade Unions.

We have already noted that much of the evidence for the self-assessment derives from the Annual Governance Statement and the table below outlines the link between the areas of governance risks that have been identified within that document and the themes for the self-assessment.

Self-assessment Themes	Areas of Governance Risk
Corporate Planning	Direction and vision Sustainability Lawfulness Being open Leadership Culture Conduct Decisions Stakeholders Planning operations Reviewing outcomes

Financial Planning	Finance Planning operations
Workforce Planning (people)	Workforce planning
Procurement	
Assets	Property assets Information Technology assets Information
Risk Management	Risk management Internal management Reviewing Outcomes Health, Safety and Well-being
Performance Management	Performance Accountability Reviewing outcomes
Engagement	Engagement

1. Corporate Planning

Cyngor Gwynedd sets out its vision and priorities clearly, through its Corporate Plan – Council Plan 2018-2023. The Plan was published five years ago in 2018, and every subsequent year an annual Plan is published which includes a review of all the priority projects. This happens through discussions between the Cabinet Members, the Departments and the Management Team. Further engagement with the rest of the Members is also part of review arrangements and in November 2021 two virtual sessions were held in order to give them the opportunity to comment on the priorities and secure political ownership of the Plan. There is a system in place to review the priority projects regularly to ensure they deliver, and to identify any obstacle that can cause slippage. Performance reports are presented by individual members to the Cabinet twice a year as well as a very brief update of the progress of all the Council Plan projects three times a year (July/September, December and March). The annual Performance Report for 2021/22 is published in July and it can be seen that the majority of projects have been completed. This is a balanced report which also draws attention to any failure when it was not possible to deliver within the timeframe, as seen with the post-16 education provision project in Arfon.

A programme to present information and training to all Councillors was undertaken at the start of the term following the election. The programme was prioritised to include general information about the Council and its services along with the main training sessions necessary for any Councillor to take on their role e.g. code of conduct, corporate parent. In addition, there were specific sessions for Councillors before they took on roles on different committees e.g. Cabinet Members, training for all scrutiny members as part of the workshops before members began their scrutiny work, and a number of other committees such as Planning, Licensing and Audit and Governance. The training programme will continue in 2023/24 based on the priorities being identified by members of the Democracy Services Committee. In addition, there will be an opportunity for a personal development interview for each Councillor to identify specific developmental areas.

There is room to improve and strengthen the role of Scrutiny Members in the Corporate Planning work, ensuring a link between the Scrutiny programme and the realisation of the Council Plan priorities and also to hold the Cabinet to account in relation to performance. At the beginning of 2022/23, a new performance challenge procedure was introduced which strengthens in a practical way the role of scrutiny members in the performance challenge meetings, and consequently their link with the Corporate Plan (see the 'Performance Management' section in the self-assessment for more details).

It is also noted that the Governance and Scrutiny Committee has found it difficult to attract suitable lay members onto the committee as required within the Local Government and

Elections Act 2021 which means that we do not have the expected number of lay members at present.

Our corporate plans comply with statutory requirements/guidelines or relevant legislation but there is room to strengthen this link. While a document such as the Council Plan 2022/23 in general addresses the specific statutory requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and refers to the objectives and the five ways of working, there is little evidence that it has permeated to become a basic element of direction setting and been 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 reactive and fragmentary in nature. The role of Statutory Officers needs to be more essential when setting a path, and at present, they tend to be involved too late in matters.

Work is already underway to look at how to create a better structure and arrangements for the Council Plan 2023-28. It is also intended to look at how the statutory requirements of the Act are in line with the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd, namely the working culture the Council has adopted, to ensure that it is a core consideration when planning but also that we are able to testify how we contribute to the principles.

No formal procedure exists for self-assessment using current information (e.g. Audit reports, customer feedback, achievements) to guide Department Plans. By now, the majority of Services have established purposes that are relevant to the residents of the county and have quantitative measures that indicate contribution to the purpose. It is noted, however, that the arrangements vary across the Council with some Departments having more mature arrangements than others. *(The Council's performance management framework is developing well although implementation is currently variable, and reporting is difficult to navigate - Review of Performance Management - Gwynedd Council: Audit Wales - January 2022.)*

In general, the Council has a suitable governance procedure in place. The Council's Constitution is a public document which sets out the governance arrangements and guidance is provided to reinforce this. The Governance Arrangements Assessment Group retains an overview of governance issues within the Council. The Group comprises the Corporate Director, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Head of Corporate Support, Assistant Head of Corporate Support, the Risk and Insurance Manager and the Council's Business Support Service Manager.

In addition, the Council publishes an annual Governance Statement which outlines our governance arrangements and their effectiveness by following the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework. A copy of the Governance Statement 2021/22 can be found here.

What is good?

- A clear vision and priorities set out within the Council Plan.
- A procedure in place to review the priorities of the Council Plan consistently and regularly.
- Political ownership of the Council Plan, with the Cabinet Members and other Members involved in the process of its development and review.

What needs to be improved?

Improvement	Responsibility
We will:	
• strengthen the role of Scrutiny Members in the corporate planning work, ensuring a better link with the scrutiny programme and ensure that they hold the Cabinet Members to account.	Leadership Team/Democracy and Language Service
• We will look to strengthen our internal arrangements to ensure that statutory requirements/guidelines or legislation are a core element and are better integrated with our corporate planning work.	Leadership Team/Statutory Officers
• Review our self-assessment arrangements based on the experiences of the first year and also look at good practice within other Councils.	Governance Arrangements Group/Council Business Support Service

2. Financial Planning

Cyngor Gwynedd is responsible for ensuring that it conducts its business in accordance with the law and appropriate standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

Despite the COVID-19 crisis and the ongoing requirements to achieve challenging savings, the final financial position of the Council's departments for 2021/22 confirms that there has been effective financial management. In 2021/22, the Council was underspending, and Cabinet members approved a net underspend of services of £791,000 for the year. However, significant pressure remains in the Highways and Municipal Department, meaning they have overspent during the year. This situation is under continuous review.

The Council has effective arrangements for financial planning and management to ensure continuation 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 managers' ownership of their systems, performance, and financial propriety.

Every year, the Council prepares its Financial Strategy which ensures a balanced Budget to ensure continuation of service. The Council also publishes a Statement of Accounts at the end of each financial year, which shows how annual expenditure is spent. The work of reviewing expenditure against budgets, and monitoring that savings have been achieved by all the Council's departments, ensures that the services operate efficiently. In September 2021, Audit Wales published a report confirming that the Council's financial management was good. The report can be seen here.

However, one recommendation was that it was necessary to look more to the future in order to anticipate the organisation's financial situation for the years to come. Cyngor Gwynedd's Medium-Term Financial Plan has been under ongoing review since the start of the financial year, as the financial gap facing the Council (like all other local authorities) increases rapidly as the impact of unprecedented levels of inflation affects the Council's ability to fund its services. Saving programmes will be one of the Council's top priorities in responding to this financial situation, and we will report to members, staff and the public regularly about the situation. As a result, a modified Medium-Term Financial Strategy will be presented to Cabinet when the 2023/24 financial settlement, indicative for 2024/25, becomes clearer in December 2022. This will help the Council to look at how to interweave its Financial Planning arrangements with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

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 occasionally on its plans to achieve savings, for example, through the Gwynedd Challenge exercise in 2016 and the Financial Strategy consultation in 2019. It also holds workshops with Members at Council tax level and engages on Non-domestic Rates annually. The Council recognises that there is a need to be more open about financial decisions and engage more often, in order to ensure that the people of Gwynedd have an input on decisions.

What is good?

- The Council underspent during 2021/22.
- The Council has effective arrangements for financial planning and management and external auditors confirm that the Council's financial management is good.

What needs to be improved?

Improvement	Responsibility
We will:	
• Look to the future in order to anticipate the Council's long-term financial situation by preparing a Medium-term Financial Strategy.	Head of Finance
• Consider the greatest ways to engage and involve residents in significant financial decisions and action	Head of Finance/Communication and Engagement Service

3. Workforce Planning (people)

The feedback from staff members shows that the Council is, on the whole, a 'good place to work', and compared to a survey carried out in 2019, the results for 2021 showed an increase in this statement's score. There is further work to be done, however, in the areas of staff appreciation and fair wages. (See the Engagement chapter for more information on the Staff Voice Survey.)

To ensure that the Council is in a position to provide services that always place the residents of Gwynedd at the heart, 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, with working from home and hybrid working arrangements having meant that working for organisations beyond the area has become more attractive to officers.

By now, planning a suitable workforce for the future is one of the main priorities within the Council Plan and receives attention corporately rather than solely in the Adults and Children field, where problems existed in the past. During 2021/22, 13 new Apprentices and seven Professional Trainees (through the Managers of Tomorrow and Specialists of Tomorrow schemes) were appointed to areas identified as a priority across the Council. There are also examples of the success of the Scheme, with individuals who have started the Apprenticeship Scheme receiving promotions and permanent positions within the Council.

The People Plan prioritises improving arrangements for nurturing talent within the Council, and ensuring that our learning and development arrangements focus on the necessary elements, e.g. through the Developing Potential Scheme. As part of the priority project 'Women in Leadership', a specific Development Plan was established for women, as they have been identified as a cohort that is reluctant to apply for higher positions. This is seen in the low percentage of women who perform a managerial function within the Council, which is disproportionate to the number within the workforce as a whole, i.e. 70% women and 30% men.

While the workforce planning project brings several departments together to collaborate in order to tackle the problems of attracting and retaining staff, the Council tends to be reactive in nature rather than planning for the long-term. One weakness of Managers (on the whole) is the failure to look ahead 5-10 years considering the age of current staff and the specialisations needed for the future, which has the potential to have a significant impact on continuation of service. The Council also intends to update and review its People Plan Strategy during the year.

What is good?

- On the whole, staff feel that the Council is a good place to work, and this has increased between 2019 and 2021.

• The success of the Apprenticeships Scheme, Specialists of Tomorrow and Managers of Tomorrow schemes, Developing Potential Scheme as part of the Grow our Own Talent Development Scheme.
• 'Workforce Planning' has been identified as a cross-departmental priority project within the Council Plan for 2022/23.

What needs improving?

Improvement	Responsibility
We will:	
• Implement a project to address the current staff recruitment problems the Council is experiencing.	Human Resources Advisory Service
• Provide guidance and advice to services in order to establish long-term workforce planning practices, so that recruitment and retention problems can possibly be avoided for the future.	Human Resources Advisory Service

4. Procurement

Procurement is the process that enables the Council to manage the acquisition of all its goods, Services and work. The purpose of the Procurement Rules is to ensure that the Council receives value for money and the necessary level of quality and performance and that all procurement activity is carried out in an open, correct and accountable manner.

The Council has already adopted the Sustainable Procurement Policy which complies with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 By adopting the Policy, the intention is to consider the possible social, economic and environmental impact that our procurement decisions can have and what steps can be taken to make the best possible use of the council's expenditure, for the good of the county.

The Council's procurement activities show that 60% of this expenditure remains within Gwynedd, and through the 'Keeping the Benefit Local' project, the Council is endeavouring to find new ways of supporting local businesses to compete and win contracts. One aspect of the work is to move to a tender assessment approach based on social value, rather than just price and quality. The piloting of this approach was carried out during 2021/22 and a further analysis will be carried out during 2022/23 to see if it is necessary to introduce changes to the procedure in order to ensure that as much of the Council's expenditure as possible remains in Gwynedd.

The Council published its Climate and Nature Emergency Plan in March 2021 which includes a section on the work of calculating the carbon emissions deriving from procurement activities. While continuing to implement the Sustainable Procurement Policy, over the next few years the Council will also be looking to provide support to the market, particularly to local providers, to be able to measure the impact of their operations on their carbon footprint and will continue to assess its internal processes of setting criteria to measure tenders in order to ensure that it measures the environmental impact of contracts.

The Procurement Team provides advice and support to services, and ensures that the organisation adheres to its Procurement Regulations. The team's aim is to strengthen and develop the procurement specialisation within the Council, adopt best practice in the field and support the local market. There are also Category Management arrangements (Environment, Corporate and People) in place in order to look at procurement strategically and put more emphasis on conducting a thorough analysis of the market, encouraging more collaboration. We have little evidence as to how effective and efficient our internal procurement arrangements are and this is something we will address in the future.

What is good?

- The Council's procurement activities show that 60% of this expenditure remains within Gwynedd.

- Further projects are underway as part of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan, in order to calculate and reduce the carbon emissions deriving from procurement activities.

What needs to be improved?

Improvement	Responsibility
We will:	
• Develop a set of measures to establish how effective and efficient our procurement category management arrangements are.	Procurement Service

5. Assets

In order to achieve the objectives and improvement priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan, services have to use a number of various assets. In order to set out its assets vision, the Council has published its Corporate Asset Plan 2019/20-2029, and this is available for residents to read on the Council's website here.

In order to create the Plan, discussions were held with departments so as to identify their likely asset needs over the next 10 years. A number of the plans involved preventive work, and looked at the long term in accordance with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. Each Member of the Council had the opportunity to play a part in the process of prioritising those plans by identifying the priority he or she considered should be given to an individual plan. The Asset Plan and the Corporate Plan and the Council's Capital Plan are closely linked.

The Council's 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 used to their full potential. At the moment, however, this risk score is low as a number of buildings that were no longer needed have been disposed of in accordance with the results of the work to create the Asset Plan 2019/20-2029. In terms of Council vehicles, there is a plan implemented to try and make better use of the Council's fleet that has already presented some financial savings and is likely to achieve more in the future.

The risk that the Council's Information Technology Assets are not used to their full potential is slightly higher. Using technology in an effective way is a crucial tool to ensure that services are provided in a manner that meets with the requirements of our residents, doing this in a cost-effective way. The Information Technology Strategy places particular emphasis on bringing digital services closer to the people of Gwynedd by introducing a range of new services such as apGwynedd, "My account" and the increased option of submitting requests for services online, as well as face to face or on the phone. However, there is a risk that this is not happening quickly enough and we face further risks in terms of security and cyber resilience.

The Council is currently reviewing the Asset Plan in order to provide an opportunity to reconsider and re-prioritise following the COVID-19 period, to ensure that it reflects wider changes such as Information Technology and Data. It will also be necessary to consider the challenge of adapting our buildings for the new way of working, including hybrid working arrangements for the future.

The Council does not engage more widely when creating the Asset Plan, however, specific engagement work is carried out when developing some of the individual plans. One recent example is the engagement on the development of plans for Canolfan Dolfeurig, a day centre in Dolgellau for people with learning disabilities. This takes place at a departmental rather than corporate level.

What is good?

- A long-term Asset Plan in place which includes priorities up to 2029/30.

What needs to be improved?

Improvement	Responsibility
We will:	
• Review the Council's Asset Plan to ensure that the priorities remain up to date due to the experiences and developments of recent years.	Chief Executive

6. Risk Management

There are robust arrangements to monitor our compliance with some specific types of operational risks. A new Corporate Risk Register was launched in March 2021 and the system has proven to be a convenient facility for users 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 in response, and it also helps Members to challenge performance and ensure that the expected measures have been taken to reduce the risk.

The Head of Finance will prepare and promote the Authority's policy statement and risk management strategy. The risk management strategy is owned at a corporate level through the Governance Group referred to above and the Governance and Audit Committee which is responsible for challenging the governance risk scores. The Senior Audit and Risk Manager will ensure that a procedure exists to measure the efficiency of the risk management process, and that all findings from the monitoring procedure will be fed back to the risk management cycle.

When dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, the Council had not planned for a national lockdown period. However, work had already been carried out in order to categorise Services from 1 to 4 on the basis of 'essential' work. This enabled the organisation to prioritise, ensuring the continuation of 'essential' services back in March 2020. It is also important to acknowledge that the lessons learned in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis have been valuable in subsequent crises, e.g. the war in Ukraine, with a specific team quickly established to support the refugees in Gwynedd.

Although the risk management procedure and strategies for the future 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.

What is good?

- A new Corporate Risk Register was launched in March 2021 and the system has proven to be a convenient facility for users in all departments.
- Lessons learned in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis have been valuable in dealing with subsequent crises, e.g. the war in Ukraine.

What needs to be improved?

Improvement	Responsibility
We will:	
• Review our arrangements to ensure that the Governance and Scrutiny Committee can satisfy itself that arrangements are in place to deal with risks in an appropriate manner.	• Head of Finance/Governance Arrangements Group

7. Performance Management

At the beginning of 2022/23, a new procedure was introduced for challenging the Council's performance. In accordance with the new procedure, all Council Departments hold an internal performance challenge meeting every other month, and report to the Cabinet twice a year. The internal meetings bring together the Head of Department, Cabinet Member, Chief Executive or Corporate Directors and Service Managers on a regular basis, and there is an opportunity to challenge the progress of improvement priority projects and the performance measures of the Department's services (i.e. the day-to-day work).

The Members have an essential role within the new performance system. As well as a Cabinet Member who will attend every performance meeting in their department, a shadow Cabinet Member and Members of the Scrutiny Committees also attend two meetings a year, and the Leader of the Council once, to ensure an appropriate challenge procedure and identify whether performance improvement is needed. As already stated in chapter 1, a procedure is also in place to review the performance of priority projects, with all Cabinet Members receiving a very concise update three times a year which provides an overview of the progress of all the Council Plan projects.

There is concern about the ability to respond to concerns in a timely manner, and while the issues that arise are addressed centrally, this may not be so true at Departmental level. It is also true that some Departments have adapted to the system and have 'bought into' and adapted to the change faster than others. The Heads, Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Members have received a guide explaining the new performance system and it will be necessary to give all the Departments and Members time to adapt over the coming months.

Each Cabinet Member reports to the Cabinet twice a year in public. However, at the moment, the performance challenge reports and monthly data are not available to Gwynedd residents. The recent Audit Wales report (January 2021) on our performance management arrangements notes that '...the Council's performance management framework is developing well although implementation is currently variable, and reporting is difficult to navigate'.

The report also draws attention to numerous and lengthy performance reports, which do not contain important information and therefore make it difficult to get an unbiased overall picture of the Council's performance. Measures have now been put in place in order to respond to the recommendations in the report, including presenting a template and guidance to be circulated to all Heads of Department. The hope is that this will simplify the performance challenge documents, and make it possible for residents to browse through the data in due course. Our measures look at our performance against purposes that have been developed to reflect what is important to the residents of Gwynedd. As a result, little comparison is made with other local authorities when looking at Cyngor Gwynedd's performance, unless there is a real value in doing so.

In the past, Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) were published annually to enable authorities to benchmark against a series of key measures across a number of different areas.

This information has not been collated in full (due to the pandemic) since 2018/19, therefore it is not possible to compare with other authorities for measures in a number of areas.

While the Council engages with residents on its decisions and priorities (see the Engagement chapter below), at the moment we do not engage specifically on performance. Further work is required in conjunction with the Council's Communication and Engagement Service in order to look at how we can consult with stakeholders on our performance, but we will need to be wary of consultation fatigue as we are already seeking the views of our residents on several topics and various schemes.

The Corporate Complaints Procedure continues to work well. The Service Improvement Officer ensures that we learn lessons from any complaints, and avoid repeating mistakes. The Complaints and Service Improvement Service has been able to continue to operate to deal with public concerns and to support services throughout the pandemic period.

What is good?

- A new performance challenge system in place for 2022/23, which in time hopefully ensures a more transparent and comprehensible system.
- The role of Members within the Performance system has been highlighted and current guidelines have been circulated to Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Members.

What needs to be improved?

Improvement	Responsibility
We will:	
• Act on the measures that have already been put in place in response to an audit of performance challenge arrangements conducted by Audit Wales in 2021/22 and continue to monitor the success of those arrangements, reviewing if necessary.	Leadership Team/The Council's Business Support Service
• Develop and improve our arrangements for reporting to the public on the performance of our services.	Each Department/The Council's Business Support Service

8. Engagement

The People of Gwynedd

A range of corporate engagement procedures have been carried out to ensure that the Council receives the public's views on its priorities and on significant decisions. In 2020/21, around 8,000 responses were received to the Council's public consultations on various topics.

One of the main corporate consultations in 2021/22-2022/23 was 'Our Area 2035', namely the engagement linked to the Regeneration Framework work and departmental engagement work such as the Housing Strategy. The purpose of the exercise was to collaborate with residents, groups and organisations to help communities to identify those priorities that would need to be addressed over the next 10-15 years and to create and realise community regeneration schemes. For this work, Gwynedd was split into 13 smaller regeneration areas in order to hold the conversations on a very local level. This exercise was undertaken in two parts:

1. September - December 2021: Holding interviews over the phone or virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams with 157 community groups and initiatives, Councillors, Community, Town and City Councils. The purpose of this was to gather qualitative data and initial messages that are important for Gwynedd communities.
2. February - June 2022: Wider engagement with the residents of Gwynedd, by experimenting with a dashboard on 'Have your Say Gwynedd' using the Engagement HQ software. It was also organised to ensure that the engagement exercises reached groups and cohorts such as young people, LGBT+ people, older people and adults with learning disabilities.

More than 3,000 people responded to the exercise and over the next few months the Council will work with communities to create 13 individual Area Plans. The work has also informed Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board's Well-being Assessment, and is an important basis for the new Well-being Plan which will be published in 2023.

The Council also has a Citizens Panel to ensure representation from a cross-section of Gwynedd residents, and that their voice is central as the Council plans, provides and reviews local services for the future.

The Communication and Engagement Service leads on corporate engagement exercises and it also supports individual services to engage in the most appropriate way.

Staff

It is important that the Council is aware of the views of its staff and gives them the opportunity to provide feedback on what sort of employer the organisation is. To this end, Voice of the Staff Questionnaires are circulated to a sample of 25% of staff in each

department on a regular basis. The survey requires a score from 1 to 5 per statement and therefore it is possible to 'track' answers from cycle to cycle. The work had to be delayed during the COVID-19 period, but it is now possible to compare a survey carried out in 2019 with the results for 2021. The survey asks about areas related to their job, their service and also the Council as an organisation. It looks at issues such as continuous evaluation, managers' support, workload and resources needed to carry out a job. The survey is completely anonymous and the results are shared by Department with the Heads, so that they have the opportunity to respond to the main messages or any specific challenge relating to the Department. The results are also shared with the entire workforce via the intranet, the weekly bulletin and staff's self-service.

In addition to the corporate survey, some departments have undertaken further work to ascertain the opinion of staff on a regular basis. The Corporate Support Department and YGC Department have been accredited with 'Investors in People' in recent years and in October 2021, the Corporate Support Department was awarded a Gold Standard level for the Investors in People Health and Well-being Assessment. Further work has also been done internally by the Environment Department and the Adults Department to ensure that staff have the opportunity to provide feedback or give input on health and well-being issues.

The Council acknowledges that there is an additional challenge when engaging and communicating with front-line staff such as carers or refuse workers. Before the COVID-19 period, the Communication and Engagement Service worked with the Learning and Development Service to hold roadshows in locations such as Refuse Centre depots, in order to provide staff with information and give them the opportunity to have their say. Although there was a recent effort to do this virtually with the Trunk Roads Department, it has been difficult to engage face-to-face with front-line staff during the COVID-19 period.

Stakeholders

The Council has several stakeholders and partners that it works with on a regular basis. The willingness of public sector bodies, including Cyngor Gwynedd, other neighbouring unitary councils, the Police, the Health Board, the third sector and others to collaborate in order to deliver public services jointly may have a substantial and visible effect on the people of Gwynedd.

The Council engages with several partners through the Public Services Board. Work is taking place to create a new Well-being Plan, and the relationship between the organisations has matured over the five years since the Board was established following the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Council's relationship with the Third Sector also continues to evolve. The Third Sector Liaison Group is a forum to make the most of the key connections in order to engage with county organisations, and ensures that the relationship maximises the benefit that may derive from this for the people of Gwynedd.

Trade Unions

The Council has arrangements to regularly engage with the recognised trade unions. There is a joint meeting between human resources officers, health and safety officers and officers of the three unions, Unison, GMB and Unite, on a monthly basis, where there is an opportunity to share information and discuss corporate employment issues, and any corporate decisions that may impact on the organisation's employees. There is also a monthly meeting between an officer from each union and the human resources manager, when there is an opportunity to discuss issues that are relevant to the individual union only. In addition to this, an annual meeting is held between union officers, Council officers and a committee of elected members, when there is an opportunity to discuss the high-level challenges facing the Council as an employer. This committee is known as the Local Joint Consultative Committee.

The unions are supportive of these arrangements and have not voiced any concern about shortcomings in the Council's ability to share information in relation to this.

What is good?

- During 2021/22, Our Area 2035 engagement work was carried out to look at the priorities of the County's residents for the future, doing so in a cohesive manner with the intention of avoiding duplication of work. The results of this work have been used to guide future priorities in a number of areas such as Housing, Adults and Highways and Municipal and have also fed into the development of the Services Board's Well-being Plan for Gwynedd and Anglesey.
- Effective arrangements in place to engage with different cohorts.

What needs to be improved?

Improvement	Responsibility
We will:	
• Review our engagement arrangements to ensure that we receive regular input from different cohorts on performance and governance issues.	Communication and Engagement Service/The Council's Business Support Service