SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

2021-22

Foreword

Scrutiny activity was held on a virtual basis again this year, there has been a drastic change in the way we work over the last two years. Members have responded positively to the change in how scrutiny work is carried out with valuable contributions at virtual meetings of the scrutiny committees.

In May, workshops were held for the scrutiny committees to prioritise items and formulate their draft work programmes. The arrangements for the workshops are elaborated upon in the report.

I wish to record my appreciation of the contribution and work of the chairs and vice-chairs, and all scrutiny members who have been part of undertaking important scrutiny work during the year.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the residents of Gwynedd, Cabinet Members, other agencies and relevant officers for their contributions and support. I would also like to note my appreciation of the staff's work during the pandemic, responding to challenges and endeavouring to provide first class services for the people of Gwynedd.

This report provides a summary of the scrutiny work achieved during the year, focusing on the main scrutiny work and expanding on items scrutinised in formal meetings. When identifying items to scrutinise, members consider how the scrutiny work could add value and contribute towards driving improvement in services for the people of Gwynedd.

A list of all items scrutinised in formal meetings during the year can be seen in an appendix to this report.

This is the last report for the Council's current term. Looking to the future, the emergence of hybrid meetings, where some members are in a committee room and others join remotely, is a move towards changing the way scrutiny work is carried out with the relaxation of Covid-19 regulations. The scrutiny work is of essential importance in contributing to driving an improvement in services for the people of Gwynedd and the contribution of the Council's new members will be crucial in ensuring this.

Councillor Beth Lawton,

Chair of the Scrutiny Forum

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Annual Scrutiny Workshops

In 2021-22, we returned to holding annual workshops to produce an annual scrutiny work programme. The workshops, held in May, were an opportunity for scrutiny committee members to get together specifically to create a work programme for 2021-22. This was the first time for the workshops to be held virtually. The way in which the workshops were held was amended to take advantage of the technology, making use of breakout rooms to give all scrutiny members the opportunity to participate.

A key step in preparing for the workshops was to identify possible items for the 2021-22 work programme. During regular meetings between the Chairs and Vice-chairs and relevant Cabinet Members and heads of department, held in February/March 2021, an initial discussion was held on items to consider. All members and heads of department were given an opportunity to present possible items noting what needed to be scrutinised, why it needed scrutiny and when it would be timely to scrutinise. It was highlighted to the scrutiny members that they did not have to limit their suggestions to the Committee they were a member of.

A list of possible items was drawn for each Committee that would form the basis of the members' discussions at the workshops.

The opportunity was taken at the beginning of the workshops to hold training on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 drawing attention to the Council's well-being objectives, the five ways of working and their association with Ffordd Gwynedd. The Equality Advisor presented information on the socio-economic duty that came into effect on 31 March 2021. See more details on the content of the training on page 21.

Members were reminded of the purpose of scrutiny, namely:

CONTRIBUTE TO DRIVING IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICES FOR THE PEOPLE OF GWYNEDD

This will be done constructively by:

- Investigating concerns regarding the quality of our services
- Acting as a Critical Friend, and ensuring that appropriate attention is given to the citizen's voice
- Identifying good practice and weaknesses
- Holding the Cabinet and its members to account
- Reviewing or scrutinising decisions or actions that are not the responsibility of the Cabinet

Before proceeding to discuss possible items for the 2021-22 work programme, it was emphasised there was a need to be clear why a matter needed to be scrutinised, and to consider how scrutiny could add value. To ensure that matters received due attention, the aim was to consider two or three items at each committee meeting. The members were asked to consider the best method of scrutinising matters - committee item, scrutiny investigation or task and finish group jointly with the service.

The members were divided into breakout rooms to consider the possible items in smaller groups. The members were asked to identify their five main priorities out of a list of possible items.

The following factors were considered when prioritising the items:

- Does the matter affect a large proportion of the population?
- Can scrutiny make a difference / influence? (People / service / performance)
- Is now the time to scrutinise?
- Is the matter a priority for the Council?
- Are we clear about what we are trying to improve?

Following the group discussions, everyone came together with representatives from the groups reporting back on which items they had identified and the considerations behind their choices.

The next step was a discussion to formulate a draft work programme for 2021-22 giving consideration to the items identified in the groups, before considering the items that remained on the list of possible items. An agreement was reached on the draft work programme at the end of this step.

To ensure that the draft work programme was meaningful, the relevant Heads of Department and Cabinet Members were invited to identify any matters that needed consideration in the context of the prioritised matters and in terms of the timing of the scrutiny. At every workshop, the discussion was constructive and beneficial and was an opportunity to amend the timing of scrutinising some items to ensure that scrutiny took place in a timely manner thus maximising the value of the scrutiny.

The final step before each Committee's first meeting approved their work programme, was to submit the entire scrutiny forward work programme to the Scrutiny Forum on 20 May to provide an overview of the items to be scrutinised during 2021-22.

The individual Committees adopted their work programmes for 2021-22 at their first meetings. The forward work programme is a live programme and the work programme was adapted during 2021-22 when matters arose that required prioritising. To reiterate that the individual committees were responsible for their work programme, the amendments were reported to the committees' formal meetings for approval.

Scrutiny Forum

The Chairs and Vice-chairs of the Scrutiny Committees and the Governance and Audit Committee are the members of the Scrutiny Forum. The Forum takes an overview of all the Council's scrutiny work with members challenging each other to ensure that the right matters are prioritised.

The role of the Scrutiny Forum is to:

- Advise on PRIORITISING scrutiny items (majority being formal scrutiny with a small number of investigations) and challenge the grounds for identifying items to be scrutinised.
- Identify the most effective scrutiny method within the resources available (formal scrutiny/investigation)
- Identify items that are for information, seeking to avoid using scrutiny arrangements to fulfil the information sharing role.
- Assess the contributions of the individual committees and assess the IMPACT of the scrutiny work, and review our scrutiny arrangements on an ongoing basis.

The 2020-21 Annual Report provided details of the Scrutiny Forum's work. The last meeting of the Forum before the membership changed, before Chairs and Vice-chairs were appointed for 2021-22 at the first meetings of the committees, was held on 20 May 2021.

Consideration was given to the draft scrutiny forward work programme for 2021/22. The Committees' Chairs and Vice-chairs were invited to elaborate on the contents of their relevant committee's programme. A discussion was held on the prioritised items. The Forum was supportive of the scrutiny forward work programme and of submitting the individual Committee's work programmes to their first meeting for approval.

The opportunity was taken to reflect on the workshops and seek the Chairs and Vice-chairs' feedback on the arrangements. Holding virtual workshops was a new experience, lessons were learnt from holding them and overall, they were worthwhile and a forward work programme was secured. A balance was sought in regards to the length of the workshops, two hours were allocated considering how much time members could commit to the workshops given their other commitments. It was noted that the time allocated for members to discuss items was a matter that needed addressing when planning for the 2022-23 workshops.

It was expressed that the attendance of the Heads of Department and the Cabinet Members was valuable with the regard to the timing of the scrutiny, and it was possible to move items that had been prioritised by members to a timelier meeting.

The workshops were a step in the right direction, and although matters could arise during the year, a forward work programme had been formulated for the coming year.

At the first meetings of the committees, new Chairs and Vice-chairs for 2021/22 were elected. Following these changes, the Forum's membership is as follows:

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Councillor
Beth Lawton

Councillor
Cai Larsen

Communities Scrutiny Committee

Councillor
Berwyn P. Jones

Councillor
Glyn Daniels

Care Scrutiny Committee

Councillor
Eryl Jones-Williams

Councillor
Angela Russell

Governance and Audit Committee
(Role of Scrutinising Corporate Matters)

Councillor
John Pughe Roberts

Councillor
R. Medwyn Hughes

There was an opportunity at the Forum's meeting on 9 September 2021 for members to familiarise themselves with the Forum's role and discuss how to reflect on meetings and assess the impact of scrutiny, liaison meetings with Cabinet Members and Heads of Department and joint meetings with the Cabinet. In terms of joint meetings with the Cabinet, it was noted that a meeting should be held when there was a specific matter to discuss and the importance of holding a joint meeting following the Election in May 2022.

The Forum convened on 16 December 2021, an initial discussion was held in terms of scrutiny's role within performance arrangements in light of the requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, to formulate a statutory annual performance report and to consult as part of the process (Self-assessment). Scrutiny members will be a core part of the self-assessment, and not to merely discuss the outcomes. The Council is required to publish the 2021/22 self-assessment by October 2022. Discussions will continue as arrangements develop.

The last meeting of the Forum was held on 31 March 2022, and members were given an opportunity to give their opinion on the future of scrutinising corporate matters in light of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It was concluded that the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee would be the best place to do this given current work pressures and that the arrangement should be reviewed in 18 months. The future of corporate scrutiny will be a matter for the new Council to act upon.

Scrutiny Items

This section gives a taster of the items that have been scrutinised at the formal scrutiny meetings. Effective scrutiny can make Cabinet Members aware of additional matters that need to be considered.

A complete list of items scrutinised at formal meetings can be seen in the Appendix to this report. All information on what was discussed during 2021/22 can be seen on the Council's website - https://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/scrutiny

Education and the Welsh language: A new vision for the Immersion Education System towards 2032 and beyond

In 2018-19 and 2019-20 developments in the language centres sector were scrutinised. There was an opportunity to provide scrutiny input once again this year. This was done by presenting observations on the Cabinet Member for Education's vision for the immersion education system towards 2032 and beyond.

The main case for change and the need for a new vision for the immersion education system in Gwynedd was to place the learner in the centre, to contemporise and modernise provision, work in partnership, an opportunity to create a first rate teaching environment, new opportunities deriving from Covid-19 and lessons learnt in light of the Pilot Scheme that was operated at the Cabinet's request.

Here are some of the observations submitted by scrutiny members during the meeting:

- The success of the language centres over the years was recognised in ensuring that learners acquire the Welsh language.
- There was agreement with the intention to strengthen accountability as part of the new vision.
- The proposal to equip schools' workforce to support learners to make further progress in building confidence and acquiring the Welsh language was supported.
- The proposal to establish an immersion education provision in Bangor was supported.
- Opinion was divided on the funding source for the immersion education system, with some members supportive of the intention that schools would contribute, thus increasing accountability and shared ownership of the system between the Education Department and the schools, but the wish was also expressed for the Council to fund the budget deficit on a corporate level due to the fact that the Welsh language was one of the Council's main priorities.

Having received the responses to members' observations, it was resolved to accept the report and ask the Education Department and Cabinet Member for Education to consider the observations of the committee, and that the scrutiny committee receives a further report on this when more details are available.

Harassment in schools

During the year, support for teachers with on-line abuse matters was identified as an issue that needed addressing. Members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee were of the opinion that an explanation was needed of how the Education Department looks after teachers who are abused on social media. The importance of understanding the role of the Council and the role of schools was noted.

Estyn

estyn.llyw.cymru
estyn.gov.wales

"We don't tell our teachers"

Experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales

December 2021

Another element of harassment in schools was discussed, which had been addressed by Estyn, namely sexual harassment in schools. Estyn published the "We don't tell our teachers" report in December 2021. The report provides details of experiences of sexual harassment between peers among secondary school pupils in Wales. The work led to recommendations that were relevant to secondary schools, local authorities and Welsh Government.

These two separate elements were considered at a meeting of the scrutiny committee held on 8 February 2022. Members noted their appreciation of the letter sent by the Head of Education Department to parents / carers in response to relatively recent examples of social media being used to harass head teachers, teachers and school staff. Members were of the opinion that it was short, precise and struck the right tone. The reference to 'some' pupils and 'some' cases was welcomed, as well as the strong encouragement for parents to check their children's mobile phones. Concern was expressed that schools could lose staff as a result of these incidents, and although there were rules at schools in term of using phones, etc., there was a small cohort who did not comply.

During the discussion on the Estyn report, members made the following observations:-

- The report noted that school staff were working hard to respond to these matters, but staff were also saying that they needed more resources, training, support and time.
- It was of crucial importance for this matter to be a priority for schools, and for the Government also, and that this should be taught as part of the new curriculum.
- It was welcomed that sex education and relationships education was now being addressed, and it was emphasised that it was important that support was available for staff on how to deal with such matters.
- There was a need to be creative on how best to provide the resources, given that time is scarce for staff and teachers. It was possible to provide on-line training, and there should possibly be a champion across schools to develop some expertise, and to be able to advise as needed.
- That teachers / schools were expected to be everything for everyone nowadays, rather than providing education alone.
- The Department recognises the magnitude and severity of the problem and intends to act.
- As the new curriculum is being introduced in phases, beginning with Year 7 upwards, there is a need to act immediately across the whole school, rather than wait for the curriculum changes to bear fruit.

Appreciation of the heroic work of teachers and all school staff was noted. It was resolved to accept the report and welcome the work; a request was made for an update in the future.

Autism Strategy

The Autism Strategy was scrutinised at a meeting of the Care Scrutiny Committee on 30 November, 2021. The Strategy is a part of the Council's Plan and is a project in the improvement plan. The vision is to ensure that families and children with autism have access to the support they need to thrive. The key matters identified as part of the plan are; access to health and social care services, diagnosis, advice and support following diagnosis, young people in the transition period, training, the National Autism Service and the Third Sector. The plan provides details of the actions for 2021-22.

Some of the observations made by members in their discussion included:

- That autism service users and their families should be consulted on the Plan and that regular feedback should be received from them about the service.
- What would the Education Department's role be in the Strategy? It should be ensured that collaboration with the Education Department is highlighted in the Plan.
- Many parents are concerned about the time it takes for children to be diagnosed with the condition and waiting times for an assessment. It was asked whether it would be possible to do something to improve this.
- A wish to receive an information session for Councillors to improve an understanding of the field.
- It should be ensured that suitable training is available for all, including Council staff, in order for them to be aware of trends e.g. that women can hide the condition better than men.
- The importance of all School staff members receiving training so that they can identify the condition early.
- Concern regarding the time it took to develop the Strategy.
- It would have been useful to see more input from families during the consultation. It was suggested that regular feedback should be received from service users and their families in order to review whether or not this Plan has improved their experiences.
- Reference was made to the three posts and the amount of money that had been identified within the Plan for implementation; it was enquired whether these posts were sufficient to respond to requirements.
- Welcomed the fact that there would be an annual review of the plan and that the scrutiny committee would receive an update in the future.

The committee welcomed the plan, supported it and was eager for the Cabinet to approve the bid for permanent funding to improve the support available to Gwynedd residents who have autism.

The Cabinet approved the Autism Plan 2021-23 at its meeting on 30 November 2021. It was agreed to prejudice the annual bids process and approve a bid for £48,000 from the permanent revenue budget now, in order to fund the post of Autism Co-ordinator and two Social Work posts at an annual cost of £144,000, with the Council contributing a third of the cost.

Housing Action Plan

In 2020, Care Scrutiny Committee members were part of a task and finish group to prioritise the plans to be included in the action plan. The members' contribution to the process succeeded in highlighting further matters that required consideration.

This year, the progress achieved since the Plan became operational in April 2021 was scrutinised. The aim of the Housing Action Plan is to "Ensure that the people of Gwynedd have access to a suitable home of a high standard, that is affordable and improves their quality of life."

Here are some of the observations submitted by scrutiny members during the meeting:

- Concern about the condition of some houses let by private landlords.
- That the report was excellent and the relevant information had been included in it.
- There was a need to promote the first-time buyers grant more, especially in the Meirionnydd Area.
- Concern about the pressure on the Council as a consequence of the increase in private housing tenants receiving a notice to quit, with the use of houses being changed to *AirBnB* leading to an increase in the number who are homeless.
- It would be useful for local members to receive information beforehand about houses that become vacant, to be aware for when electors contact them.
- That the Plan was innovative, need to share the information widely for the people of Gwynedd to be aware of what is happening.
- The Plan is crucial to ensuring the future of communities and stopping young people from having to leave their communities. The figures were heartening.
- The importance of communicating with individuals on the common housing register.

The report was accepted asking for a further update on the activity of the Housing Action Plan during 2022/23.

"I think that scrutiny is very important...this committee has been an important part of what the Housing and Property Department is trying to do. Thank you for being so constructive and positive and part of the solution."

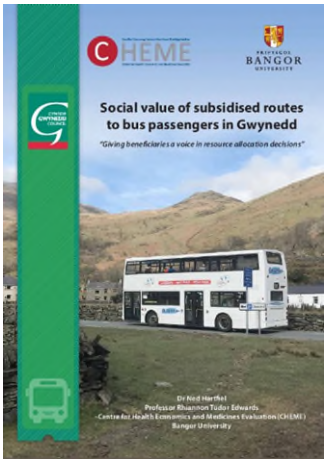
Cabinet Member

Transport - Social Value

An update was submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee on the Transport Strategic Review at its meeting on 13 July 2021. To respond to risks, the Environment Department was undertaking a comprehensive review of Public Transport provision and consulting with communities to identify the need, assess the social value, prioritise services and offer transport through innovation and getting more value for money.

Some of the observations made by members in their discussion were:

- Gratitude for the useful information within the report. That losing service in some communities has been a blow as many people need them to visit the dentist or GP.
- There was a need to look at the bus timetable, e.g. offering an earlier service in order to use this for work or education purposes.
- Asked for clarity in terms of the information on page 33 of the agenda for Service Number 14 in the University's report.
- Is there a discussion on the shuttle buses? Later journeys would be better for villages and towns to benefit from visitors.
- Later buses would enable people to park in Caernarfon and travel to Snowdonia, rather than park by the mountains.
- Does the timetable reflect the current needs of locals as the buses were passing by half-empty?
- There was a need to encourage former passengers to return to using the buses as there was a high social value if people used them to go shopping and for similar journeys.



In response to the comments, the Head noted:

- That the department was seeking to put pressure on Welsh Government to review their timetables, however, they were eager to have a relatively swift journey through Wales.
- It was suggested to Welsh Government that every other T2 service should travel into communities and that the rest travelled more directly through Wales.
- The member would be contacted regarding the information about Service Number 14.
- In relation to the parking situation for visiting Snowdonia, work is being done jointly with the National Park in order to look at solutions to reduce the use made of personal transport.
- Agreed that there is a need to tweak the timetable so there are earlier and later journeys.
- The basis of the work submitted to the committee is to investigate whether the current service is fit for purpose and meets the needs of users.
- There was a need to plan for all users despite everyone having different needs.

It was resolved to accept the report and note the observations received.

Climate Change

Climate change is a theme that has been relevant to a number of items scrutinised by the Communities Scrutiny Committee in 2021/22. At its meeting on 23 September 2021, the Committee received an update on what the Council was doing to respond to climate change challenges and other practical steps the Council could implement in future. A discussion was held on the membership of the Climate Change Board that was established by the Cabinet. Following the meeting, a request was received to elect a member to represent the Committee on the Board. At the meeting held on 13 January 2022, Councillor Mike Stevens was elected to represent the committee.

The Cabinet adopted the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan 2022-2030 on 8 March 2022. The plan sets a zero net carbon target for the activities the Council are responsible for. The Plan was scrutinised at a meeting held on 10 March.

Some of the observations made by members in their discussion were:

- Inviting Arfon and Dwyfor-Meirionnydd representatives from the Welsh Youth Parliament to be members of the Climate Change Board should be considered.
- Is there an intention to encourage others to invest to reduce carbon emissions? It would be beneficial to have a cost and benefit analysis to demonstrate how much money can be saved alongside the reduction in carbon emissions. By noting a close percentage in terms of impact it would be possible to encourage the third sector and private individuals.
- Have you considered investing in solar hot water systems and investing in PV (Photovoltaic) systems to reduce carbon footprint?
- What is the Council's viewpoint on nuclear energy, and what plans are available as an alternative means of generating electricity efficiently?
- The need to be careful in terms of nuclear energy in terms of the resulting waste and the impact on future generations.
- Need to consider using hydrogen e.g. to power cars. Germany invest in renewable hydrogen projects, generated by using water.

This area is a priority for the Council and doubtless there will be further scrutiny work following consultation with Gwynedd partners and communities.

Working in future and the mental well-being support

Working patterns have changed drastically over the last two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members of the Governance and Audit Committee were eager to scrutinise the Council's future working arrangements and the mental well-being support that is available to staff.

A report was submitted to the committee on 10 February 2022, which detailed the Council's vision to support, empower and trust in the workforce to work flexibly and productively to provide high quality services in a way that significantly reduces the impact on the environment.

During the discussion, the following observations were made by members:-

- The workforce has had to cope with the costs of heating, electricity and telephones over the period of the pandemic - need to consider income tax contributions in future.
- In the context of staff well-being, it was difficult to identify problems when working from home.
- Approve the vision and the emphasis on flexibility.
- Anticipate opportunities for employees from the south of the county to apply for 'central' jobs.
- Need to ensure that the team working element is maintained
- A request to ensure that apprentices are given suitable opportunities to develop their characters and to collaborate as a team.

As part of his response to the above observations, the Head of Corporate Support noted the importance of holding more conversations amongst staff and offering support to apprentices. He pledged that every effort would be made to respond positively to this.

It was resolved to accept the report noting the plans for working in future along with noting the support being offered to staff in terms of mental well-being. The Cabinet adopted the vision for working in the future at its meeting on 15 February.

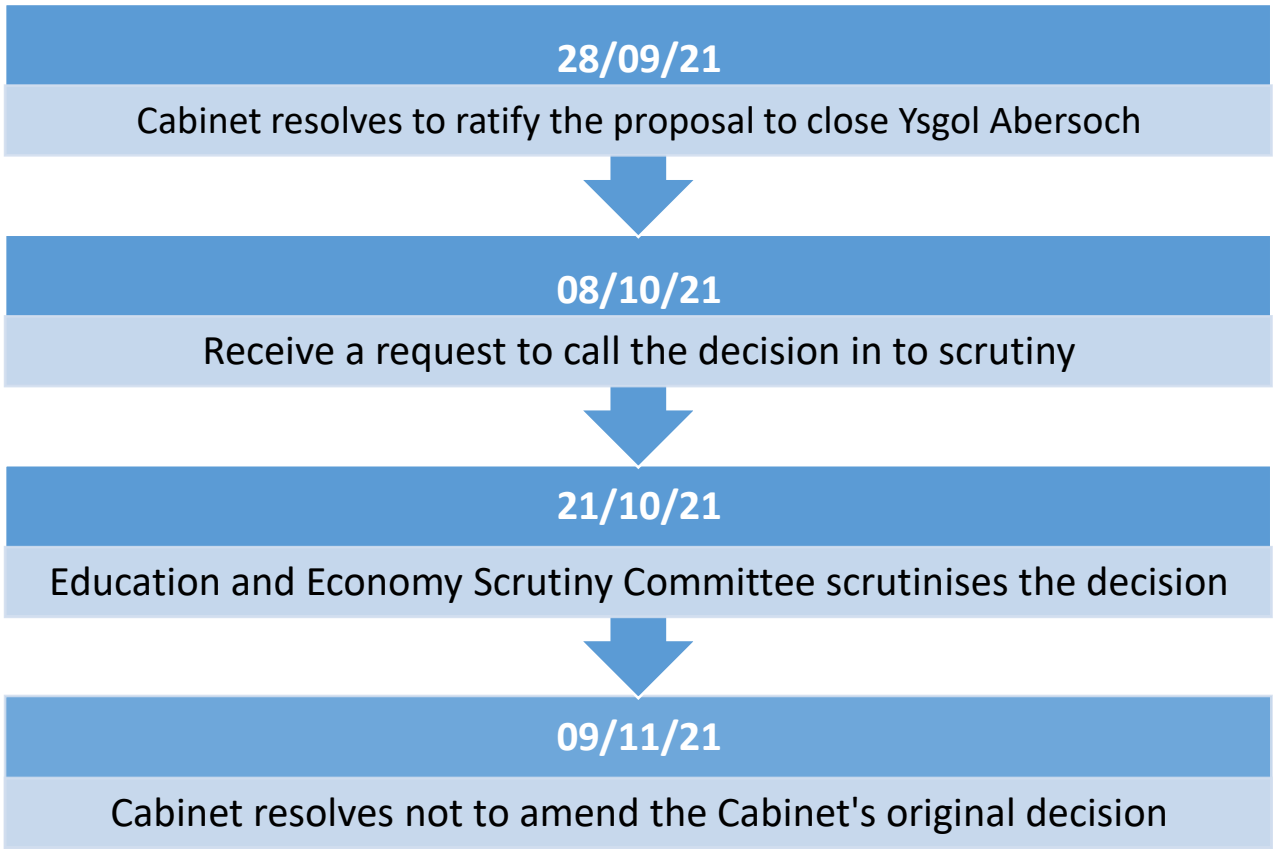
Call-ins

As part of the scrutiny system, members have the right to call-in decisions to be scrutinised. The Chair or Vice-chair of a scrutiny committee, along with two members of that Scrutiny Committee (from two different groups) may submit a request to call in a decision, noting their reasons for doing so.

When a request to call in a decision is made, the relevant scrutiny committee will convene to scrutinise aspects of the decision in accordance with the reasons for calling in the decision.

In 2021/22 two decisions were called in to scrutiny, they are explained further below:

The Cabinet's decision to ratify the proposal to close Ysgol Abersoch on 31 December 2021, and provide a place for the pupils at Ysgol Sarn Bach from 1 January 2022



At the request of Councillors Beth Lawton (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee), Alwyn Gruffydd and Elwyn Jones, the decision was scrutinised at a meeting of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 21 October 2021. An opportunity was given to the Cabinet Member and the Education Department to respond to the reasons for calling in the decision. The members who called in the decision elaborated on the reasons and the Local Member submitted information.

A record of what was discussed at the meeting can be viewed via this link - Minutes of Call-in Item

Following a comprehensive discussion, it was resolved that the scrutiny committee would refer the matter back to the Cabinet for reconsideration on the grounds that a sufficient response was not received to the second reason for calling in, namely:-

> "The report does not take future Housing and Employment that would come into force in the Village into consideration.
>
> - A new development to construct a new hotel that would create a minimum of 40 full-time posts in the area - employees and their families would need resources, including education for our children.
>
> - Welsh Government, Gwynedd Council's Housing and Property Department and a Housing Association (which owns land in the village) are currently exploring the potential to construct more homes - Welsh Government has stated that a grant is available to develop this land to potentially construct 15 homes.
>
> The Housing Association has confirmed that plans have already been drawn up for the Bryn Garmon site.
>
> There is no mention in the report of the new plan by the Housing and Property Department and nothing about the developments underway in the Village and therefore, by not doing so, the Education Department has not responded to the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act."

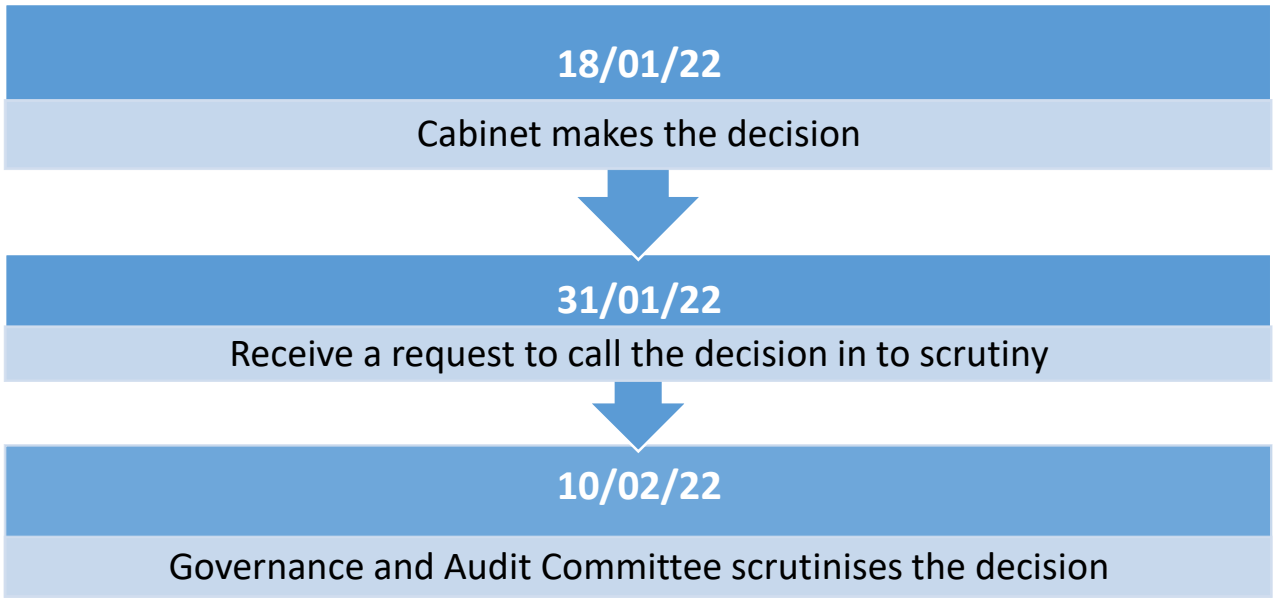
The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee attended a meeting of the Cabinet on 9 November 2021. She presented the reasoning and the background to the Scrutiny Committee's decision to ask the Cabinet to reconsider the decision. The Local Member elaborated on the school's situation noting there was a need for Cabinet Members to give particular attention to the housing matters that were in progress in the village.

The Cabinet Member for Education noted that the submitted report had dealt with the observations about the impact of potential developments in the area and that the Cabinet had considered them before reaching a decision. His proposal to the Cabinet was not to amend the decision as closing the school responded to the challenges facing the school and would lead to more consistent opportunities for the children in the catchment area, offering a good quality education, experiences, skills and confidence to be successful bilingual citizens.

IMPACT OF SCRUTINY

Although the Cabinet did not amend its original decision. This scrutiny work highlighted matters that were a cause for concern on the impact on future generations before making the final decision.

The Cabinet's decision to designate St. David's Day 2022 as an additional holiday for Council staff who work in accordance with local government workers' conditions of service



A request was received from Councillors John Pughe Roberts (Chair of the Committee), Angela Russell and Sion Jones to scrutinise the Cabinet's decision, the decision was considered at a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee on 10 February 2022. The reasons for calling in were:

"Concerns regarding the cost to Gwynedd Council of providing an extra bank holiday to the authority's staff, a cost of approximately £200 thousand which has been found during this very difficult financial period for everyone. We believe that these funds could be better used for the benefit of residents of Gwynedd. We ask the Cabinet to reconsider their decision until the Welsh Government are able to provide an additional bank holiday on St David's Day on 1st March for the whole of Wales."

The Cabinet Member responded to the reasons for calling in the decision. During the discussion, some members noted that they supported celebrating St David's Day but there was a need to make it a national holiday for everyone, that the response of the public had been relatively negative and that the timing of the decision was causing concern. Other members stated observations that supported the Cabinet's decision, such as being proud that Gwynedd was leading the way and that other employers support the decision and were following the example. At the end of the discussion, it was decided to accept the Cabinet's decision.

A record of what was discussed at the meeting can be viewed via this link - Minutes of Call-in Item

IMPACT OF SCRUTINY

This is an example of scrutiny members ensuring that all considerations have been addressed in response to their electors' concerns.

Task Groups

Ffordd Gwynedd Task Group

At the annual scrutiny workshop of the Governance and Audit Committee, 'Ffordd Gwynedd' was identified as a possible matter the members could collaborate on with the Chief Executive to hold a review of how and to what extent the 'Ffordd Gwynedd' principles have been embedded across the Council. A Task Group was established at a meeting of the Committee on 15 July 2021.

It was resolved to elect Councillors John Pughe Roberts, Medwyn Hughes, Selwyn Griffiths, Peredur Jenkins and Sharon Warnes (Lay Member) to carry out the work.

The Task Group members received training on the Ffordd Gwynedd principles. The Chief Executive asked every department to carry out a self-assessment in terms of Ffordd Gwynedd and this information was used as a basis to a discussion at the Task Group meeting held in January.

The Task Group's work will be reported on during 2022/23 and more information will be included in the next annual report.

Parking Task Group

The work of the Task Group that was established at the Cabinet Member for Environment's request was reported on in the 2020-21 Annual Report. A review was held on the Council's parking strategy. A report was submitted to the Cabinet on 16 February 2021 in terms of the parking review. The recommendations of the Task Group were accepted and an adjustment was made in terms of reconciling the enforcement hours of Band 1 Car Parks to be operational between 10am and 4.30pm.

An update was received at the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 10 March 2022, where it was confirmed that the recommendations deriving from the review had been implemented.

At the meeting, an explanation of the progress thus far was provided in terms of the management of motor vehicles and powers dealing with motorists that park illegally.

Photograph: “freepik.com”

IMPACT OF SCRUTINY

The work of the task groups demonstrates how scrutiny can add value by collaborating with Cabinet Members and Officers in order to improve, which in the long run has a positive impact on the people of Gwynedd.

Tracking the Impact of Scrutiny

In prioritising matters to be scrutinised, an effort is made to identify matters where the scrutiny work can add value. Subject to the matter in question, scrutiny can have a direct impact very quickly and on the other hand it can be an evidence base that leads to change over time. In this section, we note examples of the impact of scrutiny, be that immediately or gradually over time.

Quality Assurance - Adults Services

An overview of the work of the Quality Assurance Unit within the Adults, Health and Well-being Department was provided to the meeting of the Care Scrutiny Committee on 30 September 2021. The Quality Assurance Team has a key role to ensure that the care being commissioned and provided is first class. This is done by monitoring and supporting internal and external providers to ensure that the care is in line with the needs of the individuals within residential homes, supported housing, day care provision and domiciliary care. The team's responsibilities also include monitoring nursing homes jointly with colleagues from the Health Board.

It was given to understand that the work-load meant that many providers could go for a period of up to two years between monitoring visits. Ideally, the aim is an arrangement of monitoring all provision every six months. This would reduce risks of services failing significantly and of course reduce the likelihood of safeguarding concerns involving individuals receiving care.

The Committee was concerned about the lack of staff capacity in the unit and the risks that could emerge in regards to the safety and well-being of those receiving care, the sustainability of the market and the consequent risks to the Council. The Committee conveyed concerns about the lack of capacity and the need to secure adequate staff capacity in order to offer suitable support and monitor the quality of services to the Cabinet.

IMPACT OF SCRUTINY

As part of the 2022/23 budget, permanent funding was approved to fund an increase in the hours of the Independent Reviewing and Protection Officer post from 0.7 FTE to 1 FTE. In addition to one-off funding of £48,930 for the 2022/23 financial year to increase staffing capacity to carry out audits on care providers in the County.

The scrutiny work succeeded to elevate the concern about the lack of capacity and the risks to the Council.

Occupational Therapy Service

As a follow-up to receiving a progress report on the recommendations of the Supporting Gwynedd's Disabled People Scrutiny Investigation at its meeting on 26 November 2020, the Care Scrutiny Committee scrutinised a report on the Occupational Therapy Service on 14 January 2021.

The main conclusions of the discussion were as follows:

- The Service was facing a few challenges; however, it was also a period of opportunity to improve the service. Concern was noted that staffing levels did not correspond with the workload.
- The vision of the Department is to establish a manual handling service that would support timely hospital discharge arrangements and ensure that the individual receives the right support and equipment to enable them to meet what matters to them. An application has been made for funding from the Independent Living budget of the Welsh Government to fund the service.
- There is a need to keep an eye on the impact of Covid-19 on the service and whether or not there are sufficient resources to deal with the workload.

A progress update was received at the meeting held on 3 February 2022. Details were provided of the new team, which includes four Occupational Therapists and one Registered Nurse. A specialist team specifically involved with the Manual Handling work within the County to support the Occupational Therapists already within the Adults, Health and Well-being Department. It was noted that the work of the team reduces the risk of injuries, reduces hospital admissions and reduces the time spent in hospitals. The aim is to help individuals to live as independently as possible while retaining their dignity. By assessing and providing specialist equipment and timely intervention, it could mean that one person is able to provide care safely. This will release carers' capacity and provide suitable care in a cost-effective way.

"We would not be in this position today without your intervention as a Scrutiny Committee...your work has enabled this to happen and there is now potential to move forward and achieve a great deal on behalf of the residents of Gwynedd."

Head of Adults, Health and Well-being

Post-16 Transport

Following concerns by members in terms of the inconsistency in the cost of post-16 transport, the ability of learners/students to pay for transport costs, the travelling distances and the fact that the Welsh Government does not give the same attention as England does to the underprivileged, a scrutiny investigation was commissioned by the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2013.

The intention of the Investigation was to ascertain a county-wide picture of the way in which the Post-16 Education Transport Policy was implemented, and the impact of that policy on post-16 education providers and learners in different areas of the county.

Twelve recommendations were submitted to the attention of the Cabinet Member for Education at the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 2 December 2014, two of these were:

- We should have a purposeful Post-16 Transport Policy that considers the students/learners and their families' means to pay for transport costs.
- Consistency is needed in the provision and the arrangements across Gwynedd, in order to give everyone an equal and fair opportunity.

Progress updates on implementing the recommendations were received in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The Committee noted its frustration in terms of the slowness in implementing the recommendations but that the situation had improved and it welcomed ensuring the flexibility of the travel tickets. Members continued to lobby for change to the policy to ensure that every young person received equal opportunities.

IMPACT OF SCRUTINY

In the 2022/23 budget, permanent funding of £218,070 was included to enable removing the need to charge a fee on 16+ year olds to travel to school or college.

It was acknowledged that the cost of the Post-16 Travel Ticket was a barrier that prevented some young people from benefiting from further education. Removing the fee would ensure seamless access.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee identified a matter that needed addressing, and the work of the scrutiny committee during 2013 and 2014 provided evidence of the need for change. There were improvements in the subsequent years with scrutiny members persevering in terms of the need for further changes. Removing the fee realises the Committee's aspiration to ensure that every young person receives equal opportunities.

Training

Members attend training by virtue of their role as a Councillor. To give members an opportunity to refine their scrutiny skills and what they need to keep in mind when scrutinising, training was provided at the beginning of the annual workshops.

The members were reminded that the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 asks public bodies to design services that protect our future generations in the long term. It places a duty to improve the environmental, economic, cultural and social well-being of the people of Wales.

The Act exists as Wales is faced with several challenges now and in the future, such as climate change, poverty, health inequality and jobs and growth. To address these, collaboration is a must and consideration of the long term effects of decisions.

In accordance with the requirements of the Act the Council has formulated well-being objectives:

Our vision is for every community in Gwynedd to prosper, and for us as people to...

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 quality homes within our communities
- Live in a natural Welsh society
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible
- Take advantage of the beauty of the County's natural environment

The Council Plan explains how the Council will go about meeting the well-being objectives.

Attention was drawn to the five ways of working noted in the Act. Public bodies are required to think about them to demonstrate that they have followed the sustainable development principle, and members should consider them when scrutinising. Reference was made to the link between the five ways of working and Ffordd Gwynedd:

Long Term

How have they considered the long-term and what will people's needs be in years to come?

Risk of thinking that Ffordd Gwynedd focusses too much on what matters now?

Prevention

Have they addressed how problems can be prevented from arising or worsening in the future?

What is important = reducing the demand
Address current needs - forgetting future needs?

Integration

Have they considered the potential impact on other public bodies?

Broader consideration of what matters
Awareness of the Council Plan

Collaboration

Have they considered collaboration?

Not thinking organisationally -
what is needed to achieve what is important?

Involvement

Have the people of Gwynedd been included?

Through the eyes of the people of Gwynedd
Understand real need

The Equality Advisor was invited to submit information on the socio-economic duty under the Equality Act 2010, which came into force on 31 March 2021. The aim of this duty is to ensure that people are treated equally and fairly by reducing all types of poverty. The duty must be considered alongside the equality characteristics such as disability age, LGBT+, race.

What this duty meant for the scrutineers was highlighted:

- Question whether consideration has been given to the people of Gwynedd who live in different types of poverty. Have they been included in the process?
- Ask whether there is a timely and commensurate impact assessment in the pipeline.
- Ask if sufficient attention has been given to reducing the gap especially in strategic decisions.
- Suggest any additional work that could be done to reduce the gap and ensure fairness.

Also in May, a session was held for prospective scrutiny chairs. Practical/technical matters and governance matters were addressed. A method of reflection was adopted for Committee meetings, with the Chair, Vice-chair and relevant scrutiny officer reflecting on what went well, what did not go well and whether Scrutiny has made a difference. It is important to take the opportunity to learn through experience and this will be crucial when moving to the new Council.

Facts about Scrutiny in Gwynedd in 2021/22

47 members have participated in the important scrutiny work during the year.

48 items have been scrutinised at formal meetings.

4 meetings of the Scrutiny Forum have been held during the year.

Scrutiny members have **attended** performance challenging meetings.

Information sessions held for Care Scrutiny Committee members on the following fields:

- Mental Well-being
- Presentation by the Chief Executive of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Meetings have been held between the Chairs and Vice-chairs and relevant Cabinet Members and Heads of Department.

Scrutiny work supported by the Democracy and Language Manager, Senior Language and Scrutiny Advisor and Scrutiny Advisor.

APPENDIX

Scrutiny Work Programme 2021-2022

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee	
10 June 2021	• Education and the Welsh language: A new vision for the Immersion Education System towards 2032 and beyond • Educational grants to assist pupils
21 October 2021	• Cabinet decision call-in - Ysgol Abersoch • Support for Businesses • Well-being gap, including ➢ the effect of Covid on the education of all our pupils ➢ which steps do schools have in place to ensure the well-being of all pupils
9 December 2021	• Unemployment levels and support for people to return to work • Education Annual Report • School meals
8 February 2022	• Regeneration Framework • Harassment in schools • Schools Accessibility Plan

Care Scrutiny Committee	
1 July 2021	• Dementia care • Housing provision in the community for people with learning disabilities
30 September 2021	• Adults Services - Quality Assurance • Well-being Assessment - population needs • Help desk for all enquiries regarding housing matters
25 November 2021	• Autism Strategy
3 February 2022	• Progress Update: Occupational Therapy Service • North Wales Population Needs Assessment
17 March 2022	• Gwynedd Mental Health Service • Housing Action Plan • Gwynedd's Fostering Strategy

Communities Scrutiny Committee	
13 July 2021	• Public Services Board Annual Report • Salt Bins • Transport - Social Value
23 September 2021	• Climate Change • Coastal Assets • Water and Flood Risk
4 November 2021	• Joint Local Development Plan Review Report • Rights of Way Improvement Plan • Governance Structure and Delivery Arrangements of the Public Services Board, and progress report on the Well-being Assessments.
13 January 2022	• Annual Update by the Community Safety Partnership • Street Cleanliness • Grass Cutting and Ground Maintenance
10 March 2022	• Update - Parking Review • Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

Governance and Audit Committee	
17 June 2021	• Online Self Service
15 July 2021	• Review of Ffordd Gwynedd • IT Systems Resilience - Cyber Security
14 October 2021	• Savings Overview: Progress Report • Keeping the Benefit Local • Apprenticeships
18 November 2021	• Budget Strategy 2022/23 (scrutinise this work early with regards to Council budgeting)
10 February 2022	• Cabinet decision call-in - Celebrating St. David's Day • Working in future and the mental well-being support • Savings Overview: Progress Report • 2022/23 Budget (with a focus on risk, prior to the Cabinet recommending the budget and tax for approval by the Full Council) • Capital Strategy 2022/23 (including Investment and Borrowing Strategies)