Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-24

Mi allwch ddarllen y ddogfen yma yn Gymraeg hefyd. Ewch nôl i'r dudalen we, a chliciwch ar y botwm iaith ar dop y dudalen.

Contribute to driving improvement in services for the people of Gwynedd

CYNGOR GWYNEDD

Foreword

It has been a busy year; many matters have been scrutinised in the meetings of the Scrutiny Committees and a Scrutiny Investigation and Task and Finish Group have reported on their work. Specific recommendations were made to improve services for the people of Gwynedd in accordance with the purpose of scrutiny in Gwynedd.

We received a report from Audit Wales on their review of the effectiveness of scrutiny at the end of September 2023. Steps were put in place to respond to recommendations deriving from the review. The report details the journey toward the Full Council's decision to adhere to our existing arrangements of three scrutiny committees and to approve actions to improve efficiency.

Training was held on “Scrutiny Committees' Best Practice” in March 2024. It was noted in the training that less should be done to achieve more. It is customary in Gwynedd to aim to scrutinise a maximum of three items per Committee meeting to ensure that due attention is given to matters and that scrutiny can add value. Attention was given in the training to examples of good scrutiny work in Gwynedd, such as scrutiny leading to establishing a Falls Protocol. It was good to have a different perspective on how we could improve our scrutiny arrangements further.

This report provides a summary of the scrutiny work achieved during the year and highlights the impact of the scrutiny work.

All members, Cabinet Members, Heads of Department and Gwynedd residents were given an opportunity to propose possible items to be scrutinised during 2024/25. Two suggestions of possible matters to be scrutinised were received from Gwynedd residents. We will report on drawing up a work programme for 2024/25 in the next annual report.

By acting constructively, scrutiny can lead to improvements in services for the people of Gwynedd. I would like to thank my fellow chairs and vice-chairs, scrutiny members, cabinet members, officers and everyone who has contributed to the scrutiny work during the year.

Councillor Beth Lawton,
Chair of the Scrutiny Forum

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Scrutiny Workshops

Workshops were held to produce a draft work programme for 2023/24 per Scrutiny Committee in April and May 2023.

Firstly, training was held for the scrutiny members, by detailing:

- The Council's Well-being Objectives which have been drawn up in accordance with the requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- The Five Ways of Working that public bodies need to think about to show that they have followed the sustainable development principle under the Act -

- The connection between the Five Ways of Working and Ffordd Gwynedd (putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything that the Council does).

Members were reminded of the purpose of scrutiny in Gwynedd, namely:

CONTRIBUTE TO DRIVING IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICES FOR THE PEOPLE OF GWYNEDD

This is done constructively by:

- Investigating concerns regarding the quality of our services
- Acting as a Critical Friend, 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

Secondly, scrutiny members' attention was drawn to things to remember when undertaking scrutiny work -

- **The importance of preparation** before taking part in scrutiny work, including reading the agenda and the reports before the meeting.
- **Not to repeat** a question or observation that has already been made during the discussion.
- **Continue** to ask questions until you have received the information that you need.
- **Listen to the answers** and adapt or ask supplementary questions based on the answers received.

Then, we moved on to produce the first version of the Scrutiny Committees' work programme for 2023-24.

A list of possible items to be scrutinised was sent in advance to the members of the relevant scrutiny committee. Members were asked to respond to a question online before the workshop - ***What are your 5 main priorities?*** - keeping the following factors in mind:

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

The items that emerged as main priorities from the responses to the question were noted. Members were given an opportunity to discuss:

Do you agree with the 5 main priorities?

What else from the list should be scrutinised during 2024/25?

Open discussions were held an initial version of the draft work programme was drawn up, aiming to prioritise a maximum of three items per meeting. Before inviting the relevant Heads of Department and Cabinet Members to join to identify any matters that required consideration in the context of the matters prioritised and in terms of the timing of the scrutiny.

Each committee had formed a draft work programme at the end of the workshop. Details of the next steps are provided under the heading 'Scrutiny Forum'.

Audit Wales Review

Reference was made to the review from Audit Wales of the effectiveness of scrutiny in the 2022-23 Annual Report. At the time, we were expecting the findings of the review held during February 2023 - April 2023.

They examined our scrutiny arrangements, and the review asked the question:

'Does the Council have effective arrangements in place for scrutiny in public committees?'

The final report was received at the end of September 2023 - Cyngor Gwynedd - Review of the effectiveness of scrutiny. It was an encouraging report with six recommendations.

It was promised to review the workload of the committees as a result of the Full Council's decision in June 2022 to place corporate matters in the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee. It was decided that it would be sensible to review the workload of the various committees at the same time as considering the amendments to our scrutiny arrangements following receiving the Audit Wales report.

Members and officers were given the opportunity to provide input. Two workshops were held for members with 23 members attending. Members were given the opportunity to provide an opinion regarding the most suitable location to scrutinise corporate matters as well as other matters relating to scrutiny.

Following the consultation, possible options were drawn up for our scrutiny arrangements. Information and the possible options were presented by noting the advantages and disadvantages of each option to a joint meeting of the Scrutiny Forum and the Cabinet Members, the Management Team (Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Heads of Department) before the Scrutiny Forum concluded that the existing arrangements of three Scrutiny Committees should be retained for these reasons:

- A positive report was received from Audit Wales, getting to grips with the actions would build on the success of the existing arrangements and strengthen them, by further improving scrutiny's effectiveness;
- Good progress has already been made with our scrutiny arrangements, and action on some of these steps had already been seen, such as refining the recommendations by the committees and the development of the cabinet's forward work programme;
- Experience has shown that work programmes stabilise over a period of five years;
- Although prioritising matters can be challenging, it enables scrutiny on a cross-section of

matters and avoids excessive scrutiny on one subject that could be of specific interest to individuals;

- Developing the arrangements for the Area Forums/briefing sessions and presenting information would allow Members to get detailed information about their area in specific ways, thus enabling the Scrutiny Committees to scrutinise strategically on specific matters.

A report based on the conclusions of the Scrutiny Forum was submitted to the Governance and Audit Committee on 18 January 2024 for them to approve that the review arrangements had been completed properly. The Committee decided to recommend that the Full Council approve keeping to the existing Scrutiny Committees' arrangements subject to work being carried out to improve effectiveness and operations of the Scrutiny Committees.

See below the actions presented to the Full Council on 7 March 2024 to respond to Audit Wales' recommendations to improve the effectiveness of our scrutiny arrangements.

	RECOMMENDATION	ACTIONS
1	The Cabinet's forward programme and the Council Plan should have more influence on the public scrutiny committee's forward programmes so that the scrutiny output feeds into the decisions planned by the Cabinet.	WE HAVE: • Highlighted council plan matters when prioritising matters for scrutiny in the annual workshops and presented at the scrutiny Committees • Strengthened the Cabinet's forward programme • Modified the Cabinet reporting template to highlight matters which have been pre-scrutinised. WE WILL: • Highlight Council Plan matters/which are further pre-scrutinised by making them more visible • Ensure that more information about the Cabinet forward programme is available in a timely manner
2	Higher prominence should be given to performance information within public scrutiny committees to challenge the progress made.	WE HAVE: • Started identifying the strengths and weaknesses of our current arrangements • Identified a role for the corporate directors to support the scrutineers to identify matters for scrutiny WE WILL: • Work with the Chief Executive to create arrangements for formally presenting performance information at scrutiny committees and develop the role of the corporate directors to support the scrutineers

3	Appropriate providers whether internal or external should be used to deliver training in specialist areas such as questioning skills, financial matters and the Well-being of Future Generations Act, to increase members' confidence to challenge effectively.	WE HAVE: • Conducted training for the Chairs and vice-chairs on scrutiny arrangements • Conducted training on declaration of interest when Councillors are 'too close' to a particular subject • Organised training for all Councillors on questioning skills and creating recommendations (good practice) WE WILL: • Hold training for Chairs and prospective Chairs in May 2024 • Remind Councillors again this year about the matters of the Well-being of Future Generations Act at the annual scrutiny workshops.
4	The scrutiny processes should be reviewed to ensure that appropriate emphasis is placed on legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, to ensure compliance.	WE WILL: • Remind Councillors again this year about the matters of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Equality Act 2010 at the annual scrutiny workshops. • Remind all scrutiny Councillors of the importance of attending the annual scrutiny workshops and participate in the training available.
5	Consideration should be given to hold a higher number of investigations by inviting a limited number of members to join the task and finish group from every scrutiny committee or all members, so that those that have an interest in the field get the opportunity to participate and maintain enthusiasm. This will also be a means to engage with the public.	WE HAVE: • Re-established an investigations programme (which came to an end during Covid for obvious reasons), within the available resources • Adhered to our current arrangements of offering to members of the scrutiny committees first before extending to all members • Conducted training for the Chairs and vice-chairs on matters relating to declaration of interest and ensuring that any action is appropriate WE WILL: • Assist the Councillors to identify suitable fields for which investigation(s) should be prioritised

6	The process of reporting on the decisions of the scrutiny committees should be strengthened and a formal tracking arrangement should be adopted, in order to get the best value for money and highlight publicly the contribution of the scrutiny system to the Council's governance arrangements.	WE HAVE: • Held training for Chairs and vice-chairs with an emphasis on ensuring strong recommendations / referring matters to Cabinet in order to facilitate tracking • See above regarding strengthening the reporting template to Cabinet WE WILL: • Hold training on questioning and creating recommendations for all members, to assist them to question more effectively and make better use of scrutiny time • Establish a role for Scrutiny Chairs when referring matters to the Cabinet which have already been pre-scrutinised • Establish a formal tracking system following implementing the training and seeing the output following the training

The Full Council decided to adhere to the current scrutiny committees' arrangements and approved the actions to improve efficiency.

Improving the efficiency of our scrutiny arrangements is an ongoing journey, and we will seize any opportunity to build on our current arrangements and it is intended to introduce changes to our practical arrangements during 2024/25.

Scrutiny Forum

The Chairs and Vice-chairs of the Scrutiny Committees 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 (the majority being formal scrutiny with a small number of investigations) and challenge the basis on which items have been identified for scrutiny.
- Identify the most effective scrutiny method within the resources available (formal scrutiny/investigation)
- Identify items that are purely for information, seeking to avoid using scrutiny arrangements to achieve the information-sharing role.
- Assess the contributions of the individual committees and assess the IMPACT of the scrutiny work and review our scrutiny arrangements continuously.

Chairs and vice-chairs for 2023/24 were elected at the first meeting of the scrutiny committees. Here are the chairs and vice-chairs of each committee:

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Elwyn Jones

Councillor Paul Rowlinson

Communities Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Elin Hywel

Councillor Annwen Hughes

Care Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Beth Lawton

Councillor Linda Ann Jones

At the Forum's first meeting on 15 May 2023, the role of scrutiny in the arrangements for self-assessing performance, the possible content of the 2022-23 Annual Report was discussed and the draft scrutiny forward programme was considered.

An overview of the draft forward work programme was given to ensure that the correct matters had been prioritised. The Forum was supportive of the scrutiny forward work programme and of submitting the individual Committees' work programmes to their first meeting for approval. Members noted their support to the intention to hold a Task and Finish Group to look at the implementation of the Autism Plan.

In its meeting on 17 July 2023, the Forum received information about the Forum's role, considered the forward work programme and Audit Wales' draft report. Training was provided to the Forum in the meeting on 3 October 2023 on the legal elements for holding scrutiny committee meetings. A discussion was held about the Audit Wales report and the intention in terms of the members' workshops as part of the review to our scrutiny arrangements.

A joint meeting of the Forum and the Cabinet was held on 5 December 2023 to consider the content of the Scrutiny and Cabinet forward programmes, the scrutiny review and the next steps and the proposed scrutiny and overview arrangements of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee. During the year, the Chairs and Vice-chairs met with the relevant Cabinet Members and Heads of Department twice. The purpose of the contact meetings is to give an opportunity to openly discuss how things are going and how to improve the impact of scrutiny in Gwynedd, as well as identify possible items to be scrutinised during the following year.

Before the review report was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee, a meeting of the Forum was held on 11 December 2023 to discuss the scrutiny review and the next steps. Also in the meeting, consideration was given to the scrutiny forward work programme and possible scrutiny arrangements for the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

At the Forum's meeting on 19 February 2024, the members discussed arrangements for the 2024/25 Annual Workshops, the Scrutiny forward work programme in its new format highlighting the reason for scrutiny, the Cabinet's forward work programme, Scrutiny Review and actions and the scrutiny training that would be held in March 2024. See information about the training on page 29 of the annual report.

Scrutiny Committees

There are three scrutiny committees in Gwynedd, each of them with a role to scrutinise specific work areas. In this part, there is information about which work areas each different committee is responsible for scrutinising, the items scrutinised during 2024-25 in a Committee meeting and the reason for scrutiny as well as the impact per item.

Emphasis is given on scrutiny adding value in Gwynedd with items being prioritised to scrutinise them in a timely way to maximise the impact. The impact can be seen immediately or it can take time with the need to make changes to achieve and allow time for those changes to lead to improvement in services for the people of Gwynedd.

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Education Department, Economy and Community Department, GwE, North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Leadership Team and Legal, Corporate Support Department, Finance Department, the Council's Internal Operation and Partnerships

Emergency Planning
Ensure that arrangements are in place in terms of emergency planning

How the North Wales Emergency Planning Regional Service contributes to the resilience and safety of communities in Gwynedd, the regional service's work programme and the structure within the Council to respond to an urgent situation or an emergency were scrutinised.

Impact - Receive assurance that arrangements are in place to respond to an emergency.

Gwynedd Town Centres
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Prosperous Gwynedd

Preparing Town/City Centres action plans for individual towns is an element of the 'Regeneration of communities and town centres' project in the Council Plan 2023-28. The arrangements for preparing action plans, who is included when developing them and how it is intended to measure the impact of the action plans was scrutinised.

Impact - Receive confirmation in terms of the financial situation to achieve and receive assurance that the town/city centre action plans intertwine with the Regeneration Framework.

Digital Plan
Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - An Efficient Gwynedd

The draft Digital Plan was considered, including the work programme to address the five digital priorities, namely: Customer Contact; Information and Data; Administration and Business Systems; Workforce; Resilience. The Plan was scrutinised before it went to the Cabinet on 7 November 2023 to be approved.

Impact - A useful discussion highlighting matters to be given attention, namely that digital technology increases the distance between the two people who communicate together, that there is room to inform councillors and others in terms of artificial intelligence technology and the need to be awake to new developments in the digital field.

Education Strategy
Pre-decision scrutiny

The Education Department's vision, values and objectives in the draft Education Strategy towards 2032 and beyond and the Equality and Well-being Impact Assessments were scrutinised.

Impact - Matters were highlighted to be given attention, including the need to revisit the Education Strategy in light of the Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation report, and specifically in terms of how bilingualism is dealt with.

Pupils' attendance and behaviour in Gwynedd schools
Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic period on the field

Attendance and exclusion levels across Gwynedd schools were scrutinised, including an outline of the main reasons for absences and exclusions. The provision of the Education Department and the work programme to respond to the demand was considered.

Impact - Receive assurance that a work programme is in place to respond to the situation.

Estyn report on education services in Cyngor Gwynedd
External Auditor's Report

The Estyn report was considered with three recommendations deriving from it, namely:

- ensure that leaders act strategically on all aspects of their work and that they have suitable oversight and full consideration of risk regarding important aspects that have arisen during the inspection;

- improve arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and promoting pupils' attendance;
- strengthen provision to respond to the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and ensure arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of that provision.

Impact - Receive assurance that the Education Department is responding to Estyn's recommendations and decide to track progress on a response to the recommendations in nine months.

Cwmni Byw'n Iach
A matter on the risk register

The Covid-19 pandemic period has impacted the income of Byw'n Iach centres. As the matter has been included on the Council's Corporate Risk Register, if the company provided services in accordance with the contract, was the Council's contribution sufficient considering the change in the circumstances and what steps were taken to try and increase income - was scrutinised.

Impact - Receive assurance that the risk is being addressed and what plans Byw'n Iach has in terms of supporting people with lower incomes, and children in particular.

The need to send a letter to the Minister of Health and Social Services highlighting the work being done by Cwmni Byw'n Iach in relation to the National Exercise Referral Scheme and the need for more funding to fund its operation in Gwynedd was identified.

The Committee escalated the matter to a national level because of the importance of preventative work which contributes to the Government's vision for a Healthier Wales, namely to give greater emphasis on preventing illness and helping people to manage their own health and well-being.

Beach Management
A matter on the risk register

The matter is included on the Economy and Community Department's risk register. The main risk is people's safety in the sea where there may be dangers to life, together with dangers from structures and objects on the beach. The arrangements for beach management and specific management where there is a higher safety risk were scrutinised.

Impact - Receive assurance that arrangements are in place to manage beaches and mitigate risks.

Gwynedd Economic Development Project
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Prosperous Gwynedd

The objective of the project is to create the best possible circumstances in Gwynedd for community enterprises and businesses to thrive, and support the people of Gwynedd into work. The content of the project and the progress of the Economy and Community Department in implementing it to trigger growth in Gwynedd's economy was scrutinised.

Impact - Receive assurance that progress is being made to achieve the priority project.

Equality Objectives 2024-28
Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - An Efficient Gwynedd

Specific duty on public organisations in Wales, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, to review Equality Objectives every four years, as part of creating a Strategic Equality Plan.

Impact - Scrutiny input into the draft equality objectives before the Cabinet adopted the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28.

Education Annual Report & GwE Annual Report
Annual Items / Assurance

The Education Department's 2022/23 Annual Report was scrutinised which detailed what was completed during the year, drawing attention to the main priority projects, normal day-to-day work, positive aspects, challenges, as well as fields that needed attention over the next period. Additionally, the GwE Annual Report which reported on progress against the five key areas, as well noting the next steps on the journey to improvement.

Impact - Make observations on what has been achieved and the Education Department's priorities, as well as GwE's next steps for the next period.

Post-16 Education Project in Arfon
Council Plan 2023-28 - Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Post-16 Education was identified as one of the main priorities in the Council's Plan 2018-23. Following discussions with stakeholders, for many reasons a conclusion was drawn that the case for changing Arfon's Post-16 Education was not strong. On 28 November 2023, the Cabinet resolved to authorise the Head of Education to hold discussions on reviewing the memorandum of understanding with the stakeholders who form the Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium; and divert part of the Post-16 Project's budget to address the financial gap in Band B projects - Sustainable Learning Communities Programme.

Impact – Follow-up following scrutiny of the informal engagement process held on post-16 education in the meeting on 4 February 2021. Receive assurance in terms of the direction and the next steps.

North Wales Growth Deal - Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023/24
The Committee's role to scrutinise the Ambition Board's work

In December 2020, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the Welsh and UK Governments agreed the Final Deal Agreement for the North Wales Growth Deal. Reporting on the progress of the Growth Deal regularly is one of the requirements of the Final Deal Agreement. The Quarter 3 Growth Deal report and the Portfolio's Risk Register were scrutinised.

Impact - Scrutinise progress and impact of the Growth Deal on Gwynedd, being satisfied that mitigation measures are in place to respond to the risks.

Free school meals
Council Plan 2023-28 - Tomorrow's Gwynedd

A progress update was received at the Committee's meeting on 8 December 2022. It was resolved to ask for an update when the plan had been extended across the primary sector. The progress made and the work being done to increase the numbers were considered and the reasons why some pupils did not take school meals were looked at.

Impact - Track progress and highlight matters that need to be considered.

Communities Scrutiny Committee

Environment Department, Highways, Engineering and YGC (Gwynedd Consultancy) Department, Local Development Plan, Public Services Board, Crime and Disorder and the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan

Annual Report 2022/23 - Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board
The Committee's role to scrutinise the Public Services Board's work

The Board's annual report for 2022-23 was considered, it reflected on what was achieved by the Board to improve communities' well-being during the period.

Impact - Monitor the progress of the Public Services Board's efforts in implementing the Well-being Plan.

Developments in the Public Transport field
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

The field of public transport has been prioritised in the Council Plan 2023-28. A clear vision of "reviewing our existing public transport provision with the aim of developing a public transport network that will be convenient, reliable and reasonably priced to allow the people of Gwynedd to travel conveniently every day of the week" is noted.

The work that was in the pipeline and the future plans for the network were scrutinised.

Impact - Receive assurance that there is progress in achieving the vision of the priority project.

New Local Development Plan - The Delivery Agreement
Role to scrutinise the Local Development Plan / Council Plan 2023-28

The first step in the process of preparing the new Local Development Plan (LDP) is to prepare the Delivery Agreement. It sets out a timetable to prepare the LDP and the way in which the Council will include the local community and other stakeholders in the process of preparing a new Local Development Plan.

Impact - Identify a possible additional risk to the Local Development Plan - 'consultation'. Namely, the risk of not consulting sufficiently. As a result of the scrutiny, it was added as a possible risk in Appendix 5 of the Delivery Agreement, "Potential Risks and Response Methods".

Roll-out of public charging points for electric vehicles
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

The Council is developing a network of over a hundred charging points for electric vehicles across Gwynedd. The work achieved to date in developing a charging point network, and what is planned over the next period was scrutinised.

Impact - Highlight the need to look at providing a greater number of rapid charging points. Ask the Cabinet Member/Environment Department to consider the possibility.

Public Toilets
Scrutiny of the management of the public toilets provision

The Public Toilets Strategy was adopted in 2019; it was considered that it was timely to scrutinise the management of the public toilets provision.

Impact - Input before the Service develops an action plan.

Climate and Nature Emergency Plan
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

The Annual Report which reported on the progress made in implementing the Plan since March 2022, was scrutinised before the Cabinet considered it.

Impact - Recommend that information about 'Active Travel' be added under Section 3 of the Report: 'Section 6 Environment (Wales) Act 2016' and consider adapting the format of how information is displayed under the 'What did we promise to do in 2022/23' and 'What we did' titles in Sections 5-11 of the Report for clarity to the reader. As a result, the format of how the information is displayed was adapted.

The need for the Cabinet to consider the staffing resource to achieve the vision of the Climate and Nature Emergency Plan was highlighted. An example of scrutiny highlighting an issue that needs addressing to ensure achievement.

Local Flood Strategy
Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

The matter was scrutinised on two occasions. Firstly, the Strategy's main objectives were scrutinised, as well as the inland/catchment area risks, coastal risks and the action plans for flood and coastal erosion risk management in our communities. On the second occasion, the full Strategy was scrutinised before holding a public consultation.

Impact - It was recommended that the information about the risk in terms of roads flooding as well as the risk to properties should be included in the Local Flood Strategy and the awareness of all residents should be raised of how to prepare for flooding. As a result, a specific action point was added relating to flood risk to the highways network (Action Point 2.3A) and there are clear references in the document towards information sources for property owners who are at risk from flooding.

Annual Update by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership
The Committee's role as a Crime and Disorder Committee

An overview of the activities of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership for the 2023/24 period was considered.

Impact - To receive assurance in terms of the Partnership's work over the period, as well as priorities and the direction of the work in the future.

Grass Cutting and Land Maintenance
Follow-up following scrutiny at the 19 January 2023 meeting

An update was presented on the cutting and collecting trials that were being undertaken in selected areas within the County to promote the needs of wildlife and biodiversity and the work of raising awareness of the grass cutting arrangements on county roads.

Impact - Receive assurance in terms of the direction and identify the need to receive an update in a year's time.

Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Delivery Arrangements
The Committee's role to scrutinise the Public Services Board's work

The Board's delivery arrangements for 2024-25 based on the Gwynedd and Anglesey 2023-28 Well-being Plan, were scrutinised.

Impact - Highlight the need to include more detail about the delivery arrangements and how progress is measured to achieve the objectives of the Well-being Plan in reports for the future to ensure that scrutiny can add value.

It was recommended to the Public Services Board that the annual report should include information about:

- How the Welsh language is promoted per well-being objective;
- How the Whole System Thinking and Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales methodology is a golden thread throughout the work.

When the Draft Well-being Plan was scrutinised, specific matters were raised in terms of protecting the Welsh Language. The scrutiny led to amendments to the Draft Well-being Plan but it was not added as a well-being objective in the plan. Through scrutinising the implementation of the plan, scrutinisers ensure that the Welsh Language is a consistent priority and is promoted in every work field.

Highways Maintenance Manual
Scrutiny of implementation following the adoption of the Manual

The Cabinet adopted the Highways Maintenance Manual at its meeting on 11 July 2023. Implementation following the adoption of the Manual was scrutinised.

Impact - To recommend that the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department puts arrangements in place to notify councillors when a reported problem has been resolved and to look at establishing arrangements to review the standard of inspections.

Street Scene Service
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

The work since establishing the service was scrutinised, as well as the smart bins pilot and the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department's vision to improve the cleanliness and tidiness of towns and villages for the future.

Impact - Scrutinise the progress towards achieving the 'Clean and Tidy Communities' priority project.

Care Scrutiny Committee

Adults, Health and Well-being Department, Children and Supporting Families Department, Health and the Housing and Property Department

Gwynedd Mental Health Service (Adults, Health and Well-being Department)
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd

The Council's direction in this field was scrutinised following the first step of reviewing the service. A key finding which derived from the first step was that the current mental health multi-agency model with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board needs to be remodelled. The main considerations were highlighted in the report.

The first step of the review highlighted that a separate social care model would be the safest and most productive path forward, allowing health to focus on the medical/clinical model, whilst the Council could promote services across the care continuum.

Impact - Support the department's plans to establish a new work model for the Mental Health Service, ask the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being to contact the Welsh Government's Health Minister to explain the intention to create a new work model and the reasons for that.

Recruitment and retention of social workers (Children and Supporting Families Department)
A matter on the risk register

The current situation and action plans in the recruitment and retention of a professional workforce in the children's field were considered. The report detailed four main matters that were to be given urgent attention, namely - salaries, creating a plan to attract and retain staff, invest in new workers and be innovative in mentoring, reflective practice and staff training.

Impact - Support the Children and Supporting Families Department's intention to concentrate on the four main matters noted in the report as a response to the staffing situation, acknowledging that some of the work had already commenced.

Care Inspectorate Wales' Review Findings: Safeguarding Children Service
External Auditor's Report

The general objective of the review was to determine to what extent the current structures and processes in Wales ensures that children are put on the Child Protection Register, and are taken off it, appropriately when sufficient evidence shows that it is safe to do so. Gwynedd was one of five local authorities chosen to receive the review.

Impact - To address the findings of the review that were relevant to Gwynedd.

Housing Allocation Policy and Housing Waiting List
Scrutinise the implementation of the policy and the situation in terms of the housing waiting list

With the Housing Allocation Policy's current format being in operation for three years, the implementation of the policy was scrutinised. It was considered whether the policy had fulfilled its purpose, namely to maximise the number of houses let to Gwynedd residents with a local connection, whether there had been any problems as a result of the new policy and whether any further amendments needed to be made to the policy. It was scrutinised, taking into account the context that the Government was expected to publish a White Paper on reforming homelessness legislation in October 2023.

Impact - Scrutinise the implementation of the Housing Allocation Policy, being alert to the possible implications for the policy as a result of the Welsh Government's White Paper.

Housing One Stop Shop
Follow-up following scrutiny at the 30 September 2021 meeting

A report was submitted before the Committee meeting on 30 September 2021, on the intention of establishing a One Stop Shop, as a point of access for Gwynedd residents to be assisted with their housing needs. The latest developments in establishing the One Stop Shop were scrutinised.

Impact - Receive assurance of the development of the One Stop Shop and highlight the need to facilitate communication between councillors and housing associations.

Supported accommodation including learning disabilities services, mental health and support for women
Scrutinise the provision and the monitoring arrangements

The supported accommodation situation for individuals with Learning Disability in Gwynedd was scrutinised. The current situation, collaboration, new projects and the planning work for the future to provide supported accommodation of a high standard for individuals with learning disabilities in Gwynedd was considered.

Impact - Receive assurance of the supported accommodation situation for individuals with learning disabilities in Gwynedd and request information about supported accommodation provided by the mental health service and for support to women.

Day Care Service
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd

The intention to review the current provision, and move away from the term day care, and services provided in buildings were reported on. The move to focusing on how the well-being of individuals and their carers could be addressed and supported in a variety of different ways, by providing flexible services that meet the needs were elaborated on.

Impact - Support the intention to hold a full review of the current provision and consider an alternative model and ask officers to ensure that the new model provides a consistent service across the county, including service for those who live in rural areas.

Arrangements for managing and maintaining care homes
Request from the Governance and Audit Committee

Following an internal audit, actions were agreed for Cartref Plas Gwilym, Cartref Hafod Mawddach and Cartref Bryn Blodau in order to improve compliance with the controls and/or introduce new controls to reduce the risks that the service was exposed to. The Governance and Audit Committee was eager for the Committee to scrutinise whether the actions had been implemented and whether the control procedures were being followed by the care homes.

Impact - Receive assurance that progress has been made since the initial audits. Declare concern about staffing challenges for care homes and the problems that emerge as a result, such as difficulty in completing training and ask the Adults, Health and Well-being Department consider how to ensure that every home reaches a high assurance level in the future.

Support for unpaid carers
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd

The commitment of unpaid carers ensures that many people can receive care and continue to live independently in their homes. It was considered whether there was suitable support for unpaid carers that fulfils their needs and plans underway to improve the provision.

Impact - To declare support to raising awareness of the support available for unpaid carers, including the Direct Payments Scheme. The need to raise members' awareness of the Direct Payments Scheme was highlighted.

Housing Action Plan
Council Plan 2023-28 - A Homely Gwynedd

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." The progress of the Plan's main projects was scrutinised. What had been achieved since its adoption in April 2021, what was in the pipeline and the plans for months to come were considered.

Impact - Track the progress of achieving the priority project in the Council's Plan. Identify the need to look at the details of the Social Housing Allocation Policy and to receive assurance of the system's resilience.

Preventative work commissioned to the third sector (Adults & Children)
Assurance in terms of the provision and the monitoring arrangements

The matter was prioritised for scrutiny because of the need to receive assurance that the Council was getting value for money, what has been achieved and the monitoring arrangements for the preventative services provided by the third sector in the care field.

Impact - Highlight inconsistency in terms of the level of detail received and the performance information requested from the third sector, and the need to reconcile across the sector. Support the idea of a cross-departmental arrangement to monitor.

Falls Protocol
Contribute to establishing a falls protocol for carers to use in the community

As a result of an enquiry from a member in relation to whether there was a joint protocol between the health service and the Council in terms of the response of carers in the community (not in care homes) when a vulnerable individual has a fall. There was collaboration with the Social Services Statutory Director, the Health Board and the Ambulance Service in terms of putting arrangements in place.

Impact - Lead to the implementation of the I STUMBLE protocol, train Council staff and carers to use it, consider sharing the information with the public, collaborate with the Health Board to improve training for each carer and collaborate with the Ambulance Service to provide equipment and train local volunteers as part of a pilot scheme.

Annual Report on the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department's Complaints, Enquiries and Expressions of Gratitude Procedure for 2022-23

Assurance in terms of the arrangements to deal with complaints in the care field of work

The Annual Report on the implementation of the Representations and Complaints Procedure was scrutinised, by considering the arrangements to deal effectively with complaints received by service users and their representatives.

Impact - To receive assurance in terms of the arrangements to deal with complaints in the care work field.

Short Breaks Service (Derwen Integrated Team)

Assurance that suitable provision is available to everyone who needs the service

Derwen's Integrated Team provides respite through the support service in several different ways - home care, community and various groups. A significant rise was seen in referrals to the service over the last three years, leading to an increase in the waiting lists. The provision and demand for service were scrutinised.

Impact - Receive assurance about the provision and acknowledge the financial situation so as to continue to offer the service to everyone who needs it.

The agendas and minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meetings can be viewed here – **www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/scrutiny**

Scrutiny Investigation

The Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation Report was submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 14 September 2023. It was the fruit of thorough work over a period of time. Members of the group who undertook the work were Councillors:

- Paul Rowlinson (Chair)
- Cai Larsen
- Beth Lawton
- Huw Rowlands
- Rhys Tudur

The main question that the investigation addressed was:

'What is the Welsh-medium provision in our secondary schools and what plans are in place to increase the provision in Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 in Gwynedd?'

The implementation of the Authority's Education Language Policy in three category 3 secondary schools (1 school from Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd) was considered, namely:

- Ysgol Dyffryn Nantlle
- Ysgol Eifionydd
- Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn

Four meetings of the Investigation were held between March 2023 and July 2023 where all members of the investigation were present. Additionally, a visit was conducted to the three schools, holding discussions with leaders and focus groups with learners and staff / parent governors.

The meetings and visits enabled members of the investigation to gather evidence and discuss the findings and recommendations.

17 recommendations derived from the scrutiny work for the attention of the Cabinet Member for Education, which included:

- That the Authority makes annual requests to the schools for data on the language medium of their provision and checks the situation.
- That the Education Authority sets specific targets to increase the Welsh-medium provision for all secondary schools which are compatible with the county targets, and monitor attainment.

- That the Education Authority adapts the model Language Policy for schools, putting more emphasis on the Welsh language and making it clearer regarding what is meant by "bilingualism".
- That the Education Authority develops and increases the collaboration with the two Category T3 schools in a way that will speed up their journey to become Category 3 schools.
- That the Education Authority strengthens the linguistic provision/support for latecomers joining in years 10 or 11.
- That the Education Authority collaborates with other organisations and Menter Iaith Gwynedd to increase the provision of Welsh-medium social activities for young people.

Access can be gained to the full investigation report via this link - **Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation Report**

At the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 21 March 2024, the Cabinet Member/Education Department's progress report was received in response to the recommendations - Progress Report. It was welcomed that the Department is collaborating with a freelance consultant to revisit Gwynedd's Education Language Policy.

Impact of Scrutiny

Contribute to improving the Welsh language provision in the county's secondary schools.

Task and Finish Group

An update on the Gwynedd Autism Plan was presented to a meeting of the Care Scrutiny Committee on 20 April 2023. Following the discussion, the committee decided that they were eager to establish a task and finish group to further discuss the matter and requested to ensure that representatives from the Education Department and the Health Board were present. It was concluded that an invitation should also be extended to representatives of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee as the work bridges the work areas of both committees.

A brief for the task group's work was approved at the Care Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 21 September 2023. The intention of the work was to ensure understanding of the implementation of the Gwynedd Autism Plan as a whole, including:

- an understanding of the support available to individuals and their families when awaiting a diagnosis, and whether there are any barriers on the road to a diagnosis;
- following diagnosis, in particular the support available for children within our schools, and whether there are any barriers.

The members who conducted the scrutiny work were Councillors Elwyn Jones (Chair), Gareth Coj Parry and Jina Gwyrfai and Councillors Dawn Lynne Jones and Gwynfor Owen representing the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee.

The Task Group met on 19 February 2024, with officers from the Children and Supporting Families Department, the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and the Education Department present. Written information was received from the Neuro-developmental Team Service Manager, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

A follow-up meeting of the Task Group was held on 28 February 2024 to draw up findings and identify recommendations.

A report on the Task and Finish Group's work was presented to the Care Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 April 2024. Recommendations were made in connection with training, school planning and Council buildings and that the Committee should receive an update in 12 months. Access can be gained to the Task Group report via this link – **Autism Plan Task and Finish Group Report**

The Committee resolved:

a) To accept the findings of the Task and Finish Group.

b) To ask the service:-

- to undertake an audit of the situation regarding the professional training of staff who work in the field as a first step.
- Then to consider setting a target for completing training with the aim to include it on the core training programme as follows:-
  a) staff who work or who come into contact with people with autism (by department and including schools) and
  b) awareness-raising training for all Council staff.
- to build on the training for staff in schools and surgeries regarding referring to the Neuro-Developmental Team in cases where they are not eligible.
- to encourage all the Councillors to follow the Autism Awareness training e-module and attend open days across the County which enables everyone to experience the autism bus.

c) Recommend that the Scrutiny Committee in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Children and Families to contact the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property to ensure that there is input from the Additional Learning Needs Service to any future development of a new school or school adaptations to make them more suitable for individuals with autism, e.g. quiet spaces, the ability to dim lighting, etc. It would be beneficial to establish the principle of ensuring that the Autism Team (Children and Adults Department) has input into any new development or adaptation to any Council building.

ch) Following concern that the plan was currently grant-funded, that the Care Scrutiny Committee asks for an update after a further 12 months of operating to ensure that progress is continuing, and request the input of Education and Health once again.

Impact of Scrutiny

Scrutiny of the implementation of the Autism Plan in more detail, by making recommendations to improve implementation for the benefit of individuals with autism.

Performance Challenge

Performance challenge meetings are held every other month (with the exception of April and August), in accordance with the Council departments' areas of work. Departmental projects included in the Council Plan are considered, as well as day-to-day performance measures and also the risk register.

Representatives of the scrutiny committees are invited to attend meetings twice a year.

The scrutiny committee representatives are invited in order to:

- Have a taste of what grasp the individual departments have of performance matters.
- Identify, if required, any performance issues that could merit being addressed by a formal scrutiny committee in due course.

The representatives are expected to report back to the first informal meeting of the relevant scrutiny committee following these meetings. These are the members who attended performance challenge meetings during 2023/24:

Education	Economy	Corporate Support and Legal	Finance
Beth Lawton Gwynfor Owen reserve Jina Gwyrfai	Iwan Huws Dewi Owen reserve Jina Gwyrfai	Cai Larsen Huw Rowlands	Beth Lawton Paul Rowlinson

Environment	Highways, Engineering and YGC
Llio Elenid Owen Rhys Tudur	Stephen Churchman & Rob Triggs reserve - Arwyn Roberts

Adults, Health and Well-being	Children and Supporting Families	Housing and Property
Meryl Roberts Sasha Williams	Gwynfor Owen Sasha Williams	Menna Baines Dewi Jones

Training

Specific sessions were held for scrutiny members on 'Scrutiny Committees' Best Practice' by external instructors in March 2024. There was one Welsh session and one English session. 24 members took the opportunity to attend a session, with two members having attended both.

In the training session, the purpose of being a councillor and the purpose of scrutiny were highlighted, suggestions were made on how to make effective use of committee time and the importance of strategic questioning and making specific recommendations that can be achieved.

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that there are two types of scrutiny - reactive and proactive:

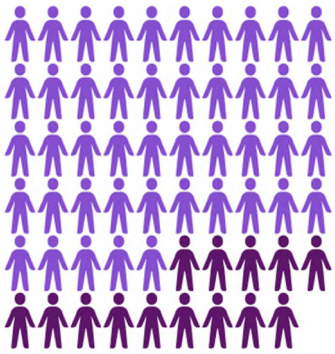
REACTIVE *Hold to Account*	**PROACTIVE** *Support Improvement*
Consult and make recommendations through: • Committees; • Investigations; • Task and Finish Groups.	• Monitoring • Challenging • Seek assurance for: ➢ performance; ➢ decisions to come; ➢ decisions made; ➢ policies.

The importance of making a difference now and for future generations in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was emphasised.

During the training, the instructors shared ideas to be considered when developing our scrutiny arrangements. For example, the need to consider the journey to a decision, drawing a conclusion at the end of discussing an item as to whether the Committee had received assurance or not, and whether there was a need to make specific recommendations; identify questions to answer in the report to make better use of time in committee meetings; and assess the performance of the Committee by scoring each item following the meetings.

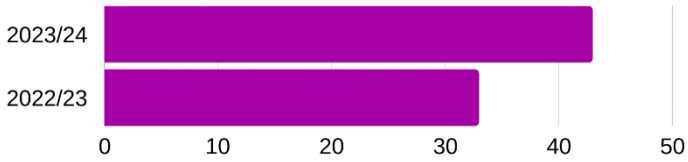
It is fair to say that members who attended the training found it beneficial and useful. The ideas shared during the training will be considered when developing our scrutiny arrangements, and will feed into further practical changes to be trialled/developed during 2024/25, to build on the actions to respond to the Audit Wales review.

Facts about Scrutiny in Gwynedd in 2023/24



45 members (out of a possible 59) have been a part of the important scrutiny work during the year.

43 items have been scrutinised in formal meetings (33 last year).

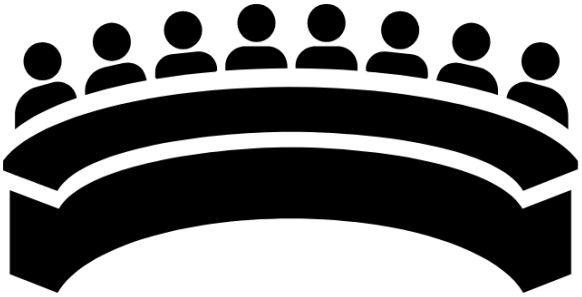


meetings of the Scrutiny Forum have been held during the year.

A member of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee represented the Committee on Gwynedd's Education Language Forum.

A member of the Communities Scrutiny Committee represented the Committee on the Nature and Climate Change Board.

3 members of the Care Scrutiny Committee represented the Committee on the Mid Wales Joint Committee for Health and Care's Scrutiny Group.



Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date	Items	Reason for scrutiny
08/06/23	• Emergency Planning	Ensure that arrangements are in place in terms of emergency planning
	• Gwynedd Town Centres	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Prosperous Gwynedd
14/09/23	• Digital Plan	Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - An Efficient Gwynedd
	• Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation Report	Scrutiny Investigation
	• Education Strategy	Pre-decision scrutiny
	• Pupils' attendance and behaviour in Gwynedd schools	Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic period on the field
09/11/23	• Estyn report on education services in Cyngor Gwynedd	External Auditor's Report
	• Cwmni Byw'n Iach	A matter on the risk register
	• Beach Management	A matter on the risk register
25/01/24	• Gwynedd Economic Development Project	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Prosperous Gwynedd
	• Equality Objectives 2024-28	Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - An Efficient Gwynedd
	• Education Annual Report & GwE Annual Report	Annual Items / Assurance
	• Post-16 Education Project in Arfon	Council Plan 2023-28 – Tomorrow's Gwynedd
21/03/24	• North Wales Growth Deal – Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023/24	The Committee's role to scrutinise the Ambition Board's work
	• Progress Report on Gwynedd Category 3 Secondary Schools Scrutiny Investigation Recommendations	Tracking – Scrutiny Investigation
	• Free School Meals	Council Plan 2023-28 - Tomorrow's Gwynedd

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date	Items	Reason for scrutiny
13/07/23	• Annual Report 2022/23 - Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board	The Committee's role to scrutinise the Public Services Board's work
	• Developments in the Public Transport field	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd
05/10/23	• New Local Development Plan – The Delivery Agreement	Role to scrutinise the Local Development Plan / Council Plan 2023-28
	• Roll-out of public charging points for electric vehicles	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd
	• Public Toilets	Scrutiny of the management of the public toilets provision
30/11/23	• Climate and Nature Emergency Plan	Council Plan 2023-28 – A Green Gwynedd
	• Local Flood Strategy	Pre-decision scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 – A Green Gwynedd
22/02/24	• Annual Update by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership	The Committee's role as a Crime and Disorder Committee
	• Local Flood Strategy	Pre-decision Scrutiny / Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd
	• Grass Cutting and Land Maintenance	Follow-up following scrutiny at the 19 January 2023 meeting
18/04/24	• Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board Delivery Arrangements	The Committee's role to scrutinise the Public Services Board's work
	• Highways Maintenance Manual	Scrutiny of implementation following the adoption of the Manual
	• Street Scene Service	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Green Gwynedd

CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date	Items	Reason for scrutiny
22/06/23	• Gwynedd Mental Health Service (Adults, Health and Well-being Department)	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd
	• Recruitment and retention of social workers (Children and Supporting Families Department)	A matter on the risk register
	• Care Inspectorate Wales' Review Findings: Safeguarding Children Service	External Auditor's Report
21/09/23	• Housing Allocation Policy and Housing Waiting List	Scrutinise the implementation of the policy and the situation in terms of the housing waiting list
	• Housing One Stop Shop	Follow-up following scrutiny at the 30 September 2021 meeting
	• Supported accommodation including learning disabilities services, mental health and support for women	Scrutinise the provision and the monitoring arrangements
	• Autism Plan Task and Finish Group Brief	Task and Finish Group
23/11/23	• Day Care Service	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd
	• Arrangements for managing and maintaining care homes	Request from the Governance and Audit Committee
	• Support for unpaid carers	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Caring Gwynedd
01/02/24	• Housing Action Plan	Council Plan 2023-28 - A Homely Gwynedd
	• Preventative work commissioned to the third sector (adults & children)	Assurance in terms of the provision and the monitoring arrangements
	• Falls Protocol	Contribute to establishing a falls protocol for carers to use in the community
11/04/24	• Annual Report on the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department's Complaints, Enquiries and Expressions of Gratitude Procedure for 2022-23	Assurance in terms of the arrangements to deal with complaints in the care work field
	• Short Breaks Service (Derwen Integrated Team)	Assurance that suitable provision is available to everyone who needs the service
	• Report by the Autism Plan Task and Finish Group	Task and Finish Group