



## Finance Department (and Information Technology)



The Finance Department's intention is to contribute towards achieving the aim of seeking "the best for the people of Gwynedd during a difficult period" by:

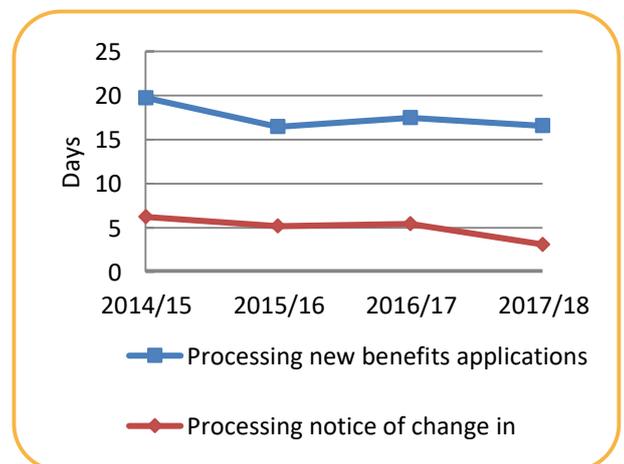
- Ensuring the appropriate support to the Council's business operation and its services when managing, safeguarding and developing its financial position, in order to establish a sustainable community in an open, accountable and prominent manner.
- Ensuring professional supportive guidance and technology of a high standard that promotes the Council's basic values and encourages entrepreneurship.
- Providing front line services (such as collecting revenue and paying benefits) of a suitable quality to the customer, providing fairness to people and communities, and focusing on residents.

### Benefits Service

We administrate benefit support to approximately 7,500 tenants to pay their rents, and to approximately 10,000 individuals, couples or families to pay their Council Tax bill, aiming to do this in a timely and accurate manner.

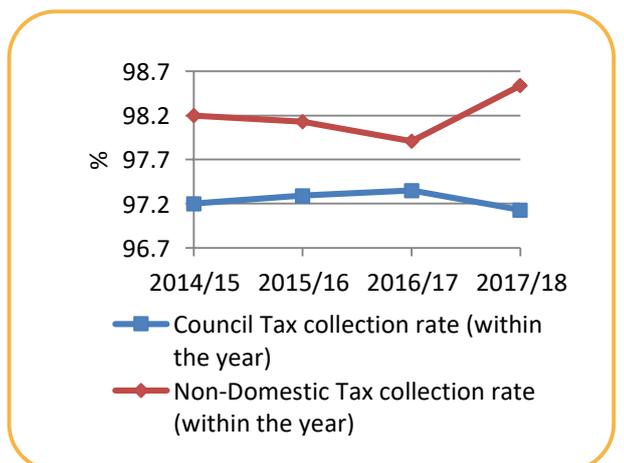
It can be seen from the graph that the number of days it takes us to pay has reduced up to 2017, and we will attempt to reduce the time further in future.

***During 2019/20 we will continue to help the people of Gwynedd as required following the introduction of Universal Credit full service in October and December 2018.***



### Tax Service

Without Council Tax and Business Rates, it would not be possible for the Council to provide its services. This service administrates and collects Council Tax for over 61,500 properties, and Business Rates (Non-domestic Rates) of approximately 7,500 business properties in the most timely and efficient manner as possible, including administrating the various available discounts, exemptions and release schemes.

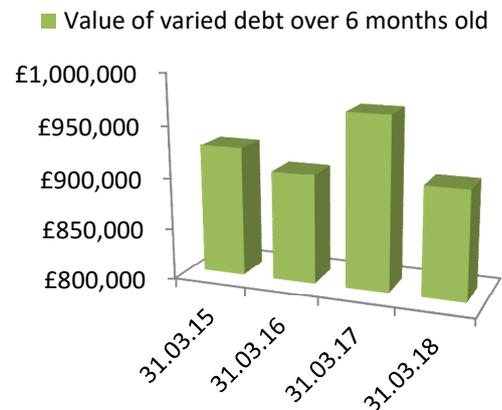


The service fully understands that it is not easy for everyone to pay these taxes, and we attempt to be flexible (e.g. encourage payment arrangements and agreements) and sympathetic to the individuals' circumstances. We attempt to encourage individuals to ask for advice on personal financing and more extensive debt advice.

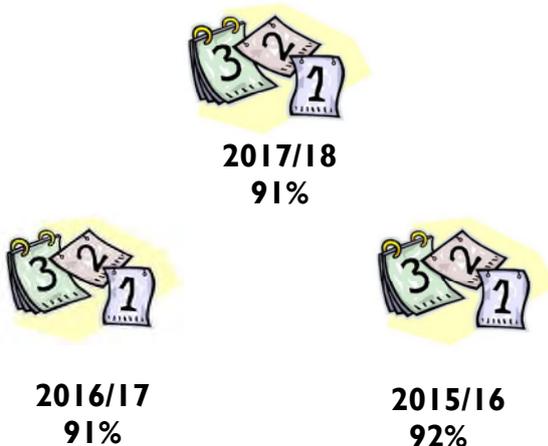
## Income Service

The Council receives income (e.g. grants, payments for service) of all types, and the Income Service processes this income, collecting the Council's debts in a timely and efficient manner in order to make the most of the income. The service considers the needs of the Council's departments and acts sensitively to debtors' financial circumstances when carrying out its work.

**We have identified the need to improve the recovering processes of some of the debts of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, and we will collaborate with this Department in order to make the most of the indebted money that is collected and available to provide services.**



### % of invoices paid within 30 days



## Payments Service

We are responsible for paying the Council's and GwE creditors in an accurate and timely manner. We pay over 105,267 invoices annually, with 91% of the invoices paid within 30 days on average, aiming to prioritise paying local suppliers promptly.

**We will be moving to an e-invoices system in order to improve the service's efficiency. These arrangements will reduce a delay in payment and will enable us to have control over all invoices that reach the Council.**

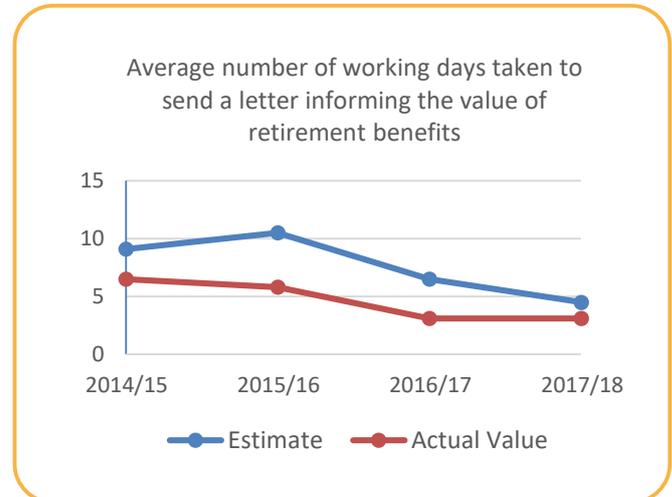
## Payroll Service

There are over 7,200 different individuals working for the Council in order to enable it to serve the people of Gwynedd, and the purpose of the Payroll Service is to ensure that they get paid accurately and in a timely manner. The service also keeps appropriate accounts in order to pay external bodies such as HMRC.

**We will be reviewing what information needs to be included on the payslips, such as highlighting the employer pension contribution, etc.**

## Pensions Service

The Pensions Service is responsible for administering the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) on behalf of over 40 employers including Gwynedd Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council and Conwy County Borough Council. The fund includes over 16,000 active members, 10,000 deferred members and 9,000 pensioners. The service's daily duties include establishing a record for new members, making changes to members' records, calculating deferred benefits, transferring pension rights in and out of the LGPS, and paying benefits after the retirement and death of the scheme's members.



***We will be improving documentation clarity in order to ensure that everyone understands it.***

## Investment and Treasury Management Service

Within this service, we invest the Council's money in order to gain interest to contribute towards funding services. We also manage the Pension Fund's investments in order to ensure the ability to pay pensions now and in future. In addition to this, we are responsible for making decisions on long-term loans.

The Unit's aim is to keep money safe, earn interest and ensure that funding is available to pay for daily expenditure.

During 2017/18, the Council's borrowing activity remained within the constraints originally set. The total interest received on investments was £211,000 which was higher than the £173,000 in the budget. None of the banks the Council had used to invest failed to pay.

***Local government pension funds in Wales work by pooling investments in order to get the greatest benefit of joint-investing.***

## Finance and Accounting Service (including devolved Units)

We provide a finance and accounting service, and we help and support services to be effective and efficient. The service:

- Regularly monitors and reports on the Council's financial performance.
- Provides financial support with a gross budget of over £405 million
- Is responsible for producing final calculations for the accounts of Gwynedd Council, two Joint Committees and the Harbour's accounts.
- Is supporting the Departments to realise over £48.5 million in savings and cuts since 2010/11 which is 96% of the savings target, with a slight slippage on the rest. The work of supporting the savings arrangement is ongoing.



**Success in staying within the budget  
-0.36%**

The Auditor General for Wales has published an unconditional audit report on the 2017/18 financial statements, namely that the accounts had been appropriately prepared and provide an accurate and fair picture of the financial situation. ***We will provide more financial advice to all Council budget holders. "Business" advice for departments and provide support to assist with the savings.***

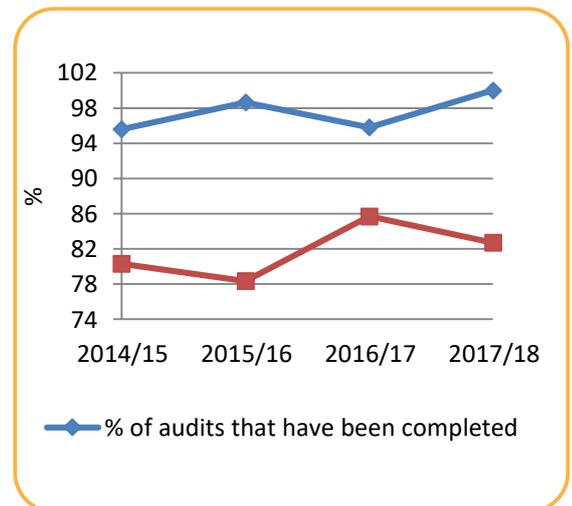
**The finance the Council receives from the Welsh Government isn't sufficient to pay for the key services the Council provides. Therefore, in order to ensure a balanced budget we will also continue to realise the savings already approved, and we will plan together with the people of Gwynedd to find and select the savings needed to respond to the financial challenge facing the Council in the future.**

## Internal Audit Service

Internal Audit reviews the Council's governance and administrative arrangements in order to give confidence to the Authority and the citizen that these arrangements are robust. We will report independently and objectively to the Head of Finance Department and the Audit and Governance Committee.

For 2018/19, a new arrangement was introduced where Internal Audit reports are placed in one of four categories of overall assurance. Initial feedback has been very positive.

The move towards developing "agreed actions", which is an agreement between us and managers across the Council on how to improve management and reduce risks, has been completed.



## Risk and Insurance Service

All Council departments need to assess the threats and opportunities they could face when providing their services, and prioritise their activities based on the assessment. The role of the Risk and Insurance Service is to advise and support the departments when doing this. We also protect taxpayers' benefits by ensuring appropriate insurance arrangements and dealing with approximately 250 claims per year.

## Information Technology Service

**We implement the Council's Information Technology Strategy in order to help the people of Gwynedd to gain easy access to the Council's information and services, and for staff to work efficiently.**

The face of the service is the Support Service and the Helpdesk, which supports 2,350 users and completes approximately 20,000 requests for information, including providing 450 new computers annually, and 1,780 mobile phones and tablet computers.

The Information Technology Strategy ensures that our technology services are presented on firm foundations that are supported by the *Infrastructure, Telephone and Network Service*, spreading to 250 buildings, 1,400 wireless access points and 2,370 phone connections, and support all systems in our data centres on 440 servers and 880TB storage.

### % of network availability

2017/18 – 99.98%  
2016/17 – 99.94%  
2015/16 – 99.95%



### % of Public Website availability

2017/18 – 99.41%  
2016/17 – 99.98%  
2015/16 – 99.62%



Despite these firm foundations, we need to introduce improvements to strengthen its durability, and this work will continue through the first half of 2019/20.

The current Strategy will be succeeded by a new Digital Strategy during 2019/20, which will transform our services further.

The *Development and Geographical Information Service* provides approximately 160 systems that have been developed around the user's appropriate needs, including systems that are used by the department for public services, direct interfaces for the public and staff self-service.

The *Programme and Innovation Management Unit* provides support to the departments to meet their IT needs, including ordering IT materials, implementing and monitoring agreements and analysing needs.

**During 2019/20 will be conduct further exercises to strengthen the durability of our provision and the increasing calls to support services 24/7.**