

Annual Report and Self Assessment Highlights

2024-25



Tomorrow's Gwynedd

Giving our children and young people the best possible start in life

What have we achieved?



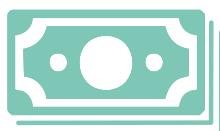
Support for families and young children

A new strategy for the early years has led to more support for parents, particularly fathers, and better access to childcare in areas such as Barmouth, Bala, Caernarfon, Porthmadog and Bangor. This helps the children of the County to have the best possible start to their time in education.



School Improvement

Ysgol Treferthyr opened in Cricieth in September 2024. Improvements are underway at other schools including Ysgol Hirael, Our Lady's School and Ysgol Tryfan in Bangor, and Ysgol Bontnewydd. This provides a learning environment that is more modern, safe and suitable for the children of Gwynedd.



Fewer costs for families

Work done to understand school costs for families, with plans developed to reduce the financial burden, including free school meals for every primary school child. This reduces the financial pressures on families.



More social opportunities

The views of young people were gathered about the youth services and the Council will use this information to improve the provision and play facilities where possible.



Forward-looking education

A 10-year strategy in progress to ensure that Gwynedd education continues to improve and meets the needs of residents.



Support for children with additional needs

We have strengthened the support for pupils with social and emotional difficulties by working with schools, identifying needs early on, and planning a new centre that will offer tailored support from September 2025, ensuring fair opportunities for every child to succeed.



School staff trained

Staff have received training on safeguarding matters and emotional needs, improving the care and support for children.



Matters requiring attention



Low pupil attendance

Many children are absent from school since the pandemic, which can affect their learning and development.



Concerns about safeguarding children

There were serious cases relating to the safety of pupils. There is a need to ensure that school safeguarding arrangements are robust and are continuously improved.



Lack of equity between schools

There are substantial variances in the costs per pupil across schools, which can lead to inequalities.



More support needed for pupils with emotional needs

Need to strengthen the provision for pupils with social and behavioural problems, ensuring that the support is effective and is available promptly.



A Prosperous Gwynedd

Strengthening the economy and supporting the residents of Gwynedd to earn a worthy wage

What have we achieved?



Promoting Culture and the Visitor Economy

A summit was held to discuss sustainable tourism, with over 100 people present. Four new overnight stopovers for motorhomes were opened. Support was given to 109 cultural projects, and investment was made in heritage sites such as the Slate Museum and Parc Padarn.



Community and Town Regeneration

Local Regeneration Plans were published for 13 areas, with an investment of £1.8 million in local projects. Placemaking Plans were completed for Porthmadog, Pwllheli, Bala and Dolgellau, and Transforming Towns grants were given to key projects such as Parc y Coleg and Galeri Cyf.



Supporting Businesses and Work

Over 600 businesses received support through programmes such as ARFOR and the Shared Prosperity Fund, and Gwynedd Business Week was held. Support was given to 221 people to find work, and 251 to improve their skills, with support also given to strategic projects such as Parc Bryn Cegin and Hwb Arloesi Glynllifon.



Keeping the Benefits Local

A new procurement strategy was drawn up to keep more money local and we have done work to raise awareness about the new rules among staff and suppliers.



Supporting Businesses and the Economy

176 businesses were supported with grants and practical advice, and 54 of them have committed to pay a real living wage and to use more Welsh.



Supporting Communities

Over £1.6 million in funding has been allocated to community groups via Cist Gwynedd. £8.5 million was invested to improve town centres, refurbishing 26 buildings and bringing 10 empty properties back into use.



Culture, Leisure and Learning

Substantial investments were made to improve facilities across Gwynedd including Glynllifon, leisure centres, harbours, Dinas Dinlle, and the Lloyd George Museum. Popular events were held across the county, attracting thousands of people and increasing the benefit for the local economy.



Matters requiring attention



Less funding available

Important funding programmes have ended, and less support is now available. This raises questions about how we can continue to support economic development in the future.



Risk of missing opportunities

There is a risk that Gwynedd will miss out on an opportunity to fully benefit from regional plans, if the arrangements do not work well.



What have we achieved?



Increasing the supply of housing for local people

Since the start of the Housing Action Plan, 386 social houses have been built, helping around 1,300 people. In 2024/25, 23 houses were bought to let at an affordable rent, 108 empty homes were restored, and 90 affordable houses were built. An additional £8 million was received from the Welsh Government to support further developments, with new sites in the pipeline in Llanberis and Bangor.



Fuel poverty and the cost-of-living

Gwynedd residents received support to reduce energy costs, with over 5,600 vouchers distributed and support being available through the Cost-of-living website and community surgeries. Also, 753 homes received support to improve their energy performance, and people were referred to services such as food banks and housing grants to assist them further.



Homelessness

New accommodation for homeless people was completed in Bangor and Pwllheli, and more are in the pipeline. 65 people have been housed by means of affordable rent schemes, and the Council is preparing to open a 'One Stop Shop' to help people with housing issues.



Second homes and holiday accommodation

The Council has implemented an Article 4 Direction to control second homes and holiday accommodation. Despite a reduction in the number of these properties, there is insufficient evidence yet to prove the direct impact.



Matters requiring attention



Homelessness continues to be a challenge

Homelessness is still a big challenge in Gwynedd, with a high demand for accommodation. More sites need to be developed across the county to respond to this demand.



Challenges when implementing new legislation

Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill required more resources in order to implement it in full.



Access to housing services

There is concern that people are not freely accessing advice on housing matters, but a 'One Stop Shop' is underway to help with this.



A Caring Gwynedd

Supporting the residents of Gwynedd to live full and safe lives in our communities

What have we achieved?



Modernising care

We have improved two care homes - Hafod Mawddach and Cefn Rodyn - and have opened new dementia units in Bryn Blodau. Discussions are ongoing to create extra care accommodation in Caernarfon and in Penyberth, Pwllheli.



Technology

Information and advice about care is now available on-line via the Dewis and AskSara search engines, and we have also created a list of telecare devices (such as a personal alarm or sensors). This helps people to live independently and alleviates the pressure on care services.



Collaboration with Health

Communication arrangements and regular meetings have been established to improve the collaboration between the Council and Health Service, reducing duplication and improving the service for individuals.



Work Opportunities

Additional staff were appointed to support people with learning disabilities to obtain paid employment with a real living wage. The Council offers support to individuals and employers to ensure that the arrangements are successful.



Llechen Lân

An analysis of Gwynedd's population was undertaken, along with the demand for services, and the best practice in order to understand what will be needed over the next 20 years. This will help us better plan resources and services for the future.



Supporting People's Well-being

Well-being Champions were appointed, and cost-of-living events and drop-in sessions were held to support residents. We worked with Citizens Advice to provide numeracy and budgeting support, and practical support was available for people to learn to use technology, including the provision of IT equipment. A fund was established to support community feeding projects, with cookery courses arranged in partnership with the Health Board.

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What have we achieved?



Autism Plan

A preventative worker was appointed to support children on the diagnosis pathway. The team also develops programmes to support parents and carers and has offered training on autism and concerning behaviours. We are continuing to work on the Llwybrau Ni project, which offers social opportunities for young people and respite for parents.



Residential provision for children

A small group home opened its doors in Morfa Bychan with staff appointed and two children welcomed to the home. Two additional properties have been bought, and preparation work is underway to register them.



Innovation and New Opportunities

A Care Academy has been launched to help people start a career in care. Almost 1,000 telecare devices have been upgraded to digital ones, helping people to live more independently and safely in their homes.



Better Care for the People of Gwynedd

Despite the increasing demand for services, the Council has managed to reduce the waiting lists for assessments and domiciliary care. Locating staff in hospital has also reduced the delay for patients who are waiting to return home from the hospital.



Matters requiring attention



Lack of Sufficient Care Provision

A lack of care provision may lead to harm to individuals and additional costs for the Council, increasing the demand for services. The Llechen Lân project helps us understand the demand and resources required, to better plan for the future and reduce the risks.



Staff Recruitment and Retention Challenges

Staff shortages can affect the quality of the care provided. The Council has taken steps such as establishing the Care Academy and is reviewing salaries to improve the situation.



Collaboration with External Partners

A lack of collaboration with organisations such as the Health Board, the police and third sector may lead to lower-quality services. The Council is already taking steps to strengthen the relationship and simplify the way that organisations work together.



Increasing pressure on Budgets and Services

Increasing demand and more needs placing pressure on budgets with the older population growing at a scale that is much higher than the working-age population.



A Welsh Gwynedd

Ensuring that we give every possible opportunity for our residents to use the Welsh language in the community

What have we achieved?



Modernised and extended the immersion provision

A new unit was opened at Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn to help children learn Welsh and improvements were made to three other sites - Cymerau, Dolgellau and Maesincla. Also, a virtual village called Aberwla was created to provide on-line help for Welsh learners.



Promoting the use of the Welsh Language by the residents of Gwynedd

Projects were developed to encourage people to use Welsh in their work and in their communities, including digital content for young people. In addition, work was carried out to protect Welsh place names and to address the shortages of staff who speak Welsh in some organisations.



Matters requiring attention



Recruiting Welsh Speakers

Some believe that high-level Welsh language skills are needed to work for the Council, and although this is not the case, this misconception can make recruitment more difficult. Young people who speak Welsh are leaving Gwynedd, which can reduce the use of Welsh in the community.



A Green Gwynedd

Protecting the natural beauty of the county, and responding positively to the climate change crisis

What have we achieved?



Flooding

A new Floods Strategy was adopted for the county, and a project to the value of almost £6 million was completed in Hirael, Bangor, to reduce flood risk and improve recreation. Good progress was also made with the detailed design for the North Promenade in Barmouth.



Waste and Recycling

A new Waste and Recycling Strategy was drawn up for public consultation in 2025, and plans are underway to modernise the waste treatment facilities in Harlech and Caernarfon.



Climate and Nature Emergency

60 charging points were installed in 13 locations for the Council fleet, with 31% of the fleet now electric vehicles.



Active Travel

Successful plans were developed for Penrhos Road, Bangor; Ysgol Rhostryfan; and Ysgol Treferthyr, Cricieth.



Clean and Tidy Communities

The Ardal Ni team has responded to a substantial increase in requests for cleaning work, and they are being praised for their work across the county.



Matters requiring attention



Increase Recycling

Our recycling levels are consistent at 64%, which is now below the new national target of 70%. The Waste Strategy will detail plans to address this.



Fuel

There was an increase of 0.98% in the number of litres of fuel used by the Council compared to the previous year.



Food standards and food hygiene inspections

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has stated that the Council is not meeting its statutory duties in terms of the frequency of food standards and food hygiene inspections. The service is in the process of addressing the FSA's recommendations to improve the situation.



An Efficient Gwynedd

Putting the people of Gwynedd first and treating them fairly and ensuring that the Council performs effectively and efficiently

What have we achieved?



Staff Learning and Development

A new Learning and Development Framework was launched with the training programme for the first year focusing on matters such as financial management, well-being and digital skills. In addition, a new Well-being Strategy was introduced with a focus on mental, physical, social and financial well-being.



Women in Leadership Programme

Further activities were held that underpin the project's work, such as the Developing Potential Programme, encouraging women to apply for senior posts and addressing a balanced representation at committees and groups.



Managing the Impact of Financial Cuts

Total savings of £43 million have been realised since 2015/16 (93% of the target).



Digital Plan

A detailed programme has been created to improve our services via our Digital Plan. This includes improvements to the Council's telephone system.



Matters requiring attention



Savings

Need to ensure that departments are realising the financial savings identified.



Tax Collection

A review is underway to improve our rates of collecting Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates.



Polling Stations

A review of polling places has been carried out to assess the suitability of the stations and consider whether more suitable locations are available.



Acknowledgements

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