



# Gwynedd Council Annual Performance Report 2020/2021



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# Foreword of the Leader of Gwynedd Council



I hope that we will never see a year like 2020/21 ever again. Yes, that is a huge statement; however, it was a year of pain and bereavement for a number of families and individuals who suffered because of Covid-19. Please accept my sympathy and that of all my fellow members and Gwynedd Council staff.

It is impossible not to refer to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the residents of Gwynedd and on our response as a Council to the situation when presenting this report on Gwynedd Council's performance during 2020/21. I sincerely thank each and every one of the Council staff members who went that extra mile in order to keep the residents of Gwynedd safe, and who continue to do so. The staff of our homes and care services were on the front line in the battle against the virus, and we owe them a huge debt of gratitude, as well as everyone else who continued to maintain public posts, such as teachers, waste services officers and crematorium staff.

Quietly behind the front line services, an army of other officers were redeployed temporarily from their usual jobs to undertake essential work such as establishing the Test, Trace and Protect Service, sourcing and distributing PPE, and running an information and support service for the public, particularly for those who were shielding or vulnerable. All of this was work that was prioritised by us as a Council in an attempt to do our best for the people of Gwynedd, and if we had to slow down work on some other plans in order to achieve that, then so be it.

As a Council, we also owe a huge debt of gratitude to all the other agencies, and to the people of Gwynedd themselves, for working in partnership with us throughout the effort to respond to the pandemic. Despite the strong existing partnerships, this report is full of examples of slick and successful collaboration between the Council and partners old and new, from the Health Board to voluntary community groups. We have to continue to sustain this strong will for collaboration in the future.

By reading this report in its entirety, I hope that you can gain an understanding of the very varied nature of Gwynedd Council's work. It is a matter of great pride that we not only continued to sustain normal services in the face of the pandemic, but that we also managed to start, or complete, a number of other influential projects. We have adopted a Housing Action Plan, which includes over 30 specific plans that will lead to a £77 million investment in the housing field in Gwynedd over the next six years. The new Ysgol y Garnedd building was opened in Bangor, which will give the best opportunities for generations of children in the city. A new dementia unit was completed in Llan Ffestiniog, and its doors will be opening soon. In the middle of the challenging second wave of Covid-19 in January 2021, Care Inspectorate Wales carried out an inspection of adults and children services and presented very positive feedback. It is also excellent to be able to say that no waste from the county is directly disposed of through landfill any more.

Therefore, sharing this report is a matter of great pride for me, as it collectively bears witness that 2020/21 was not only a difficult and challenging year, but also a year of achievement, despite the obstacles we faced.

**Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn,**  
Leader of Gwynedd Council.



# Introduction



The Council published its 'Gwynedd Council Plan for 2018-2023' in March 2018, in which our ambition and priorities were set for the five years in question. We have reviewed the Plan every year since then in order to keep it current and therefore, this report illustrates how we proceeded to realise the ambition of the 'Gwynedd Council Plan 2018/2023: 2020/21 Review'. It also includes information about the rest of the Council's 'day-to-day' work and our expenditure for the year.

**Part 1** of this report provides an update on our performance per Improvement Priority, namely the fields that required particular attention from us. **Part 2** describes the rest of our work, and there are individual chapters for each Council department. Within the departmental reports, we also update the work on Local Priorities that were identified by elected members.

It is clear that the main impact on the work of Gwynedd Council during 2020/21, as every other local authority, was the Covid-19 pandemic. We detail our response to the pandemic in the 'Impact of Covid-19' chapter, which follows this introduction.

As we have reported in the past, our **financial position** as a Council has changed considerably in recent years and it will continue to set us a considerable challenge as we plan our services for the future. Of course, 2020/21 was such an extraordinary year compared to all others with additional expenditure falling on the Council that we had not been able to plan for in advance. However, we have still had to realise our savings programme due to grant cuts from Welsh Government. 90% of the savings schemes, a total value of £31 million between 2015/16 and the end of 2020/21, have been realised.





This is an end of financial year report, but the task of measuring the success of our work, and **challenging our own performance**, happens throughout the year. The challenges of responding to new Covid-19 related tasks and maintaining our day-to-day work over the past year led to a different approach in 2020/21.

Leading on from internal progress updates, end of year departmental performance challenge meetings were held, where the Cabinet Member, with the support of the Chief Executive or the Corporate Director, reviews the progress of the departments' Improvement Priorities projects and their day-to-day work. Furthermore, members of the relevant Scrutiny Committee attended so that they can report the achievements to the rest of the members.

This end of year Annual Performance Report is based on the balanced findings of these meetings, along with any financial information. The report is presented to the Cabinet and the Full Council for approval.

With the introduction of the **Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) (the Act)** designated public bodies are required to work individually and collectively to improve well-being in Wales.

In line with the requirements of the Act, the Council adopted seven Well-being Aims for 2018/19, which contribute to the seven national well-being aims, and these have been and remain up-to-date. The objectives are based on the well-being assessment carried out by the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board and engagement sessions held when developing the Plan.

The need to act in accordance with the five sustainable development principles has also been noted, through:

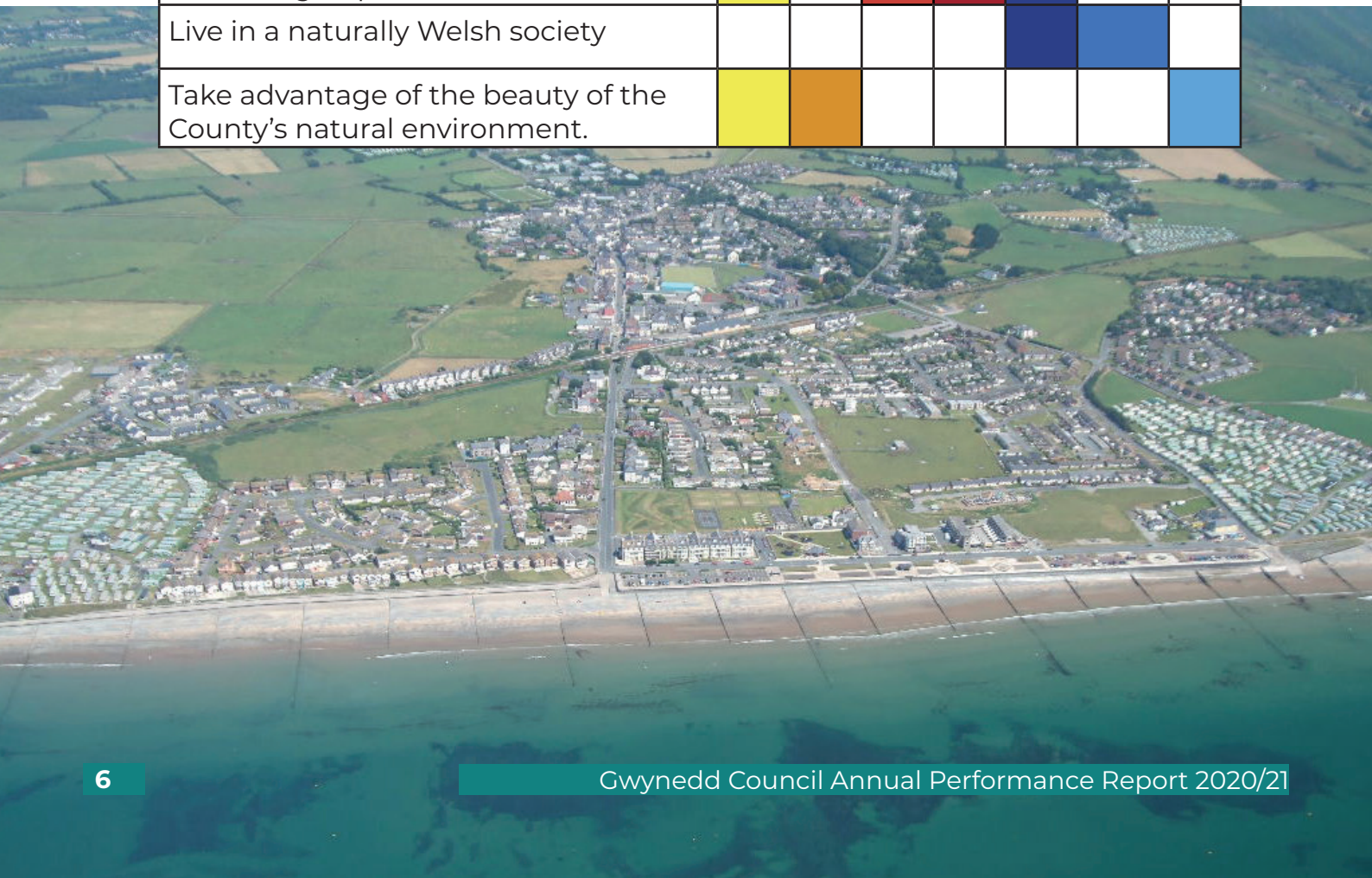
- considering the long-term
- prevention

- integrated working
- working collaboratively
- and being inclusive of people of all ages.

We are expected to report on our contribution to the principles of the Act, and information about many of these activities can be found in the body of the report. In addition, the Wellbeing Objectives, to which each individual project and the Departments' day-to-day work contributes, are noted at the end of each chapter.

We have agreed that the best way to embed the responsibility for acting in accordance with the five sustainable development principles is for the Department Management Teams to pay attention to the principles when forward-planning. There is some evidence to suggest that this does happen, but the need to assess whether this method is successful has been recognised. We will continue to look at how the five ways of working can be embedded within the Departments.

| Gwynedd Council Well-being Objectives  | National Well-being Goals |           |           |       |                      |  |                      |
|--|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|----------------------|--|----------------------|
| We will ensure that the residents of Gwynedd:  | Prosperous                | Resilient | Healthier | Equal | Cohesive Communities | A vibrant culture where the Welsh language is thriving | Globally responsible |
| Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives  |                           |           |           |       |                      |  |                      |
| Live in quality homes within their communities   |                           |           |           |       |                      |  |                      |
| Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support themselves and their families               |                           |           |           |       |                      |  |                      |
| Receive education of the highest quality which will enable them to do what they want to do |                           |           |           |       |                      |  |                      |
| Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible                                |                           |           |           |       |                      |  |                      |
| Live in a naturally Welsh society  |                           |           |           |       |                      |  |                      |
| Take advantage of the beauty of the County's natural environment.                          |                           |           |           |       |                      |  |                      |



# The main impacts of the Covid-19 crisis on Gwynedd Council services

On 23 March 2020, the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced that the United Kingdom would be going into Lockdown with immediate effect with stringent restrictions on people's rights to leave their homes. The seriousness of the health crisis had become apparent, and the public, organisations and businesses had to accept and adapt to a totally different life literally overnight.

At the time, the Council employed over 6,200 staff across all its services, and there was a need to continue providing essential 'front-line' services for Gwynedd residents. It was not an option for the Council not to provide these essential services, such as care for vulnerable adults and children, or waste collection. Welsh Government and Public Health Wales issued regular instructions and regulations on living and working in Wales during this period. As a Council, we responded to these instructions by planning how to continue to provide services and support while keeping residents and staff safe at the same time.

On Friday, 20 March, the **county's schools** closed and the curriculum was delayed. At the time, nobody knew that the majority of learners would not be returning to the classroom until mid-July. 62 of our schools were re-purposed between 23 March and 17 July to provide care for at least one day between Monday and Friday to vulnerable children and children of key workers. The rest of the year was a period of adapting education provision, often at short notice, in response to Welsh Government guidelines.

Much more details about the education provision and well-being support for Gwynedd children and young people can be found in the Education Department's chapter in part 2 of this report, but it is fair to say that provision was revolutionised during 2020/21.

Of course, one of the most obvious fields to be affected by the crisis as we still sought to care for our most vulnerable residents was the **care field**. People over 70 years old were advised to be particularly cautious and to avoid mixing before the official Lockdown period came into force. Likewise, it was advised that 'non-essential' visits to care homes should not continue.

Therefore, it should be noted that the work of responding to the pandemic in this field did not commence on 23 March, with infection control procedures already implemented in care homes and the community, as well as efforts to ensure that staff and vulnerable residents were protected. We had been distributing PPE stock received from the Government to the Council's internal care services as well as independent care services in the county, to ensure that they had proper equipment to be able to deal with any Covid-19 cases that would arise. However, from this date forward, the process of creating new ways of working sped up rapidly.

A number of officers from the Adults, Health and Well-being Department focussed their efforts completely on maintaining very regular contact with our internal services and our independent care providers in order to ensure appropriate support for them, and ensuring that they were



aware of the latest Government and Public Health Wales guidance. They also kept a record of the number of Covid-19 cases, the need for tests for staff and clients, PPE equipment stock and ensured appropriate support accordingly. They were also responsible for ensuring suitable contact when required between providers and our health and safety and environmental health services.

In the early days of the crisis, until it was possible for members of the public to arrange their own Covid-19 test, we were responsible for administering the referral pathway, which enabled front-line staff in the care field to have a test should they display symptoms. The department was also supporting the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board with the regular testing system in care homes by providing support to distribute and collect tests. Care homes in the county were completely committed as they implemented procedures to ensure that regular testing could be undertaken to protect residents. This was a substantial demand on them in terms of time and training, and it meant that staff had to attend work on their days off.

Since December 2020, we have been responsible for ordering and distributing LFD tests (tests where individuals undertake the test themselves) for all of the county's care providers to ensure that front-line staff in the field have a sufficient supply to be able to test twice a week. Throughout the year, the department's officers have been pursuing individual matters relating to test results, and have kept in regular contact with key partners such as the Health Board and Welsh Government in order to identify and solve weaknesses in the system to ensure arrangements that are as convenient as possible.

Since the end of 2020, Council staff also offered organisational support to the Health Board and GPs as they rolled out the vaccination programme. We coordinated lists of front-line staff who needed the vaccine as a priority and facilitated communication between them and front-line staff as required. Two Byw'n Iach leisure centres were used by GPs as temporary vaccination centres, and Council staff have been working on a temporary basis to provide assistance at the Health Board's main vaccination centre in Bangor.

As PPE guidelines strengthened and as we restored more and more services, the need for PPE equipment across Council departments became more prominent - e.g. in schools, in the crematorium and in a number of other 'face-to-face' services. Initial arrangements that were implemented in the care field were built upon in order to create a more mature and reliable arrangement on a corporate level, which included: providing Health and Safety guidance on the need for PPE in different situations, a system to monitor stock levels across locations, and a procedure for ordering PPE, running a PPE storage area and collecting and distributing the equipment. This work has grown as we see more services being restored and there are no guidelines to suggest that PPE will not be required any time soon and, therefore, this system remains operational, with the likelihood that an additional element of distributing Covid-19 home testing kits to staff across the Council will also be added. Staff from departments such as Corporate Support, Adults, Health and Well-being, Housing and Property and Highways and Municipal have all been involved with the work of bringing this system together and we are very proud of their success in distributing thousands of items each week across the county.

On a broader level, it must also be borne in mind that the first few weeks of the initial Lockdown was a concerning and confusing period for many Gwynedd residents, especially those who had been advised to shield or those who could not leave their homes. This led to a massive campaign to bring providers and volunteers in the community together to support the most vulnerable and the Council coordinated a lot of this work. Partnerships with a number



of other organisations such as Anglesey Council, the Housing Associations, Citizens' Advice Bureau and Mantell Gwynedd were strengthened and a number of Council staff were relocated from their usual posts to be part of the **Community Resilience** work.

Between April and September, a number of Council staff relocated from their usual posts to offer advice and information over the telephone to Gwynedd residents as part of the Covid-19 Support Team. The team mainly focussed on contacting individuals who had been advised to shield to ensure they had the necessary support to cope with a period where they could not leave their homes. Others organised and distributed food packages for vulnerable residents and children; 4,781 people who were self-isolating were contacted and it was arranged to distribute the Government's food packages to them. Jointly with Menter Môn, Anglesey Council, the Dylan's company and housing associations, a new food distributing scheme called 'Neges' was established. Staff from many different departments also packaged surplus food in schools and distributed it to the Food Banks, and information on where to go in order to obtain essential items such as food and medicine was regularly updated on the Council website and via the Covid-19 Support Team phone-line.

The **Test, Trace and Protect Service**, under the leadership of the Environment Department, was established in May 2020 and came into operation on 1 June 2020. The purpose of the service is to reduce the spread across our communities by supporting people who have been infected or who have been in contact with a positive case to isolate in accordance with guidelines, to support people with symptoms to get access to a Covid-19 test and work with specialist partners to control risks for people who are isolating together with wider communities and businesses. Between June 2020 and 31 March 2021, the service has responded to 11,315 Covid-19 cases in Gwynedd (with the exception of hospital patients).

We have also undertaken the substantial work on behalf of other Welsh local authorities, with the model enabling us to be more resilient across Wales to reduce the spread and ensure the best use of public funding.

This work was a high priority and, therefore, 7 staff members from different Council departments were relocated, as well as five 'bank' staff members, and 90 new staff were employed to work in the team. Now, at the start of 2021/22, the service continues to employ 102 employees.

In order to offer financial support to those instructed to self-isolate by the Contact Tracing Service, the Council's Finance Department administrated the Self-Isolation Payment Scheme on behalf of Welsh Government. They processed 713 payment applications between the scheme start date on 16 November 2020 and the end of March 2021.

The Environment Department has also had a lead role in terms of protecting people and coordinating preparations for reopening, by dealing with enforcement cases where required. Covid-19 Community Engagement Officers were also appointed by the Environment Department to provide guidance on latest Covid-19 guidelines to organisations, businesses and individuals in Gwynedd while supporting them to comply, in the hope of avoiding enforcement situations. In a situation where we have been unsuccessful in contacting people over the phone, these officers have also been supporting the Test, Trace, and Protect Service to contact positive cases or people who have been in contact with a positive case. The role of these officers is to engage and educate and not to enforce.

**Gwynedd businesses**, both large and small and across all sectors, have suffered hardship and obvious losses during 2020/21. Departments across the Council joined forces to support local businesses by protecting jobs and livelihoods of Gwynedd residents. A specific task-force was established to lead the work with departments such as Finance, Environment and Corporate Support playing a prominent part as well as the Economy and Community Department. The latest information and advice was shared with over 4,300 local businesses and enterprises via a series of information bulletins, and this work continues to 2021/22 as restrictions are lifted.

The COVID-19 crisis had a **significant financial impact**, with a combination of additional costs and loss of income worth over £20 million to the Council in 2020/21. There was additional spending on obvious things such as PPE, which had not been planned for by the Council, but we have been able to reclaim this expenditure from Welsh Government.

Welsh Government introduced five different grant schemes during the year in order to support businesses, and the Council processed 20,000 payments for a total of £106m for businesses in Gwynedd.

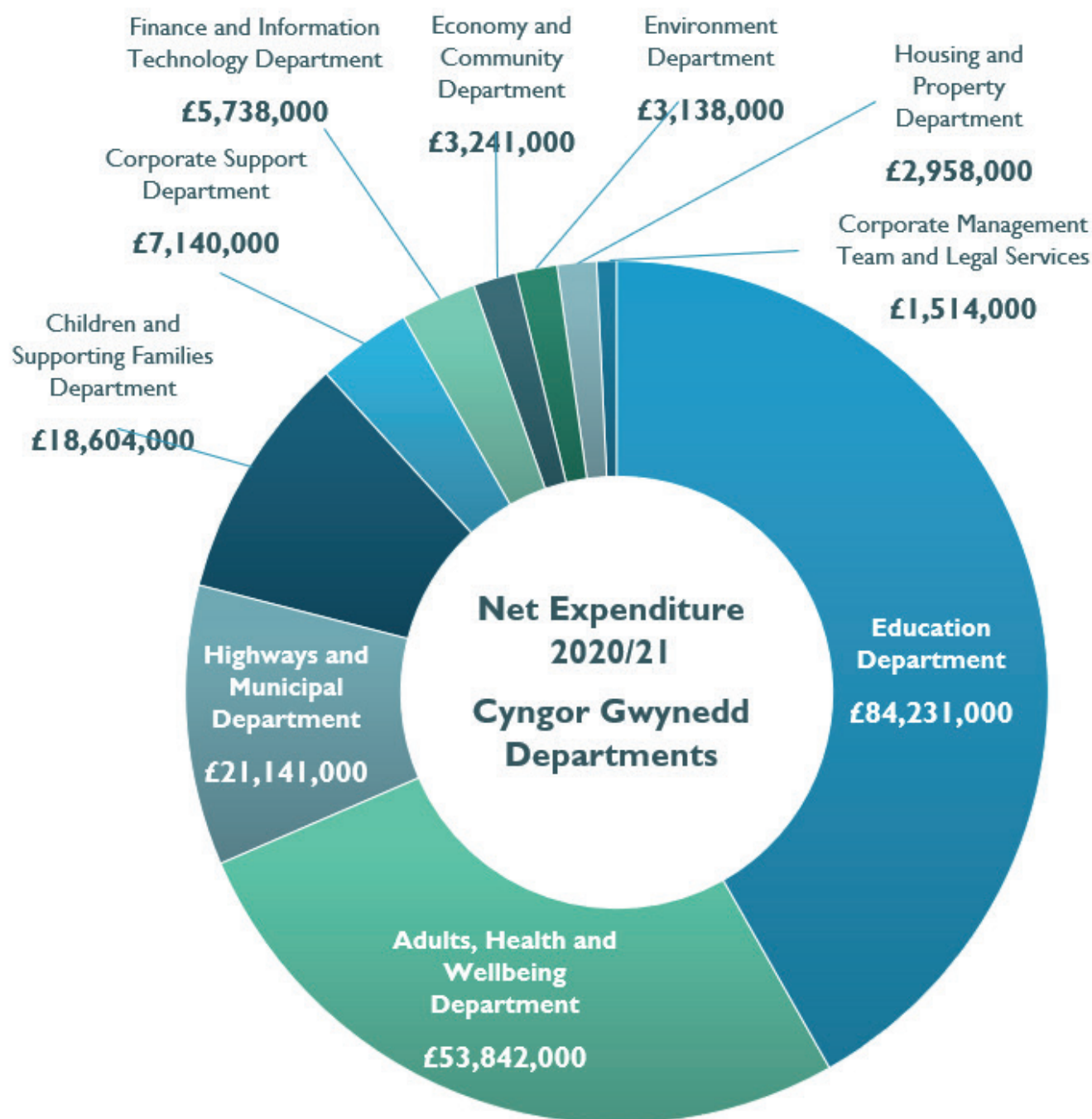
In terms of **working arrangements** of Council staff not working on the front-line who were prioritised, the majority have been accomplishing their work from home since March 2020, or through a combination of being home and out in the community.

Staff were ready to adapt to their new working environments quickly and they received information technology (IT) support as required. Over 900 new laptops were provided, excluding school provision, and additional work was undertaken on the infrastructure in order to protect from cyber-attacks and to strengthen internet connections. Customer contact services were maintained over the phone and the web throughout the year as we adapted and upgraded our use of technology, and new on-line self-service systems were developed for our residents, such as applying for business grants or booking an appointment in a recycling centre.

The IT network was also strengthened in all our schools, and laptops, iPads or internet connections were provided to learners who did not have internet access. This was essential in order for them to be able to continue with their education.

Like most workplaces, Council staff and members held most of their meetings virtually throughout 2020/21, and the translation team managed to adapt very quickly in order to be able to ensure simultaneous translation provision in virtual meetings. Although there was some delay in holding Council committee meetings as we sought to establish arrangements to hold virtual meetings and ensure that it was available bilingually with secure access, we succeeded to establish procedures, a protocol and train members very early on with virtual meetings of the Cabinet being held from April 2020 onwards. Over the coming months, other Council committee meetings were restored in the same manner in order of priority. In terms of the public's ability to exercise their rights to follow the members' public discussions, we succeeded to start recording meetings and publish them within approximately 24 hours of the meeting very early on in the process, but live webcasting proved to be more challenging when seeking to ensure bilingual provision. However, we managed to webcast the Cabinet meeting live from November 2020 onwards, and the Full Council meeting from December 2020 onwards. We will continue to develop in this field in order to further extend the provision in future.

# Our Expenditure



The **Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy** department attracts income therefore their net expenditure was  
**£-298,000**

# Part 1

## Improvement Priorities

Eight Improvement Priorities have been identified within the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023. These are the key fields within which we believe we need to take action in order to make a positive difference to the lives of the people of Gwynedd.

Under the 8 Improvement Priorities below, a description is provided of the projects which will contribute towards realising the ambition that the Improvement Priorities describe. On the following pages, a report is provided on the progress of those projects during 2020/21 against what we said we would do in the Gwynedd Council Plan: 2020/21 Review.

Further information on what we will do in the future in the Gwynedd Council Plan 2018-2023 can be obtained by visiting [\*\*www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/councilplan\*\*](http://www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/councilplan)



# Improvement Priority 1

Improve the conditions to create a viable and prosperous economy whilst aiming towards securing more jobs which offer good salaries.

| North Wales Growth Deal  | Improvement Priority 1 |
|--|------------------------|
| <b>What did we promise to do?</b>  |                        |
| <p>A lack of growth is a weakness in the economy of the whole of north Wales, and particularly in the north-west. In an attempt to overturn the situation, the six counties in north Wales, and other stakeholders such as education establishments in the region and the private sector, came together to establish the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB).</p> <p>The Board's main plan is the 'North Wales Growth Bid' and in November 2019 an initial agreement was signed between the Ambition Board, the Welsh Government and UK Government which are preparing the realisation of the Growth Bid. The deal will lead to an investment of £1.1bn in the north Wales region over the next fifteen years and will create up to 4,000 jobs across north Wales.</p> <p>As a member of the Ambition Board, our aim as a Council is to ensure that the people and businesses of Gwynedd maximise the benefits from this financial investment, especially at a time when there will be a need to respond to the side-effects of Brexit.</p> <p>In future, we will continue to contribute to the Ambition Board's work programme, including improving the availability of fast broadband, developing the Trawsfynydd Power Station site, and developing a Rural Innovation Centre in Glynllifon. We will also contribute to the development of the North Wales Economic Framework, which is being prepared by Welsh Government to identify the main regional investment programmes in the future.</p> |                        |
| <b>What progress was made in 2020/21?</b>  |                        |
| <p>Over the last year a Regional Programme Office team has been set up with the support of Gwynedd Council as the Host Authority. Work has been done to develop the details of a package of regional projects to be submitted as part of the North Wales Growth Bid, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A Digital Programme to upgrade infrastructure across Gwynedd</li><li>• Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub</li><li>• Smart Local Energy Network Project for communities</li><li>• Developing the Trawsfynydd Power Station Site</li><li>• Developing business premises at Parc Bryn Cegin, Bangor</li></ul>   |                        |

In 2020, the Council scrutinised and approved the agreement between NWEAB, the British Government and the Welsh Government for £240m of investment in the north Wales economy. The detailed business cases for the projects are in the process of being prepared with a view to begin implementing the first projects in 2022.

Over the last year preparatory work has also begun to review the growth vision for north Wales, however, Covid-19 has affected the timetable for developing the new Development Framework. An analysis was prepared of the impact of Covid-19 on North Wales businesses and on employment in the region and a series of measures to be prioritised in future in light of the pandemic was agreed with the Government.

#### Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.



**What did we promise to do?**

The Council is responsible for procuring, or purchasing, a number of goods and services and is eager to try to ensure that local businesses can compete and win these contracts in order to ensure that as much of the Council's expenditure as possible remains local. We have already introduced new arrangements to attempt to purchase goods and services in more innovative and efficient ways, and steps were taken to facilitate the ability of businesses to compete for contracts.

In future, we will engage with local businesses in order to assess what would make procurement opportunities more attractive to them and what further support they need. We will also review our procurement arrangements in order to ensure that the balance between keeping the benefit local and getting value for money is appropriate.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

In terms of revenue spending, there was an increase in local spending to £78m (63% of all revenue spending) compared with £71m (60% of all revenue spending) the previous year.

Within that performance, there were major variations in the spending headings with some fields spending less and others spending more. The greatest variations were seen in the following fields:

- Costs with local Adults and Children Care providers increased by £8m.
- Allocation of Grant Funding to local businesses increased by £4m.
- Civil engineering expenditure increased by £1m.

In terms of capital spending, there was a reduction in local spending to £3.6m (23% of all capital spending) in 2020/21 compared with £5.1m (33% of all capital spending) the previous year. This is due to the impact of working within Covid-19 restrictions mainly where it was not possible to carry out work on our roads. Also, new schools were built such as Ysgol y Garnedd and Ysgol y Faenol where contractors from outside Gwynedd were appointed to deliver the schemes.

We have continued with the work of raising awareness and understanding among businesses of the Council's procurement procedures and to find other ways of supporting them further to deliver the services we need.

We have also established a project to include aspects of local social benefits within the process of assessing contract bids. The current procedure looks at price and quality alone and adding this new element could enable us to calculate the broader value of implementing contracts awarded by the Council.

**Well-being Objectives:**

- **Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.**
- **Live in a naturally Welsh society.**

### What did we promise to do?

Salaries in Gwynedd are among the lowest anywhere in Britain. Weekly pay in the county was the lowest in Wales in 2019 (£459 on average) and the low pay at its worst in our rural communities (£423). Low salaries will inevitably lead to higher levels of poverty and rural depopulation, which in turn affects our communities, the future of our young people, and the Welsh language as a healthy community language.

The Creating High Value Jobs project has already taken steps to improve the situation, ensuring European funding to realise a plan to develop space for businesses to locate at Snowdonia Aerospace Centre in Llanbedr, and a plan to increase the number of school pupils who study the subjects desired by businesses within well-paid sectors.

In future, we will continue with the above-mentioned schemes, and we will also lead on other schemes such as developing a scheme by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to prepare the Trawsfynydd Power Station site in order to attract investment to generate low-carbon energy. Such schemes will ensure the continuation of high-value local jobs.

### What progress was made in 2020/21?

After years of trying to influence the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority confirmation was received in 2020 that the work to decommission the Trawsfynydd Power Station will continue safeguarding employment on the site for years to come.

An investment of £20m was secured through the North Wales Economic Ambition Board Growth Bid to develop the Trawsfynydd site for future employment use and Welsh Government has agreed to set up a new company as a vehicle to drive the development.

The preparatory work to upgrade Llanbedr Air Field has commenced along with preparations to create a new access road to the site. Discussions are continuing with companies that have expressed an interest in locating on the site to benefit from the resources and gain access to the air zone. The British Government has declared the site as one of its aerospace launching sites and the relevant regulatory arrangements are being put in place.

Preparing young people to benefit from the work opportunities is key and through the [STEM scheme](#), 140 young people received opportunities and experiences involving science and technology during 2020 despite the restrictions related to the pandemic. Among other things, a webinar was held to celebrate local women who are engineers or scientists, a workshop was held to help local young people to study to become medics and a series of sessions to generate interest in related subjects with pupils from 8 of Gwynedd's secondary schools.

The creative industries have also been identified as a sector that includes high value jobs and the Council is coordinating the Gogledd Greadigol network to collaborate with the sector to hold, create and recruit jobs. The network has nearly 800 followers on social media. The network was also very active in representing the voice of the creative sector in response to the Covid-19 crisis.

### Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



**What did we promise to do?**

The nature of our rural economy means that 79% of Gwynedd businesses do not employ more than one person and there are too many jobs within sectors which don't pay well. This leads to threats in terms of the sustainability of our rural communities.

Ensuring digital connectivity for our rural communities, and that the workforce and rural businesses have the skills to take advantage of them are matters that have already received attention. We have held a pilot scheme to provide public WiFi in eight rural towns, and to increase access to computer equipment. We are also a part of the ARFOR programme, a Welsh Government investment to create more and better jobs in areas in west Wales where a high percentage of the population speaks Welsh.

In the future, we will continue to act as part of the ARFOR programme, to extend the digital provision in communities and will work with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and the private sector to establish a rural innovation hub in Glynllifon, giving particular attention to the food and drink sector.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

Despite the challenges of 2020/21, the scheme has achieved much during the year. The [ARFOR](#) programme was coordinated across four counties leading to joint activities such as [Bwrlwm ARFOR](#) which encourages businesses and their customers to appreciate the Welsh language. Locally, grants were offered for businesses to grow including; the development of new industrial units in Nefyn, supporting a lady from Bala to return to the area to start a business selling Welsh goods and helping a local meats business to expand their offer. The grants will lead to the creation of 100 jobs locally.

ARFOR in Gwynedd has also helped to establish the [Ffiws](#) centre in a vacant shop in Porthmadog to give local businesses the opportunity to learn how to use modern equipment such as 3D printers or a computer operated wood cutting machine. After gaining experience of using the equipment in Ffiws, one example of the venture's success is that a local business selling bee keeping equipment has invested in new equipment and has moved to an industrial unit to enable the business to grow further.

The scheme has also secured funding to build upon Ffiws' work by supporting communities to reduce waste, promote local supply chains and create opportunities for Gwynedd businesses.

Across Gwynedd and Anglesey ARFOR has also addressed the challenge of young people leaving the area under the [Llwyddo'n Lleol 2050](#) banner. The project supports young people to venture, to start a business and to convey what's good about our area to their peers. Throughout the year, the LEADER programme in Gwynedd has also continued to deliver despite the circumstances. It has held a range of activities to promote innovation; amongst them, there is a scheme that trials the provision of electric cars for community use. The cars have been used extensively during the pandemic and have helped to deliver meals to vulnerable members of society and offer help to the residents of isolated communities to attend medical appointments as public transport was less available.

LEADER has supported local businesses to begin trading on-line; to use technology to measure the use of town centres in Gwynedd to see the impact of Covid-19 restrictions and to contribute to a selection of schemes to support communities during lockdown, for example through food delivery schemes.

The scheme has also continued with efforts to ensure that good broadband is available to everyone in Gwynedd by supporting the efforts of individual communities such as Croesor, Pistyll and Dyffryn Ardudwy to improve broadband availability.

**Well-being Objectives:**

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.





**What did we promise to do?**

Lively town centres are able to make substantial contributions to the economic and social success of local areas.

The "high streets" of a number of Gwynedd towns need support to ensure that they thrive by maintaining and creating work and providing a range of goods and services that residents and visitors need.

We have already been collaborating with businesses in Bangor and Caernarfon to promote the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and to attract resources from Welsh Government's Regional Regeneration Programme. We successfully established a loans programme for the upgrading of redundant buildings in the areas of Caernarfon, Bangor, Bethesda and Penygroes, and we are collaborating with partners in Harlech to establish a town centre regeneration programme there also.

In future, we will continue with the above-mentioned work, and will prepare plans for 13 catchment areas in Gwynedd, based on what matters to the residents within these communities.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

Bangor city centre has been identified as a regional priority within Welsh Government's Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme and is therefore eligible to receive capital grants. As part of the Bangor City Centre Regeneration Scheme, it succeeded to:

- support 9 applications worth £750,000 in grant funding to improve and renovate vacant property on the High Street.
- secure £1.2m for Cwmni Fran Wen's scheme, Y Nyth, to develop a new creative centre at St Mary's Church.
- secure revenue funding of £20,000 and prepare an initial report to consider potential locations to develop a new Health and Well-being Centre in the city centre.
- lead on the Bangor Partnership and collaborate with a range of partners on a cross-section of schemes within the city such as the green infrastructure scheme, a centre for the homeless, the Bangor Good Food scheme and the Hiracl Bay infrastructure scheme.

The Economy and Community Department was successful in securing a comprehensive loans package worth £1.1m that will target town centres across the county. The department will collaborate with the Housing and Property Department to bring commercial and residential property in town centres back to use through the Council's schemes and also by supporting third party schemes.

The department worked with businesses in Bangor and Caernarfon to support the Business Improvement Areas. A formal vote was held among businesses and property owners during

March 2021 and it was resolved to continue with the Business Improvement Areas for the next five years.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, arrangements were established in 20 towns and centres across Gwynedd to implement short term safety measures and engage with Town and Community Councils and local business groups. In addition, we succeeded to:

- attract a grant of £365,000 from the Welsh Government's capital fund to implement a package of projects to promote town centres. The package includes developing digital infrastructure within town centres along with improvements to make commercial areas more attractive. Developing the digital infrastructure will enable the towns to provide community wi-fi and gather data about the use of our town centres and trial the innovative use of available technologies
- secure a package of £135,000 from the Welsh Government's regeneration capital fund to implement small-scale improvements in town centres and to administrate the Welcoming the Customer Safely Fund. 56 businesses within the county were supported with up to £2,000 each to support businesses to operate within Covid-19 restrictions and adapt their external spaces.

#### Well-being Objectives :

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



## What did we promise to do?

During 2019-20, a full nomination from Gwynedd was presented to the UK Government and to UNESCO for a World Heritage Site designation. The nomination gives us an opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of the traditional slate industry on an international platform, and to celebrate and protect the Welsh culture associated with those areas.

We have already used the World Heritage Site nomination as a tool to regenerate our slate communities and to increase the value of the tourist industry. £1m of additional resources have been attracted to the county through the Heritage Fund, Welsh Government, the European Union and Snowdonia National Park through the LleCHI project.

In future, we will collaborate with the slate communities, via the LleCHI project, to create a programme of regeneration activities in these areas that will improve the appearance and look of communities, improve the quality of the visitor's experience, and will lead to an increase in residents' ownership of their heritage, language and culture.

## What progress was made in 2020/21?

During 2020/21 we responded to enquiries on our nomination by the official assessment body on behalf of Unesco and we also arranged a visit from an official assessor over a 7 day period during the autumn. Despite Covid-19 restrictions, we were able to hold a safe and successful visit by holding an official welcome evening through Zoom with the First Minister of Wales, a British Government Minister and local and national representatives. The assessors provided a positive interim report on our nomination.

As part of arrangements to manage the nomination in future, we formulated the following:

- Local Management Plans with landowners
- Supplementary Planning Guidance with landowners
- guidance to care for our slate landscape with communities and landowners
- draft economic objectives for the future with stakeholders and landowners
- Risk Management Plan with stakeholders and landowners
- quarry safety communications strategy
- brief for setting a linguistic baseline for projects in the nomination area.

Our community and regeneration activities continued through the LleCHI scheme funded by the Lottery Heritage Fund, Gwynedd Council, Snowdonia Fund and Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig. This project has been central to all the engagement work, community regeneration and cultural activity relating to the nomination. It has supported many activities to promote pride in area, culture, heritage and language and is also a means of celebrating our slate areas' contribution to the world. The activities included:

- the continuation of activities for LleCHI Young Ambassadors including site visits, creating videos and displays.

- community art and regeneration projects in Bethesda, Deiniolen, Llanberis, Penygroes, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Abergynolwyn and Tywyn
- developing an Interpretation Plan for the entire site and beginning the work of developing a new website
- discussions with partners for a succession plan for LleCHI and specifically with the Wales Slate Museum on potential development on the site
- assistance in implementing the priorities of the Local Management Plans in Llechwedd, Dorothea, Parc Padarn and other sites.

#### Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.



Image: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

**What did we promise to do?**

Tourism is one of Gwynedd's main economic sectors and it is an important employer. However, the increase in the tourist numbers makes a significant contribution to the pressure on the infrastructure of the county's destinations; a cost that is mainly shouldered by the residents of Gwynedd.

We have already consulted with representatives from the sector and Snowdonia National Park Authority in order to look at how we can attract income to support the industry, and what the priorities are for the future.

In future, we will look to continue to collaborate with the tourism industry and our partners to create a new Tourism Management Plan for Gwynedd that will consider the best way of getting the greatest benefit to the industry and for the residents of Gwynedd. In doing so, we will seek to improve the sector's contribution to the communities and economy of Gwynedd, improve the provision of the county's destinations and increase the industry's provision for tourists and for the people of Gwynedd.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

During 2020/21 we continued to meet with the Tourism Sub-group of the Regeneration Board to understand the visitor economy sector in Gwynedd and develop sustainable principles for the future.

Evidence sessions were held with the tourism sector and good practice was identified in sustainable tourism from other areas in Britain and across the world.

We appointed a consultant with expertise in the field of international sustainable tourism to work with the Council on developing the principles and an associated action plan.

The draft Sustainable Visitor Economy Principles were submitted to a meeting of all Council Members and members of Snowdonia National Park in March 2021 and in light of the feedback, the draft principles were approved for engagement and consultation on 30 March 2021. The draft principles were based on the following vision:

*"A Visitor Economy for the benefit and well-being of Gwynedd residents"*

And the three principles and associated sub-principles as follows:

1. Celebrate, Respect and Protect our Communities, Language, Culture and Heritage
  - a visitor economy in the ownership of our communities which boosts pride in one's area
  - a visitor economy that leads in Heritage, Language, Culture and the Outdoors
2. Maintain and Respect our Environment
  - a visitor economy that respects our natural and built environment and considers the implications of visitor economy developments on our environment today and in the future
  - a visitor economy that leads in sustainable and low carbon developments and infrastructure.



3. Ensure that the advantages to Gwynedd communities outweigh any disadvantages
- a visitor economy that ensures that infrastructure and resources contribute towards the well-being of the community all year round
  - a visitor economy that thrives for the well-being of Gwynedd residents and businesses and that offers quality year-round employment opportunities for local people
  - a visitor economy that promotes local ownership and supports local supply chains and produce
  - a visitor economy that improves the quality of the experience and the offer for all.

Upon approving the draft visitor economy principles, it is intended to hold a broader engagement exercise with the public, businesses and key partners. There will be a need to continue to develop arrangements to implement the principles in partnership with Snowdonia National Park, the sector and Gwynedd communities. In order to do so, the Council will develop a Gwynedd Sustainable Visitor Economy Plan which will contribute to the Gwynedd Regeneration Framework.

**Well-being Objectives:**

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.





**What did we promise to do?**

It is currently an uncertain time for businesses as a result of Brexit and changes in trading and competition arrangements. Gwynedd Council is determined to help local enterprises to adapt and respond to the challenge and we have already played a proactive part in the discussions regarding the future of business support in North Wales and the future of money to support the economy post-Brexit.

The county's businesses also work with many Council Departments and they receive a service from them, including rates, planning, trading standards, building control and procurement. We have already consulted with the county's businesses to see whether the assistance and support they receive from the Council is the best it can be.

In future, we will respond to the views of businesses about the support they receive from the Council and ensure that every part of the Council considers how they can offer assistance to support businesses. We will also encourage Gwynedd businesses to make the most of the support available from others, and to powerfully convey the needs of Gwynedd businesses when discussing with our partners, in particular in light of Brexit.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

2020/21 has been a difficult year for businesses in Gwynedd as a result of Brexit, and, most particularly, the Covid-19 pandemic.

The work that had already started through the plan to facilitate collaboration across Council departments had set a firm foundation as we respond urgently to the impact of Covid-19 on the county's businesses.

Consequently, the Council's departments have collaborated closely during the last year to ensure that business needs are considered and that appropriate support is provided.

We succeeded to establish an inter departmental taskforce as soon as the Lockdown began in March 2020 to lead our response and the Council has succeeded to:

- distribute over £110m in financial support directly to businesses providing an on-line application procedure to help businesses to access support with ease.
- ensure that businesses receive appropriate and timely information to enable them to work safely in accordance with regulations
- win the support of businesses to cascade information to residents and visitors to the area and help to keep our communities safe
- ensure that the Council speaks in unison with businesses with a view to support them to the best of our ability. For example, the Public Protection Service helped businesses to comply and referred them to sources of support and the Economy and Community Department promoted good practice in terms of compliance among businesses

- hold a campaign to encourage local residents to support businesses by buying local.

Many businesses have expressed their gratitude for the work, such as:

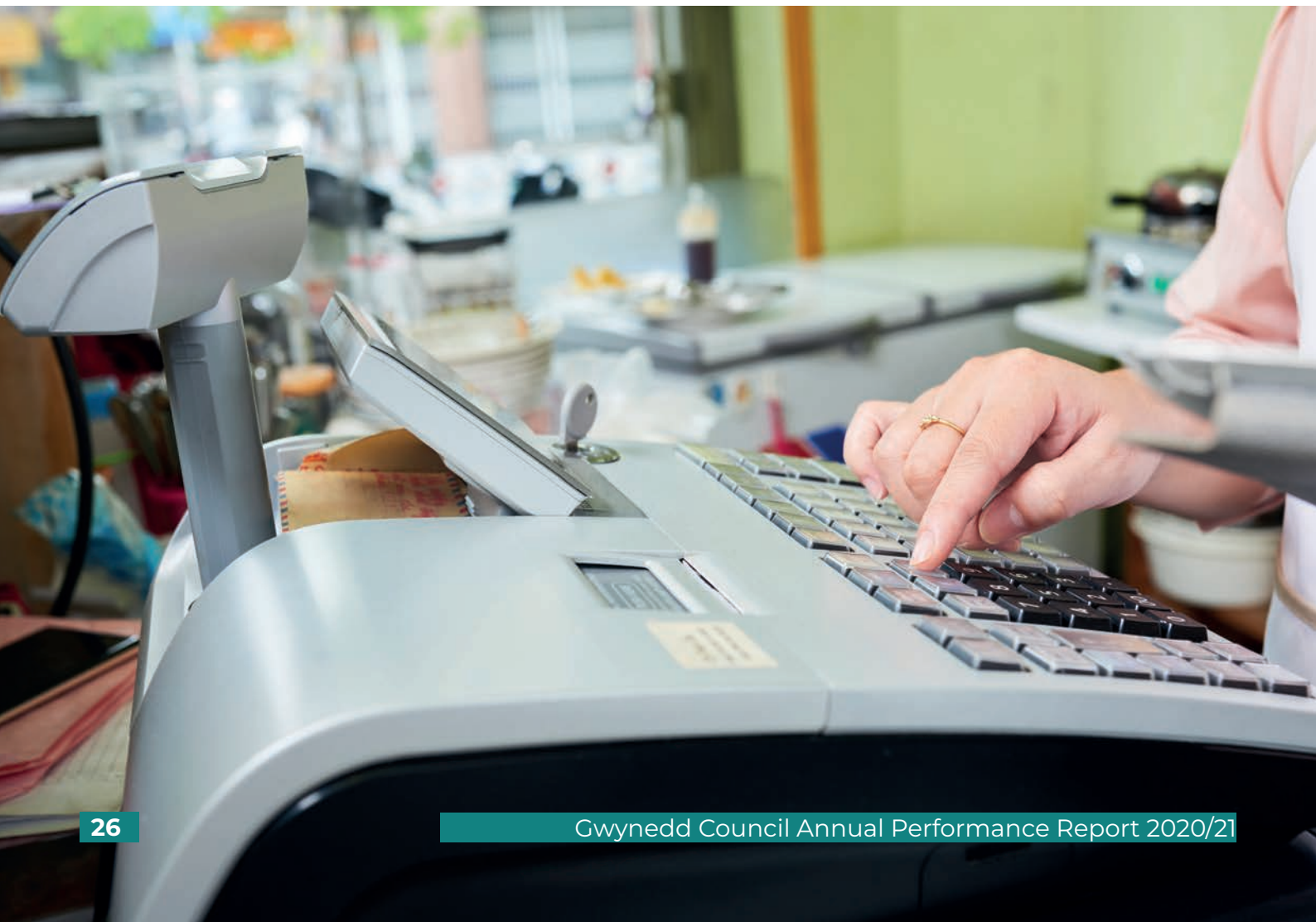
*"Just a word to thank Gwynedd Business Support for your bulletins and business support grants. They have both been invaluable to a small business like us and we truly appreciate how quickly and effectively you have responded to quickly changing circumstances to help businesses to carry on...."*

The Council has also worked hard to ensure that Gwynedd businesses are aware of the implications of leaving the European Union and any new requirements. Information about the new regulations and the support that is available have been included regularly in our information bulletins and we speak regularly with local businesses as any challenges resulting from Brexit become apparent.

Similarly, the Council has been working closely with Welsh Government and other counties in north Wales during the last year to voice the needs of Gwynedd businesses and to gather and share good practice.

#### Well-being Objectives:

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.



**What did we promise to do?**

Welsh Government has outlined its national vision to address the need to develop vital skills in Wales and the broader economy to identify the priority fields and how apprenticeships will be an integral part of fulfilling this.

The Council has already identified appropriate fields for establishing apprenticeships and has allocated funding to deliver these schemes for the next two years. 17 apprentices had been appointed to work in the Council by the end of December 2019.

In future, we will proceed to appoint more apprentices in priority fields during 2020/21, considering the practicality of the scheme's continuation beyond the current commitment.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

Of the 17 original apprentices, 11 women and six men have been recruited. The age range comprises of - two apprentices aged under 18, eleven apprentices between 18 and 24 and four apprentices who are over 25. By the end of 2020/21 eight apprentices have been appointed to jobs within the Council and continue to follow their qualifications. One apprentice has left the scheme voluntarily.

At the beginning of 2021/22 we are in the middle of a process of recruiting and appointing 19 additional apprentices to nine different fields, meaning that we will have recruited a total of 35 apprentices with the Cabinet's original investment of £300,000. This is 15 apprentices more than the target in the original plan, and the main reason for this is that Council services have been able to contribute more to the plan's costs than what had been anticipated.

We have planned to offer at least 20 apprenticeships a year for the next three years. This all would add to the 35 apprenticeships already created and would enable us to develop further by working more with small businesses, local contractors and community enterprises to establish and support new apprenticeship jobs.

**Well-being Objectives:**

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.





# Improvement Priority 2

Ensure that every pupil has the opportunity to reach his or her potential by ensuring that we have a sustainable education system, which provides development opportunities relevant to everyone whatever their background or where they live.

| Bangor catchment area, Berwyn catchment area (Bala), Trefferthyr catchment area (Cricieth), Post-16 provision  | Improvement Priority 2 |
|--|------------------------|
| <p><b>What did we promise to do?</b></p> <p>As a number of our schools are old and unsuitable to address future learning and educating needs, and as there are challenges associated with the provision of secondary and post-16 education in the county, we are planning and realising innovative projects to ensure that the children and young people of Gwynedd are educated in the best possible learning environment.</p> <p>We have completed the work of establishing Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn, in the <b>Bala Catchment Area</b>. The school opened to pupils aged 3-19 years in September 2019, along with services for the local community such as a library and theatre. We have commenced work to improve the provision in the <b>Bangor and Trefferthyr catchment areas</b>. We have also been <b>collaborating with Meirionnydd Secondary Schools</b> to look at the system of providing secondary education for the area, and carrying out field work with key stakeholders to consider the current post-16 provision across the county.</p> <p>We will aim to complete Ysgol y Garnedd in Bangor by September 2020, Ysgol y Faenol in Bangor by January 2021 and Ysgol Trefferthyr in Cricieth by September 2021. We will continue to collaborate in order to identify creative solutions to the secondary provision in Meirionnydd and we will draw up a report on the current <b>post-16 provision</b> that will form the basis to future developments.</p> |                        |
| <p><b>What progress was made in 2020/21?</b></p> <p><b>Bangor Catchment Area:</b></p> <p>We have completed the work of establishing a new building for Ysgol y Garnedd in Bangor. The school opened to pupils aged 3-11 years in October 2020, only a few weeks later than originally intended due to the pandemic, and that is incredible given the challenging times of the pandemic, and is testament to collaboration and partnership working between all stakeholders.</p>  |                        |



The school community have settled in their new home and are making the most of the modern, first rate building, environment and teaching resources.

The work of extending and upgrading Ysgol y Faenol in the Bangor catchment-area is continuing, and in light of some problems with the tenders at the beginning of the project there was delay with the timetable meaning that the work of extending and upgrading Ysgol y Faenol was about to start when the first Lockdown came in (March 2020), and consequently, the amended completion date for the school is February 2022.

The work that has been ongoing on the site of Ysgol y Faenol over the last year reflects good collaboration and partnership working between the school, the Council and the construction company, in an extremely challenging time when pupils and builders are on the site the same time and having to work within the added restrictions of the pandemic such as social distancing and maintaining bubbles.

### **Ysgol Treforthyr:**

We have begun the work of establishing a new building for Ysgol Treforthyr in Cricieth. A public consultation was held on the proposal to increase the school's capacity to 150 pupils, and the new building will include a location for the early years along with space for the cylch meithrin. It is anticipated that the work of planning for and constructing the new building for Ysgol Treforthyr will be completed by September 2023, with slippage in the timetable in light of our decision at the start of the project to include Ysgol Llanystumdwy as part of the initial consultation. However, after a number of meetings the school chose not to participate in the project. The business case for the new building has been approved by the Welsh Government, therefore the money has been guaranteed to begin the work.

### **Meirionnydd:**

The progress in the context of finding creative solutions to the secondary provision in Meirionnydd has been slow and has been impacted in light of re-purposing schools to provide childcare as well as remote learning, and subsequently supporting learners as they return to the school following the Covid-19 lockdowns.

Nevertheless, we have sought the opinion of headteachers and representatives of the Governing Body of every secondary school on the potential challenges they face in terms of providing quality secondary education in the Meirionnydd area. Two former secondary headteachers were commissioned to gather the opinion of headteachers and we also held consultation sessions with the chair and vice-chair of every school.

In particular, we looked at identifying the challenges the schools face in terms of recruiting teachers, middle managers and leaders. However, the opinion thus far has not highlighted any obvious concerns, although some specific aspects need addressing.

The next steps will be to seek the opinions of pupils, parents and staff. We will address the quality of the experiences the pupils are getting at the schools along with the opinion of staff about the experience of working within these schools. In order to ensure fair comparison we will circulate the questionnaire among staff, parents and pupils at Arfon and Dwyfor schools also. The work of forming the questionnaire has begun and we will share it with all stakeholders during the summer term 2021.

### **Post-16 Education:**

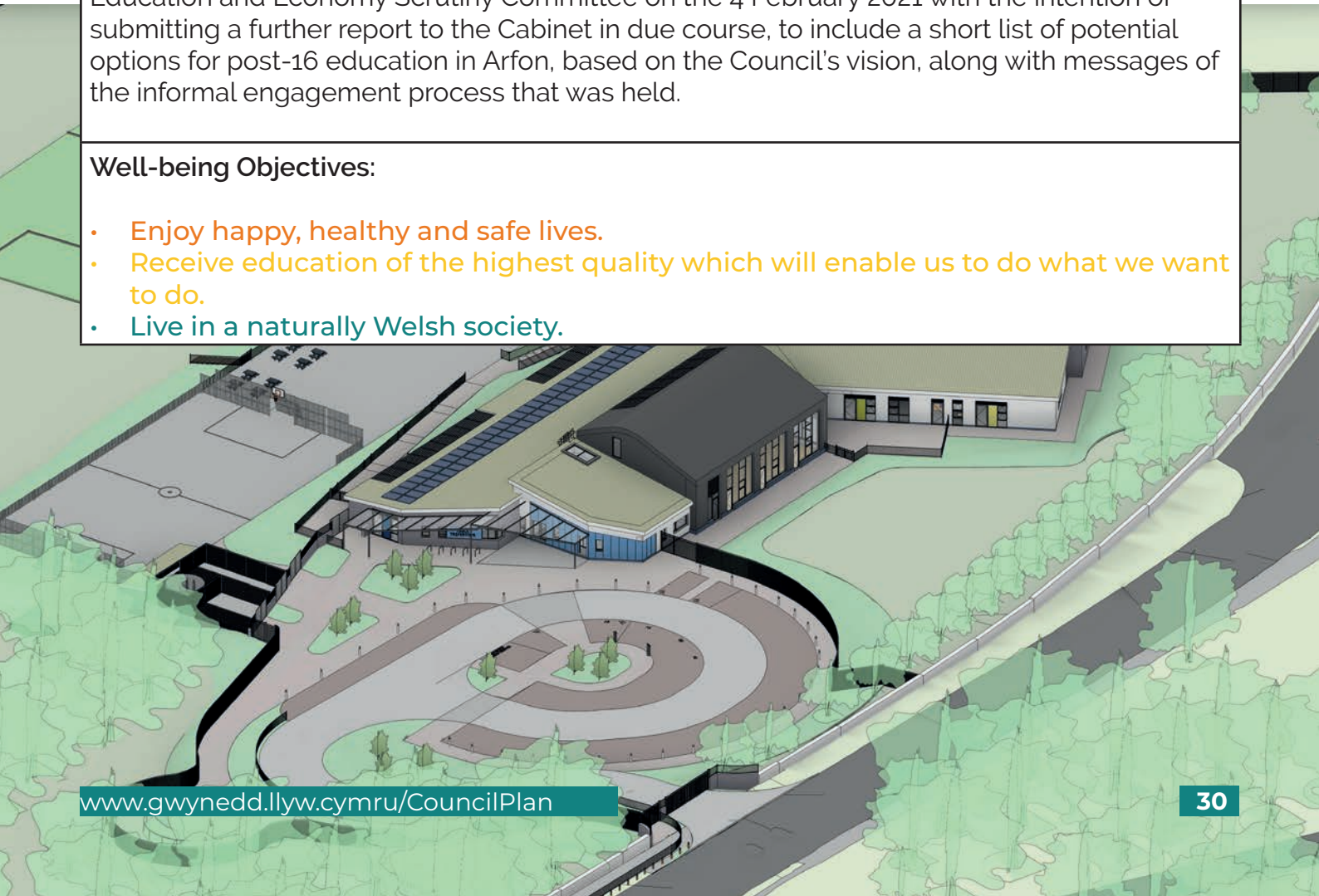
An overview report on post-16 education was submitted to the Cabinet on 10 March 2020 which included our vision for post-16 learners in Gwynedd, along with a recommendation to hold discussions with the stakeholders of post-16 education in Arfon.

A period of informal engagement on post-16 education in Arfon was held during the autumn term of 2020. The purpose of the engagement was to give stakeholders such as learners, parents, staff, governors and the wider community an opportunity to present observations and ideas regarding the post-16 education system in Arfon, within the context of the Council's vision and objectives.

As part of the process, virtual meetings were held via Microsoft Teams and Zoom, with learners, parents, staff and governors to give them an opportunity to voice their opinions and ask any questions about the field. In addition, special virtual sessions were held to gather opinions and ideas from learners in Arfon. A report on the process was submitted to the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee on the 4 February 2021 with the intention of submitting a further report to the Cabinet in due course, to include a short list of potential options for post-16 education in Arfon, based on the Council's vision, along with messages of the informal engagement process that was held.

### **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.**
- **Live in a naturally Welsh society.**



**What did we promise to do?**

Work has already been done to **transform the additional learning needs and inclusion service**, with the aim of ensuring that those children and young people who need it have access to the most suitable support to enable them to fulfil their potential.

This service is now provided throughout Gwynedd and Anglesey, and it focuses on equipping our schools to support our most vulnerable children and young people to ensure they are able to fulfil their potential.

In the future, we will continue to develop the service in some fields such as the early years, post-16 and special schools. We will also build on the existing partnership work between our Special Schools and with the authority's mainstream schools in order to improve the learning experiences of children with severe and complex needs.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

The transformation work in this field during this year has been focused on preparing for the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 over an extended period, and following the publishing of the Final Code on 23 March 2021. We are planning the steps needed for the initial steps of transitioning from the existing legislation to the new legislation in September 2021. Although some elements will come into force in September 2021, there will be a full three year period of transition, with some elements such as post-16 being delayed.

A crucial element of the new legislation will be the importance of placing the learner and their family at the centre of the process of identifying and providing for their individual needs, and this is key to the preparations and to the systems of schools, other educational establishments and the support services. The work of simplifying processes as much as possible is extremely important for this.

In terms of wider preparations we have seen strong progress in preparing for the legislation with many innovative aspects. A Preparedness Survey (i.e. how prepared the Authority is to transition to the new legislation) created for Welsh Government demonstrates that 33 fields have reached full preparedness, 18 fields have reached preparedness in part and 3 fields are showing initial work. Work streams in the key fields (e.g. post-16 and the Early Years, and ALN Funding) continue to make good progress in preparing for the new requirements. Processes for service provision, quality assurance and training have been created and established.

**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.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.







# Improvement Priority 3

## Reduce inequality within the county

### Gwynedd Residents to Play a Full Part in the World of Work

### Improvement Priority 3

#### What did we promise to do?

A substantial number of residents are unable to fulfil their full potential as they are underemployed or excluded from employment. Being outside the world of work leads to reducing residents' wealth and increasing the demand for public resources, and preventing this is a key part of the anti-poverty agenda. There are direct benefits from being in work in terms of increasing earnings, but there are also wider benefits in terms of health, children's life opportunities and pride in communities.

We have already been working with employers, especially within the tourism industry, to ensure that more Gwynedd residents benefit from the employment opportunities available, and support the residents of Gwynedd to foster the digital skills required to access work.

In future, we will continue with the above-mentioned plans and develop further plans such as close collaboration with our partners across north Wales and with the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions, to improve the coordination of our services.

#### What progress was made in 2020/21?

2020/21 was a very challenging time for Gwynedd residents in terms of work. Historically, unemployment rates in Gwynedd have been lower than average - although underemployment and exclusion from employment remain as challenges.

With the emergence of Covid-19 a high percentage of the Gwynedd workforce was placed on the furlough scheme; 16,700 in July 2020, namely 36% of all workers in the county. A significant increase was also seen in the number of unemployed in the county, especially within communities that are very dependent on the visitor economy. Over 3,200 were looking for work in Gwynedd in July 2020 - double the number in 2019.

Nevertheless by changing its way of working the scheme has continued to support local people to join the labour market and has helped 320 individuals during 2020/21. 68 have succeeded to obtain work as a direct consequence of the support.

One example is an individual who was eager to return to work and move to the construction field. The individual received assistance with their CV, to complete a health and safety course, to develop interview skills and to gain a forklift truck driving licence. During a mentoring session with a local employer they made a good impression and now work for a construction business in Bala.

In order to respond to the new challenge of unemployment in the county, the scheme has secured funding to employ more workers in the field, and to move to hold a series of new activities such as training on on-line job searches and working more closely with local employers. The scheme also works with partners in Gwynedd to ensure that local businesses and residents make the best of the UK Government's Kickstart scheme that guarantees six months' work for young people at no cost to the employer.

#### Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



**What did we promise to do?**

Some residents need more support to deal with life's challenges, and the Council invests in, provides and plans many services and interventions to support people to face up to their problems and attempt to overcome them. These can vary from parenting difficulties to substance misuse to the impact of loneliness.

We have drawn together services from across the Council to shape the Supporting People Programme and to date, we have focused our efforts on mapping, identifying obstacles and improving our understanding of how our services are provided at present.

In future, we will continue to carry out mapping work to understand needs in specific communities and areas, look at whether grant schemes are used for the most effective purpose, and continue to build on the Children First Programme in the Maesgeirchen area.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

It became apparent in March 2020 that we as a Council needed to respond quickly to the daily changes that were occurring as the Covid-19 pandemic developed. Therefore, we amended our 2020/21 Work Programme to divert our attention and resources to supporting people's well-being to cope with the crisis.

We set up the Covid Support Team to support the residents of Gwynedd to access the help they needed to cope with the challenges of the crisis. Among the Team's main responsibilities were:

- Taking calls and e-mail messages from the public, relating to Covid-19 matters, and providing them with information.
- Identifying the most appropriate assistance and support for the residents who contacted them.
- Contacting everyone who was shielding and offering support, and raising their awareness of the support available in the form of Welsh Government food parcels. Between April and August 2020, 5,080 residents contacted the Team, and 4,781 of those were shielding.
- Escalating any concerns to the relevant teams within the Council.
- Identifying what mattered to the residents who came into contact, and identifying a solution.
- Contacting external organisations and bodies on behalf of the residents, and act as a point of contact between the organisation/body and the resident, where appropriate.

Arrangements were established across our departments and with our partners to support communities to maintain well-being and to help residents. We have been supporting



befriending groups and community groups that provide practical help in relation to shopping, food and keeping in contact with vulnerable residents. Our support has been involved with helping to recruit volunteers, funding the groups, getting supplies to the groups and building links between the groups and other services.

We have supported the food banks with food supplies, equipment and premises and grants. We have established the "Cynllun NEGES" food parcel scheme jointly with Menter Môn and Dylan's Restaurant to provide food parcels to vulnerable homes, beyond the food parcel programme that was provided for vulnerable individuals who were shielding.

We have established a new information section on the Council's website to provide information and advice to residents on the help that is available for them to cope with the crisis - matters such as practical help with self-isolating, information on being healthy, and the services and activities that are available.

We have established and prepared information packages and activity packages for families and residents, e.g. art and craft packs, digital tablets, gardening packs, digital activities to keep in touch.

We coordinate specific awareness raising campaigns with partners, e.g. domestic violence, scams and on-line safety, financial advice and benefit payments.

As we evaluate this work we are also amending the work programme for the future to meet our residents' latest needs in light of the crisis. The Supporting People Board has commissioned specific work streams namely supporting homelessness prevention, welfare of children and young people, supporting unpaid carers, tackling food poverty, digital poverty and maintaining community resilience. These priorities will continue in 2021/22.

The work on reviewing our use of and arrangements relating to the preventative grants has not progressed during 2020/21. Instead, we adapted the activity of a number of them to realise the above and we received a higher number of short-term preventative grants to be administered during the year.

The work of setting up the Integrated Centre as part of the Kids' Zone was delayed but has now recommenced and the impact of the crisis is evident in the reshaping of the importance and the need for hubs in communities of deprivation to secure access to the help that people need locally.

We are confident that re-prioritising the original plans has allowed us to respond successfully to the needs of vulnerable people in unusual times.

#### Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

**What did we promise to do?**

We will review the conditions and the working environment to ensure that we take the lead in encouraging Women in Leadership and identify and seek to remove any barriers that could prevent women from reaching leadership and management posts within the Council.

An internal Project Group has carried out a consultation with staff during 2019/20 and in future, we will implement a work programme that will include a programme to develop potential for women, carrying out an audit of our recruitment and appointment methods for managerial posts and creating a forum for female leaders and prospective leaders within the Council.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

A series of discussion forums was arranged for council staff and Elected Members who are women facilitated by some of the Council's senior female officers. Topics such as experiences of leading and managing during the crisis were discussed and the facilitators gave a presentation on preparing for senior jobs. They were attended by a total of 40 women. The sessions received positive feedback and it was expressed that it would be beneficial to hold more sessions.

The main messages deriving from these conversations have been recorded and consequently further activities were held - namely sessions on "imposter syndrome" which were attended by a total of 79 staff, and 18 Elected Members. There are further arrangements in the pipeline to introduce a mentoring programme for the Council's female leaders and prospective leaders as part of a programme of developing potential for women while the "conversation sessions" have been established as a continuous arrangement.

The work of reviewing recruitment and appointment arrangements for managerial posts has slipped during the year but the Project Group has received a presentation on matters to be considered further by the Human Resources Manager.

**Well-being Objectives:**

- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

**What did we promise to do?**

In order to put the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do, we must first identify any barriers that some people face when looking for, or receiving services from the Council. Therefore, our intention is to undertake a thorough investigation of the opinion of Gwynedd residents who have protected characteristics (as noted in the Equality Act 2010) about the services offered by the Council.

This engagement will happen in 2020/21 as part of the 2020-24 Strategic Equality Plan. We will create a further Action Plan based on the evidence we receive.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

During 2020/21 we have begun a public survey along with a survey of Council staff to improve the information we have about people with protected characteristics. As part of this work we carried out a comprehensive campaign to encourage individuals to take advantage of the opportunity to have their say and to identify and contact other stakeholders and groups and initiatives and produce materials such as video clips, BSL clips, press statements, articles and web pages to promote the survey.

There was some slippage to the original timetable for holding the survey because of the re-prioritisation of resources and working methods due to the Covid-19 crisis and consequently, it will remain open until the end of May 2021 rather than the end of February 2021. The outcome of the survey will give us information about the current situation but the intention is to continue with the engagement work in order to improve the information that we have about people with protected characteristics including "in-person" work later on in 2021.

In order to improve the understanding of Elected Members and staff of equality there is a need to ensure that they receive the correct training. During 2020/21 we have developed and trialled a range of remote learning methods and researched suitable learning materials. During next year we will develop a training and awareness raising programme to ensure a better understanding of the needs of the people of Gwynedd and the Equality Act.

The feedback on the engagement work will be fed into the training programme in future. In the meantime, we will look at ways of attracting staff to complete the training on equality and how to encourage them to reflect and realise the need over the coming months.

We have been encouraging staff to complete the equality characteristics monitoring questionnaire in order to obtain reliable evidence to help to improve the diversity of our workforce and with work to reduce any pay gaps. To date, only around half of the Council's workforce has completed the requirement and therefore we will continue to encourage staff to complete the questionnaire by targeting specific departments.

It was intended to hold an audit on the gender pay gap and audit on gender based pay during 2020/21. Unfortunately this work has slipped somewhat as we need to develop the Council computer systems' capacity to generate the information more easily and therefore the work will be completed during the summer of 2021.



# Improvement Priority 4

Ensure a greater supply of suitable housing available to our residents.

Housing Strategy for the People of Gwynedd 2019-24

Improvement Priority 4

## What did we promise to do?

The demand for social and affordable housing to house the residents of Gwynedd is currently higher than the supply available. In response to this challenge, we have already drawn up a Housing Strategy which aims to optimize our supply of housing in Gwynedd, to improve their standard and also improve access to housing by strengthening the support that is available to people to enable them to live independently in their communities.

An interim plan was developed for 2020/21 in order to commence the work of delivering this Strategy, and for the future, we will develop a medium term Action Plan to maximise our ability as a Council to meet the challenge of providing suitable homes for our residents in Gwynedd.

## What progress was made in 2020/21?

To reach the ambition in our Housing Strategy, 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”, we have adopted a Housing Action Plan that includes over 30 specific plans that will lead to an investment of £77 million in the field of housing in Gwynedd over the next six years. These schemes will aim to fulfil the following objectives:

- No one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Social housing available to all who need one
- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd Housing are environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd

During 2021/22, we will start to implement these plans in order to increase the opportunities for local people to have suitable homes within their communities.

The demand on our homelessness service has increased significantly (26%) over the past year as a result of the pandemic and we will therefore aim to prioritise a number of the schemes which will increase the supply of housing available to the homelessness service during the first year of the Housing Action Plan. We will also prioritise schemes to assist with bringing empty homes back into use, buying houses from the market to be let to the county's residents, and commence the process of developing our own housing to be sold to local people.

## Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



# Improvement Priority 5

Ensure that we encourage and promote the ability of the people of Gwynedd to live their lives through the medium of Welsh.

## Promote the use of the Welsh language within the Council's services

## Improvement Priority 5

### What did we promise to do?

Gwynedd Council has been prominent in terms of ensuring that services for residents are available through the medium of Welsh as we operate through the medium of Welsh internally. Promoting the use of the Welsh language within Council services is continuous work, and we are aware of the need to continue to maintain our staff's language skills.

To date, we have been successful in reviewing the language requirements of all posts and in assessing the linguistic ability of 40% of our officers against those requirements. This has all been supported by a language improvement and learning programme.

In future, we will focus on working with the rest of the Council's services - especially front-line services - to complete the assessment and develop the skills of new and existing staff and to take up new opportunities to ensure that we offer a fully bilingual provision for all aspects of our services.

### What progress was made in 2020/21?

A total of 2,401 staff members have been assessed against their post's language designations with 91.8% (2,204) achieving or exceeding the requirements. This means that 197 (8.2%) staff members have been identified who do not meet the designations. Of the number that did not meet the requirements, 11 individuals do now reach their language designations after receiving support and two managers (one from the Adults, Health and Well-being Department and one from the Children and Supporting Families Department) receiving 1:1 support with a tutor which has led to significant progress in a short space of time.

We have developed a self-study course (Access level) for central staff and school staff. Welsh Government is now using this course as a pilot to be offered to schools across Wales.

Measures have been agreed to support the project's long term objectives with arrangements in place for new staff to complete an assessment when they are appointed and to complete the self-evaluations as part of the process of inducting new staff in the care field. Further, the Language Designations Forum has been established with representatives/promoters from every Department who are mainly responsible in the departments for sharing information and good practice as well as identifying any future obstacles and risks.

### Well-being Objectives:

- Live in a naturally Welsh society.



**What did we promise to do?**

At present there is inconsistency in the provision of bilingual services by public bodies in Gwynedd which means that it is not always possible for residents to use the Welsh language naturally when communicating with public bodies.

We will collaborate with other public services, through the **Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board**, to ensure that we innovate in the provision of the Welsh language and public services in the county.

In future, we will contribute to a work programme that will draw together the Council's Adults, Health and Well-being Department, the Health Board and Anglesey Council to establish working arrangements in a bilingual situation for the Community Resources Teams, namely the teams that will provide care and support for the people who need it.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?****Community Resources Team**

Some progress was achieved in accordance with the original plan by working with the Community Resources Team to identify the workforce's language skills and develop principles by collaborating across the different partners (e.g. agree there is room to promote and encourage the offer of a chosen language). However, responding to the Covid-19 crisis affected the ability to move the project forward.

It was decided to change direction as it was apparent there was an opportunity to work with companies tendering to provide care work on behalf of the Community Resources Team in order to ensure that they are aware of the need to provide each element of the service bilingually and that they receive the support to do this.

The next steps will be

- to hold a session with the provider companies to assist them to implement the proactive offer, in other words, to make sure that the language offer is implemented from the beginning
- to review the tenders to ensure they contain clear requirements about language provision.

**Reception Areas Project**

The purpose of the reception areas project undertaken by the Welsh Language Sub-group (Public Services Board) was to encourage the people of Gwynedd to speak Welsh when they come into reception areas (at the Council and other partners). The project was delayed as a result of many reception areas being closed at times during the lockdown periods. The Welsh Language Sub-group now has a new leader and the first priority is to reconsider the work programme to the future.

**Well-being Objectives:**

- **Live in a naturally Welsh society.**

**What did we promise to do?**

The Council has direct contact with Gwynedd businesses to encourage Gwynedd businesses to use the Welsh language. Hunaniaith officers as well as officers within the Economy and Community Department encourage businesses to increase the use of the language through their work in the communities.

In future, we will continue with this work, and we will also work with external partners such as Welsh in Business and the Welsh Language Commissioner to ensure that everyone together plans the provision required by Gwynedd businesses.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

This work is now embedded in our day-to-day work and will not be recognised on a corporate improvement priority level in the Council Plan in 2021/22.

During the last year, officers from Hunaniaith and the Economy and Community Department have encouraged businesses to increase their use of the Welsh language through their community outreach work. We have also been collaborating to create a webpage for the Gwynedd Council website to encourage and promote the Welsh language to businesses and we've also collaborated with a "Helo Blod" officer (Promoting the Welsh language in business) to refer businesses for support.

**Well-being Objectives:**

- **Live in a naturally Welsh society.**



### What did we promise to do?

In order to promote and increase the use of the Welsh language among young people within the curriculum and socially, we have led on the Welsh Language Charter in order to influence children's social use of the Welsh language in primary schools and there have been calls to ensure its progression in the secondary schools.

We have been working in collaboration with secondary schools to produce an individual action plan in order to increase the opportunities for children and young people to use the Welsh language in formal and informal situations, and have given specific attention to the language medium of the provision across the curriculum in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5.

In future, we will continue to collaborate on these issues and will support the schools to complete and implement their plans. We will also support schools to act in accordance with the new national requirements of Welsh Government's Welsh Language Charter Framework that is coming into force during 2020-21.

### What progress was made in 2020/21?

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Welsh Government has not published the new national Welsh Language Charter Framework, and it has not been possible to implement the Language Charter in its usual format throughout the schools following the numerous lockdowns during the last year.

However, because of the lockdown periods, there was concern that the confidence of a number of children and young people in speaking Welsh would be affected due to the lack of opportunities to use the language at home, and the lack of opportunities to speak Welsh with peers. Consequently, during Lockdown (March 2020), a number of resources were created for Gwynedd schools by the Welsh Language Charter Co-ordinator and the Secondary Sector Language Strategy Co-ordinator, and schools were also encouraged to share resources in the field of the Welsh language on Hwb, and a library of county resources was created by the department along with contributing to regional and national resources at the request of GwE for every Key Stage. Video clips were produced for the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 as a resource to encourage learners to use the spoken language, and training that was held on immersion principles in the Foundation Phase was transferred to a digital medium for all schools to use.

As the schools reopened in September 2020, the Secondary Welsh Language Strategy Coordinator provided additional support to some learner groups at the secondary schools who had lost confidence in their use of the Welsh language and their Welsh language skills during Lockdown. Similarly, the Welsh Language Charter Coordinator provided intensive support to some primary schools to reinforce the Welsh language.



As Foundation Phase learners returned to school following the further Lockdown (January-March 2021), a questionnaire was shared with every school to establish a baseline of the position of the Welsh language, to identify strategies used by the schools to reinforce the Welsh language and to identify any further support needs. We are in the process of analysing the messages from this questionnaire and intend to circulate a similar questionnaire in the context of Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 later during the summer term of 2021. This information as a baseline will refer to the work programmes of the Language Coordinators, cluster work and grants in the context of the Welsh language, along with the priorities of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan that we will be consulting on as a new ten year plan in the 2021 autumn term.

We have also given particular attention to supporting the workforce's language skills in order to facilitate a Welsh medium future to the provision across the curriculum in Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 by trialling a Work Welsh pilot scheme for Teachers on behalf of the Welsh Government with the teaching staff of one secondary school in the county.

#### Well-being Objectives:

- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.

# Improvement Priority 6

Ensure that we have care services which help people to live their lives as they wish.

## Re-designing Care Services

## Improvement Priority 6

### What did we promise to do?

The county's care needs are changing, and we have been working together with the Health Board to secure easy and direct access to services that support what matters to adults in Gwynedd. A working method that places more emphasis on health and well-being and prevention work will ensure better outcomes for individuals, enable them to live independently for as long as possible and reduce the need for intensive care.

We have established 5 Local Area Teams that provide a seamless service and build on the strengths of the individual and the community. They also ensure that our arrangements for hospital discharge are effective and correspond to what matters to the individual. In 2020/21, we will work to identify and remove further barriers to integrated working, such as improving and streamlining the process of referring to services and strengthening the arrangements for sharing information. We have extended a pilot for a new way of providing home care across the county and have also worked to develop and improve the provision in our residential homes, which included opening Dementia Units in Tywyn and Bangor.

In future, we will prepare to implement the new method of providing home care by summer 2020 and will work to develop the dementia provision, extra care housing, profound physical needs care and suitable accommodation for individuals with learning disabilities. We will also work on developing the mental health services available in the county with a focus on early intervention and support.

### What progress was made in 2020/21?

In relation to the work to develop integrated services, we have held virtual workshops for the Community Resources Teams in order to agree local priorities and work programmes, with arrangements for each area to report monthly on progress, successes and barriers. These arrangements have been in operation since November 2020. We have also developed a specific work programme for reviewing the arrangements for collaboration with hospitals and have agreed on short-term working processes to support the vision we have of the Local Teams taking ownership for supporting the timely discharge of individuals from hospital. The workers of the Social Work Team in Ysbyty Gwynedd will be relocated within the Community Resources Teams to strengthen community capacity. Although it is early to say, there are signs of a change of culture and closer working between professions, which in turn reduces the need for people to repeat their stories to a number of different professionals.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 crisis has meant that it was not appropriate to conduct tendering exercises during such a challenging time for care providers, and as such there has been a slippage in the timetable for proceeding with the new approach of providing home care. However, a short-term plan was put in place with our care providers in an attempt to stabilise the market and manage the capacity until we could go out to tender on the new contracts. During 2020/21, local workshops were held with the service and the providers to agree on how to gain better control of the local care provision capacity and waiting lists. The care providers are also part of local discussions within the Community Resources Teams in most areas. It is early days at present, but these arrangements do seem to be improving joint-working thus far.

Our work to modernise our residential provision has continued, and during the year the construction of a new Dementia Unit was completed at our home in Llan Ffestiniog. This provision was retained as a back-up resource during the pandemic, but we are now looking forward to opening the unit. Alongside this, investment programmes worth £500k have continued on our home in Dolgellau, where we will maximise the quality of resources and create a new bariatric provision, and we are also creating a Dementia Unit in our home in Barmouth. We hope that these resources will assist to meet the various needs of the people of Gwynedd, and promote independence and dignity. Work on the development of an Extra Care Housing facility in Pwllheli is continuing, led by Adra housing association.

With regard to suitable accommodation for individuals with learning disabilities, the number of individuals who have been identified as needing a supported accommodation placement has increased, and the lack of suitable properties locally is a cause of concern and leads to fragile home situations and additional pressure on carers. We have been working with various stakeholders and housing associations to try and meet these accommodation needs, and we were involved in producing the Housing and Property Department's Housing Action Plan, which has now been approved by the Cabinet. We are also in discussions with Grŵp Cynefin and Adra to see how we can work more closely together to make the most of any empty properties they have.

We are continuing to collaborate with the Health Board to develop the county's mental health services, and the work on ICAN centres focuses on early intervention, working together with third sector organisations. This service provides a one-stop shop for individuals needing support, and it enables us to make the contact between them and any housing agencies, Citizens Advice Bureau etc. as required in order to help them with matters that are causing them stress and negatively affecting their mental health. During the Covid-19 crisis we have been providing this support virtually to a broad range of individuals. During the last year we have established a new hub in Caernarfon in partnership with Gisda in order to offer support to young people, and we intend to extend this to Blaenau Ffestiniog too.

#### Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.



**What did we promise to do?**

In order to help people maintain connections, reduce loneliness and sustain mental and physical health, we need to go further than just providing support services in the home or residential care. We have been motivating and supporting the communities of Gwynedd to be more resilient in order to find preventative solutions that increase local care options for people.

We have mapped the services and groups that currently exist in communities in order to identify gaps, and connect individuals who need support to services, and have also promoted community initiatives. New resources have been created, such as the Dyffryn Nantlle Community Transport Scheme and Pwllheli Men's Shed.

Towards the future, we will continue to identify gaps in provision in our communities, with the aim of agreeing on local priorities with those communities. By March 2021, we will be clear on the well-being priorities for each of the Council's areas and will begin to consider how we will shape our services for the future. We will also continue to develop the community hub model across the county in order to provide a broad range of well-being opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in our local communities.

**What progress was made in 2020/21?**

The pandemic has certainly highlighted the strengths of our communities as people came together to support each other. The time in question has also enabled us to understand much more about the gaps that exists as dozens of Council staff went about engaging with the most vulnerable members of our communities as part of the Covid-19 Support Team. But despite the learning that emerged from this during the past year, unfortunately we did not manage to agree on local priorities, as was originally intended. The reason for this was the need to prioritise officers' time to be able to respond fully to the crisis we were facing.

The work of identifying well-being priorities for each of the Council's areas was also suspended for a year, with the permission of the Future Generations Commissioner. This work will now be completed by March 2022. We will be updating the Population Needs Assessment soon, and the Council will also lead on a community regeneration programme over the next period. All this work will allow us to review our intentions, and will feed into our considerations of how we will shape our services towards the future.

In relation to the work on developing the community hub model across the county which provides well-being opportunities for adults with learning disabilities in their local communities, we were unable to make the progress intended during the year as the service had to give priority to maintaining services and support for adults with learning disabilities and their families, as best we could. However, we have opened a new community hub in Felinheli and the hubs have been hugely beneficial for us to be able to provide a service safely during the pandemic. The plan to rebuild the Dolgellau Hub (Dolfeurig) is also progressing, with the aim for the work to commence in January 2022.

Although our ability to deliver the project's objectives has always relied on effective joint-working across services, partners and communities, our experience during the last year has highlighted the need to review how best to coordinate the work and achieve the aim in moving forwards. A slight change is that we will no longer be reporting on the progress of this work as a single project for the future, but instead we will be tying it in with the wider plan we have in place for Supporting People's Well-being.

#### Well-being Objectives:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.



### What did we promise to do?

Recruiting to the care field is challenging for various reasons. We have an effective and committed workforce, but we must ensure that we have enough workers with the necessary skills in order to cope with the increasing need that is likely to arise in future.

We have been striving to try to better understand the challenge that exists across the field, and in response to this a work programme was developed in an attempt to address some of the concerns. The work of establishing a new home care provision system will have a positive impact on elements such as the salaries of front-line staff in the private sector, lengths of work contracts and the promotion of career pathways in the field.

The themes that will be addressed over the coming year are Terms and Conditions of Work, Workforce Planning and Development, the Image and Profile of Care Posts, and Communication and Marketing.

### What progress was made in 2020/21?

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted our recruitment challenges more than ever, and has meant having to prioritise some aspects of this project with emphasis on recruiting staff in the short term. This has led to an inevitable slippage in some developing work programmes that would have had a positive impact on things such as the workforce's terms and conditions of employment.

It was extremely challenging to maintain front-line services during the pandemic, and the main challenge was responding to substantial staffing shortages. The Cabinet approved additional resources in October to respond to the staffing shortages that we anticipated we would face. This facilitated our ability to hold recruitment campaigns to attract more workers to the field.

Arrangements were put in place to support and train individuals who were completely new to the field, whether they were individuals just beginning their careers, or those wishing to re-train after losing their job as a result of the pandemic. As part of the campaign [SOS #DaretoCare](#) that was held between November 2020 and January 2021, over 100 individuals were identified as potential candidates to be employed in the care sector.

We used different methods to those we had used in the past, and worked closely with the Council's central communications team. An example of this was using different ways of targeting particular areas in the county through social platforms.



The campaign was successful as we managed to reach individuals who would not have considered working in this sector in the past, as well as individuals who would not have seen an advertisement on the Council's website and responded to it. This work has enabled us to have better resources and materials and has enabled us to target particular areas and groups. As a result of the campaign, we have been receiving 2 or 3 applications for posts; prior to this we would often fail to attract any candidates. There are several examples within care field of appointing through new and alternative means, such as through the apprenticeship scheme, and the Government's recent 'Kickstart' scheme that provides employment opportunities to young people.

#### 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 with dignity and independently for as long as possible.



# Improvement Priority 7

Ensure that the whole Council places the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything we do.

## Empowering Units to Implement Ffordd Gwynedd

## Improvement Priority 7

### What did we promise to do?

As a Council, it is our responsibility to ensure that it is the needs of the people of Gwynedd that steer how we offer the services that we provide. In doing so, we should avoid any unnecessary working arrangements. The purpose of this project will be to lead service teams to reflect on their current working arrangements, to challenge whether they are placing the people of Gwynedd centrally and whether there is room for improvement.

The original Ffordd Gwynedd Strategy published in October 2015 has now ended. The Ffordd Gwynedd Plan in its new form was approved during 2019/20.

In future, we will therefore implement the Ffordd Gwynedd Plan work programme, which includes workforce planning, customer contact, working conditions and performance challenging as some of its main priorities.

### What progress was made in 2020/21?

An amended Code of Conduct has been adopted for Council staff, which reflects the expected behaviours that belong to our working culture. Each of the working conditions is reviewed in turn to ensure that they coincide with the Ffordd Gwynedd culture and the content of the Code is considered to provide a foundation for this.

We succeeded to continue with the training programme to support the development of "the working method" across the Council. This work was facilitated after establishing remote learning arrangements during the second half of the year. The six day training for managers and leaders was adapted to be presented in shorter sessions and a number of workshops were held with specific teams to support service reviews and develop the mind-set within those services. It will be possible to build and extend this support based on the work achieved this year with the intention of concentrating on implementing the reviews and making a difference.

Performance challenging arrangements were reviewed with a view to produce monthly reports for Cabinet Members from now on. We will continue to hold regular performance challenging meetings while focusing on the main risks identified within the Risk Register, which are reflected in turn in the improvement priorities that have been agreed in the Council Plan.

The specific work in relation to workforce planning is identified as a new improvement priority in the Council Plan for 2021/22 and it incorporates the work that has already taken place with apprentices and professional trainees along with the developing potential programme for the Council's existing staff.

Wales Audit Office has carried out an independent assessment of the development of Ffordd Gwynedd within the Council. The assessment acknowledged that vast progress had been made but drew attention to some matters that would enable the Council to embed this working culture on a broader and deeper level across our services.





# Improvement Priority 8

## Respond to the climate change emergency

| Climate Change Action Plan   | Improvement Priority 8 |
|--|------------------------|
| <b>What did we promise to do?</b>  |                        |
| <p>Since March 2019, the Council has been measuring all the steps we have already taken to reduce our carbon footprint and to prepare our communities for responding to climate changes in the future. We also researched new and innovative methods we can adopt for the future, not only as a Council but across the communities of Gwynedd, and have commenced the process of consulting on those ideas and any other ideas that we might have missed.</p> <p>In 2020/21, we will publish and implement a Climate Change Response Plan that will build on the steps that we are already taking to reduce our carbon footprint to ensure that we maximise the contribution of the Council and the county in responding to the crisis. Realising the Climate Change Action Plan will be a responsibility for all Council departments and we will need to ensure that our own internal arrangements are robustly in place before we proceed to see how we can collaborate with other partners.</p> |                        |
| <b>What progress was made in 2020/21?</b>  |                        |
| <p>Unfortunately, the Covid-19 crisis interrupted the work that was underway to compile a Climate Change Action Plan, but officers have been working on a draft version. The aim of the draft paper is to highlight what the departments intend to achieve so that this becomes a basis for a members' workshop early in 2021-22. This will lead to adopting an Action Plan for the future.</p> <p>We have also been preparing to appoint a Project Officer to lead on this work, who will be in post during 2021-22.</p>  |                        |
| <b>Well-being Objectives:</b>  |                        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.</li></ul>  |                        |

# Part 2

## Departmental Reports

# Education Department

Together with the work this department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

One of the Council's main priorities is to ensure that the children and young people of Gwynedd are all given the same opportunities and have the best possible education and experiences.

In a normal year, this report would be a medium to provide a brief analysis of the standards of Gwynedd schools in the context of the Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2 in the primary sector, and Key Stages 3 and 4 in the secondary sector. We would have reported on the new indicator, namely the Capped 9 point score accounted for the best nine GCSEs (or equivalent qualifications) for every learner. However, as a result of Covid-19 and the lockdown, when schools were closed on 20 March 2020, and re-purposed from 23 March onwards to provide childcare for vulnerable children and the children of key workers with the curriculum suspended, there is no analysis available of standards across the Key Stages, including Key Stage 4, as the external GCSE and A Level examinations were not held as usual.

In addition, ESTYN did not inspect our schools during this period, therefore the Gwynedd schools inspections profile has not changed from what was reported upon in 2019/20. However, though ESTYN did not inspect schools during 2020/21, at the request of Welsh Government, they held a review of the work of local authorities to support their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020, and presented an individual report to each local authority on

their findings. An extract from this report is provided below.

2019-20 was a year of consistent and continued change for the Education Department, for schools and for children and young people, with the school being re-purposed to provide care for vulnerable children and children of key workers from 23 March 2020 onwards, with the curriculum suspended. Several lockdowns were seen during the year, and during these periods, our schools were responsible for providing distance learning, together with live learning sessions in order to ensure the best possible education for our children and young people, with a clear emphasis also on ensuring the well-being and happiness of the children and young people under the circumstances.

The Education Department recognises the significant impact that this pandemic has had on children and young people and provides support for them. As the learners returned to the schools, there was concern that some children and young people may be left behind in terms of their educational attainment, and that some would need additional support to close that gap, as well as the need for support with their well-being. In response to this concern, since September 2020, all schools in Gwynedd have implemented an 'Accelerated Learning Programme' with funding from the Welsh Government to respond to the impact of the lockdown period on the well-being and attainment of certain groups of learners aged 5-16. The Education Department in conjunction with GwE (the School Improvement Service) is supporting the schools to implement this programme. The Education Department is also giving specific attention to the impact of the pandemic on the well-being and attainment of children in the early years, together with its impact on



well-being, attainment and the projections for young people post-16. The department will be able to say more about these work streams in next year's report.

Following the reopening of schools, the Education Department also supported individual schools when cases of Covid-19 arose, providing appropriate guidance and advice, following the guidance of the test, trace and protect service, whilst also ensuring the continuation of education via a remote provision for bubbles of learners who would have had to stay home to self-isolate for a while.

During the year of consistent and continuous change, therefore, the Education Department attached great importance to communicating with stakeholders, seeking to ensure timely guidance, guidelines and decisions to enable schools to operate in the most appropriate way under the circumstances. The significance of this timely communication is conveyed in ESTYN's Thematic Report:

#### *'Leadership and Collaboration*

The Head of Education has maintained direct and consistent communication with officers, school leaders and with elected members throughout the pandemic. There was strong collaboration within both the primary strategic forum and the secondary head teacher strategic forum during the lockdown period. All decisions, plans and policies were agreed through these forums and this consistent approach to communication. This was valued by school leaders, who felt it reflected the collective and shared responsibility that exists between the local authority and its schools.'

The Education Department worked in close partnership with the heads, GwE, Council departments and Welsh Government in order to be able to provide the best guidance and

support to the schools under difficult and very challenging circumstances for them.

#### **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**

In order to facilitate remote learning during the year, but more specifically in response to the first lockdown, the Education Department was very proactive and prominent in the field of ICT, providing 1,200 Chromebook devices and 175 MiFi devices for families who did not have access to technology and/or internet connection during the first lockdown. This made a great difference in improving access to education and educational experiences for children during this time, however, some challenges remained in terms of a shortage of devices for large families, meaning that some children had to share devices and miss out on live lessons if families were required to prioritise the lessons of one child at the expense of the other. The Education Department also led on drawing up policies and procedures to allow Gwynedd schools to provide distance learning through live learning technology. Gwynedd's progressive policy was eventually adopted by a number of other authorities, and the department was innovative in promoting and encouraging live learning sessions with our schools, and saw the clear advantages of that for the learners.

*'Here is a cameo from the ESTYN Thematic Report (January 2021) on the department's work to support schools and PRUs:*

'Digital learning as a legacy of the pandemic. The authority has accelerated its strategic plan to provide a laptop for every pupil in years 5-11, with the first tranche of deliveries due in the spring for those in key stage 4. This strategy also includes providing all teachers with a new work laptop for facilitating digital learning. As a result, schools are able to plan for a future where learners have greater access to ICT,

thus ensuring that new digital skills learnt during lockdown periods are embedded in teaching and learning going forward.'

The work of providing devices for all learners and teachers continues, with 900 iPads, 5,500 Chromebooks and 3,500 laptops bought in accordance with the vision highlighted in our Digital Education Strategy.

The department will be able to say more about ICT development in next year's report.

## **The Welsh Language**

During the lockdown period, Language Centre staff had to adapt and transform the way they provided support for latecomers to acquire the Welsh language. Language Centre staff were in fact the first to pilot live learning sessions during the Summer Term 2020, in order to maintain the spoken language of latecomers who attended Language Centres during the 2019-20 academic year. Language Centre and school staff recognised that most of the latecomer learners only had access to the Welsh language and the opportunity to practise speaking and listening skills through these live learning sessions. To complement the live learning sessions, Language Centre staff also set up Google Classrooms for the learners on Hwb to provide latecomers with further opportunities to practise and acquire the Welsh language. Here is a cameo from the ESTYN Thematic Report on the Local Authority's work in supporting latecomers:

### *'Supporting learners who are new to the Welsh language*

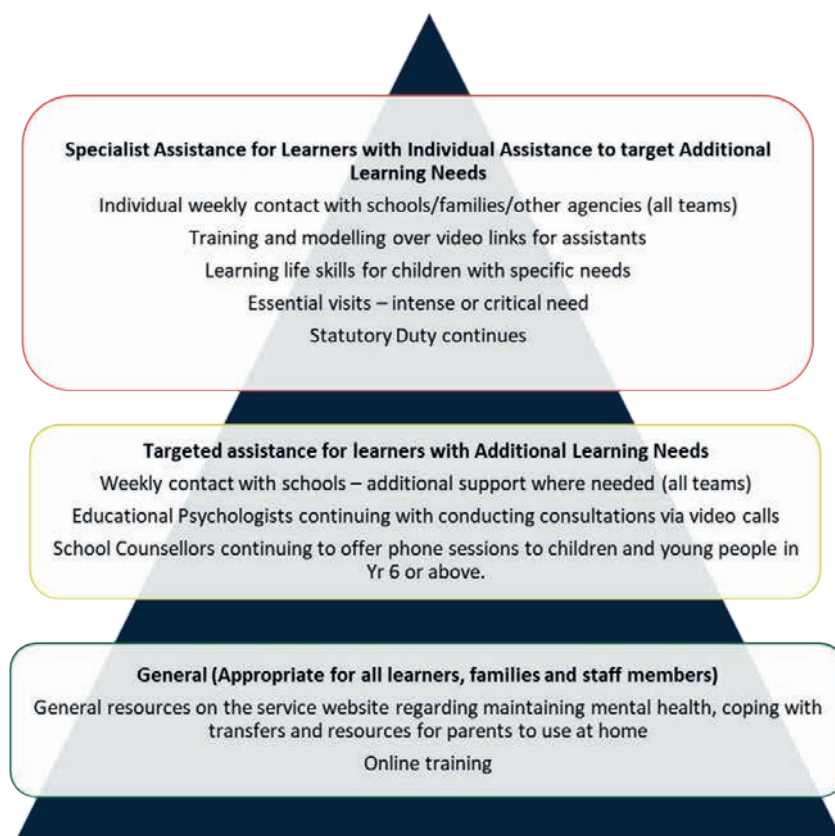
One example of the close alignment of the local authority and GwE is their approach to supporting schools to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. Some coastal areas of Gwynedd saw a significant influx of non-Welsh speakers during the lockdown period. The challenge of catering for their linguistic

needs when schools reopened in September was compounded by the difficulties in running Welsh language units in their traditional form. To counter this, to support primary schools, the local authority arranged for the specialist teachers to provide an outreach service on a cluster basis, whilst the cluster's Supporting Improvement Advisor worked with the schools to create and adapt Welsh schemes of work.'

As a result of the pandemic, Language Centre staff have continued to provide support for latecomers via blended learning, namely face-to-face sessions in the schools, live teaching sessions on TEAMS along with work on Google Classrooms, however, consideration will be given to re-opening the Language Centre for learners for the first time since the pandemic during the Summer Term 2021.

## **Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (ALN & I)**

The ALN&I Service reviewed the provision model in a very short space of time to respond to the lockdown over the past year in order to allow learners to continue to have access to the service. This was challenging of course, due to the restrictions in a period which was extremely different and challenging for children and young people and their families. Throughout this period, the statutory duty to provide in accordance with the SEN Act (2002) has continued, and transformation work for the new legislation in the field of Additional Learning Needs has also continued. The service operated on three tiers in order to respond to the different levels of needs:



There was a need to place a definite emphasis on supporting well-being on these tiers with elements of that stemming from contact at an individual level, targeted training and general training and resources. For example:

- Resources for dealing with transformation, five ways to well-being on the website ([www.adyach.cymru](http://www.adyach.cymru)). Great use was made of the website.
- Seasons for Growth Programme (for dealing with loss and grief) and Mindfulness
- Supervision for ELSA assistants (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) which supported vulnerable pupils during this period
- Well-being sessions for Head Teachers
- And as a new addition, resources to respond to the period of uncertainty for years 11-13.

The welfare service supports schools to promote attendance. Difficulties with

attendance can arise for a range of reasons e.g. behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties. During the period, elements of the role of the Welfare Officers have changed unavoidably with the usual arrangements for prosecuting parents on hold. Throughout the Covid-19 period, they have supported the schools by giving assistance to learners and their families if they had difficulties attending school for many reasons as a result of Covid-19. These difficulties have included anxiety about the virus and the new arrangements, lack of incentive because of the situation, as well as historical difficulties continuing and intensifying.

During lockdown, 152 individuals in years 7-10 were identified as requiring support in terms of their well-being, with 80% having weekly engagement and 20% on an ad-hoc basis by undertaking activity packs sent to the home, support with fitness and diet, support with emotional well-being, support on the school site, together with ADTRAC provision for year 11 learners who were at a high risk of becoming NEET.

In addition, ESTYN identified that the



Education Department had given purposeful support for heads and school staff, striking an effective balance between supporting heads, staff and learners with well-being and promoting learning. Here is a cameo from the ESTYN Thematic Report (January 2021):

*'Balancing support for wellbeing and promoting learning*

The education officers for primary and secondary schools held regular meetings with every head teacher. In these meetings, there was a particular focus on schools' success in engaging with vulnerable learners. She has ensured that secondary school staff have all received extra training in how to provide well for pupils with special educational needs. In addition, all head teachers have received beneficial training on mental and emotional wellbeing. This is to ensure that head teachers feel well supported in managing their own wellbeing as well as feeling empowered to support that of their staff. Head teachers have noted that this training and support has been highly valuable.'

## Catering and Cleaning

Catering and cleaning staff responded positively to the various demands on them during the year. At the beginning of lockdown, the catering service provided packed lunches for learners who were eligible for free school meals, however, only 224 eligible children came to collect the packed lunches. Consequently, from 20 April until September 2020, direct payments were arranged for learners who were eligible for free school meals, with 2,249 children receiving a free meal direct payment on 14 August 2020. These direct payments continued throughout the school holiday period until Easter 2021. After schools were re-opened, direct payments were arranged for eligible children who were a part of a bubble in a school and who were required to self-isolate, with the

remaining eligible children receiving free lunches at the schools.

In addition, 230 catering staff assisted with cleaning schools during the day from 29 June 2020 until 17 July 2020. Since September 2020, staff clean schools during the day and after school, and despite staffing challenges within the service, the catering service has managed to provide the usual school meals every day to all Gwynedd pupils.

## Period Poverty

A grant was received from Welsh Government to address period poverty in the community and at our schools in order to allow girls to access hygiene products free of charge. As a result of the grant, period products are now available to all school learners from years 5-13 who need them, and during lockdown, learners were able to contact their school for products. In addition, the TRAC 11-24 scheme distributed packs of eco-friendly reusable period products for vulnerable people, deprived people or people who were not in contact with the main-stream education system. Over 160 packs were distributed to all parts of the county. Work has been undertaken to distribute packs directly within communities also, with 420 packs shared with community groups which have been set up to support vulnerable individuals and families during this period.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Receive education of the highest quality which will enable us to do what we want to do.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

# Adults, Health and Well-being

Together with the work this department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition by providing the timely support necessary to allow the people of Gwynedd to live their lives as they wish.

## **Covid-19**

The Covid-19 crisis that struck in March 2020 has posed significant challenges to the department throughout 2020/21. Taking account of the unprecedented year we have had, the department's performance has been good. This department's work carries on regardless during the pandemic, and the focus had to be on adapting and changing the support given to residents. We saw during the year that many required support in the same way as usual, if not more support, and some decisions to suspend some services were very difficult to make. Some of our day centre services were closed for a period of time, and some centres remain closed due to the risks involved, however our staff did their best to provide support outside in the community wherever possible. Nevertheless, the department has managed to continue to provide most of its services (through alternative means in some situations) and has made a great effort to enable and support our independent care providers to be able to do the same.

One major challenge for many of the individuals and their families whom we support was the need to prevent visitors from visiting care homes. This of course had a negative effect on residents and families. Despite the restrictions, every effort was made to facilitate visits in situations of serious illness.

At the beginning of the crisis, there were periods of uncertainty and lack of guidance on aspects such as discharging patients from hospitals. In response to this, guidelines were put in place to ensure clarity for front-line workers and to safeguard our residents. Also at the beginning of the crisis, there was a very worrying shortage of PPE equipment, and constant changes in the guidance caused uncertainty for our care staff. Furthermore, the need for some staff to self-isolate for various reasons highlighted the recruitment challenges we have been facing for many years. There is more information about PPE issues in the Covid-19 chapter of the report, and about recruitment in the information on Improvement Priorities.

Something else the service had to adapt to and cope with was the need to regularly test front-line staff and residents who were being supported. Although this was key to preventing transmission, the constant changes to the arrangements have been challenging, and contributed at times to uncertainty arising from having to wait for the results, or because the guidelines at the time did not allow testing some cohorts of staff. Alongside having to deal with these new requirements, we should acknowledge the heroic effort seen across the field to vaccinate key staff and our vulnerable residents.

Flexibility within the department's services and staff to take on new responsibilities and duties overnight was essential to our success in responding to the crisis. An excellent example of this was the establishment of the Covid-19 Support Team and the arrangements that were put in place at the start of the pandemic, and which continue, to support care providers across the county. There is more information about these aspects in the Covid-19 chapter at the start of the report.

A further challenge for us now of course is to weigh up our options as we aim to re-build better, address lessons learned, and in doing so consider the shape of our services for the future. As part of this we must assess the longer-term effect of the pandemic on our communities and the demand there will be on our services. We will begin that journey during the year ahead by revisiting our 'population needs assessment'.

One positive by-product of the Covid-19 crisis is the fact that it highlighted the key importance of the role of care staff in maintaining and supporting health services, and it is pleasing to see this being recognised. It will be vital that we ensure that this recognition continues in future, to ensure better collaboration and services of the highest quality for our residents.

### **Older People, Physical and Sensory Disabilities**

The work on the Community Health and Care Transformation Programme is ongoing, with emphasis on integrating the essential culture within our five Local Teams and equipping leaders and staff to ensure that they keep what matters to the individual at the heart of their care. These teams, which include health and care staff, and staff from the third sector and independent sector, have regular contact on a patch-level; they share information and resources, work together to understand the situation locally and address any barriers. Other elements of the programme include projects that facilitate hospital discharges, a project for sharing information across agencies, and the project on redesigning domiciliary care across the county.

Although the timetable has slipped slightly because of Covid-19, the plans are going ahead, and our vision continues to focus on moving the domiciliary care services towards

a patch-based model, and commissioning based on outcomes for individuals and social value. We intend to conduct a tendering process for specific areas during the coming year.

Our main indicator as a service now is whether we have achieved what is important to the individual whom we are supporting. The data during the past year shows that we have achieved this in 71% of those cases. We then managed to partly achieve what is important in 23% of the cases, which unfortunately leaves 6% (24 individuals) where we were unsuccessful in achieving what matters to them.



Many had decided to stop their care for a period of time at the beginning of the first lockdown as they were in the shielding category, and had family supporting them at home. Reinstating the care for these individuals as families returned to work has proved challenging, which has contributed to the lack of increase in the number of people stating that we are achieving what is important to them. As expected, loneliness and lack of companionship has also had an effect on individuals' well-being. This is reflected in those cases where it was not possible to achieve what matters to the individual, with



the reasons including examples such as being unable to see members of the family, or having been unable to socialise with friends in a day centre.

We continue to face challenges in providing care services within some communities in the county, specifically some rural areas where there is a shortage of carers and an ageing population which leads to increasing pressure on our services. Unfortunately, this has been highlighted during the Covid-19 crisis, with the waiting lists for domiciliary care provision having increased, and providers returning care packages to the Council due to staffing problems. However, more recently during February and March 2021, we have seen some encouraging improvement in the situation, with a reduction in the numbers waiting for a domiciliary care provision.

## **Mental Health**

The Mental Health Service is a joint integrated service with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. The Health Board leads this service, and our social workers and Board colleagues are based in multi-disciplinary teams in the Hergest Unit and Ysbyty Alltwen.

During the pandemic, our Mental Health Teams have continued to support individuals, whether in the community or through our ICAN centres. This support was mainly in virtual form, but face-to-face visits continued for individuals who were deteriorating or were in a crisis. There is more information on the developments of the ICAN work available under the Re-design of Care Services project in the Improvement Priorities section.

The challenge remains to have a suitable practitioner to carry out work under Section 12 of the Mental Health Act 1983. The Corporate Director has escalated these concerns to the Health Board and has requested an action plan to address the problem. This lack of

provision causes delay in trying to secure timely admission to hospital, and there is a risk of the individual's mental condition deteriorating further.

## **Learning Disabilities**

The offer of preventative intervention is driving the improvements in the field of Learning Disabilities, with the focus on developing community-based services that address what matters to individuals. The service's performance measure shows a positive performance, noting that 85% of our cases have reported that we achieved what matters to them, and a further 15% noting that we had partial success in achieving what matters. In considering the data for the past year, we should recognise more than ever that what matters to the individual can change depending on the situation at the time. It was vital that we were able to be creative and flexible in adapting the support for those individuals, in order to address what mattered to them through alternative approaches.

We know that the issues that prevent us from fully achieving what matters mainly involve accommodation and employment opportunities. We have a project board in these two priority areas at present, with the aim of addressing the deficit, which corresponds with the priorities of the North Wales Learning Disability Transformation Programme. We have started working with Housing Associations and the Council's Housing and Property Department in order to address the shortage of suitable accommodation for individuals with disabilities across the county. Providing training opportunities and work experiences for individuals with learning disabilities is also a priority, which will enable individuals to learn and participate in society. As well as working alongside private sector employers, it is important that we as a service and as a Council lead the way. A Community Hub is

being developed in Dolfeurig, Dolgellau and a 'Meals on Wheels' Service is being operated in the area of Ffôr, Pwllheli, in cooperation with Agoriad. These two provisions will offer opportunities for training and paid employment.

During the lockdown, we managed to continue with sessions to promote individuals' well-being - physical, emotional and social. We have provided virtual sessions such as yoga, dance, art with a local artist, a quiz, a disco as well as a Makaton Choir and much more. Other activities were also held, such as walking groups in the community and confidential 'Blwch Siarad' discussion sessions in collaboration with Mind. During the year, 134 individuals received support or joined the sessions.

The service also managed to continue to provide one-to-one day and respite opportunities in some priority situations and has provided bespoke services by using our community hubs flexibly in order to adhere to Covid-19 regulations. In addition, since September, the Learning Disabilities Service has started using a new respite unit in Pwllheli to provide an overnight respite service for individuals with disabilities, which helps carers with the substantial pressure they are under, and ensures that we meet the need before a more intensive intervention is required.

## Well-being

We are working to improve quality of life by connecting people, but we also focus on supporting family/unpaid carers. A Facebook page was set up during the pandemic to support people's well-being by promoting Public Health Wales' Five Ways to Well-being. On the page we shared a broad range of information and health and well-being events in Gwynedd. A creative fortnight was also held on-line under the title **Well-being for Me** between 18-31 January this

year, with the aim of supporting the mental well-being of the individuals who took part. The event was free of charge to anyone over 18, and all the activities were based on the 'Five Ways to Well-being'. These included creative activities, videos, conversations, ideas, inspiration, a sense of supporting each other and a booklet to guide each individual through the period.

The Covid-19 crisis has certainly highlighted the pressures on unpaid carers and during 2020/21 we worked with other organisations to establish the Gwynedd Carers Network, where work took place during the year to support unpaid carers during the pandemic. The 'Looking After Someone' booklet was also prepared to support carers. In August 2020, an Online Carers Festival was held for three weeks, with the aim of providing information, supporting the well-being of carers and having fun. Alongside this, a Carers' Rights Day was held, which was an online campaign to raise awareness of carers' rights. We have also been part of a partnership to produce an ID card and App for Young Carers. The app makes it easier for young carers and their families to get support and notify their schools of any situations that arise, and we will be running a pilot of the app soon.

## Our Internal Provision

As a Council we have 13 residential homes (11 for older adults, and two for people with learning disabilities) and we are very proud of the way the service has managed to maintain the quality of the care throughout the pandemic.

During the year homes have faced several challenges, and residents and staff have adapted incredibly well. We are extremely proud of the efforts and the commitment to put people's well-being at the heart of the provision, encouraging them to keep in touch with their families through technology, to

participate in religious services online and to run activities to entertain them. We have committed to upgrading Wi-Fi connections in all homes, and new equipment has now been installed in almost every home.

We have continued with the programme of investment and modernisation of our homes in order to improve quality and secure bespoke resources to meet service users' needs. Renovation work has been completed at our home in Llan Ffestiniog, and work is being undertaken in our homes in Dolgellau and Barmouth.

In relation to the department's **Local Priorities**, work has commenced on an Extra Care Housing development in Pwllheli. In line with this, we will also be looking at improving the care provision in rural Llŷn in future. The work of identifying sites for a development in the Dolgellau area and other areas in Meirionnydd is also continuing. We aim to have a definite plan in place on at least one of the sites by spring 2022.

This work is being further addressed as part of the 'Redesigning Care Services' project in the Improvement Priorities section.

### **Safeguarding and Community Safety**

In a 12 month period, 598 **safeguarding enquiries** have been made, 93% of which were completed within 7 days. This percentage is lower than last year (95%) as a result of the significant increase this year in the number of safeguarding reports (437 enquiries in 2019/20). However, although 7% of enquiries were not completed within 7 days, it should be noted that they were addressed and the risks were managed in all cases.

**of all the adults  
protection referrals  
completed during  
the year, we  
managed to  
control the danger  
92% of the time**



It should be noted that the figure above includes those cases where the individuals refused intervention (the risk was managed 98% of the time with the exception of those cases).

Our **Community Safety** work happens in partnership across Gwynedd and Anglesey in order to tackle and reduce crime and disorder to improve the safety and well-being of the residents of both counties. The Partnership's 2020-21 plan has been completed, and the [2021-22 plan](#) has been prepared.

The workload in this field has increased during the year. The most obvious example of this is the work relating to Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). We are currently working on four reviews, which is undoubtedly limiting our ability to be able to give attention to other key matters.

### **Quality Assurance**

We have redirected resources temporarily in order to increase our capacity to complete the **quality assurance** work in a more proactive way. We have continued to improve our work by gathering information early on; however,



we continue to see a shortage in permanent capacity to complete the preventative work in full. This shortage was highlighted during the Covid-19 crisis where the full team capacity (three full-time workers and one part-time worker), as well as additional capacity from other teams in the department, focused on supporting our care partners. There is more information about this work in the Covid-19 chapter at the start of the report.

During January 2021 the department was inspected by Care Inspectorate Wales. We are pleased to report that they provided positive feedback, and we should also acknowledge how challenging the timing of the visit was, considering our efforts and the prioritisation that had to happen at the time in response to the second wave of the pandemic.

### **Business Service**

A high proportion of the Business Service's work over the past year was driven by the pandemic. Whether this was by redirecting staff, supporting providers with the testing arrangements or administering extra financial assistance to the field. Despite having to prioritise work, the core work of supporting the front-line teams in the care field could continue, and there are also examples of where we could capitalise on the opportunity to improve and streamline some of our work processes such as our method of paying independent residential and nursing providers.

### **Commissioned provision**

In respect of provision that is commissioned, we acknowledge and are grateful for all the work that has happened to respond to the pandemic and to look after our vulnerable residents across the county. Specifically in the Older People field, for example, we have faced several challenging situations during the year where we had to work

closely with providers and relevant agencies. Unfortunately we saw Penrhos Home near Pwllheli closing in the autumn, and individuals and their families were supported during this difficult time, and individuals were facilitated to move to other care homes of their choosing. We supported a number of other homes that faced challenges during the year, on matters such as management and leadership.

The need to look at improving the salaries of front-line staff has become more apparent than ever, and we will need to ensure full input into the wider discussions that will be taking place in respect of this. This aspect is a key part of what has been identified as an improvement priority to ensure a secure workforce for the future. This has contributed partially to the challenge faced by Local Authorities across Wales in terms of the standard fees that are paid to care providers to care for our residents. Over the coming year, we will work together with providers to gain a better understanding of the actual cost of providing care, and offer options on the way forward which would contribute to the sustainability and stability of the market.

### **Summary**

During a difficult year, the department's performance has been good. The main matters that will need addressing further during 2021/22 and beyond are:

- Continuing with the re-design of our care services, further promoting the work of strengthening resilience in our communities
- Securing a suitable and sustainable care provision across the county
- Ensuring a secure workforce in the care field for the future

- Building and adapting our services, taking account of lessons learned from the pandemic

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the following Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

# Children and Supporting Families

Together with the work this department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

Clearly, this year has been a very different year for us all. We have had to change our way of working in order to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children and their families throughout this challenging time. At the end of a year such as this, it is good to be able to look back and state that our practice and performance generally across the Children field have remained strong. It was good to receive positive feedback once more from Care Inspectorate Wales after their visit to our services in January 2021. The department was praised for succeeding to keep in touch with children and families through visits, keeping in touch via calls and virtually. The department was praised for its professionalism and for our workers' efforts to support the stability of families and placements, and provide every possible support to keep families together during this challenging time.

The department managed to continue to support and safeguard children and keep children and their families together in a context of restrictions on the usual ways of working; adopted PPE, testing and vaccination procedures; diverted staff to lead the work of the Covid-19 Support Team and to the Test, Trace and Protect Team. We developed new interventions and services to safeguard and address the needs of families as they coped with the pandemic such as weekly food boxes for three months to every household where there was a child on the protection register; provided baby goods boxes for new mums in deprived areas; provided food packs to support the placements of post-care young people; supported schemes to create and

provide Arts and Gardening Activity Packs and Play Sacks to homes throughout the county. The county's young people have benefited from on-line chat and support forums, social activities such as making music, quizzes, fitness and cookery - all online - in an effort to build resilience and promote well-being in difficult times.

Play and fun sessions were provided for families supported by our Social Work Teams over the summer holidays.

Partners in the third sector were commissioned to provide new support to target young parents who were at a higher risk of reaching the care threshold with their parenting skills, and additional support for families to deal with conflict, with mental health and well-being challenges and specific support for fathers. We will continue to commission these services beyond the crisis period due to the successful results for our families.

We welcomed the new opportunities that came about as a result of having to work virtually and some families will continue to choose to engage with our services in this way in the future. We have also seen the lockdown period beneficial for a number of our families as they left behind the pressures of life and had the time to focus on their relationships.

The crisis has meant that a number of external agencies have re-located staff or made decisions to protect the well-being of staff and avoid face-to-face contact with children and families. This has led to a reduction in children and families being identified and referred to us for support; less contact between other agencies with children and families and has meant that, at times, the

department's workers were the only workers in touch with vulnerable families providing support and assistance.

While accepting that partners have, like us, been through a period of change and new challenges, some agencies' willingness to step back has made us concerned about everyone's ownership of ensuring that children are safeguarded. Care Inspectorate Wales noted that we had acted as the sole agency in the field of safeguarding at times during the year. Nevertheless, we have continued to maintain high standards when responding to referrals, which could be safeguarding referrals, or referrals for care and support.

We have continued to offer early support for families when needs are highlighted. From providing advice and information via our Families Hub, to providing direct support for matters such as parenting skills, challenging behaviours of children, conflict in families and development delay in children. When a family needs support to deal with several matters, our Team Around the Family co-ordinates support for them, and 61 families received support from a co-ordinator during 2020/21.

We have escalated and adapted our existing programmes such as Flying Start, Families First and the Play and Childcare Offer and established new programmes such as the Child Development Programme to maintain our preventative services.

As part of their day-to-day work, the Social Work Teams offer timely support and intervention for children and their families and draw on more specialised interventions if appropriate.

The Trobwynt Team works intensively with vulnerable children and families, and children who are on the verge of going into care. They are able to support families with matters

such as parenting, counselling, substance misuse, meetings to bring in members of the extended family, mediation, family therapy, and support to cope with adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). We are continuing to develop this specialist support, depending on the needs and feedback of families.

One such specialist project is Reflection, which offers specialist support to parents who have children in the care system on a permanent basis. During 2020/21, support was provided to nine parents. On average, women report progress in 7 out of 10 of their personal results. This includes better incentive, taking responsibility and life skills.

We have also established the Emrallt Teams, with the aim of reducing the number of harmful sexual behaviour cases being referred to statutory services following an incident of abuse, by means of a number of timely and appropriate interventions. In order to meet our aim, we have invested substantially in awareness raising events and access to preventative and specialist training packages by Brook, the NSPCC and AIM.

The success of collaboration between families and the team means that a number of children have been able to stay at home with their families, some have been able to return home from foster and residential care, as well as ensuring that vulnerable foster placements have been substantially stabilised.

At the end of March 2021, 281 children were in the Council's care, and 71% of these received care in a foster placement, with 35% of those foster carers either friends or family members, and 18% of looked-after children were placed with their parents, and therefore remained at home.

Compared with the number of looked-after children over recent years, there has been a gradual increase from 194 (in 2015/16) to 291



(in 2019/20); this year (2020/21) we have seen a slight decrease for the first time to 281. This decrease could be starting to show that our strategy to keep families together is having an impact, therefore, this strategy is a priority for the department for 2021/22, in order to continue with the aim of reducing the number of looked-after children.

Children and young people come into our care under highly challenging circumstances, but we are as ambitious for these children as we would be for our own children. We have Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) who monitor the care plans of each child and young person we look after, and they assure us as a Council that the interests of the child are safeguarded throughout their time in care. In 2020/21, care plan reviews and child protection conferences were held virtually. This has brought challenges but has also led to new opportunities to contact children and their families. Despite the restrictions of the pandemic in maintaining reviews and day-to-day work, our officers have continued to succeed to sustain and develop our relationship with children and their families. Care Inspectorate Wales praised our work in this field following their inspection.

Our ability as a Council to place children with foster parents is a key part of the service for children. We as a Council are extremely proud of our foster parents, and the Fostering Team continues to ensure that we have enough foster parents to meet the needs of children who cannot reside at home. Our virtual campaign this year managed to recruit more carers and attracted 16 enquiries. Also this year, we established a helpline for foster carers to support them through this challenging year.

The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit provides assurances to the Council that our safeguarding arrangements are robust. In 2020/21, 389 child protection 'conferences'

were held. The percentage of the case conferences where it was considered that the risk assessments were high quality was 97% and was consistent with the recent years. This consistently high performance shows the impact of our investment in practice to ensure good decisions that protect the rights of children and their families. This work remains a priority through the innovative Effective Child Protection work.

**According to our  
Independent Review  
Officers 97% of reviews  
are ambitious for  
children in care**



Hearing and listening to the voice of the child has remained a priority for us over the past year. The Corporate Parent Panel has been working to strengthen this aspect of its work so that it maintains close links with what matters to the children in our care.

Unfortunately, during 2020/21, some of our previous priorities have slipped somewhat or have been put to one side for the time being in order to focus on maintaining and providing our essential services.

Several aspects of the North Wales Child Transformation Programme, which was intended to trial new methods of working and new interventions in order to improve and change services, were delayed. It was not possible for us to proceed with a joint scheme with the Adults Social Services to identify different ways of working with children and parents within families who come into contact with our department. We also failed to establish a Multi-disciplinary Sub-Regional Team which would provide intensive, short-term support for families with profound and

complex needs. The aim of the pilot was to respond to the change in the looked-after children population profile, the increase in the average cost of residential placements, and the lack of availability of specialist placements to address profound and complex needs. As addressing profound and complex needs in families remains a priority and a risk for us, we will resume this priority for 2021/22.

We are also in a better position by now to be able to move on with realising the findings of the review of services for children with autism. In 2021/22, we will establish an Autism Scheme in Gwynedd jointly with our partners.

We are extremely fortunate of our workforce yet again this year. During this challenging year, we have been required to divert staff to respond to staffing gaps in teams in order to maintain and adapt services safely in order to safeguard and support children and their families. The willingness and flexibility of our workers to respond to these staffing needs shows their continued commitment to the service and to the vulnerable families of Gwynedd. However, recruiting, developing the workforce and maintaining and supporting workers will be a priority for us in the next year to respond to the staffing challenges and needs of our workers.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.

# Economy and Community

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

## Developing Gwynedd's Economy

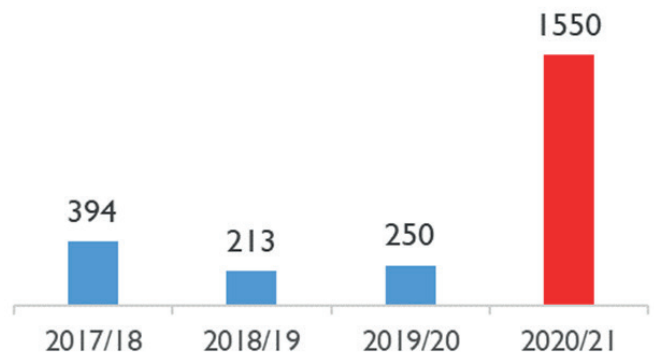
Covid-19 has created an economic crisis in 2020 which continues to date. At the same time, leaving the European Union has created challenges for a great number of businesses and the service has tried to advise Gwynedd businesses with trading arrangements and new markets. Prior to this, Gwynedd's economy had been performing fairly well at a Wales level but not in comparison with other regions of Britain and Europe. Salary levels in Gwynedd are much lower than in other parts of Wales and the productivity value of Gwynedd businesses is low compared to other areas. Gwynedd Council took proactive measures in 2020/21 to try to save and sustain local businesses, support local residents who have lost their employment and create the conditions which would enable businesses to recover and grow in the future.

We have changed our priorities and re-directed our efforts to respond to the crisis and formed new teams from across the department to work closely with other parts of the Council.

In 2020/21, 1,550 businesses received support from the department, an 520% increase compared with 2019/20.

At its peak, the department was responding to up to 500 enquiries per week from local businesses as a result of Covid-19.

Businesses receiving support



As well as distributing financial support, the department has worked hard over the past year to ensure that local businesses have the best information about the trading guidelines and advice as a result of Brexit and Covid-19, to enable them to stay ahead and keep their staff and customers safe. A special page on the Council's website was set up, together with a newsletter which is now being sent to over 4,370 local businesses at least twice a week. The feedback from businesses to these bulletins has been very positive.

Despite the pandemic, the demand from businesses for more suitable land and property has continued. The Council has committed a budget of £2 million in order to respond to this demand and work to prepare schemes has started.

The work of preparing the Gwynedd Regeneration Framework has also started in 2020 and 13 area plans will be prepared in 2021/22 to identify local priorities for the future. Welsh Government's town centre regeneration programmes have continued over the past year and the importance of regenerating the high street has been heightened. A range of schemes have been

developed in Bangor city centre which contribute to improving the viability of the high street, including schemes to renovate nine empty properties.

As a result of Covid-19, the department has reviewed its regeneration arrangements and has established contact points for 20 towns or destinations within the county in order to share information effectively with Local Members and the business sector. These arrangements have been crucial in order to share information about support and measures for re-opening safely. The department was successful with bids for financial support to create improvements to these towns, together with supporting 59 businesses to adapt their ways of working in response to the restrictions.

The tourism industry is a key employer in Gwynedd. With an economic value of over £1.3 billion, over 18,000 people work in this field. This is one of the sectors that has been hit hardest as a result of Covid-19 due to restrictions on businesses to recover safely. During 2020/21, emphasis was placed on providing information for the visitor sector to enable them to respond to the crisis. Responsible destination and visiting safely messages were shared on the Snowdonia Mountains and Coast website with over 576,000 hits to the website. As the visitor economy has been closed for a substantial part of the year, the figure is lower than the previous year (944,000). 67,900 people engaged with us via our social media accounts. A review of tourism priorities in the area was completed, which will be the basis for sustainable visitor economy principles for the period until 2030.

During 2020/21, we saw new visitors coming to Gwynedd, a vast number of whom were not used to rural or coastal areas in Britain and problems arose as a result of that. Though the department responded e.g. by employing

safety officers for specific locations, it was not possible to respond in every case because of a lack of resources and the size of the demand.

The Department manages 301km of the Gwynedd coastline, concentrating on eight Blue Flag beaches, several other urban and rural beaches, four harbours and two marinas. During the year, attention was given to reviewing the management arrangements for the Pwllheli marina and harbour for the future and to programme detailed dredging work at Pwllheli Harbour while also looking at sustainable options for the future.

### Supporting Strong and Healthy Communities

The Community Support Service has continued to support voluntary groups during 2020/21, as well as supporting new groups which have formed in order to offer support to vulnerable individuals in the communities. It has been a challenging time for community groups and the service has been assisting them to overcome some of the challenges they face. The service has been involved with the work of co-ordinating town centre groups in order to identify and consult on Covid-19 measures.

A Community Support Fund has funded 21 projects this year, attracting £206,000 in funds to the county. The service has also allocated £25,000 in funds to support the voluntary Covid-19 campaign on behalf of Magnox.

While following the Government's safety guidelines, the county's libraries were closed at the beginning of the financial year. During this time, Welsh Government made a substantial investment in the national digital offer, and we have seen a significant



increase in loans of e-books, e-audio books and e-magazines and access was provided from home to the ancestry website for users. Gwynedd Libraries have also invested in digital services where users can have access to on-line national and international newspapers free of charge. Figures for the use of e-resources are not currently available.

With restrictions being lifted, some of the county's principal libraries were opened during July 2020, with all libraries open by September for click and collect and delivery services only. Also, the Home Library service (House-bound) was restored and a completely new system was established where library users could contact to order books either by phone, e-mail or on-line, with an option to collect the packs from their library or get their packs delivered to their homes. Many chose this option for various reasons, and it was an essential option for those people who were shielding or were vulnerable for health reasons.

During 2020/21, 77,641 items were loaned (which is 18% of the usual annual figure) with approximately 2,000 people using the service on a monthly basis (compared with 7,000 per month in a normal year). During the nine months between July and March, 2,385 packs were distributed to homes, which was 265 packs per month on average, and we also managed to offer period products free of charge through the Tackling Poverty grant scheme, and we received over 500 orders, with the stock running out within days.

We started to provide on-line story times for families at the beginning of January 2021. During this period, 24 live on-line sessions were held with 179 children and adults attending.

We worked with the Fusion Network on a commission to provide packs of books for the Family Reading Scheme. 135 packs were

created and distributed with the families of Foundation Phase children in the target areas.

We also worked with Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig and the Circular Economy schemes in Wales to secure funding to establish a 'Library of Things' in three locations in Gwynedd. Some Library Service staff supported the Covid-19 Community Calls Teams as well during the initial period.

Neuadd Dwyfor has been closed during 2020/21, due to the Covid-19 restrictions. However, construction work on the improvement project commenced in November following a successful bid for capital investment to the Council and work to plan a new working model was started, in discussions with the Library team and the Theatre/Cinema team which would see both teams providing one service for Neuadd Dwyfor customers. A Service User Team was set up also to support this project. We managed to attract £125,000 from Welsh Government to the re-development project.

The Council continues to maintain galleries, museums and archives in Gwynedd. In 2020/21, the museums and galleries arranged community and educational activities. 10 new learning packs were provided on-line. 120 arts packs were sent out to the community. Six schools and 55 families were supported by the Family Learning Signature from Home. It was ensured that the collections were safe during Lockdown, and when Storiell opened during October/November 73% of the visitors were from Gwynedd.

Gwynedd children and people were supported by 27 Community Arts projects. One example was "Well-being for Me" where 83% saw an improvement in their well-being. 23 organisations/artists received a grant and a Keep Going conference was arranged for the sector. 5,000 watched live concerts by musicians from Gwynedd on Facebook. Over

1,000 busy packs were distributed to children and families in the county through food banks and other partners.

A scrapbook of all the Community Arts activities is available [here](#). A successful conference was held on Zoom to highlight how the arts had changed, experimented and succeeded to hold activities and support communities, individuals and well-being of the people of Gwynedd during Lockdown.

The Archives were closed for most of the year, but it was possible to open for a limited number for a period of 13 weeks. During those weeks, 191 visited and viewed 2,558 documents. During the year, the service responded to 2,174 enquiries, 23,339 used our on-line catalogues, and during Lockdown we provided 143 collections to be added to our on-line catalogues. It was not possible for the Education Officer to visit the schools, but 42 unique packs of resources were created for various schools.

The department is responsible for a network of 12 Byw'n lach centres across Gwynedd. Since 2019, these centres have been managed through an agreement with Byw'n lach Cyf. company. The centres have been closed for extensive periods in 2020/21 due to the Covid-19 restrictions. When we managed to open the doors in September 2020, 91% of users reported that they were happy or very happy with the Byw'n lach service. In response to Covid-19, Byw'n lach company started a virtual exercise service and held 818 virtual fitness sessions during that time.

Despite the fact that several officers from the Sports Teams were working on the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) scheme for the majority of the year, we managed to continue to offer inclusive participation opportunities in sports and physical activities. The majority of these sessions were virtual, but when possible, the team continued to visit schools and offered

fitness improvement sessions - outdoors - together with many different courses and competitions. The team also promoted and offered support to Gwynedd sports clubs to complete bids for various grants from Sport Wales which offered financial support as a result of Covid-19.

The Department is responsible for two Rural Parks - Parc Glynllifon and Parc Padarn. During 2020/21, both parks had to close to visitors during the lockdown periods due to Covid-19 restrictions. The Quarry Hospital has been closed to the public throughout the year due to adaptations within the building which include measures to ensure the safety of the wardens.

During 2020/21, Glynllifon was successful in its bid for Welsh Government's Sustainable Management Scheme funds and work to restore some historical structures and improving safety in the Park has started. The priority in Parc Padarn was also ensuring the safety of the public, and conservation architects were appointed to inspect the site's structure and put new safety measures in place.

## **Local Priorities - The Council's Plan**

One of the local priorities noted in the Council's Plan is the desire to attract more long-term, highly-paid jobs. Members in the Porthmadog, Ffestiniog and Penllyn areas noted this as a high priority for their areas. The Create High Value Jobs project has been set up in order to respond to the problem and it focuses on opportunities which will bring benefits to these communities (see Part 1 of this report).

Improving the poor connectivity of mobile phones and broadband in the Dolgellau area is another local priority. We are pressing on Welsh Government to prioritise the County

for plans in the field, thus adhering to the principles of Digital Gwynedd together with working enthusiastically with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig to meet the need.

Because of concerns around the future of the Ffestiniog Community Centre, the regeneration team recently conducted a review of public buildings throughout Gwynedd. This review showed that public buildings in Blaenau Ffestiniog, including the Community Centre, were used ineffectively and this identified an opportunity to improve resource sharing in future.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support ourselves and our families.
- Live in quality homes within our communities.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Make the most of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

# Highways and Municipal

The past year has been immensely different for us all, and has tested us to the extreme. However we can be proud of what has been achieved in new and challenging circumstances, and the department has succeeded to ensure the continuity of our services while responding to the needs of the crisis.

## Waste and Recycling

It is very important to the people of Gwynedd that their waste is collected when we say we will collect it. During 2020/21 approximately 4,556,708 waste collections were made. Of these, 10,417 complaints were received for a failure to collect (which corresponds to 0.002%). Some of these failures were due to matters that arose in relation to the crisis, but a high percentage related to the continuation of more commonplace reasons such as the impact of severe weather or shortcomings on our part. Although we are improving the experience of the service for the residents of Gwynedd, by reducing the number of missed collections, we have now reviewed our working arrangements and we are in the process of changing the waste collection route arrangements. We have already completed the changes in Arfon and Dwyfor. Due to Covid-19 restrictions it was not possible to complete the work in the Meirionnydd area as intended in 2020/21, but the arrangements have now been introduced and the initial signs are positive.

In response to complaints about mess and rubbish falling from/being left by refuse and recycling collection vehicles, the changes in the working patterns are a step forward. We have seen a great improvement since the introduction of our new collection vehicles,

with a reduction in the materials that are missed. During 2021/2022 we will continue to respond to our residents' concerns by building and improving our arrangements for responding to complaints.

It is vital to deal with waste correctly in order to protect our environment and avoid creating problems for our children and our children's children. An economy that promotes reuse and recycling to reduce waste (known as the Circular Economy) is vital as we travel towards this aim. We are working to promote the circular economy in Gwynedd and are ensuring that schemes to reuse and repair play an increasing role in our day-to-day work. We will also arrange campaigns to address this important work and the county's aspiration to promote reuse. By doing this we can ensure that materials continue to be used, in order to avoid creating waste – that will contribute to our zero waste agenda in Wales.

During the year, we have succeeded to attract **£1.4m** in grant funding in the field of the Circular Economy, that has enabled us to deliver a number of exciting projects, such as:

- Llandygai Bangor Recycling Centre Adaptation Project, which includes establishing a reuse shop
- Project to adapt equipment to treat recycled materials in Caergylchu, Caernarfon
- Community food provision project
- Warws Werdd and Antur Waunfawr joint project
- Repair cafe project
- Reuse/bulk items project
- Finish distributing the Cartgylchu

We are happy to report that we recycled, reused or composted 67% of Gwynedd's household waste in 2020/21. This is an





increase of 2.26% since 2019/20. We needed to reach the statutory target of recycling 64% of the county's waste by 2019/2020 and our next statutory target is a performance of recycling 70% of the county's waste by the end of March 2025.



Burying waste in the ground causes pollution to the land, water and the air. We hoped to achieve the aim of sending zero waste to landfill by the end of 2020/21, and with the Parc Adfer residual waste incineration site now fully operational, we are pleased to confirm that no waste from the county is directly disposed of in landfill.

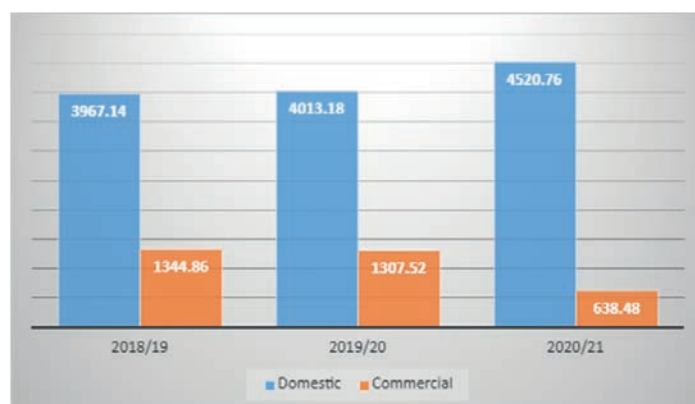
We will work on a new waste strategy for the county. The strategy will consider innovative ways to encourage reuse and increase recycling in order to ensure we can achieve the new statutory target of 70% of all waste being recycled by 2025. It will also be in accordance with Welsh Government's latest strategy.

## GwyriAD

GwyriAD is our in-county food waste treatment facility, which processes all the food waste collected on a weekly basis from residents and businesses.

The graph below shows that there has been an increase in the tonnes of domestic food waste that reach the site during 2020/21, while the tonnes of commercial food waste have significantly decreased. This demonstrates the side-effect of the pandemic

on our collections, but having said this, we are pleased to note that the total tonnes of food waste that reaches the site is stable despite the crisis.



Due to the nature of the face-to-face work that is involved with the efforts to increase food collections, the opportunities to deliver this work have been very scarce during the period of the crisis. However, this work remains a priority for the department over the coming period.

## Commercial Waste Services

We provide commercial waste and recycling collections to more than 2,000 business in the county, and over past years we have witnessed an improvement in the levels of commercial waste that is recycled or composted. In 2020/21 49% of commercial waste continued to be recycled/composted. Over the past year a number of businesses have closed due to the crisis, and one of our priorities for the coming period is to encourage our commercial businesses to take advantage of the recycling and food recycling service.

## The Appearance of Streets and the Public Realm

The local environment is extremely important, and a central part of this is to see our streets and areas being clean, tidy and safe. We apply a measure called the 'Cleanliness

Index' (a combination of external and internal assessment) in order to assess the cleanliness and appearance of streets. In 2019/20 our cleanliness standard was 73% but we were unable to gather this data this year due to the crisis restrictions. Keep Wales Tidy normally carries out a survey to assess how many 'defects' (such as rubbish, weeds, dog fouling, chewing gum and cigarette stumps) can be found on our streets, but unfortunately this work was not carried out during 2020/21.

There was significant pressure on the cleaning service and bins servicing during the re-opening in summer 2020, with street bins under pressure due to the higher than usual number of visitors. The department will revisit our cleaning arrangements and bin services in preparation for reopening the season in 2021. It is important for us to learn from last year's experiences as we reopen this year. We will also be installing additional recycling bins on the streets as part of the opportunities for residents to recycle when visiting town centres.

We have also been collaborating on the *Bangor Image* project, which aims to enhance the city's appearance and environment. Some of the projects include getting rid of 'to let' house signs, supporting a plastic free Bangor, improving the appearance of the High Street and trialling advertising on roundabouts. As we consider similar partnerships throughout the county we realised that we needed to consider our vision for clean and tidy communities more widely, and this matter has now been included as a priority project in the Council's Plan for 2021/22.

## Grounds Maintenance

The department is responsible for maintaining roadside verges and open spaces in order to improve the environmental quality of our towns and villages and to make them safer places for residents.

Parcels of land can make a positive contribution to our local environment, not only in terms of appearance, but also due to their potential as habitats. Promoting biodiversity within our parcels of land is now a priority and we have adjusted our grass-cutting patterns along county roads in order to promote this aim. We have also committed to reducing our use of damaging weedkillers.

We have attracted grants for our work to promote natural habitats, wild flowers and biodiversity, as seen in the following table:

| Project  | Description  |
|--|--|
| Resilient Green Spaces: Greener Corridors and Spaces<br><br><i>Funding source: Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) in Wales</i>  | Engaging and supporting community groups and councils to adopt local verges as part of an enterprise to help protect, manage and increase pollen friendly habitats to ensure that wildlife corridors are increased and better connected. |
| Ffridd Rasys and Llwyn Isaf: Project to establish wild-flowers and woodland on landfill sites<br><br><i>Funding source: Places for Nature Partnership Challenge Fund / Local Places for Nature</i> | Establish wild-flower meadows and native trees / hedges. Improve biodiversity by better management of grasslands. Better managements of rights of way, and more open access to land and water.   |

| Project   | Description   |
|---|---|
| Local Places for Nature<br><br><i>Funding source: WCVA - Local Nature Partnership</i> | A suite of projects that includes the management of invasive species, planting native trees, creating wild-flower meadows, planting street trees and pollinating plants. Many of the projects will be delivered in partnership with community groups. |
| Urban Green Infrastructure - Bangor   | Increase the green infrastructure by replacing existing hard surfaces in car parks with green areas, native trees and sustainable drainage options.   |

## Children's Playing Fields

We know that playing fields are important for children, parents and childminders, but as play equipment is expensive and funding is scarce, maintaining them so that they are safe for children and young people to enjoy is challenging.

We have corresponded with community councils regarding their initial observations regarding forming partnerships and we will continue with these discussions during 2021/22. We will also contact other groups and partners within the community that would be interested in forming a partnership with the service.

## Bereavement Service

Although the Covid-19 crisis gave rise to many

additional challenges, we are very proud to report that we have succeeded in maintaining our bereavement service across the county throughout 2020/21.

## Public Toilets

There are a total of 73 public toilets in the county, together with 35 community toilets in places such as cafés, pubs etc., and 17 public toilets owned by Snowdonia National Park Authority. Our scheme to form partnerships with community and town councils is now firmly established, and the service was extremely busy as the county re-opened over the summer 2020. Changes had to be introduced to address the needs that arose due to the crisis, including ensuring that appropriate signage was in place, and additional cleaning arrangements.

## CCTV

Technological developments in relation to CCTV have been introduced, and during 2020/21 we have succeeded to expand the network of CCTV in the Caernarfon and Bangor areas.

The service has also collaborated with Gwynedd and Anglesey Community Safety Partnership to submit a bid to the Police to extend the network to other areas in Bangor.

## Fleet Service

This service leads, manages and assists Council departments in order to ensure the appropriate, safe and lawful use of our fleet vehicles.

We have also been collaborating with Welsh Government on the fleet de-carbonisation project and we are awaiting the outcome of the review. One element of the work on the ground is to trial various vehicles during the summer 2020. An electric waste collection

vehicle was successfully trialled in one area, it performed well, and was able to carry a similar tonnage without any problems when travelling in a rural area. We will trial further vehicles in 2021/22 with the intention of taking advantage of grants to change our fleet. We are also part of a group that is discussing hydrogen, and the potential of establishing hubs in north Wales.

## Highway Maintenance

It is important that residents, businesses and visitors in Gwynedd can move with ease within the county. To ensure this, we maintain 2,697km of County Roads along with 199km of Trunk Roads (namely highways of national importance, on behalf of Welsh Government).

While the condition remains fairly static, historically the condition of class C roads highlights the highest percentage that require attention. There is significant pressure on our budgets to maintain our roads in good condition. The 'tar and chip' (road surfacing) programme was not finished during 2020/21 due to a lack of clarity regarding the regulations on close proximity working during the first lockdown period. This could lead to a further deterioration by winter 2021, so recovering this situation will be one of the department's priorities in moving forward.

The impacts of climate change is increasingly a matter for us to consider as more rainfall, flooding and harsher winters affect our road surfaces. The department will continue to monitor and consider the situation when prioritising the county road maintenance programme.

We are also in the process of reviewing our Highways Assets Maintenance Plan in order to reflect the new requirement to prioritise based on risk.

## Maintenance of Bridges and Structures

We maintain bridges and structures across the county. This includes undertaking regular statutory investigations, dealing with incidences of severe floods and general maintenance work.

We maintain 629 bridges throughout the county. There are 338 arched bridges, and 96 bridges are listed as having additional requirements. In addition we have 1,618 retaining walls throughout the county that are also maintained by the department.

A number of our bridges were severely damaged in the storms and floods during winter 2020 and emergency repair works had to be arranged to safeguard and repair them.

It is exciting that a planning application has now been submitted for building Pont Newydd Bodfel near Pwllheli. This will be the longest arched bridge to be entirely built from new, and we hope to begin the work during summer 2021.

## Street Lighting

We continue to fix street lights promptly and it takes two and a half days on average - a figure that has remained broadly constant over recent years.

As part of the Council's "invest to save" programme, our substantial programme to change street lights to LED has been implemented over recent years. During 2020/2021 1,700 street lighting units and signs were replaced with LED, which is a slightly lower number than anticipated. Since 2015/16, we have replaced more than 14,300 street lights and signs with LED technology. The following table shows the reduction in our carbon emissions as a result of this programme. We are very proud to see the obvious benefit from these changes.



| Year    | Tonnes of CO2 |
|---------|---------------|
| 2014/15 | 3435          |
| 2015/16 | 3002          |
| 2016/17 | 2426          |
| 2017/18 | 1703          |
| 2018/19 | 1208          |
| 2019/20 | 959           |
| 2020/21 | 811           |

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- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Make the most of the beauty of the County's natural environment.

## Ash Dieback Disease

Over the year we have started gathering data about the number of trees that have contracted the disease across the county. This work was undertaken between June and October while the trees were in leaf. The data conveyed the scale of the problem across some of the council's assets and the risks posed by infected trees to road users, schools and other council lands. A summary of the results can be seen here:

- 14,968 trees were examined
- 8,867 were on council lands or on the verges of highways
- 5,276 were identified as being in the red, high risk category

We must remember that only the first step in a far larger programme has been completed, and it is likely that it will take up to five years to gain control of the situation. We will continue with the examinations, and will operate a programme of tree felling/ treatment for those in the high risk category. Consideration should also be given to recovery and re-planting work with suitable species as part of the climate change challenge.

# Housing and Property Department

Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

This new department was established in September 2019 and the work of merging the Property Service and the Housing Service has proceeded smoothly. A new structure has been introduced in the Housing Service in order to allow us to give due attention to the increasing challenges in the field of affordable housing for the people of Gwynedd and responding to the homelessness crisis that now faces all parts of the country.

## The Impact of Covid-19 on the Department's work

During 2020/21, the majority of the staff have adapted to working from home, and where this is not possible we have changed working arrangements and methods.

Some of the Units have been significantly impacted due to Covid-19, mainly the Homelessness Unit, which has witnessed a significant increase in the number of individuals and families who present themselves as homeless, and the new statutory requirement to offer accommodation to anyone who is homeless, regardless of their circumstances. Additionally, the Housing Options Team has seen a significant increase in enquiries and applications for the social housing register.

The Department contributed towards work to respond to the pandemic, with the Office and Cleaning Units ensuring that our offices were safe, in order to enable some of our staff to continue to work if they were unable to work from home. The Department led the effort

to distribute PPE to front-line services in the early days, and responded swiftly to a crisis situation.

Staff resources were redeployed to assist the Environment Department with licensing, in order to accommodate key workers and facilitate the effort to establish vaccination centres, Ysbyty Enfys, and the Health Board clinics in temporary alternative locations. The Department also led the establishment of a partnership with the Housing Associations, to assist with the distribution of food packages to Gwynedd's most vulnerable residents.

## Property Service

In order to respond to the challenges that arise from climate change, and ensure that Gwynedd communities are prepared for the future, the Council adopted a **carbon management plan** in May 2010. The plan has been a substantial investment in order to reduce the carbon emissions of the Council's activities, in addition to contributing towards the wider aim of a low carbon Gwynedd.

### Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the Council's activities since 2010



**\*since adopting the Carbon Management Plan in 2010**

The nature of such plans is integrally measured over a long period of time, with small differences between monitoring periods having a cumulative impact over a more extensive period. This has all led to annual financial savings of over £1.1m for the Council.

The fact of the majority of staff have worked from home over the past year due to Covid-19 has probably contributed significantly to the reduction in carbon emissions from our buildings and from travelling. The Energy Conservation Unit acknowledges that the emissions are likely to increase this year if more use is made of our buildings, and the Covid restrictions are relaxed.

The responsibility of ensuring that all our schools, care homes, leisure centres etc. are safe to be used by the county's residents lies with the **Property Safety Unit**. Despite the obstacles of the past year, they managed to continue to undertake security inspections in our buildings, such as asbestos condition surveys and fire risk inspections. They have also succeeded to invest in improving the condition of our buildings, with projects to the value of £4.3 million having been realised during the year.

Prior to the first lockdown period, the **Maintenance Unit** succeeded to consistently reduce the number of days taken to complete each piece of work, but due to the restrictions on sites and the fact that some of our staff have been redeployed to work on other projects, as anticipated, there has been an increase in this average during 2020/21 to 8.3 days, compared to 6.8 days during 2019/20. However, the feedback received through our customer satisfaction surveys show that 84% of our customers who were questioned were completely satisfied with the service, with consistent praise for the internal maintenance workforce. This team has been expanded during the past year, and we now have electricians and water quality testing officers

in addition to the carpenters, plumbers and telecare installation and repair officers.

The customer satisfaction of the **Pest Control Team** has been very high throughout 2020/21 also, with great praise for prompt and effective work. They succeeded in continuing to offer this key service even throughout the lockdown periods. We gather customer feedback on a monthly basis and over the past year, 94% of the customers who were questioned were completely satisfied with the service that they received from the unit. In general, matters relating to bills and paying for services were the reason that customers have not being completely satisfied with the service.

Our **Cleaning and Offices Unit** has been busy ensuring that our offices are safe for key staff to continue to attend. They have introduced a host of new Health and Safety arrangements overnight in order to ensure that everyone who has had to continue to attend their workplace is safe.

We have also introduced a customer satisfaction measure for our office users, with positive initial results from our cleaning customers.

Our **Estates Unit** has seen a significant improvement in its customer satisfaction score over the year, with 95% completely satisfied with the service that they receive on average, a substantial improvement on the 83% that were completely satisfied the previous year. The unit has also now taken over the responsibility for the Council's industrial units and enterprise centres. They examine the efficiency of the provision, and have already achieved savings without affecting the quality of the service offered to tenants.

During 2020/21 the **Property Development Team** has succeeded to continue to drive

our capital projects, despite the pandemic. In October 2020 the new Ysgol y Garnedd was opened - a new building for 420 primary pupils in Bangor, and the work of constructing and renovating Ysgol y Faenol is also underway. The Team is busy working on more than 30 construction projects, ranging from schools to homes for older people, to housing developments, with 94% of those currently progressing in line with the expected timetables.



*The new Ysgol y Garnedd*

## Housing Service

The main challenge facing the Housing Service is trying to contribute to increase the supply of housing for local people and the housing options available to the people of Gwynedd.

In 2019, the Council adopted its Housing Strategy that notes the vision 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”*

During the past year, the Council's Housing Action plan was adopted by the Council. The plan confirms how we will ensure that:

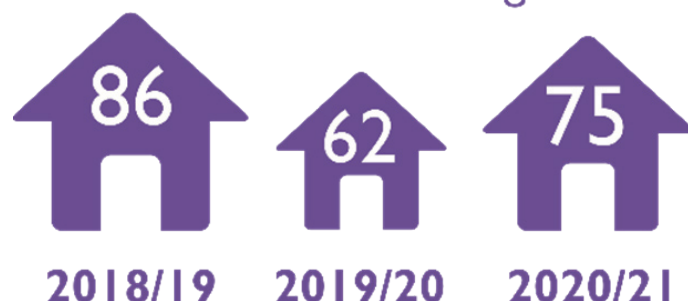
- No one is homeless in Gwynedd
- Social housing available to all who need one

- Everyone's home in Gwynedd is affordable to them
- Gwynedd Housing are environmentally friendly
- Homes having a positive influence on the health and well-being of the people of Gwynedd

It identifies 33 specific projects that will lead to a capital investment of £77M in the field of housing in Gwynedd over the next six years.

The Council uses the Social Housing Fund from the Welsh Government to facilitate the Housing Associations' ability to build more houses for local people. Our Housing Action Plan aims to provide 500 new social houses, and we will see a significant increase over the coming years.

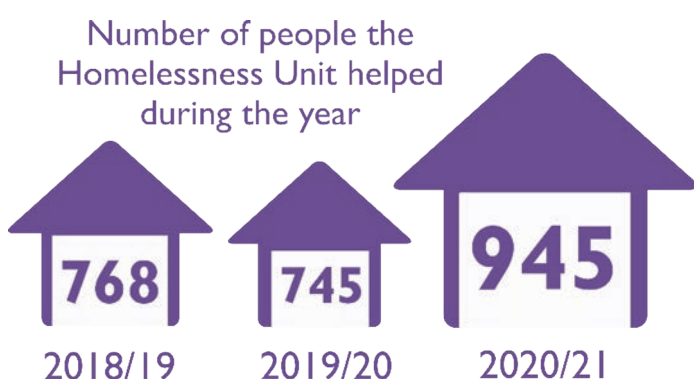
## Number of new units developed with the Social Housing Grant



The **Homelessness Unit** is the unit that has been affected most severely by the pandemic. The Unit has been operating in order to prevent homelessness but also to provide support for families or individuals who find themselves homeless. At the beginning of the lockdown in March 2020, the Government asked each Local Authority in Wales to ensure that nobody slept outside on the street. National regulations were amended overnight to ensure that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, had the ability to obtain



support from their Local Authority if they were faced with homelessness. There has been a 71% increase in the number of people who present themselves as homeless or under threat of becoming homeless over the past six years, and an increase of 26% solely in the past year.



This has placed great pressure on our temporary housing options and at present we are far from being able to cope with the demand. The result of this is having to over-use bed and breakfast accommodation, with those costs being met from the Welsh Government phase 1 crisis fund. This fund has been extended until September 2021.

The Council does not have sufficient temporary accommodation to meet the demand, and continuing to use bed and breakfast accommodation is not a long-term solution. Our Housing Action Plan has identified the need for approximately 50 supported accommodation units, and we have succeeded in attracting grant funding for the majority of the development costs of such units.

To this end, the service has started our first housing development by developing flexible units or 'pods' in Caernarfon, which are nearing completion. There are other schemes currently being designed in Bangor, Pwllheli, Dolgellau, Corris and Deiniolen, and they will all be completed within the next two years.

In parallel with the increase in accommodation, we will also expand the internal support team and external specialist agencies to move people forward more swiftly, in order to reduce the number of homeless people. The combination of an increase in accommodation and the increase in support means that we have now produced a plan, which has been adopted by the Cabinet, in order to address the county's homelessness situation.

The **Housing Support Grant** (£6.7m per annum) provides support for vulnerable people to manage or retain their tenancy and live independently. During 2020/21, the programme in Gwynedd has supported over 2,000 people to access and maintain permanent or temporary tenancies and prevent homelessness.

Another unit that has been affected severely by the pandemic is the **Housing Options Team**. We also adopted a new local allocation policy during the first lockdown, which prioritises people who have a connection with Gwynedd. This has led to a significant increase in the number of enquiries and applications received by the Team. During March 2021, four times as many e-mail enquiries were received compared to the beginning of the year. This is mainly due to the impact of the pandemic on the situation of individuals, which has led to an increase in applications for social housing, and people wishing to know how the new allocation policy will affect them.

During 2020/21, the average number of days on the waiting list for a house was 41 days, which reflects the lack of social housing in the county. Over the past year, on average it took 26.3 days to process an application for the short list for a social housing tenancy, and arrangements have been put in place to significantly reduce this as a matter of urgency in 2021/22.

The **Housing Grants and Projects** team's work has been affected by the pandemic, which has led to a decrease in the 'Grants for first-time buyers' and 'Empty Housing Grants' projects, and the 'Empty House Renovation' loans that have been realised this year. With the Housing Action Plan now in place, we will be able to increase our delivery in this field.

Number of empty houses brought back into use



The Team has also continued to work on delivering adaptations to the homes of disabled children and young people, with 141 adaptations completed during 2020/21.

Number of houses modified for people with disabilities



The average number of days taken to complete adaptations to the homes of individuals with disabilities has reduced, compared to previous years.

Number of days taken, on average, to complete adaptation work to the homes of people with a disability



During the lockdown period, when the **Enforcement** team's officers were unable to access sites, they were redeployed to assist the Environment Team to licence over 1000 rental properties to house key workers during the pandemic. Since December 2020, the team has also been undertaking customer satisfaction surveys, with positive feedback received to date.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.
- Live with dignity and independently for as long as possible.
- Take advantage of the beauty of the county's natural environment.

# The Environment Department

The main areas of responsibility of the Environment Department are Planning, Public Protection, Transportation and the Countryside, and the Building Control Service.

## **Covid-19**

As is true across the rest of the Council, many of the department's services have had to adapt how we provide our services to the people of Gwynedd, and have had to prioritise work to help prevent transmission. This has naturally affected the department's usual day-to-day work.

The department's officers have been undertaking alternative duties by offering guidance and advice on Covid-19 measures to businesses, establishments and the public. The department also contributed to producing and establishing regional and national Covid-19 prevention policies, as well as carrying out inspections, monitoring and taking enforcement action to deal with non-compliance with statutory requirements for preventing the spread of the virus and to protect their workforce and their customers. The department's role in this respect has been essential in ensuring that we as a council safeguard the residents of Gwynedd to the best of our abilities, in extremely challenging circumstances.

Although the crisis placed rather different demands on the service over the past year, the department has coped incredibly well, by prioritising the response to the pandemic while continuing to try to provide day-to-day services where this was possible or essential in order to respond to high-risk issues. Work that had been scheduled for 2020-21 has slipped, but this was inevitable in the current climate, and we will work to recover the situation. However, we do have concerns

about staff well-being in some services where the workload has been unreasonably high, and where it has been more difficult than ever to take annual leave. One of our priorities moving forward is to reinstate a healthy situation for all our staff across the department.

## **Public Protection**

The services most affected in this department as a result of the Covid-19 crisis are our Public Protection services. Since March 2020 they have been leading the efforts to respond to the Covid-19 crisis and have therefore changed their way of working significantly. This has meant having to prioritise particular work in order to contribute to the effort of controlling the spread of the disease.

As was noted at the beginning of the report in the chapter relating to the Covid-19 crisis, the department led on establishing the Test, Trace and Protect Service – which has been in operation since June 2020 and employing 120 workers who have traced over 11,000 cases of Covid-19. This service experienced its busiest time during the second wave of Covid-19, as the number of cases that needed tracing increased daily. The role of this service was crucial in managing the spread of Covid-19, and there is further information about these arrangements in the chapter on Covid-19.

When Covid-19 case numbers were not so high, the department continued with an essential role in the arrangements for the re-opening of our businesses, establishments and wider communities. This has happened through:

- Providing specialist advice to businesses, other council departments, local agencies, care providers, schools and members of

the public in regards to hygiene measures and self-isolation guidelines.

- Carrying out inspections and support, advisory and monitoring campaigns in various business premises and sectors, e.g. supermarkets, garden centres, hairdressers etc.
- Conducting proactive visits with the Police to give advice to licensed businesses such as restaurants and public houses over the busy summer period
- Responding to complaints about non-compliance with Covid-19 regulations in licensed businesses such as public houses, restaurants and caravan parks; and taking enforcement action where required in order to keep people safe
- Responding to an increase in complaints of domestic noise and complaints about burning garden waste, which is likely to be associated with the fact that many are working from home
- Producing information on Covid-19 precautions for the taxi industry
- Putting arrangements in place to manage the busy destinations across the county, including parking control and enforcement

To give an idea of the scale of the increase in the work of these services, in relation to the number of service requests in the Contagious Diseases field, the department received 1,536 requests during 2020 compared with almost no requests in the previous year. This work has taken up all the officers' time in these services during 2020/21 and has meant that they were unable to carry out their usual role in the same way. Indeed, 55 high-risk businesses and 25 Air Pollution Processes businesses that required an inspection during 2020-21 are late, with their timetables slipping to 2021-

22. This is as a result of the efforts to lead on our response to the pandemic, coupled with the fact that many of these businesses have been closed, and Covid-19 regulations made it difficult to conduct meetings. 62% of the animal feed establishments that require an inspection will also slip to the 2021-22 programme. Consequently, the 2021-22 inspection programme for these services will be very heavy, and there are concerns about staff capacity and well-being in these services as they cope with recovering these inspections whilst continuing to discharge their duties according to the crisis. In addition to this, there is a significant backlog of food establishments (over 1,000) that require an inspection in accordance with the Food Hygiene inspection programme, and we are in discussions with the Food Standards Agency as to the best way to respond to this.

The experiences of the past year have highlighted the importance of the role these services play in protecting our communities' health and, unfortunately, they have highlighted the services' lack of resilience due to years of cuts. Responding to the seriousness of this shortfall is therefore one of the challenges for the year ahead, and a new Improvement Priority project has been included in the 2021/22 Review of the Gwynedd Council Plan in order to address the matter. One element of the work was to recruit Covid-19 community engagement officers to work with our communities to safeguard them, in the short term, but with a view to improving the resilience of these services in the long term. There is more information about this engagement work in the Covid-19 chapter of the report.

## Planning

The Planning Service facilitates and manages sustainable developments within the Gwynedd planning authority area (which does not include the National Park area).



Over recent years, we have been measuring our customers' level of satisfaction. We have work on-going to respond to the observations received, specifically around the arrangements for contacting the service and communication difficulties. We are working on developing alternative methods for undertaking this work through a new back-office system.

Between March and July 2020 no planning committees were held due to Covid-19 restrictions. Therefore it was not possible to determine those applications that required submitting to the committee. Furthermore, lack of capacity as a result of long-term sickness and working arrangements during the pandemic has meant that processes are taking longer than usual. It has also taken longer for us to receive responses from statutory consultees. Consequently, in 2020/21 planning applications took an average of 89 days to be determined compared to 62 days in 2019/20.

70% of the housing approved through the planning system during 2020/21 contribute to the county's affordable housing. This figure reaches the target set by the Joint Local Development Plan. Further information about the provision of homes in Gwynedd is included in the Housing and Property Department chapter.

The service also has a role to take enforcement action on developments that have not been granted planning permission, and during 2021/21, 133 inspections were completed, but there are 263 cases that are still being inspected. The work has included many complex cases this year, where the demand on officers' time has been higher. This was also at a time where there was reduced staff capacity available to carry out planning enforcement work.

## Joint Planning Policy

We worked on a Draft Monitoring Policy for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, but because of the pandemic, it was not possible to gather all the usual information. Following an announcement by the Minister Julie James MS, we will be required to report on a two-year period in October 2021. The draft report's conclusion was that the plan delivered the strategy and that the plan's policies worked. There was no evidence of a need to review the plan early, but this will be considered further as we compile the final report.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPGs) reinforce the plan's ability to give a sound basis on which to make decisions on future planning applications. Two SPGs have been adopted during the 2020/21 period, namely *Change of use of community facilities and services, employment sites and retail units* and *Tourism development – attractions and accommodation*.

In February 2021, the Welsh Government published a new National Development Framework (NDF) titled 'Future Wales'. Its purpose is to set the direction for development in Wales up until 2040. The service provided input to the relevant consultation back in August 2019.

## Building Control

The Building Control Unit works with the public and partners so that our communities have safe buildings that meet the appropriate building standards. The Unit continues to provide a good service for residents and the satisfaction score has remained high and fairly stable over recent years. In a customer satisfaction survey in 2020/21, an average score of 9.6 out of 10 was given compared to 9.7 in 2019/20. Following a Ffordd Gwynedd review of the service, the following indicators were agreed, with the aim of improving the

Building Control service for customers:

- The time between receiving full planning applications and their approval
- Customer Satisfaction Score
- Time from receiving notification of a dangerous structure to securing it
- Average time taken to process an application for 'Naming and numbering houses/streets'
- Percentage of decisions made to the statutory timescale

We intend to simplify the questionnaire that we ask customers to complete, focusing on only two questions, namely how many marks given out of 10 for the service received, and if not 10, how can we improve.

One of the Building Control Unit's duties is to process applications for Full Plans. The Unit conducts an assessment of the plans, and issues decision notices within its statutory target of between 5 and 8 weeks. The Unit aims to inspect the plans within 15 days, and release decisions on the applications as soon as possible.

A 21% decrease in Building Control applications was seen during the pandemic, and there was consequently a considerable income loss. A reduction in medium to large-scale project applications also contributed to this deficit.

## Transportation and the Countryside



The **public transport** sector in Gwynedd has faced a turbulent time over recent years, with the service having to respond swiftly to major

changes in terms of the providers who were available. The Transportation and Countryside Service has now commenced the work of undertaking a comprehensive survey of the public transport network. The service will collaborate with Bangor University in order to design a network that will be based on social value rather than cost and passenger numbers. It will also consider innovative methods of offering a public transport network. Unfortunately, the timetable for the review to become operational has slipped due to Covid-19 demands on the department's capacity. However, we intend to resume this work during 2021/22.

As a result of officers being redirected to alternative duties during the Covid-19 crisis, it has not been possible for us to gather the usual data that relates to the punctuality of bus services. However, we are continuing to collaborate with the transport sector in order to maintain services that meet the needs of the people of Gwynedd.

Within **Parking**, a Parking Task Group was formed towards the end of 2019 in order to address various parking issues and present potential solutions to address the financial deficit facing the Council and to improve the current parking arrangements as well. The last year has exacerbated problems such as a shortage of parking spaces throughout the county as a result of people staying in the UK for holidays rather than venturing abroad, and this has highlighted the need for additional powers to deal with vehicles that create obstructions and better control of motor homes.

During 2020/21 the **Countryside Service** has concentrated on installing signs to encourage people to maintain social distancing on our busiest paths, has dealt with applications to close paths due to concerns about the spread of Covid-19, and has responded to cases of unauthorised path closures and

cases of felling trees that have a preservation order. Despite this, the lockdowns have given people the opportunity to rediscover their neighbourhood and appreciate their local environment. We saw an increased desire by communities and individuals to contribute towards protecting and enhancing the quality of the countryside. We also managed to proceed with some of the operational areas identified in the Ffordd Gwynedd Review of the Service back in 2019.

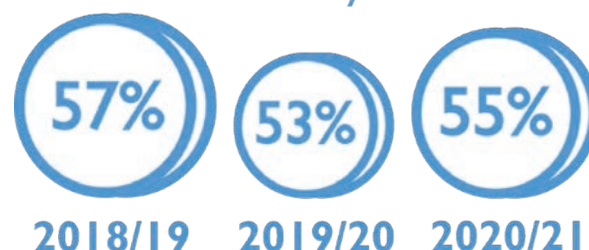
Over the last year, the scale of the spread of ash dieback has highlighted itself, together with the risks to the safety of people and properties and the implications to **biodiversity** and the landscape. We worked with the Highways and Municipal Department to respond to the disease and led on the work of preparing for recovering and reducing its long-term effect on the countryside.

### Corporate Category Management

The purpose of this service is to work with and support the Council's services to spend public funds in a strategic and accurate manner, ensuring value for money and encouraging keeping the benefits local.

During 2020/21 the whole team was responsible for procuring PPE and quality cleaning goods for the first six months of the year. Despite this, we managed to save £72,000 and identify £276,000 for the future. The team attempts to keep the expenditure local, where possible, and where legal rules allow. Through early engagement with the local market and working jointly with Business Wales who provide advice and support to prepare bids for tenders, there was an increase in local expenditure of 2% compared with 2019/20.

### Percentage of local expenditure within Gwynedd



### The year ahead

Of course, we will be faced with the challenge of restoring and stabilising following the crisis during 2021/22, and we will use the lessons that have arisen from the crisis when considering the shape of our future services. Our main priorities over the coming year are to:

- Strengthen Public Protection capacity
- Adopt a Climate Change Action Plan
- Provide input to and seek to influence the process of establishing the Corporate Joint Committee for North Wales which will directly impact the field of planning and transport
- Continue with the public transport review
- Consider / implement the possible solutions arising from the parking review
- Commence the Review of the Joint Local Development Plan

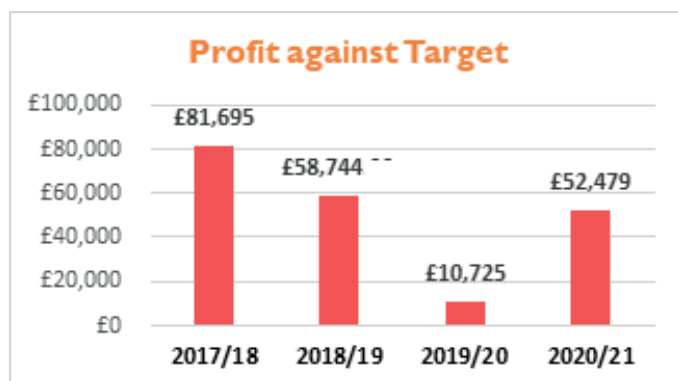
The Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd well-being objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives.
- Live in quality homes within their communities.
- Take advantage of the natural beauty of the County.

# Gwynedd Consultancy Department (YGC)

**Ymgynghoriaeth Gwynedd Consultancy (YGC)** operates commercially in the engineering and construction fields to secure high quality employment in the County and to try and generate profit to help the Council's financial position.

For 2020/21, we managed to generate a profit that was £52,479 higher than our set target.



During lockdown the financial performance of YGC has been excellent, and we have managed to generate a profit that has exceeded our target. This was made possible by completing the design and construction work over the pandemic period, and to continue to work on plans throughout north and mid Wales and Pembrokeshire.

Key to all of this was the willingness of staff to work flexibly, coping and adapting to the situation. We have made some adaptations that have been a great success for the department and we will continue with some of these arrangements to the future.

## Performance of the Water and Flooding Unit

This service protects the people of Gwynedd from floods and coastal erosion. This is done

by developing plans which attract grant funding.

All these are communities that have either suffered historically, or where there is strong evidence that climate change is likely to increase the risk in future. In the year 2020/21, the service has worked on over 20 projects to reduce the risk of flooding for hundreds of people.

- The flooding prevention projects include (please note the **number of buildings** that benefit from a reduction in flooding risks):
- Viaduct Gardens, Barmouth (**33**) - develop options to mitigate coastal flooding risk.
- North Promenade, Barmouth (**712**) - develop options to mitigate the risk level of flood and coastal erosion.
- Hiracl Bay, Bangor (**82**) investigate the options to reduce the risk level of coastal flooding together with flooding that derives from surface water.
- Afon Gwyrfa (**54**) - investigate the nature and options to reduce the risk level of flooding in the afon Gwyrfa catchment area jointly with Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales.
- Ogwen Catchment Area (**95**) - preparing a detailed business case to carry out improvements along the catchment area, to manage and reduce flooding risk.
- Wnion Catchment Area - a joint scheme with the National Park and local farmers to develop flood alleviation schemes by



using softer and natural methods such as tree planting and changes in land use cultivation.

- Completion of construction work on schemes in Felinheli and Rhostryfan **(46+41)**.
- There have been several minor improvements across the county, for example at Tan Lôn, Aberdaron, Cricieth, Barmouth, Llanfaglan.
- Greening Bangor Scheme **(16)** - Identify locations in the city centre with the potential to be transformed into landscaping that is less hard and then has the potential to contribute to managing water flow and mitigate local flooding risks. This includes work such as creating areas for planting flowers and trees.

## Monitoring Assets

The Service has completed coastal assets investigations and land drainage in the county. The service has 264 assets that are scored from 1 to 5, where 1 is the best score. The target is a score of 3. There are 219 assets with a score of between 1 and 3. Of the 45 that are not on target, the department has plans to raise the condition of these assets.

The department also seeks to make all coastal assets safer for the public.

## Flooding Investigations

We continue to gather information about the level of flood risk within the county, and have developed specific maps and databases for this purpose. **During 2020/21 it was recorded that 101 residential properties and 21 commercial premises have suffered from internal flooding.** In addition, the unit has noted and responded to over 50 cases of flooding near misses due to surface water

issues. This information will be fed back to develop future schemes to reduce the flooding risk in the county.

*We continue to collaborate with the public sector, and other bodies, by raising awareness of flood risks and coastal erosion.*

## Regulatory

During 2020/21 we have processed 27 applications for ordinary watercourse consent across the county. The consultancy service offered means that each request received during this period have been acceptable, with an average response time of 24 days within a permitted response period of up to two months.

The purpose of the ordinary watercourse consent process is to manage specific activities that may have a detrimental impact on flooding. During the last year, we have also been discussing the requirements of the new land drainage byelaws with various developers. This is in order to ensure that they are aware of the implications on future developments. This process of raising awareness will continue.

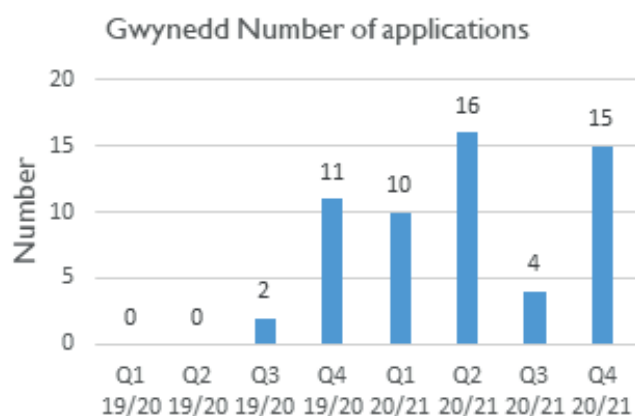
During 2021, we have provided observations on over 300 planning applications to ensure that the flooding threat and coastal erosion for new developments were highlighted and acceptable, and that the application details complied with national policies.

## SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems). Number of Applications

As we expected, the number of applications have increased every quarter. The table below, indicates the number of applications received and processed by the department. We have also processed 55 applications for the Isle of Anglesey and Wrexham Councils. We continue to work with the planning

departments of the Council and Snowdonia National Park, to highlight the requirements to their applicants.

It appears that the awareness of these requirements have increased. In addition, the quality of the applications are improving because of the service and support we give.



This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives
- Live in quality homes within their communities
- Benefit from the beauty of the County's natural environment.

### Pre-application Service:

Although the received approval to charge a fee for this service, we have continued to offer the service free of charge over the lockdown periods.

### Work beyond Gwynedd.

Gwynedd Council has been appointed by the Isle of Anglesey and Wrexham Councils to process and check all their SuDs (Sustainable Drainage Systems) applications.

We also lead technically across North Wales, and collaborate with the County Councils of Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. This work comprises drafting policies and procedures that can be used regionally to share resources and have consistency in the way the requirements are implemented.

# Finance and Information Technology Department

The Finance Department ensures the appropriate support for the Council in managing, safeguarding and developing its financial position in addition to providing services, such as collecting revenue and paying benefits, in a fair manner. In 2020/21, staff salaries, suppliers' invoices and grants to businesses in light of the Covid-19 crisis were paid. The Council's Information Technology services are also part of the Finance Department and they offer high quality technical guidance and support which promotes the Council's basic values.

## Financial Management and Savings

The Finance Department's financial management work and accountants support is an asset to the Council's departments when delivering for the people of Gwynedd at challenging times. Through conscientious financial management, the department has helped the Council manage to keep within its budget every year since 2015/16.

In the financial climate of restrictions on public expenditure, reliable financial estimates and accurate and fair accounts were produced. The Finance Department is responsible for the Council's robust arrangements, and for providing suitable resources to ensure that all departments realise what is expected of them.

As noted in the introduction to this performance report, 90% of the savings schemes, with a total value of £31 million between 2015/16 and the end of 2020/21 had been completed, but other schemes were more challenging to deliver. Therefore, the current savings schemes were reviewed during 2020/21, and prudential steps were

taken to cancel some savings and slip others on to 2022/23.

The Covid-19 crisis had a significant financial impact, with a combination of additional costs and loss of income worth over £20 million to the Council in 2020/21. Gwynedd Council accountants submitted claims to Welsh Government to compensate for loss of income to the tune of £7.3 million, additional expenditure of £11.6 million and bids worth £1.5 million for the Furlough scheme.

In terms of the Council's performance for 2020/21, the impact of the crisis has been very clear on the financial position, with significant grant receipts associated with Covid-19 later in the financial year transforming the financial position, including grants for schools' budgets, for digital transformation, shortcomings in realising savings and Council Tax arrears.

## Internal Audit

The Council's Internal Audit service gives confidence to the citizen and the Council on the Council's control environment and governance arrangements through independent and objective reporting to the Head of Finance and the Audit and Governance Committee.

During 2020/21, 23 audits were completed, and a 'high' or 'adequate' assurance level was confirmed for each one. It was not possible to complete some audits, therefore, the auditors assisted with other priorities, including distributing business grants.

As well as auditing Gwynedd Council, internal

audits were held on behalf of Snowdonia National Park Authority, GwE, Byw'n lach company and 70 town and community councils.

## Pensions

The Pensions Service administrates the Local Government Pension Scheme on behalf of over 40 employers, including Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy councils. The service focuses on operating accurately and promptly on behalf of its members.

We have managed to pay pensioners and the time taken to process retirements and deal with cases of bereavement improved. There was an increase in the time taken to transfer pension benefits, because some of the staff had assisted with distributing business grants for a while, and it is expected that the situation will improve in 2021/22.

Although we continue to send documents by post, the 'My Pension Online' website is going from strength to strength with 16,000 members registered by now. The new option on the system to enable the upload of documents such as a retirement form speeds up the system of processing pension benefits.



By now, the i-Connect system is being used on a monthly basis by all Pension Fund employers to update the salary records. This means that the information in the pensions system is as current and accurate as possible.

As a result of the Covid-19 crisis, on 31 March

2020, the value of the Pension Fund had dropped to £1.94 billion, due to a slump in the global equity markets in the final quarter of 2019/20. By 31 May 2021, markets had picked up, and the value of the Gwynedd Fund had returned to £2.51 billion.

The Pensions Committee and Fund managers have continued to work on a scheme to ensure that the Gwynedd Pension Fund, our consultants and asset managers are looking at investing in sustainable assets. More details are available in this statement:

<https://www.cronfabensiwnngwynedd.cymru/cy/Gwybodaeth/Newyddion/Cronfa-Bensiwn-Gwynedd-Datganiad-Dadfuddsoddi.pdf>

## Taxes

As a result of the restrictions which started in March 2020, a firm decision was made to suspend any work to pursue Council Tax debts for 3 months, and when we re-started collecting it, we did so gradually, and referred Gwynedd residents to the assistance available to them. Since then, 95.5% of the 2020/21 Council Tax was collected within the year. In difficult circumstances, this was encouraging, compared with 96.8% in 2019/20. The collection rate during the year is the national performance indicator, but it should be noted that the vast majority of the money that is due is collected eventually.



The Tax Service, with the assistance of staff from other services within the department,



was given the responsibility of administering the Welsh Government Covid-19 grants to businesses in Gwynedd. As a result of the various lockdowns of the crisis, there were five grant schemes during 2020/21 and over £106m of grant funding was distributed to assist the county's businesses, with nearly 20,000 payments processed.

## **Benefits**

The average time taken to process a new Housing Benefit application in 2020/21 was 18.74 days, compared with 15.68 days in 2019/20. The decline in performance reflects the substantial increase in contact from usual customers and new customers who were suffering from the financial impact of the pandemic. Despite this, we managed to improve the average time taken to process a Housing Benefit change of circumstances notification to 3.77 days this year, from 4.78 in 2019/20.

In addition, the Benefits Service has assisted 1,718 families through support from the Discretionary Housing Payments Fund (DHP), which is extra support towards paying rent. In doing so, we have been able to assist a significant number of Gwynedd tenants to remain in their existing homes or move to a new property.

Additionally, the Benefits Service has processed a school uniform grant / pupils development grant (access) worth £148,460 for 1,423 children, and has assessed free meals claims for 3,049 children in Gwynedd during 2020/21 (2,534 in 2019/20).

In addition to the usual work, the service has undertaken the Self-Isolation Payments Scheme for Welsh Government, and has dealt with 713 applications for payments since the beginning of the scheme on 16 November

2020 until 31 March 2021.

## **Insurance and Risk**

The service has been advising on insurance matters in relation to Covid-19, and arranged additional cover as and when necessary. Also this year, we tendered for insurers for property, computers, credit guarantee and terrorism cover. The policies with the new insurers started on 1 April 2021.

The new Corporate Risk Register was launched on 6 March 2021. The new system offers a convenient facility for users in all departments as they consider their priorities and note what needs to be done, and to assist members to challenge performance and ensure that the expected steps have been taken.

## **Income**

The Income Service aims to process cash receipts and collect the Council's debts promptly and efficiently.

The value of various debts over 6 months old on 31 March 2021 was £1,822,462, which is a significant increase on the corresponding figure of £1,280,823 on 31 March 2020. Much of the debt is due to cash-flow restrictions stemming from the pandemic, but we expect the situation to improve as the economy re-opens.

Nevertheless, the service managed to collect 94.59% of invoices raised by the Council in 2020/21, compared to 94.98% in 2019/20. Owing to the economic circumstances during the year, such a reduction was expected. Despite this, the rate of prompt collections (i.e. payment received within the quarter) was approximately 92%, which is an improvement compared to previous year despite the impact

of the pandemic on the economy.



## Payments

The purpose of the service is to pay the Council's creditors correctly and promptly. As a result of the impact of Covid-19, with Council staff working from home, we have adapted to electronic arrangements, which have proven to be successful. In order to deal with the crisis, there was a significant number of additional payments, including paying free school meals to parents of school pupils, freelance grants for the arts, self-isolation payments and grants for Gwynedd businesses. Nevertheless, the Payments Unit managed to improve the performance of paying invoices within 30 days to 93% (compared with 92% in 2019/20), with local payments to Gwynedd at its highest level at 96% this year.

## Payroll

The purpose of the service is to pay staff correctly and promptly, and also to maintain appropriate accounts for external bodies such as HMRC. There were a few cases during the year where the crisis arrangements of working from home had led to a failure to send information to the Payroll Unit on time, resulting in having to make amendments to salaries. Despite this, this was a small number and over a period of 5 years, the number of

monthly cases which lead to amendments to salaries continues to show a downward trend.

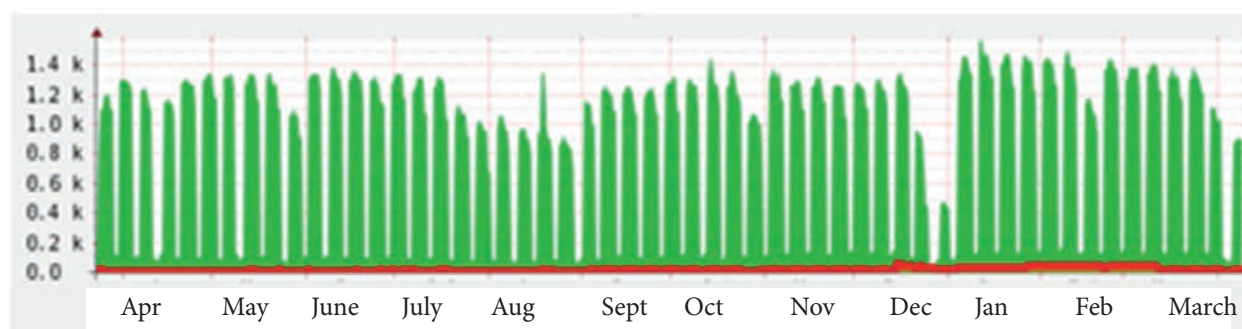
## Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) Service provides and supports technology of all kinds to help staff and the people of Gwynedd to gain easy access to information and systems.

It became clear at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis that there was a need for a significant and speedy change to allow all Council office staff to work from home effectively from the first day. Despite the situation evolving at speed, many changes were made to the Council's infrastructure by improving the internet connection, buying and distributing licences, increasing the capacity of the infrastructure and building a new firewall. These changes were made on firm footings which were already underway, with the changes giving a healthy and resilient platform to enable the continuation of services for the people of Gwynedd. The crisis means that the new digital strategy, which is being prepared for the Council, will look very different.

Prior to the crisis, a total of 138 users worked from locations outside the offices, but this changed significantly in 2020/21 with 1,450 working from home.

## Number working from home 2020/21



Also, over 900 new laptops were provided during the crisis period, increasing the number of laptops to 2,250. Despite all the changes, the high standards increased with 99% reporting that they were happy with the Helpdesk Service.

We upgraded from 'Skype' to enable holding virtual meetings on 'Teams', which is now an integral part of the Council's services, and 'Zoom' for meetings with simultaneous translation.

## Use of Teams (January - March 2021 quarter)

|                                  | Quarter   | Daily   |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Chat messages                    | 669,404   | 10,973  |
| 1:1 <u>conversations</u>         | 103,314   | 1,693   |
| Time spent in meetings (minutes) | 6,998,611 | 114,731 |
| Meetings created                 | 32,445    | 531     |

Several IT infrastructure projects were completed successfully. We strengthened our disaster recovery arrangements by strengthening resilience, including a reserve generator in our headquarters. Also, our defences were strengthened as well as our ability to recover in the event of a cyber-attack.

There has been a significant improvement to infrastructure in schools. The network in all schools has been upgraded, introducing 300 network suites and over 1,000 Wi-Fi connection points. With a Welsh Government grant, 2,506 laptops were provided to primary schools, with a further 1,947 and 893 iPads to be distributed. 1,062 laptops will be distributed to the teachers before we turn our attention to our secondary pupils.

The IT Systems Development Unit developed 26 new systems in response to the crisis. Many of these were direct online facilities for the public, including requests for business grants and recycling centre appointments. Also, there were many internal developments, such as a fleet asset system which manages vehicle details.

The unit developed another 27 IT systems, bringing the total to 53. Feedback was received from 38 of the projects, with 37 stating that they were happy and had no improvements to offer. The customer of the other project was satisfied, and offered an improvement in relation to communication.

We managed to retain our Public Service Network (PSN) accreditation which expresses the UK Government Cabinet Office's satisfaction with the Council's IT services and network in terms of security, and we continued with the national 'Gold' standard on the standard and cleanliness of data contained in the Gwynedd Land and Property register.



# Corporate Support Department

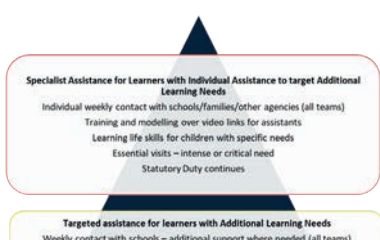
Together with the work this Department undertakes to realise the Improvement Priorities in Part 1, the remainder of its 'day-to-day' work also contributes to the Council's ambition.

It has been an unexpected and unusual year for the whole department with many officers re-located to fulfil work which was crucial to enable front-line services to operate - from ensuring PPE supplies for staff to keeping direct contact with and supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities.

In addition, some of the services had a critical role advising and communicating the message regarding the rules and best practices during the crisis, and following that they were key in resurrecting the services that were required to be paused for a while.

It was a great effort to fulfil all of this while also maintaining key services and this summary of performance for the year reflects that.

## Customer Contact



It is possible for Gwynedd residents to access a number of services on-line, at a convenient time for them, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It also provides a more cost-effective way of contacting the Council.

Gwynedd residents and businesses can now get in touch about 33 matters (27 in 2019/20) relating to highways, ordering and paying for a parking ticket, arranging a visit to a recycling

centre, paying for school meals and more. Over 50% of service requests in 17 fields (4 in 2019/20) are presented on-line, with 88% of the requests to book an appointment to visit a recycling centre presented in this way. During 2020/21, 11,689 residents opened a new self-service account, which was 2,000 more than did so in 2019/20.

## Time taken to answer phone calls in Galw Gwynedd



We provide a telephone service through Galw Gwynedd. This year's performance, in terms of the time taken to answer calls, has improved compared with the previous year, despite the fact that 12,000 more calls had been received i.e. from 49 seconds on average in 2019/20 to 47 seconds. The performance would have seen more of an improvement if it was not for the number of calls dealt with at the beginning of summer regarding recycling centre appointments.

We are continuing to address this and are making an effort to improve performance, mainly through a combination of further promotion on self-service and extending the on-line chat service.

## Communication and Engagement



Holding a two-way dialogue with the people of Gwynedd in order to share information about the Council's services and to hear our residents' opinion is a priority. Four exercises to

gather the opinion of the people of Gwynedd about various services were held in 2020/21 with 8,910 individuals taking advantage of these opportunities to give their opinion. The exercises which attracted the most response were the ones regarding the holiday home premium and the recycling centres.

By March 2021, 34,172 individuals were receiving video clips, digital images and messages daily through the Council's Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts, which is an increase of 4,672 since the previous year.

We focused on enabling residents to gain easy access to services during the Covid-19 pandemic and to convey key messages about public health matters. An electronic newsletter has been established for citizens ("Newyddion Gwynedd Bach") and a system was developed to communicate messages to very local audiences via social media.

### Registering Births, Deaths and Marriages

The service managed to improve performance with 94% of registrations of death being made within five days, which exceeds last year's performance despite the fact that most registrations happened over the phone as a result of the pandemic.

We only managed to register 51% of births within five days due to lockdown restrictions - compared to 98% in 2019/20. However, we managed to deal with the backlog of several hundred births to be registered before the end of the year.

The number of weddings that it was possible to hold was substantially reduced and this led to a loss of income for the service during the year.

### Council Business Support

The work of preparing and publishing the Council's performance report for 2019/20 and

the review of the Council Plan for 2021/22 was co-ordinated. A specific project has been set up in order to lead on the implementation of the Equality Plan with the work initially focusing on trying to obtain a better understanding of the obstacles facing the county's residents in this context.

Support is provided to the Gwynedd and Anglesey Public Services Board which seeks to ensure that public services providers collaborate in order to improve the well-being of citizens. One of the main priorities of the Public Services Board is to update the Well-being Assessments for both counties and this is being addressed at the beginning of 2021/22.

### Research and Information

The pandemic highlighted the need for accurate and timely information about the nature of the crisis. Consequently, the service undertook substantial work on gathering, analysing and reporting on relevant data for the Council's services.

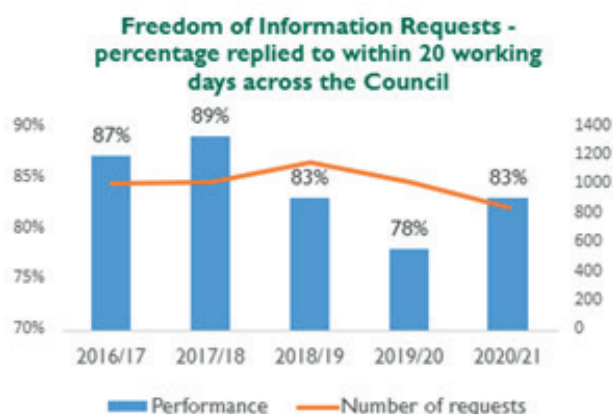


One issue that concerns us is that 30 information incidents have occurred across the Council in 2020/21 (i.e. where information has been lost or gone to the wrong person); this compares to 20 during 2019/20. An initial analysis suggests that approximately one third of the cases stemmed from circumstances of working-from-home during the pandemic.

We have already prepared guidelines and promotional material involving specific matters which need to be remembered when working from home, and we have updated our training programme and held virtual training sessions with teams in order to address the various issues which have been highlighted.

We started to move the Council's services to a new version of iGwynedd (the Council's electronic record management system) with the response to date from the services which have transferred reporting that the new system facilitates sharing information and documents.

During the year, the number of requests from individuals wishing to see information about themselves (data protection requests) has reduced to 53 (66 in 2019/20). 85% of these requests were answered within the expected time of one calendar month.



Additionally, 842 freedom of information requests were made during the year. The prompt response rate increased compared to the previous year to 83% and this is encouraging given the pressures on the Council's services during the pandemic.

## Purchasing

In addition to the work on the 'Keeping the Benefit Local' Improvement Priority, the Procurement Service has been responding to

the challenges of the pandemic and played a key part in the arrangements for ensuring PPE supplies for front-line staff. The three Category Teams have been a crucial part of these arrangements as well and continue to be involved with the purchasing, distribution and stock management aspects. The People Category Team also deals directly with older people's homes and social services more broadly.



## Democracy and Language

The purpose of the Democracy Service is to support Councillors in order that they can make decisions and act in the interests of the residents of Gwynedd.

The project to allow remote access to Council meetings has progressed significantly during the year with all the Council's formal meetings held virtually during the pandemic. Consideration is being given at the beginning of 2021/22 to adopt a protocol for holding meetings in the future, and it is forecast that many formal meetings will continue to be held virtually after the current restrictions are lifted.

For the 2020/21 period, the percentage of committee agendas published within the timetable (at least five working days before the meeting) stayed at 92%. Work with report authors is continuing in order to improve this performance.

The standard of the work produced by the Translation Unit continues to be appreciated, with 98.5% of the satisfaction questionnaires completed scoring the written translation service a 5 out of 5. The Translation Unit has played a key part in enabling simultaneous translation at virtual meetings, and also assisted other organisations to provide the same service.

"Hunaniaith" (Gwynedd's language initiative) also managed to change its ways of working with the community, using virtual methods to continue with its efforts to promote the Welsh language across the county.

## Human Resources

There has been a significant reduction in the number of sick days per staff member during the year to 6.3 days per head on average (down from 9.78 days per head in 2019/20) - this was mainly due to the Lockdown but also because the work of promoting physical and mental health as well as better management of absences has come to fruition. The Council remains among the councils with the lowest level of sickness absence.

Number of days lost on average per head as a result of sick leave



Three employment appeals hearing were held over the course of the year with the Committee's decisions supporting the original decision of the employer on the three occasions and a new code of conduct has been approved for staff within the Council.

## Support Service

The Support Service provides administrative assistance to the Council's staff. The work of introducing the Self-service system to staff without an IT account is a priority. This means that managers have convenient access to the DBS status of staff in regulated jobs, that pay slips are received electronically as well as receiving information in a more convenient and quicker way than in the past. By now, 92%

(71% in 2019/20) of Council staff are live on the Self-service system with further work to extend this figure during 2021/22.



## Learning and Organisational Development

The Learning and Organisational Development service

provides a learning and development service for the Council's staff and elected members. The service also leads on schemes for trainees and apprentices as well as being prominent in supporting the Council's Ffordd Gwynedd culture. Virtual learning methods have been developed over the course of the year, focusing on creating a remote learning environment and holding on-line assessment centres.

The service, together with the Education Department, received an award from Welsh Government's Educational Leadership National Academy for the work accomplished in developing leadership through coaching within education.

The service is co-ordinating arrangements to respond to complaints and promoting the lessons learned from the complaints received. Over the course of the year, the Local Government Ombudsman stated that the Council was prominent in using complaints to improve services.

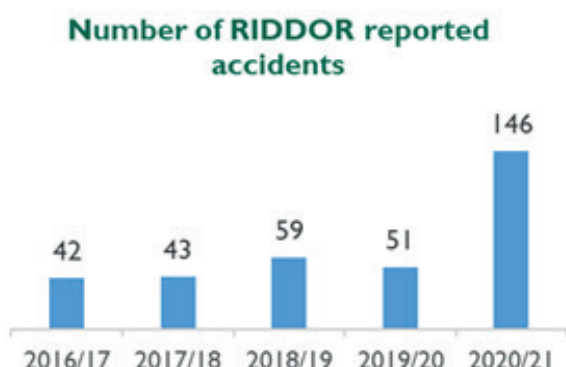
By now, 208 of the county's businesses, namely an increase of 24 in the past year, have joined the Staff Benefits Scheme, administrated by the service. The Scheme contributes to promoting the Buying Local Project and use their contacts with the businesses to that end.



## Health, Safety and Well-being

Many of the service's efforts were re-directed to deal with a range of aspects in terms of the Council's response to the pandemic. Over 600 vulnerable staff had a consultation with the Occupational Health Unit in order to offer guidance on the risk level to them and on any adaptations to protect them during the Lockdown. Also, the service responded and investigated cases of the virus and clusters in workplaces or among Council's workforce.

146 incidents were reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) over the course of the year. This compares with 51 incidents in the previous year, and this is mainly because *"reasonable doubt that a member of staff could have caught COVID at work"* had been added during the year to a list of incidents that needed to be reported to HSE.



We have also continued to support staff, whether front-line staff or staff who feel isolated when working from home, particularly in the context of mental well-being. This has been done through a combination of awareness-raising sessions and providing support as well as virtual consultations (and face-to-face) with the Occupational Health Team and Medra counsellors.

In order to ensure that our health and safety procedures are as robust as they can be, the Council Plan for the coming year has identified

this field as a corporate improvement priority.

This Department's day-to-day work contributes towards the Gwynedd Well-being Objectives, ensuring that Gwynedd residents can:

- Enjoy happy, healthy and safe lives
- Earn a sufficient salary to be able to support themselves and their families
- Live in a naturally Welsh society.

# Legal Services

The Legal Service provides a full legal service for all the departments within the Council. This includes specialised fields such as employment, commercial property, child protection, litigation and planning.

We receive consistently positive feedback, with the 2020/21 customer satisfaction survey showing that 87% of clients were fully satisfied (a score of 10 out of 10) with the service provided. It is difficult to draw a specific message from the feedback, but we monitor the performance level and the reasons for attributing a score lower than 10/10 closely, and respond to messages that derive from the data. Naturally, the information contributes to the procedure for managing and monitoring our performance.

## Customer Satisfaction Survey - score of 10 out of 10



It is also appropriate to note that the Legal Team has moved to electronic work systems early this year and is operating fairly paper-free. Our ability to do this reflects the investment already made in software but also work and commitment across the teams and their leaders.

Considerable work has also been undertaken to advise and support on the legal and

operational changes surrounding the Council's democratic processes during the crisis.

In relation to propriety arrangements, the Service has supported and advised on the Council's main matters and several specific corporate matters including:

- Housing Strategy
- Penrhos Home Site
- Schools Organisation

As Gwynedd Council is host authority for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, the Monitoring Officer led the regional legal work of establishing Governance Agreement 2 ("GA2") as well as supporting the Portfolio Office on the democracy aspects. The work continues.



The Service is also responsible for supporting the Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer by administering all the county's elections and the Electoral Roll. A grant was received from Welsh Government early in 2020 to support the work of establishing the new franchise (16 year-olds) as well as other aspects on the theme of access to voting. Unfortunately, it must be accepted that the Covid-19 situation has had a substantial impact on this work which was to involve attending Schools, Colleges and Youth Groups to promote registration. By now, a member of staff has been appointed to work on the promotional and registration project with a cross-departmental Project Group. This will allow the project to move forward when preparing for the Council elections in 2022. As the 2020/21 year drew to a close, substantial work had already started in order to prepare for the Senedd and Police

Commissioner elections in May.

The Service carries out a statutory function supporting the North West Wales Coroner Service. Following the retirement of the Coroner during the year, Kate Sutherland was appointed to an operational role and discussions were commenced with the UK Government's Department for Justice on the next steps in relation to the future of the area.