



Scrutiny Annual Report 2017-18

SCRUTINY IN GWYNEDD



Councillor
Seimon Glyn



Councillor Beth
Lawton



Councillor Eryl Jones-
Williams



Councillor
Medwyn Hughes

Chairs' Introduction

We scrutinise in Gwynedd to attempt to make a difference to the residents of Gwynedd.

The role of scrutiny is at an arm's length from the services, offering independent recommendations in order to try and improve services and also, hold Cabinet Members to account for their performance. This occurs through formal scrutiny at committees and also through audits or improvement working groups that look at matters in more depth and report recommendations to the Cabinet Member.

2017/18 was a year of change for scrutiny in Gwynedd, with revised scrutiny arrangements, and the focus on attempting to ensure appropriate attention to different matters and, in doing so, improve the work balance between the different committees. We have shifted towards more scrutiny on matters BEFORE decisions are made by the Cabinet, rather than scrutinise the impact of policies only.

There are now three Scrutiny Committees — Communities, Education and Economy, and Care, and corporate elements are scrutinised in the Audit and Governance Committee. The new scrutiny arrangements are being continuously developed, and we acknowledge that further amendment work is to be carried out, whilst maintaining a clear focus on endeavouring to make a difference to the people of Gwynedd.

We are very grateful to the people of Gwynedd, Cabinet Members, other agencies and relevant officers who support us in attempting to ensure we reach our aim.

Councillor Beth Lawton

Chair of the Scrutiny Forum

Scrutiny Chair and Vice- chairs 2017-18

Communities Scrutiny Committee

Chair - Councillor Simon Glyn

Vice-chair - Councillor Mike Stevens

Care Scrutiny Committee

Chair - Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams

Vice-chair - Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes

Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

Chair - Councillor Beth Lawton

Vice-chair - Councillor Nia Jeffreys

Audit and Governance Committee

Chair - Councillor R. Medwyn Hughes

Vice-chair - Councillor John Brynmor
Hughes

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Supporting Families

Strong and prosperous families with an opportunity for everyone to grow and develop is at the core of a happy and successful society.

We know that some families in Gwynedd live with many complex issues such as unemployment, family dispute, debts, health problems and no home or suitable house.

In Gwynedd, the emphasis is on supporting families **before** matters get bad in the first place.

The *Gwynedd Families First Commissioning Strategy* has been in place since 2012. This strategy emphasises collaboration with services within the Council and with external agencies, whilst putting the **needs of the family first**.

A review of the Strategy was undertaken in summer 2017, and the strategy proved successful, but that it was time to extend it.

10 principles were identified for the new Strategy — *Supporting Families in Gwynedd Strategy*:

The main aim is to:

Ensure that the child and the family is at the centre of everything we do.



Recommendations and observations of the Scrutiny Committee:

1. **The work of the Children and Supporting Families Service should be submitted to the meeting of the full Council.**
2. **Note the success of the Third Sector's contributions and deplore that Welsh Government has ended these grants.**
3. **It was noted that the Council's Education Department and the Health Board were strong partners.**
4. **Need to give specific attention to the lack of skills amongst young children, including speech and language.**
5. **Support the proposal to extend the provision across the County and to collaborate across agencies, including the third sector.**
6. **Keep an eye on the success of the pilot scheme with Housing Wardens in Maesgeirchen, Bangor.**
7. **The Cabinet Member was reminded of the need to meet the needs of children with disabilities.**



[Link to the Report and the Minute](#)

Looked after Children

The purpose of this service is to look after children when their parents cannot do so for various reasons.

This includes situations where the parents are violent, cannot provide sufficient care, or where a parent or guardian is unavailable.

- The number of looked after children is on the increase in Gwynedd and generally across the country. A 6% increase was seen in the County this year, with 231 children being looked after (February 2018).
- Consideration was given to the following elements by the Scrutiny Members:
 - ⇒ Type of placement — with parents, living independently, residential care, fostering and adoption.
 - ⇒ Reasons for becoming looked after.
 - ⇒ Placements in and out of County.
 - ⇒ Comparisons with other counties.
 - ⇒ Court Cases.
 - ⇒ The Work of the Edge of Care Team.
 - ⇒ Case Examples.



It was noted that all Gwynedd Councillors are Corporate Parents with a responsibility for considering information carefully about how well the Council supports the outcomes for the 231 looked after children, and everyone was encouraged to attend the training.



- 1 The Committee was assured that the Service responded promptly and timely, and took safeguarding steps in each case.
- 2 GCSE and A Level results are amongst the best in Wales.
- 3 Specialist presentations on the work of the Edge of Care Team were requested for the future.
- 4 The Edge of Care Team's early intervention is key.
- 5 It was noted that Social Workers had no more than 22 cases at any one time.

[Link to the Report and the Minute](#)

Health in Blaenau Ffestiniog

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board recently reorganised Health Services in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area.

Although the new provision includes a new Health Centre, there are some local concerns that there is no suitable provision for X-ray Services, minor injuries or sufficient beds for residential patients.



[Link to the Report on the Minute](#)



A Special Meeting of the Care Scrutiny Committee was held in September 2017 when evidence was considered by the Health Board and the Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital Defence Committee. The Health Board was requested to:

- ⇒ Share all information about the decision.
- ⇒ Conduct an independent review of the new provision
- ⇒ Consider the engagement and consultation shortcomings in order to improve.
- ⇒ The Cabinet Members for the Environment and Adults, Health and Well-being were requested to undertake an assessment of the convenience of the area's public Transport.
- ⇒ The Cabinet Members for Housing and Adults, Health and Well-being were requested to collaborate with relevant partners to improve the provision of suitable housing for older people in the area.
- ⇒ The Health Board and Gwynedd Council were requested to collaborate to recruit more care and health staff for the area and for the whole of Gwynedd.

Other matters that have been addressed by Members of the Care Scrutiny Committee

- Mental Health - Developmental work and plans regionally.
- Advocacy - Information on new regional and national arrangements.
- Young people who leave care — information about the early intervention Services and outcomes for individuals
- Carers — A progress report was received on 30 January 2017 on the execution of the scrutiny investigation's recommendations to support unpaid carers.
- Paying for Care Services — An update was received on the impact of presenting the new policy for service users.
- Supporting People with Disabilities in Gwynedd — A working group of members was set up to carry out an investigation in order to assess the Service offered to the people of Gwynedd by the North Wales ALAC (Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre).
- OPUS — An update was given on the Scheme which Works with individuals who have learning disabilities and mental health problems to help them receive training and employment.
- Learning Disabilities Services — after the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales conducted a survey, it was validated that the Action Plan had been completed.
- Social Housing — information on vacant houses was considered, and the Members noted their desire for any additional funding from the Council Tax Premium on second homes and vacant houses is reinvested for the purposes of bringing vacant houses back into use.
- Domiciliary Care — the details of the development work was considered in terms of regional work and the plans in the Tywyn area.
- Well-being Act 2014 — information was received on the plans and initial effects in light of the introduction of the Act.
- Care-Health Collaboration Scheme in Ysbyty Alltwen — the update was considered.
- Regional Work — information was received about the work of the Number 9 Board across north Wales.
- Social Services Complaints — the Adults, Health and Well-being Annual Report was considered for 2016-17, and observations were made for the Cabinet Member to consider before submitting his report to the Cabinet.
- Homelessness — a report on the impact of the new benefits schemes on homelessness was considered. It was noted that the Service was under additional significant pressure; that a more robust collaboration structure was required with the Health Board and that the number of suitable housing for homeless people needed to be increased.

Other matters that have been addressed by Members of the Care Scrutiny Committee (cont'd)

- Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd — the work of CCG was scrutinised for the 2016-17 year.
- Mid Wales Care-Health Board — two Members of the Committee scrutinise the work of the Board jointly with representatives from Powys and Ceredigion.
- Housing Allocation Policy — Information was received about the options submitted to move to a banding system which gives priority based on community connections, but more information was needed on the scoring system.

Other matters referred to the 2018-19 Work Programme

The following were referred to next year's Work Programme:

- Frondeg, Caernarfon — develop a new accommodation model for adults with learning disabilities.
- Autism Officers — an update on the effect of their work
- Respite Care
- Recruiting Difficulties
- Impact of Savings and Cuts — consider the 10 year impact since the introduction of the first Savings Strategy in 2007 in the field of Care.
- Case Meetings — after transferring from Frondeg, Pwllheli to Ffordd y Cob, consider the suitability of the resources.
- Care Workers' Pay — need clarity on the new arrangements
- Children with Disabilities — need to give regular consideration as part of reports and selecting a specific subject to scrutinise.

Referred matters

- Safeguarding — The 2016-17 Annual Report of the Strategic Safeguarding Panel was scrutinised by the full Council on 5 October 2017.
- Poverty — consider the situation in terms of Child Poverty, Disability Poverty and Fuel Poverty (Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee).
- Coordinating Health Services – between the Health Board and Surgeries (Community Health Council).

Education in Gwynedd

Success and fulfilling the potential of our children and young people is one of the county's most important issues.

In the past year, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee looked at a number of different elements of the service, including examination results, specific matters in key stage one, support from GwE and the Education Authority and education principles for the future.

FIT FOR PURPOSE EDUCATION

In considering different elements of the education service over the past years, the recommendations link back to firm and strong leadership, and the appropriate conditions to enable leaders (now and in future) to lead and develop to their full potential.

Three basic principles have been developed as a basis to the education system, that will address these problems and will provide education of the highest possible standard for the future.

- A system of viable secondary schools
- two age ranges within the same class **in the primary**
- approximately 80% of unconnected time for the Headteacher to focus on leadership matters **in the primary**

The scrutiny Members supported the principles noted above, but further scrutiny will be required to ensure a full understanding of implementing on a grass-roots level.



Education in Gwynedd

SUMMER 2017 EDUCATIONAL RESULTS

The Committee scrutinised the summer results across the age ranges. The following was reported:

- ⇒ Concern about attainment in the Foundation phase. The Committee members scrutinised this matter in detail at a further meeting after raising this concern.
- ⇒ Strong attainment in Key Stage 2 and 3.
- ⇒ A drop in the TL2+ performance indicator, which is in line with the national picture as a result of changes to the method of reporting and changes to the examination requirements.
- ⇒ Gwynedd's performance, A*-E in Key Stage 5, is slightly higher than Gwynedd's performance in 2016.

With such a critically important field for Gwynedd pupils, members of the Committee will continue to keep an eye on developments.



GWE SUPPORT

The GwE Consortium provides educational support to all North Wales authorities. Members of the Committee have scrutinised whether Gwynedd receive fair support from GwE, and commission Gwynedd's required support.

The Committee members were satisfied on the whole, but emphasised the need to continuously challenge the provision as well as continue with the good collaboration.

Changing services

In light of the continuous financial squeeze, the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee has scrutinised how to provide services in a different method on more than one occasion this year.

YOUTH SERVICE

A challenging field that the Committee scrutinised was the youth service. With the need for savings in the field, a working group was set up to look at and seek an understanding on the different possible options for a new service that would be:

- Sustainable and fair
- Affordable
- Respond to the needs of young people for the future.



It was a field where there were many discussions, and the Committee did not succeed in coming to a judgement or make a specific recommendation on the future of the service. Some Members leaned towards keeping the traditional provision, and others towards adapting for the future.



However, the Committee noted the observations below:

- The idea of looking at setting up clubs in the community and helping the clubs to establish themselves.
- Contact the town and community councils to see how they could be supported to hold activities and projects on behalf of the Youth Service.
- There was concern about the impact on the young people who specifically live in deprived areas in terms of gaining access to the service
- There was also a concern about the impact on the Welsh language.

Changing Services

ESTABLISHING A LEISURE COMPANY.

Members of the Committee support the need for providing leisure facilities for the people of Gwynedd in order to promote everyone to live healthy lives.

The Committee looked at the savings the service had to achieve - looking at the options to do so without closing a number of centres or increasing membership fees on a significant scale.

The Committee supported the option for the Council to set up a Company that will be managed by the Council, as this will bring the required savings for the Council whilst also safeguarding staff and the services that are currently offered.



The Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee raised many points:

- The need for a dynamic leader for the Company
- Opportunities to promote and market the available services more creatively
- Continue to support successful plans in individual centres
- The need for firm governance arrangements and management of the provision so that staff can be safeguarded, and can continue to maintain high standards and a bilingual provision.

The full Council has decided that this is the best way forward, and the work of setting up the Company is in progress. The Scrutiny Committee will continue to keep an eye on developments over the coming months.

Secondary Language Strategy



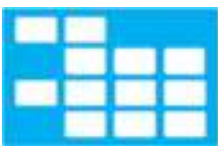
Bearing in mind Welsh Government's target to increase the number of Welsh speakers significantly by 2050, Members of the Committee were eager to see how the Authority intends to encourage our young people in our secondary schools (and colleges) to speak Welsh at schools and socially.

The Committee noted the importance of:

- * Progression between the Language Charter that supports the primary pupils and the Language Charter for the secondary schools
- * The role of school councils in order to ensure ownership of the Strategy
- * The role of schools to assist with organising Welsh gigs, and the need to promote a social life through the Welsh language, including digital communication.

Welsh Government's aim of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050!

North Wales Economic Growth



north wales economic ambition board
bwrdd uchelgais economaidd gogledd cymru

More and more projects and work is now taking place regionally, and one of these projects is to develop economic prosperity across North Wales. The work between the six authorities in north Wales has greatly progressed this year, and is continuing to develop.

It is an exciting development with excellent possibilities for north Wales and Gwynedd.

It is also a challenging time to ensure that the correct projects are identified and to ensure a benefit for Gwynedd, including the south of the County.

Workshops are held to ensure that all Council Members are aware of the developments that are taking place in light of the recommendations of the scrutiny Members.

Other matters that have been addressed by Members of the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee

FOUNDATION PHASE

There was concern about attainment in the Foundation phase, and a further report was received to ensure that matters improve and teachers get the appropriate support.

EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

The results of the Scrutiny Investigation about education support services were reported, with the Cabinet Member accepting the six recommendations.

AREA OFFICES

The developments with the new area offices was a consideration by the Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee. The Committee will scrutinise the impact of this development further in 2018/19.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

All reports considered by the Committee can be seen by following the link below.

[Link to the Committee meetings page](#)

Rights of Way

- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on highways authority such as Gwynedd Council to prepare and publish a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RWIP).
- The first Plan was drawn up in 2007 and this was reviewed last year.
- After holding a public consultation, the draft Action Plan was scrutinised by Members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 7 December 2017.
- The RWIP will be used as a basis for detailed plans.



These observations were noted by scrutiny:

- The work programme is challenging, given the Council's savings plan.
- There is a need to improve access to information about routes and maps for the public.

The Cabinet Member was asked whether it was possible to influence Welsh Government to submit an automatic roll back plan.

Food Hygiene

- Each Local Authority, including Gwynedd Council, is responsible for enforcing the requirements of the Food Safety Act locally.
 - Following a Public Inquiry into cases of E.coli 0157 in south Wales in September 2005, recommendations were made to each authority in Wales, including managing interventions in new food businesses.
 - In March 2014, an audit was carried out by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) of Gwynedd Council's arrangements. The Report included harsh criticism of the lack of compliance with recommendations to improve.
 - An Action Plan was drawn up to meet the shortcomings and a progress report was submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Committee in May 2015, when it was noted that the majority of actions had been completed.
 - An update was received at the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 10 October 2017.
-
- The Members were satisfied that the majority of recommendations had been achieved, but were concerned that signs of a lack of resources to complete the work in a reasonable amount of time created a risk for the Council and to citizens of the County.
 - The Members will request a further progress report next year.



Planning and the Welsh language

- Planning law in Wales is complicated and is difficult to understand in places.
- Effective land use planning can contribute towards firm economic development, retaining natural assets and improving the quality of life for individuals and communities.
- National planning policy provides the policy framework for local planning authorities for them to prepare their Development Plans effectively, and this is reiterated by the Technical Advice Notes (TAN) on specific subjects.
- In addition, local authorities can draw up Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to help ensure that the policies are better understood.
- The Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan 2011-26 was adopted in July 2017.
- A Scrutiny Investigation was set up on 7 December 2017 to contribute towards forming the Creating and Maintaining Distinctive and Sustainable Communities guidance.
- The Investigation's recommendations were submitted to a meeting of the Joint Planning Policy Committee on 24 April 2018.

These are the recommendations:

- Hold a public inquiry for developments of 10+ urban housing and 5+ rural housing.
- Language Statement and Language Assessment for each development that goes to a public inquiry.
- Ensure specialist external input on Language Planning, Research, Analytics, Consultation and Engagement.
- That the above get an opportunity to contribute to the draft Guidance before consulting upon it publicly to maximise the value of the consultation.



Other matters that have been addressed by Members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee

- Public Services Board — Consider the draft Gwynedd and Anglesey Well-being Plan
- Waste Enforcement — background information was considered and a Consultation was set up.
- Dog Control Orders — information was considered about the requirements of the Public Space Protection Orders.
- Pest Control — an update was received on plans for the Pest Control Unit to become financially self-supporting. The Members were happy with the progress.
- Public Toilets — keep an eye on the partnership Plans and the situation where toilets had closed.
- Crime and Disorder — the Crime and Disorder Annual Report was considered. The Members were satisfied with the Partnership's work.
- Planning Procedure — the tension between ensuring that guidance is received from Officers and the need for Members to be independent in their opinion in planning matters was considered. It was also noted that it was not possible to be entirely clear on some data such as building statistics and Bangor student accommodation.
- Parking Issues — information was received and a discussion was held on arrangements and impacts across the County, including visitors, untidy parking, designated parking spaces and electronic payments.
- Converting Agricultural Buildings — information was considered and barriers for local people, and the Cabinet Member was asked to lobby the Government to improve the situation.
- Overdevelopment of Caravan Sites — information was considered on the matter and a request was made to scrutinise the Tourism Accommodation and Facilities Supplementary Planning Guidance before it was adopted.

Other matters that have been addressed by Members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee

- Radicalisation – information was considered on the work of the CONTEST Board that aims to prevent people from being pulled into terrorism.
- Grenfell Tower — Information was considered on the implications of the disaster. The Members heard that the Council has no buildings covered with the specific material in question.
- The Impact of Savings and Cuts — a suggestion was noted that the role of the Scrutiny Members was to gather feedback from Service Users.
- Grass Cutting — a report was considered that noted the difficulty to realise financial savings, and a recommendation was made to spend less on flower beds, and to consider other options.
- Sustainability Balance —background information was considered
- Smallholdings —background information was considered

Matters referred on to the 2018-19 Work Programme

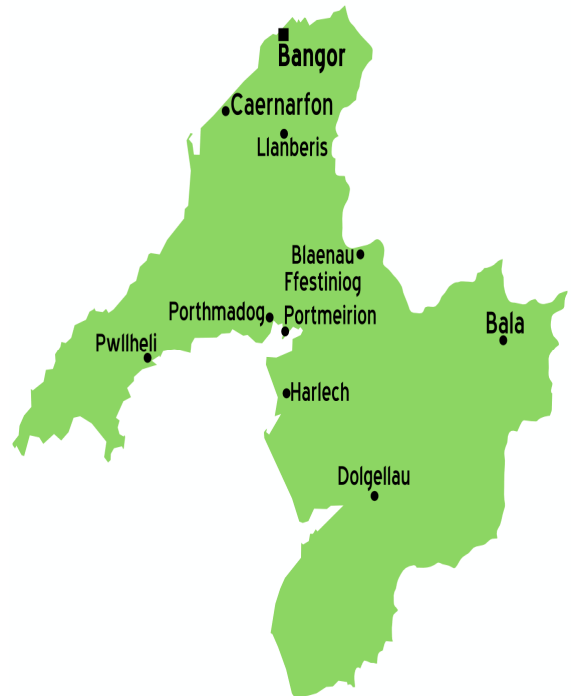
- Decentralising Services — To Town and Community Councils and other organisations.
- Floods — Mitigation impact plans.

Under the new scrutiny arrangements the Audit and Governance Committee has responsibility, amongst other responsibilities, to scrutinise corporate matters.

The following matters were looked at this year.

Review of Electorate Boundaries in Gwynedd

Currently, there are 75 elected members representing the people of Gwynedd on the Council. The Electorate Commission is reviewing the number of Councillors, with a view to lowering the total. The committee scrutinised the Council's ideas for new wards prior to presenting the ideas to the Boundary Commission.



The committee noted the importance of:

- * Ensuring attention to effective local representation
- * The effect of the population not on the electorate register

The Committee was of the view that the Commission would need to consider the above when reaching a conclusion.

Electoral wards will change by the 2022 election.

We do not currently have any further information.

Review the Council's policy on discretionary relief for non-domestic rates.

A working group of members from the committee was established to review the council's policy on discretionary relief for non-domestic rates as the policy had not been reviewed for a while.

The working group recommended changes to the current policy which were presented to the Cabinet Member. The report can be seen on the website.

