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Dear Dylan

## Arrangements for responding to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

### What we did

We undertook an assessment of the Council's progress in responding to the key requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act (the Act) 2021 between April and August 2022. We gathered our evidence through document reviews and interviews. We also drew upon the relevant findings from our other ongoing and recent work at the Council. Our work looked at the arrangements the Council was putting in place in responding to the Act. The work was not an assessment of the effectiveness of these arrangements.

### What we found

**The Council has drafted its first annual self-assessment and will present it at a full Council meeting in the autumn of 2022. The Council has not yet confirmed its plans for completing the external panel performance assessment, but believes it will take place in the second half of this Council's term**

- The Act requires councils in Wales to complete an annual self-assessment of their performance. Isle of Anglesey County Council has drafted its first annual self-assessment looking at performance for 2021-22. It has presented it to the Executive

and to the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2022. Once the Governance and Audit Committee has reviewed the self-assessment to agree the content or propose amendments, the Committee will then present it to full Council in the autumn of 2022.

- The Council’s self-assessment has three main categories – performance management; use of resources; and risk management. Each of these three categories has three sub-categories:

Performance Management	Performance Reporting
	Customer Service
	Governance and Compliance
Use of Resources	Workforce Development and People Management
	Resourcing
	Collaboration and Integration
Risk Management	External regulatory reports/peer input
	Internal Audit
	Corporate Safeguarding

- To complete the overall self-assessment, each of the Council’s nine services completed a self-assessment.
  - Firstly, they scored their performance against the nine sub-categories using a four-point scale of excellent, good, adequate, and unsatisfactory.
  - Secondly, they scored their prospects for future improvement using a second four-point scale of excellent, good, adequate, and unsatisfactory.
- For each service, the Council visually plotted the results of their self-assessment against their prospect for future improvement in a two-by-two matrix.
- The Act also requires an external, panel performance assessment to be conducted once during the period between two, consecutive, ordinary elections. The Council has not made a formal decision on when the external panel assessment will take place. The assessment is likely to be in the second half of this Council term. The Council told us it plans to create a team of officers from within existing resources to collate information and support the Panel before and during the assessment.

### **The Council is currently drafting its Participation Strategy, but work has not yet started on revising the Petitions Scheme**

- The Council’s Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act Action Plan identifies the tasks it aims to undertake to create a Participation Strategy and revise its Petitions Scheme. The Council’s Business Planning, Programme and Performance Manager is leading on this element of the Act for the Council.
- The Council is currently drafting its Participation Strategy.

- The Council's Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act Action Plan states that the work to revisit and revise the Petitions Scheme has not yet started. The Council told us it will need external support to complete this work because of capacity issues through staff vacancies. It has requested assistance from the WLGA.
- The Council told us it plans to re-establish its Engagement and Consultation Board. The Board's programme of work will undertake involvement in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

**The Council has appointed four lay members and eight elected members to its new Governance and Audit Committee and plans to run a qualitative self-assessment of the Committee's performance in 2022-23**

- Under the new arrangements, the Council's Governance and Audit Committee has 12 members comprising eight elected members and four lay members.
- The Council in April 2022 approved the appointment of three new lay members to the Governance and Audit Committee. It also approved the continuation of the pre-existing lay member for a second five-year term, bringing the total number of lay members to four.
- The Council approved changes to the Constitution and Terms of Reference for the Governance and Audit Committee in accordance with the Act.
- The Council has provided specific training to the members of the Governance and Audit Committee in June 2022. The WLGA facilitated training looking at the roles and responsibilities of the Committee members.
- The Council told us that it plans to run a qualitative self-assessment during 2022-23, collecting feedback from the Governance and Audit Committee members and those who work closely with the Committee. The Council's aims of this assessment are to understand how the Committee is performing and to identify areas for future development and training for members.

**The North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) met for the first time in January 2022. The six constituent councils are aiming to transfer the functions of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board to an empowered sub-committee of the CJC. Benefits include streamlining governance and avoiding duplication between the two bodies**

- The Welsh Government introduced regulations on 17 March 2021 to create four Corporate Joint Committees across Wales. The constituent bodies established the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (NWCJC) on 1 April 2021. The initial functions of the NWCJC came into force on 30 June 2022. Gwynedd Council, as the Host Authority for the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB), leads on a project to respond to this new procedure, 'Collaborative Working of Principal Councils'.
- The partners involved in this committee are:

- Conwy County Borough Council
- Denbighshire County Borough Council
- Flintshire County Borough Council
- Gwynedd Council
- Isle of Anglesey County Council
- Wrexham County Borough Council
- Snowdonia National Park Authority
- The six constituent councils agreed the NWCJC should continue the direction established by the NWEAB. The constituent bodies presented a report in January 2022 to their Cabinets/Executive Boards recommending that the functions of the NWEAB be transferred by way of a delegation agreement to an empowered sub-committee of the NWCJC. The proposed model sees an Economic Ambition Board Sub-Committee reporting to the NWCJC. This alteration was proposed to achieve a streamlined governance model and avoid any duplication between the two bodies.
- The Council is currently waiting on guidance and regulations on matters such as scrutiny, borrowing powers and VAT status to develop the work of the NWCJC further.

**The Council has no immediate plans to use the General Power of Competence as set out in the Act, but has identified the need to train officers and provide guidance**

- The Council told us it had no immediate plans to use the General Power of Competence as set out in the Act.
- The Council's LG&E (Wales) Act 2021 Action Plan states that it will wait to see the Regulations before considering further but may need to decide on the steps required to embed the Power as part of operational business as usual.
- The Council has identified the need to provide training and guidance to its officers on the Power, but it has not yet planned this work.

**Conclusion**

The Council is making good progress developing its arrangements to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. There is further work to be done including:

- confirming and implementing plans for completing the external panel performance assessment
- complete the preparation and adoption of a Participation Strategy
- revise its Petition Scheme
- provide training and guidance to officers on the General Power of Competence
- at the North Wales regional level, confirm the scrutiny arrangements, borrowing powers and VAT status of the Corporate Joint Committee

Yours sincerely

Alan Hughes

Audit Lead