

**DECISION NOTICE OF AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER OF GWYNEDD  
COUNCIL CABINET**

**DATE OF DECISION 24 February 2025**

**DATE DECISION PUBLISHED 24 February 2025**

**DATE DECISION WILL COME INTO FORCE** and implemented,  
unless the decision is called in, in accordance with section 7.25  
of the Gwynedd Council Constitution **3 March 2025**

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**CABINET MEMBER NAME AND TITLE**

Councillor Nia Jeffreys  
Council Leader

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**SUBJECT – Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy**

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**DECISION**

Sign the Charter for Families Bereaved though Public Tragedy.

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**REASON WHY THE DECISION IS NEEDED**

Please see attached Officer Report.

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**DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND ANY RELEVANT DISPENSATIONS  
APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

None

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**ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION**

Consultation with  
Gwynedd Council Statutory Officers

The results of the consultations are reported upon in the attached report.

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## DECISION NOTICE OF AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER OF CYNGOR GWYNEDD CABINET – OFFICER REPORT

Name and title of Cabinet Member/s:	Nia Jeffreys, Council Leader
Name and title of Report Author:	Catrin Love Assistant Head of Department Corporate Services
Date of Decision:	24.2.25
Signature of Cabinet Member/s:	

**Subject: Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy**

### **Recommendation for the Decision:**

Sign the Charter for Families Bereaved though Public Tragedy

### **Background**

This Charter stems from the work of Bishop James Jones, the former Bishop of Liverpool, having been commissioned by the UK Home Office following the second Hillsborough inquest in 2016, to undertake a review of the families' experience following the disaster.

In 2017, Bishop James presented his recommendations to the UK Parliament in a report titled '*The patronising disposition of unaccountable power.*'

Within the report, Bishop James outlines his conclusions that the Hillsborough tragedy, the aftermath, and the struggle to be heard for over a quarter of a century had a detrimental effect on the well-being of bereaved families and survivors. What the report refers to as '*patronising disposition,*' is a specific reference to a '*cultural mindset within organisations that defines how they, and people within them, behave (1).*' One core feature of that culture is an '*instinctive prioritisation*' of the reputation of the organisation over an individual's right to expect people to be held to account for their actions.

The creation of the Charter was one of many recommendations within Bishop James's report, and now all public organisations are encouraged to sign it, and many have already done so. The Charter itself can be viewed on the third page of this report. It is essentially a series of 6 statements. All statements are about transparency and acting in the best interest of the public, in order to avoid prolonged pain and suffering for families in any future public tragedy such as Hillsborough, or Grenfell.

### **Reason why Decision is needed:**

All public organisations in the UK are encouraged to sign this Charter in order to respond to recommendations within Bishop James' report. Many of our public sector partners in Wales have already signed it, with work ongoing through the Welsh Resilience Forums to encourage all relevant organisations to do so, with the aim eventually being of 'One Charter for Wales' across the public sector.

Two pan-Wales events have been held to date led by South Wales Police in order to raise awareness of the Charter amongst Senior Officers of public organisations. The first event set the scene through a presentation by Bishop James himself, and the second event heard first-hand experiences of families bereaved in the Hillsborough, Aberfan, and Grenfell tragedies. There is a desire to see all Authorities sign the Charter by Spring 2025, and several public organisations in Wales, including the Welsh Government, all Police Forces, and some Councils such as Ceredigion Council have already done so, and several other Councils have expressed the intention to do so.

To reflect the effort to get all organisations to sign within the above timeframe, a Public Ceremony will be held next month in Merthyr to mark the historic event of public organisations across Wales signing the Charter. Signing before then would enable Cyngor Gwynedd to be recognised at that event as an organisation that has signed the Charter.

### **Reason and justification behind the Decision:**

By signing the Charter, the Council is responding to the request for all public organisations to do, and by doing so, to publicly commit to learning lessons from tragedies such as Hillsborough and Grenfell, and their aftermath. This is so that the perspective of grieving families is not lost by public organisations in the way they respond, and that families are treated with care and compassion.

It's also a commitment to respond to any such tragedy in an open and transparent manner, maintaining the public's interest as a priority above all else

(1) The patronising disposition of unaccountable power: A report to ensure the pain and suffering of the Hillsborough families is not repeated,' The Right Reverend James Jones KBE, Her Majesty's Stationary Office.

## Appendix: Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy

### **Declarations of personal interest by any Cabinet Member consulted with and any relevant dispensations approved by the Standards Committee**

### **Record of any interest declared by any Cabinet Member consulted and any dispensation from a Standards Committee:**

### **Any consultations undertaken prior to making the decision:**

#### Head of Finance

'I can confirm that the Finance Department has discussed the obligation of signing the Charter with our insurers and I am satisfied that there is no obstacle from the perspective of insurance. The decision sought does not create a financial commitment. I therefore welcome the Charter, and I have no opposition to its signing.'

#### Monitoring Officer

'The Charter is intended to adopt general principles about how public bodies respond to and deal with the consequences of the most serious incidents. It is a commitment to behaviours which build on the experiences and difficult lessons of the past and is aimed at not repeating them. Obviously, the response to events of this nature cannot be legislated in detail. The Charter will work within the context of the legal and investigation processes that would result. These have their own requirements and arrangements which would apply in such a situation. However I am satisfied that there is no legal impediment against the Council committing to the Charter.'

#### Local Member/s -



## **Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy**

In adopting this Charter, I commit that Cyngor Gwynedd learns the lessons of the Hillsborough disaster and its aftermath, so that the perspective of the bereaved families is not lost.

I commit to Cyngor Gwynedd being an organisation which adopts the principles below and strives to:

1. In the event of a public tragedy, support the activation of emergency plans and deployment of resources to rescue victims, to support the bereaved and to protect the vulnerable.
2. Place the public interest above our own reputations.
3. Approach forms of public scrutiny – including public inquiries and inquests – with candour, in an open, honest and transparent way, making full disclosure of relevant documents, material and facts. Our objective is to assist the search for the truth. We accept that we should learn from the findings of external scrutiny and from past mistakes.
4. Avoid seeking to defend the indefensible or to dismiss or disparage those who may have suffered where we have fallen short.
5. Ensure all members of staff treat members of the public and each other with mutual respect and with courtesy. Where we fall short, we should apologise straightforwardly and genuinely.
6. Recognise that we are accountable and open to challenge. We will ensure that processes are in place to allow the public to hold us to account for the work we do and for the way in which we do it. We do not knowingly mislead the public or the media.

Signed: