

# Isle of Anglesey County Council Scrutiny Report

<b>Committee:</b>	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date:</b>	18 February, 2026
<b>Subject:</b>	Smallholdings Management Strategic Plan 2026 – 2031
<b>Scrutiny Chair:</b>	Councillor Jeff Evans

## 1. Who will be the portfolio holder presenting / leading the report?

<b>Portfolio Member</b>	<b>Role</b>
Councillor Alun Roberts	Leisure, Tourism, Maritime and <b>Property</b>
<b>Service Officer (supporting)</b>	<b>Role</b>
Meilir Hughes	Chief Property and Assets Officer

## 2. Why the Scrutiny Committee is being asked to consider the matter

The Smallholdings Management Strategic Plan 2026 – 2031 provides the framework for ensuring that there is a strategic, holistic and co-ordinated approach to the management of the Smallholdings Estate, aligned with the Council Plan. The period of the current Plan has ended and therefore a new plan needs to be established for the next period. The Committee is asked to consider the content of the 2026-2031 Strategic Plan.

## 3. Role of the Scrutiny Committee and recommendations

- For assurance  
 For recommendation to the Executive  
 For information

### Recommendation(s):

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to accept the content of the Smallholdings Management Strategic Plan for the period 2026 – 2031 before it is presented to the Executive Committee.

## 4. How does the recommendation(s) contribute to the objectives of the Council's Plan?

Approving the Strategic Plan will contribute to the following objectives;

Economy - improving the viability of the Estate in the long term and thereby ensuring the Council's ability to promote farming opportunities and rural economy businesses on the island.

Climate change – improving the availability of the Estate on for alternative uses that would contribute to the Council 's journey towards Net Zero if the Council choose to do so.

## 5. Key scrutiny themes

Key themes the Scrutiny Committee should concentrate on:

1. The principle of committing financially valuable assets in order to provide a non -statutory service.
2. Financial constraints
3. The aim of enabling alternative use of the Estate to support the Council's Plan
4. Effective governance and oversight
5. Risks and challenges

## 6. Key points / summary

### **A new Strategic Plan is needed.**

The latest policy was adopted over 15 years ago, and its original operational period has ended. There is a duty to maintain current policy documents to support democratic and transparent governance. Officers need a policy framework and guidance to empower them to make consistent decisions aligned with the Council's aspirations.

### **The adoption and delivery of the Strategic Plan will improve the management and viability of the Smallholding Estate.**

The Smallholdings Management Strategic Plan's purpose is to establish a vision and principles to drive sustainable management of the Estate. That will ensure long-term viability by returning appropriate financial, environmental and social benefits.

### **The Strategic Plan recognizes the need, and recommends increasing the Maintenance budget by £100,000**

As part of the development of the Strategic Plan it was established that there is a shortfall in the current budgetary provision which means that the maintenance backlog is increasing continually. By reducing the Estate's net contribution to the Council Fund and investing that money in Repair and Maintenance work we can address the backlog and deliver an Estate that will be in a condition that we can be proud of.

### **The Strategic Plan establishes a process to identify opportunities for rationalizing the Estate.**

The Strategic Plan establishes the principle of evaluating the viability of holdings as they become vacant and considering whether to re-let, re-structure or dispose of holdings on each individual holding's own merit on a case-by-case basis.

The Strategic Plan establishes a long-term ambition to increase the size of the Estate by buying additional land funded from income from sales.

**The Smallholdings Steering Group supports the Strategic Plan.**

A multi-party Smallholdings Steering Group has been convened, and it's the output of that group's meetings that has driven the Strategic Plan. The Steering Group Recommends the Draft Strategic Plan.

**7. Impact assessments**

7.1. Potential impacts on groups protected under the Equality Act 2010

Impact assessment carried out – no impact identified. Please contact the author of the report for more information/details.

7.2. Potential impacts on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage (strategic decisions)

Impact assessment carried out – no impact identified. Please contact the author of the report for more information/details.

7.3. Potential effects on opportunities to use Welsh and not treat the language less favourably than English

Impact assessment carried out – no impact identified. Please contact the author of the report for more information/details.

7.4. Potential impact on the Council's Net Zero Carbon target

Positive / Neutral / Negative and how.

Positive.

The long-term commitment to the Estate ensures continued ownership of lands which are a net carbon sink.

The implementation of the Strategic Plan will lead to improving the availability of the Estate for alternative uses to support the delivery of the Council's Plan when suitable.

While further authority would be required to commit parts of the Estate for alternative purposes, the Council can choose to commit parts of the Estate to schemes that contribute to the Council's journey towards Net Zero.

**8. Financial implications**

The Strategic Plan recognizes a need, and recommends increasing the Maintenance budget by £100,000. Supporting the Plan and accepting the Recommendation will mean an additional demand worth £100,000 on the Council's revenue budgets.

**9. Appendices**

Smallholdings Management Strategic Plan

**10. Report author and background papers**

Meilir Hughes, Chief Property and Asset Officer

# Ynys Môn

THE ISLE OF

# Anglesey



## Smallholdings Management Strategic Plan

2026 – 2031



# Foreword



Councillor Alun Roberts  
Portfolio Member  
Leisure, Tourism,  
Maritime and Property



Huw Percy  
Head of Service:  
Highways,  
Waste and  
Property

The Isle of Anglesey County Council is proud of its Smallholdings Estate and the contribution it continues to make to the rural economy, farming community and environment of the Island.

The Council is committed to our Estate's retention and to securing its long-term viability as a let agricultural Estate.

Managing the Estate, and the competing and often diametrically opposed demands made of it by various stakeholders is a significant challenge, for example; the demands of incumbent tenants will be quite different to those perspective applicants for their first tenancy, and this Strategic Plan seeks to balance those demands in pursuit of the best interest of the Estate in the long term.

Whilst it is appreciated that there may be some resistance to elements, it's recommended that the changes proposed are undertaken gradually to address risks in good time. Delay in undertaking changes will exacerbate risks and is likely to lead to more drastic actions having to be undertaken in due course.

*This strategic plan does not apply to the David Hughes Charitable Estate, which has a separate policy document reflecting the obligations attached to its charitable objectives.*

# Purpose

“To manage the Smallholdings Estate sustainably to ensure its long-term viability by providing an appropriate financial, environmental and social return to reflect its capital value.”

The Smallholdings Management Strategic Plan is driven by the Council Plan and the Capital Strategic Plan to ensure that smallholdings management decisions are taken in a planned way that allows the Council to achieve its key strategic objectives whilst ensuring long-term viability.

This strategic document has a lifespan of 5 years and will provide the framework for ensuring there is a strategic, holistic and co-ordinated approach to the management of the Smallholdings Estate, in line with the Council Plan.

# The Smallholdings Estate



Size Of Holdings	
Size (acres)	Number of Holdings
0-5	3
5-10	9
10-30	5
30-40	7
40-50	11
50-60	9
60-70	5
70-80	10
80-90	12
90-100	6
100-120	9
120-140	2
140-160	2
160-180	1
Farm Type	
	Number of Holdings
Milking	2
Mixed	76
Bare Land	13
Tenancy Type	
Type	Number of Holdings
Farm Business Tenancy	55
Agricultural Holdings Act (lifetime)	22
Agricultural Holdings Act (retirement clause)	13
No Tenancy	1

# Council Plan Strategic Objectives

The Council Plan is the key document serving as a focal point for decision-making at all levels; providing a framework to plan and drive forward priorities; shape annual spending; monitor performance and progress.

At its core is our desire to work with Anglesey residents, communities and partners to ensure the best possible services, improve the quality of life for all and create opportunities for future generations.

Its six main objectives reflect the key areas the Council should be focusing its efforts on.

The Council Plan’s vision is to:

‘Create an Anglesey that is healthy and prosperous where people can thrive.’



The Welsh Language

Increase the opportunities to learn and use the language.



Social Care and Wellbeing

Providing the right support at the right time.



Education

Ensuring an effective provision for today and for future generations.



Housing

Ensuring that everyone has the right to call somewhere home.



Economy

Promoting opportunities to develop the Island’s economy.



Climate Change

Responding to the crisis, tackling change and working towards becoming net zero organization by 2030.



[Council Plan 2023-2028](#)

# Core Values

The council's core values underpin everything we do, shaping our culture and guiding how we make decisions, work with partners and deliver services.



## Respect

We are respectful and considerate towards others regardless of our differences .



## Collaborate

We work as a team, with our communities and partners to deliver the best outcomes for the people of Anglesey.



## Honesty

We are committed to high standards of conduct and integrity.



## Champion the Council and the island

We create a sense of pride in working for the Council and present a positive image for the Council and the Island.

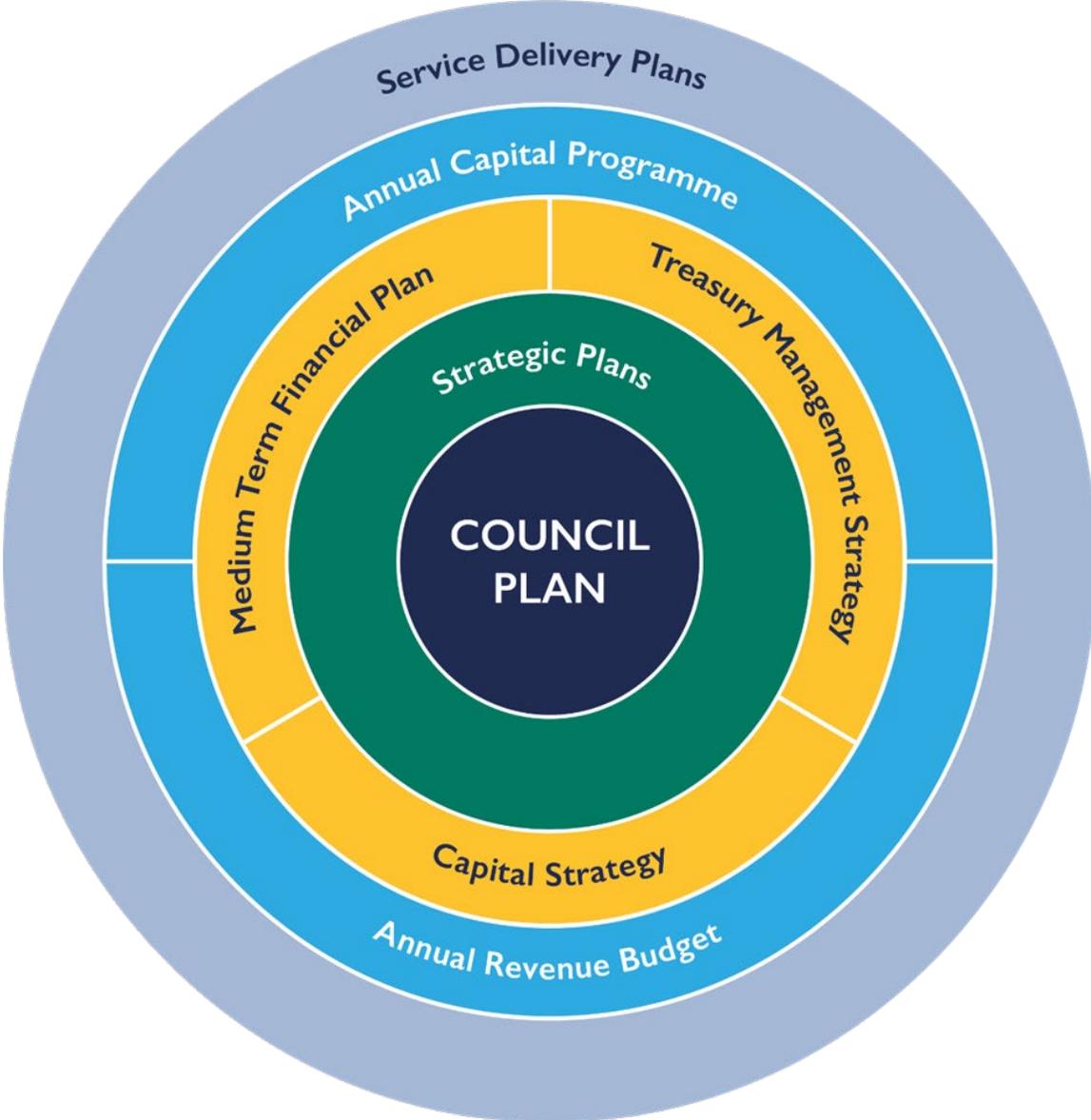


[Council Plan 2023-2028](#)

# Strategic Circle

The strategic circle identifies the plans in place to ensure we are able to achieve our priorities and objectives.

This plan is a key strategic plan that aligns with the Council's Plan and contributes to the achievement of the strategic objectives and vision.



[Council Plan 2023-2028](#)

# Key priority areas

“To manage the Smallholdings Estate sustainably to ensure its long-term viability by providing an appropriate financial, environmental and social return to reflect its capital value.”

## 1. A financially sustainable Estate

- Appropriately rationalized and optimised Estate that generates financial returns commensurate with the capital invested to secure a financially sustainable long-term future.

## 2. An Estate to be proud of

- In good condition, supportive of its tenants and able to continue to provide opportunities for people to farm on their own account.
- Managed transparently, prudently and professionally with decision-making principles applied consistently and fairly.

## 3. An Estate where risk is minimised and managed

- Managed to minimise the Council’s exposure to risks (insured and others) and the consequences of their realization.

## 4. An Estate that supports the Council Plan

- An Estate that supports the delivery of the Council Plan’s strategic objectives where appropriate.

# A financially sustainable Estate

## Why is this important?

The capital value of the Estate is significant, and it should generate a financial return commensurate with that invested capital.

The retention of an Estate that performs poorly, and that needs to be subsidized from central council budgets is unsustainable.

The future of an appropriately rationalized and optimized Estate that performs well financially is more secure and sustainable.

## What are we going to do?

- Rationalize the Estate
- Invest appropriately
- Maximize Rental Income and improve timeliness of payments

## How are we going to do this?

- Consider the business case for both retention and disposal when holdings become vacant.
- Consider alternative uses.
- When selling, do so on the open market and look to maximize the capital receipt.
- Retain land where appropriate, adding it to other holdings or letting as bare land.
- Produce a 10-year investment plan.
- Increase the annual R&M Budget by £102,000 from 2026/27 with the budget to be subject to inflation-based increases for the duration of the strategic plan.
- Review all rents in accordance with the provisions.
- Change letting terms to simplify rent reviews when opportunities arise.
- Hold deposits when letting new holdings.
- Pursue timely payments enforcing when necessary.
- Terminate tenancies in cases of persistent late and non-payment.

# A well-managed Estate to be proud of

## Why is this important?

The Smallholdings Estate is an asset of significant value and profile within the agricultural community. The links between the Council and its tenants can span decades.

It is important that we manage the Estate transparently, prudently and professionally.

As well as offering rare opportunities for people to farm on their own account, they are people's homes, and it is important that those homes are fit for purpose.

## What are we going to do?

- Improve documentation and record keeping to strengthen our capability to make data informed decisions by creating a complete, accurate and well-maintained dataset for our holdings/ tenancies.
- Apply decision-making principles consistently using data to inform those decisions.
- Improve transparency and answerability for management arrangements
- Review the principles and processes of appointing new tenants
- Invest appropriately in the repair and maintenance of the holdings, and we will specifically aim to improve the Estate's EPC average rating.

## How are we going to do this?

- Develop profile sheets for all holdings summarising key data and update periodically.
- Record agreements between Landlord and Tenants for future reference.
- Undertake comprehensive condition surveys to establish the condition of dwellings and buildings.
- Use CPM (computer aided facilities management program) to manage rent reviews and tenancy renewals.
- Establish key performance indicators and report annually.

# An Estate where risk is minimised and managed

## Why is this important?

There are certain risks attached to owning any property. The risks attached to smallholdings are higher relatively to those attached to other Council properties in their unmitigated state. This is due to their lack of uniformity, the tenants' independence and the limited control the Council has over their actions.

As the Council is committed to retaining the Estate, the risks cannot be eliminated. Therefore, it's recommended that reasonably practicable steps are taken to manage them.

## What are we going to do?

Minimise exposure to the following risks:

- Civil and/or criminal liability
  - For health and safety matters and others
- Statutory Compliance
  - Building Safety Matters
  - Environmental Legislation
- Financial burden
  - Repair and maintenance costs and liability for costly repairs
  - Insurance costs
  - Non-payment of rent
- Poor Estate management
  - Non-compliance with lease terms by either Tenant or Landlord
  - Repair and Maintenance
- Reputational damage
  - As a secondary consequence of the realisation of the above risks.

## How are we going to do this?

Take opportunities to make beneficial changes to tenancy agreements whenever possible e.g. when negotiating tenancy renewals or amendments to:

- Clearly define both Tenant's and Landlord's duties
- Transfer certain duties to tenants as appropriate.
- Transfer responsibility for ensuring the house is safe and compliant to the Landlord (where necessary).
- Investigate options for reducing the cost of insuring the properties to the Landlord.
- Reduce the length of the tenancies to give the Landlord a stronger negotiating position and more control over the properties.
- Take a low-risk approach to tenant appointment
- Presume in favour of approving applications for succession (on revised terms) in joint names where family members wish to succeed subject to previous satisfactory performance.\*

\* NB this will reduce opportunities for new entrants

# An Estate that supports the Council Plan

## Why is this important?

Whilst the Estate is let to c.90 households, it is proposed that it should be made available for alternative uses to support the delivery of the Council Plan where appropriate.

This may include retaining some holdings or parts of holdings in hand rather than letting them so they can be used for alternative purposes. It could also involve working collaboratively with tenants to develop management plans that enable the land to be used for a particular purpose.

## What are we going to do?

Consider alternative uses for parts of the Estate when opportunities arise:

- Repurpose buildings for strategic use.
- Repurpose land for strategic development. Repurpose land for uses that will contribute towards tackling climate change.
- Reinvest the proceeds from the sale of holdings to acquire new land to be let as part of the Estate in the short to medium term with strategic potential for accommodating economic, housing, education or other development.

## How are we going to do this?

- Change the form and length of tenancy, as outlined under “Minimize Risk” to give the Landlord a stronger negotiating position and more control over the properties.
- Repurpose holdings only after full appraisal and approval, giving priority to development or tackling climate change. Appropriate opportunities will be rare but should be taken when presented.
- Create a ring-fenced capital fund from sale proceeds to reinvest in the Estate, including purchasing strategic agricultural land for future development. Land will be let for agricultural purposes until its strategic potential can be realized.

# Risks in delivering the Smallholdings Management Strategic Plan

- Internal capacity to deliver
- Legislative changes
- Need to react to unforeseen events
- Budgetary constraints
- Resistance to change
- Broader discussions around pressure on the agricultural sector derailing change
- Perception of proposed changes being unfair
- Limited ability to make changes within the life of tenancies without the Tenants' consent, together with the long length of those tenancies and low turnover.
- Climate change and the seemingly higher frequency of damage-causing storms, and the resulting pressure on insurance costs and cover availability.

# Governance: Monitoring and evaluation

We will establish robust arrangements to ensure the successful delivery of the strategic plan. These arrangements will provide clarity, accountability, cohesion, and a structured approach to effectively monitor progress.

The Highways, Waste and Property Service Management Team will lead on developing, implementing and monitoring the strategic plan. This group will report directly to the Leadership Team – Capital and Digital.

Regular progress updates will include details of actions taken, outcomes achieved, and the impact delivered, highlighting both successes and challenges. An annual progress report will be produced, alongside a formal review of the strategic plan to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

It is important to recognise that delivering these changes will take time, largely due to the security of tenure held by our tenants. Progress will depend on individual circumstances, and we must be prepared to take opportunities as they arise, such as retirements or other changes.