

To: Members of the County Council

Date: 2 June 2014

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Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **COUNTY COUNCIL** to be held at **10.00 am** on **TUESDAY, 10 JUNE 2014** in **COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN LL15 1YN**.

Yours sincerely

G Williams
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

AGENDA

PART 1 - THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THIS PART OF THE MEETING

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at this meeting.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

4 CHAIRMAN'S DIARY (Pages 5 - 6)

To note the civic engagements undertaken by the Chairman of the Council (copy attached).

5 MINUTES (Pages 7 - 16)

To receive the minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 13 May 2014 (copy enclosed).

6 FINANCIAL INCLUSION TOGETHER (FIT) PROJECT (Pages 17 - 30)

To consider a report by the Project Manager, Financial Inclusion Together (copy enclosed) to provide information to Council members regarding the Financial Inclusion Together Project.

7 WALES AUDIT OFFICE (WAO) ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT (Pages 31 - 64)

To consider a report by the Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation (copy enclosed) to provide information to Members of the Council's Annual Improvement Report.

8 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION POLICY (Pages 65 - 82)

To consider a report by the Pay and Reward Specialist (copy enclosed) for Full Council to adopt the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy.

9 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS AND POLITICAL BALANCE (Pages 83 - 90)

To consider a report by the Democratic Services Manager (copy enclosed) for Full Council to appoint the Chair and ten other Members to the Democratic Services Committee for 2014/2015. Also detailing the position of other Committees to inform Members of any actions required to maintain the political balance of the Committees.

10 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 91 - 94)

To consider the Council's forward work programme (copy enclosed).

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors

Councillor Brian Blakeley (Chair)

Ian Armstrong
Raymond Bartley
Joan Butterfield
Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones
Bill Cowie
Ann Davies

Councillor Gwyneth Kensler (Vice-Chair)

Geraint Lloyd-Williams
Margaret McCarroll
Jason McLellan
Barry Mellor
Win Mullen-James
Bob Murray

James Davies
Meirick Davies
Richard Davies
Stuart Davies
Peter Duffy
Hugh Evans
Peter Evans
Bobby Feeley
Carys Guy
Huw Hilditch-Roberts
Martyn Holland
Colin Hughes
Rhys Hughes
Hugh Irving
Alice Jones
Huw Jones
Pat Jones

Peter Owen
Dewi Owens
Merfyn Parry
Paul Penlington
Arwel Roberts
Gareth Sandilands
David Simmons
Barbara Smith
David Smith
Bill Tasker
Julian Thompson-Hill
Joe Welch
Cefyn Williams
Cheryl Williams
Eryl Williams
Huw Williams

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Agenda Item 4

Digwyddiadau wedi eu mynychu gan y Cadeirydd / Events attended by Chairman

26.04.14 - 27.05.14

Dyddiad / Date	Digwyddiad / Event	Lleoliad / Location
26.04.14	Cinio Elusennol Maer Prestatyn Mayor of Prestatyn Charity Dinner Is Gadeirydd wedi mynychu / Vice Chair attended	Prestatyn
28.04.14	Penblwydd Mrs Gaynor Williams yn 100 oed Mrs Gaynor Williams 100 th birthday	Dinbych Denbigh
30.04.14	Cyngerdd Blynyddol Gwasanaeth Ysgolion William Mathias Annual Concert	Llanelwy St Asaph
01.05.14	Ansawdd Safonau Llyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus Cymru Launch Welsh Public Library Standards (trefnwyd gan/organised by CYMAL)	Prestatyn
01.05.14	Lansiad 'Pro Kite Surfing' Event Is Gadeirydd wedi mynychu / Vice Chair attended	Y Rhyll/Rhyl
02.05.14	Cyfarfod Blynyddol a Sefydlu Maer Newydd Annual General Meeting and Installation of New Mayor	Dinbych Denbigh
08.05.14	Cyfarfod Blynyddol a Sefydlu Maer Newydd Annual General Meeting and Installation of New Mayor	Abergele

Cadeirydd Newydd / New Chairman

15.05.14	Seremoni Dinasyddiaeth Citizenship Ceremony	Rhuthun Ruthin
15.05.14	Seremoni Wobrwyo 'British Empire Medal' Presentation Ceremony	Bodelwyddan
16.05.14	Cinio Elusennol Maer Y Rhyll Mayor of Rhyl's Charity Dinner	Y Rhyll/Rhyl
19.05.14	Cyfarfod Blynyddol Cyngor Tref Rhuthun Ruthin Town Council AGM	Rhuthun/Ruthin
22.05.14	Ymweliad Cynghorau Ysgolion i'r Siambr School Councils Visit to Chamber	Rhuthun/Ruthin
30.05.14	Digwyddiad Gyfnewid Pastwn y Frenhines Queen's Baton Relay Event	Llandegla

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COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Tuesday, 13 May 2014 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ian Armstrong, Raymond Bartley (Chair), Brian Blakeley (Vice-Chair), Joan Butterfield, Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones, Bill Cowie, Ann Davies, James Davies, Meirick Davies, Richard Davies, Stuart Davies, Hugh Evans, Peter Evans, Bobby Feeley, Carys Guy, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Holland, Colin Hughes, Rhys Hughes, Hugh Irving, Alice Jones, Huw Jones, Pat Jones, Gwyneth Kensler, Margaret McCarroll, Jason McLellan, Barry Mellor, Win Mullen-James, Bob Murray, Peter Owen, Dewi Owens, Merfyn Parry, Paul Penlington, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, David Simmons, Barbara Smith, David Smith, Bill Tasker, Julian Thompson-Hill, Joe Welch, Cefyn Williams, Cheryl Williams and Eryl Williams

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Economic and Community Ambition (RM), Head of Legal & Democratic Services (GW), Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation (AS), Democratic Services Manager (SP) and Committee Administrator (SLW)

Also in attendance:

Superintendent Alex Goss, North Wales Police
Paul Shea, North Wales Police Call Centre Manager

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Geraint Lloyd-Williams and Huw Williams

Apologies for absence were also received from the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director: Customers

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest.

3 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS: DUBLIN DECLARATION

The Chair informed full Council of the Dublin Declaration which had been approved and accepted at Cabinet on 29 April 2014. The Declaration would be signed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Hugh Evans, Lead Member for Social Care and Children's Services, Councillor Bobby Feeley and the Chair of the Council, Councillor Raymond Bartley.

By signing the document, Denbighshire County Council were pledging to take forward work based on the World Health Organisation and the United Nations' principles to make their communities more age friendly.

The pledge, known as the Dublin Declaration due to Ireland's presidency of the EU, highlighted the need to create age friendly places, with a key focus on promoting awareness of older people, their rights, needs and potentials, as well as highlighting the positive social, economic and cultural contribution made by them.

Councillor Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Social Care, Adult and Children's Services and also the Older People's Champion clarified to the Council Members that people were living longer within the community and there was a need to respond positively. It was about allowing people to live independently in their own homes and also to celebrate the ageing population and listen to their views regarding the kind of opportunities to be explored to keep them fit, active and to be able to participate in local community life.

As the number of people living longer increased it would be important that the council considered ways to adapt surroundings and buildings to reflect the needs of an ageing population.

At this point Councillors Hugh Evans, Bobby Feeley and Raymond Bartley signed the Declaration.

4 CHAIR OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

The retiring Chair, Councillor Raymond Bartley, delivered a speech during which he reflected upon his time as Chair and highlighted a number of events he had attended over the last twelve months.

The retiring Chair and his consort, his wife Dorothy, had a very busy year attending over 200 events. The most memorable event had been the huge success of the National Eisteddfod in Denbigh. The retiring Chair and his wife, had attended the Eisteddfod every day and been approached by hundreds of people, offering their congratulations for the success of the Eisteddfod, or complimenting the County for their support and commitment to the event. The retiring Chair expressed thanks to each and every member of staff involved in any of the arrangements, from senior management to all those who played their own special and invaluable part in the success. It had been a great team effort and one which Councillor Bartley would always hold with special pride and one which had put Denbighshire on the map in a favourable way.

It had also been a great honour to be able to offer a £2,000 sponsorship to the North Wales Music Festival in St. Asaph. This had been used to provide a musical workshop for pupils within the county's special schools. Part of the sponsorship would also be used for school transportation to enable pupils from a number of schools to attend a variety of workshops arranged for them.

Other highlights included:

- St. Davids Day flag and poetry competition for all Denbighshire Primary school students. This event had been so successful that it would now become an annual event.

- School visits to the Council Chamber
- Denbighshire Schools concerts
- Attending the 100th birthdays of citizens of Denbighshire.

Thanks were extended to everyone who attended or supported the events held to raise money for the retiring Chair's two charities.

The retiring Chair also thanked staff from Democratic Services who had held some fund raising events for Ty Gobaith and the sum of £1,724.00 had been raised and forwarded on to Ty Gobaith. The retiring Chair thanked everyone for their generosity and thoughtfulness to others and expressed his pride in the efforts of staff.

The retiring Chair presented cheques from money raised during his time as Chair (in total £4,000) to his chosen charities:

- (i) Eluned Yaxley, Fundraising Manager, accepted the cheque for £ 2000 on behalf of Ty Gobaith/ Hope House Hospice
- (ii) Ian Bellingham, Chief Executive accepted the cheque for £2000 on behalf of St. Kentigerns Hospice, St. Asaph

The retiring Chair then proceeded to present gifts to his Chaplain, Reverend Wayne Roberts, his Consort, the Member Support and Development Manager, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Democratic Services Manager, Member Support Officer, Business Co-ordinator: Leaders Office, Committee Administrators and the Scrutiny Co-ordinator in recognition for their support during the past twelve months.

The retiring Chair offered special thanks to the Chief Executive, the Corporate Director: Customers, the Corporate Director: Economic & Community Ambition and the Head of Finance & Assets for their support and assistance during the past year.

Thanks were also extended to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Hugh Evans for sharing his knowledgeable experience and advice.

Finally, the retiring Chair wished to thank his wife, Dorothy, for her unfaltering support and for her dedicated service to Denbighshire County Council over the years.

At this point, the retiring Chair invited nominations for the appointment of Chair of the County Council for 2014/15. Councillor Joan Butterfield proposed Councillor Brian Blakeley to be elected Chair outlining the personal qualities and experience he would bring to the position.

Councillor Cefyn Williams seconded the proposition adding Councillor Blakeley would make an excellent Ambassador for Denbighshire County Council.

There being no further nominations and following a vote by a show of hands, Councillor Brian Blakeley was unanimously elected Chair of the Council for the 2014/15 municipal year.

The retiring Chair wished the incoming Chair all the best for the future and invested him with the Chair's Chain of Office, following which, he completed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The retiring Chair's Consort invested the new Chair's Consort with the Chain of Office.

The incoming Chair paid tribute to the work undertaken by the retiring Chair and presented him with the Past Chair's Badge, plaque and a gift on behalf of the Council.

The incoming Chair named his daughter, Michelle Blakeley, as his consort, Reverend Andy Grimwood as his Chaplain for the year and advised of his chosen charities – Ty Gobaith/ Hope House Hospice and Rhyl Lifeboat.

5 VICE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

The Chair sought nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chair.

Councillor Eryl Williams proposed that Councillor Gwyneth Kensler be elected Vice-Chair of the Council for the 2014/15 municipal year. He referred to Councillor Kensler's vast experience and dedication to the county.

Councillor Hugh Evans seconded the nomination referring to Councillor Kensler's tireless work for the community.

There being no further nominations and following a vote by a show of hands, Councillor Gwyneth Kensler was unanimously elected Vice-Chair of the Council for the 2014/15 municipal year.

The Chair invested Councillor Kensler with the Vice-Chair's Chain of Office following which she completed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The incoming Vice-Chair's consort was named as Gaynor Morgan Rees, who, unfortunately, had been unable to attend full Council due to prior commitments.

Group Leaders paid tribute to the work of the retiring Chairman over the last twelve months and congratulated Councillors Brian Blakeley and Gwyneth Kensler upon being elected Chair and Vice-Chair respectively.

6 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters.

7 MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 April, 2014 were submitted.

Councillor Joe Welch stated his attendance at the meeting of the 8 April 2014 had not been noted on the minutes.

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts stated with regards to item 9 Capital Plan, he had raised the issue of procurement which had not been noted within the minutes.

Councillor Arwel Roberts stated with regards to item 11 Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, he had asked for an amendment and had not raised an objection.

Matters Arising – Councillor Rhys Hughes enquired regarding item 9, Capital Plan, whether an Environmental Policy now in place. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed he clarify and report back to members.

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 April, 2014, be confirmed as a correct record.

8 NORTH WALES POLICE - FORCE COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE (FCC)

Superintendent Alex Goss, on behalf of North Wales Police, congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair on their appointment and wished them well for the next 12 months.

Superintendent Alex Goss, Head of the Joint Communication Centre, St. Asaph, North Wales Police, together with Paul Shea, Manager of the Force Communications Centre (FCC) gave a presentation to increase Members' knowledge of the Force Communications Centre (FCC) function and accessibility and also to highlight calls received, including inappropriate 999 calls.

Paul Shea, ran through the presentation. The presentation covered:

- Number of calls received
- Call handling
- Contact numbers and other means of contact
- What happened with a call
- Critical incident management
- Inappropriate 999 calls

Discussion took place and questions were raised by members. The following issues were covered:

- The training of staff prior to commencement of their employment together with ongoing training
- Penalty for inappropriate use of 999 and wasting police time. North Wales Police had a duty of care for everyone in North Wales and the 999 lines were required for essential emergency calls
- Any assistance which councillors and communities could give to eliminate the inappropriate 999 calls would be welcomed
- Follow up information arising from a crime being reported. Options were currently being explored, one being "track my crime", which would be available on the internet, as a possible solution
- Closure of roads due to accidents. Road closures depended on the seriousness of the incident. The police avoided closing roads unless

absolutely necessary. If the decision to close a road was made, North Wales Police would then contact the local authority highways department to take on the road closure

- Local knowledge by staff had been included in the recruitment process. The telephony systems were due to be upgraded to a skill based telephone system. It had also been mooted that in the future, teams would be divided to improve local knowledge
- There had been an increase in mental health calls which had caused issues. On many occasions the calls resulted in an officer being deployed. Superintendent Goss confirmed that mental health problems were not an issue for the police and a police custody suite was not the appropriate place for a person with mental health issues. Professional people should be dealing with these cases, and not the North Wales Police

Superintendent Goss stated that if Members wished to visit the Force Communications Centre, to contact him and he would facilitate the visit.

RESOLVED that members note and take on board the presentation and to contact Superintendent Alex Goss if they wish to visit the Force Communications Centre.

At this juncture (11.50 a.m.) there was a 20 minute break.

Meeting reconvened at 12.10 p.m.

9 ANNUAL DELIVERY DOCUMENT FOR THE CORPORATE PLAN

The Lead Member for Modernising & Performance, Councillor Barbara Smith and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Hugh Evans, presented a report (previously circulated) to inform Members of the Year 3 Delivery Document (2014/15) for the Corporate Plan 2012/17 and the Cabinet Members' Corporate Plan Priorities to be delivered by 2017.

A decision had been required to approve the final draft version of the Corporate Plan Year 3 Delivery Document. A Delivery Document had been created for every year of the Corporate Plan. The purpose of the Delivery Document had been to outline some of the key projects that would be started and/or delivered during the financial year for each of the priorities, with the intention of illustrating how the Corporate Plan affected the work that was being carried out.

With regard to the Cabinet Members' priorities for 2017, Council had been asked to note the Measures of Success that Cabinet Members had identified within their portfolios to deliver against each of the Corporate Plan priorities.

Discussion took place and questions were raised by members. The following issues were raised:

- A large number of abbreviations were contained within the document. The document would be reproduced in a more user friendly format and officers would ensure information had been clearly set out.
- Cutting back 20% of amount of staff travel time. Mobile working including skype and remote access, would reduce the amount of travelling time for staff.
- Parent's preferential school choice. There had been an eligibility criteria for every applicant which each parent would be requested to sign. If the parental choice had been not to send their child to the nearest school to their home, then they would be requested to pay for the provision of school transport.
- Residents Survey. It had been clarified that, in the past, the residents survey had been distributed to random residents by a professional company on behalf of Denbighshire County Council. In 2014, the residents survey had been undertaken in house.
- Councillor Cefyn Williams raised the issue of the standard of the roads within Denbighshire. Councillor Williams stated that the standard of road maintenance had been deteriorating and, therefore, could be the cause, in the future, of a serious accident. The standard of the work carried out on the highways was very poor as, within 18 months of the repairs being carried out, holes would again begin to appear. It had been confirmed that there were insufficient finances to carry out work to all the roads which required improvement within the county. A budget had been set aside each year for highway improvements. The road improvement plans were presented at the Member Area Group meetings for approval or amendment. Councillor David Smith informed members that if they knew of any roads in such a bad state of disrepair, they should contact him and he would pass the information on to the highways section. Councillor Hugh Evans recommended the issue of the state of disrepair of the county's highways be addressed at Scrutiny Committee for a more in-depth discussion.
- Improved living conditions in private sector housing. 320 privately owned dwellings to be adapted to enable disabled people to live independently in their own homes. A breakdown of the information as to who would receive the funding within the private sector had been requested by Councillor Joan Butterfield.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Subject to any agreed changes, Members approve the final draft of the Delivery document to enable it to be translated and published*
- (ii) Council notes the content of Appendix 2 relating to each Cabinet Members portfolio*

10 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts presented the Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report (previously circulated) for Members consideration.

To comply with Article 6.3.7 of the Council's Constitution, Scrutiny Committees must report annually to full Council on their work, make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

Following lengthy discussion, the following points were raised:

- Scrutiny member's attendance at Service Challenge Groups and other outside bodies was extremely important and Scrutiny members were urged to attend. If, for any reason, a Scrutiny member was unable to attend they were requested to send a substitute member if possible
- Cabinet Lead Members now attend Scrutiny Committee which assists Scrutiny Members greatly
- A standing item on Cabinet Agenda covered items referred from Scrutiny Committees.
- If a request had been received to add an item to a Scrutiny Committee meeting agenda, it would be presented to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group who then made the decision as to which would be the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to deal with the issue. Alternatively, the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group occasionally made the decision that the issue was not for Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise.

Councillor Joan Butterfield expressed her gratitude to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group and the support officers for such a clear and precise report.

RESOLVED that Council accept the Annual Report of Council's Scrutiny Committees 2013/14

11 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services introduced the Council's Forward Work Programme (previously circulated).

The Lead Member for Finance and Assets highlighted the dates for the forthcoming Budget workshops scheduled to take place in July, 2014.

The dates were as follows:

- 9 July 2014 (all day)
- 14 July 2014 (all day)
- 30 July 2014 (half day – afternoon session)

RESOLVED that subject to the above, the Council Forward Work Programme be approved and noted.

The meeting concluded at 1.30 p.m.

Report To: Full Council

Date of Meeting: 10 June 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Cllr Huw Irving, Lead Member

Report Author: Sarah Lamberton, Project Manager, Financial Inclusion Together

Title: Making financial inclusion everyone's business - an introduction to the FIT Project

1. What is the report about?

Financial Inclusion Together (FIT) is a Conwy and Denbighshire Local Service Board project funded through the European Social Fund. This report will provide an overview of the project and explore how Councillors can benefit from getting involved in the project.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide information regarding the FIT project and encourage Council members to participate in one of its financial inclusion awareness raising sessions, so that they in turn can provide greater support to local constituents.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the report is noted.

4. Report details.

Financial Inclusion Together is supported by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government. The project aims to tackle poverty by developing, coordinating and promoting financial inclusion services within Local Service Board (LSB) organisations across Conwy and Denbighshire.

What is financial inclusion?

It's about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to access the financial advice, services and products needed to participate fully in society. Welsh Government have identified 5 key themes:

- Access to mainstream Financial Services
- Financial capability (including digital inclusion)
- Accessible financial and debt advice
- Income maximisation (including energy efficiency)
- Access to affordable credit and loans

Aims of the Project

- To improve the strategic co-ordination and collaboration of services across Conwy and Denbighshire to ensure that financial inclusion is integrated and embedded into the normal service delivery of relevant public, private and third sector organisations.
- To improve access to quality financial inclusion information and advice services which will ensure that people in Conwy and Denbighshire are empowered to manage a challenging economic future.

What the project is doing

One key objective of the project is to provide at least 1000 front line workers in LSB partner organisations with the financial inclusion knowledge and resources necessary to empower people they have contact with to be financially included.

To do this the FIT project is delivering awareness raising sessions to anyone working in the frontline who could assist in providing information on, or make quality referrals for in depth advice around financial inclusion.

The project is also building a legacy of actions within LSB partner organisations that will continue to embed financial inclusion practice once the project has ended (in December 2014).

How can Councillors benefit from getting involved with the project and attending one of the awareness raising sessions?

- Appendix 1 provides an overview of the learning outcomes and objectives participants can expect to achieve from attending an awareness raising session.
- Appendix 2 provides detail on session dates available and how to book a place.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

This is a preventative project which aims to tackle poverty in the community; it helps frontline staff to assist people to better manage in a challenging economic climate.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

As the project is funded through the European Social Fund, there is no cost to the Council.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

The EqIA for the FIT project's awareness raising sessions is attached as Appendix 3. No decisions are being made in this report that require conclusions from the EqIA.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Not required.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not required

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

N/A

11. Power to make the Decision

No decision is required.

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Financial Inclusion Together

Awareness Raising Session Outline

Learning Outcomes	Learning Objectives – The learner will be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand what financial inclusion is and the impact it has on people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe what financial inclusion is Identify citizens who are /or at risk of experiencing issues around poverty and financial inclusion Describe the benefits of financial inclusion and possible barriers Identify local and national issues which impact upon people's financial inclusion
<p>Page 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand their role in addressing Financial Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the different levels of advice and guidance Recognise the parameters and boundaries of the the level of support they are able to offer and when they need to refer Recognise how addressing financial inclusion could impact on their service/ role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to identify when somebody needs support with financial inclusion issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how they would identify there is a financial inclusion issue Demonstrate understanding of skills needed to sensitively discuss financial inclusion issues Demonstrate appropriate questioning and listening skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer basic support to improve financial inclusion and access to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate basic knowledge of Welsh Government's 5 financial inclusion themes Identify tools and resources which are available to support citizens with financial inclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to refer and signpost appropriately to specialist providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the difference between signposting and referring Demonstrate an understanding of when it's appropriate to signpost and when a referral is necessary Demonstrate a knowledge of relevant local and national advice organisations and the services they provide Identify what makes an effective referral and demonstrate an understanding of how to make a quality referral

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Financial Inclusion Together

Building prosperity not poverty



Awareness Raising Session – Booking Form

What's it about? ... Financial Inclusion Together is a Local Service Board project supported by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government. The project aims to tackle poverty by developing, coordinating and promoting financial inclusion services across Conwy and Denbighshire. This informative 3 hour session will equip frontline workers with the basic knowledge, skills and resources to address issues around financial inclusion and poverty confidently.

Who is it for ... This awareness session is for frontline workers who have regular contact with members of the public. It is suitable for workers who are in a position to offer support, provide signposting information and make referrals to specialist advice agencies.

What will the session cover? ...


- What financial inclusion means and the impact it has on people
- Your role in addressing financial inclusion
- Identifying when somebody needs support with financial inclusion
- Equip you with a toolkit to offer basic support, signpost and refer effectively

Free Awareness Raising Sessions for frontline workers in Conwy and Denbighshire

How to book ... Select a date and return the completed form to financial.inclusion@denbighshire.gov.uk or post to Financial Inclusion Together, Denbighshire County Council, 64 Brighton Rd, Rhyl, LL18 3HN. For more information call 01824 712272

Name				Job Title	
Organisation				Department	
Contact Number				Email	
Manager's Name				Manager's Email	
Date of the session				Time of Session	
Venue					
Any special requirements (communication /access)				Language Preference	
Which area do you work in	Conwy		Denbighshire		Conwy and Denbighshire
	Venue		Date		Time
	Cartrefi Conwy, Abergele		16 th May		9.30am - 12.30pm
	Touchstones 12, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay		19 th May		1pm - 4pm
	64 Brighton Road, Rhyl		21 st May		1pm - 4pm
	64 Brighton Road, Rhyl		30 th May		9.30am - 12.30pm
	Touchstones 12, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay		4 th June		9.30am - 12.30pm
	Glasdir, Llanrwst		5 th June		9.30am - 12.30pm
	64 Brighton Road, Rhyl		9 th June		1pm - 4pm
	Cartrefi Conwy, Abergele		10 th June		9.30am - 12.30pm
	DVSC, Naylor Leyland Centre, Well Street, Ruthin		12 th June		9.30am - 12.30pm
	64 Brighton Road, Rhyl		16 th June		1pm - 4pm
	Cartrefi Conwy, Abergele		18 th June		1pm - 4pm
	Touchstones 12, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay		19 th June		1pm - 4pm
	Touchstones 12, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay		24 th June		9.30am - 12.30pm
	64 Brighton Road, Rhyl		25 th June		9.30am - 12.30pm
	Cartrefi Conwy, Abergele		27 th June		9.30am - 12.30pm
	Touchstones 12, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay		1 st July		9.30am - 12.30pm
	Cartrefi Conwy, Abergele		2 nd July		1pm - 4pm
	64 Brighton Road, Rhyl		4 th July		9.30am - 12.30pm
	DVSC, Naylor Leyland Centre, Well Street, Ruthin		10 th July		1pm - 4pm
	Glasdir, Llanrwst		15 th July		1pm - 4pm
	Touchstones 12, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay		16 th July		1pm - 4pm

Cartrefi Conwy, Abergele	22 nd July	9.30am - 12.30pm
64 Brighton Road, Rhyl	23 rd July	1pm - 4pm
Cartrefi Conwy, Abergele	31 st July	1pm - 4pm
Touchstones 12, Princes Drive, Colwyn Bay	5 th August	9.30am - 12.30pm
Cartrefi Conwy, Abergele	13 th August	9.30am - 12.30pm
64 Brighton Road, Rhyl	18 th August	9.30am - 12.30pm
64 Brighton Road, Rhyl	27 th August	9.30am - 12.30pm

 **Data Protection** Denbighshire County Council is the Data Controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998. Denbighshire County Council will manage the information you provide in a manner that conforms to the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will only be used for project monitoring & evaluation requirements.

Financial Inclusion Together Awareness Raising Session

Equality Impact Assessment

Financial Inclusion Together - Awareness Raising Session

Contact: Helen Jackson, Adult and Business Services

Updated: 21.05.14

1. What type of proposal / decision is being assessed?

A project proposal

2. What is the purpose of this proposal / decision, and what change (to staff or the community) will occur as a result of its implementation?

<p>The two main aims of the project are:</p> <p>To improve the strategic co-ordination and collaboration of services across Conwy and Denbighshire to ensure that financial inclusion is integrated and embedded into the normal service delivery of relevant public, private and third sector organisations.</p> <p>To improve access to quality financial inclusion information and advice services which will ensure that people in Conwy and Denbighshire are empowered to manage a challenging economic future.</p> <p>The purpose of the the proposal is to develop and improve awareness of financial inclusion amongst frontline workers within Local Service Board partner organisations across Conwy and Denbighshire. Frontline staff will be equipped to identify, offer basic support, signpost and refer effectively. In addition their improved knowledge will enable them to address any financial inclusion issues on a personal level. The increased knowledge and awareness amongst frontline workers will result in improved access to specialist advice agencies and support for citizens - with the ultimate aim of reducing poverty</p>
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3. Does this proposal / decision require an equality impact assessment? If no, please explain why.

*Please note: if the proposal will have an impact on people (staff or the community) then an equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken*

Yes	This proposal will impact frontline workers and ultimately citizens within Local Service Board organisations in Conwy and Denbighshire
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4. Please provide a summary of the steps taken, and the information used, to carry out this assessment, including any engagement undertaken

(Please refer to section 1 in the toolkit for guidance)

The project proposal was developed collaboratively with a steering group made up of stakeholders from a wide range of organisations.

A baseline survey and training needs analysis was conducted to gain views from a broad range of stakeholders. The programme is being developed with a task and finish group made up of representatives from key partners. The programme is also being piloted prior to the main delivery phase from January 2014.

5. Will this proposal / decision have a positive impact on any of the protected characteristics (age; disability; gender-reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation)?

(Please refer to section 1 in the toolkit for a description of the protected characteristics)

This proposal will improve access to services and maximise the income of groups at risk of financial inclusion issues. People within protected groups are potentially at a higher risk of financial inclusion issues, these include people with disabilities and older people. The increased knowledge and awareness of frontline staff will result in them receiving better service and an earlier intervention.

6. Will this proposal / decision have a disproportionate negative impact on any of the protected characteristics (age; disability; gender-reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation)?

No - From a frontline worker perspective we need to ensure that the Awareness Raising Sessions are accessible to all. The pre course booking form asks participants if they have any additional needs, if any are highlighted we'll take appropriate measures to ensure that they are not a barrier to accessing the session.

7. Has the proposal / decision been amended to eliminate or reduce any potential disproportionate negative impact? If no, please explain why.

<Please Select>

N/A

8. Have you identified any further actions to address and / or monitor any potential negative impact(s)?

Yes	<p>All the training venues that we use will have full disabled access. The resources and materials used will be clear with high contrast font used. Requests for adaptations such as training materials in different formats, interpreters, hearing loops, etc will be considered on an individual basis.</p> <p>As requirement of the project funders we are capturing Equality and Diversity information from everyone who attends the Awareness Raising Session</p>
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Action(s)	Owner	By when?
Monitor the 'additional requirements' question on the session booking form. If there are requirements that we're not able to currently meet which create a barrier to accessing the sessions, seek to review and adapt our sessions to eliminate the barrier.	Sarah Lamberton	Throughout the project
Work with frontline workers to gain case studies which relate to individuals with protected characteristics to gain citizen perspectives and experiences of accessing services	Sarah Lamberton	Throughout the project
Develop links with organisations and groups who support people with protected characteristics and capture information on particular challenges they have around accessing financial inclusion services. This information can then be used to influence future service delivery	Sarah Lamberton	Throughout the project
<Please describe>	<Enter Name>	<DD.MM.YY>
<Unrestrict editing to insert additional rows>	<Enter Name>	<DD.MM.YY>

9. Declaration

Every reasonable effort has been made to eliminate or reduce any potential disproportionate impact on people sharing protected characteristics. The actual impact of the proposal / decision will be reviewed at the appropriate stage.

Review Date:	1.11.14
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Name of Lead Officer for Equality Impact Assessment	Date
Helen Jackson	27/10/13

Please note you will be required to publish the outcome of the equality impact assessment if you identify a substantial likely impact.

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Report To:	Council
Date of Meeting:	10th June 2014
Lead Member / Officer:	Barbara Smith, Lead Member for Modernisation
Report Author:	Alan Smith, Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation
Title:	2013-14 Annual Improvement Report

1. What is the report about?

The report concerns the annual assessment of the Council's prospects for improvement, undertaken by the Wales Audit Office.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide information to Members on the Council's Annual Improvement Report (AIR). See Appendix 1.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council note the contents of the attached report and the proposals for improvement within it.

4. Report details.

Under the Local Government Measure, the Wales Audit Office annually reviews the Council's progress towards meeting its objectives and its prospects for continuing to improve in the year ahead.

For the year 2013-14, the WAO has concluded that:

- Denbighshire made good progress in delivering improvements in all its priority objectives for 2012-13 but further improvements are required in a few key areas;
- The Council's service challenge reviews and other measures to self-evaluate its performance are robust;
- The Council's planning for improvement and its arrangements to support improvement are good;
- The Council is likely to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15.

If the WAO have significant concerns about the progress made by the Council or the direction it is taking, it will make formal recommendations for change. Denbighshire's report does not have any formal recommendations this year (we have never had any in fact) reflecting the WAO's positive view of the Council's progress.

This is not to say that we are getting everything right though, inevitably, some things need more work and both last year's and this year's Annual Reports made some 'proposals for improvement'. We have made good progress with all the proposals made in the 20012/13 report and this year the Inspectors have made two further proposals which they feel will help the Council continue to progress. These are:

- P1 - *In order to achieve its objective to modernise services the Council should continue to address weaknesses in its Corporate Human Resource Service.*
- P2 - *The Council should ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear for the achievement of the affordable housing objective.*

The Council accepts both these proposals and is already taking action to address them. In terms of the proposal relating to the HR service, we are continuing to work through an action plan to address the identified shortfalls. In relation to the affordable housing issue, a task group of key members and Officers is being established to review our objectives in this important area.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

No decision is required, but the WAO's review of the Council's progress is an important part of understanding our progress towards delivering our Corporate Priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no financial implications.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

Not applicable.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Officers have reviewed the report for accuracy prior to publication. It will be presented to Corporate Governance in July.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not required.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There would be risk to the Council if the proposals for improvement made by the WAO were not acted on.

11. Power to make the Decision

No decision is required.

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WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE
SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

Annual Improvement Report

Denbighshire County Council

Issued: May 2014

Document reference: 272A2014

About the Auditor General for Wales

The Auditor General is independent of government, and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Auditor General undertakes his work using staff and other resources provided by the Wales Audit Office, which is a statutory board established for that purpose and to monitor and advise the Auditor General. The Wales Audit Office is held to account by the National Assembly.

Together with appointed auditors, the Auditor General audits local government bodies in Wales, including unitary authorities, police, probation, fire and rescue authorities, national parks and community councils. He also conducts local government value for money studies and assesses compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

Beyond local government, the Auditor General is the external auditor of the Welsh Government and its sponsored and related public bodies, the Assembly Commission and National Health Service bodies in Wales.

The Auditor General and staff of the Wales Audit Office aim to provide public-focused and proportionate reporting on the stewardship of public resources and in the process provide insight and promote improvement.

This Annual Improvement Report has been prepared on behalf of the Auditor General for Wales by Huw Lloyd Jones and Gwilym Bury under the direction of Alan Morris.

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Summary report and proposals for improvement

Summary

1 Each year, the Auditor General must report on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks are planning for improvement in delivering their services. This report draws on the work of the relevant Welsh inspectorates, as well as work undertaken on the Auditor General's behalf by the Wales Audit Office. The report covers Denbighshire County Council's (the Council) delivery and evaluation of its services in 2012-13, its planning for improvement in 2013-14 and, taking these into account, concludes whether the Auditor General believes that the Council will make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15.

2 We found that the Council made good progress in delivering improvements in all of its priority objectives for 2012-13 but further improvements are required in a few key services. We came to this conclusion because:

- the Council worked effectively with its business partners to deliver initiatives which support the local economy;
- the Council has made some progress in improving performance in education but recognises that further progress is required at key stage 3;
- the condition of most roads in Denbighshire has improved;

- the Council continues to improve the wellbeing of its most vulnerable citizens;
- the Council has worked effectively to keep Denbighshire's environment attractive but further work is required to reduce incidents of fly-tipping and improve resident satisfaction;
- the Council has helped prevent many people from becoming homeless but its work to ensure access to affordable housing was less effective; and
- the Council has delivered some efficiencies in modernising services but there has been a lack of progress by the Human Resources service in meeting targets.

3 We found that the Council's service challenge reviews and other measures to self-evaluate its performance are robust. In particular:

- the Council's service challenge arrangements are good;
- the Council's performance management arrangements are soundly based;
- the Council has met improvement reporting duties required under the Measure; and
- the Council complied with financial reporting requirements.

4 Finally, we found that the Council's planning for improvement and its arrangements to support improvement are good. In particular:

- the use of performance standards helps to promote a consistent culture of ambition;
- the Council continues to make good progress in addressing the proposals for improvement identified in the previous Annual Improvement Report;
- corporate arrangements are in place to ensure compliance with the Council's Welsh Language Scheme;
- the Council has complied with its duties under the Equality Act 2010;
- processes for developing the Annual Governance Statement have improved and the Council is taking further action; and
- the Council continues to manage its financial position effectively.

5 Taking the above into account, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15.

Proposals for improvement

P1	In order to achieve its objective to modernise services the Council should continue its work to address weaknesses in its Corporate Human Resource Service.
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P2	The Council should ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear for the achievement of the affordable housing objective.
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Detailed report

Introduction

- 6 Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure), the Auditor General must report each year on how well Welsh councils, fire and rescue authorities and national park authorities are planning for improvement in delivering their services. **Appendix 1** provides more information about the Auditor General's powers and duties under the Measure. With help from Welsh inspectorates, Estyn (for education), the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (the CSSIW), and the Welsh Language Commissioner, we have brought together a picture of what each council or authority in Wales is trying to achieve, how it is going about it, and the progress the Council has made since the Auditor General published his last annual improvement report. The report also draws on the Council's own self-assessment. Finally, taking all this into account, the report concludes whether the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15.
- 7 We do not undertake a comprehensive annual review of all Council arrangements or services. The conclusions in this report are based on our cumulative and shared knowledge and the findings of prioritised work undertaken this year.
- 8 Given the wide range of services provided and the challenges facing the Council, it would be unusual if we did not find things that can be improved. The Auditor General is able to:
- make proposals for improvement – if proposals are made to the Council, we would expect them to do something about them and we will follow up what happens;
 - make formal recommendations for improvement – if a formal recommendation is made the Council must prepare a response to that recommendation within 30 working days;
 - conduct a special inspection and publish a report and make recommendations; and
 - recommend to Ministers of the Welsh Government that they intervene in some way.
- 9 We want to find out if this report gives you the information you need and whether it is easy to understand. You can let us know your views by e-mailing us at info@wao.gov.uk or writing to us at 24 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ.

The Council made good progress in delivering improvements in all of its priority objectives for 2012-13 but further improvements are required in a few key services

The Council worked effectively with its business partners to deliver initiatives that support the local economy

- 10 The Council's 2012-13 improvement objectives for developing the economy had six intended outcomes:
- the infrastructure that connects the county, to the wider region and beyond, will enable individuals and businesses based in Denbighshire to compete effectively in wider markets for jobs and trade;
 - Denbighshire will have a workforce with the skills required for business growth;
 - businesses will develop and grow in Denbighshire;
 - Denbighshire's existing economic strengths and new potential will be maximised;
 - towns and rural communities will be revitalised; and
 - deprivation in parts of Rhyl and upper Denbigh will be reduced.
- 11 The Council has played an active role, together with the other five unitary authorities in North Wales, in establishing the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. The Council is a strong advocate of the Board, acknowledging that the economic wellbeing of the County depends heavily on what happens beyond its boundaries as well as within. Responsibility for developing the Board's agreed priorities has been allocated to each partner. The Board is working on the
- development of an integrated Infrastructure Investment Plan – which includes the development of an economic case for investment in rail electrification in North Wales – and a Skills Development Plan.
- 12 During 2012-13, activities associated with this outcome focused on liaising with Sector Skills Councils and Careers Wales to identify skills gaps and to prepare advice and training courses to support young people. For example, the Council negotiated a development agreement with Rhyl City Strategy and the owners of the former Honey Club; as the site is redeveloped into a hotel and restaurant, customised training will help local residents seeking work to acquire the skills required when staff recruitment begins.
- 13 As was the case in 2011-12, the target to reduce the level of Job Seeker's Allowance claimants compared to average levels in Wales was again missed, but this indicator has fluctuated and may not be a reflection on the effectiveness of the Council's work to support economic growth. The reduction in the last two years in the percentage of economic inactivity in Denbighshire and the reduction in the absolute number of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance is a positive trend.
- 14 In our last Annual Improvement Report we reported that it is difficult to judge the impact of the Council's intervention in helping to develop the local economy. The North Wales Economic Ambition Board has recently established a set of outcome measures to measure future progress but will not be able to report on these measures until next year. Many of these indicators lack baseline

data, and further measures may also be introduced to reflect the dynamic nature of economic development. This means that the Council will not be able to monitor progress against its economy-related outcomes robustly until the end of 2014-15.

- 15 In the meantime, however, the Council has started using third-party economic data, such as those produced by the Office for National Statistics, to monitor changes in the local economy. Although these statistics are influenced by a wide range of external factors, they can be a valuable source of information about local, regional and national economic issues. The statistics help the Council to identify areas where significant improvements are needed; for example, whilst the County has a relatively low proportion of working age residents with no qualifications, it has a higher-than average proportion of working age residents with qualifications at Level Two and above. So, whilst residents seeking work may have basic qualifications, many will be unable to compete effectively for vacancies which demand higher-level qualifications. A key challenge for the Council will be to develop a robust understanding of the health of the local economy and to use that understanding to influence the way it provides support.

- 16 Individual projects to develop the economy have continued to progress. The Council and its partners were successful in continuing to support a number of capital projects including the completion of work of the new bridge and harbour improvements at Foryd Harbour. The Pont y Ddraig pedestrian and cycle bridge, which spans the Clwyd estuary,

is part of a £10.5 million development and includes a public square and a quayside building to create a hub for the harbour, the surrounding dunes and beach areas.

- 17 The Council focused on supporting the delivery of projects identified within the seven Town and Area Plans, such as establishing a 'town team' within Ruthin to encourage businesses, visitor attractions and events to work in a more co-ordinated way. It also made progress in developing sustainable plans for funding future projects following the unsuccessful bid for Welsh Government funding from the Vibrant and Viable Places Fund to support initiatives within Rhyl.

The Council has made some progress in improving performance in education but recognises that further progress is required at key stage 3

- 18 The Council's education Corporate Plan priority is to improve performance and the quality of school buildings. Overall the Council has assessed its progress as positive and considers that it is well placed to deliver its plans for 21st century schools, and that it has made good progress in delivering its Modernising Education programme. It has agreed an appropriate framework for school reorganisation and is delivering this framework through an effective process of area reviews. Estyn inspected 10 schools in Denbighshire during the 2012-13 academic year. The inspection outcomes compare favourably with those in other councils; over 90 per cent of the grades awarded were 'good' or 'excellent', and none were unsatisfactory.

- 19 Our review of education performance data shows that pupils in Denbighshire's primary schools generally achieved satisfactorily in 2013. Results in the Foundation Phase (seven year olds) and at Key Stage 2 improved in comparison with 2012 and at a rate broadly in line with the Wales average. In 2013, 84.9 per cent of seven-year-olds in Denbighshire schools achieved the Foundation Phase indicator, above the Wales average of 83 per cent and the eighth highest in Wales. At key stage 2, 86 per cent of pupils achieved the core subject indicator¹ compared with 84.3 per cent across Wales, the ninth highest. A comparison of performance in Denbighshire primary schools with that in schools across Wales with similar levels of deprivation shows that schools in Denbighshire performed broadly at the level that might be expected in both the Foundation Phase and at key stage 2.
- 20 Pupils' performance in secondary schools in 2013 was mixed. At key stage 3, the proportion of 14-year-old pupils achieving the core subject indicator, as measured by teacher assessment, has been below the Wales average in four of the last five years, with 75 per cent doing so in 2013. Though an improvement on 2012, the Wales average improved to 77 per cent, leaving Denbighshire's performance the sixth lowest in Wales. When compared with schools elsewhere in Wales with similar levels of deprivation, results in Denbighshire's schools were weak. The proportion of pupils achieving higher National Curriculum levels (Levels 6 and 7) in Denbighshire is markedly lower in English, Welsh and science than the Wales average.
- 21 The development of the North Wales regional school improvement service, 'GwE', which began its work in April 2013, has the potential to promote improved standards in schools. GwE also has the potential to improve the consistency of teacher assessment across North Wales, an issue that may affect the reliability of data about pupil performance at the Foundation Phase and key stages 2 and 3.
- 22 At the age of 16, however, the proportion of pupils in Denbighshire achieving the Level 2 Threshold (equivalent to five or more good GCSE passes) reached 85.7 per cent in 2013, well above the Wales average and the second highest in Wales. Performance against this measure has improved by almost 18 percentage points over the last four years whereas the Wales average has increased by only 11 percentage points. Five of the eight secondary schools in Denbighshire were in the top quartile when compared with schools elsewhere in Wales.
- 23 Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils whose GCSE qualifications included good grades in English or Welsh (first language) and mathematics fell slightly in 2013 to 53.4 per cent, only slightly better than the Wales average. The Council is aware that performance against this measure should be better. The proportion of 16-year-old school-leavers in Denbighshire who do not progress into further education, training or employment fell significantly in 2012, the latest year for which data is available, to 2.9 per cent, which is the fifth lowest among councils in Wales, and much better than the Welsh average of 4.2 per cent.

¹ To achieve the core subject indicator, a pupil must achieve the expected national curriculum level in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science.

- 24 Rates of attendance in both primary and secondary schools fell slightly during 2012/13. In primary schools, attendance compares favourably with the Wales average and attendance in individual schools compares well with similar schools elsewhere in Wales. In secondary schools, however, attendance rates fell slightly to 92.4 per cent, slightly below the Wales average. Comparisons with similar schools elsewhere in Wales indicate that, in six Denbighshire schools, attendance in 2012-13 did not compare well with that in similar schools across Wales.
- 25 Rates of permanent and longer fixed-term exclusions from Denbighshire secondary schools are low. During the 2012-13 academic year, the rate of fixed-term exclusions lasting six days or more was the second lowest in Wales. The rate of shorter fixed-term exclusions was slightly below the Wales average.
- 26 The Council has successfully pursued a policy of reducing the number of pupils for whom it maintains a statement of special education needs. The number of statements maintained has fallen year-on-year from 551 in January 2007 to 372 in 2013. This reduced demand for statements helps to ensure that specialist resources such as educational psychologists are able to make better use of their expertise and has also enabled the Council to ensure that those pupils who need statements receive one in a timely manner.
- 27 The modernisation of the Council's schools estate continues. Since 2009, a series of area reviews has resulted in a reduction in the number of primary schools that the Council maintains from 53 to 47. In addition, school buildings have been refurbished and, where necessary, extended. A survey of school buildings in 2009-10 concluded that just over one third of the Council's school buildings were in need of significant maintenance. Remedial work has been undertaken at some of the schools in this category and other schools feature among the Council's future modernisation plans. However, there remain at least eight schools where the quality of the facilities remains a significant issue.
- 28 The Council is responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of school places in an efficient manner. In January 2013, there were some 1,500 surplus primary school places (16.6 per cent of the total) distributed across the 47 schools. Though higher than Welsh Government target of 10 per cent, this is slightly below the Wales average of 17.6 per cent. Across the eight secondary schools, there were 1,244 surplus places, representing 16.2 per cent of the total. This is also below the Wales average of 18.7 per cent.

- 29 Net budgeted expenditure on education for 2013-14 was, at £5,135 per pupil, a little higher than the Wales average of £4,992 per pupil. The gross cost of primary school provision, taking account of both delegated and non-delegated funding, but excluding home-to-school transport, is slightly higher than the Wales average at £4,614 per pupil. The gross cost of secondary provision is a little lower than the Wales average at £5,081 per pupil.
- 30 The level of financial reserves held by schools in Denbighshire increased significantly during 2012-13 to £2.9 million. At £190 per pupil, this represents the fourth highest level of reserves amongst councils in Wales. However, the summary position masks significant variations between schools. More than a quarter of schools carried forward surpluses in excess of 10 per cent of their budgets into the 2013-14 financial year, but a further 19 per cent of schools began the year with deficits. In a small number of cases, longstanding deficits have begun to increase again after a period of gradual reduction.

The condition of most roads in Denbighshire has improved

- 31 The Council has set itself ambitious targets to judge whether the quality of its roads is improving. Its new ambition is that, by 2017, less than five per cent of A and B roads and less than 10 per cent of C roads will be in overall poor condition. The Council made progress in 2012-13 against the majority of its targets for improving the condition of roads. Indicators for the condition of A and B roads improved but there has been little progress with C roads and 13.9 per cent remain in a poor condition.
- 32 As we reported in our last Annual Improvement Report one of the reasons for keeping roads in good condition is to improve safety. Road safety is now being actively monitored by the Council through measures for skid resistance, accidents per kilometre, take-up of cycle and safety training, and insurance claims. In 2012-13, all these indicators met the Council's targets and new performance measures will be reported in 2014 for the percentage of road defects repaired within target times and the percentage of key routes where a drop-kerb route is in place.
- 33 In 2012-13, £3.4 million was identified for major highways works as the condition of roads is a priority for the Council. However, the Council noted in its Annual Report that this is a priority area for improvement, as only 86 per cent of the planned capital highways maintenance programme was achieved in 2012-13.

The Council continues to improve the wellbeing of its most vulnerable citizens

- 34 CSSIW concluded in its review and evaluation of the provision of social care services in 2012-13 that, overall, the Council continues to improve the wellbeing of its most vulnerable citizens. The report describes positive changes across both adult and children's services.
- 35 CSSIW found that the Council's emphasis on early intervention, prevention and reablement continues to enable more people to lead independent lives. As a result, fewer adults require hospital admission or residential care and the Council is able to offer a more cohesive service to families as their needs alter. More people are able to access continuing support in their own communities and the Council is placing increased emphasis on personal choice and control through the active promotion of direct payments and citizen-directed support.
- 36 The Council engages actively with people who use its services and CSSIW notes that there is evidence that users' views have been incorporated into service developments and improvements. Denbighshire provides good information, advice and guidance on its services, but further work is needed to help users understand the changed emphasis in adult services towards prevention and enablement.
- 37 In 2011-12, fewer adults than in previous years had their care plans reviewed and this was highlighted by CSSIW as an area for improvement. CSSIW's 2012-13 report confirms that the timeliness of reviews has improved; the Council's performance in this area is now amongst the best in Wales and this will support the Council in ensuring that people have the right service to meet their needs. However, the Council needs to establish clear measureable outcomes to assist with the evaluation of existing services.
- 38 The timeliness of assessments within children's services has also improved. This has led to improved access to services and better case management. Services for looked-after children continue to be an area for concern, however; the proportion of looked-after children in Denbighshire who receive health assessments and dental checks is amongst the lowest in Wales; the percentage with three or more placements has doubled over the last three years; and, fewer looked-after children than before have a plan for permanence in place within the required timescale. CSSIW reports that work is required to improve stability for these children and ensure that their healthcare and education needs are being met.
- 39 Further work is required to improve the provision of support to carers in Denbighshire. CSSIW reports that the Council has strategies in place to improve services and it is working with third-sector agencies and carers' groups in North Wales to provide better support.

- 40 The Council is committed to collaborative working and has been effective in leading and supporting a number of multi-agency initiatives. Partnership working has enabled the development and delivery of restructured services and this has led to improved quality of care in the county. The CSSIW notes that relationships with partner agencies are good at both individual and organisational levels, despite some challenges in engaging effectively at a strategic level with the new structures within the local health board.
- 41 A major focus of the UK Government's plans for welfare reform are changes to Housing Benefit, which aim to reduce annual expenditure by around £2.3 billion. These include reductions to Local Housing Allowance rates for private-rented-sector claimants and deductions in payments to social-sector tenants in under-occupied homes. Since April 2013, the Government has also introduced a cap on the total amount of benefit that working age people can receive. All of these changes will mean that millions of households in Great Britain will receive less in benefits, creating hard choices for them about how they use their money and manage on a day-to-day basis.
- 42 The Council and its partners delivered a suite of inter-related projects designed to tackle poverty and improve the quality of life for residents from the more deprived areas of the county. For example, families were provided with better access to health visitors, childcare and parenting programmes to better prepare children starting school. The Council also collaborated with partners to improve local access to welfare, housing and employment advice and guidance as a way of helping vulnerable people to secure the support they are entitled to. Work also continued on the West Rhyl Housing Improvement project and the Denbighshire Empty Homes Project, although the Council has had limited success so far in this area.
- 43 The average time taken by the Council to process new benefit claims is improving, falling from 15 days in 2011-12 to 12 days in 2012-13. This remains significantly better than the Welsh average of 20 days. The average time taken to process changes of circumstances remains the same as in 2011-12 at five days. This is marginally better than the Welsh average of six days.
- 44 Whilst speed of processing is important there are a number of other measures which help to give a full picture of how well the Council is processing housing benefit applications. Analysis of these measures, such as the percentage of new claims decided within 14 days for 2012-13, found that performance declined but, following action by management, these indicators have improved during 2013-14.

The Council has worked effectively to keep Denbighshire's environment attractive but further work is required to reduce incidents of fly-tipping and improve resident satisfaction

- 45 The Council uses a range of local indicators to judge success in raising awareness about issues such as litter and dog fouling as part of its work to achieve clean and tidy streets in Denbighshire. The 'Cleanliness Index', which measures overall cleanliness of highways and land within the county, is one of the best recorded in Wales. However, recorded incidents of fly-tipping were higher than the average for other councils in Wales, and the Council has identified this as an area for improvement.
- 46 The Council conducted a resident survey in 2013 which indicated a high degree of resident dissatisfaction (51 per cent) with the incidence of dog fouling in their locality. The Council has recently launched its anti dog-fouling campaign, 'Love your Pet, Respect the Environment'. The campaign was designed to urge dog owners to be responsible but also improve the way in which residents could report problems. The Council also employed a team of environmental enforcement officers who could respond to complaints as well as track down offenders and issue fines. Targeted enforcement operations have been carried out in a number of areas including the placement of signs, letter drops, talking to dog owners, issuing waste bags, and distributing postcards with telephone numbers to report incidents. Although

the campaign has increased people's awareness of the issue of dog fouling, it is too early to judge if resident satisfaction with this issue has improved.

The Council has helped prevent many people from becoming homeless but its work to ensure access to affordable housing was less effective

- 47 The Council's Improvement Priority for housing is broader than improving the quality of Council-owned stock. The Council also wants to work with partners to ensure an adequate supply of affordable homes, and support people who are or are about to become homeless.
- 48 In Denbighshire, there has been a similar trend to that elsewhere in Wales with a decreasing number of households accepted as homeless. However, the Council's Homeless Service has experienced an increase in the number of people seeking assistance since 2012. The Council's performance for taking action to prevent homelessness remained excellent in 2012-13 and was the best in Wales.
- 49 In 2012-13 the number of households accepted by the Council as homeless and in priority need was one of the lowest in Wales and consequently the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation was, on average, lower than in other councils in North Wales. The average time homeless households spent in temporary accommodation in Denbighshire was also low and represented top quartile performance amongst councils in Wales.

50 The Welsh Government has encouraged more action by the eight councils in Wales, including Denbighshire County Council, which failed to achieve the Welsh Quality Housing Standard (WHQS) by the original target of 2012. The Council originally believed that it would be fully compliant by the 2012 deadline. However, only 86 per cent of Council-managed social rented homes met the WHQS in 2012. The Council currently aims to achieve full compliance by April 2014.

51 The Council reported improvements in response times for urgent and non-urgent categories of repairs during 2012-13, but the Council's failure to consistently ensure full compliance with legislation relating to the completion of annual gas safety checks in its housing stock is a matter of concern which the Council is now taking steps to address.

52 The Council is taking action to try to ensure a sufficient supply of affordable homes and recognises that less than a quarter of the affordable housing estimated to be required was built in 2012-13. The 61 affordable homes completed in Denbighshire in each of the two years since 2011 was less in total than the 154 homes completed in 2010-11. The Council is taking action to try to ensure a sufficient supply of affordable homes and has set a target of 570 new homes to be completed between 2012 and 2017. However, progress during 2012-13 was below the Council's target. In addition to its own continuing work to make affordable properties available in the county, the Council is also working closely with other partners to identify a range of new initiatives

to increase the future supply of affordable housing but the current Housing Strategy does not set out clearly enough the roles and responsibilities for meeting the 2017 affordable homes target. The Council is currently conducting a review of how it will achieve its affordable homes target.

The Council has delivered some efficiencies in modernising services but there has been a lack of progress by the Human Resources service in meeting targets

53 The Council defines success in delivering efficiencies and improved services for customers primarily by measuring positive customer feedback, the delivery of Outcome Agreements with the Welsh Government and the delivery of successful Council projects. The Council also reports on its progress as measured by the Welsh Government's statutory national indicators.

54 The Council has made some progress on its improvement objective to develop and improve services. A key indicator for this objective is the number of complaints to the Council and the speed of response to them. Both indicators improved in 2012-13 but the Council's ambition is for further improvements during the lifetime of the Corporate Plan. The 2013 Residents' Survey showed that, whilst there had been progress from the 2011 survey, only 43 per cent thought the Council was efficient and well run and 49 per cent thought the Council acted on the concerns of residents (up from 40 per cent in 2011).

55 A range of improvement projects linked to this objective made good progress in 2012-13. The Council has launched an improved website, made some progress on Town and Community Charters and introduced a range of measures to improve customer service standards and the quality of customer communications. The 2013 Residents' Survey showed over 70 per cent satisfaction with customer services across a range of performance indicators although only 53 per cent felt well informed about the services the Council provides.

56 For 17 of the 30 statutory Welsh Government national indicators Denbighshire's performance was in the top quartile for councils in Wales. The Council was fully successful for seven of the 10 outcome agreements set with the Welsh Government and partially successful for the other three outcomes.

57 A key service for delivering efficiencies is the Council's Corporate Human Resources (HR) service. The service has made limited progress in meeting its key internal targets during 2012-13. This lack of progress may hinder future progress in modernising services across the Council. The staff appraisal system process, for example, has been subject to delays in implementation and the consistency of its implementation does not appear to be monitored effectively. The HR service lacks a clear and robust understanding of the cost of its service, and how these compare to other councils. Staff surveys indicate that morale amongst the Corporate HR service is low. Outcome and performance information for the Corporate HR service is not comprehensive and key performance measures for the service are not in place. However, a recent internal audit follow-up report indicated that some progress is being made in addressing key areas for improvement.

The Council's service challenge reviews and other measures to self- evaluate its performance are robust

The Council's service challenge arrangements are good

- 58 The Council's Service Challenge arrangements have improved in 2013 and provide valuable annual opportunities for senior officers and key elected members to consider in detail the evidence relating to the performance of those services managed by each head of service. Well-managed preparatory meetings, at which the service managers are not present, consider detailed evidence of performance as well as matters such as sickness absence. Importantly, the preparatory meetings allow those present to set service performance in the context of known risks, and to narrow the focus of the subsequent challenge meeting to those matters that are most relevant. Where necessary, the preparatory meetings identify areas in which there is insufficient evidence and require heads of service to submit further information ahead of the service challenge meeting a few weeks later.
- 59 The preparatory meetings and the service challenges are conducted in a business-like but non-threatening manner. They form an important strand in the Council's self-evaluation process, enabling senior managers and elected members to understand more fully how well each service is performing against targets and in the national context, and to identify what needs to be done in areas that are performing less well.

The Council's performance managements arrangements are soundly based

- 60 Our last Annual Improvement Report (May 2013) concluded that the Council's performance management arrangements were soundly based and developing satisfactorily, with clear and effective leadership by senior officers and councillors. This continues to be the case. The performance scrutiny committee and the strengthened service challenges receive performance information of consistent quality and in an easily understood format. In addition to the service challenges, the Council's Cabinet reviews performance on a six monthly basis.
- 61 Despite overall staffing numbers being reduced we found that the Council's central policy team continues to oversee, co-ordinate, and actively manage performance. This has enabled the Council to continue to deliver a well-understood and consistent system for performance management.
- 62 The results of our 2013 audit of the accuracy of a sample of the Council's performance indicators were satisfactory and we qualified none of the Council's performance indicators.

The Council has met its improvement reporting duties required under the Measure

- 63 The Auditor General's November 2013 Improvement Assessment Letter concluded that the Council had discharged its improvement reporting duties under the Measure. In particular:
- the Council had published an assessment of its performance during 2012-13 in its *Annual Performance Report 2012/13* (the Report) before 31 October 2013;
 - the Report assessed the Council's performance in the preceding financial year (2012-13) and set out how the Council had sought to discharge its duties under the Measure;
 - the Report evaluated the Council's success in achieving its improvement objectives and expresses its view clearly;
 - the Report included a short section for citizens who wanted to provide feedback or make comments on the Report;
 - the Report included details of performance and comparisons as measured by the national statutory performance indicators; and
 - the Report included a short section on the ways in which the Council had sought to collaborate.

The Council complied with financial reporting requirements

- 64 The auditor appointed by the Auditor General gave his opinion on the Council's accounts on 25 November 2013. [Appendix 3](#) gives more detail.

The Council's planning for improvement and its arrangements to support improvement are good

The use of performance standards helps to promote a consistent culture of ambition

- 65 The Auditor General's September 2013 Improvement Assessment Letter reported that the Council had discharged its improvement planning duties under the Measure. The Council published its *Year 2 Delivery Document* (the Plan), the annual review of its Corporate Plan 2012-17 (*An Excellent Council, close to the community*), in April 2013. The Plan complies with the requirements of the Measure to produce an annual Improvement Plan. The Plan is straightforward and concise, outlining what the Council wants to achieve and how it will go about it. The rationale for why Improvement Objectives (Outcomes) have been chosen is explained briefly but clearly. The Plan also explains what the Council aimed to do during 2013-14 and the measures it would use to evaluate success in achieving its objectives.
- 66 The Council consulted extensively during the development of its Corporate Plan. We agree with the Council's judgement that it was too soon to consult again about the Improvement Objectives for 2013-14. The measures the Council will use to evaluate success in achieving its objectives were therefore developed from measures in draft service plans for 2013-14 and discussions with the leadership team and elected Members.
- 67 The Council has rejected an approach to target-setting based on incremental progression of the previous year's performance in favour of an approach based on achievement of the 'excellence threshold'. Excellence thresholds are usually based on the Council's performance being amongst one of the top six performing councils in Wales. If over half the other councils in Wales are achieving better performance than in Denbighshire the Council will consider this a high priority for improvement.
- 68 The concept of the 'excellence threshold' is clearly understood by senior management and helps to instil a consistent level of ambition across the Council. However, our work on data quality suggests that some staff in individual services are less clear about the new approach to implementing corporate objectives and had difficulty in articulating how they would judge whether the people of Denbighshire would be better off at the end of the lifetime of the Corporate Plan.
- 69 The Council has clearly stated how its Improvement Objectives link to its medium-term financial plan. It has identified the resources available to support the delivery of Improvement Objectives in 2013-14, from both revenue funding and £6 million additional capital funding.

The Council continues to make good progress in addressing the proposals for improvement identified in the previous Annual Improvement Report

70 The Council has made good progress in addressing the proposals for improvement in the Auditor General's 2013 Annual Improvement Report. In particular:

- The Council has strengthened its reporting arrangements for collaboration in its *Year 2 Delivery Document* and clearly sets out the status and outcomes of its collaboration objectives. The Year 2 Delivery Document identifies progress and setbacks on collaboration projects, most notably the decision by Denbighshire and Conwy councils not to further pursue the integration of their Public Protection Services.
- In the May 2013 Annual Improvement Report, we reported that the clarity of the links in the Corporate Plan between the Improvement Objectives and accompanying measures of success, baseline data and targets for improvement was not yet consistent across all seven Improvement Objectives. This remains the case in the *Year 2 Delivery Document*. However, the Council has made some progress in assessing whether anyone is better off as a result of its work. It has issued technical guidance to staff which defines indicators to measure success for all the Improvement Objectives and the 'excellence threshold' that the Council is aiming to achieve during the lifetime of the Corporate Plan.

71 As part of its own cycle of improvement, the Council has implemented all our proposals from our themed reviews of Technology, Information Management and Public Engagement.

Corporate arrangements are in place to ensure compliance with the Council's Welsh Language Scheme

72 The role of the Welsh Language Commissioner was created by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. It is expected that new powers to impose standards on organisations will come into force through subordinate legislation by the end of 2014. Until that time, the Commissioner will continue to review Welsh language schemes by virtue of powers inherited under the Welsh Language Act 1993.

73 The Commissioner works with all local authorities in Wales to inspect and advise on the implementation of language schemes. It is the responsibility of local authorities to provide services to the public in Welsh in accordance with the commitments in their language schemes. Every local authority is committed to providing an annual monitoring report to the Commissioner outlining its performance in implementing the language scheme. The Commissioner analyses every monitoring report, provides a formal response and collects further information as required.

74 The Council has taken steps to assess its provision in Welsh by means of a Mystery Shopper exercise. In order to derive maximum value from the process, the Council must take steps to improve and implement the Action Plan. The Council has been proactive in developing the number of staff who can provide a basic service through the medium of Welsh by introducing a mentoring scheme and working in partnership with local colleges. As opportunities to plan the workforce through recruitment are currently limited, the Council will need to invest more in Welsh language training and plan it effectively. The Council has undertaken to report on complaints on a quarterly basis and the new complaints officers provide a quarterly report to the language officer on complaints involving the Welsh language.

The Council has complied with its duties under the Equality Act 2010

75 The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 (the Act) sets out specific requirements for local authorities in Wales. The Act required councils to develop and publish Equality Objectives and a Strategic Equality Plan by 2012. There is significant alignment between the requirement to produce Equality Objectives and the 'Fairness' element that authorities must consider in setting Improvement Objectives under the Measure.

76 The Council's Improvement Objectives include an equality impact assessment, which includes information about the Council's equality work, particularly in relation to research, and reports on topics relating to protected groups and the Council's future plans for engagement with these groups. We believe the Council has met the requirements of the Act in setting its Improvement Objectives.

77 The Act requires local authorities to publish an Annual Equality report outlining progress on their strategic equality plans. The Denbighshire report was published before the statutory deadline of March 2013 and we believe that it met the requirements of the Act in reporting progress. It is the Council's intention that the next Corporate Plan in 2017 will incorporate the Strategic Equality Plan as part of the Council's commitment to addressing equality issues throughout its services.

The Council has improved its processes for developing its Annual Governance Statement and is taking further action

78 My September 2013 Improvement Assessment Letter reported that the Council had been open to learning, as demonstrated by the improvements it had made to its arrangements for drafting its Annual Governance Statement for 2012-13. The Council had established a Governance Group to produce an action plan to bring together all of the key internal and external recommendations to support the completion of the Annual Governance Statement and was continuing to explore ways of making further improvements.

79 However the Council, through the work of the Governance Group, recognises it needs to take additional steps to obtain senior officers' and members' perspectives on the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. The current 2012-13 Annual Governance Statement makes very limited reference to governance controls in relation to commissioning, and the Council undertakes limited assurance work to assess the effectiveness of these controls. The Council recognises the need to strengthen arrangements for developing its Annual Governance Statement and is also taking action to improve partnership controls.

The Council continues to manage its financial position effectively

80 The Council has clearly stated what its Improvement Objectives aim to achieve and has included broad details, linked to its Medium Term Financial Plan, on the resources available, both revenue and capital, to support their delivery. However, the Council now faces a significant future challenge following fundamental changes in the financial climate. Despite a very challenging grant settlement from the Welsh Government, the Council has set a balanced budget for 2014-15 which includes a 3.5 per cent increase in council tax and savings of £8.5 million. For the period 2015-18 further savings will be required. The Council recognises that it needs to keep all its options open and has begun to identify a range of possible measures which will then be subject to consultation during 2014.

81 The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the 2010 spending review to Parliament on 20 October 2010. This formed a central part of the coalition government's response to reducing the national deficit, with the intention of bringing public finances into balance. The Chancellor's policies represent the largest reduction in public spending since the 1920s and come at a time when demographic changes and recession-based economic pressures are increasing demand for some services. To effectively plan their finances, authorities should analyse details of financial trends, appropriate benchmarking information, possible scenarios and their likely impact over the short, medium and long term. The current financial climate and the recent tough settlement for local government mean that good financial planning is critical to sustaining financial resilience.

82 The Wales Audit Office is currently examining authorities' financial health, their approach to budgeting and delivering on required savings, to provide assurance that authorities are financially resilient. This work will consider whether authorities have robust approaches in place to manage the budget reductions that they are facing to secure a stable financial position that enable them to continue to operate for the foreseeable future. The focus of the work is on the 2014-15 financial planning period and the delivery of 2013-14 budgets. This review will be completed early in 2014-15 and we will publish the findings in our next cycle of improvement assessment work.

The Council is likely to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15

- 83 Based on the conclusions in the previous sections of this report the Auditor General for Wales believes that Denbighshire County Council is likely to meet the requirements of the Measure in making arrangements to secure continuous improvement.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Status of this report

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) requires the Auditor General to undertake an annual improvement assessment, and to publish an annual improvement report, for each improvement authority in Wales. This requirement covers local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities.

This report has been produced by the Wales Audit Office on behalf of the Auditor General to discharge his duties under section 24 of the Measure. The report also discharges his duties under section 19 to issue a report certifying that he has carried out an improvement assessment under section 18 and stating whether, as a result of his improvement plan audit under section 17, he believes that the authority has discharged its improvement planning duties under section 15.

Improvement authorities are under a general duty to 'make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of [their] functions'. Improvement authorities are defined as local councils, national parks, and fire and rescue authorities.

The annual improvement assessment is the main piece of work that enables the Auditor General to fulfil his duties. The improvement assessment is a forward-looking assessment of an authority's likelihood to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. It also includes a retrospective assessment of whether an authority has achieved its planned improvements in order to inform a view as to the authority's track record of improvement. The Auditor General will summarise his audit and assessment work in a published Annual Improvement Report for each authority (under section 24).

The Auditor General may also in some circumstances carry out special inspections (under section 21), which will be reported to the authority and Ministers, and which he may publish (under section 22). An important ancillary activity for the Wales Audit Office is the co-ordination of assessment and regulatory work (required by section 23), which takes into consideration the overall programme of work of all relevant regulators at an improvement authority. The Auditor General may also take account of information shared by relevant regulators (under section 33) in his assessments.

Appendix 2

Useful information about Denbighshire and Denbighshire County Council

The Council

The Council spends approximately £236 million per year (2013-14 budget). This equates to about £2,500 per resident. In the same year, the Council also planned to spend £49.9 million on capital items.

The average band D council tax in 2012-13 was £1,052 per year. This increased by 2.34 per cent to £1,074 for 2013-14. Eighty-four per cent of Denbighshire's housing is in council tax bands A to D. The average band D council tax for England in 2013-14 was £370 higher than in Denbighshire at £1,444.

The Council is made up of 47 elected members who represent the community and make decisions about priorities and use of resources. The Leader is Councillor Hugh H Evans OBE. The political make-up of the Council is as follows:

- 8 Conservatives
- 13 Independent
- 8 Plaid Cymru
- 18 Labour

The Council's Chief Executive is Dr Mohammed Mehmet and his management team includes:

- Corporate Director: Modernisation and Wellbeing – Sally Ellis (retired February 2014). Nicola Stubbins is the new Director of Social Services.
- Corporate Director Economic and Community Ambition – Rebecca Maxwell
- Corporate Director: Learning and Communities – Hywyn Williams

Other information

The Assembly Members for Denbighshire are:

- Ann Jones, Vale of Clwyd, Labour Party
- Darren Millar, Clwyd West, Conservative Party
- Ken Skates, Clwyd South, Labour Party

Regional Assembly Members are:

- Llyr Huws Gruffydd, Plaid Cymru
- Mark Isherwood, Welsh Conservative Party
- Aled Roberts, Welsh Liberal Democrats
- Antoinette Sandbach, Welsh Conservative Party

The Members of Parliament for Denbighshire are:

- Chris Ruane, Vale of Clwyd, Labour
- David Jones, Clwyd West, Conservative
- Susan Elan Jones, Clwyd South, Labour

For more information see the Council's own website at www.denbighshire.gov.uk or contact the Council at County Hall, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin, LL15 1YN. Telephone: 01824 706000.

Appendix 3

Annual Audit Letter

Councillor Hugh H Evans – Leader
Mohammed Mehmet – Chief Executive
Denbighshire County Council
County Hall
Wynnstay Road
LL15 1YN

Dear Councillor Evans and Dr Mehmet

Annual Audit Letter

This letter summarises the key messages arising from my statutory responsibilities under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 as the Appointed Auditor and my reporting responsibilities under the Code of Audit Practice.

The Council complied with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting and use of resources

It is the Council's responsibility to:

- put systems of internal control in place to ensure the regularity and lawfulness of transactions and to ensure that its assets are secure;
- maintain proper accounting records;
- prepare a Statement of Accounts in accordance with relevant requirements; and
- establish and keep under review appropriate arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

The Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 requires me to:

- provide an audit opinion on the accounting statements;
- review the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and
- issue a certificate confirming that I have completed the audit of the accounts.

Local authorities in Wales prepare their accounting statements in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom. This Code is based on International Financial Reporting Standards. On 27 September 2013, the Appointed Auditor issued an unqualified audit opinion on the accounting statements confirming that they present a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and transactions. My report is contained within the Statement of Accounts. The key matters arising from the accounts audit were reported to members of the Corporate Governance Committee in my Audit of Financial Statements report on the 27 September 2013 and a more detailed report will follow in due course.

My consideration of the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness has been based on the audit work undertaken on the accounts, as well as placing reliance on the work completed as part of the Improvement Assessment under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. Overall, I am satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place. The Auditor General will highlight areas where the effectiveness of these arrangements has yet to be demonstrated or where improvements could be made when he publishes his Annual Improvement Report.

I am currently unable to certify the completion of the audit due to objections to the accounts raised by members of the public remaining open. I am currently in the process of formally concluding on these objections which enable me to certify the closure of the 2012-13 audit.

The financial audit fee for 2012-13 is currently expected to be in line with the agreed fee set out in the Annual Audit Outline.

Yours sincerely

Derwyn Owen

Director Financial Audit
For and on behalf of the Appointed Auditor

25 November 2013

Appendix 4

Denbighshire County Council's improvement objectives and self-assessment

The Council's improvement objectives

The Council is required by the Welsh Government to make plans to improve its functions and the services it provides. Each year it must publish these plans along with specific 'improvement objectives' that set out the key things that the Council intends to do to improve. The Council must do this as soon as possible after 1 April each year.

The Council published its improvement objectives for 2013-14 in April 2013. The details are available on the Council's website at www.denbighshire.gov.uk. They are:

Key improvement objective priorities 2012-13	Key improvement objective priorities 2013-14
Developing the local economy.	Developing the local economy.
Improving performance in education and the quality of school buildings.	Improving performance in education and the quality of school buildings.
Improving our roads.	Improving our roads.
Vulnerable people are protected and able to live as independently as possible.	Vulnerable people are protected and able to live as independently as possible.
Clean and tidy streets.	Clean and tidy streets.
Ensuring access to good quality housing.	Ensuring access to good quality housing.
Modernising the council to deliver efficiencies and improve services for our customers.	Modernising the council to deliver efficiencies and improve services for our customers.

The Council's self-assessment of performance

The Council's self-assessment of its performance during 2012-13 can be found at www.denbighshire.gov.uk.

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Report To: Full Council

Date of Meeting: 10th June, 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Barbara Smith

Report Author: Sophie Vaughan, Pay and Reward Specialist

Title: Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy

1. What is the report about?

This report outlines the legislation changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, 2014, and the changes required to the Council's policies.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

A decision is required on the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretion Policy (copy attached in Appendix A) and the amendments outlined in the following report.

Background

The cost of providing public sector pension schemes has been steadily increasing over many years and the previous Government was concerned about their long term sustainability. As a result the Government appointed Lord Hutton to chair an independent Public Services Pensions Commission to undertake a fundamental review of public sector pension provision.

The present Government accepted the Commission's recommendations and government departments negotiated with the relevant employer representatives and trade unions, and as a result the new LGPS Regulations came into force on 1st April, 2014.

The new regulations require all scheme employers to review their existing discretionary pension policy statements and publish new statements effective from 1st April, 2014. It is a requirement that the discretion policy statement is agreed and published by 1st July, 2014.

The main changes to the LGPS scheme from April are summarised below:-

- To change from final salary pension schemes to a career average re-evaluated earnings scheme.
- Scheme retirement ages should be the same as state retirement pension ages
- There should be a cost sharing mechanism where members would share the increasing costs and not just the employers with 9 contribution bands resulting in greater contributions from members.

- Benefits accrued at 1/49th of pensionable pay in each year
- Members can opt to for 50/50 and pay half contributions for half benefits (1/98th accrual) for an unlimited period of time.
- Members can opt to take voluntary payment of benefits from age 55
- A new definition of pensionable pay to include hours worked including non-contractual overtime and additional hours for part time workers.
- Vesting period of 2 years rather than the previous 3 months (i.e. members may request a refund within 2 years)
- Existing rights of current scheme members should be protected

The four specific matters on which employers needs to declare their local policies are as follows:-

a) Discretion of employer to award additional pension

An employer may increase a member's benefits by awarding additional pension up to a maximum of £6,500 per annum from April, 2014.

Prior to the new regulations employers were able to award an additional £5000 per annum to a scheme member. Denbighshire County Council did not use its discretion to award additional pension under the previous regulations.

The provision of awarding additional pension would be substantial and once awarded the pension could not be taken away. The recommendation under the new regulations:-

- *there should be no change to the Council's existing policy on this and therefore the council will not award additional pension*

b) Flexible Retirement

This provision enables an employer to grant permission for an employee who is age 55 or over to receive payment of their pension benefits and continue working for the council on a lower level pay.

The Council's current policy is to allow flexible retirement provided permission is granted by the Flexible Retirement Panel and the employee has a permanent reduction in pay or hours of at least 20% and retires fully within 2 years of flexibly retiring. This was recently agreed and adopted by Full Council.

The recommendation under the new regulations is:-

- *there should be no change to the council's existing policy on this provision*
- *that the existing policy should be readopted under the new scheme.*

c) Early Payment of Pension Benefits

From April 2014 a current member of the pension scheme aged 55 or over can elect to receive immediate payment of their retirement benefits, without their employers permission, however the pension benefits payable will be subject to an actuarial reduction so there will be no cost to the council.

Employees age 55 and over can request immediate payment of their retirement benefits subject to the employer agreeing to waive actuarial reductions. Under the LGPS regulations actuarial reductions are automatically waived in the case of

efficiency or redundancy retirements. The Council's current policy is to refer applications from employees to the Head of Service and Head of Finance to determine the financial viability of the request, with the ability to waive any actuarial reduction.

In cases of deferred members (former employees) applications to access retirement benefits are considered on a case by case basis. Early payment of pension to deferred members is allowed when there is no cost to the council or where the circumstances are exceptional and the criteria for compassionate grounds is demonstrated.

The new regulations allow the employer the discretion to activate the "85 year rule", where a member's age and length of service equal 85 (before the age of 65) for individual employees prior to age 60 in the case of Early Retirement. Any cost of this can be borne in whole or in part by the employer.

The recommendation is that the policy should be adopted as follows:-

- *for current employees voluntarily retiring from age 55 before normal pension age who request payment of their pension benefits should receive their benefits actuarially reduced so there is no cost to the council.*
- *In exceptional circumstances, for deferred members the reduction can be waived on compassionate grounds in accordance with the criteria and approval procedures in the council's early termination of employment scheme.*
- *The Council will approve activating the 85 year rule in all cases where there is no cost to the employer, allowing the member to take their benefits early with some actuarial reductions.*
- *For current employees the Council may consider waiving actuarial reductions in part or in full and will consider each case on its own merits with a full business case which is to be approved by the Head of Service, Head of Finance and the Head of HR.*

d) Additional Pension Contributions (APC's)

The new regulations allow a member to request to pay additional pension contributions to cover a period of authorised unpaid leave within 30 days, but allows the employer to extend that period. The employer is required to fund 2/3rds of the cost if purchase is made within 30 days.

A member of the local pension fund can apply to make additional pension contributions by regular contribution or lump sum to cover a period of unpaid absence due to trade dispute. The cost of this will be met in full by the member.

A member of the local pension fund can also apply to make regular additional pension contributions to boost their pension. This regulation allows the employer, if it wishes, to fund in whole or in part, this cost. The administering authority, if it wishes, can require a medical report from the applicant to show that he/she is in good health.

The recommendation is that:-

- *Under the regulations the employer must fund 2/3rd's of the cost where the member purchases the lost pension contribution within 30 days for authorised absence. The employer will not fund any other Additional Pension Contributions (A.P.C's)*

3. What are the Recommendations?

The pension regulations require the scheme employer to make a decision on each of the five 'Employer Discretions'. The Policy must be agreed and published by the 1st July, 2014.

It is recommended that the discretions detailed above and in the attached policy are adopted by Full Council.

4. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

It is a legal requirement for Denbighshire County Council to agree and publish a Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy, in accordance with the Local Government Pension Regulations 2013.

5. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no additional costs associated with the adoption of the above discretions.

6. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

An EqIA has been completed (copy attached in Appendix B) and an ongoing action has been acknowledged to ensure that the "85 Year Rule" is being applied fairly and consistently. To ensure this a business case must be completed, and decisions made by the Head of HR and the Head of Finance should be consistent.

7. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no specific risks associated with the adoption of the above discretions.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The policy has been submitted to LJCC on the 4th June 2014 with a recommendation that the policy be adopted by Full Council. The outcome of LJCC will be communicated verbally at the meeting.

9. Power to make the Decision

Power to make the decision is s112 Local Government Act 1972

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME DISCRETIONS AND BANDING POLICY

This document is subject to the policy statement included in the Employee Handbook

This document is subject to the standard policy statements

This policy has an appeals process applied to it

To view FAQs click [here](#)

To provide feedback on this document please click [here](#)

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<i>Date agreed & Implemented:</i>	
<i>Agreed by:</i>	
<i>Review date:</i>	
<i>Frequency:</i>	

<i>Ver</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Reason for Change</i>	<i>Authorised</i>
V1			New Regulations 01/04/14	Sophie Vaughan

1. What is this policy?

2. Contribution Banding Process

3. Awarding Additional Pension

4. Flexible Retirement

5. Early Payment of Pension Benefits at the Request of the Employee

6. Shared Additional Voluntary Contributions

7. 85 Year Rule

8. Transfer of Pension Rights

9. Definitions

1. What is this Policy?

Discretions Policy

The regulations of the Local Government Pension Scheme require every employer, under Regulation 60(1) of the LGPS (Administration) Regulations 2013 and Regulation 66(1) of the LGPS (Administration) Regulations 2007 to:

- (i) issue a written policy statement on how it will exercise the various discretions provided by the scheme,
- (ii) keep it under review and
- (iii) revise it as necessary.

This document meets these requirements stating the regulation requirement and the organisation decision on these.

These discretions are subject to change, either in line with any change in regulations or by due consideration by the Authority. These provisions do not confer any contractual rights.

2. Contribution Banding Process

Denbighshire County Council will determine the employee's pensionable pay contribution banding on the 1st April each year in accordance with Regulation 9(3) of the LGPS Regulations 2013.

Each April contribution banding will be allocated as follows:

- Relief / Casual Employees band allocation will be based on their actual pensionable earnings from the previous financial year.
- Employees who have worked additional hours will be allocated by their current contractual salary and any additional hours worked in the previous financial year. This will be adjusted for new starters who do not have a whole years' service,
- Employees who participate in a salary sacrifice scheme that is not recognised by the Local Government Pension Scheme (e.g. Car Sacrifice Schemes) will have their contributions calculated on their reduced salary. Childcare Vouchers or Cycle to Work are not affected as they are currently recognised by Local Government Pension Scheme.

Details of the percentages and salary band ranges that decide the pension contributions that members pay can be found on the Pay & Reward Intranet Page.

3. LGPS Regulations 2013, Regulation 31 – Awarding Additional Pension

This regulation allows an employer to resolve to award a member additional pension of not more than £6500 a year payable from the same date as his / her pension is payable under any other provisions of the Regulations.

Additional pension may be awarded in addition to any increase of total membership.

Statement of Policy

Denbighshire County Council will not award additional pension.

Review - The Council may review its policy at any time.

4. LGPS Regulations 2013 Regulation 30(6) 30(8) – Flexible Retirement

A member of the pension scheme who has attained the age of 55 and with his/her employer's consent, reduces the hours he / she works, or the grade in which he/she is employed, may make a request in writing to the Pension Fund to receive all or part of his/her benefits under the Benefits Regulations. However, payment of the benefits cannot be made without the employer's consent.

If the benefits are reduced in accordance with guidance issued by the Government Actuary, the employer may agree to waive, in whole or in part, any such reduction.

Statement of Policy

Any employee request for flexible retirement will be considered on a case by case basis on its own merits following full consideration of all financial and service delivery implications. The reduction should be a minimum of 20% of their current salary or hours and the employee must retire fully within 2 years of taking flexible retirement.

Denbighshire has the discretion to waive in full or in part any employee actuarial reductions. Where there is a capital cost to the employer it is unlikely that the request will be agreed unless these costs can be offset by financial savings. Each case will be decided based upon its individual merits.

This does not preclude younger employees under 55 years of age requesting flexible working but without the payment of their retirement benefits.

Review - The Council may review its policy at any time.

5. LGPS (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2013 Regulation 30(5) and 30(8) - Early Payment of Pension Benefits at the Request of the Employee

When a member of the pension scheme leaves employment before he/she is entitled to the immediate payment of retirement benefits, once he/she has attained the age of 55 he/ she may choose to receive payment of them immediately without consent from his/her employer, and their retirement benefits will be actuarially reduced.

If the benefits are reduced in accordance with guidance issued by the Government Actuary, the employer may agree to waive, in whole or in part, any such reduction on compassionate grounds.

The Council will consider former employees (deferred members before April 2014) who are over the age of 55 and who request access to their retirement benefits if there is no cost to the employer, or they can demonstrate they meet the criteria of compassionate grounds which is determined by the HR Manager

Statement of Policy

It is the policy of Denbighshire County Council to consider each case of early release of pension on its own merits:-

- (i) If there are compelling, compassionate* reasons to do so.
- (ii) If there is no cost to Denbighshire County Council and the benefits are actuarially reduced.

If Denbighshire County Council agrees to permit early release of deferred benefits for reasons other than compassionate grounds, any actuarial reduction will be applied to the person's accrued pension benefits to take account of the fact that the benefits are being paid early.

Denbighshire County Council has the discretion to waive any actuarial reduction for early payment on compassionate grounds

Review - The Council may review its policy at any time

6. LGPS Regulations 2013 Regulation 17 (1) – Shared Additional Voluntary Contributions

Where the member's employing authority contributes to the scheme, the additional voluntary contributions arrangement is to be known as a shared cost additional voluntary contributions arrangement and contributions to it as "SCAVCs".

Statement of Policy

Denbighshire County Council will not contribute towards a shared cost additional voluntary contributions scheme.

Review - The Council may review its policy at any time.

7. LGPS (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014, Schedule 2 – 85 Year Rule

The “85 Year Rule”, where a member’s service and age equal 85, can be activated for individual members, prior to age 60 in the case of Early Retirement, the cost of which can be borne, in full or in part, by the employer.

Statement of Policy

Denbighshire County Council has the discretion to waive reductions in full, or in part, and will consider each case on its own merits with a full business case to be approved by the Head of Finance and Head of HR.

The Council will approve activating the 85 year rule in all cases where there is no cost to the employer, allowing the member to take their benefits early with some actuarial reduction

Review - The Council may review its policy at any time.

8. LGPS Regulations 2013 Regulation 100(6) – Transfer of Pension Rights

If a scheme member wishes to transfer a previous pension benefits into the LGPS he/she must opt to do so within 12 months of joining the LGPS or such longer period as the employer may allow.

Statement of Policy

Denbighshire County Council will not consider extending the time limit for a transfer in of previous pension rights more than twelve months of joining.

9. Definitions

*Definition of compelling, compassionate reasons:

(i) The member can clearly demonstrate that they have a dependent, who is in need of the member’s constant supervision due to a long term illness and as a result the member is suffering from severe financial hardship OR

(ii) There is another substantial reason (not relating to caring for an ill dependant) where the member can demonstrate that they are facing very severe, on-going financial hardship and will be doing so on a long term basis.

In exceptional circumstances, and only with the prior approval of Denbighshire County Council, Denbighshire County Council may vary the terms of this policy on an individual basis, and consider each case on its merits. The list is subject to statute, regulations and Denbighshire County Council policy. It may be varied in the future as necessary. Each discretion will be dealt with independently.

LGPS Discretions Policy May, 2014

Equality Impact Assessment

LGPS Discretions Policy

Contact: Sophie Vaughan, HR

Updated: 19/05/2014

1. What type of proposal / decision is being assessed?

A new or revised policy

2. What is the purpose of this proposal / decision, and what change (to staff or the community) will occur as a result of its implementation?

The purpose of this revised policy is to bring the policy in line with the new LGPS Pension Regulations. This will provide employees and employers with an agreed policy which outlines the discretions that the employer has in five key areas.

1. Whether to offer shared cost Additional Pension Costs with an employee
2. Whether to offer Flexible Retirement - which has already been agreed
3. Whether to allow an authority to activate the rule of 85 for employees retiring between 55 and 60
4. Whether to offer additional pension to an employee up to a maximum of £6,500 per annum.
5. Allowing early release of pensions on compassionate grounds, or when there is no cost to the council.

The Council's position on 1,2,4 & 5 have not altered, although the option to activate the "85 Year Rule" is new. The recommendation is that each case will be considered on it's own merits, and will require a business case to be confirmed by the Head of Finance and Head of HR, similar to the process of the Early Termination of Employment Policy.

3. Does this proposal / decision require an equality impact assessment? If no, please explain why.

*Please note: if the proposal will have an impact on people (staff or the community) then an equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken*

Yes

<If no, briefly summarise the reasons for this decision here, and skip ahead to the declaration at the end>

4. Please provide a summary of the steps taken, and the information used, to carry out this assessment, including any engagement undertaken

(Please refer to section 1 in the toolkit for guidance)

The policy has been considered to see if there was an impact on each of the protected characteristics. Different scenarios were considered, and then considered in line with the protected characteristics. Many of the discretions Denbighshire County Council has opted not to adopt. The Flexible Retirement Policy has it's own EIA. The only one remaining is the Rule of 85.

- 5. Will this proposal / decision have a positive impact on any of the protected characteristics (age; disability; gender-reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation)?**
(Please refer to section 1 in the toolkit for a description of the protected characteristics)

n/a

- 6. Will this proposal / decision have a disproportionate negative impact on any of the protected characteristics (age; disability; gender-reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation)?**

n/a

- 7. Has the proposal / decision been amended to eliminate or reduce any potential disproportionate negative impact? If no, please explain why.**

Yes	The proposal is to ensure that the discretions policy is in line with the new legislation
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- 8. Have you identified any further actions to address and / or monitor any potential negative impact(s)?**

Yes	<If yes please complete the table below. If no, please explain here>
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Action(s)	Owner	By when?
Ensure Business Cases are submitted and the decision makers use fair criteria	Sophie Vaughan	Ongoing
<Please describe>	<Enter Name>	<DD.MM.YY>
<Please describe>	<Enter Name>	<DD.MM.YY>
<Please describe>	<Enter Name>	<DD.MM.YY>
<Unrestrict editing to insert additional rows>	<Enter Name>	<DD.MM.YY>

9. Declaration

Every reasonable effort has been made to eliminate or reduce any potential disproportionate impact on people sharing protected characteristics. The actual impact of the proposal / decision will be reviewed at the appropriate stage.

Review Date:	January, 2015
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Name of Lead Officer for Equality Impact Assessment	Date
Sophie Vaughan	19/05/2014

Please note you will be required to publish the outcome of the equality impact assessment if you identify a substantial likely impact.

Report To: Council

Date of Meeting: 10 June 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Democratic Services Manager

Report Author: Steve Price

Title: Committee Appointments and Political Balance

1. What is the report about?

This report details changes to the memberships of the Council's committees and appointments to be made by Council to the Democratic Services Committee.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

The appointment of the chair and members of the Democratic Services Committee falls to full Council. Detailing the position of other committees will inform members of the position of their committees and of any actions required to maintain the political balance of these committees.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council notes the issues raised and appoints the chair and ten other members to the Democratic Services Committee for 2014 / 2015.

4. Report details.

Democratic Services Committee

4.1 At the Annual Meeting on the 15 May Council decided that the membership of the new Democratic Services Committee required under the Local Government Measure would be 11 councillors which would not include a Cabinet member.

4.2 Section 11 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to appoint a committee to review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge democratic services functions, and to make reports and recommendations to the authority in relation to such provision.

4.3 The members of the Democratic Services Committee must be appointed by Full Council. There are to be no co-opted members. Under the Measure there may be no more than one member of the Cabinet on the Committee (who cannot be the Leader), but Council in May 2012 decided that the membership would not include members of the Cabinet.

4.4 The Committee must be politically balanced and Council must appoint its chair who must not be a member of any of the political groups represented on the Cabinet. For Denbighshire, this means that the chair will be a member of the Labour group. The Labour group have nominated the existing chair, Councillor Barry Mellor.

4.5 The existing members of the Democratic Services Committee are Councillors Bill Cowie, Stuart Davies, Martyn Holland, Barry Mellor, Win Mullen-James, Bob Murray, Peter Owen, Merfyn Parry and Arwel Roberts. Councillor Butterfield has replaced Councillor Gareth Sandilands and a Plaid Cymru vacancy (Councillor Kensler left the Committee upon her appointment as Vice Chair of Council last month) is being filled by Councillor Cefyn Williams.

Scrutiny Committee Chairs

4.6 The 2011 Measure also governs the appointment process for the Scrutiny chairs. In Denbighshire this results in two of the three chair positions being allocated to the Labour group and the third position being allocated to the three political groups represented on Cabinet. The appointing groups have not notified Democratic Services of any changes to the 2013 / 14 chairing arrangements.

Seats on Committees

4.7 Appendix 1 gives a committee-by-committee view of the political balance requirements and vacant seats.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The fair distribution of committee seats is essential to elected members and the democratic working of the Council.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

This report does not affect other services. Please see section 8 for a statement on costs.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

Not required as this report does not introduce new policies, procedures or actions that would have an impact on equality issues.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Regular consultation is undertaken with the group leaders on the committee membership issues affecting their groups. Council also receives reports on political balance at least once a year.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no direct costs arising from this report. The remuneration of members for undertaking specific roles e.g. on Cabinet or chairing a committee have been previously agreed by Council. The position of chair of the Democratic Services Committee does not receive a chairing allowance.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

Not applicable.

11. Power to make the Decision

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

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Political Balance Position at May 2014

The tables below summarise the position for each of the committees. The third column headed *Political Balance* shows the actual number of seats each Group is entitled to have on the committee.

Changes to committee memberships can occur at any time and the Groups are encouraged to ensure that each committee has a full contingent of members throughout the year. A general review of the political balance of the committees is undertaken annually to re-balance committees for the start of the new municipal year in May. This year the Annual Meeting of Council was held on the 13 May 2014.

Cabinet	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	0	3
Independent	4	2
Conservative	2	1 or 2*
Plaid Cymru	2	1 or 2*
<p>Comments: The political balance requirements have been achieved for the groups participating in the executive.</p> <p>In the event of a political group with 5 or more members declining to take up their seats on the Cabinet the Leader may appoint councillors to fill the vacancies and the rules of political balance do not apply to the filling of those vacancies. No further actions required.</p> <p>*With 8 members each both the Conservative and Plaid Cymru Groups have the same political balance weighting, so in respect of political balance, either could take a second seat on the committee.</p>		

Corporate Governance Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	2	2
Independent	2	2
Conservative	1	1
Plaid Cymru	1	1
<p>Comments: The membership of the Corporate Governance Committee is 6 councillors of whom one shall be the Vice Chair of the Council, politically balanced. The new Vice Chair of the Council, Councillor Gwyneth Kensler was already a member of the committee.</p> <p>Action: No action required.</p>		

Communities Scrutiny Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	4	4
Independent	3	3
Conservative	2	2
Plaid Cymru	2	2
Comments: This committee is politically balanced.		
Actions: None required.		

Partnerships Scrutiny Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	4	4
Independent	3	3
Conservative	2	2
Plaid Cymru	2	2
Comments: This committee is politically balanced. From the start of the 2014 / 15 municipal year Councillor Ray Bartley and Richard Davies (Independents) joined the committee whilst Councillors Bill Cowie and Joe Welch left.		
Actions: None required.		

Performance Scrutiny Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	4	4
Independent	1	3
Conservative	2	2
Plaid Cymru	2	2
Comments: There are currently (May 2014) 2 vacancies for Independent Group member on this committee.		
Action: Independent Group to nominate 2 members.		

Planning Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	11	12
Independent	8	8
Conservative	5	5
Plaid Cymru	5	5
Comments: Labour have one vacant seat.		
Actions: The Labour Group to appoint 1 member.		

Licensing Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	4	4
Independent	3	3
Conservative	2	2
Plaid Cymru	2	2
Comments: This committee is politically balanced.		
Actions: None required.		

Democratic Services Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	4	4
Independent	3	3
Conservative	2	2
Plaid Cymru	2	2
Comments: The Chair and members of this committee are appointed by Council based on a politically balanced allocation. A report will be submitted to Council in June 2014 for a decision.		
Actions: Council to confirm membership in June 2014.		

Local Joint Consultative Committee (LJCC)	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	2	2
Independent	2	2
Conservative	1	1
Plaid Cymru	1	1
Comments: This committee is politically balanced.		
Actions: None required.		

Corporate Health, Safety and Welfare Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	2	3
Independent	2	2
Conservative	2	1 or 2*
Plaid Cymru	2	1 or 2*
Comments: Labour are currently (May 2014) 1 member below their entitlement of 3 members on the committee. Both the Conservative and Plaid Cymru Groups have an additional member – see note*.		
Actions: (i) Labour to appoint 1 additional member (ii) Following this, either the Conservative or Plaid Cymru Group to then withdraw 1 member.		
*With 8 members each both the Conservative and Plaid Cymru Groups have the same political balance weighting so either (but only one of them) could take a second seat on the committee.		

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	2	3
Independent	1	2
Conservative	2	1 or 2*
Plaid Cymru	1	1 or 2*
<p>Comments: Both Labour and the Independents are entitled to 1 extra seat</p> <p>Action: Independent and Labour Groups to appoint 1 member each.</p> <p>*With 8 members each both the Conservative and Plaid Cymru Groups have the same political balance weighting so one of them would be entitled to take 2 seats</p>		

Appeals and complaints Committee	Current Membership	Political Balance
Labour	4	4
Independent	3	3
Conservative	2	2
Plaid Cymru	2	2
<p>Comments: This 'committee' provides a pool of members for appeals and complaints work. It is currently balanced.</p> <p>Actions: None required.</p>		

County Council Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Council Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
Council Briefing 23 June 2014	1	Member Training	To consider member training issues	N/A	Cllr Barbara Smith / Eleri Woolford
	2	Welfare Reform			Paul McGrady
	3	Local Housing Strategy	To consider LHS prior to going to full council in September		Cllr Hugh Irving/ Peter McHugh /Sue Lewis
8 July 2014					
Council Briefing 9 July 2014		BUDGET WORKSHOP			
Council Briefing 14 July 2014		BUDGET WORKSHOP			
Council Briefing 30 July 2014		BUDGET WORKSHOP (2.00 p.m.)			

County Council Forward Work Plan

Meeting		Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Council Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
9 September 2014	1	Capital Plan	To discuss previous years outturn and update of 5 months of current year	Yes	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady / Richard Weigh
	2	Local Housing Strategy	To agree the Local Housing Strategy	Yes	Cllr Hugh Irving / Peter McHugh / Sue Lewis
Council Briefing 22 September 2014	1	Modernising Social Services & Enhancing Wellbeing Programme for Vulnerable People & Groups	To consider a briefing	N/A	Cllr Bobby Feeley / Steph O'Donnell
Council Briefing 13 October 2014		BUDGET WORKSHOP			
Council Briefing 20 October 2014		BUDGET WORKSHOP			

County Council Forward Work Plan

Meeting		Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Council Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
Council Briefing 12 December 2014		BUDGET WORKSHOP			
February 2015	1	Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2015/2016	To approve the TM Strategy Statement 2015/2016	Yes	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill/ Paul McGrady / Richard Weigh .

Note for officers – Full Council Report Deadlines

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
<i>June</i>	27 May	<i>July</i>	24 June	<i>September</i>	26 August

Updated 03/06/2014 – SLW

Council Work Programme.doc

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