

To: Members of the Governance and
Audit Committee

Date: 8 June 2023

Direct Dial: 01824706204

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Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE** to be held at **9.30 am** on **WEDNESDAY, 14 JUNE 2023** in **COUNTY CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN AND BY VIDEO CONFERENCE**.

Yours sincerely

G. Williams
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

To appoint a Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee for the ensuing year.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

To appoint a Vice Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee for the ensuing year.

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (Pages 5 - 6)

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

5 URGENT MATTERS

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.

6 MINUTES (Pages 7 - 12)

To receive the minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 26 April (copy enclosed).

7 COUNCIL PERFORMANCE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022 TO 2023 (Pages 13 - 134)

To receive a report on the Council Performance Self-Assessment 2022 to 2023 (copy enclosed).

8 BUDGET PROCESS UPDATE (Pages 135 - 156)

To receive a report on the revised financial projections for the 3 year period 2024/25 to 2026/27 and a proposed budget strategy for setting the budget the 2024/25 (copy enclosed).

9 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2022-23 (Pages 157 - 188)

To receive the Internal Audit Report 2022-23 (copy enclosed).

10 INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER & STRATEGY 2023-24 (Pages 189 - 220)

To receive the Internal Audit Charter & Strategy 2023-24 (copy enclosed).

11 WORKFORCE PLANNING

To receive a verbal update from the Chief Internal Auditor on Workforce Planning.

12 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 221 - 226)

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

FOR INFORMATION

13 ESTYN LETTER TO LOCAL AUTHORITY FOLLOWING ARA WORKSHOPS (Pages 227 - 230)

To receive for information a copy of correspondence received from Estyn (copy enclosed).

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors

Ellie Chard

Arwel Roberts

Justine Evans
Carol Holliday

Andrea Tomlin
Mark Young

Lay Member

Nigel Rudd
David Stewart

Paul Whitham

COPIES TO:

All Councillors for information
Press and Libraries
Town and Community Councils

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

Code of Conduct for Members

DISCLOSURE AND REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

I, (<i>name</i>)	<input type="text"/>
a *member/co-opted member of <i>(*please delete as appropriate)</i>	Denbighshire County Council
CONFIRM that I have declared a *personal / personal and prejudicial interest not previously declared in accordance with the provisions of Part III of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, in respect of the following:- <i>(*please delete as appropriate)</i>	
Date of Disclosure:	<input type="text"/>
Committee (<i>please specify</i>):	<input type="text"/>
Agenda Item No.	<input type="text"/>
Subject Matter:	<input type="text"/>
Nature of Interest: <i>(See the note below)*</i>	<input type="text"/>
Signed	<input type="text"/>
Date	<input type="text"/>

*Note: Please provide sufficient detail e.g. 'I am the owner of land adjacent to the application for planning permission made by Mr Jones', or 'My husband / wife is an employee of the company which has made an application for financial assistance'.

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GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held in COUNTY CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN AND BY VIDEO CONFERENCE on Wednesday, 26 April 2023 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillors Ellie Chard, Justine Evans, Carol Holliday and Mark Young (Vice-Chair)

Lay Members Nigel Rudd and David Stewart

ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Director: Governance and Business – Monitoring Officer (GW), Head of Finance and Property Services (Section 151 Officer) (SG), Chief Internal Auditor (BC), Committee Administrator (NH) (Zoom Host) and Committee Administrator (SJ).

Audit Wales representatives Mike Whiteley and Gwilym Bury was also in attendance.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Lay Member Paul Whitham.

Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets also sent her apologies.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests of a personal or prejudicial nature were declared.

3 URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters raised.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on the 08 March 2023 were presented for consideration.

Matters of accuracy –

Page 10 - Progress Update On Statement of Accounts 2021/22 – the Head of Finance apologised he had not circulated an update on the impact of the delay on the accounts. He confirmed the email was intended to be circulated to Governance and Audit Committee members.

Page 11 - Governance and Audit Committee Work Programme – The Chair confirmed the Annual Governance and Audit annual report would be presented in June not April as stated in the minutes

Matters arising –

The committee asked for an update on the progress on the Statement of Accounts 2021/22. Members heard work had progressed, information around the asset issue had been forwarded to Audit Wales. It was stressed officers were working towards the September deadline, to present to the Committee to be signed off. The Audit Wales representative echoed the comments made by the Head of Finance and commented he did not anticipate any issues.

Page 6 – Minutes – The Chair confirmed a training session had been arranged for 25th May on the new CIPFA. He encouraged all members to attend. Further training sessions would be arranged including one on the subject of Statement of Accounts.

Page 6 – Minutes – the Chair confirmed he had attended the most recent Chairs and Vice Chairs Scrutiny Group meeting and had raised the concern of Recruitment and Retention. It was agreed at that meeting that a report on recruitment and retention be presented to Performance Scrutiny Committee – 8th June 2023. The Chief Internal Auditor confirmed work had started in the area and an update report would be reported back to Governance and Audit Committee at the 14 June 2023.

Page 11 – Governance and Audit Committee Work Programme – the Monitoring Officer confirmed the Corporate Risk Register would be presented to Performance Scrutiny on the 27th April. The Papers were available for the public to view via the Denbighshire County Council website. Members were made aware the Chairs and Vice Chairs was not a public meeting it was an internal body. The meeting was for internal business that discussed proposals for areas for debate at Scrutiny meetings. A formal agenda was published along with minutes for each meeting. Members heard a link could be provided to access the documents.

RESOLVED, subject to the above that the minutes of the Governance and Audit committee held on 08 March 2023 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

The Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) introduced the report (previously circulated). It was highlighted to members the dates on the report header should read January 2023. Members were updated on the Internal Audit Team's progress in terms of its service delivery, assurance provision, reviews completed, performance and effectiveness in driving improvement.

The report provided information on work carried out by Internal Audit since the last committee meeting. It allowed the committee to monitor Internal Audit's performance and progress as well as providing summaries of Internal Audit reports. Confirmation that 7 Audits had been completed since the last committee meeting, all of which had received a high assurance rating. There had been six follow up reviews completed since the last update and summaries were included for information, all received a high or medium assurance ratings.

Members were guided through the table which provided details of the reports completed from the external regulators. Members were provided with details of the report status and links to access any papers. Details of three Audit Wales reports specific to Denbighshire had been included for reference. A further list of intended work would be provided from Audit Wales at a later date.

Members heard 43% of the Internal Audit's intended plan had been completed over the last 12 months. Due to recruitment and staffing issues over the 12 month period had impacted on the work completed. The department had been running at 66% workforce until February 2023. It was also noted 3 special investigations had been received in the last 12 months which impacted on officer's time. 23 reviews had been completed, 17 received a high assurance (74%), 6 medium assurance (26%) and 0 no or low assurance ratings had been issued. Six out of the 7 listed follow up reviews had been completed.

The Chief Internal Auditor highlighted the audit agreed actions that have been implemented by service figure had been left blank because currently School reviews had not been entered on Verto meaning not all actions were picked up and secondly, we had noted that not all Services were updating their action status on Verto. It was stressed it had been raised as a concern of Internal Audit at a recent Senior Leadership Team meeting. The Monitoring Officer added that along with the concerns raised by internal Audit, Strategic Planning and Performance Officers had also raised concerns with imputing actions on the system.

The Chair thanked the Chief Internal Officer for the detailed introduction. During the discussion –

- The majority of the reviews not completed this year would be carried over to 2023/24. A plan would be formulated detailing the potential list of reviews hoped to be completed next year. The Annual Governance Statement would not be impacted due to the number of reviews being postponed. At least one review had been completed in each service area.
- The priority of work for the list of reviews is completed with the Chief Internal Auditor and Heads of Service.
- Internal Audit were satisfied that all Head Teachers had a risk assessment in place for those members of the Governing body that had not completed the DBS check. It had been raised with the HR team to discuss with all schools.
- Throughout the year officers monitored the progress of completing reviews. All reviews that needed to be completed to provide assurance to committee were completed. It was the responsibility of the Chief Internal Auditor to ensure those reviews were completed.
- It was stressed the close working relationship between Section 151 Officer and the Chief Internal Officer had continued to discuss and monitor the completion of reviews to form an assurance for members.
- The Financial Systems budget monitoring report had previously P3 action attached to it. Members heard the reason the action had exceed the 6month period had been due to the new general ledger implemented over the next 12 months. It had been agreed to be a 12 month review date.

- Training of Internal Audit Officers would take place over the next 12 months and potentially would impact on the number of reviews completed. Members noted the issues around recruitment of officers and stressed it as an area of concern.
- Schools had been looked at over the previous 12 months. A rolling plan had been implemented to ensure all schools in Denbighshire were audited over a 4-5 year plan. A full school audit would be completed. Estyn reviewed other areas, but did not receive the reports completed by Internal Auditors.
- The assurances that had been provided were realistic. Members heard some audits had been completed at officer request. This illustrated the open relationship between Internal Audit and other services of the authority.
- A light touch audit in all service areas had been completed during the year. Going forward members heard the financial reviews would be split into two parts; high assurance reporting and low assurance.
- Close working with the Monitoring Officer with all whistleblowing complaints would continue. After an initial review work would be relevant departments to review areas that need addressing. Each case was reviewed on a case by case basis. The Monitoring Officer confirmed each whistleblowing complaint received was required to be consulted with the Chief Internal Auditor.

RESOLVED that, members note the Internal Audit's progress and performance.

6 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Governance and Audit Committee's Forward Work Programme (FWP) was presented for consideration (previously circulated).

The Chair stated the June 2023 meeting had heavily proposed agenda. The Chair informed the Committee he had discussed with Officers any potential deferrals of reports that would lighten the meeting.

It was suggested to defer the Draft Annual Governance Statement to July 2023, all members were in agreement.

The appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee would take place at the June meeting.

An update on the review of the Workforce Planning would also be available for the June meeting.

The Audit Wales Representative, Gwilym Bury informed the Committee a number of Audit Wales reports in relation to Denbighshire would be published in the near future.

It was also highlighted to members the September 2023 meeting looked like a heavy proposed agenda. The Chair suggested that no further items be added to the September meeting unless urgent.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed the SIRO Annual report and the RIPA Annual report need to be included on the November Committee meeting.

It was highlighted the final Statement of Accounts report of which the draft will be presented to the committee in September, will need to be included on the agenda for the first meeting in 2024.

The Chair informed the Committee he had requested a meeting with the Chief Executive to meet and discuss the committee. He suggested if members wanted any feedback from that meeting to email the Chair direct.

RESOLVED that, the Governance and Audit Committee's forward work programme be noted.

7 INFORMATION REPORT - AUDIT WALES - OUTLINE AUDIT PLAN 2023

The Chair introduced the Audit Wales report – Outline Audit Plan 2023 (previously circulated).

Gwilym Bury the Audit Wales representative, explained new arrangements had been agreed for the financial work which required more planning before Audit Wales could start work. The report set out the planned work primarily on Performance Audits. The full, detailed audit plan was intended to be issued in July 2023.

The Chair asked if due to the increase work with the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 would that have an impact on the fee. Mike Whiteley Audit Wales, informed members the reason no fee had been included in the Outline Audit Plan was due to the fee being in a scale fee that was based on a risk assessment. The risk assessment had not been completed yet, meaning the fee could not be accurately recorded.

The fee for 2021/22 work was still in progress, any potential changes would be discussed with the finance officers and brought to the committee for discussion.

Members heard ISA's were the International Standard for Auditing. ISA315 noted in the report was a revised Standard that had been updated in respect of the high profile audit failures.

Members noted Audit Wales were still outstanding an Audit Lead (Financial Audit) and encouraged if possible diversification within the workforce. The Audit Wales representatives acknowledged the comment and confirmed they endeavoured to do so where possible.

RESOLVED, that members note the information report – Audit Wales – Outline Audit Plan 2023.

The Chair offered on behalf of the Committee, offered best wishes and gratitude to Gwilym Bury on his upcoming retirement. He thanked him for his participation and attendance at Governance and Audit Committee meetings.

Gwilym Bury thanked officers and members for their well wishes and past on his best wishes for the financially challenging years to come.

The meeting concluded at 11.05 p.m.

Report to	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of meeting	June 14, 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets
Head of Service	Nicola Kneale, Interim Head of Service Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital and Assets
Report author	Emma Horan, Planning and Performance Officer
Title	Council Performance Self-Assessment 2022 to 2023

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. This report accompanies the council's Performance Self-Assessment for 2022 to 2023, providing our end of year analysis of progress and challenges with our key performance objectives (i.e. our Corporate Plan themes), and for the first time presents data against the new Corporate Plan's performance management framework.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 Regular reporting is an essential monitoring requirement of the council's performance management framework and our statutory duties in relation to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Equality Act 2010 and Wales Measure 2011, and our contributions to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 2.2 We monitor our performance regularly, taking quarterly reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet meetings. Our Executive Summary, presented alongside this report, provides an evaluative statement of our progress.
- 2.3 Feedback is sought on the content of the draft reports, attached at appendix I and II, before we take the reports through committees and seek approval of the final documents by Council in July.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. Governance and Audit Committee considers the reports, and agrees any further actions required to respond to any performance related issues highlighted within them.

4. Report details

- 4.1 With this report, we present two documents. Appendix I presents our Executive Summary, which seeks to draw out the highlights of our performance against our objectives (i.e. our Corporate Plan themes that are also our Well-being and Equality Objectives) and the seven governance areas prescribed in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The short paragraphs within this document are effectively our statement of performance against our functions, also looking ahead to the challenges that we face and areas for improvement. We have introduced a new section within this report called 'Overall, how well are we doing?'. This section highlights areas we should focus on to ensure performance can be sustained and where needed, improved.
- 4.2 Appendix II is our familiar quarterly Performance Update Report, which is our process for ongoing self-assessment and embodies all the evidence (internal and external) and analysis that seeks to answer the questions of 'How well are we doing', 'How do we know', and 'What and how can we do better'? This Performance Update Report presents the latest picture covering January to March 2023, and is the first performance report for our new Corporate Plan performance management framework. The new Corporate Plan and associated performance management framework is significantly larger than our last, but we have managed to keep the report to the same size as our previous reports. Services and the Strategic Planning Team have done a great deal of work to collate the data that we have available, but we acknowledge that there are some gaps to further investigate and areas for development. These areas are highlighted and discussed within the reports. Our next performance report for April to June, is likely to present a more complete picture of performance. This Performance Update Report for January to March, when combined with the Executive Summary and the three preceding Update Reports, makes up our Self-Assessment for 2022 to 2023.

Reviewing all four Performance Update Reports together will allow the reader to see improvement activity that we have identified throughout the year in support of performance.

- 4.3 From our October to December report to these present reports, we included Well-being and Equality sections that capture our contributions to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; the Equality Act 2010, and subsequent Wales Regulations 2011 and 2021 (which includes the socio-economic duty). We also include an update on Equality and Diversity, which captures corporate initiatives in support of this agenda.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

- 5.1 The Performance Self-Assessment includes an evaluation of the council's success in delivering against its Corporate Plan themes.

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

- 6.1 There is no additional cost associated with this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) is not required for this report. A WIA was undertaken on the Corporate Plan itself, and was presented to [County Council](#) when the plan was approved in October 2022. New projects / programmes of work within the Corporate Plan will be individually assessed, as any new actions will be going forward.

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

- 8.1. The reports have been developed by the Strategic Planning Team, in consultation with other council services. Feedback has already been sought on the report from the Senior Leadership Team, Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet at Cabinet Briefing. Further consultation will take place with Cabinet prior to being submitted to County Council for approval on July 4, 2023.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. No statement is required with this report.

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

10.1 Failure to publish our Self-Assessment would likely result in statutory recommendations from Audit Wales, with significant implications for the reputation of the council.

10.2 The risk of poor performance being reported out of context, impacting on our reputation. On this basis, we have already shared the draft report with the Communications Team.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1 Part 6 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (chapter 1, section 89).

11.2 Part 2 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 (section 13).

11.3 The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 (section 16); and The Equality Act (Authorities subject to the Socio-economic Inequality Duty) (Wales) Regulations 2021.

Executive Summary: Self-Assessment of Performance, 2022 to 2023

Together with our four quarterly update reports for 2022 to 2023 that have functioned as our ongoing assessment throughout the year, this document makes up our Self-Assessment of Performance required under the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It presents an accessible end-of-year summary of our performance against key functions, specifically our Well-Being Objectives (otherwise referred to as our Corporate Plan themes), the seven governance areas, and the Public Sector Equality Duty (which includes the new Socio-Economic Duty).

To review the evidence behind the conclusions in this document, please refer to the Performance Update Reports, published on our [website](#).

Contents

Contents	2
Contact details and more information	3
Our Approach to Self-Assessment.....	4
Equality and Diversity	5
Overall, how well are we doing?	6
Performance Objectives – Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027	7
Governance Functions – The Council’s Corporate Health	13

Contact details and more information

For more information, or to let us know what you think about anything in this report, contact us:

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By telephone: 01824 706291

Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.

By post:

Strategic Planning and Performance Team
Denbighshire County Council
PO Box 62
Ruthin
LL15 9AZ

We welcome correspondence in Welsh. There will be no delay in responding to correspondence received in Welsh.

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Our Approach to Self-Assessment

Our approach to Self-Assessment follows the same one undertaken for the first year that one was legally required, in 2020 to 2021. We have continued to use a new style of Performance Self-Assessment Update report, one that responds to the performance requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflects on the Corporate Health of the organisation. Our reports, produced quarterly and published [online](#), involve an analysis of the seven governance areas recommended by the Act's statutory guidance, as well as continuing to catalogue the activity of our principle meetings (Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny, and Governance and Audit), key news items, and reports by our internal audit and external regulators. This Executive Summary brings the volume of the quarterly reports together alongside a critical overview of our performance, the extent to which our performance is driving positive outcomes and how well our governance is supporting continuous improvement. This summary also looks ahead to key opportunities and challenges.

We have a great body of quality evidence around how we are performing as a council, which has been comprehensively catalogued in our quarterly Self-Assessment Performance Update reports. These make up our ongoing self-assessment. However, the extent of the evidence available has not been helped by the size of our new Corporate Plan Performance Management Framework. It is difficult to make such a large document accessible, but this emphasises the importance of our continuing to produce this short executive summary, providing only very high-level summary statements that assess our performance (taking into account the wealth of quality information available in our quarterly reports). We have also in our latest report reintroduced a colour and trend status summary that provides a more visual overview of performance, whilst still meeting accessibility standards.

It is a requirement that the council, through its self-assessment process, identify improvement actions, and in subsequent self-assessments reports provide an update on our progress against them. We have achieved this through our quarterly Performance Update reports (supporting the principle of ongoing assessment), which have identified improvement actions during their production. The council's Service Performance Challenge programme, which normally generates improvement actions, was suspended this year to reflect ongoing changes to Council's membership and our senior leadership

restructure. However, these will recommence during 2023 to 2024 and feed into our quarterly Self-Assessment Update reports.

During 2022 and 2023 the council launched its 'Stakeholder Survey' for the second time, to ask specific questions now required under the Act. An analysis of the most recent results is provided in our accompanying Self-Assessment Performance Update report for the period January to March 2023. The council will now look forward to running similar engagement exercises annually as part of its approach to Self-Assessment.

Equality and Diversity

The new Corporate Plan encompasses our equality and well-being objectives, and these are reported through our quarterly reports. The Interim Strategic Equality Plan we were required to create for 2021 to 2022 is now complete and has been closed. Any indicators, measures, activities and projects which are still relevant / live, have been, where appropriate, transferred to the new Corporate Plan. Although our engagement work on the development of the Corporate Plan themes was comprehensive, we know that engagement with seldom heard groups or those with protected characteristics needs to improve, and we are working internally and with regional colleagues to develop solutions to this.

Our [report for the period October to December 2022](#), highlighted our commitment to equality and diversity and we considered how each new Corporate Plan theme applies the sustainable development principle and five ways of working (collaboration, involvement, long-term, integration, prevention) and delivers the seven well-being goals (Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015).

In October 2022, we established a Strategic Equality and Diversity Group, comprising Lead Members, the Corporate Director for Governance and Business, Heads of Service and Diversity Champions from each of the five political parties in the county. The group is chaired by Cllr Julie Matthews, Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities. The role of the Group includes taking responsibility for ensuring that the council demonstrates fairness in its delivery of services and its employment practices; to ensure a culture in which all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, and offensive and discriminatory behaviour and harassment are not tolerated; and to monitor the quality of key well-being impact assessments and consider how those assessments are used in

our decision-making. The Group is not a decision-making body but can refer issues to relevant committees and groups when decisions are required.

The Group met twice in the period being reported to discuss equality and the new Corporate Plan (including our Strategic Equality Objectives), Well-being Impact Assessment, Diversity in Democracy, and the Anti-Racism Wales Action Plan. Going forward, the Group will critique Well-being Impact Assessments (focussing on equality and diversity), review the statutory reports for the Public Sector Equality Duty and Gender Pay Gap, and will ensure robust arrangements are in place meet the council's general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Group will also monitor our commitment to the Zero Racism Pledge.

Overall, how well are we doing?

This Self-Assessment demonstrates that during the year we have used our resources economically, efficiently, and effectively; that our governance is functioning and effective; and that our focus is on securing the best possible outcomes for our environment and communities in Denbighshire. This section summarises our performance and governance across the year into some general observations about our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

- We have strong member engagement, and our governance is well-functioning and responsive. This is demonstrated by management of the escalated risk about safeguarding at senior leadership level, operational management and through to Scrutiny, Cabinet and Governance and Audit. We need to ensure we continually test consensus around how long we are prepared to tolerate the highest level of risk in our Corporate Risks, especially given the present challenges to community well-being and the potentially negative impact on staff well-being.
- Our senior leadership team is keen to ensure engagement with members and communities is proactive and meaningful. Members have been fully engaged in the development of our new Corporate Plan (a plan that compliments wider public sector plans). A challenge will be to ensure backbenchers continue to feel a part of the development and delivery of the Corporate Plan over the next few years.
- Members are likely to be asked to make ever more challenging decisions over finances and service delivery. This could jeopardise what is a very ambitious and wide-ranging Corporate Plan and impact community and environmental well-being.

- The legacy of the pandemic and the change to a new, hybrid working pattern has resulted in a new settled way of working for council employees and services continue to be delivered to a high standard. Policies to support hybrid working have taken longer than expected and a challenge for the future will be to ensure innovation and productivity is sustained.
- The rationale for the restructure of our senior leadership team reflected an understanding of how we are operating now, and how we needed to adapt - in a sustainable way - to the likely demands we will face in the future. There are though Corporate Plan pledges for which we have no agreed way forward; and are cited here as gaps. We have faced continuing barriers with the connected theme in terms of sustainable travel (this is a perennial issue, a legacy of our [previous Corporate Plan](#)). There is sometimes a lack of pace and Corporate Plan governance structures, once confirmed, must be more agile in recognising and resolving barriers to progress.
- A lack of pace is also the result of continuing pressures recruiting staff (and has been the driver of escalations in several of our corporate risks). Key areas of work, such as in procurement or strategic asset management, and staff well-being has been impacted by staff shortages. In social care, we have worked tirelessly to ensure delivery is safe despite severe issues with recruitment and retention, as discussed in the [Director of Social Services annual report](#) (the 2023 to 2024 report is due imminently). These are national challenges and are resulting in risks to outcomes for our communities. We will need to be ever more creative in recruiting and retaining staff.
- Service Performance Challenges were suspended this year and will resume from April 2023. These are instrumental in identifying potentially transformative actions to address deficiencies in services, to better align services with strategic and collaborative objectives, and to support services to maximise opportunities to achieve better value for money or service outcomes. Actions arising from these challenges will be reported as Improvement Actions through our quarterly self-assessment reports.

Performance Objectives – Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027

Given the accompanying Performance Self-Assessment Update report is our first opportunity to comment on performance, we are using the sections below in this Executive Summary to largely outline weaknesses or threats in relation to securing the change we

have committed to in our Corporate Plan. Future reports will contain more analysis about the effectiveness of our actions on outcomes for people, places, and communities. Where things are not working out as hoped, we will explain why and what we are doing about it.

The fact many of our Corporate Plan themes build on the work started in our last Corporate Plan demonstrates our commitment to using evidence and stakeholder aspirations to plan for the long term to prevent problems from deteriorating or developing in the first place. In short, we are committed to embedding the sustainable development principle and five ways of working. Given most activity has yet to start in earnest, we feel this summary adequately represents our current position and the main areas of challenge we are facing in the early stages in delivering our new Corporate Plan.

A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

This theme is well-established, and the council has a strong track record of collaborative working across services as well as with external partners to achieve goals set out in the [Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan](#). However, performing well against this theme will be a challenge as factors outside the council's control, such as the economic climate, continue to create pressure and threaten success. The council has pledged to signpost residents to opportunities to improve the efficiency of their homes and this is an area for development with many new measures and activities in the pipeline from April 2023. The interconnected nature of this with fuel poverty will need to be considered going forward. Improving the energy efficiency of Council Housing stock is also a challenge for us and will likely require significant resource for us to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard that is expected to be upgraded in the near future. Tackling Denbighshire's levels of homelessness has been and will continue to be a significant area of work for the council and its partners. Much work is being targeted towards early intervention and prevention as well as the use of our Welsh Government approved Rapid Rehousing Plan to reduce the number of households experiencing homelessness, ensuring that where homelessness cannot be prevented, instances of it are rare and brief. Bringing the Single Access Routes to Housing (SARTH) system in-house from April 2023 will provide an opportunity to better understand local housing need and keep residents informed of available housing options.

A prosperous Denbighshire

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

Establishing a performance framework encompassing economic growth and business and community enterprise development has largely been achieved. There is an opportunity to develop this further as the council's new economic strategy takes shape in 2023. This will be a significant and key piece of work with many interdependencies to manage and opportunities for collaboration and involvement with services across the council as well as external partners. To maximise the benefit for our residents, we will need to address current gaps in measuring the growth of our green and rural economies and our support of local social and community enterprises. Development of the economic strategy for Denbighshire will be an important milestone and will need to be in place early on in this Corporate Plan for us to be able to start to implement and measure change. Residents' incomes are lower by national comparison, with average annual pay figures for Denbighshire ranking lowest of all local authorities in Wales for 2022 to 2023. Poverty negatively affects well-being and is a driver of inequality (as evidenced in the Conwy and Denbighshire Well-being Assessment). Improving outcomes for our residents in this regard is a significant focus for this new Corporate Plan, but, as above, aspects of economic prosperity are beyond our control as a council. There is a need to play to our strengths and build on the recent success of schemes such as March for Business and Working Denbighshire, and to continue the good work done to secure external funding for large- and small-scale projects.

A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire

Measures: Good

Projects: At Risk

It is worth noting that of all the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) domains, the highest number of areas in Rhyl in the 10% most deprived areas was in this domain; clearly demonstrating the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and health and well-being. Thresholds will need to be set for as many measures as possible to help us judge our performance in this theme. The UK Government has announced that the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) is being delayed beyond this current parliament. The Council will continue with current arrangements for protection

safeguards, so no gaps in service provision is envisaged, and will look to implement and embed the LPS when possible. The Alzheimer's Society will no longer be offering the Dementia Friendly organisation status and will end the initiative in December 2023. We have decided we will, for the remainder of the year, stop our work to pursue this status, which means we will not complete the 2023 assessment. The Ageing Well in Denbighshire Group and the Dementia Friendly Council Group have merged, and work will continue to enhance provision for people living with dementia and those caring for them under the World Health Organisation eight domains of an Age Friendly Community.

A learning and growing Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: On Target

The council's performance framework around its Learning and Growing theme is comprehensive and will provide a more detailed picture going forward on the work that it delivers in support of young people, specifically including more detail around early years' child development, and support for skills and employability. In the case of early years' support in particular, there is a great deal of valuable work taking place across numerous teams that previously was not publicly reported upon, and may also benefit from greater oversight and integration. A significant area of work for us is delivery against the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, but the council has a strong track record of excellent delivery in this area; investing some £100m in over 7 years in schools and education facilities across the county. Community Focussed Schools is also a new challenge for us that needs to be fully scoped and better understood, and will likely require significant resource for us to meet our aspirations. There also remains nationally an issue with how local authorities can report on attainment data, but we rely on close working with GwE, our School Improvement Consortia, to understand exactly what support our schools need to deliver high standards of teaching and learning.

A better connected Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

The project to develop a Sustainable Transport Plan (STP), which includes active travel, featured in our last Corporate Plan. It is not without its challenges, and whilst there are

measures around reducing carbon emissions and increasing public EV charging points, at present it is unclear how other priority areas in the STP will be measured. These are:

- Increasing the use of passenger transport for everyday journeys.
- Increasing travel choices for our residents, businesses and visitors.
- Facilitating development that has good transport links and encourages journeys by sustainable transport modes.
- Increasing the use of active travel for everyday journeys.

A greener Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

Following positive feedback from Audit Wales on our programme management and organisational ambition on this agenda we are reassured that we have a well-scoped action plan in place. However, ensuring that we meet our net carbon zero commitment as an organisation by 2030 continues to be a challenge and will not be easily achieved. We have good governance in place though to ensure continual monitoring and challenge takes place. A national report about the public sector's response more generally, to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, broadly says organisations need to be bold and take risks if they are to stand a chance of meeting this ambitious target. We will be reviewing our Climate and Ecological Change Strategy 2030, its scope and targets during 2023 to 2024. At that point it is likely that we will need to increase momentum, make bolder decisions, and be prepared to tolerate greater risks to become net carbon zero.

A fairer, safe, and more equal Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

We are not confident that we have sufficient measures or activities in place to monitor our pledge within this theme to ensure that the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds, seldom heard groups, and those at a socio-economic disadvantage are heard and inform decision making. The Strategic Equality and Diversity Group (SEDG) will work with partners to ensure we have external contact details for seldom heard groups and community cohesion groups which will help to address this perceived gap. Positively though, the Council was commended during the year by the Older People's Commissioner

for Wales for its [good practice in the work which has been done on raising awareness of pension credit](#) for the county's communities.

A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

Welsh language performance measures for council services and customer services are to be determined once the Welsh Language Strategy and Policy have been agreed in June 2023. It is difficult to measure the culture change that the Corporate Plan calls for in terms of the use of the Welsh language internally, in the community, and our commitment to supporting the celebration of Welsh culture more broadly. We will have to develop more qualitative means of assessing our success in this area. There is a gap in terms of our desired cultural strategy for Denbighshire. There is no clear sense of how this will be achieved at present. Positively though, our new Cabinet includes a [Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage](#).

A well-run, high performing council

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: At Risk

This theme incorporates our values and principles as an organisation and statutory performance reporting obligations (predominantly under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021). Embedding and measuring a new customer service framework will be a significant and key piece of work with many interdependencies across themes, such as Welsh language and culture. This work will require an integrated approach including officers from across services, stakeholders and elected members. How this will be taken forward has not yet been agreed. Ensuring that value for money is embedded within our organisational culture, and that decisions are balanced by considering service quality and social value, has been cited as a suggested piece of activity with a suggested possible measure. This work needs to be scoped. Staff have worked with the Chief Executive to develop actions to embed [our five principles, which this theme has been structured around](#). We will incorporate these actions once they are agreed.

Governance Functions – The Council’s Corporate Health

Denbighshire’s [annual governance statement](#) highlights specific strengths and areas for improvement. Our statement for 2021 to 2022 is published online. The 2021 to 2022 statement set out improvement actions that link to our governance functions, such as workforce capacity and resilience, code of conduct ([well-run high performing council](#)), procurement and contract management, funding and whistleblowing. Our statement for the financial year 2022 to 2023 will be presented to Governance and Audit Committee in July 2023.

Corporate Planning

In this last year, the council has continued to deliver on key strategic strands of work to meet its legislative requirements under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the Equality Act (Wales) Regulations 2011. Significantly, its new Corporate Plan for 2022 to 2027 was approved by [County Council in October, 2022](#). Our corporate plan was developed using the body of evidence developed by the Public Service Board. Discussion at that level - and across Boards such as the Regional Leadership Board, North Wales Economic Ambition Board - has informed the development of our Plan. However, we have seen less informal qualitative participation from partners, for example in our focus groups, than has previously been the case. We have also continued with implementing arrangements for two European Union replacement funds (the community Renewal Fund that ended in December 2022; and the Shared Prosperity Fund, for which applications for projects were sought), and the Levelling-Up Fund. Cabinet also endorsed the Regional Economic Framework for North Wales. These things have been achieved whilst simultaneously welcoming a new Council and Cabinet from May 2022, inducting, training and appointing new councillors to new responsibilities and committees; and working to restructure our Corporate Executive and Senior Leadership Teams (having appointed two new directors to key roles, and agreeing a new structure for services from April 2023). Key challenges ahead will include implementing new governance arrangements for the Corporate Plan; recruiting to four vacant Head of Service posts from April 2023; and moving our New Ways of Working project to the next phase to look at office assets. Improvement actions identified over the last year have therefore, on the whole, progressed very well. However, like most other councils in Wales, we know that we still need to consider arrangements to put a Peer Assessment Panel in place in the term of the current council, responding to the

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act, 2021. Although slightly improved, we also acknowledge that overall customer satisfaction with the council and its long-term plans is not where we would like it to be. Our new Corporate Plan has a clear focus on how the council works, including customer service, engagement, and our performance. It is important that we demonstrate improvement in these areas and respond to the expectations of our customers.

Financial Planning

The council's financial planning arrangements have proven robust, and the council holds a reasonably stable reserve and has strong monitoring and planning mechanisms in place to actively manage pressures, such as the Medium Term Financial Plan, Treasury Management, the Budget Setting process, and a [Capital Budget setting Process](#) which is in the process of being developed. There are of course some significant budget variations, but we work to resolve those, and we have a good record of delivering savings. We have reported to Audit Wales that our policies and procedures for [countering fraud and corruption](#) are in place and well-managed. Audit Wales has given assurance that the council has adequate arrangements in place for the [certification of grants and returns](#) (for 2020 to 2021). The continuing delays to the approval of the [Statement of Accounts for 2021 to 2022](#) remains a challenge due to the timescales affecting other areas of work for the Finance Team, and therefore impacting service delivery going forward. The most significant issues facing councils in recent times have been brought about by global economic uncertainty, inflation, and demographic pressures. There is a risk that the current level of services may be unsustainable over the coming years.

Performance Management

The council has undertaken significant work in this year to develop its new Corporate Plan Performance Management Framework, with excellent engagement and input at all levels of the organisation. Significantly, the new framework will address concerns around a lack of benchmarking within the council's corporate performance reporting and elevate a significant amount of service level performance data to its public reports. The size of the framework will, however, present a challenge to manage, and considerable work is still required to embed the new framework within our reporting structures and to develop identified gaps. Following agreement of governance arrangements for the new Corporate Plan, it would also be timely for the council to update its [Performance Management Guide](#). The council has in this last year [published](#) and built upon its approach to self-assessment

through its comprehensive quarterly performance reports, satisfying requirements under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act, 2021; and has delivered the second year of its annual stakeholder engagement, seeing an increase in participant numbers from the previous years. We continue to develop Verto, our performance management system, to make improvements where we can and update our guides and training materials, though these improvements have been secondary to those being made to the project management side of the system. Since their appointment, the council's scrutiny committees have considered a wide variety of reports touching on the council's performance in numerous functions, but no significant issues relating to corporate performance management have been raised this year. Following approval of the new Senior Leadership Team structure, arrangements for the council's Service Performance Challenge programme have also been agreed and will commence from May 2023. These are important meetings for considering the performance and improvement of our services. Finally, the council has struggled this year to maintain the capacity of its Internal Audit Team, but is proactively addressing this and has seen some improvement in its staffing levels there more recently.

Risk Management

Training was offered to all councillors on the council's risk management methodology (which includes risk appetite), ahead of the first [Performance Scrutiny](#) meeting of the new Council in June 2022. The report included, for the first time, a summary to help communicate the growing number of risks that the council faces in the current global climate. The council's [risk appetite statement](#) was reviewed and updated. The council's previously 'minimalist' risk appetite in relation to Workforce: Terms and Conditions was relaxed very slightly to a 'cautious' risk appetite, to reflect the way we are 'flexing' recruitment processes – in a safe way – to alleviate challenges in filling roles. All other aspects of our risk appetite statement have remained the same. This year we have seen a growing interdependency between risks (in terms of existing risks growing in likelihood or impact), and national and global issues that are beyond our control, such as the deterioration in the economy and continuing pressures in relation to recruitment and retention. We apply a "three lines of defence model" whereby for our most serious corporate risks, we use performance data, identify key and ancillary controls, and identify external and internal assurance that is in place or is planned. For example, the risk of "a serious safeguarding or practice error, where the council has responsibility, resulting in serious harm or death" was escalated during the year. Despite concerted efforts, the risk

score was increased, and remains at an increased level, based on our assessment that the chance of this occurring is higher than it was previously and whilst we do not regard the likelihood as “almost certain to occur in most circumstances” (which is the definition of Risk Likelihood A in our risk methodology), the risk had to be escalated to the highest level. Our governance has responded to this with increasing oversight by Cabinet, Performance Scrutiny and Governance and Audit; whereby the relationship between risk management, corporate planning and workforce planning have been highly connected, and will be subject to further interrogation by Internal Audit in the new financial year. Performance Scrutiny and Governance and Audit Committees have been satisfied with our application of risk management, but have asked to see more movement in risk scores where possible. Overall, we have a total of 20 risks on our corporate risk register; 11 of which are inconsistent with our risk appetite (55%).

Workforce Planning

Workforce planning has continued to grow in significance as the consequences of the pandemic and changes in work patterns and opportunities have heightened challenges in relation to recruitment and retention across the council and presented greater risks to outcomes for services and vulnerable people in particular (see [risk management](#) above). In October 2022, [Governance and Audit Committee](#) considered a report outlining the findings of the ‘follow up’ inspection of the Intake and Intervention Service, Education and Children’s Services. The review identified positive findings and areas for improvement, and an action plan was created to improve on those areas of concern. The follow up inspection highlighted some areas of improvement, but recognised the impact of a high number of vacancies across the service that impacted the improvement journey. Again, staff retention and recruitment were recognised as of national concern. A detailed report about recruitment, retention and workforce planning across the council was presented to [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in January 2023, following earlier reports received in [November 2022](#), about the September 2022 risk review and recruitment and retention issues in social services. The Committee was reassured that officers were aware of and responding adequately to challenges in relation to recruitment and retention. An Internal Audit review into these matters will take place during 2023 to 2034. This review will be critical in ensuring our responses to recruitment and retention are correct and effective. In response to the continuation of hybrid virtual and in person committee meetings, a Senior Committee Administrator was appointed early in the year to support democratic governance activities. Our senior leadership restructure was consulted on and

implemented at Director-level from summer 2022, with the complete senior leadership structure being implemented from April 2023. This has taken longer than expected but will result in a transformational redesign of services, whereby the council is on the 'front foot' in relation to influencing and preventing demand; better positioned to maximise opportunities; and has clearer leadership on important matters like climate change and Welsh language. We have improved the data that we hold about our own workforce for equality purposes, and after putting in place temporary additional resources to address the back-log caused by the pandemic of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, compliance stood at 92% by the end of March 2023 compared to 85% in September 2022. We have completed a review of our flexible working policy and guidance subject to approval from Cabinet, these will be implemented from June 2023 together with support for staff and managers with the new ways of working. A fresh workforce planning process will commence once the new senior leadership structure is in place later in the year. This will need to align more closely to our strategic asset management (a weakness identified by Audit Wales in its [local study of Denbighshire's asset management and workforce planning](#)).

Assets

As we stated last year, the council faces significant challenges with regards to its assets. We have a perennially deteriorating and very large network of roads and bridges, requiring a continued financial budget commitment in order to address this decline, combined with meeting the challenge of progressing significant projects such as the replacement of the Llanerch Bridge; a large portfolio of buildings to align with our Net Carbon Zero ambition; a growing need to support and facilitate decarbonisation in procurements; and growing pressures on our ICT infrastructure. However, we have made improvements. We secured Welsh Government funding for optimised retrofit works for energy saving in our council housing. We have invested in our capability to generate the council's own electric from installed renewable energy generation; more than tripling the installed capacity through schemes such as roof mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. Simple carbon mitigations are now included in our contracts and it is now standard practice for major projects (above £1 million in value) to use a connection to the national grid for electricity, where available. We have made significant investments in green public transport, though the Ruthin electric bus (the country's first-ever zero emission 100 per cent battery-operated 16-seat minibus) and through electric vehicle charging, with points being installed across the county and through a multi electric vehicle charging hub, the largest charging hub in Wales, which went live in Rhyl. The council has drafted a revised Information Risk Policy, which it will

shortly seek approval for. The requirement for services to consider Information Risk as part of their Service Planning for 2023 to 2024 and services are also encouraged to continually review their Service Risk Registers, which should capture any information risks that services are carrying. We have good health and safety and fire safety procedures in place. Community Focussed Schools and how those are maximised as assets will be a focus for the year ahead, as described under our [learning and growing theme](#). We have been unable to progress a Service Challenge Action (Improvement Action), to establish Remote Meeting Hubs in areas where broadband connection is poor. Development of a new asset management strategy has been delayed because of staff capacity. Once the strategy is in place, we will develop and deliver portfolio plans to determine the shape, size and future use of assets for each of the council's asset management portfolios. As stated above, the strategy and portfolio plans will need to closely align to workforce planning to ensure our assets are managed for the longer term in a way that supports and integrates with our workforce plan.

Procurement

The council spends around £130million every year buying third party goods or services, and Denbighshire has continued to prioritise securing local community benefits through our procurements. During the year the Community Benefits Hub Manager became a permanent role and we have taken a leading role as Chair of the Welsh Government Social Value Working Group. We are delivering better outcomes for our communities through our procurements. For example, through initiatives such as tree planting, which includes the 'right tree in the right place' principle, or through a new standard practice for major projects (above £1 million in value) to use a connection to the national grid for electricity for their power supply (instead of local diesel generators), where available. One contractor, Balfour Beatty - on the Rhyl East Coastal Defence project - achieved an independently verified 82% reduction in energy use by the Site Office complex as a result. Going forward, the Community Benefits Hub will promote use of a 'green tariff' for electricity grid connection. In terms of outcomes for people, a solar panel project for council homes in Rhyl involved a proactive contractor drawing in tenants and other local people to upskill and some participants have gained full time jobs as a result (the number will be confirmed in the next reporting period). Other benefits remain challenging to measure and report (such as reduction in miles travelled on contract delivery). Contract Procedure Rules are compliant with the Socio-Economic Duty but need to be updated again to reflect new UK Public Procurement legislation due in 2023 to 2024.

Notwithstanding delivery of many of our improvement actions and achievements for our communities, progress across a range of actions to improve and decarbonise procurement have continued to be slow as we were unable to appoint into procurement manager and specialist decarbonisation roles. For example, we had hoped to develop and adopt a new Procurement Strategy by the end of the summer 2022. Given the capacity issues we have faced and the national developments in relation to new legislation, a delayed start is probably correct given this is such an important area of work for us to get right and will require culture change across the organisation and the local supply chain. Fortunately, in February 2023, our Community Benefits Hub Manager was successfully appointed to a Collaborative Procurement and North Wales Construction Framework Manager post. We are confident that following this appointment we are now well-placed to respond to the two new procurement Bills from Welsh and UK Governments and have a solid foundation for building on the relationships with the local supply chain, national companies and local community and voluntary groups. Our new Corporate Plan is in alignment with the growing mandate from Welsh Government to refocus procurement on community impact (Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill) as part of our assessment of value for money.

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Corporate Plan Performance Update: January to March 2023

This document presents the council's performance against its Corporate Plan themes and governance areas between January to March 2023, including our application of the Sustainable Development principle, the Public Sector Equality Duty, and Socio-Economic Duty.

Contents

Contents	2
Contact details and more information	3
Summary position	4
A Note on Measuring Performance.....	7
A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs.....	8
A prosperous Denbighshire	18
A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire	26
A learning and growing Denbighshire	36
A better connected Denbighshire.....	46
A greener Denbighshire	53
A fairer, safe, and more equal Denbighshire.....	60
A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.....	67
A well-run, high performing council.....	73

Contact details and more information

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Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.

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We welcome correspondence in Welsh. There will be no delay in responding to correspondence received in Welsh.

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Summary position

Strategic Planning and Performance Officers continued to hold discussions with Cabinet members, Corporate Directors, the Senior Leadership team, managers and staff at all levels, to determine the right strategic set of measures and activity to monitor through these performance reports. This exercise also involved service planning for the year ahead, to ensure our services all work coherently as 'one council' and identify their contribution to the nine Corporate Plan themes. We have also incorporated our Strategic Equality Objectives into this work, and identified national indicators to support benchmarking. In our previous report, we considered our application of the [sustainable development principle](#). The basis of the framework was agreed by Cabinet and our Senior Leadership Team in March 2023, and it forms the basis of this report for January to March 2023. The chapters below provide a summary of activity that has taken place during the last period beneath our Corporate Plan themes, with a round-up of contributing news and committee items. There will be aspects still in need of development and some gaps to fill; some of these will be confirmed in time for our next report, others are more complex and will require further scoping. These will be considered as we confirm existing or establish new governance arrangements for the Corporate Plan.

Overall, we can see through this report that our [Housing](#) theme is already established following on from our previous Corporate Plan. We are aware and already responding to address weaknesses in our performance, especially in relation to homelessness where outcomes for our communities are not as positive as we want and aspire them to be. [Economic growth](#) is concerning, and we would like to see incomes and pay increase. Poverty negatively affects well-being and is a driver of inequality (as evidenced in the Conwy and Denbighshire Well-being Assessment). Improving outcomes for our residents in this regard is a significant focus for this new Corporate Plan. Development of an economic strategy for Denbighshire will be an important milestone and will need to be in place early on in this Corporate Plan for us to be able to start to implement and measure change. In terms of a [healthier, happier and caring Denbighshire](#), thresholds will need to be set for as many measures as possible to help us judge our performance in this theme. It is worth noting that of all the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) domains, the highest number of areas in Rhyl in the 10% most deprived areas was in this domain; clearly demonstrating the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and health and well-being. There are some concerning issues that our [Learning and Growing](#) theme aims to tackle, such as our placement within the Education and Employment domains

within the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation, attendance at school and the number of Year 11 Leavers known Not to be in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). However, we have effective and robust arrangements in place to work collaboratively to address these challenges and there is exceptionally good preventative work taking place in support of Early Years development. [Connectivity](#) and access to services continues to be problematic for us and is a theme that continues from our previous Corporate Plan. We will be in a better position to analyse our performance once road condition data becomes available. Ensuring that we meet our [net carbon zero commitment](#) as an organisation by 2030 continues to be a challenge and will not be easily achieved. We have robust governance in place to test our progress and the plans we have in place. While we have made a judgement overall about our measures and projects for a [fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire](#), we will be better placed to judge our performance and identify obstacles or challenges from our next report. Our [vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language](#) theme, together with our final [well-run, high performing council](#), will need to seek out imaginative and qualitative ways to judge the extent to which the culture change we want to see is achieved. In relation to our final theme, we are pleased to have our Corporate Plan so closely aligned to our organisational values and principles. The fact many of our Corporate Plan themes build on the work started in our last Corporate Plan demonstrates our commitment to using evidence and stakeholder aspirations to plan for the long term to prevent problems from deteriorating or developing in the first place. Given most activity has yet to start in earnest, we feel this summary adequately represents our current position and the main areas of challenge we are facing in the early stages in delivering our new Corporate Plan.

Corporate Plan theme summary

The measures evaluation for each theme below has been determined through the performance management framework that we have in place. The projects evaluation has been determined by the status of our projects.

A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

A prosperous Denbighshire

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire

Measures: Good

Projects: At Risk

A learning and growing Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: On Target

A better connected Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

A greener Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

A fairer, safe, and more equal Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

A well-run, high performing council

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: At Risk

A Note on Measuring Performance

In Denbighshire, our default approach to setting performance thresholds is to take the upper-quartile (best performing) from nationally comparable information as the point where performance is considered 'Excellent'. The 'Priority for Improvement' threshold is usually the median. Midway between these two values determines the threshold between 'Acceptable' and 'Good' performance.

If no data is available that we can compare ourselves with (either nationally or by comparable grouping), then we will take a local view on what we feel reasonably determines 'Excellent' and 'Priority for Improvement' performance. This should represent our ambition.

Our data tables use this same language, except for 'Priority for Improvement', which is truncated to 'Priority to Improve'. Our data tables also show information about trend. Trend is identified as 'Better', 'Worse', or 'Same' and is based on a comparison with the previous period for which we have data. Where possible, we also show trend for projects and activities, which is determined by comparing the overall status of the project or activity with its status in the previous period. Project and activity statuses are identified as 'On Target', 'Experiencing Obstacles', 'At Risk' or 'Compromised'.

For more information on how we manage performance, view the [Performance Management Guide on our website](#).

A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

Some measures under this theme are new to 2023 to 2024 and no data is available yet. Looking at the data we do have, we exceeded our targets in some respects, securing housing for 16 people on the Complex Disabilities Housing Register. However, a 'Priority for Improvement' are the rates of housing deprivation, which increased between 2014 and 2019, as shown by the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data. We do not know what the situation is post-pandemic as the most recent WIMD data is for 2019. Addressing the issue of homelessness in Denbighshire has been challenging, and this is reflected in the three indicators categorised as a 'Priority for Improvement'. These are benchmarked nationally and show that Denbighshire has the third lowest rate of prevention of all Wales's local authorities and the lowest rate of positive discharge from homelessness for the year 2021 to 2022. Data for 2022 to 2023 shows that for homelessness prevention and relief, Denbighshire's performance is worse than the previous year and for rates of positive discharge, performance is better. Comparative data with other authorities for this recent year is unavailable at this time. Much work is being done to tackle this issue, however, as part the Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. For example, early intervention and prevention work is in progress with performance data for My Home Denbighshire (MHD) starting to be collected in this period, and there are promising signs from the homelessness prevention figure of 89%.

Council housing stock compliance with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) has remained at 100%, though we must recognise the rate of full compliance (without acceptable fails) is much lower at 58%. Despite rising costs impacting the volume of efficiency improvement work that is achievable, we have seen an improvement in the percentage of Council Housing stock achieving an energy rating of C or above from 35% to an 'Acceptable' 42%. Overall tenant satisfaction levels are lower than we would like, however, and we continue to drive forward tenant involvement schemes (see [projects update](#)) and hope to build on this in the coming year.

The number of dwellings improved with a disabled facilities grant fell from 106 in the previous year to 66 in 2022 to 2023 and is a 'Priority for Improvement'.

A new focus for 2023 is signposting all residents to opportunities to improve the efficiency of their homes, giving us an opportunity to increase engagement with people through digital as well as more traditional means. As we monitor progress going forward, we will assess the need for support and make links to tackling fuel poverty.

Denbighshire was the highest performing local authority in terms of its supply of affordable housing in 2021 to 2022. The additional supply of Council Houses was at an ‘Acceptable’ The number of 15 for 2022 to 2023. However, there are completion dates in sight for Council Housing developments in the Spring of 2023 (see [projects update](#)). The Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) waiting list numbers reduced during this period, and with the assessment system being brought in house in April 2023, an opportunity to review and improve systems has been created with activity to this effect commencing from April. Also from April, we will monitor our engagement with people whose housing security may be ‘At Risk’ through partnership working between Citizen’s Advice Denbighshire (CAD) and the Homelessness Prevention Team (HPT) as well as through the My Home Denbighshire early intervention service.

For further measures and activity related to the support offered to those experiencing homelessness please see our [learning and growing theme](#) and for connections between energy efficiency and fuel poverty, please see our theme for a [fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire](#).

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published every four to five years.

Title	2014	2019
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Housing (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) – Benchmarked Nationally	14% Priority to Improve Better	16% Priority to Improve Worse

Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The number of dwellings improved with a disabled facilities grant - Benchmarked Nationally	106 Priority to Improve	66 Priority to Improve

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
	Better	Worse
The number of people who were on the Complex Disabilities Specialist Housing Needs Register for whom supported housing has been secured - Benchmarked Locally	13 Excellent Better	16 Excellent Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that there is sufficient, good quality housing in Denbighshire, which meets people's needs - Benchmarked Locally	No data	31.19% Priority to Improve
The percentage of households successfully prevented from homelessness (section 66) - Benchmarked Nationally	41.97% Priority to Improve Worse	38.35% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of households successfully relieved from homelessness (section 73) - Benchmarked Nationally	21.55% Priority to Improve Worse	15.96% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of households positively discharged from homelessness (section 75) - Benchmarked Nationally	44.75% Priority to Improve Worse	50.22% Priority to Improve Better
The total number of care leavers who experience homelessness during the year (As defined by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) within 12 months of leaving care - Benchmarked Locally	9 Good Better	3 Excellent Better
The percentage of council properties compliant with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard - Benchmarked Nationally	100% Excellent Same	100% Excellent Same
The percentage of Council House tenants that were satisfied with the quality of their home - Benchmarked Locally	84% Priority to Improve Better	Data pending. Expected later in 2023
The percentage of tenants that were satisfied with the way Denbighshire Housing deals with repairs and maintenance - Benchmarked Locally	77% Priority to Improve Worse	Data pending. Expected later in 2023
The percentage of existing and acquired Council housing stock achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of C or above - Benchmarked Locally	35.44% Priority to Improve Better	41.89% Acceptable Better

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The additional supply of affordable housing, including social housing, provided during the year - Benchmarked Locally	222 Excellent Better	Data pending. Available June 2023
The additional supply of Council Houses provided - Benchmarked Locally	13 Acceptable Better	15 Acceptable Better
The percentage of empty private properties brought back into use through direct action by the local authority - Benchmarked Locally	No data	22% Excellent

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of emergency housing repairs completed within target time - Benchmarked Locally	93.48% Priority to Improve Better	92.51 Priority to Improve Worse	95.85 Acceptable Better	94.72 Priority to Improve Worse	97.22 Acceptable Better
The number of disabled adaptations carried out for council house tenants – Count Only	51	59	66	64	56
The number of households helped through the ECO4 scheme – Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of page views of the energy efficiency page on our website – Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The number of people on the SARTH waiting list - Benchmarked Locally	2050 Priority to Improve Better	2075 Priority to Improve Worse	2190 Priority to Improve Worse	2235 Priority to Improve Worse	2,093 Priority to Improve Better
The number of referrals received into Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) – Count Only	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	80
The percentage of referrals Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) that have been prevented from presenting to homelessness prevention service - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	89.36% Excellent
The percentage of referrals Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) that are for people in employment – Count Only	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	22.5%
The percentage of referrals Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) that are a) Privately Rented – Count Only	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	63.75%
The percentage of referrals Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) that are b) Local Authority – Count Only	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	11.25%

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of referrals Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) that are c) Housing Association – Count Only	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	2.5%
The percentage of referrals Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) that are d) Owner occupied – Count Only	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	5%
The percentage of referrals Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) that are e) Unknown – Count Only	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	No data. New to January 2023	17.5%
The number of people at risk of homelessness supported by the CAD-HPT (Citizens Advice Denbighshire-Homelessness Prevention Team) link officer – Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
Of those people at risk of homelessness supported by the CAD-HPT (Citizens Advice Denbighshire-Homelessness Prevention Team) link officer, the % that are in employment – Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

There are 17 projects listed within this theme in the Corporate Plan. Five are running 'On Target', four are 'Experiencing Obstacles', one is at business case stage, and two are complete. Four projects are new for 2023 to 2024, due to begin April. There is one project 'At Risk' (Improving Energy Efficiency in Council Houses). The expected policy change to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard is an area of concern for energy efficiency targets in Council Houses, with cost increases impacting the volume of work that is achievable in order to meet the new targets. However, as outlined in the measures summary, there is a positive trend in the Energy Performance Certificate ratings data. Overall, the most significant project within this theme is to deliver the [Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan](#). This is an overarching project encompassing many if not all aspects of this theme. It is encouraging to see that this is 'Experiencing Obstacles' and is not considered to be 'At Risk', though it is important to recognise that homelessness measures are a 'Priority for Improvement'.

One complete project to 'Develop and implement Best Use of Stock plan to make best use of housing stock to meet changing need' has been incorporated into the usual business activity of the service and there is work now being done to target the issue of under occupation in Council Housing. One other project is complete: 'Implement a programme of Tenancy Visits to support tenants and gather accurate data on households to inform service provision'. This work is now business as usual, though will be combined with work to engage tenants who are most likely to experience social inequality to access services and take an active role in their community.

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Deliver and monitor the Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Develop and implement Best Use of Stock plan to make best use of housing stock to meet changing need	Complete	This is business as usual as there will be regular ongoing projects to support this. We are currently working on targeting under occupiers to link to new

Title	Status	Exception
		developments in Prestatyn for example.
Project: Improving Energy Efficiency in Council Houses	At Risk Same	Good progress has been made to increase the number of properties surpassing the council's energy target. However, we await the new WHQS policy which we believe will heavily impact our targets going forward.
Work collaboratively with Flintshire County Council providing contact information and signposting on our website regarding homes' energy efficiency	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Promote Energy Efficiency page on our website through our social media channels	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Signpost to Welsh Government's NEST scheme through the post	On Target	
Project: Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Project: Denbighshire replacement Local Development Plan	Not started	At business case stage
Project: Ruthin Extra Care Housing (Phase 2)	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Explore how we can protect housing through new Welsh Government legislation to regulate the impact of second homes	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Project: Edward Henry Street	On Target Same	
Project: Additional Council Housing Developments	On Target Same	
Work with Rhyl Regeneration Programme Board to contribute to progressing Rhyl Residential Strategy	Experiencing Obstacles Same	

Title	Status	Exception
Develop performance and reporting systems following the implementation of SARTH and current SPoA triage service to further understand citizens accessing housing information / SARTH	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Develop a tenant involvement framework for Denbighshire Housing	On Target Same	
Implement a programme of Tenancy Visits to support tenants and gather accurate data on households to inform service provision	Complete	This is Business as Usual and will be combined with work to engage tenants who are most likely to experience social inequality to access services and take an active role in their community
Project: SARTH: Bring in-house	On Target	

A round up of news

The following news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

In January, Cabinet approved the temporary extension of contracts and the process for retendering of contracts in relation to [Denbighshire Learning Disability Supported Living Schemes](#). Approval was obtained from Cabinet in March, for the provision of [a Dynamic Procurement System for delivery of Disabled Grant Facilities](#), which will be delivered in partnership with Flintshire County Council.

At the same meeting, Cabinet approved the [renewal of the housing maintenance voids contractor framework](#) to undertake refurbishment work to empty domestic properties owned by the council (known as voids).

Cabinet support was also given for the [Replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy](#). Key changes to the Preferred Strategy included making additional references to climate change mitigation, carbon reduction and active travel.

Performance Scrutiny Committee examined the progress made to date in delivering the [Housing and Homelessness Strategy](#). The report outlined key areas of progress such as affordable housing.

Performance Scrutiny Committee, on considering a report outlining feedback to Welsh Government on [mould and condensation in Denbighshire's Council housing stock](#), concluded that it was satisfied with the systems and processes in place to address such issues.

The council awarded The Salvation Army with a contract to run the [Temporary Emergency Accommodation Support Project in Rhyl](#), which aims to support people in Denbighshire currently housed in emergency accommodation. The project will create twenty new jobs.

A prosperous Denbighshire

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

Within this theme there are a number of nationally benchmarked measures that give an indication of performance compared to other local authorities in Wales. However, there are some gaps as we await the publication of new national data. There are also gaps in the data where new measures will be taken forward by the council from April 2023. A key aspect of this theme is delivering initiatives to stimulate economic growth and the measures below suggest that this is an area for concern. Rates of average annual pay are a 'Priority for Improvement', and though they have increased, they are the worst in Wales. The Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data for income is also a 'Priority for Improvement', as is the claimant percentage for Universal Credit in Denbighshire. However, we have several activities designed to boost the local economy and we will measure the external funding secured by the council for economic development going forward in 2023, from April.

Recognising the local and global economic challenges it faces, the council will be developing an economic strategy from April 2023 to include green, rural, and urban economic growth plans as well as enhancing tourism. We do have STEAM data available for 2021 to 2022, which suggests that the economic impact of tourism figure is improving, though this is still a 'Priority for Improvement', and we await the release (in summer) of more up to date data for 2022 to 2023. The council also recognises its role in supporting business growth, local enterprise, and community benefit. The Working Denbighshire scheme has made good progress by supporting 15 people to gain work experience placements during this period. However, the most recent national data available shows that the rate of businesses closing (business deaths) exceeded the rate of new businesses being created (business births) and the business death rate in Denbighshire during that time was the third highest in Wales and a 'Priority for Improvement'. Good progress was seen in the business birth rate, however, which had a positive trend, and 390 businesses were supported through 23 training and networking events held between 2022 to 2023.

For further measures and activity in support of skills, training and employment please see our [learning and growing theme](#); for community development and benefits, see our theme

for a [better connected Denbighshire](#). Finally, for further themes connected to the local economy, see [A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language](#) and [A well-run, high performing council](#).

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published every four to five years.

Title	2014	2019
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Income (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) – Benchmarked Nationally	14% Priority to Improve Same	12% Priority to Improve Better

Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
Average gross annual pay for people who live in the area and work full time (£) - Benchmarked Nationally	26780 Priority to Improve Better	27121 Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has a prosperous economy that provides access to the right skills, jobs, and income – Benchmarked Locally	No data	31.89% Priority to Improve
External funding (in pounds) secured for economic development – Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The percentage of available funding awarded by Economic Business Development (EBD) for commercial property grants - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
STEAM - Total Economic Impact of Tourism (£ million) - Benchmarked Locally	432 Priority to Improve Better	Data pending. Available in summer
The number of businesses taking part in training events - Benchmarked Locally	No data. Suspended due to the pandemic	390 Excellent Better

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
Births of businesses per 10,000 of the population aged 16 to 64 - Benchmarked Nationally	78 Good Better	Data pending
Deaths of businesses per 10,000 of the population aged 16 to 64 - Benchmarked Nationally	89 Priority to Improve Worse	Data pending

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of working age people who are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit - Benchmarked Nationally	3.7% Priority to Improve Better	3.5% Priority to Improve Better	3.5% Priority to Improve Same	3.7% Priority to Improve Worse	3.8% Priority to Improve Worse
The number of paid and unpaid work experience placements offered through Working Denbighshire - Benchmarked Locally	No data	No data	No data	No data	15 Good
The percentage of spend with suppliers based within Denbighshire – Benchmarked Locally	36% Good Worse	39% Good Better	35% Good Worse	35% Good Same	35% Good Same
The cumulative percentage of Denbighshire contracts over £25k and under £1m containing community benefits – Benchmarked Locally	88% Excellent Worse	100% Excellent Better	64% Excellent Worse	64% Excellent Same	66 % Excellent Better

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

There are 21 projects listed within this theme in the Corporate Plan. Seven are running 'On Target', four are 'Experiencing Obstacles', one is at business case stage and one is at project brief stage. Six projects are new for the 2023 to 2024 financial year, due to begin in April. There are two projects 'At Risk', and these are the Queen's Buildings Rhyl and the Former North Wales Hospital. The delivery confidence status for the former is 'At Risk' due to the struggle to appoint an operator and the effects of this on the completion date.

Delays are also expected at the Former North Wales Hospital due to the need to meet planning conditions and legal terms. The project has made excellent progress, however, in terms of securing additional Ambition North Wales Growth Deal funding to plug the viability funding gap.

It is worth noting that the success of these projects overall is not reflected in the measures which are, in the main, a 'Priority for Improvement'. A significant activity for the future within this theme will be to develop the council's new Economic Strategy, with work on this commencing from April 2023.

Other developments in the last period

Brief for all councillors on the North Wales Growth Deal

The work of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, including the North Wales Growth Deal is listed as an item on the Council Workshops forward work plan reserve list for consideration beyond 2023. Any review of the reserve list should consider the inclusion of this item so that councillors may be updated on this work.

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Enabling and supporting NW Growth Deal projects in partnership with Ambition North Wales	On Target	
Coordinating WG Transforming Towns funding programme streams	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Project: Corwen High Street (Clwyd South Levelling Up Round 2)	On Target Same	

Title	Status	Exception
Develop funding bids for future rounds Levelling Up and Growth Deal funding	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Project: Queen's Buildings Rhyl	At Risk Same	At risk of not being completed for peak summer season. Intention to appoint operator by June.
Project: Former North Wales Hospital	At Risk Same	Viability funding secured. Development of the site is unlikely to commence for some time. Intention to take planning conditions, listed buildings, and legal agreement reports to Planning Committee by May.
Project: Victorian Post Office (Rhyl)	On Target Same	
Develop the council's new Economic Strategy	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Develop Town Centre Place Making Plans	On Target Same	
Develop the AONB Sustainable Tourism Plan and integrate into Local Tourism Plans	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Deliver the Denbighshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2027	On Target Same	
Evaluate the impact of the Tourism Levy	Not started	The Tourism Levy is not actually active. We've had the consultation which ended in December 2022. It's now going through a process that will mean scrutiny at various levels in the Senedd and may then come into law before the current political term ends.
Project: Co-Relocation of Rhyl Tourist Information Centre and Rhyl Museum	Not started	Business case stage

Title	Status	Exception
Project: Seeking to improve the appearance of poorly maintained Rhyl Town Centre properties	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Project: Reconnect the top of Rhyl High Street with the beach (Rhyl promenade)	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	
Project: Work with Rhyl Regeneration Programme Board to contribute to progressing Rhyl Public Realm Strategy	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Project: Rhyl Gateway	Not started	Project brief stage
Work with employers to identify hard to recruit jobs and develop sector routeways to fill the gaps	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Co-ordinate a range of training and networking opportunities for businesses, signposting to digital courses and webinar	On Target Same	
Complete feasibility report for move-on accommodation at St Asaph Business Park	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Develop a Community Benefits Framework to align with the Social Partnership and Procurement (Wales) Bill	On Target	

A round up of news

The following news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

In January, Cabinet approved [year 1 applications to the Shared Prosperity Fund](#) and noted the process and timescales for future application rounds. At February's meeting, Cabinet agreed to [commission Cadwyn Clwyd and DVSC to deliver a programme](#) (including a grant regime or 'Key Fund') in the area of Business Support and Community Capacity Building under certain Shared Prosperity Fund interventions.

Mixed successes were reported in January, with the [Levelling Up Fund Announcement](#) that the Vale of Clwyd bid had been unsuccessful but that the bid for Clwyd West projects had been secured.

[Let's show our love for local businesses this Saint Dwynwen's Day](#) was Theme on January 25, as the council reminded residents to support our local towns when thinking of gifts and treats for loved ones.

[Working Denbighshire job fairs were held in Rhyl](#) in January and in [Llangollen Town Hall in March](#). The events aimed to support Denbighshire citizens to gain education, training, and employment.

[March For Business](#), the council's annual campaign for businesses across Denbighshire, returned with free workshops, networking events and advice sessions. [Pop-up events to support businesses with a range of topics](#), including starting a business, finance, and growth were held in Denbigh and Ruthin. The [North Wales March for Business Dinner attracted record attendance](#) enabling over 100 people to network and share insights on coping with the rising cost of doing business. [Denbighshire Tourism Forum](#) provided a great opportunity for delegates to hear about the latest tourism news and meet other like-minded businesses. Run by the council's Tourism Team, the next forum is planned for Autumn 2023.

A drop-in session about the [Four Great Highways drop was held at Llangollen Town Hall](#) in March, and gave residents, businesses and visitors an opportunity to view the concept design options that have been developed, further to the recent consultation that was undertaken.

The [Fifth Wheel Company](#) and [Bio-Check](#) are both St Asaph-based companies set to benefit from research and development collaborations designed to boost digital support and smart technologies. Funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund, all businesses taking part receive expert support on three-month intervention projects from a digital specialist.

Organised by Denbighshire County Council in partnership with Wrexham and Flintshire, over 60 businesses and 170 people participated in [familiarisation trips](#) throughout March, which are designed to share knowledge of North East Wales's attractions as part of the Denbighshire Tourism Ambassador Scheme to promote tourism.

Enhancements to green spaces and play equipment commenced in March at [Llangollen Riverside Park](#), made possible through the Brilliant Basics fund to improve tourism infrastructure across Wales.

The council and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB advised people to plan ahead when it came to [countryside visits over the Easter](#). The council highlighted new traffic measures and urged visitors to respect the countryside and park responsibly.

A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire

Measures: Good

Projects: At Risk

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

In terms of the measures for this theme, the majority of these are new for the Corporate Plan, and to the 2023 to 2024 financial year. Looking at the data we do have, performance is, in the main, considered to be 'Excellent'; well above the thresholds set for them. It should be noted that many other measures do not currently have thresholds set, which means we have not set our level of ambition or intervention point.

However, 17% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire remained in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of health (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) in 2019; this has increased from 10% in 2014 and is a 'Priority for Improvement'.

Our annual stakeholder survey asked stakeholders to say whether they agree that they can live safely, happily and independently in the county and also receive good support when needed. 47.44% agreed and this is a 'Priority for Improvement'.

There is excellent work being undertaken for retaining a high percentage of safeguarding enquiries from adults completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse. We can also note the number of contacts by adult carers received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided continues to increase, with an excellent response.

For further measures and activity in support of housing and homelessness, please see our [Housing](#) and [Prosperous](#) themes respectively. For information about equality and deprivation, and safe environments, see our theme a [Fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire](#). Finally, for further detail around our work to support education and well-being, see our [Learning and Growing](#) theme.

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published every four to five years.

Title	2014	2019
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Health (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) - Benchmarked Nationally	10% Priority to Improve	17% Priority to Improve Worse

Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage of new assessments completed for children during the year that were completed within statutory timescales - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The percentage of children looked after at 31 March who have experienced three or more placements during the year - Count Only	19	18
The percentage of child protection conferences held within statutory timescales - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The percentage of schools that have achieved Trauma Informed School status by 2027 - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of children looked after at 31 March per 10,000 population aged under 18 by local authority and year – Count Only	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	96
The number of young people referred to the Youth Justice Service during the year from Denbighshire - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of contacts by adult carers received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided - Benchmarked Locally	1,037 Excellent	1,159 Excellent Better
The total number of carers needs assessments for adults undertaken during the year - Count Only	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	401
The total number of carers needs assessments for young carers undertaken during the year - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of care and support packages that have been right sized to single handed care	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
with specialist equipment - Benchmarked Locally		
The percentage of schools in the county embedding the Whole School Approach to mental health and well-being (include regional involvement) - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of young people (per 100 of residents 10 – 18 year olds) who receive counselling in Denbighshire and have a positive outcome – Benchmarked Nationally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	3.3 Acceptable
The average improvement in young people’s core score for children and young people who received counselling in Denbighshire – Benchmarked Nationally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	8.5 Excellent
The percentage of stakeholders who agreed that they can live safely, happily, and independently, in Denbighshire and also receive good support when needed to promote resilience and well-being - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	47.44% Priority to Improve
The percentage of young people offered the active option of advocacy from Education and Children’s Services - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	Data pending
The percentage of adults where independent professional advocacy was provided after assessment of need – Count Only	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	72.5%
The number of projects supported by the Community Development Team, and funded, offering a positive impact upon loneliness and isolation - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The percentage of young people (aged 11-25) participating in youth activity opportunities delivered and supported by the Youth Service - Benchmarked Locally	No data	26% Good
The number of County Community Groups using in scope facilities Denbighshire Leisure Limited - Benchmarked Locally	137 On Target	134 On Target Worse
The number of alternative (out of scope) facilities/venues used for the delivery of services to DCC residents - Benchmarked Locally	107 On Target	96 On Target Worse

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The number of sport and recreation related projects / groups supported by the Community Resilience Team - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready for citizen care and support needs – Count Only	No Data	29

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of safeguarding enquiries from adults completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse - Benchmarked Locally	No data	98.7% Excellent	98.85% Excellent Better	98.84% Excellent Worse	98.8% Excellent Worse
The number of overall referrals via SPoA to receive information, advice and assistance – Count Only	No data	No data	No data	No data	5,126
The number of referrals / enquiries recorded on Children and Family Support Gateway - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The cumulative number of new micro-provider businesses created for citizen care and support needs - Count Only	No data	No data	No data	No data	20

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The number of care and support packages that have been right sized to single handed care with specialist equipment - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of Talking Point contacts for information, advice and assistance (libraries, One Stop Shops and hosted by Community Navigators etc) - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The percentage of citizens receiving information, advice and assistance from Talking Points who did not need to be referred into Adult Social Care - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

There are 26 projects listed within this theme in the Corporate Plan. Eight are running 'On Target', one is 'Experiencing Obstacles', and one is shown as complete; this is 'Design and deliver a sport programme to improve the health and wellbeing of young people'. There will be further work on sports programmes for young people and these will be considered business as usual.

One project is 'At Risk' relating to our work to maintain our status as a Dementia Friendly organisation with the Alzheimer's Society via an annual assessment. The Alzheimer's Society has confirmed they will no longer be offering this status (from the end 2023) and therefore we will no longer be providing annual assessments under this initiative. The Ageing Well in Denbighshire Group and the Dementia Friendly Council Group have merged and work will continue to enhance provision for people living with Dementia and

those caring for them. Furthermore, this group will work towards becoming an age friendly county with the World Health Organisation, using their eight domains of assessment, which includes social participation and respect and social inclusion, both areas covering good health and well-being for people of all backgrounds.

15 projects are new to the 2023 to 2024 financial year, and are due to begin April. One of these is at Project Brief stage, and one project, 'Implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards', will be delayed by the UK Government. Adult Social Care and Homelessness and Education and Children's Services have all safeguarding procedures in place, so there is no definitive gap in service provision. However, they will await further instruction from the UK Government, which is likely to be 2024 onwards.

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Implement the Liberty Protection Safeguards and ensure effective preparation of all staff across Adults and Children's Services for this implementation.	Not started	It is understood that the UK Government has delayed implementation until the term of the next parliament.
Embed the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures in to all aspects of Children's and Services	On Target	
Work with partners to deliver the annual joint strategic plan for the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board	On Target	
Monitor and implement requirements of Foster Wales and monitor effectiveness of national approach.	On Target Same	
Embed the work of the Independent Living Team to support individuals through direct payments or Pre-Paid Cards, to increase efficiency	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Implement Post 16 of ALN work	Not started	This activity will commence from August 2024
Develop an in-county residential short breaks and emergency care provision for children with complex needs and disabilities within Denbighshire	On Target	

Title	Status	Exception
County Residential Break Review.	Not started	Once the project has passed the Project Brief and Business Case stages we will start to report upon this project.
Implement and embed the Autism Code of Practice in partnership with the Regional Strategic Group for North Wales across Adults and Children's services.	Experiencing Obstacles	
Implement the Out of Court Disposal Parenting Support Intervention to comply with the Children (Abolition of Defence of Reasonable Punishment) (Wales) Act 2020 (by 2025) – move to corporate parenting area.	On Target	
Work with local unpaid carers to identify the respite opportunities they need, and how barriers are overcome to enable this.	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Bwthyn y Ddol Phase 2 (Activity) Develop and implement, including staffing, a new Children's Assessment Centre jointly with Conwy County Borough Council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	On Target	This activity will continue to run during 2023 to 2024.
Ysgol Tir Morfa - Hydrotherapy pool	On Target	
Enhance the intervention work at Plas Brondyffryn and Tir Morfa in terms of play opportunities from Play Rangers.	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Increase the opportunities for unpaid young carers to take part in three year national Short Breaks fun package (via Carers Trust Wales).	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Work to maintain status as a Dementia Friendly organisation with the Alzheimer's Society (annual assessment).	At Risk	The Alzheimer's Society has confirmed they will no longer be offering this status (end 2023) and therefore we will no longer be providing annual assessments under this initiative. The Ageing Well in Denbighshire Group and the Dementia Friendly Council Group have merged and work will

Title	Status	Exception
		continue to enhance provision for people living with Dementia and those caring for them.
Work in partnership regionally to embed the All Wales Dementia Pathway of Standards.	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Work to enhance and extend the Access to Play project throughout the County.	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Expand the Play Rangers offer Let's Play Out Programme throughout the county	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Work to reduce the Youth Services waiting list for support in Denbighshire.	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Enhance the Story Pals Project and Arts programme to deliver intergenerational activities (delivered through the Denbighshire Arts Strategy).	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Undertake a review of independent professional advocacy for all service provision.	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Work towards becoming an age-friendly Denbighshire, with World Health Organisation, in partnership with Ageing Well in Denbighshire multi-agency group.	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023
Deliver a programme of activities and events to encourage children and adults to re-engage with their local library, to support engagement and wellbeing and to combat social isolation and loneliness.	On Target	
Design and deliver a sport programme to improve the health and wellbeing of young people.	Complete	This activity is complete, and future work for sports activities will be business as usual.
Enhance the Nature for Health Programme within Denbighshire which offers multiple benefit – reducing isolation, improve health, rural skills, health and nature walks, arts and crafts)	Not started	This activity will commence 1 April 2023

A round up of news

The following news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

The beginning of 2023 saw the council's Trading Standards Team increase their [campaign to take action against shops found to be supplying illegal tobacco](#). Work, supported by North Wales Police, was undertaken for Operation CeCe - a joint initiative between National Trading Standards and HM Revenue and Customs to tackle the illegal tobacco trades - and significant quantity of illegal tobacco was seized in Rhyl, and other towns in North Wales. [Denbighshire Trading Standards](#) also urged businesses to make necessary checks on their stock of disposable e-cigarettes, liquids and vaping devices and ensure that they meet UK legal requirements. An increasing amount of non-compliant disposable vaping products have been found for sale within Denbighshire. The majority of products found are non-compliant due to having over-sized tanks, incorrect labelling and being unregistered - meaning that they are not notified products with the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Denbighshire County Council's Scrutiny Committee considered a review under the Council's Scrutiny 'call-in' procedure of a decision taken by Cabinet, on December 13, 2022, on the '[Recommendation of the Regional Fee Setting Group](#)'. The "call in" is a normal part of the democratic process, and allows the Scrutiny Committee to exercise its statutory powers to review or scrutinise executive decisions.

In February, the [Partnership Scrutiny Committee](#) accepted a report on the North Denbighshire Community Hospital Project. The project was to develop the Royal Alexandra Hospital site in Rhyl; a vital development for Denbighshire and partner Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board related the pressures facing Ysbyty Glan Clwyd.

The [Partnership Scrutiny Committee](#), at that same meeting, undertook discussions with representatives from the Council's Social Services, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and North Wales Police on their partnership working arrangements in relation to mental health.

The council's [Edge of Care team launched a new project](#) in January, seeking volunteers to support a project aiming to improve the mental health and well-being of individuals living in the area. In response to the pandemic and the need to support people in their own homes, Denbighshire Community Support Services has also put in place

arrangements for [a dog, Maisie, to accompany her volunteer, Jackie, on home visits](#). The aim of the project is to put people at ease and help relieve stress. More work within our care homes, saw residents and their families at [Cysgod y Gaer Care Home in Corwen](#) enjoy a chance to meet a The number of animals, including rabbits, guinea pigs, a tortoise, corn snakes, a python, a little Shetland pony and lizards. February 2023 saw the start of a [new music therapy pilot project at Dolwen Care Home in Denbigh](#). Music therapy can support people with all kinds of conditions: from autism to dementia, learning difficulties to brain injuries, life-limiting illnesses to mental health issues, grief, and trauma.

The council confirmed it will continue to offer a [free development programme](#) which supports residents to set up their own micro-provider service in their local communities, following the success of the project over the past year. 'Micro-providers' offer care and support to older and disabled people in their own homes, helping them live their lives their way. So far, there are over 20 micro-providers operating in Denbighshire, who support around 140 residents.

Denbighshire County Council Chairman, Councillor Arwel Roberts, presented the [winners of his schools art competition](#) - which was launched in partnership with one of his nominated charities, NSPCC Cymru/Wales, North Wales Hub, Prestatyn – with certificates, medals and prizes for their outstanding efforts. Children were asked to draw what made them feel happy. The overall winner from Ysgol Y Parc was invited to attend a small presentation at Council in February.

A learning and growing Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: On Target

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

The performance framework here is broadly divided across three areas of focus for this theme in the Corporate Plan – namely support for Early Years Development; Engagement and Achievement at School; and Employability Support. In this first report there are still some measures in need of development and gaps to fill, largely to do with our quarterly performance measures. Otherwise, the tables below provide a snapshot of key performance as at the end of the year, and areas to focus on improvement going forward.

There are three, what we could consider to be, overarching indicators within the set; two of which are for the Education and Employment domains within Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). For both measures our performance remains unchanged since the previous WIMD report in 2014 (9% and 12% respectively in the top 10% most deprived), though our placement has improved to 'Acceptable' for the Education domain because performance has worsened nationally. Our third 'overarching' measure considers the percentage of stakeholders who agree that good quality learning and training is available in Denbighshire, where 48% agree.

There is exceptionally good work taking place in support of Early Years development. In September 2022, 82% of all children entering nursery had individualised profiles, called 'Me in a Nutshell', created for them to support their effective transition. These are developed with the support of the Family Link Team. Meanwhile, 99% of parents report the positive impact of attending Bookstart / Rhyme-time through our Library Services.

Primary and Secondary school attendance following the wake of the pandemic remains a concern, with secondary attendance dropping significantly to 86% (93% in 2019). The Education Social Work Team continue to monitor and work closely with schools to ensure effective attendance procedures are in place; however, it is unavoidable that Covid-19 has continued to have an impact during 2022 to 2023.

Recently published data for the percentage of Year 11 Leavers known Not to be in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) shows Denbighshire's position to have declined from 1.7% to 2.3% during 2022 to 2023. This represents 26 young people. It is

important to note that this year group was probably the most impacted of all year groups by the pandemic; experiencing disruption to their education during years 9, 10 and 11. Our new measure for the percentage of Year 11 pupils with an identified Post-16 pathway also reveals that 4% do not have a plan in place.

The completion of Care Leaver Pathway Plans within statutory timescales also continues to be a 'Priority for Improvement' at 71% during 2022 to 2023, though this is a marked improvement on performance for the previous year (20%).

For further measures and activity in support of well-being please see our [Healthier, Happier and Caring theme](#); for equity in education, including free school meal support, see our theme for a [fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire](#). Finally, for further detail around our work to support volunteering and employment, see [Connected](#) and [Prosperous](#) themes respectively.

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published every four to five years.

Title	2014	2019
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Education (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) – Benchmarked Nationally	9% Priority to Improve Better	9% Acceptable Same
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Employment (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) – Benchmarked Nationally	12% Priority to Improve Worse	12% Priority to Improve Same

Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that good quality learning and training is available in Denbighshire, allowing people of all ages to reach their personal and professional potential – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	47.79% Priority to Improve
The percentage of children entering nursery that have been provided with a 'Me in a	81%	82%

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
Nutshell' profile by Family Link Workers, supporting their effective transition – Benchmarked Locally	Excellent	Excellent Better
The percentage of parents that have reported a positive impact through attending Bookstart / Rhyme-time – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	99% Excellent
The percentage of parents that travel a positive distance by attending structured learning events through Families First and Flying Start – Benchmarked Locally	53% Acceptable	58% Good Better
<i>Attainment measure(s) to be determined</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>
The percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools – Benchmarked Locally	No data. Covid-19	90.8% Priority to Improve Worse (than 2019)
The percentage of pupil attendance in secondary schools – Benchmarked Locally	No data. Covid-19	86% Priority to Improve Worse (than 2019)
The percentage of pupils engaged through Llwybrau that achieve a positive outcome, including level 1 or 2 qualifications – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	88% Acceptable
The number of schools providing education through suitability and condition categories C and D – Benchmarked Locally	27 Excellent Same	27 Excellent Same
The percentage of schools able to host community focussed activities – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	Data pending. Available in summer
The percentage of Year 11 Leavers from schools know Not to be in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), at the preceding 31 August in Denbighshire – Benchmarked Nationally	1.7% Priority to Improve Same	2.3% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of Year 11 pupils that do not have an identified Post-16 pathway in place – Benchmarked Locally	4.14% Priority to Improve	Data pending. Available in November
The percentage of children or young people who are looked after that have a Personal	100% Excellent	96% Good

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
Education Plan in place – Benchmarked Locally		Worse
The percentage of initial Care Leaver Pathway Plans completed during the year that were within the statutory timescales, where the young person has care leaver status – Benchmarked Locally	20% Priority to Improve	71% Priority to Improve Better
The total number of care leavers in categories 2, 3 and 4 who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training in the 13 -24 months since leaving care – Count Only	5	7

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The number of children taking part in the childcare offer – Benchmarked Locally	635 Good	732 Excellent Better	477 Acceptable Worse	521 Acceptable Better	570 Excellent Better
The percentage of parents supported through the work of the Family Link Service that report a positive difference – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	95% Excellent
The number of schools in either Estyn Review, Significant Improvement or Special Measures – Benchmarked Locally	1 Good Same	2 Good Worse	2 Good Same	3 Acceptable Worse	3 Acceptable Same

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of pupils (using Pupil Attitudes to Self and School - PASS) who respond positively against pupils' feelings about school – Benchmarked Locally	87.2% Good Better	No data. No Survey	No data. No Survey	81.8% Good Worse	No data. No Survey
The number of voluntary / work experience placements offered through Llwybrau – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of volunteering opportunities offered by the council through its corporate website – Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The percentage of young people in Denbighshire reached by Youth Services – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to quarter 3 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 3 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 3 2022 to 2023	23.6% Acceptable	Data pending
The number of people with learning disabilities that have achieved a positive outcome as a result of support provided through the council's Work Opportunities services (Y Bont, Popty, Meifod, Garden Control, and Golden Group) – Count Only	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	34

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The number of people with learning disabilities in paid sustainable employment as a result of the council's Work Opportunities Job Finding Service – Count Only	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	3
The percentage of businesses contracted over £1m that have committed to work with Careers Wales to the benefit of our local schools and colleges (through our Community Benefits Policy) – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	100% Excellent
The number of employment opportunities secured / jobs protected through our Community Benefits Policy on projects over £1m – Count Only	No data. New 2023 to 2024	No data. New 2023 to 2024	No data. New 2023 to 2024	No data. New 2023 to 2024	No data. New 2023 to 2024
The percentage of people that, through Working Denbighshire, have travelled a positive distance on their journey towards or into employment – Benchmarked Locally	74%	88% Excellent Better	81% Good Worse	82% Good Better	82% Good Same

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Broadly the council is making good progress with the first year projects and activities identified in support of this theme, ten being noted as 'On Target'. Three projects are 'Experiencing Obstacles', largely due to staff capacity, but this does not represent a

significant risk to the successful completion of these tasks. One area currently reporting as 'At Risk' is our Modernising Education Programme (WG's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme). All four projects within Band B are currently experiencing delays for a number of reasons (detailed below), and progress with the delivery of new childcare facilities has also stalled.

One remaining activity in this framework, concerning the implementation of the Temporary Emergency Accommodation Support Contract – which will include various life, recreational and employability skills and benefits relevant to this theme – will commence reporting during 2023 to 2024.

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Implementation of the Childcare Offer for Wales Digital Platform	On Target Same	
Flying Start Expansion	Experiencing Obstacles	
Recommissioning of Families First	Experiencing Obstacles	
Support the regional project on Emotional Health, Well-being and Resilience Framework, which will provide resources for parents	Experiencing Obstacles	
Review Early Years provision in the context of WG Early Years Transformation funding and the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) agenda	On Target Same	
Embed new posts in the Flying Start Childcare and Early Language Development Teams from January 2023 to support the Flying Start Childcare Expansion	On Target	
In partnership with GwE, Support schools and non-maintained settings to deliver the new curriculum for Wales to ensure our learners become capable, ambitious, enterprising, ethical, healthy and confident adults.	On Target Same	

Title	Status	Exception
Implement requirements of the of ALN Reform Act within Education and Children's Services to ensure compliance	On Target Same	
Implement School Improvement Guidance: Framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability	On Target	
Support schools in developing digital competency through educational leadership of the EdTech project	On Target	
Modernising Education Programme	At Risk Worse	<p>Suitability of Plas Brondyffryn and Pendref sites under consideration (Denbigh High paused due to the former). Proposals for Ysgol Bryn Collen / Gwernant submitted, awaiting Welsh Government (WG) response.</p> <p>Progress slow with works to Oaktree Centre following the contractor going into administration in February. Revised tender for Twm o'r Nant again over the forecast, with virement submitted to WG in November (decision pending).</p> <p>Ysgol Dewi Sant stalled due to drainage issues, but project has been resubmitted for the next funding round.</p>
Community Focussed Schools: Prestatyn High Pilot	On Target	
Engage with the North Wales Ambition Board and the Regional Skills Partnership to ensure that skills and training secured through our Community Benefits Policy is fit for the future and / or transferrable	On Target	
Through our Community Benefits Policy, secure business led strategy workshops	On Target	

Title	Status	Exception
for the benefit of residents seeking to upskill		
Develop performance and monitoring systems for the Temporary Emergency Accommodation support contract as it develops, which will include various life, recreational and employability skills and benefits	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.

A round up of news

The following news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

Supporting early years' child development, in January, Libraries launched a new book, [Baby Talk: Black and White](#), through a Bookstart Rhymetime event in St Asaph, looking to give babies the best start in life by developing physical and cognitive skills.

Work continues on the [Childcare extension of Ysgol Penmorfa](#), funded by the Welsh Government's Flying Start Capital Grant. Work began in September 2022, and the project will increase the capacity of childcare provision in Prestatyn.

The council has invested £600k in [refurbishment works at Prestatyn High School](#) to improve the learning environment for pupils. Work on updated science facilities is near completion, and in the next phase the school will receive roof and further classroom refurbishments.

At its [meeting in February](#), Cabinet reviewed objections to its Statutory Notice to increase the capacity of Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn from 116 to 220 pupils under Band B of the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. Two objections were received, focussing on the location of the build (rather than the capacity), which has not yet been agreed or committed to by Cabinet or Council. Recognising the demand for specialist permission, Cabinet approved the proposal set out in the Statutory Notice, allowing the project to progress to the next stage.

In March, the council collaborated with Conwy County Borough Council to deliver ['Future Booster' events](#) aimed at 18-25 year olds, to help them take control of their future, including finances, housing, jobs, skills and training, well-being, and healthy living.

Following these opening events, more events are also being planned to take place during the summer months.

In March, the council was delighted to officially open its [new Youth Centre in Rhyl](#). Located at the town's former East Parade Café (which had been vacant since 2015), work on the site began in June 2022. Following an investment of £217k by the council and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Centre has been designed in consultation with young people, and will be an invaluable resource to enable the council and its partners to engage and support young people in an area of social deprivation and exclusion.

A better connected Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

Within this theme there are several nationally benchmarked measures that give an indication of performance compared to other local authorities in Wales. However, there are some gaps as we await the publication of new national data; namely those that we use to judge our road conditions.

From April 2023, we will commence our annual resurfacing programme on roads across the county where the life has expired. We will also commence our surface dressing programme on high priority roads where surface dressing represents the most cost-effective method of prolonging the lifespan of the road. The project to Develop a Sustainable Transport Plan (STP) (to include Active Travel) featured in our last Corporate Plan. It is not without its challenges, and whilst there are measures around reducing carbon emissions and increasing public electric vehicle charging points in support of our [Greener theme](#), we are currently developing measures on the other priority areas in the STP, which will be added to this theme's performance management framework in due course.

14 of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire remained in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Access to Services (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) in 2019, with no change from 2014, a 'Priority for Improvement'.

This theme also includes measures in relation to personal and community well-being. Our Community Development Team has seen the number of projects or groups supported steadily rise from 27 for the same period last year to 61. Work is also ongoing to involve more of our tenants in community projects. "The number of volunteer hours supporting community resilience and development activity" is provided, for the time being, as an estimate whilst we develop a more reliable means for measuring volunteer hours. New measures of our work to support communities to develop their digital skills and confidence will be included from April 2023.

Our stakeholder survey asks stakeholders to say whether they agree with three statements for this theme. 55.7% agreed in 2022 to 2023 that Denbighshire had the social

infrastructure needed to support personal and community well-being, which is considered to be 'Acceptable'. 48.96% agreed that Denbighshire had the digital infrastructure (such as good broadband connectivity, good mobile internet or mobile phone signal) to support thriving, cohesive, and well-connected communities and 29.46% agreed that Denbighshire had the transport and road infrastructure to support thriving, cohesive, and well-connected communities. Both measures are a 'Priority for Improvement'.

For further measures and activity in support of well-being please see our [Healthier, Happier and Caring theme](#); for community focussed school activity and developing digital competency please see our [Learning and Growing theme](#).

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published every four to five years.

Title	2014	2019
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Access to Services (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) – Benchmarked Nationally	14% Priority to Improve Same	14% Priority to Improve Same

Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has the transport and road infrastructure to support thriving, cohesive, and well connected communities – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	29.46% Priority to Improve
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has the digital infrastructure (such as good broadband connectivity, good mobile internet or mobile phone signal) to support thriving, cohesive, and well connected communities – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	48.96% Priority to Improve
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has the social infrastructure needed to support personal and community well-being – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	55.70% Acceptable

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
<i>Measures to be developed around the Sustainable Transport Plan</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>
The percentage of principle A roads that are in overall poor condition – Benchmarked Nationally	2.6% Excellent Better	Data pending
The percentage of non-principal/classified B roads that are in overall poor condition – Benchmarked Nationally	4.03% Excellent Better	Data pending
The percentage of non-principal/classified C roads that are in overall poor condition – Benchmarked Nationally	7.97% Excellent Better	Data pending
The percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale) Benchmarked Locally	No data	Data pending
The percentage of premises that receive less than 30Mbps - Count Only	No data.	4.57%
The percentage of premises that receive less than 10Mbps - Count Only	No data	2.88%
The percentage of library users who say that using the library has had a positive impact on their digital skills and confidence - Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The percentage of people who borrowed a digital device from a library who said it had made a positive impact on their digital skills and confidence - Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
<i>Measure to be developed around digital Telecare</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>
The number of community projects co-produced with the community and third sector - Count Only	No data	7
The number of volunteer hours supporting community resilience and development activity - Count Only	No data	700 (estimate)
The number of contacts provided through the council's Edge of Care volunteer service - Count Only	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	795

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The number of projects or groups supported by the Community Development Team - Benchmarked Locally	27	33	55	53	61 Excellent Better
The number of tenants involved in community projects – Count Only	No data	0	6	6	6

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Projects or Activities

This theme contains 19 projects and activities. 13 projects are at various stages, those that are live are either ‘Experiencing Obstacles’ or ‘On Target’, and there are no exceptions to report. There are five new activities due to commence from April 2023.

The project to “Develop a Sustainable Transport Plan (to include Active Travel)” does not currently have a status, reflecting its status as a business case. This work will need careful management to ensure it is delivered with pace.

Title	Status	Exception
We will work towards achieving a quality road network by implementing an annual resurfacing programme on a The number of roads across the county where the life has expired.	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
We will implement an annual Surface Dressing programme on a The number of high priority roads where this represents the most cost-effective method of prolonging the life-span of the road.	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
We will aim to deliver the most viable option to replace the Llanerch Bridge.	On Target Same	

Title	Status	Exception
Contribute to the development of the new Regional Transport Plan	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Review, develop and modernise rural, urban and inter-urban transport services, where appropriate, working with partners within the Metro project and alongside the emerging bus reform	On Target Same	
Develop a Sustainable Transport Plan (to include Active Travel)	Not started	At business case stage
EV Charging Hub Rhyl	On Target Same	
Four Great Highways (Clwyd South Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	This will be a live project from April 2023
Wenffrwd (Clwyd South Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At business case stage
Corwen to Cynwyd Active Travel Route. Phase 1 (Clwyd South Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At project brief stage
2a Moel Famau country park new cycle paths & visitor facilities (Clwyd West Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At project brief stage
1a St Peter's Square (Clwyd West Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At project brief stage
Green Lane Car Park Corwen (Clwyd South Levelling Up Round 2)	On Target Same	
Traffic modelling and design traffic improvement works (Rhyl Programme Board)	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Electric Vehicle Infrastructure - Public Charging Points	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Delivery of the replacement LDP, which takes forward local priorities for land use planning within the national policy framework. The replacement LDP will ensure emerging local priorities around climate change and biodiversity are	On Target	

Title	Status	Exception
reflected in local planning policy and decision making.		
Progress towards digitalisation of telecare services before the 2025 deadline for ceasing of analogue telephone services.	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Develop a community resilience action plan	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Replace our current backup infrastructure to remove the reliance on legacy technologies and improve resilience.	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023

A round up of news

The following news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

On January 13, 2023 we issued a [weather warning](#) as we prepared to undertake winter maintenance gritting action due to the risk of ice, sleet and snow showers. We also placed additional resources on standby to respond to any flooding-related incidents.

Essential [resurfacing work of the took A548 Rhyl Coast Road](#) and [resurfacing works to Bastion Road Prestatyn](#) took place at the end of January 2023. We informed the public that due to essential electrical maintenance work, [Bridge Street, Denbigh](#) would be closed for two weeks at the end of January and bus services would be diverted from their usual route. Essential carriageway patching works to [Bwlch Pen Barras, Moel Famau](#) were carried out at the end of March 2023.

In collaboration with Transport for Wales, we announced the [new hourly TrawsCymru T8 bus service](#) between Corwen, Ruthin, Mold and Chester, which came into service at the end of January. At the end of March we announced the return of the [Dee Valley Picturesque Bus service](#), to start its third season on 1st April 2023. A bus service providing the best access to see key destinations around Llangollen.

Our expansion of Denbighshire's electric vehicle charging infrastructure, the new charging hub in Rhyl, was recognised by the [Electric Vehicle Association for Wales – EVA Cymru](#) as a great resource for both locals and visitors. In March, we publicised the work the council is doing alongside KerbPower Ltd of Ruthin, in their development and

commercialisation of an [innovative solution to boost electric vehicle\(EV\)](#) thanks to a digital collaboration with AMRC Cymru.

During the period we consulted on a The number of new developing projects. In January, Llangollen's residents, businesses and visitors were invited to take part and have their say on a project aimed at promoting and enhancing the [four great 'highways'](#) of Llangollen: the Llangollen Canal and World Heritage Site, the former Ruabon to Barmouth railway line, the River Dee and Thomas Telford's historic route, the A5 Holyhead Road. Residents were invited to have their say on future improvements to the [local walking, wheeling and cycling network in Rhuddlan](#). In February, we launched a consultation on the [H-Bridge, Rhyl](#) and surrounding streets to make it a safer and more inviting area for walking, wheeling and cycling. In March, we launched a The number of consultations that invited residents to share their views and ideas on proposed improvements to the [local walking, wheeling and cycling network across Prestatyn](#), the [local walking, wheeling and cycling network in Denbigh](#) and [walking, wheeling, and cycling in and around Brook Street, Llangollen](#).

A greener Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

Ensuring that we meet our net carbon zero commitment as an organisation by 2030 continues to be a challenge and will not be easily achieved. The overarching Climate and Ecological Change Programme 2021 – 2030 in year delivery confidence is currently showing as 'Experiencing Obstacles' due to delays in project delivery, which means benefit realisation will be delayed also.

There are a number of key annual performance measures that are being used to judge the performance of the council in achieving its 2030 goals, including: reducing carbon emissions the council emits from various sources; increasing carbon sequestration of land the council owns, leases and manages; and increasing the species richness of the land the council owns, leases and manages. Work is currently being undertaken to provide data for these measures for 2022 to 2023 and will be reported on from June 2023.

Our stakeholder survey will now, every year, ask stakeholders to say whether they agree that Denbighshire is resilient against the impacts of climate change and nature's decline. This question was first asked during 2022 to 2023. 43.61% of respondents agreed and this is a 'Priority for Improvement'.

For further measures and activity in support of greener initiatives please see our [Housing](#) theme for energy efficiency and our [Connected](#) theme for sustainable travel and electric vehicle charging points.

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published every four to five years.

Title	2014	2019
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Physical Environment (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation) – Benchmarked Nationally	2% Good Better	2% Good Same

Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire is resilient against the impacts of climate change and nature's decline – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	43.61% Priority to Improve
Net Carbon Zero - Total carbon tonnage emitted and absorbed by the council (excluding supply chains) – Benchmarked Locally	11,656 Good Better	Data pending
The percentage of DCC owned and operated land in highest categories of species richness – Benchmarked Locally	40.62% Acceptable Better	Data pending
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through fleet – Benchmarked Locally	2,699 Priority to Improve Worse	Data pending
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through business travel– Benchmarked Locally	163 Excellent Better	Data pending
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through supply chains– Benchmarked Locally	31,409 Priority to Improve Worse	Data pending
Capacity (in MW) of renewable energy equipment installed in our buildings (owned and operated) - Count Only	1MW	1MW
The percentage of municipal waste reused, recycled or composted - Benchmarked Nationally	67.67% Excellent	Data pending
The number of properties with a high or medium risk of flooding (DCC wide) - Count Only	1,171	Data pending
Area of moorland (heather, gorse and bracken) managed per annum – Count Only	20 hectares	Data pending

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

This theme is supported by the overarching Climate and Ecological Change Programme 2021 to 2030 and a further 13 projects and activities.

Two projects currently have an `At Risk` status. The Remodelling Waste Service Operations project's key current issue that needs resolving is a way forward with delivery of Phase 2 of the Waste Transfer Station following [RL Davies and Sons Ltd entering voluntary administration](#) on February 16, 2023.

The Wildflower Meadow project is also `At Risk` due to concerns regarding project progress overall, and capacity issues that have not been addressed. A meeting to review the project and the forward plan has been arranged for May and it is hoped delivery confidence will improve following this. That said, the 2023 to 2024 season has now officially started. This year's wildflower meadow sites have now been finalised and the number of sites has increased by 40%. A great achievement.

The two Coastal Defence Improvement Schemes for Rhyl Central and Prestatyn Central remain `On Target` and there is a new activity to develop a new Flood Strategy for the county to commence in April 2023.

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Climate and Ecological Change Programme 2021 – 2030	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Carbon sequestration on existing land holdings	On Target Same	
Wildflower Meadow project	At Risk	Concerns regarding project progress overall and capacity issues are still not being addressed.
Nature Reserve at Green Gates Farm, St Asaph	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Implement Ash Dieback work as per the Action Plan across the county	On Target Same	

Title	Status	Exception
We will enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems in all of our Council service areas	New April 2023	
Rhyl Green Infrastructure	On Target Same	
Remodelling Waste Service Operations	At Risk Same	Key current issue that needs resolving is a way forward with delivery of Phase 2 of the Waste Transfer Station.
We will work towards reducing the use of plastics within Denbighshire County Council, including School Catering and Procurement, along with any future work (including its Alternative Delivery Models (ADM)s) such as Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL)	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Deliver improvement and expansion projects for Denbighshire County Council allotments	On Target Same	
Develop a new Flood Strategy for the county	New	Work to commence from April 2023
Prestatyn Central Coastal Defence Improvement Scheme	On Target Same	
Rhyl Central Coastal Defence Improvement Scheme	On Target Same	
2b Loggerheads country park new visitor facilities & flood management (Clwyd West Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At project brief stage

A round up of news

The following news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

In January, [Governance and Audit Committee](#) was presented with the Wales Audit Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 report for information. Members agreed to include the papers and officer response on their next committee meeting agenda for discussion.

In February, [Cabinet](#) received a report about the regional energy planning process and incorporating priorities into strategic actions and intervention. They endorsed the North Wales Energy Strategy and the associated Action Plan, and noted the commencement of Local Area Energy Planning in Denbighshire.

In March, [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) received a report on the progress of the Denbighshire Moorland Project, which outlined the progress to date in delivering the objectives of the Denbighshire Moorland Project. An update on the Waste Service Remodelling Project was also presented, which sought Members' observations on the progress made to date with the planned implementation of the new waste service model.

At the end of March, [Cabinet](#), received a report about the decision to terminate the contract between Denbighshire County Council and R L Davies and Sons Ltd (RLD) whereby RLD was to be the main contractor for the Waste Depot Phase 2 on the Colomendy Estate, Denbigh. This followed news that RLD would be going into administration. Cabinet expressed its sadness that RLD, a local and longstanding business, had gone into administration and said that its thoughts were with the employees and all affected.

In January, a [major school-wide biodiversity project](#) with pupils at Ysgol Bro Cinmeirch in Llanrhaeadr, got underway with planting the first of thousands of trees that will be distributed across Denbighshire schools to tackle climate change and the nature emergency. As part of the Council's wider Woodland Creation Project nearly 3,000 trees including wildlife hedgerows to help nature recover have been planted around a [historic site in Rhyl](#). To celebrate planting in [Corwen](#) a sessile Oak was planted to mark their support to local nature as part of this wider project.

Supporting our commitment to sustainable development we started a new project in collaboration with Bangor University and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology to look at public perceptions of changes to [green spaces in Rhyl](#) and how this information can shape future nature recovery work.

We also supported sustainable management regimes by introducing a [flock of sheep to Prestatyn Hillside](#) to support the maintenance of the variety of wildflowers and wildlife that gives the site its special character. The introduction of the animals is part of the 'Unique Opportunities - Landscape Solutions for North East Wales' Project and was supported and

funded through the Welsh Government Rural Development Scheme and Natural Resource Wales.

Work began to reopen [Brickfield Pond Nature Reserve](#) to support peoples' health and well-being whilst also supporting local biodiversity. Rhyl students who are on the Pathway to Construction Course also joined Countryside staff to [construct a new wooden fence](#) at the entrance to the redeveloped orchard site. Countryside staff have also worked closely with the community group behind [Rhuddlan Nature Reserve](#) to grow a thriving environment for both biodiversity and visitors to embrace.

[New electric bin lorries came into operation](#) and our Home Library Service, which supports those who cannot make it to a library due to ill health, disability or caring responsibilities, also gained their [first new electric van](#).

[Denbighshire County Council's Postcards from the Future competition winner](#) was announced appealing for help to give animals a future. All winning entries were read out at [Full Council](#) in February. The council also ran an [engagement session with Prestatyn High pupils](#) to showcase how important climate change has become in everyday operational life for the council and its services.

Volunteers helped us restart important biodiversity projects to monitor [otters](#) and [adders](#). We also looked for further volunteers as [Volunteer Rangers](#) for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to help take care of the area it covers and inspire others about the land.

Hedgerows are essential habitats for wildlife and Countryside Service staff and volunteers joined together in February to help Coleg Llandrillo Rhyl students learn the art of [hedgelaying](#) by improving a section of hedge at the Rhyl Cut.

In March, Countryside Services led a session for volunteers to [create new nesting shelters for little tern chicks born at Gronant](#). This vital work was a joint event between North Wales Little Tern Group and Nature for Health. Naturalist Iolo Williams also recently visited the [Gronant Little Terns colony](#) for his new series, 'Iolo's Borderlands'.

We reminded residents of our [`bee' signs throughout the county](#) that signifies Denbighshire County Council's Bee friendly status awarded by the Welsh Government and is the prime signpost for the Council's Wildflower Meadows Project. We also asked visitors to be [mindful when visiting the county's beauty spots](#) and included a message that

supported farmers and landowners of people keeping dogs on leads when walking through the countryside with livestock, particularly during lambing season.

Our Ash dieback management work continued with work being carried out at [Loggerheads Country Park](#) in January and in [Corwen](#) in February. As this necessary felling programme progresses, more trees of alternative species will be planted, in suitable locations to reduce the impact on the landscape and biodiversity.

At the beginning of February, we reminded the public of tips and hacks to discover how their [food waste creates power](#) as we teamed up with Wales Recycles to support their Mighty Mission to Wales to get to number one.

Our Property Section Energy Team has continued to tackle reducing the [carbon footprint of Denbighshire schools](#). Ten Denbighshire schools have seen carbon reduction work take place on site including loft insulation, installation of solar PV, LED lighting, [air source heatpumps](#), battery storage, replacement boilers, improved heating controls and the addition of energy efficient water heaters. This work has so far resulted in a reduction in a combined output of carbon by around 64 tonnes.

[A successful forum](#) was held in March, at the Community Hwb Llysfasi for the AONB Champions, Town and Community Councils and Local Members.

Over the last six months we have taken part in the Design Councils, Design Differently program. The work focused on [Bws Benthylg](#) and how it can be of benefit to different county communities

A fairer, safe, and more equal Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

The majority of the measures below are new to this Corporate Plan, and to the 2023 to 2024 financial year. Performance for the measures we do have are, in the main, considered to be 'Excellent'.

36.23% of stakeholders agreed to the statement that people in Denbighshire are treated fairly and equally and have access to opportunities to promote their well-being and community cohesion, a 'Priority for Improvement'.

In 2019, 10% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire were in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of community safety. 12% of LSOAs were in the 10% most deprived (overall) in Wales.

Compared to last year, Denbighshire continued to see a decrease in the number of repeat victims of reported domestic crime for January to March 2023, from 690 to 537. This equated to a 22.2% reduction in Denbighshire compared to North Wales which, as a whole, saw a 4.5% reduction for the same period. In terms of repeat offenders of domestic abuse for January to March 2023, there was a decrease from 74 offenders to 56. This equated to a 24.5% reduction while North Wales showed an increase of 0.3%.

Completion of our hate crime, modern day slavery and violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence e-learning modules (not mandatory) are new indicators and performance is currently a Priority for Improvement or Acceptable.

Some data is pending for this report and will be obtained for our next report. Other information, such as 'the number of reported occurrences of prejudice related bullying in schools', is expected in October 2023.

For further measures and activity to support well-being, see our [Healthier, Happier and Caring](#) theme. There is additional information to support housing and homelessness in our [Housing](#) theme; measures and activities to support employment and deprivation our [Prosperous](#) theme and education and volunteering in our [Learning and Growing](#) and [Connected](#) themes.

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published every four to five years.

Title	2014	2019
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Community Safety (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation - WIMD) - Benchmarked Nationally	14% Priority to Improve Worse	10% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation - WIMD) - Benchmarked Nationally	14% Priority to Improve Worse	12% Priority to Improve Better

Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage of stakeholders who agreed that people in Denbighshire are treated fairly and equally, and have access to opportunities to promote their well-being and community cohesion - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	36.23% Priority to Improve
The percentage of personnel within DCC who have undertaken the hate crime e-learning module (not mandatory) - Benchmarked Locally	No data	7% Priority to Improve
The percentage of personnel within DCC who have undertaken modern day slavery e-learning module (not mandatory) - Benchmarked Locally	No data	25% Priority to Improve
The percentage of personnel within DCC who have completed violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence e-learning - Benchmarked Locally	No data	82% Acceptable
The number of reported occurrences of prejudice related bullying in schools - Benchmarked Locally	No data	Data pending. Expected October 2023
The percentage of adults who say their library is an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place - Benchmarked Locally	93 Excellent Same	93 Excellent Same

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage of children in poverty in Denbighshire – Count Only	34.09%	Data pending
The percentage of children living in workless households – Count Only	21.1%	Data pending
Measures of all households and vulnerable households living in fuel poverty in Wales (placeholder) - Benchmarked Nationally	Data pending	Data pending
The percentage of eligible young people leaving care in receipt of the basic income pilot from the Welsh Government - Benchmarked Nationally	No data. Pilot Scheme across Wales to be undertaken	Data pending
The percentage of people living in households in material deprivation – Count Only	9.1%	Data pending
The number of families resettled within Denbighshire – Count Only	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	75
The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in Denbighshire - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat victims of Domestic Abuse reported including non-crime occurrences (3 or more in 12 months, measured as year to date) - Count Only	690	126	266	386	537
The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse reported (3 or more in 12 months) - Count Only	74	11	28	42	56

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of eligible primary school pupils taking Free School meals (Denbighshire) – Count Only				68.3%	Data pending
The percentage of eligible secondary school pupils taking Free School meals (Denbighshire) - Count Only				80.52%	Data pending

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

There are 21 projects within this theme of the Corporate Plan. Five have already started and are 'On Target', and one is seen as 'At Risk'. This is the activity 'Support diversity and engagement by embedding the framework on a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being'. There has been a recent notification of a reduction of Welsh Government grant fund to support this work, which may compromise or curtail this work. The remaining 15 projects are due to commence in the 2023 to 2024 financial year (various dates).

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Undertake preventative work, in partnership with the Police Licensing and Local Authority Licencing, in relation to business premises (including sales to minors, alcohol, tobacco and e-cigarettes)	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Develop and deliver Gypsy, Roma and Traveller awareness raising community events	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Purchase of ANPR cameras - The purchase of six specialist ANPR specification redeployable surveillance cameras which will enable us to monitor	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023

Title	Status	Exception
and gather information in respect of environmental crime hotspots.		
Work in Partnership to enhance the Community Cohesion Programme offer in Denbighshire	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Commit to the Welsh Government's Anti-Racism Wales Action Plan through Service Business Plans	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Deliver upon the pledge to promote zero racism in Denbighshire	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
<i>Promote to schools English as an Additional Language Programme in terms of tackling racism and ensure anti-racism policies at schools are up to date (this includes raising awareness of ARWAP)</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>This activity is being scoped</i>
Engage and support tenants most likely to be experiencing social inequality to access services and take an active role in their community	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Bruton Park, Rhyl (working with Bruton Park residents to maximise community well-being).	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Develop Croeso Cynnes hubs throughout the County.	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Support diversity and engagement by embedding the framework on a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being	At Risk	Recent notification of reduction of WG grant fund to support this work, may compromise or curtail this work.
Review and revise the Youth Council for Denbighshire.	On Target	
Embed the DCC Anti-Bullying Strategy throughout all schools	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Period Dignity.	On Target Same	
Enhance the Nature for Health Programme within Denbighshire which offers multiple benefit – reducing isolation, improve	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023

Title	Status	Exception
health, rural skills, health and nature walks, arts and crafts)		
Develop a network to engage people and groups with protected characteristics (through the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group)	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Universal Free School Meals for all Primary School Pupils	On Target	
Develop and deliver the county wide Food Strategy and Food Partnership Network (including social supermarket project – Cogog) around Denbighshire	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023
Enhance the School Holiday Enrichment Programme to support children to eat well	On Target	
Enhance the offer, through Working Denbighshire, for all refugees who have settled in Denbighshire to gain support of an employment mentor (all adults are actively involved in English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes	On Target	
In partnership with Denbighshire Leisure Ltd and the Third Sector, secure funding for creative and cultural activities to work with resettled families in the county	Not started	Work to commence from April 2023

A round up of news

The following news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

In collaboration with Hey Girls, and funded through the Welsh Government Period Dignity Fund 2022 to 2023, the Council provided the [subscription service for young people in Denbighshire to help tackle period poverty](#). The subscription is available to residents in Denbighshire and young people on roll at a Denbighshire school and offers free eco-friendly and plastic free reusable or disposable sanitary products. If over 18, participants must reside in Denbighshire and be in receipt of a low income benefit such as universal credit, income support, child tax credit to be eligible.

In February, [Working Denbighshire](#) published information about the support it provides to support and guide individuals, on a pathway that meets their own needs and aspirations,

to hopefully lead them back into to employment. One example was a client with an unhealthy relationship with alcohol, leading to a detrimental effect on his mental health, periods of homelessness and spells in jail due to his anti-social behaviour. Support is vital in such cases, and the client's quality of life has improved markedly due to assistance with securing supported accommodation and counselling for his alcohol dependency.

In March, the Council welcomed news that the Welsh Government will continue to make funding available to make [free school meal payments for eligible pupils for the Easter and Whitsun school holidays, in response to the cost of living crisis](#), together with the May Bank Holiday and the Coronation Bank Holiday.

As part of a wider campaign to support our residents during these difficult times, the council raised awareness of Pension Credit. The Council has become aware this is an under claimed entitlement across Wales and wanted to do its best to address that in Denbighshire. We also work very closely with the Department of Work and Pensions and Citizen's Advice Denbighshire, who provide our residents with additional support to check their eligibility and make an application should they need it.

A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: At Risk

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

Our stakeholder survey will now, every year, ask stakeholders to say whether they agree that Denbighshire is a county where the Welsh language is a living, thriving language and that the rich cultural heritage and natural assets of Denbighshire are being used to their full potential. This question was first asked during 2022 to 2023. Just shy of 55% of respondents agreed that the Welsh language is a living, thriving language in Denbighshire, which is considered to be 'Acceptable'. 44% of residents agreed that the rich cultural heritage and natural assets of Denbighshire are being used to their full potential and is a 'Priority for Improvement'.

The number of people who could speak Welsh (aged 3 or older) as at the end of March 2022 stood at 92,300, which was 38.9%. This compared to 91,500 (33.3%) by the end of March 2021. The proportion of the population who report they speak Welsh daily and can speak more than a few words of Welsh tends to be lower, at 12% (all ages) in 2021 to 2022. Once agreed, new measures to monitor the effectiveness of our Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh Language Policy will be developed and reported upon in future reports.

27.4% of year one pupils received their education through the medium of Welsh during the academic year 2021 to 2022, a 0.4% increase on the previous year. Our ambition is to increase this to 32% by 2027 (the end of this new Corporate Plan), working towards 40% by 2032. Our ambition is based on current projections, which includes assumptions regarding growth in demand in existing Welsh medium schools and the transition of existing English medium schools to offer a Welsh medium foundation phase. We will confirm our threshold for intervention, i.e., what will be a 'Priority for Improvement', in our next report.

By the end of March 2023, 73% of staff had completed Welsh language awareness e-learning. Performance is considered a 'Priority for Improvement'.

4,350,000 tourists visited Denbighshire in 2020, which is an increase on the previous year's figures reflecting the disruption due to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions. The

figure - whilst improved - remains lower than the 5,990,000 visitors to Denbighshire in 2018. Data is always published in arrears and new data is expected in the summer.

For further measures and activity in support of Welsh language and culture (for example, our pledge to be close to our communities), please see our [well-run, high performing council](#) theme.

Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire is a county where the Welsh language is a living, thriving language - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	54.74% Acceptable
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the rich cultural heritage and natural assets of Denbighshire are being used to their full potential - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	44.01% Priority to Improve
The number of people who can speak Welsh (aged 3 or older) - Benchmarked Nationally	92,300 Acceptable Better	Data pending
The percentage of year 1 pupils receiving Welsh medium education - Count Only	27%	27.4% Thresholds pending
<i>New measures associated with delivery of the Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh Language Policy (placeholder)</i>	<i>No data. New to 2023 to 2024</i>	<i>No data. New to 2023 to 2024</i>
Heritage income generated over the year (£) - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
STEAM - The number of tourists visiting Denbighshire - Benchmarked Locally	4,350,000 Acceptable Better	Data pending. Available in summer

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of staff that have completed Welsh Language Awareness e-learning - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	No data. New to quarter 4 2022 to 2023	73% Priority to Improve
Measure: The number of Denbighshire Artisans supported (DLL Contract KPI) - Benchmarked Locally	54 (Annual figure) Excellent	No data	No data	No data	55 (Annual figure) Excellent Better

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

This theme contains 20 projects and activities. 11 have not yet started and these are at various stages (from project brief to business case); five are 'On Target' and three are 'Experiencing Obstacles'. The Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project is 'At Risk'. The status is 'At Risk' on the basis that funding has yet to be secured and therefore the funds are not in place to proceed as planned with the accommodation solution and the activity plan. Subject to the necessary approval from Cabinet, who now also wish to review alternative options in Denbighshire, a funding application to the NLHF (Welsh capital grant funding) will be submitted in either August or November 2023, and the outcome should be known some four months later. In the meanwhile, both archive services will continue to work collaboratively and develop the service under the North East Wales Archive brand.

Our pledge to 'Develop a cultural and heritage strategy and a programme of events' has not yet started and there is no clear, agreed way forward for delivering the pledge at this time.

Levelling Up Projects are being developed. None of the Clwyd West projects are live yet; most are either at project brief or business case stage and an update will be reported in the next period.

Delivery of the Welsh Language Strategy 2023-28 to promote and increase the use of Welsh in the county and the service delivery, policy making, and operational standards of the Welsh Language Policy will commence once Cabinet approval has been sought in June 2023. The Strategy in particular, may warrant being run as a project to ensure the culture change we want to see is achieved and embedded fully across the council and all its services.

The title of an activity to “Work with partners on the proposed designation of a National Park in North East Wales” has been amended to “Develop Denbighshire County Council’s internal and external governance on the emerging proposal from Natural Resources Wales for the new National Park in North East Wales”, to better reflect the current status of developments in relation to a new National Park.

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Implement the WESP to support 1 million speakers by 2050	On Target Same	
Deliver the Welsh Language Strategy 2023-28 to promote and increase the use of Welsh in the county	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Deliver the service delivery, policy making and operational standards of the Welsh Language Policy	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Develop and deliver a service wide Welsh language and culture project to young people celebrating where they live	Complete Same	We completed activity to develop and deliver a service wide Welsh language and culture project to young people celebrating where they live during the year, culminating in St David’s Day celebrations, Welsh cooking, music, and art sessions.
SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: <i>Develop a cultural and heritage strategy and a programme of events</i>	<i>Not started</i>	<i>Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.</i>
Project: Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project	At Risk	Funding has yet to be secured and therefore

Title	Status	Exception
	Same	funds are not in place to proceed as planned with the accommodation solution and the activity plan. A funding application is being developed.
Develop phase 1 Bodelwyddan Castle as a Country Park and a gateway to Denbighshire	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Develop and deliver the Denbighshire Heritage Service Forward Plan 2023 to 2026	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Develop and deliver the Ambassador Scheme in Denbighshire and across Wales in partnership	On Target Same	
Implement Welsh Government's new Cultural Strategy for Denbighshire Libraries	Not Started	Welsh Government's Cultural Strategy has not yet been published.
Develop Denbighshire County Council internal and external governance on emerging proposal from NRW for new National Park in North East Wales	On Target Same	
Seek the designation of the AONB as a Dark Sky Community	On Target Same	
Support and implement the National Music Service	On Target	
Plas Newydd, Llangollen: Enhance the visitor experience to include improvements to the grounds (Clwyd South Levelling Up Round 1)	Not started	At business case stage
Horseshoe Falls (Clwyd South Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At business case stage
Ruthin Clock Tower: Renovation of Clock Tower exterior (Clwyd West Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At project brief stage
Ruthin Gaol/46 Clwyd Street, Ruthin: Premises restoration including new access and improved public facilities (Clwyd West Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At business case stage

Title	Status	Exception
Nant Clwyd-y-Dre, Ruthin: Restoration to the Grade 1 listed building (Clwyd West Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At business case stage
Cae Ddol, Ruthin: Public Realm Upgrade and connect to the heritage theme (Clwyd West Levelling Up Round 2)	Not started	At project brief stage

A round up of news

The following news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

[A new Walking book, 'The Edge of Cymru', exploring Wales was launched at Plas Newydd, Llangollen](#) in January. The event celebrated the publication of the book and highlighted the importance of raising the profile of Welsh authors, particularly those that explore our landscape, culture and language.

The council informed residents and visitors to the county that following two years of flood recovery work, [Ruthin Gaol will reopen](#) its cell doors to visitors from the April 1, 2023. The restorations include a host of exciting new additions for visitors to explore.

In March, the council held an [open day at the Roman Bath House in Prestatyn](#). People were invited to attend the open day to learn about the ancient site's history, to try Roman-inspired crafts, and learn more about some of the stonework renovations and enjoy historically accurate Roman re-enactment. Funded by Cadw and the AONB Sustainable Development Fund, the project aims to increase visitor numbers and secure the site for generations to come.

[Denbighshire Libraries Service](#) attended Performance Scrutiny Committee in March, to update the Committee on its performance in relation to the 6th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-20. The Service also sought the Committee's observations on the progress made in developing libraries as places of individual and community well-being and resilience.

A well-run, high performing council

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: At Risk

This chapter in previous reports was entitled “Corporate Health: The council is efficient, well-managed and environmentally sustainable”. Under our new Corporate Plan, the theme of Corporate Health continues, but as “A well-run, high performing council”.

As we explained in the Summary Position section in our [previous report](#), since November 2022, we have held discussions to determine the right strategic set of measures and activity to monitor through these performance reports in future. Many of the measures and some of the activities previously reported under Corporate Health are continuing, and we have updated progress in relation to those below. There is though, still some work to do before a final indicator set is reached that incorporates new indicators for projects or activities that have yet to commence.

Performance Framework: Measures Update

Measuring equal appointments is complex and looks at the protected characteristics for which we readily have data (based on what people have declared). The protected characteristics that we particularly look at here are Race, Disability, Sexuality and Gender Reassignment. Based on recently published data for 2021 to 2022, we see an increase in appointments from 4% to 21%. This compares to 19% when looking at those that do not have these characteristics and were appointed. On closer inspection of the data, more appointments were made to people stating they were gay or bi-sexual or had their gender reassigned than those who stated they were heterosexual/straight. People with a protected characteristic of 'race', disability or religion were less likely to be appointed than those without those protected characteristics (the percentage difference in appointments was 2% for 'race', 3% for disability and 11% for religion).

80.7% of the lowest paid jobs that the council offers were occupied by women during 2022 to 2023 (up from 79.3% on the previous year), which is considered a ‘Priority for Improvement’. Our measure of the mean hourly rate of pay for women showed that women were being paid more than men during both 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021, but the difference in pay swung back to favour men by 6.7% in 2021. Mean hourly rate of pay returned in the favour of women again during 2022 to 2023.

As at March 2023, sickness absence stood at 9.8 days, the same as for the last period, and remains a 'Priority for Improvement'. As at March 2023, the percentage of staff who are eligible for one or three 121s and who have had at least one or three one-to-one meetings in the last 12 months stood at 61%, up from 53% in the last period. This is a rolling total. The percentage of employees that have completed all 9 mandatory e-learning modules by the end of the year (excluding schools) stood at 49% by the end of the year, and is a 'Priority for Improvement'. Given the challenges facing the council, this theme uses employee turnover as an indicator. More employees have left the council (including and excluding schools) over the last two years, peaking to 12.4% (excluding schools) and 11.7% (including schools) of the total workforce during 2022 to 2023.

We have received no formal recommendations for improvement from external regulators (Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and Audit Wales), and there have also been no low assurance reports in this period from internal audit. The joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) took place in Denbighshire in February 2023, involving Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and Estyn. A draft report has been received but we expect to be able to report on the outcomes of the Review in the next reporting period.

One corporate project is currently presenting as 'Compromised' (Dewi Sant Childcare project), with 96% of all projects being regularly updated by project managers, an improvement of 1% from our last report.

We currently have a total of 20 risks on the register, 11 of which are inconsistent with our risk appetite (55%). This is considered to be a 'Priority for Improvement'.

Just under half (49.5%) of all Corporate Plan measures were showing as a 'Priority for Improvement' during January to March, which is considered 'Acceptable'.

Our measure on budget variance (i.e. what we have and receive versus what we are spending) has decreased to £1.585million. The council's reserves have also decreased to £5.531million.

We have started to monitor the revenue outturn expenditure per head of population, which we benchmark nationally. Revenue outturn expenditure per head of population in Denbighshire stood at £2913.25 in 2021to 2022. We need to agree our methodology for determining what excellence looks like. On the basis of our default methodology, whereby

excellence is determined by calculating the median across Wales - which for 2021 to 2022 stood at £2,669.31 - our performance would be considered a Priority for Improvement, ranked second highest when compared to all local authorities in Wales. However, this is a single crude measure that could warrant being examined alongside council tax rates for example. It does though offer a lens into a debate about value for money, which is one of the pledges within this theme; a pledge that needs scoping further.

By the end of March, 35% of the council’s spend was with local suppliers and 66% of contracts (over £25k and under £1,000k) during the period contained community benefits. Two collaborative procurements were awarded during the period, and one collaborative procurement opportunities was missed. There were 15 potential collaborative procurements on the horizon, and these will be explored and developed in the coming months.

The percentage of negative news stories about the council (taken as a proportion of all news stories about the council) has increased from 12% in the previous period to 14% between January and March 2023. This represents 27 negative stories out of a total of 190 and is a ‘Priority for Improvement’. The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter has decreased from 53% to 42%. This represents 24 from 56 complaints upheld or partly upheld, and is considered ‘Good’.

Several of our stakeholder survey questions have seen some improvement this year but all of those relating to this theme remain a ‘Priority for Improvement’. Each question reflects the pledges within the new Corporate Plan and are an area of focus for the council. These questions will be asked every year for the remainder of this Corporate Plan, and we anticipate seeing improvements in the survey results as the Plan is delivered.

For further measures and activity in support of procurement and community benefits, please see the [Prosperous](#) theme.

Annual or biennial measures

2019 to 2022 data

Title	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022
The percentage of new appointees from applications where it was disclosed that they are either from a racial or religious minority	15%	4%	21%

Title	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022
group, have a disability, are gay or bi-sexual, or had their gender reassigned – Count Only			

2021 to 2023 data

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage difference in the mean hourly rate of pay for women – Benchmarked Locally	6.7% Acceptable	-13.4% Excellent Better
The percentage of the lowest paid salaries (bottom quarter) that are women – Benchmarked Locally	79.3% Priority to Improve Better	80.7% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of attendance by elected members (expected and present), year to date - Benchmarked Locally	89%	84% Good Worse
The percentage of employees who leave Denbighshire as a percentage of the total workforce (excluding schools) – Benchmarked Nationally	10.6% Good Worse	12.4% Acceptable Worse
The percentage of employees who leave Denbighshire as a percentage of the total workforce (including schools) – Benchmarked Nationally	10.2% Priority to Improve Worse	11.7% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council is transparent, well-run, and high performing – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	40.69% Priority to Improve
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council works well with partners – Benchmarked Locally	62% Good	41.26% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that there is a good working relationship between political leaders and senior management – Benchmarked Locally	63% Good	29% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council manages its performance well – Benchmarked Locally	28% Priority to Improve	42.53% Priority to Improve Better

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council manages its risks and challenges well – Benchmarked Locally	30% Priority to Improve	41.47% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council manages its finances well – Benchmarked Locally	26% Priority to Improve	37.41% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council has effective long-term plans in place – Benchmarked Locally	31% Priority to Improve	37.59% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council treats its workforce well – Benchmarked Locally	35% Priority to Improve	48.27% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council makes best use of its assets and resources – Benchmarked Locally	20% Priority to Improve	27.95% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council purchases its goods and services in a fair and efficient way – Benchmarked Locally	25% Priority to Improve	28.47% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council acts on the concerns of residents – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	38.62% Priority to Improve
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council treats all people fairly – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	42.39% Priority to Improve
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council's Corporate Plan and priorities reflect the needs of the local community - Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2022 to 2023	37.3% Priority to Improve
Revenue outturn expenditure per head of population (£s) - Count Only	2,913.25 Thresholds pending	Data pending. Available October 2023

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of Corporate Plan Measures showing as 'Priority for Improvement' – Benchmarked Locally	47% Acceptable Worse	51% Priority to Improve Worse	51% Priority to Improve Same	No data: does not apply	49.5% Acceptable Better
The number of projects on the project register showing as 'Compromised' – Benchmarked Locally	1 Good Better	1 Good Same	2 Acceptable Worse	1 Good Better	1 Good Same
The percentage of projects whose delivery confidence was updated in the last three months – Benchmarked Locally	100% Excellent Better	95% Good Worse	100% Excellent Better	95% Good Worse	96% Good Improved
The percentage of corporate risks inconsistent with the council's risk appetite statement – Benchmarked Locally	64% Priority to Improve Worse	No data: does not apply	55% Priority to Improve Better	No data: does not apply	55% Priority to Improve Same
The cumulative The number of negative reports from external regulators – Benchmarked Locally	0	0	0	0 Excellent Same	0 Excellent Same
The cumulative The number of Internal Audit low assurance reports, financial year to date – Benchmarked Locally	4 Acceptable Worse	0	0	0 Excellent Same	0 Excellent Same

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
Corporate and Service Budget Variance (£k) – Count Only	-2,399	1,109	2,661	2,189	1,585
Council reserves (£k) – Count Only	7,135	7,135	7,135	7,135	5,531
Negative news stories as a percentage of all news stories about the council – Benchmarked Locally	9% Priority to Improve Worse	10% Priority to Improve Worse	11% Priority to Improve Worse	12% Priority to Improve Worse	14% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter – Benchmarked Locally	60% Priority to Improve Worse	46% Good Better	67% Priority to Improve Worse	53% Acceptable Better	42% Good Better
The percentage of Members that have completed Code of Conduct training – Benchmarked Locally	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The rolling average The number of working days / shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence – Benchmarked Nationally	9.57 Priority to Improve Worse	10.18 Priority to Improve Worse	10 Priority to Improve Worse	9.8 Priority to Improve Better	9.8 Priority to Improve Same
The percentage of staff who are eligible for one or three one-to-ones and who have had at least one or three one-to-ones in the last 12 months (by person) – Benchmarked Locally	43% Priority to Improve Better	45% Priority to Improve Better	52% Priority to Improve Better	53% Priority to Improve Better	61% Priority to Improve Better

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023
The percentage of staff for whom we have equality monitoring information – Benchmarked Locally	52% Good Worse	51.4% Good Worse	76% Excellent Better	72% Excellent Worse	71.5% Excellent Worse
The number of vacancies advertised during the quarter – Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The percentage of employees that have completed all 9 mandatory e-learning modules by the end of the year (excluding schools) – Benchmarked Locally	No data	No data	No data	No data	49% Priority to Improve Better
The number of career pathways – Count Only	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	No data. New to 2023 to 2024
The number of actual collaborative procurements – Count Only	1	5	2	1	2
The number of missed collaborative procurements – Count Only	1	0	0	0	1

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Projects Update

This theme includes several suggested activities that need to be scoped. Some are already in progress (such as delivering the action plans identified by staff in the five staff-led task and finish groups created by the Chief Executive). Two activities are 'On Target', seven are 'Experiencing Obstacles', and the remaining 13 are due to start between 2023 to 2024 (four of which are suggested and need to be scoped). Governance arrangements

for this theme are under discussion and we hope to report on an agreed way forward in our next report.

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Prepare for Peer Review for Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: Deliver action plans identified by the five staff-led task and finish groups	Not started	<i>This activity is being scoped</i>
SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: Develop and launch a new customer service framework (linked to our Welsh Language Strategy and Policy)	Not started	<i>This activity is being scoped</i>
SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: Procure a new corporate CRM (timescale 2025)	Not started	<i>This activity is being scoped</i>
Implement the Public Participation Strategy	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Develop a co-production strategy (DCC wide)	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Update the procurement strategy (to become a new project: Implement the new procurement strategy to deliver decarbonisation and the principles of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill)	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Develop and secure Asset Management Group adoption of new Asset Management Strategy	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Develop and deliver portfolio plans to determine the shape, size and future use of assets for each of the council's asset management portfolios	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Undertake an annual review of the Corporate Workforce Plan 2022 to 2027	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: Ensure value for money is embedded within our organisational culture, and that decisions	Not started	<i>This activity is being scoped</i>

Title	Status	Exception
<i>are balanced by considering service quality and social value.</i>		
Establish the Ethical Liaison Group	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Update the Members' Code of Conduct to include a timeframe within which Members are expected to have completed Code of Conduct training	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Develop a framework to guide councillors in handling harassment, abuse and intimidation	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Implement the new requirements of the UK Elections Act 2022 and other electoral reform	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Ensure that the Constitution is fit for purpose following the changes brought about by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Raise awareness of mental health issues across the council through delivery and embedding of the Time to Change action plan	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Promote and enable career pathways, where possible, to support workforce development and progression	Not started	Work to commence during 2023 to 2024.
Embed the new agile working policy and support any learning and development needs from it	On Target Same	
Improve the information we have about our workforce, including equality information, to support more detailed analyses in future Public Sector Duty Reports	Experiencing Obstacles Same	
Deliver the Corporate Workforce Action Plan	On Target Same	
Deliver the action plan of the Social Care Recruitment and Retention Operational group	Experiencing Obstacles Same	

Self-Assessment: Governance Areas

The following is our self-assessment against the seven key governance areas and seeks to paint a picture of how well the council is performing, how we know that (linking to evidence where it is available), and what we can do to improve. Our news round up is included in each governance section.

Corporate Planning

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

Embedding our new Corporate Plan, 2022 to 2027

Following the approval of our new Corporate Plan (denbighshire.gov.uk/corporateplan), the Strategic Planning and Performance Team have been working to align the council's reporting functions to the new Plan, which includes our governance arrangements and a revised Performance Management Framework that will support the nine themes. Our first Programme meeting for the new Corporate Plan was held with the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet on March 17 to agree our 'blueprint document' for delivery of the Plan. This report is the first to present performance against this new framework. A further session planned with our Corporate Executive Team and Cabinet on April 25 will agree governance arrangements for the nine themes in the Plan. We have also ensured that all Service Plans align to, and include content from the Corporate Plan to ensure reporting clarity.

Senior Leadership Team

Following the conclusion in January of the formal consultation on the proposed options for the new Senior Leadership Team restructure, agreement around the final structure was circulated in February, with implementation effective from April 1, 2023. In brief, new service groupings have been created beneath two Corporate Support Services covering 'People' (which includes the former Legal, HR and Democratic Services, Corporate Health and Safety, Communications and Marketing, and Customer services) and 'Performance, Digital and Assets' (which includes most aspects of the old Business Improvement and Modernisation service, but with the addition of Property Services). A new Housing and Communities Service will also include Community Development, Archives, and Housing Development and Maintenance. Community Support Services will also change its name to

become the Adult Social Care and Homelessness Service. Finally, Internal Audit will move to make up the new Finance and Audit Service. We are currently carrying four vacant head of service posts within the structure, being covered by interim arrangements with managers acting up. These posts will be recruited in two batches, starting with the heads of Adult Social Care and Homelessness, and Highways and Environmental Services being advertised in April; followed by the Corporate Support Service posts hopefully in May. For more information on the new structure, [visit our website](#).

Councillor Meetings

A survey of councillors opened in December to determine whether meetings held during the day is a detriment to working members where employers are reticent to release staff to attend meetings. The results were shared with [Council in January](#). 34 responses were received (72% of the membership) and concluded that the majority of members preferred morning meetings, did not want to see the timings of meetings rotated, and that evening meetings would be the most difficult to attend. Members duly approved and confirmed existing arrangements for the timing of Council, committee and other member meetings.

Agree and implement a whole council approach to New Ways of Working

A briefing note was circulated in November (covered in our previous report) that outlined the position with regard to staff and office / home working. This position remains unchanged. However, following the restructure of the Senior Leadership Team, responsibility for the New Ways of Working project has now moved to the Corporate Director for Governance and Business. It is anticipated that the next phase of the project will look at the council's office estate, i.e. what it needs and where.

Respond to the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

One outstanding requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act concerns arrangements for a peer 'Panel Assessment' of council functions, to take place once within the electoral term. The position remains unchanged since our last report, where we are waiting on the Welsh Local Government Association to provide us with detail on their national Peer Assessment offer, including costs. We had anticipated this detail by the spring of 2023, with the first panel assessments of local authorities taking place in the autumn of 2023 at the earliest. However, there are ongoing delays and we will seek clarity.

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)

Twelve projects for Year 1 of the Shared Prosperity Fund were approved by Cabinet in January, but we are still waiting for permission to issue grant agreements and claim forms to projects to draw down the funding. The window for Year 2 and 3 applications was opened between January 31 and February 24, and in Denbighshire we received 110 applications: 70 for regional projects, with the remaining 40 being direct delivery in Denbighshire only. Following receipt and appraisal of the applications, including consultation with the wider Denbighshire SPF Partnership, the Senior Leadership Team and Member Area Group Chairs, 60 projects were discussed at a Partnership meeting on March 21, with 29 being shortlisted, and 3 placed in reserve.

We have now also received the first draft of the regional agreements that outline arrangements and next steps after the approval of applications at Stage 1. Discussion has also taken place with the regional team about how we collectively provide feedback on regional applications. Meanwhile, Finance has gathered evidence for our first claim for Administration fees, claimed retrospectively to January 2023.

In February, Cabinet agreed to commission Cadwyn Clwyd and Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council to deliver Key Funds in the area of Business Support and Community Capacity Building. Officers and Heads of Service are working with Legal, Finance and regional colleagues to confirm who will be the Project Lead for these Key Funds. We are also in the process of seeking additional information from the Regional Team about the requirements needed to request advanced payments for projects.

Financial Planning

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

Finance Update Reports

In January, Cabinet considered a [finance report](#) detailing the latest financial position and progress against the agreed budget strategy. Plans to spend a capital grant to implement a homelessness leasing scheme were approved. Cabinet received a further [finance report at February's meeting](#) and members approved the commissioning form to tender for all classes of insurance services (except for marine and terrorism) for the authority. Also approved was the writing-off of unrecoverable Business Rates. The latest [finance report](#)

for the period was presented to Cabinet in March. Approval was given for the match-funding requirement for the Clwyd West Levelling Up Grant programme and the 'Four Great Highways' project as part of the Clwyd South Levelling Up Grant programme.

The net revenue budget for 2022 to 2023 is £233.696million (up from 216.818m in 2021 to 2022). The position on service and corporate budgets is a forecast overspend of £1.585million. The 2022 to 2023 budget required service savings and efficiencies of £0.754million to be identified and these are assumed to have been achieved. At the end of February, the council's borrowing totalled £273.035million at an average rate of 4.08%. Investment balances were £36.2m at an average rate of 3.44%.

With regards to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the latest revenue position assumes a decrease in balances at year end of £578k compared to £4k at the time the budget was approved. The decrease relates to a reduction in estimated rental income. HRA balances are therefore forecast to be £1.479million at the end of the year. The HRA Capital budget of £23million is largely allocated between planned improvements to existing housing stock (£12million) and new build developments and acquisitions (£11million).

The reports also give a summary of the council's Capital Plan. The approved Capital Plan for 2022 to 2023 is £51.1million with expenditure to date of £30.3million. The Capital Plan contingency was increased by £1.676million to £2.176million (up from the £0.500million agreed in February 2022) due to carrying forward the unhypothecated element of a capital grant received from Welsh Government in March. After allocations to the Waste Project and the Levelling Up Scheme, the contingency level at £764k will help mitigate the risks to the overall programme of the impact of inflation on capital costs.

The budget for Education and Children's Services remains an area of concern as the current forecast overspend is £3.437million (previously £2.999million). Most of the pressure relates to children's placements, which have either commenced this financial year, or are now projected to continue longer than previously predicted. The Education service overspend (£182k) relates to Out-of-County income budget pressure of £704k due to a reduction in the number of pupils from other councils attending council facilities, offset by grant maximisation and efficiencies across the service. The Community Support Service budget remains a high-risk area, with the current outturn prediction being £2.318million (previously £2.369million) due to an overall pressure of £4.8million, in high cost placements and homelessness service, netted off by fully utilising a cash reserve of £2.4million.

Statement of Accounts

The council has a statutory duty to produce a statement of accounts that complies with approved accounting standards. In March, the Governance and Audit Committee were updated on the progress of the [Statement of Accounts for 2021 to 2022](#). A technical issue affecting all Welsh local authorities was resolved in December, however, two more specific issues concerning Denbighshire County Council's council house asset values have resulted in further delays to work being completed in order for Audit Wales to approve the accounts. As it is also important to address the backlog in preparations with the closedown process for the 2022 to 2023 Statement of Accounts, an audited final set of accounts for 2021 to 2022 is unlikely to be taken for approval until September 2023.

Annual Treasury Management

In January, the Governance and Audit Committee received an update on the council's [Treasury Management](#) activity during 2022 to 2023. The Committee also reviewed the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023 to 2024 showing how the council would manage its investments and borrowing, including Prudential Indicators which set limits on the council's Treasury Management activity. Meeting in February, Council members approved the [Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023 to 2024 and Prudential Indicators](#) for financial years between 2023 and 2026. The council is required to invest its treasury funds prudently, striking an appropriate balance between risk and return and the TMSS outlines the council's approach in this regard.

Budget Process Update

At its meeting in January, the Governance and Audit Committee received a [budget process update](#) from the Head of Finance. Members were assured that the process had involved extensive consultation, including a Council Briefing held earlier in January, which had been supportive of the budget proposals. The [budget for 2023 to 2024](#) had also been discussed and approved by Cabinet. The [final proposals for the budget 2023 to 2024](#) were then approved by Council at its meeting in late January.

The budget report set out the implications of the draft Local Government Settlement for 2023 to 2024, which had resulted in a positive settlement of 8.2% (compared to the Welsh average of 7.9%). The settlement included all pay increases for teaching and non-teaching posts and responsibility to pay social care staff the Real Living Wage. As the settlement generated £14.231million, and pressures amounting to £25.116million were calculated, a

funding gap of £10.885million was identified. Proposals for balancing the budget were outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan, including the recommended Council Tax rise of 3.8%, which was at the lower end of indicative increases across Wales.

Due to the very late date for the Final Settlement, it was recommended and agreed that Cabinet and Council delegate authority to the Head of Finance and Property in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance to adjust the use of cash included in the budget proposals by up to £500k. The draft settlement included a slightly increased indicative average settlement of 3.0% for the financial year 2024 to 2025. Although this increase was welcomed it does indicate that difficult decisions will be required over the coming years.

As part of the budget proposals for 2023 to 2024, members of the Council agreed in January the adoption of the [All Wales Council Tax Reduction Schemes](#) and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 and the All Wales Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2023. The nationally defined scheme aims to provide consistent levels of support to vulnerable people. Members also approved the discretionary elements of the scheme detailed in the report.

At its meeting in February, Council was required to pass further resolutions relating to setting the levels of [Council Tax for 2023 to 2024](#) to ensure the legal validity of the process. The detail of recommended amounts calculated can be found in the appendix of the report. These are in line with the requirements of the regulations and were approved by full Council.

Other developments in the last period

Recommendations of the Budget Board

Following the cessation of the Strategic Investment Group, a new capital approval process has been in development. In the interim, the Budget Board – Capital met to consider bids prepared by each service. In February Cabinet gave support for projects identified for inclusion in the 2023 to 2024 Capital Plan as per the [recommendations of the Budget Board](#). Members were advised that the total funding available for 2023 to 2024 block allocations for on-going programmes of work was £13,368,000. The list of projects included Highways works which would require £4m prudential borrowing to maintain the level of spend. It was noted that a rise in costs would be difficult to support due to the

reduction in the Welsh Government's Capital Budget and as a result, the council would need to resort to funding through capital reserves for those areas viewed as priorities. Meeting in February, Council approved the [recommendations of the Budget Board and Capital Plan](#) for financial years between 2023 and 2026.

Performance Management

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

Implement annual process for stakeholder engagement on council performance.

Our annual Stakeholder Survey was launched on November 7 and closed on March 19. It was promoted through our Libraries and receptions, with paper copies available at those locations, as well as through social media campaigns. We received 630 responses, which is an increase on the previous year. The results have been included within the data in this report, which includes of course for the first time new questions around our new Corporate Plan themes. Existing questions that we asked last time around our seven governance areas have also been updated and included within this report. We will hold a lessons learned meeting in the coming months before the launch of the survey again for 2023 to 2024.

Address Staff Capacity within Internal Audit

Two Career Pathway Auditors commenced in their roles during this period, and recruitment into the vacant Principal Auditor role, which is being advertised for a third time, will commence in April 2023.

Self-Assessment of Performance

During this last period, and continuing our ongoing process for Self-Assessment of performance against our functions, the council produced its third in-year performance update report covering September to December. This was circulated to the Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny for their information, and is now available to view on the [performance page of our website](#). This January to March update report is the fourth and final report in the set, which, combined with our Executive Summary, makes up our Self-Assessment for 2022 to 2023.

Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: Performance Management Framework

As described earlier in this report, considerable work has been carried out by the Strategic Planning and Performance Team to develop the Performance Management Framework for the new Corporate Plan. We have worked closely with Corporate Executive Team and Cabinet leads, and officers from every level of the council to bring forward a comprehensive set of measures and actions in response to our Corporate Plan themes and pledges, which are presented in this report for the first time. We have sought to challenge services around their ambition for performance and actively include national measures, where appropriate, to allow for good benchmarking and comparisons to be drawn. Service Plans have also been aligned to the new framework to allow for clarity of reporting, the whole now being built into our Performance Management System, Verto. There will be aspects still in need of development and some gaps to fill, but the foundation is now in place to be taken forward through our routine reports to managers and committees. It would be timely now that this framework and, shortly, new governance arrangements for the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027 are in place for the Strategic Planning and Performance Team to update its [Performance Management Guide](#). This work will be taken forward in the summer.

Other developments in the last period

Service Performance Challenge

Following agreement from the Senior Leadership Team in January and Cabinet Briefing in February, arrangements have been put in place for our internal Service Performance Challenge programme to commence from May. The challenges are an important aspect of the council's Performance Management arrangements, allowing senior managers, Cabinet, scrutiny members and our regulators to 'deep-dive' into the performance of a particular service area, and to freely discuss and seek solutions to key issues or risks. The Service will prepare a short SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis that will form the basis of the discussion, alongside performance data on their Service Business Plan and Service Risk Register.

Performance Report: Cefndy

At its [meeting in January](#), Performance Scrutiny received a performance report on Cefndy, which is a site that provides important employment opportunities for local disabled people who would otherwise struggle to find employment. Cefndy manufactures various living aids

and has been in existence for approximately 40 years, with many staff having worked there for many years, the average length of service being 17 years. It was noted that disruption and cost volatility to global supply chains in recent years had increased Cefndy's competitiveness against imports and impacted positively on sales with old and new customers. However, there have also been some unforeseen budget pressures too during the current financial year, including additional energy costs, higher than expected salary increases, and emergency building repairs. Work has taken place over the previous 18 to 24 months to stabilise the service. The committee requested a further information report following the close of the current financial year (2022 to 2023) to give an update on Cefndy's performance, and to receive their annual performance report for 2023 to 2024 in the summer of 2024.

Christ the Word Catholic School

Following the [Estyn report](#) that placed Christ the Word Catholic School in special measures last summer, at its [meeting in January](#), Performance Scrutiny received an update on all the steps undertaken by the council's Education Service, the School's Governing Body, Diocese and GwE to date, including the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP), and joint Local Education Authority (LEA) and GwE Support Plan for the school. These measures included the appointment of additional governors for the School's Governing Body; the appointment of an interim school leadership team; and the provision of additional support to help move the school forward. All of these actions and the measures outlined in the PIAP had been accepted by Estyn and the delivery of the PIAP and LEA/GwE action plans were now subjected to regular challenge and monitoring. Following an in-depth discussion, members supported all parties' efforts to address Estyn's recommendations, and requested that an update report be presented to the committee in September 2023.

Risk Management

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

Corporate Risk Register

We currently have a total of 20 risks on the register, 11 of which are inconsistent with our risk appetite (55%). We have updated our presentation of the register, which now incorporates risk colour and trend. Whilst risk scores had not changed, the risks we are

facing, in some cases, remain severe and serious. The February 2023 review of the corporate risk register will be presented to Performance Scrutiny in April 2023. The next planned review of our corporate risk register will commence from September 2023.

Risk Appetite Statement

In November, [Governance and Audit Committee](#) received an update on the application of risk management methodology. Members were in agreement to endorse the proposal to amend the Corporate Risk Appetite Statement. The council's [risk appetite statement](#) was reviewed and adjusted in November 2022. The council's minimalist risk appetite in relation to Workforce: Terms and Conditions has been relaxed very slightly to a cautious risk appetite, to reflect the way we are 'flexing' recruitment processes – in a safe way – to alleviate challenges in filling roles. All other aspects of our risk appetite statement have remained the same.

Information Risk Policy

The council has drafted a revised Information Risk Policy, which it will shortly seek approval for. The requirement for services to consider Information Risk as part of their Service Planning for 2023 to 2024 was also included within our 'Service Planning Prompts', which are always shared with Heads of Service and managers when developing new service plans. Services are also encouraged to continually review their Service Risk Registers, which should capture any information risks that services are carrying.

Workforce Planning

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

Staff Training, Development and Mental-Health

A review of our current flexible working policy and guidance is complete and approval has been obtained from the Local Joint Consultative Committee. The policy needs to be presented to Cabinet for approval. If approved, it will be implemented from June 2023 together with a communications plan, induction materials and sessions to support staff and managers with the new ways of working.

HR has appointed a lead Learning and Development Specialist to oversee and deliver the mental health action plan. They will work alongside Mental Health Champions, once they

are in place, to ensure support for mental health and well-being is embedded across the council. The action plan has two outstanding actions (a survey and to establish Champions).

Improve the information we have about our workforce

This action includes equality information to support more detailed analyses in future Public Sector Duty Reports. By the end of March, we had equality information for 71.5% of staff. Due to continual changes in staff the equality information we have about our workforce tends to vary. However, performance has improved greatly since June 2022, at which point we had information for 51.4% of staff.

Workforce planning

Workforce planning actions remain underway to progress the findings of the corporate and service-level workforce planning reviews. There continues to be a significant focus on recruitment, especially in social care and health roles. An annual update will be presented in April 2023. A fresh workforce planning process will commence once the new senior leadership structure is in place later in the year.

We are working to develop our Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh Language Policy, both of which will impact upon workforce development and service delivery to support and raise the profile of the use of Welsh within the council and in the wider community. The policy has been approved by the Senior Leadership Team and the Welsh Language Steering Committee. Both the Strategy and the Policy were both expected to be approved with delivery starting from April 2023, but full approval will be sought from Cabinet in June 2023.

A detailed report about recruitment, retention and workforce planning across the council was presented to [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in January 2023. This report was stimulated by earlier reports received by Governance and Audit Committee in [November 2022](#), about the September 2022 risk review and an information report about recruitment and retention issues in Social Services. The Committee said it was reassured officers were aware of, and responding adequately to, challenges in relation to recruitment and retention and Members were reminded of a planned Internal Audit review that would take place in the new financial year (2023 to 2034).

Social Care Workers

In January, the council launched a campaign to attract people to a career in Social Care, in roles varying from health and social care to catering. Recruiting more staff into social care is critical for effective services to vulnerable people and is part of wider efforts to reduce risks associated recruitment and retention in social care in Denbighshire and nationally. The council is committed to working with prospective employees to remove any barriers to work, and is promoting the job security, staff benefits - such as competitive rates of pay, an excellent pension scheme, travel allowance, and generous annual leave entitlement, together with flexible working hours and contracts – to attract new staff into these critical roles.

Service Challenge Action: DBS Compliance

Safer recruitment remains a high priority for the council. The additional resource in the team addressed the backlog of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) renewals. That resource is no longer in place and has been replaced with a business-as-usual approach. Weekly monitoring by Human Resource Assistants continues and additional reports have been created to assist with performance monitoring. This has resulted in an increase in compliance to 92%, up from 90% on the previous period. The remaining 8% are in progress and the reasons for their outstanding status are due to staff needing to action a task or are awaiting the DBS process to be concluded and the certificate produced.

A more formal monitoring process is being prepared and we are actively reminding recruiting managers of their responsibilities with regards to safer recruitment; to ensure that new staff have all the appropriate checks in place before they start. Communications to new employees and managers has been revised setting out the safer recruitment checks that need to be completed. We expect this action to be complete within the next period.

Assets

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

Asset Management strategy

Progress in this area has continued to be affected by a lack of capacity within the team. An additional staff member has been appointed and we expect that person to be in post by June 2023. Once the new asset management strategy is in place, we will develop and deliver portfolio plans to determine the shape, size and future use of assets for each of the council's asset management portfolios.

Service Challenge Action: Remote Meeting Hubs

The aim of this action was to support remote meetings in areas where broadband connection is poor. Whilst we have delivered broadband infrastructure to community sites to enable the creation of hubs, finance and resources are not available to progress this action further at the present time.

Supporting Businesses and Partners to Adapt

As is outlined [below](#) in more detail, a key area of work for the year ahead, working across the council, will be to implement the new procurement strategy, which once approved, will set out our approach to delivering decarbonisation, the principles of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill and the requirements of new UK Government procurement legislation. This will involve working across the council to support Denbighshire's local supply chain. The new decarbonisation procurement specialist role will be instrumental in coordinating this support. There is an opportunity in the interim to use the material produced by Welsh Local Government Association for businesses as part of the Decarbonisation Procurement Toolkit. We will need to ensure there is clarity first though, to ensure roll out of the toolkit is effective. A particular priority for the year will be to work with suppliers on the Design and Print Framework to ready them for carbon reporting from April 2024.

Procurement

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

Decarbonisation Procurement Expertise

The Procurement Team has secured agreement to recruit jointly, with Flintshire County Council, a new decarbonisation specialist within the team to progress decarbonisation in

our procurements and supply chain. The post of Procurement Business Partner – Decarbonisation is being advertised again with an application deadline of May 2023.

Biodiversity Protection and Decarbonisation in Procurement

There continued to be capacity issues and these are still affecting the pace of progress in relation to actions in this area. However, positively, a Collaborative Procurement and North Wales Construction Framework Manager has now been appointed and has been in post since March 2023. The postholder was formerly the Community Benefits Hub Manager.

A key area of work for the year ahead, working across the council, will be to start delivering procurement and community benefit activities within our new Corporate Plan; primarily to implement the new procurement strategy, which once approved, will set out our approach to delivering decarbonisation, the principles of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill and the requirements of new UK Government procurement legislation. This will involve working across the council to support Denbighshire's local supply chain.

The Welsh Local Government Association has produced and launched a Decarbonisation Procurement Toolkit, which includes carbon-related questions by sector and level of spend. The new carbonisation procurement specialist will be leading on this work. We have yet to fully start supporting businesses and suppliers in Denbighshire to encourage lower carbon practice, and again this will be a key focus for the new procurement specialist.

Reduction in miles travelled on contract delivery continues to prove challenging to measure and report. The Community Benefits Hub plans to review the approach to measurement considering the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill.

Contract Procedure Rules

Contract Procedure Rules will be updated to reflect new UK Public Procurement legislation due in 2023 to 2024. We will continue to report on progress through this report in the meantime.

Improvement Actions

Below is a new improvement action that has been identified through this report:

- Update the [Performance Management Guide](#) to reflect the new Corporate Plan Performance Management Framework and governance arrangements.

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Report to	Governance and Audit Committee
Date of meeting	14 th June 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets
Report author	Steve Gadd, Head of Finance and Audit
Title	Budget Process Update

1. What is the report about?

The report sets out the revised financial projections for the 3 year period 2024/25 to 2026/27 and a proposed budget strategy for setting the budget the 2024/25.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 To update the committee on the revised financial projections for the 3 year period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

2.2 To update the committee on the budget strategy agreed by Cabinet for setting the budget for 2024/25.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 To note the revised financial projections for the 3 year period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

3.2 To note and consider the budget strategy agreed by Cabinet for setting the budget for 2024/25.

4. Report details

4.1 Summary of 23/24 budget setting position

The Draft Local Government Settlement for 2023/24 was received by the council on 14th December and resulted in a positive settlement of 8.2%, compared to the Welsh average of 7.9%. This resulted in additional funding of £14.231m. However, this was against a background of the Council facing pressures of £25.116m leaving a funding gap of £10.885m. The gap was bridged by increasing Council Tax by 3.8% (£2.713m), one-off corporate savings (£6.095), small service savings (£1.261) and 1% school savings (£0.816m).

On the positive side this has meant that no cash from reserves was required to support the budget. However, we were aware of a number of risks around energy costs, pay increases and those services that have historically struggled to stay within the budgets set at the beginning of the year (eg adult's and children's social care, school transport).

4.2 Revised Budget Projections for 2024/25 to 2026/27 (see Appendix 1)

The draft settlement included a slightly increased indicative average settlement increase of 3.0% for 2024/25. Although this is very welcome from a planning perspective it does result in a very difficult financial position. No indications have been given for future years and obviously the political and economic environment remains extremely uncertain. The Council has never experienced a period of prolonged very high inflation and a return to well below inflation settlements – this is what we are facing in 2024/25.

It should be noted that the figures in Appendix 1 do not include estimates for savings that could be achieved yet – it only shows an estimate of the pressures and a possible impact of increases in Council Tax and Revenue Support Grant (which has already been set in principle). The increases in the projections largely relate to factoring in likely/possible overspends in year relating to pay, energy and known pressure areas. On top of these we have also reviewed other key pressures in light of the continuing high inflation and a known risk to the integrity of the grading system for staff used which is likely to become unfit for purpose in response to the rising National Living Wage. The table includes a Low, Medium and High estimate for each row – this is illustrative of the uncertainty of the figures and also of the amount of work that still needs to be carried out in particular. The key points are:

- High level estimates indicate we could be facing pressures of £37m in 24/25 (compared to £25m in 23/24)
- 3% Revenue Support Grant will only result in an additional £5.6m (compared to £14.2m in 23/24)
- If Council Tax increase remains at 3.8% this will only generate £3m income, the £7.7m figure would require an increase of 10%. It should be stressed that these are for illustrative purposes only at this point.
- Although it looks like the worst case scenario is a budget gap of £23.4m, if Council Tax increase remains at 3.8% the actual worst case scenario is £28.3m.
- It could be assumed that we should achieve c£3m in 1% savings (including all services and schools) and increases in fees and charges which would slightly reduce those figures.
- In practice it is unlikely that all the pressures will come out at the highest level (also see work stream below) but we should and are planning to take action to reduce the projected net expenditure by c£20m.

4.3 Key areas to contribute to the Budget Strategy for 2024/25

Service 1% Efficiencies – services will be expected to continue to deliver 1% small-scale savings which do not include gradual increments in fees and charges.

Fees and Charges – services will be expected to increase fees and charges in line with cost inflation in most cases as per the fees and charges policy.

Other Savings – these are envisaged to be large scale service changes – services are being asked to develop initial ideas which will be initially reviewed by CET for deliverability and Cabinet for political acceptability.

Reduction of areas of overspend – a request for ideas to reduce areas of overspend has also gone out to services – without keeping a tight control of spend in these areas other services will have to contribute more and more savings.

Council Tax – consideration of the level of Council Tax will need to be undertaken (MTFP assumption still at 3.8%).

Pressures – Strategic Pressures will continue to be considered when identified – however service will be expected to mitigate the impact of small pressures.

4.4 Other key aspects of the Budget Strategy for 2024/25

Staff involvement – staff are being encouraged to engage with the processes within services (see 4.2) – however a staff suggestion scheme will also be developed in the coming months.

Member involvement – a process of capturing the ideas of backbench and political groupings will be developed including the ensuring that detailed budgets are available for members to use in their deliberations.

CET Lead – CET will lead on driving the significant projects forward.

Communications Plan - A formal plan has been developed and agreed in draft form by CET in preparation for review by Cabinet Briefing and a summary is included as Appendix 2. It includes details of how we will engage with the stakeholders identified in Section 8.

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

Effective management of the council's budgets and delivery of the agreed budget strategy underpins activity in all areas. The proposals include allocations to continue to support both corporate and service priorities.

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

Financial implications will become evident during the implementation phases of the budget strategy.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well-being Impact Assessments for all significant budget savings and Council Tax increase will be developed over the coming months to ensure that decisions are well informed.

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

As noted above a Communication Strategy has been developed to ensure that the following groups are consulted at the appropriate times: Corporate Governance Committee, SLT, Cabinet, Group Leaders, all Council Members, the School Budget Forum, Trade Unions, our employees, local businesses and our residents.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The aim of the budget process is to ensure that the council delivers a balanced budget. The projections and strategy set out in this report will help ensure that the Council is informed and prepared to set a budget at this challenging time

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

The budget process itself is a risk management measure with the aim of identifying, assessing and agreeing budget proposals in a planned and timely way. Budget proposals will need to identify and manage risks specific to those proposals.

11. Power to make the decision

Local authorities are required under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs.

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APPENDIX 1

MTFS Summary	Forecast 2024/25			Forecast 2025/26			Forecast 2026/27		
	Low £m	Medium £m	High £m	Low £m	Medium £m	High £m	Low £m	Medium £m	High £m
Pay Pressure	4,000	5,000	6,000	1,019	2,500	4,000	1,019	2,500	4,000
Pay Grades Pressure	4,000	6,500	9,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Price Inflation (inc Energy)	550	2,500	4,000	250	500	750	250	500	750
CTRS	350	650	950	350	650	950	350	650	950
Fire Levy	100	350	600	100	200	400	100	200	400
Social Services	2,000	3,000	4,000	1,000	2,000	3,000	1,000	2,000	3,000
Childrens Services	2,000	2,500	3,000	1,000	1,750	2,500	1,000	1,750	2,500
Schools Inflation	4,000	5,000	6,000	2,000	3,000	4,000	2,000	3,000	4,000
Schools Demography	350	600	800	350	600	800	350	600	800
Investment in Priorities	500	500	500	700	700	700	700	700	700
Additional Service Pressures	1,000	1,500	2,000	1,500	1,750	2,000	1,500	1,750	2,000
Total Pressures	18,850	28,100	36,850	8,269	13,650	19,100	8,269	13,650	19,100
	A	B	C						
Increase in Revenue Support Grant	-5,641	-5,641	-5,641	-4,261	-2,130	0	-4,354	-2,177	0
Council Tax Increase	-2,952	-5,438	-7,768	-2,948	-5,431	-7,758	-3,077	-5,669	-8,098
Total Increase in Revenue	-8,593	-11,079	-13,409	-7,209	-7,561	-7,758	-7,432	-7,846	-8,098
	D	E	F						
Annual Budget Gap	10,257	17,021	23,441	1,060	6,089	11,342	837	5,804	11,002
Cumulative Budget Gap	10,257	17,021	23,441	11,318	23,110	34,783	12,155	28,914	45,785
2024/25									
Worst Case (C+D)		28,257							
Best Case (A+F)		5,441							

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Communications and Engagement Strategy:

DCC Budget

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Report to	Budget Board
Date of report	15.12.2022
Report author	M. Sian Owen
Title	Budget Communications and Engagement Strategy
Last revised date	17.05.2023
Last revised by	M. Sian Owen

Principles

All communications and marketing materials will be developed and produced in accordance with the following Council standards and guidelines:

- [Corporate Branding Guidelines](#)
- Welsh Language Standards
- [Design & Print Framework](#)
- [Engagement framework and toolkit](#)

All communications, and engagement with the public will be proof-read and approved by the Corporate Communication, Marketing and Engagement team before publication and distribution.

The corporate communications team can arrange interviews requested by the press with the leader, or requested by the leader to enable him to set out the Council policy or position. The corporate communications team can advise and help him to prepare, but it is his decision as to the line he takes in those interviews. If there is any specific political message that he would like to promote, then at that point it is for his PA to arrange.

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Background information

In light of the current budget pressures and cost increases, it is necessary to produce a communications and engagement strategy, to help staff, councillors, residents and businesses to understand and engage with the current financial challenges faced by the Council. This strategy will cover the budget implications for the year 2023-24, with a view to extending the activity throughout the summer and Autumn to prepare for the financial year 2024-25.

There are different levels of communications activity to take into account in this plan

1. High level political communications – which are the responsibility of the leader and cabinet advised as appropriate by the communications team, CET and Head of Service.
2. CET messages agreed with cabinet at a cabinet workshop
3. Corporate Budget Communications – led by Steve Gadd, supported by the communications team where needed.
4. Project level budget decisions and impacts on services – the responsibility of the relevant CET member, Head of Service and supported by the communications team. Each of the major service changes will require their own separate communications and engagement plans, with reference back to the key corporate messages.
5. There will also be key reactive communications activities developed as and when unplanned external factors are brought into play.

Communications and engagement aims

To ensure that all target audiences have access to information and key budget messages are communicated effectively.

To ensure staff councillors, residents and businesses have an opportunity to engage with the council on this subject.

Communications and Engagement Strategy

To ensure that where service cuts affect specific users there is a targeted communications and engagement plan in place, and where there are options available there should be consultation on those options with those affected.

Communications and engagement objectives

To produce clear messages and signposting to information and to promote opportunities to engage with the council.

To engage effectively with key audiences where appropriate

To monitor activity and produce a report on the outcomes of this strategy

Communications and engagement outcomes

The information about the budget and budget setting process on the Denbighshire County Council channels will be accurate, clear and accessible.

The relevant audiences will either be informed or engaged, depending on the direct impact of the budget setting process.

Measurement and evaluation

Feedback and evidence from Councillors and staff

Opportunities to engage and the level of interaction with the engagement opportunities

Press coverage

Social media and website analytics

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Key message development

All messages will be developed in conjunction with Steve Gadd and Rhian Evans.

Corporate messages will be based on WLGA messaging as there is no need for independent lobbying

Corporate messages will also be developed with Cabinet

Core messages

Key messages release schedule

Key message	Milestone	Dates
Budget pressures mean services are at risk. Council Tax may have to rise to cover deficits. (Linked in with costs of living message and Croeso Cynnes)	ITV news interview with DCC leader Jason McLellan	13.12.2022
Include messages from cabinet workshop	Gary Williams has agreed to organise this and Sian will facilitate	
Despite the WG budget the council has less money for the coming year, It a “real term cut”		
Inflation means that the things the council buy cost more		
Both rising costs and the money we are given mean we cannot afford to deliver everything we would want to		

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Key message	Milestone	Dates
We will continue to find the best savings options we can – staff will focus on keeping unnecessary costs down to a minimum		
We will continue to ask for and listen to new ideas about cost effective ways to deliver services		
Due to surging inflationary pressures and sky-high energy bills. The impacts on our communities and residents are likely to be profound.” Based on WLGA line		
As it stands, local services are facing a £784m budget black hole next year alone which is only likely to rise ever further in subsequent years Based on WLGA line – we could add our own figure in here	To be reviewed on receipt of further info	During 2023
The economic outlook remains bleak which means that councils will still have to take difficult decisions to meet spiralling budget gaps due to energy bills, inflation and pay costs Based on WLGA line		
Specific messages about specific cuts – detail to follow		

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Communications and engagement activity plan

There is a very detailed communications activity plan which has been populated and is updated after each budget team meeting. This is an operational document for use by the project team.

Key target audience groups (Appendix 1)

See Appendix 1 for the key target audience groups.

Governance

A budget communications team has been set up and will meet monthly.

The recommendations from the team meetings will be approved by the Head of Service/ section 151 officer and the budget board.

This report will be shared with CET

Communication and engagement risks

Timescales to develop and deliver some of the actions in the plan are very tight. Some actions may be dropped to ensure the overall plan can be delivered.

Ability to provide accurate financial information at a time when the financial position is changing rapidly. On occasions we will have to use what we have at that specific time to the best of our knowledge.

Interdependencies

WLGA and WG messaging will provide the background for the campaign. Key messaging will integrate with this through the local use of national lines that chime with our local conditions.

Communications and Engagement Strategy

The Welsh Government are running a cost of living campaign which will influence and chime with the DCC budget messaging to ensure that the population understand that we are managing budgets within the context of their real life experience.

Signposting to sources of advice and support alongside this campaign will help to ensure public resilience to dealing with these messages is supported.

The Corporate Plan Communications Strategy will focus on the delivery of the priorities, reflecting the current budget context.

Costs

Any additional costs will be funded from the Budget Mitigation Reserve. Costs are expected to be minimal

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Appendix 1: Key target audience groups

List of key target audience groups

- Cabinet
- Councillors
- Staff
- Affected residents
- Businesses
- Unions
- Partners

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Key target audience groups/stakeholder matrix (Optional)

Audience Group	Interest (Low / Medium / High)	Influence (Low / Medium / High)	What's the Group's most important goal?	How will they contribute?	Best way to manage	Contact method(s)
Cabinet members	Highest	Highest	Balance the budget Maintain essential services	Feedback and approval Cabinet messaging workshop	Directly and closely	Cabinet meetings and direct email/ briefings
Councillors	High	High	Balance the budget	Feedback and approval	Directly and closely	Council meetings Council workshops

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Audience Group	Interest (Low / Medium / High)	Influence (Low / Medium / High)	What's the Group's most important goal?	How will they contribute?	Best way to manage	Contact method(s)
Staff	High	Medium	To ensure they can maintain services to residents	Staff briefings by SLT and middle managers	Directly and closely	Staff briefings by SLT and middle managers
Unions	Interest	Medium Influence on specific projects	To protect staff interests	HR and middle manager briefings	Directly and closely	Monthly meetings with HR, briefing notes from finance
Affected residents	Medium	Medium	To understand how the council spending affects them personally	Direct contact Surveys	With clarity, integrity and openness	Through Council information channels

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Audience Group	Interest (Low / Medium / High)	Influence (Low / Medium / High)	What's the Group's most important goal?	How will they contribute?	Best way to manage	Contact method(s)
Affected businesses	Medium	Medium	To understand how the council spending affects them personally	Direct contact with business groups Surveys	With clarity, integrity and openness	EBD/Tourism newsletters to include articles on the budget cuts
Political Groups	High	High	To understand how the council spending will affect their communities	Direct contact Surveys	Directly and closely	Presentations from Steve Gadd? Direct email contact

Communications and Engagement Strategy

Audience Group	Interest (Low / Medium / High)	Influence (Low / Medium / High)	What's the Group's most important goal?	How will they contribute?	Best way to manage	Contact method(s)
Partners	High	High	How will council cuts affect their operation	Direct contact	Direct and closely	SLT/Contract manager direct contact

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Report to	Governance & Audit Committee
Date of meeting	14 June 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis / Bob Chowdhury – Chief Internal Auditor
Report author	Bob Chowdhury, Chief Internal Auditor
Title	Internal Audit Report 2022-23

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report provides the Committee with the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2022-23 that provides the Chief Internal Auditor's overall opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk and control during the year that informs the 'annual governance statement'.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) require the 'chief audit executive' to deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that the organisation can use to inform its annual governance statement. This Committee's terms of reference require it to consider the annual report of the internal auditors.
- 2.2. The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 require the review of governance arrangements to be reported within the authority, in the Council's case the Governance & Audit Committee, and externally with the published accounts of the authority. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is an annual review of the systems of internal control and gathers assurance from various sources to support it. Internal Audit is a key contributor and the Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) should provide a written annual report to those charged with governance to support the AGS.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. The Committee considers and comments on the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report and overall opinion.

4. Report details

- 4.1. The Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24 is being taken to the Governance and Audit committee for approval on the 14th June 2023. Appendix 1 details the position with audits contained in the 2023/24 audit strategy and those carried forward from 2022/23. Internal Audit operates a flexible plan so that areas of highest perceived risk are prioritised for a review. Governance & Audit Committee are informed of any changes during the year as part of the Internal Audit Update Report.
- 4.2. This year's annual opinion needs to consider a number of key factors: During the last 12 months, two Internal Auditors (40% of the team), have successfully secure new roles in different organisations. The Chief Internal Auditor has re-evaluating what skill gaps have been created and how they could be filled. This has taken time and has meant the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan for 2022-23, has been disrupted and prompting a refocusing of the plan on areas of greatest priority to the council which can be delivered within the resources available to Internal Audit.
- 4.3. As local authorities scaled down their Covid 19 teams at the end of June 2022, the Chief Internal Auditor returned to his full-time post. The focus of the team for the remaining nine months was to focus on the 2022-23 plan, but unfortunately the financial year has seen the team focus on three investigations as a consequence of two whistleblowing complaints and one irregularity. These three investigations have been labour intense and has meant staff being pulled off projects in the 2022-23 plan.
- 4.4. My opinion is largely based on the completion of the risk based internal plan, see Appendix 1 for a list of audit results and assurance ratings definitions. No audit during the year received 'Low' assurance, the others being awarded 'High' or 'Medium' Assurance ratings. Where significant issues have been identified, overall these have been appropriately addressed, which confirms that management is responsive to our work.

- 4.5. Internal Audit has completed three items of advisory work during the year which demonstrates that management is willing to engage with Internal Audit to establish good risk and control environments.
- 4.6. Our work has highlighted some areas of weakness in management of risks and/or controls which may put achievement of objectives at risk. Improvements are required to address such areas so that the framework of governance, risk management and control is adequate.
- 4.7. Internal Audit's annual opinion is attached as Appendix 1 and concludes that reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control

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

- 5.1. Internal Audit's role is to provide assurance regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control. Each of these areas helps ensure that the council can deliver on all corporate priorities as identified in its corporate plan.

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

- 6.1. There are no additional costs associated with this report. Actions to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and Council policies are taken within existing budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. Not applicable - there is no decision required with this report

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

- 8.1. Consultation with officers, and Audit Wales was conducted in drafting the Internal Audit Strategy.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1. Not applicable - there is no decision required with this report.

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

10.1. An inadequate and operationally ineffective internal control system can have adverse impact on the Council's risk management processes and wider corporate governance, and, therefore, the quality of service provided.

10.2. The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require Internal Audit to evaluate the effectiveness of risk management and contribute to the improvement of risk management processes. Where risks are identified as part of the Internal Audit process, action plans are agreed and monitored in order to mitigate these risks.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Not applicable - there is no decision required with this report.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022-23

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Contents

Contents	
Contents	2
1. Introduction and background	4
2. Internal Audit Opinion 2021-22	4
3. Summary of audit work 2021/22	6
4. Counter fraud summary	8
5. National Fraud Initiative (NFI)	8
6. Irregularities	9
7. Proactive exercises	9
8. Other counter fraud activity	9
9. Added value	10
10. Corporate Governance Working Group	10
11. Collaborative Working	10
12. Assurance Advisory Support	11
13. Agile Auditing	11
14 Data Analysis	11
15. Assurance Mapping	12
16. Internal Audit performance	12

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

17. Conformance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards	17
18. Quality Assessment	18
19. Improvement Programme	16
Appendix 1- Summary of Internal Audit Work 2021-22	19
2021-22 Audits – Reporting stage	19
2021-22 Audits Cancelled or Deferred	21
Appendix 2 – Audit Coverage by Corporate Risk	21
Appendix 3 – Definitions	23
Definitions of assurance ratings	23
Definition of risk ratings	23
Appendix 4 – Quality Assurance Improvement Programme	24

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 This report outlines the internal audit work that Internal Audit has been carried out for the financial year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 require the review of governance arrangements to be reported within the authority, in the Council's case the Governance & Audit Committee, and externally with the published accounts of the authority. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is an annual review of the systems of internal control and gathers assurance from various sources to support it. Internal Audit is a key contributor and the Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) should provide a written annual report to those charged with governance to support the AGS
- 1.3 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) require the 'chief audit executive', in the Council's case the Chief Internal Auditor (CIA), to deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that the organisation can use to inform its Annual Governance Statement.
- 1.4 This is achieved through a risk-based plan of work, agreed with management and the Governance & Audit Committee. The opinion does not imply that Internal Audit has reviewed all risks relating to the Council.

2. Internal Audit Opinion 2022-23

- 2.1 The CIA has based his 2022-23 opinion on the following:
 1. The scope and outcome of Internal Audit's work during the year;
 2. Any follow up action taken in respect of audits from previous periods;
 3. Internal Audit report opinions and assurance ratings;
 4. The issues and risks that Internal Audit has raised during the year;
 5. The effectiveness of management's response to the issues and risks that Internal Audit has raised;
 6. Assurances received from external regulators and other sources;

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

7. The outcome of the Council's review of its Corporate Governance Framework and governance arrangements 2022-23.
- 2.2 This year's annual opinion needs to consider a number of key factors: During the last 12 months, two Internal Auditors (40% of the team), have successfully secured new roles in different organisations. The Chief Internal Auditor has re-evaluated what skill gaps have been created and how they could be filled. This has taken time and has meant the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan for 2022-23, has been disrupted and prompting a refocusing of the plan on areas of greatest priority to the council which can be delivered within the resources available to Internal Audit.
- 2.3 As local authorities scaled down their Covid 19 teams at the end of June 2022, the Chief Internal Auditor returned to his full-time post. The focus of the team for the remaining nine months was to focus on the 2022-23 plan, but unfortunately the financial year has seen the team focus on three investigations as a consequence of two whistleblowing complaints and one irregularity. These three investigations have been labour intense and has meant staff being pulled off projects in the 2022-23 plan.
- 2.4 My opinion is largely based on the completion of the risk based internal plan, see Appendix 1 for a list of audit results and assurance ratings definitions. No audit during the year received 'Low' assurance, the others being awarded 'High' or 'Medium' Assurance ratings. Where significant issues have been identified, overall these have been appropriately addressed, which confirms that management is responsive to our work.
- 2.5 Internal Audit has completed one item of advisory work during the year which demonstrates that management is willing to engage with Internal Audit to establish good risk and control environments. Although an assurance rating is not given for this work, the outcome is used to inform our overall opinion on the adequacy of governance, risk management and control arrangements.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

- 2.6 Our work has highlighted some areas of weakness in management of risks and/or controls which may put achievement of objectives at risk. Improvements are required to address such areas so that the framework of governance, risk management and control is adequate.
- 2.7 For the purpose of this Annual Report, sufficient audit work was carried out, including the assignments that have been concluded but not yet finalised, which has enabled me to form the Annual Internal Audit Opinion for 2022/23. In reaching my opinion, I have considered the balance of the results of our audit work against this environment and concluded that the major risk issues are not significant in aggregate to the system of internal control. When considering the balance of audit work carried out in 2022/23 and the assurance ratings given, regard is also placed on the response from senior management. Internal Audit has not reviewed all risks and assurances relating to Denbighshire County Council and, therefore, I cannot provide absolute assurance on the internal control environment.

3. Summary of audit work 2022-23:

- 3.1 The Internal Audit Strategy is produced to concentrate on key risks facing the Council. The Internal Audit Strategy 2022-23 was agreed with the Governance and Audit Committee on the 8 June 2022 and it has been updated throughout the year to ensure that Internal Audit focuses its resources in areas of greatest priority and risk at the time and provides assurance in the areas where it is most needed. Progress and changes are reported to the Governance & Audit Committee as part of the Internal Audit Update Report.
- 3.2 The Schedule in Appendix 1 contains a list of all audits agreed in the Audit Strategy 2022/23 and the final outturn for the financial year. The table below shows a summary of the audit opinions provided during the year, categorised as follows:

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Assurance Rating	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
High Assurance ●	8	12	5	8	20
Medium Assurance ●	17	9	10	14	9
Low Assurance ●	5	7	1	2	0
No Assurance ●	0	0	0	0	0
Advisory ●	2	4	6	2	3
	30	32	22	26	32

3.3 The assurance opinions were either 'high' or 'medium' this year (100%).

3.4 We had no low assurance reviews this year, but the process in place is to put the review on the next Governance and Audit Committee agenda and ask a representative from the service to attend and to confirm that the agreed improvements will be implemented and responding to any challenge from members.

3.5 Projects which are at draft stage but are yet to be finalised are listed in Appendix 1.

3.6 Additionally, 25 audits from the Audit Strategy 2022-23 were either cancelled or deferred to 2023-24 (shown in Appendix 1). This was due to the reduced capacity of the Internal Audit team during the year, but also the focus of internal audit activity on three investigations.

3.7 As in previous years, there were no reports with 'No Assurance' rating issued during the year.

3.8 The Internal Audit Opinion considers the number of no and low assurance reports, particularly the issues raised and the overall impact on the control environment. Where no or low assurance review have been followed up during

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

the year, consideration is given to the management response and progress made with implementing the agreed action plan

3.9 The last year has seen no Government enforced lockdown, and there were no known impairments or restrictions to internal audit's scope affecting the projects undertaken during the year. Internal Audit has worked remotely during the last year and the team are now fully adjusted to the new way of working.

4. Counter Fraud summary

4.1 Counter-fraud arrangements are vital to the Council with the aim of protecting public funds and accountability. The responsibility for managing the risk of fraud lies with management; however, Internal Audit is involved in evaluating the risk of fraud and the manner in which it is managed by the council. National Fraud Initiative (NFI)

5. National Fraud Initiative (NFI)

5.1 Work on the 2020/21 exercise is complete and the 2022/23 exercise is underway. The table below summarises the main results achieved in recent exercises; the 2022/23 exercise is still ongoing:

NFI Results	2018/19	2020/21	2021/22
Housing Benefit	£24,989	£12,830	£21,040
VAT	-	-	-
Council Tax Single Persons Discount	£665,027	£18,307	£5,622
Council Tax rising 18s	£3,039	£9,913	£7,326
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	£8,118	£74,289	£59,010
Total	£701,173	£115,339	£92,998

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

5.2 Over recent years the number of Housing Benefit (HB) matches have reduced significantly due to the roll out of Universal Credit and the number of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) has reduced in the last 12 months. This has resulted in the Council processing less CTR matches this time resulting in a lower percentage of overpayments being recorded against the CTR matches.

6. Irregularities

6.1 During the 2022/23 financial year, Internal Audit has been informed of two allegations of fraud. Internal Audit carried assisted with two investigations. Both investigations are currently on-going. A third investigation was completed by Internal Audit around a service failing to comply with agreed procedures around handling money. The investigation confirmed procedures had been breached and controls have been strengthened and staff made aware of current procedures.

Outcome of Investigations	2022/23
Dismissal / contract terminations	0
Resignations accepted after investigation	0
Written warnings issued	0
No further action	1
Investigations pending outcomes	2
Prosecutions	0

7. Proactive exercises

7.1 The Internal Audit team has undertaken proactive exercises which were included in the Internal Audit Strategy. This includes reviewing direct payments

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

and housing tenancy fraud and this year's financial audits including Revenues and Benefits focused on the controls to prevent and detect fraud. The outcome of these reviews have been reported to Governance and Audit Committee and improvement action plans agreed with the relevant services.

8. Other counter fraud activity

8.1 The Council has a current Strategy for the Prevention and Detection of Fraud, Corruption & Bribery which was align with the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy for Local Government. A Fraud Response Plan has been updated and was approved at the Governance and Audit Committee in July 2021. The strategy and plan will need to be reviewed during the next 12 months to ensure they are both still fit for purpose.

9. Added value

9.1 In addition to providing risk-rated assurance reports, Internal Audit has strived to add value wherever possible i.e. going beyond the standard expected and providing something "more" without any added costs.

10. Corporate Governance Working Group

10.1 Internal Audit is a lead participant in the Corporate Governance Working Group to review governance arrangements and update the Corporate Governance Framework and the Annual Governance Statement.

11. Collaborative Working

11.1 The North and Mid-Wales Internal Audit Partnership meetings attended by Chief Audit Executives from all North Wales councils and Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board facilitates collaboration, sharing ideas and improving efficiency and effectiveness of our services. The Chief Internal Auditor also attends the Welsh

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Chief Auditors Group (WCAG) that coordinates a peer review of conformance against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

12. Assurance Advisory Support

12.1 Internal Audit has provided advisory support on a number of Boards, projects and other requests, including:

1. Information Governance Group
2. Business Rates Support Grants

12.2 Summary reports and presentations are provided to Schools to highlight improvement areas identified during thematic reviews which helps them to identify potential areas of risk or opportunities. Also, we assist the Governing Body to better understand the need for appropriate oversight; and feedback to the Council with the level of support and guidance required for schools where concerns have been identified.

13. Agile Auditing

13.1 The concept of 'Agile Auditing' during the pandemic has been difficult to carry out as access to department ICT systems was time consuming. With increased collaboration and a joint commitment with the service under review, it is possible to complete audits faster and more efficiently. While it was difficult to apply this approach the team have considered the approach on a few audits during the second half of the year and have had positive feedback from the senior managers working with us on these reviews.

14. Data Analysis

14.1 We continue to apply Computer Assisted Auditing Techniques to analyse data as part of our auditing wherever possible. This allows us the opportunity to test

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

whole populations of data, or where this is not possible or appropriate, to target our testing in a more effective manner.

15. Assurance Mapping

15.1 Internal Audit performs an annual assurance mapping exercise to map out the key activities performed by the Council and how these are assured. This informs the Internal Audit Strategy so that it focusses on areas of greatest risk and maximise the value from Internal Audit. The assurance map is updated during the year to reflect key changes to risk or the control environment and, where appropriate, the list of audit priority projects is updated. The Chief Internal Auditor meets with Audit Wales officers regularly throughout the year to coordinate audit work and minimise duplication.

16. Internal Audit Performance

16.1 There are no national performance indicators for Internal Audit, so we measure performance by benchmarking with other Councils' Internal Audit Services via the Welsh Chief Auditor's Group. A bench marking exercise is currently being completed by the 22 Welsh councils and the results will be shared with the the group by September 2023.

The table below shows Internal Audit's performance for the year.

Performance Target	Target	Current Performance
Discuss, agree and issue scope for each audit	100%	100%
Draft report issued within 10 working days of the closing meeting	Avg. days >10	12.63
Final report issued within 5 working days of agreeing the draft report and action plan	Avg. days > 5	5.45
Implementation of Agreed actions	75%	53%

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

- 16.2 Overall, performance against the indicators has dropped this year. The reason for the draft report and the final report issued being higher this year is due to one review. We issued the draft report to DLL and due to the Company Accountant leaving, the draft report was not moved on for three months despite regular communication with DLL senior management. The audit agreed actions that have been implemented figure his gone up this year as we have invested time in follow up reviews.
- 16.3 Internal Audit are prioritising the completion of assurance work and continue to follow up previous reviews awarded a low assurance to ensure that necessary improvements are being made. While many actions are taking longer to resolve than originally envisaged by services, we are satisfied that progress is still being made to implement the requisite change.
- 16.4 The Chief Internal Auditor attends Service Management Team meetings to prompt completion and provide an update on the performance. Governance and Audit Committee monitor the completion of improvement actions arising from low assurance reports through Internal Audit's follow up reviews and may invite service representatives to explain if insufficient progress is made with audit actions arising from high or medium assurance reports.
- 16.5 A customer satisfaction survey to recipients of internal audit reviews in 2022/23 allows feedback on our performance - rated as either: "Not at all"; "Limited", "Satisfactory", "Good" or "Very Good". The percentage of scores marked as satisfactory or above are shown below. In total, 10 (out of total 17) completed the survey. The survey is anonymous to encourage honest feedback.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Customer Survey Questions	Target	Not At All	Limited	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good
Consulted/made aware on the objectives and/or scope of the audit?	100%					100%
Level of consultation throughout the audit?	100%				20%	80%
Professional and approachable auditor?	100%					100%
Results and conclusions of the review explained?	100%					100%
Accurate report that addressed the key issues?	100%			10%	20%	70%
Were you able to comment on the review	100%			10%		90%
Did you have an opportunity to comment on the results of the review?	100%					100%
Auditor took your views into account?	100%					100%
Was the audit constructive and did it add value overall?	100%				40%	60%
Are you happy with the new way internal audit are conducting their reviews?	100%			30%		70%

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

16.6 Performance relating to consultation with service has dipped slightly as we have scored satisfactory in three questions, but the other responses were either good/very good. Since the 1 April 2023, we have redesigned the questionnaire to make it easier and quicker to complete and are also sending it out with the final report to encourage more questionnaires to be returned.

16.7 Here are a few examples of the comments received:

"I feel that the remote audit worked very well as we created a school/audit team on TEAMS. We were able to upload documents into folders. Multiple people were able to add to the folders at the same time and edit the self evaluation which meant there was only ever one master working copy of everything. The documents were also available for the Auditor to browse as they needed to. Any requests for additional information were also uploaded as necessary."

"The audit was conducted in a professional thorough manner, all members of staff involved had the opportunity to discuss with the auditor the processes. We felt that it was a system of uploading documents on to a Teams shared folder worked best for our school, and the auditor also found this very helpful - this maybe useful for other schools to use. The senior audit involved was happy to listen to all our feedback & queries and happy to discuss and respond to this."

"The audit was conducted well and fully inclusive. Every step was explained fully."

16.8 We consider all feedback to ensure we continue to meet our stakeholders' needs.

17. Conformance with Public Sector Internal Standards

17.1 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 require the Council to perform an annual review of the effectiveness of its internal audit function. The PSIAS mandates that Internal Audit maintains a Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP).

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

17.2 The results of the QAIP which includes the internal self-assessment by Internal Audit confirms that Denbighshire Internal Audit Service generally conforms to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) for its internal audit activity.

17.3 Performance of internal audit was consistent with the Internal Audit Charter which sets out the purpose, authority and responsibility of the internal audit activity consistent with the Definition of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics and the Standards. Our Internal Audit charter is being submitted to Governance & Audit Committee for approval on the 14 June 2023 meeting.

17.4 The Chief Internal Auditor maintains a quality assessment process which includes reviews of all audit work. The quality assessment process and improvement are supported by a development programme and internal audit manual.

18. Quality Assessment

18.1 An external assessment of our service against the PSIAS in March 2018 stated “Internal Audit is operating in conformance with the standards” and the result was reported to Governance & Audit Committee in November 2018. The External Assessment provides independent assurance against the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) and appendix 4 shows progress with implementing the improvement actions identified. An external assessment must be carried out every five years. The Welsh Chief Auditors Group is coordinating the next round of this exercise and has allocated Ceredigion County Council’s Chief Audit Executive (CAE) as the external assessor for Denbighshire Internal Audit Service, to be conducted in June 2023. The CAE for Denbighshire will perform the external assessment for Gwynedd County Council.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

19. Improvement Programme

19.1 A quality improvement programme is in place which consists of all recommendations from the external assessment; all improvement actions arising from the external assessment have since been implemented. Additional improvement actions resulting from this year's annual internal self-assessment include:

- Update Audit Manual to provide greater coverage of consulting arrangements (Standard 2220)
- Update the assurance planning document to include the agreed corporate risk appetite (Standard 2010)

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Appendix 1 – Summary of Internal Work 2022-23

The following table provides an overview of Internal Audit work conducted during the year, including the overall Assurance Ratings and the number of risks/issues raised in the action plans (where applicable).

Ref No:	Report Title	Status of Project	Assurance Rating	Risks/Issues Raised		
				Critical	Major	Moderate
D212212	Revenues & Benefits	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D212211	Equalities	Complete	Medium ●	0	0	3
D212213	Finance Services	Complete	High ●	0	0	2
D212228	Families First Funding	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D212222	Ysgol Brynhyfryd	Complete	High ●	0	0	2
D212219	Ysgol Hirraddug	Complete	High ●	0	0	2
D212217	Ysgol Y Castell	Complete	High ●	0	0	1
D212216	Ysgol Tremeirchion	Complete	High ●	0	0	1
N/A	NFI	Complete	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
D222325	AONB	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D212203	Commercial Waste	Complete	Medium ●	0	1	2
D222335	Ysgol Caer Drewyn & Ysgol Carrog	Complete	High ●	0	0	3
D222332	Ysgol Gellifor & Ysgol Bryn Clwyd	Complete	Medium ●	0	0	5
D222338	Christchurch C P	Complete	High ●	0	0	2
	PLASC	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D212215	Ysgol Melyd	Complete	Medium ●	0	1	2
	Community Safety	Complete	Medium ●	0	1	2
D222305	Revenues and Benefits Phase 1	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D222305	Revs & Bens Phase 2	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D222330	ALN	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D212220	Ysgol Dewi Sant	Complete	High ●	0	0	1
D222304	Financial Systems - Payroll	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D212226	Financial Systems - Accounts Payable	Complete	High ●	0	0	1

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

D212226	Financial Systems – Treasury Management	Complete	High ●	0	0	0
D212226	Financial Systems – Budget Control	Complete	High ●	0	0	1
D222327	Blue Badges	Complete	N/A	0	0	0
D212226	Denbighshire Leisure Limited – Governance & Contract Management	Complete	Medium ●	0	0	4
N/A	Support Budgets & Direct Payments: Adults 3rd Follow Up	Complete	Medium ●	0	0	0
N/A	Provision of Homeless Accommodation 3rd Follow Up	Complete	High ●	0	9	7

2022-23 Audits- Reporting Stage

	Report Title	Status of Project	Comment
	Work Force Planning	Fieldwork	
	ICT Asset Management	Fieldwork	
	Housing Support Grant	Fieldwork	
	Christ the Word	Draft Report	

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

2022 – 23 Audits Cancelled or Deferred

Report Title	Status of Project	Comment
Fostering	Planned for 2023-24	
Looked after children – Independent Reviewing Officer	Planned for 2023-24	
Programme & Project Management	Planned for 2023-24	
Liberty Protection Safeguards	Planned for 2023-24	
Procurement – pre tender stage	Planned for 2023-24	
Mediquip	Planned for 2023-24	
Court of Protection	Planned for 2023-24	
Community Equipment Service	Planned for 2023-24	
Partnership Arrangements	Planned for 2023-24	
Youth Service	Planned for 2023-24	
Tackling Poverty	Planned for 2023-24	
Asset Management	Planned for 2023-24	
Health and Wellbeing	Planned for 2023-24	
Flood Risk Strategy	Planned for 2023-24	
Insurance	Planned for 2023-24	
Planning Applications	Planned for 2023-24	
Post 16 Education Grant	Planned for 2023-24	
Homelessness	Planned for 2023-24	
Cefndy Healthcare	Planned for 2023-24	
Risk Management	Planned for 2023-24	
Denbigh High School	Planned for 2023-24	
Esgob Morgan	Planned for 2023-24	
Pentrecelyn	Planned for 2023-24	
Cash Collection	Planned for 2023-24	
ALN	Planned for 2023-24	

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Appendix 2 – Audit Coverage by Corporate Risk

Corporate Risk	Coverage	Assurance Rating
CRR00001 The risk of a serious safeguarding error where the council has responsibility resulting in serious harm or death	Reasonable	High ●
CRR00006 The risk that the economic and financial environment worsens beyond current expectations, leading to additional demand on services and reduced income	Reasonable	Medium ●
CRR00011 The risk of an ineffective response to a serious event, such as severe weather, contamination, public safety (including cyber-attack) or a public health event (such as Covid-19).	Reasonable	Medium ●
CRR00012 The risk of a significantly negative report(s) from external regulators	Reasonable	Medium ●
CRR00013 The risk of significant liabilities resulting from alternative models of service delivery	Reasonable	High ●
CRR00014 The risk of a health and safety incident resulting in serious injury or the loss of life (where H&S is referred to, this incorporates fire safety)	Reasonable	High ●
CRR00018 The risk that programme and project benefits are not fully realised	Reasonable	High ●
CRR00021 The risk that effective partnership interfaces between BCU Health Board and Denbighshire County Council do not develop, leading to significant misalignment between strategic and operational direction of BCU and DCC.	Partial	High ●
CRR00027 The risk that even if the settlement is as anticipated, decisions that are necessary to identify and deliver the savings programme and enable a balanced budget are not taken or implemented quickly enough	Reasonable	Medium ●

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

CRR00030 The risk that Senior Leadership capacity and skills to sustain service and corporate performance is not available	Reasonable	Medium ●
CRR00031 The risk of fraud and corruption resulting in financial and reputational loss and possibly impacting on service delivery	Reasonable	High ●
CRR00033 The risk that the cost of care is outstripping the council's resource	Partial	Medium ●
CRR00034 The risk that demand for specialist care cannot be met locally	Partial	Medium ●
CRR00036 The risk that any negative impacts of leaving the European Union cannot be mitigated by the council	Partial	Medium ●
CRR00037 The risk that partners don't have the resources, matching priorities or commitment to support delivery of shared plans and priorities	Reasonable	High ●
CRR00044 The risk of Ash Dieback Disease (ADB) in Denbighshire leading to significant health and safety issues that represent a potential risk to life	Reasonable	High ●
CRR00045 The risk that the council fails to become a net carbon zero and ecologically positive council by 2030	Reasonable	High ●
CRR00048 The risk that recruitment and retention issues, leading to a loss of expertise and capacity, worsen resulting in poor or inadequate services	Reasonable	Medium ●
CRR00049 The risk that the future funding regime doesn't allow the council to continue to support the most vulnerable learners and disengaged young people in the way we have been through EU funding	Reasonable	Medium ●
CRR00050 The risk that Welsh Government's commitment to eliminate profit from the care of Looked After Children results in an unstable or unsuitable supply of placements	Reasonable	Medium ●

CRR00012 The risk of a significantly negative report(s) from external regulators – regular meetings with Audit Wales and updates from Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and Ombudsman confirms that no significantly negative reports were received in 2022/23. A summary is included in the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Appendix 3 – Definitions

Definitions of assurance ratings

High Assurance ●	Risk and controls well managed and objectives are being achieved
Medium Assurance ●	Minor weaknesses in management of risks and/or objectives but no risk to achievement of objectives
Low Assurance ●	Significant weaknesses in management of risks and/or control that put achievement of objectives at risk
No Assurance ●	Fundamental weaknesses in management of risks and/or controls that will lead to failure to achieve objectives

No opinion / Advisory ● - Advisory opinions are used for audit work carried out at the request of senior management to provide advice on risk, governance and/or control or to develop potential solutions to problems and provide control assurance. They are also used for our reviews of major change projects that are at an early stage where an assurance rating cannot effectively be awarded.

Definition of risk ratings

Internal Audit reports include an action plan that raises risks/issues that highlight improvement areas. These risks/issues are defined in the following table as per the council's Risk Management Strategy. No 'Critical' risks/issues were raised during the year.

Low ●	Advisory issues discussed with managers during the audit and not included in audit reports and action plans.
Moderate ●	Operational issues that are containable at service level.
Major ●	Corporate, strategic and/or cross-service issues potentially requiring wider discussion at SLT.
Critical ●	Significant issues to be brought to the attention of SLT, Cabinet Lead Members and Corporate Governance & Audit Committee.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

Appendix 4 – Quality Assurance Improvement Programme

Progress against actions from the external assessment as at June 2023

Ref	Standard	Agreed action	Comment
	Code of Ethics		
1.	Do internal auditors have regard to the Standards of Public Life’s Seven Principles of Public Life?	Amend the Annual Declaration to include Standards of Public Life’s Seven Principles of Public Life. Chief Internal Auditor, Completed	Complete. Auditors aware of the Standards of Public Life’s principles and annual declaration updated and signed acceptance by all auditors.
	1000: Purpose, Authority and Responsibility		
2.	Does the internal audit charter cover the arrangements for appropriate resourcing?	Internal Audit Charter “Resources” should incorporate the reporting arrangements if there are insufficient resources. Chief Internal Auditor, Completed	Complete. Internal Audit Charter updated accordingly.
	1100: Independence and Objectivity		
3.	The board approves the internal audit budget and resource plan.	Provide details of the annual resources available for Internal Audit, i.e. number of productive audit days available after taking into account non-productive time, e.g. annual leave, training etc. in the Internal Audit Strategy. Chief Internal Auditor, May 2019	Complete. Internal Audit Strategy states the annual resources available for Internal Audit.
	1300: Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme		

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

4.	The “Checklist for Assessing Conformance with the PSIAS” produced by CIPFA to satisfy the requirements set out in PSIAS 1311 and 1312 was not used as a basis for the internal assessment.	The IIA’s checklist was used for the internal assessment. Agree to use the PSIAS checklist as agreed by the Welsh Chief Auditors Group in future to conduct the internal assessment. Chief Internal Auditor, March 2019	Complete Internal Audit assessment checklist updated.
1300: Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme 1311: Internal Assessments			
5.	Does the periodic assessment include a review of the activity against the risk-based plan and the achievement of its aims and objectives?	The Internal Audit Update report to Corporate Governance Committee to include a review of activity against the risk-based plan. Chief Internal Auditor, May 2019	Complete. Annual Internal Audit Report summarises work completed against the Internal Audit Strategy.
1300: Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme 1311: Reporting on the Quality Assurance Programme			
6	Has the CAE reported the results of the QAIP to senior management and the board and that the results of both external and periodic internal assessment must be communicated upon completion.	This has already been identified following the internal assessment. The external assessment report will be presented to the Corporate Governance Committee. Chief Internal Auditor, November 2018	Complete External assessment presented to Corporate Governance Committee in November 2018.
7	Has the CAE included the results of the QAIP and progress against any improvement plans in the annual report?	Include results of the QAIP and progress within the annual report Chief Internal Auditor, May 2019	Complete. Annual Internal Audit Report includes the results of the QAIP and progress.
2000: Managing the Internal Audit Activity			

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

	2060: Reporting to Senior Management and the Board		
8	Is the frequency and content of such reporting determined in discussion with senior management and the board and are they dependent on the importance of the information to be communicated and the urgency of the related actions to be taken by senior management and the board?	<p>This was also highlighted as part of the review of the Corporate Governance Committee's effectiveness in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice.</p> <p>Review frequency of reporting on Internal Audit activity to the Corporate Governance and update the Forward Work Programme if required.</p> <p>Chief Internal Auditor, April 2019</p>	<p>Complete.</p> <p>Frequency of Internal Audit report reviewed and Forward Work Programme for the Corporate Governance Committee updated. All Low and No Assurance Reports continue to be reported to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.</p>
	2100: Managing the Internal Audit Activity 2110: Governance		
9	Has the internal audit activity evaluated the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Design b) Implementation, and c) Effectiveness of the organisation's ethics-related objectives, programmes and activities? 	<p>Include a review of Ethics within the Internal Audit Strategy.</p> <p>Chief Internal Auditor, May 2019</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>A review of Ethics has been completed and includes an agreed action plan. A follow up review of the agreed actions to be carried out in</p>
	2400: Communicating Results 2410: Criteria for Communicating		
10	If there are any areas of disagreement between the internal auditor and management, which cannot be resolved by discussion, are these recorded in the action plan and the residual risk highlighted?	<p>Where risk/issues or actions cannot be agreed, these are highlighted within the action plan of the relevant internal audit report and the Corporate Governance Committee made aware.</p>	<p>Complete.</p> <p>Internal Audit Charter updated to include this requirement</p>

Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23

		<p>This will be incorporated within the Internal Audit Charter for clarity.</p> <p>Chief Internal Auditor, May 2019</p>	
11	<p>Does the annual report incorporate a comparison of work actually carried out with the work planned?</p>	<p>This action is difficult to achieve in practice as the Internal Audit plan changes during the year to correspond to changes in risk and priorities.</p> <p>Chief Internal Auditor to assess the effort required to perform this comparison, and if it is not excessive, the comparison will be included in the Internal Audit Annual report.</p> <p>Chief Internal Auditor, May 2019</p>	<p>Complete.</p> <p>Comparison between work planned and work carried out included in the Internal Audit Annual Report.</p>

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Report to	Corporate Governance & Audit Committee
Date of meeting	14 June 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis / Bob Chowdhury – Chief Internal Auditor
Report author	Bob Chowdhury – Chief Internal Auditor
Title	Internal Audit Charter & Strategy 2023-24

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report provides the Committee with the Internal Audit Charter and Strategy for 2023-24. The Charter defines Internal Audit's purpose, authority and responsibility in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Strategy provides details of the proposed Internal Audit projects for the year that will allow the Chief Internal Auditor to provide an 'opinion' on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk and control during the year

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 Local Authorities subject to the Account and Audit (Wales) Regulations must maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal controls. In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), safeguards will continue for a period of time to maintain Internal Auditors' independence and objectivity.

2.2 The Strategy contains a risk-based internal audit plan that takes into account the PSIAS requirement to deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that the organisation can use to inform its governance statement. This Committee's terms of reference require it to consider internal audit's plans.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 The Committee approves the Internal Audit Charter (Appendix 1) and the Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24 (Appendix 2).

4. Report details

4.1 The main changes to the Internal Audit Charter in Appendix 1 are included in the 'Positioning & Reporting Lines' section as follows:

4.2 There have been minor changes to the Charter around updating pronouns and the new Chief Internal Auditor qualifications.

4.3 The Internal Audit Strategy in Appendix 2 provides background to the internal Audit service as well as its proposed plan of work for the year based on an assessment of risk and consultation with services.

4.4 The proposed plan of work will allow the Chief Internal Auditor to provide an overall 'opinion' for the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023-24 and inform the Annual Governance Statement. This Committee will receive regular information reports on progress.

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

5.1 There is no decision required with this report. There is no direct contribution to the Corporate Priorities, but some projects in the audit plan will review Corporate Priority areas and will provide assurance on their delivery.

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

6.1 Not applicable - there is no decision or costs attached to this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1 This report does not require a decision or proposal for change, so there is no impact on people who share protected characteristics.

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

8.1 The Chief Internal Auditor has consulted with Corporate Directors, Section 151 Officer, senior management and their management teams.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 There are no financial implications attached to this report.

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

10.1 Failure to deliver an adequate level of internal audit may mean that the Chief Internal Auditor cannot provide an annual 'opinion' on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk and control during the year. This would potentially lead to a significant governance issue being raised in the Council's 'annual governance statement' at the end of the financial year.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1 Not applicable - there is no decision required with this report.

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Internal Audit Charter 2023-24

Internal Audit Charter

Contents

Contents	2
1. Introduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2. Our Purpose	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3. Definition of internal auditing:	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. Our Mission	5
5. Our Objectives	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6. Code of Ethics	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7. Core Principles for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8. Internal Audit Positioning and Reporting Lines	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9. Authority	8
10. Scope of Internal Audit Activity	9
11. Resources	10
12. Internal Audit Plan	11
13. Report & Monitoring	12
14. Quality Assurance and Improvement	Error! Bookmark not defined.
15. Internal Assessments	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Internal Audit Charter

16. External Assessments

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Charter defines the purpose, authority and responsibility of internal audit. The Internal Audit Charter establishes the internal audit activity's position within the Council; authorises access to records; and defines the scope of internal audit activities.
- 1.2 All UK public sector internal audit service providers work to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).
- 1.3 The PSIAS use generic terms that, in Denbighshire County Council's case, are translated as:

PSIAS	DCC
Chief Audit Executive	Chief Internal Auditor
Senior Management	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
The Board	Governance & Audit Committee

- 1.4 The PSIAS require the Chief Internal Auditor to develop and maintain an up-to-date Internal Audit Charter to establish:
- Internal Audit's purpose, mission and position within the Council.
 - The Chief Internal Auditor's functional reporting relationship with the CEO and Governance & Audit Committee.
 - Authorisation for Internal Audit to access records, personnel and physical properties relevant to the performance of its work.
 - The scope of Internal Audit's work, including the nature of its assurance role, consultancy services and its involvement in anti-fraud and corruption work.
 - Arrangements for resourcing the Internal Audit service.

Internal Audit Charter

- Arrangements for avoiding conflicts of interest within the Internal Audit service.

1.5 The Chief Internal Auditor will review the Charter each year and present it to the Governance & Audit Committee for final approval.

2. Our Purpose

2.1 The PSIAS include mandatory elements of the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF):

- Definition of Internal Auditing
- Core Principles
- Code of Ethics
- International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing

3. Definition of Internal Auditing:

3.1 “internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation’s operations.

3.2 It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes”. *(PSIAS)*

3.3 Within the Council, Internal Audit is one of the cornerstones of effective governance. Our annual internal audit opinion and other reports are a key element of the framework of assurance that is used to complete the Annual Governance Statement. We give assurance to elected members and management, highlighting areas for improvement.

3.4 Our role is a unique one, providing effective challenge and acting as a catalyst for positive change and continual improvement in governance in all its aspects.

Internal Audit Charter

Our role is particularly important when the Council is facing uncertain and challenging times.

4. Our Mission

4.1 “To enhance and protect organisational value by providing risk-based and objective assurance, advice and insight” (*PSIAS*)

5. Our Objectives

- Provide independent assurance and advice to management and elected members on risk management, governance and internal control.
- Develop and promote our role to make a significant contribution to modernise the Council and deliver efficiencies and improve services for our customers.
- Add value in all areas of our work, providing excellent service to our customers.

6. Code of Ethics

6.1 All members of the Internal Audit service make an annual declaration that they agree to comply with the IIA Code of Ethics as follows:

Ethic	Principle
Integrity	The integrity of internal auditors establishes trust and this provides the basis for relying on their judgement.
Objectivity	Internal auditors demonstrate the highest level of professional objectivity in gathering, evaluating and communicating information about the activity or process being examined. Internal auditors make a balanced assessment of all the relevant circumstances and are not unduly influenced by their own interest or by others in forming judgements.

Internal Audit Charter

Confidentiality	Internal auditors respect the value and ownership of information they receive and do not disclose information without appropriate authority unless there is a legal or professional obligation to do so.
Competency	Internal auditors apply the knowledge, skills and experience needed in the performance of internal audit services.

6.2 In addition, our annual declaration states that we will declare any interests we may have in any services that we review; and have read the PSIAS, Code of Ethics, Council's Code of Conduct for Officers and have due regard to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

7. Core Principles for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing

7.1 Our internal audit approach is underpinned by the following Core Principles:

- Demonstrate integrity.
- Demonstrate competence and due professional care.
- Is objective and free from undue influence (independent)
- Aligns with the strategies, objectives, and risks of the organisation.
- Is appropriately positioned and adequately resourced.
- Demonstrates quality and continuous improvement.
- Communicates effectively.
- Provides risk-based assurance.
- Is insightful, proactive, and future-focused.
- Promotes organisational improvement.

7.2 In addition, the Chief Internal Auditor will be appropriately experienced and hold a professional qualification (CCAB or CMIIA) and is responsible for:

Internal Audit Charter

- Developing an annual internal audit plan based on an understanding of the significant risks to which the Council is exposed.
- Submitting the plan to the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee and Senior Leadership Team for review and agreement.
- Implementing the plan and reporting any amendments that may occur.
- Ensuring compliance with the Standards.
- Developing and maintaining co-operative relationships with management, other internal auditors, external auditors and other review bodies to ensure the most effective audit coverage is achieved.
- Maintaining a professional internal audit team with sufficient knowledge, skills and experience to carry out the plan.
- Providing an annual opinion as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment including any issues which should be considered for inclusion in the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

8. Internal Audit Positioning and Reporting Lines

- 8.1 The Chief Internal Auditor has a functional reporting line to the Head of Finance and Audit, but also has direct access on internal audit issues to the CEO, Corporate Director Governance and Business, Cabinet, Governance & Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committees.
- 8.2 These extended reporting lines provide Internal Audit with sufficient independence of the activities that it reviews to enable our auditors to perform their duties objectively, allowing us to make impartial and effective professional judgements and raise issues for improvement.
- 8.3 The Head of Finance and Audit reviews the Chief Internal Auditor's performance with input and feedback from the CEO and Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee. This ensures that the Chief Internal Auditor's opinion and scope of

Internal Audit Charter

work cannot be limited or affected by his functional line management position within the Council.

- 8.4 Governance and Audit Committee monitor the effectiveness of Internal Audit's activities. It should be involved in the selection process when/if an internal audit service provider changes, the appointment or termination of the Chief Internal Auditor and in ensuring that internal audit is adequately resourced.
- 8.5 The Chief Internal Auditor will ensure that the Internal Audit service remains free from all conditions that threaten the ability of Internal Auditors to perform their work in an unbiased manner. Internal Auditors have no direct operational responsibilities or authority over any of the activities audited. In the exceptional circumstance where this is required, the approval of the Governance and Audit Committee will be obtained and safeguards put in place to protect our independence and objectivity.

9. Authority

- 9.1 The Council's Financial Regulations stipulate Internal Audit's rights of access, providing the service with authority to:
- Access all Council premises at reasonable times.
 - Access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and systems.
 - Receive any information and explanation considered necessary concerning any matter made under consideration.
 - Require any employee of the Council to account for cash or any other Council asset under his or her control.
 - Access records belonging to third parties, such as contractors, when required.
- 9.2 The Chief Internal Auditor attends Governance and Audit Committee and has a pre-meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of Governance and Audit Committee,

Internal Audit Charter

Head of Finance and Audit and the Corporate Director – Governance and Business before every Governance and Audit committee meeting. The Chief Internal Auditor also has right of access to all Governance and Audit Committee members.

- 9.3 During the last 12 months the Chief Internal Auditor also attends quarterly meetings with CET and Cabinet Briefing and six monthly with SLT to present a report on all internal and external reviews that are taking place within Denbighshire.

10. Scope of Internal Audit Activity

- 10.1 The Internal Audit service is very proactive and innovative, constantly aiming to improve. We have a customer-focused approach to audit planning, project scoping and service delivery, involving elected members, senior management and operational staff.
- 10.2 Our Internal Audit Assurance Plan links closely to the Council's Governance Assurance Framework, taking account of other assurances that the Council may receive, internal or external, to prevent duplication and co-ordinate regulatory work. It also takes account of discussions with senior management.
- 10.3 Our work provides a risk-based approach that allows the Chief Internal Auditor to form and evidence his opinion on the control environment to support the Council's Annual Governance Statement.
- 10.4 Internal Audit is not responsible for managing the risk of fraud – this lies with the Council's senior management. Internal Auditors have sufficient knowledge to evaluate the risk of fraud and the manner in which it is managed by the council, but are not expected to have the expertise of a person whose primary responsibility is detecting and investigating fraud.

Internal Audit Charter

- 10.5 The Council's Financial Regulations and investigation procedures require managers to inform the Chief Internal Auditor of any suspected financial irregularities. The Chief Internal Auditor retains the right to decide on an appropriate course of action, which may mean a joint investigation or investigation by the service. All investigation reports should be sent to the Chief Internal Auditor for inclusion in a report on fraud investigations within the Internal Audit Annual Report. We will also consider any control issues identified in the fraud investigation in terms of the impact on current and future internal audit activity.
- 10.6 Internal Audit occasionally provide guidance and advice e.g. on new systems or may help to develop new processes using our specific skills. Services may also occasionally ask us to carry out specific projects on a consultancy basis for a fee. The Chief Internal Auditor will accommodate such requests only where there is sufficient capacity to carry out the work to the required standard. We make it clear from the outset that we are working on a consultancy basis and are not giving audit assurance on these occasions.
- 10.7 The PSIAS permit assurance services to be provided where internal audit has previously performed consulting services. This will only be the case where the consulting/advisory work completed has not impaired objectivity. Individual objectivity will be managed when assigning resources to the engagement.

11. Resources

- 11.1 The Governance and Audit Committee has the responsibility to ensure the internal audit function is sufficiently resourced and has the required skills and competencies required to meet the Council's audit needs.
- 11.2 The service structure has been amended during the last 12 months due to recruitment issues, but the team remains at 6 FTE. The table below shows the

Internal Audit Charter

changes that have taken place:

Staff No:	As at April 2022	Staff No:	As at 31 March 2023
1	Chief Internal Auditor	1	Chief Internal Auditor
1	Principal Auditor	1	Career Pathway Principal Auditor
2	Senior Auditor	3	Career Pathway Senior Auditor
2	Auditors	1	Auditor

11.3 Over the last 12 months the dynamics of the team has altered with two members leaving and there are recruitment issues nationally facing internal audit teams within Wales. To rectify this, the Chief Internal Auditor with the support of HR has implemented Career Pathway posts. The Career Pathway Principal Auditor is currently studying the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors qualification (and is part-qualified) and is also due to start ILM level 4 in September. The three Career Pathway Senior Auditors will be completing AAT and then studying the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors route. The Auditor is currently studying AAT and the Chief Internal Auditor holds the qualification of Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA).

11.4 In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the Chief Internal Auditor will advise senior management and the Governance & Audit Committee of any changes to resources that are likely to affect the completion of the planned work which may impact the ability to provide the necessary assurance.

12. Internal Audit Plan

Internal Audit Charter

- 12.1 At least annually, the Chief Internal Auditor will submit to senior management and the Governance & Audit Committee an internal audit plan for review and approval. The internal audit plan will consist of a list of audit priorities and resource requirements for the next financial year. The Chief Internal Auditor will communicate the impact of resource limitations and significant interim changes to senior management and the Governance & Audit Committee.
- 12.2 The internal audit plan will be developed based on a prioritisation of the audit universe using a risk-based methodology, including input of senior management and the Governance & Audit Committee. The Chief Internal Auditor will review and adjust the plan, as necessary, in response to changes in the organisation's business, risks, operations, systems, and controls. Any significant deviation from the approved internal audit plan will be communicated to senior management and the Governance & Audit Committee through the Internal Audit Update Report.

13. Reporting and Monitoring

- 13.1 A written report will be prepared and issued by the Internal Auditor following the conclusion of each internal audit engagement and will be distributed as appropriate. Internal audit results will also be communicated to the Governance and Audit Committee.
- 13.1 The internal audit report will include management's response and corrective action taken or to be taken in regard to the specific findings. Management's response will be incorporated into an action plan which will include a timetable for anticipated completion of action to be taken and an explanation for any corrective action that will not be implemented.
- 13.3 The internal audit activity will follow-up all low assurance and no assurance areas and report the results to the Governance & Audit Committee. A

Internal Audit Charter

representative from the Service will be asked by the Committee to attend to explain the action taken to address identified weaknesses.

13.4 The Chief Internal Auditor will periodically report to senior management and the Governance and Audit Committee on the internal audit activity's purpose, authority, and responsibility, as well as performance relative to its plan. Reporting will also include significant risk exposures and control issues, including fraud risks, governance issues, and other matters needed or requested by senior management and the Governance & Audit Committee.

14. Quality Assurance and Improvement

14.1 The Chief Internal Auditor maintains the quality assurance and improvement programme which covers all aspects of Internal Audit's activities. The programme includes internal and external assessments to evaluate Internal Audit's conformance with the Mission Statement, the Core Principles of Internal Auditing and the International Standards and application of the Code of Ethics.

15. Internal Assessments

15.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations (Wales) 2014 places a statutory obligation on the Council to conduct a review of effectiveness of internal audit at least once a year. This comprises of:

- Ongoing monitoring of the performance of the internal audit activity
- Periodic self-assessment of the internal audit activity against the PSIAS.

16. External Assessments

16.1 PSIAS require an External Assessment to be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor from outside the Council.

Internal Audit Charter

16.2 An external assessment was carried out in 2017-18 on a peer review basis organised through the Welsh Chief Auditors Group. The results were reported to Corporate Governance & Audit Committee in November 2018 which concluded that:

“The overall opinion following the external validation of Denbighshire County Council Internal Audit Service is that it generally conforms with the PSIAS. Some opportunities for further improvement have been identified as shown in this report but none of the items of partial or non-conformance are considered to be a significant failure to meet the Standards”.

16.3 Actions to address items of partial conformance have been completed as reported to the Governance & Audit Committee.

16.4 Any known instances of non-conformance with the PSIAS will be reported to the Governance & Audit Committee and any significant deviations will be considered for inclusion in the Council’s Annual Governance Statement.

16.5 Our next peer external assessment is due to be undertaken by the Corporate Manager – Internal Audit at Ceredigion County Council in June 2023 and the results will be shared with the Governance and Audit Committee.

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

Contents

Contents	2
1. Introduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2. High Level Audit Plan	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3. Counter Fraud and Corruption Work including NFI	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. Partnership working with other auditors	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5. Proposed Audit Priorities for 2023-24	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6. Internal Audit Performance Monitoring	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7. Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Internal Audit Service is an independent and objective internal team that provides assurance and advice to all levels of management and elected members on the quality of operations within the Council. We particularly focus on governance, risk management and control arrangements.
- 1.2 Internal Audit will continue to deliver its services in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Internal Audit Charter which sets out its purpose, authority and principle responsibilities.
- 1.3 The Internal Audit Strategy for 2023/24 aims to support the council in making the best use of its resources and takes into account strategic risks and the corporate priorities. The internal audit plan and the work of internal audit must focus on the things that matter to the organisation, and the opinions and improvement suggestions that internal audit provide must help the organisation achieve its objectives and be valued by stakeholders.
- 1.4 This Internal Audit Strategy contains the proposed internal audit activity for the year and gives an outline scope of coverage for each area of work. The plan must retain sufficient flexibility to allow us to react to changes in the risk environment. Any changes will be agreed with management and reported to the Governance & Audit Committee.
- 1.5 The plan of work provides the council with objective opinions on the effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, governance and control arrangements. These are key elements of the evidence which informs the:
 - Internal Audit Annual Report; and
 - Annual Governance Statement.
- 1.6 The Internal Audit structure comprises six full-time equivalent (FTE) members of staff, comprising the Chief Internal Auditor, 1 Career Pathway Principal Auditor, 3 Career Pathway Senior Auditors and 1 Auditors. This equates to 1,008 days available for productive assurance work. The number of productive days does

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

not include “non-productive” days such as annual leave, training, illness, management (e.g. 121s) and team meetings.

2. High Level Audit Plan

2.1 The Audit Plan 2023/24 takes into account the:

- Council’s corporate and service risk registers;
- corporate assurance requirements, including the Annual Governance Statement;
- the outcome of previous audits and those of other assurance providers;
- discussions with service management teams;
- Planned work deferred from 2022-23.

2.2 The plan remains flexible to ensure that it reflects any emerging or changes to risks and priorities of the Council. It will be regularly reviewed with services, and updated as necessary, to ensure it remains valid and appropriate so that internal audit resource is deployed effectively. As a minimum, the plan will be reviewed after six months.

2.3 The table on page 7 lists the priority audit areas for the year.

3. Counter Fraud and Corruption Work including NFI

3.1 Counter fraud arrangements are a high priority for the Council and assist in the protection of public funds and accountability. As per the Internal Audit Charter, Internal Audit is not responsible for managing the risk of fraud – this lies with the Council’s senior management.

3.2 Internal Audit will continue to investigate instances of potential fraud and irregularities referred to it by management and will also carry out pro-active counter fraud and corruption testing of systems considered to be most at risk of fraud. This is informed by CIPFA’s ‘Code of Practice on managing the risk of fraud and corruption’. Notable areas of fraud nationally include: Housing

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

Benefit, Council Tax, Housing and Tenancy, Procurement, Insurance, Abuse of Position, Blue Badges and Direct Payments (Social Care).

- 3.3 Audit Wales facilitates a national data matching exercise (National Fraud Initiative – NFI) every two years. Work on the 2020/21 is complete and the 2022/23 exercise has recently commenced. Internal Audit engages with relevant Council services to ensure system reports are extracted accurately and on time, and that data matches are reviewed and resulting action is taken as necessary. Progress will be reported to Governance & Audit Committee periodically as part of the Internal Audit Update report.
- 3.4 Internal Audit captures details of referrals where there are allegations/suspicions of fraud or corruption taking place and this is reported to the Governance & Audit Committee as part of the Internal Audit Update Report. An Annual Fraud Report will be included as part of the Internal Audit Annual Report to summarise and reflect on the work that has taken place during 2022/23.

4. Partnership working with other auditors

- 4.1 We continue to work to develop effective partnership working arrangements with other local authority audit services. We participate in audit networks, locally and nationally, which provide for a beneficial exchange of information and practices. This often improves the effectiveness and efficiency of the audit process, through avoiding instances of “re-inventing the wheel”, particularly in new areas of work which has been covered in other authorities. We continue to maintain an effective working relationship with the Council’s external auditors, Audit Wales, and meet regularly to exchange information and minimise potential duplication.

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

5. Proposed Audit Priorities for 2023-24

- 5.1 This year's audit plan has been developed through discussions with senior and middle management and aligned with the corporate priorities and corporate and service risks registers and the council's risk appetite. It is also informed by previous audit results, horizon scanning and current themes such as Climate Change. For 2023/24, key considerations for setting the plan include:
- Onboarding new staff who have not worked in Internal Audit before and assisting them with training and support;
 - financial challenges and related budget savings required to be delivered by the council;
 - organisational changes including increased partnership working and major projects;
 - organisational resilience and sustainability.
- 5.2 All audit areas identified as high priority within the plan will be undertaken together with annual audits of financial areas for the Section 151 Officer with particular focus on key changes around the new financial system currently due to go live on 1 April 2024. Audit areas rated as medium priority will be kept under review and any changes or emerging risks will be captured and the audit plan updated as necessary.
- 5.3 The following list shows the current priority projects for 2023-24 that has been agreed between the CIA and each service management team and directors. The Governance and Audit Committee will continue to receive a regular progress update on Internal Audit work actually undertaken, which will include a list of upcoming work from the project priority schedule.
- 5.4 A summary brief for each audit area is listed in the table below, detailed scope of work will be developed and agreed with management prior to the start of each review. This is to ensure that key risks to the operation or function can be considered during the review.

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

Audit Project	Audit Brief
Risk Management	Review will focus on the corporate risks in the Corporate Risk Register that have not been covered elsewhere in the Audit Plan; with a specific review of the effectiveness of the mitigating controls and further actions specified against each risk.
Fostering	Provide assurance over the controls in place to support the robust management of the fostering service including payments to foster carers and compliance with good practice and relevant legislation. Also review the embedding and benefits gained from being part of the Foster Wales national network.
Looked after children – Independent Reviewing Officers	Corporate risk – safeguarding. The role and responsibilities of the independent reviewing officers in caring for looked after children. Review the effectiveness of the IRO service with consideration to strategic and managerial oversight, performance monitoring and reporting.
Programme & Project Management	Corporate risk. Review of a sample of key council programmes or projects to give assurance over governance, risks management, and controls.
Financial Systems	Annual assurance for the S151 Officer. Focus on the main accounting systems. To review progress on the implementation of the new financial system.
Revenues & Benefits	To provide assurance around how Revs and Benefits service is operating now that it has come back in-house.
Liberty Protection Safeguards	Support/advise the Council on its response to new Liberty Protection Safeguards (DOLS/DIDS).
Mediquip	Review arrangements over Mediquip to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractual agreements and authorisation • Risk management • Management and supervision • Performance management • Financial arrangements
Court of Protection	Review to cover the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and procedures • Management of client finances including investments

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees • Access controls • Performance monitoring and reporting
Community Equipment Service	<p>Review to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance arrangements over partnership • Procurement – compliance with financial regulations and contract procedure rules, • Financial management and monitoring to include pooled budget, • Inventory, stock of equipment, and equipment servicing and • Compliance with GDPR.
Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL)	Service Level Agreement to provide internal audit services.
Youth Service	Linked to corporate priority – young people. Review effectiveness of the council's arrangements and its response to the recent WG's Youth Work Strategy.
Procurement – pre-tender stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review compliance with legislation, financial regulations and contract procedure rules, • Project planning & appraisal • Seeking quotations and invitations to tender • Effectiveness of community benefits hub • Environmental and carbon considerations
Partnership Arrangements	<p>Review to inform the Annual Governance Statement to assess adequacy of corporate arrangements to manage key partnership risks and for a sample of individual partnership arrangements review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance arrangements • Achievement of expected outcomes • Data protection arrangements • Monitoring of financial management • Funding agreements and monitoring arrangements where grants involved.
Cefndy Healthcare	<p>Service risk – review impact of Brexit and key risks. Scope to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning • Key controls – financial, policy and procedures.

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement & contract management – compliance with Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations. Consider ethical procurement and supply chain resilience. • Legal & regulatory compliance – also Brexit considerations • Customer service
Tackling Poverty	New corporate priority relating to reducing deprivation. Review to cover governance arrangements including roles and responsibilities, strategies and plans.
Denbigh High School	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Esgob Morgan	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Pentrecelyn	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Dinas Bran	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Bro Famau	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Emmanuel	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Henllan	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Bro Dyfrdwy	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Bodfari	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Trefnant/Llanbedr	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Plas Brondyfryn	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Bryn Collen	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Ysgol Gwenant	Reviews of schools providing assurance over: governance, financial management, safeguarding and other key areas.
Asset Management	Asset management over property including acquisition and disposal process and authorisations.

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

Health and Wellbeing	Impact of Covid-19 on staff health and wellbeing and organisational response. To include a review of the Occupational Health service.
Flood Risk Strategy	Review corporate arrangements to manage flood risk, scope to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flood risk management strategy and operational plans - Coordination between services and partners - Systems and processes for identifying potential flood risk areas
Insurance	Evaluate controls to ensure the council has appropriate insurance in place to cover key risks associated with its activities and responsibilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance coverage • Insurance renewals • Claims handling • Assessment of contractor liability for claims where applicable • Service charge for insurance cover
Planning Applications	Review effectiveness of key controls in place around the processing of planning applications to ensure that applications are assessed appropriately and objectively, and decisions are made in line with delegated officer responsibilities. Proactive counter-fraud review of the controls in place to mitigate the risk of fraud or conflicts of interests impacting the planning application process.
Post 16 Education Grant	Assurance over the grant claim preparation and authorisation process.
Housing Support Grant	Assurance on the preparation of the grant claim and authorisation process.
Council Run Care Home	To carry out a process review on the two council run care homes, with a view to undertaking a full audit in 2024/25 if required. .
Blue Badges	Following on from the process review completed in 2022/23, we will undertake an audit of the service concentrating on the issues raised in the process review.
Library fees & charges	Process review to be completed this year on the service, with a view to carrying out an audit in 2024/25 if required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed new charging policy
Cash Collection	Review corporate arrangements in place for cash collection and current banking arrangements

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

ALN	Following on from previous review, advisory/assurance work on implementation of the ALN, this year we will undertake sample test around the controls and processes.
Rhuddlan Town Council 2022-2023	Annual Audit work on behalf of Rhuddlan Town Council
AONB Grant	Annual grant certification work on behalf of the AONB.
Wellbeing Impact Assessment	To provide assurance that the council is complying with the Wellbeing Impact Assessment and services are fully engaged.
National Fraud Initiative	To start on the matching process during this financial year
UK Resettlement Team	To review arrangements in place to support people being resettled within the UK and monies been spent comply with the terms and conditions of the grant.
Taxi Licensing	Carry out a full review of the taxi licensing process within Denbighshire. Look at complaints received in last couple years.
Staff PayScale review	To review the key piece of work being undertaken by HR around staff PayScale and remuneration.
Housing Contact Centre / Corporate Call centre	To provide assurance around the controls in place to support an efficient and effective call centre, with the scope looking at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both call centres comply with the councils policies and procedures - Enquires are dealt with in a timely manner - Monitoring of customer feedback.
Liberty Gas	To review the arrangements in place between the council and the contractor to ensure compliance with the contract
Contract Management of ICT system	To look at the current Contract Management process in place for purchasing and renewing ICT system.
Climate Change & Ecological Change Programme	To provide assurance that the council is complying with the Climate & Ecological Change programme and services are fully engaged.
Whistleblowing Investigation	As required.

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

Follow up audits	As required.
School Funds Audits	On request.

6. Internal Audit Performance

6.1 Internal Audit will continue to use the following performance measures from 1 April 2023 to measure its customer service and its efficiency and effectiveness in following up action plans and ensuring that agreed improvement is delivered by services following an internal audit review.

Service Standards	Target
Internal Audit will discuss, agree and send services the Internal Audit Project Scoping Document before it commences work.	100%
At the conclusion of its work, Internal Audit will hold a closing meeting with all relevant people to discuss the outcome of its work, and then send services a draft report as soon as possible after that meeting.	Avg. Days (less than 10)
Internal Audit will issue a final audit report as soon as possible after agreeing the report and its action plan with services.	Avg. Days (less than 5)
Using performance management system (Verto), Internal Audit will monitor and report on the % of agreed improvement actions that have been implemented by services to show that Internal Audit's service is effective in helping to deliver improvement.	75%

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

7.

Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS)

7.1 PSIAS 1312 states that “External assessments must be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation. The CAE [Chief Audit Executive, which is Denbighshire’s case is currently the CIA must discuss with the board:

- The form and frequency of external assessments.
- The qualifications and independence of the assessor or assessment team, including any potential conflict of interest.”

7.2 This external assessment was completed in 2017-18 by the arrangement of the Welsh Chief Auditors Group through a peer review by a local authority Internal Audit Service. Denbighshire’s assessment was carried out by Gwynedd County Council’s Internal Audit Service and reported that Denbighshire Internal Audit Services:

“...generally conforms with the PSIAS. Some opportunities for further improvement have been identified ... but none of the items of partial or non-conformance are considered to be a significant failure to meet the Standards”. Submitting the plan to the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee and Senior Leadership Team for review and agreement.

7.3 The CIA has updated the self-assessment to capture the partial conformance items raised in the external assessment. The Quality Assurance Improvement Plan was reported to Governance & Audit Committee in November 2018 and an update was provided as part of the Annual Internal Audit Report in June 2019, July 2020, June 2021 and June 2022. A further update will be included as part of the Annual Internal Audit Report in June 2023.

Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24

7.4 The Internal Audit Charter has been updated to capture the requirements highlighted in the report and a review of Ethics & Culture has recently been completed which means that all improvement actions arising from the external assessment have been addressed. A further update will be provided to the Governance & Audit Committee in June 2023 as part of the Annual Internal Audit Report.

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Decision required (yes/no)	Author – contact officer
26 July 2023					
	1	Issues Referred by Scrutiny Committees (if any)	To receive and issues raised at Scrutiny		Rhian Evans/ Karen Evans – Scrutiny Co-ordinator
	2	Recent External Regulatory Reports Received (if any)	To consider any reports received		Nicola Kneale – Interim Head of Service Business Improvement & Modernisation - Strategic Planning Team Manager
	3	Internal Audit Update	To update committee on Internal Audit's latest progress		Chief Internal Auditor
	4	Forward Work Programme			Democratic Services
		Reports			
	5	Treasury Management update and review			Head of Finance – Steve Gadd
	6	Corporate Complaints Process			Statutory and Corporate Complaints Officer – Kevin Roberts/ Monitoring Officer – (Ann Lloyd –Line manager)
	7	Draft Annual Governance Statement			Chief Internal Auditor
	8	Annual Whistleblowing Report			Gary Williams – Monitoring Officer
	9	Draft Annual Governance and Audit Committee Report (This report will cover the previous years)	To present to Full Council- the annual report from Governance and Audit		Gary Williams – Monitoring Officer

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Decision required (yes/no)	Author – contact officer
20 Sept 2023					
	1	Issues Referred by Scrutiny Committees (if any)	To receive and issues raised at Scrutiny		Rhian Evans/ Karen Evans – Scrutiny Co-ordinator
	2	Recent External Regulatory Reports Received (if any)	To consider any reports received		Nicola Kneale – Interim Head of Service Business Improvement & Modernisation - Strategic Planning Team Manager
	3	Forward Work Programme			Democratic Services
		Reports			
	4	Audit of Accounts Report 2021-22			Head of Finance – Steve Gadd
	5	Approval of the Statement of Accounts 2021/22	To receive the audited accounts	Yes	Head of Finance – Steve Gadd
	6	Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23			Head of Finance – Steve Gadd
	7	Annual Corporate Health and Safety report	To consider the Health & Safety management within DCC during 2021-2022.		Corporate Health and Safety Manager – Gerry Lapington
	8	Fire Safety Report	To receive the annual report on the Fire Safety programme and performance.		Fire Safety Manager – Dawn Jones
22 Nov 2023					

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Decision required (yes/no)	Author – contact officer
	1	Issues Referred by Scrutiny Committees (if any)	To receive and issues raised at Scrutiny		Rhian Evans/ Karen Evans – Scrutiny Co-ordinator
	2	Recent External Regulatory Reports Received (if any)	To consider any reports received		Nicola Kneale – Interim Head of Service Business Improvement & Modernisation - Strategic Planning Team Manager
	3	Internal Audit Update	To update committee on Internal Audit's latest progress		Internal Auditor
	4	Forward Work Programme			Democratic Services
		Reports			
	5	Budget Process Update			Head of Finance – Steve Gadd
	6	Corporate Risk Register: September 2023 Review	Review the risks facing the council and our risk appetite statement.		Iolo McGregor/Heidi Barton-Price
	7	Annual SIRO report			
	8	Annual RIPA report			Gary Williams – Monitoring Officer

FUTURE ITEMS			
	1	Updates of Commissioning of older peoples care home placements.	Nicola Stubbins – To present to committee when an update is available.
	2	Net Carbon Zero	Helen Vaughan-Evans

	3	Internal Audit – Follow up report – Exceptions and Exemptions	Chief Internal Auditor to update members following the Internal Audit report
	4	Capital Projects -Contingency Report	Head of Finance – Steve Gadd

NB The exact date of publication of occasional reports by for example Wales Audit Office or Annual Reports by the Ombudsman are not presently known. They will be assigned a meeting date as soon as practicable.

Date Updated : 10/5/2023 SJ

FUTURE TRAINING DATES

<u>Date and Time</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Officer</u>
21 July 2023 – 2pm Start	CIPFA training	Chief Internal Auditor
14 September 2023 – 2pm Start	Statement of Accounts	Section 151 Officer



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Dear Graham Boase,

Thank you for engaging positively in our discussions during the recent risk and assurances workshop. I am writing to outline the assurances and risks we discussed during that workshop which are based on our work with the local authority over the last year.

We highlighted the following assurances:

- **The Directors of Education and Children's services collaborate effectively**

The professional collaboration between both services provides effective support for learners and their families. The cross-sector meetings, for example the Multi-agency Provision (MAP) meetings are well established and are an opportunity to share relevant information and provide bespoke provision regarding attendance and behaviour of individual learners. Additional training by both services to up skill school based pastoral staff to provide support to groups with identified learners has been beneficial, for example in supporting learners to reengage with their learning. Leaders in different providers state that they feel are well supported by officers.

- **The officers' knowledge of providers is generally effective in terms of challenge and support for leaders**

The officers know the strengths and areas for improvement well. The Family Support Officers are an invaluable part of the service and they have sound working relationships with learners and their families. This strong partnership helps learners to engage in learning. School leaders have been trained as Trauma Informed School practitioners and leaders and now 'training' their staff as there was such a high demand.

- **Inspection outcomes since restarting in February to December 2022**

- Non-maintained: 6
- Primary: 4 (including 2 best practice case studies)
- Secondary: 3 (2 in SM)
- Special/Pupil Resource Units: 2 (1 Independent Special School & 1 Independent Special College) & 1 Independent School

Inspection outcomes are generally strong across most sectors. However, 1 secondary school was placed in follow-up in July 2022.

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Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth. | Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

- **Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS) Estyn thematic visit (Autumn 2022) provided valuable information regarding the effectiveness of the provision**

All EOTAS decisions are made through multi-agency panels consisting of professionals from education, inclusion services, health, psychology, education welfare officers, SNAP Cymru, youth justice.

EOTAS provision is generally broad and meets the needs of learners. The curriculum requirements are clearly set out, for example by the pupil referral unit, and is overseen by the senior leadership team and the management committee. Recently, the LA has developed a draft policy around part time timetable of pupils in terms of mapping and tracking and how often the reviews should take place.

The Local Authority (LA) expect all learners accessing any EOTAS provisions to re-integrate into mainstream education, further education, employment, or training. Staff within the outreach team are employed to support schools and learners during this process. Learners in Year 11 are supported through a multi-agency approach through the Engagement and Progress team, which includes services such as Careers Wales, Youth Service etc. In general, the provision seems appropriate for EOTAS learners. The evaluation is provided via the reports drafted for scrutiny and the regional consortia.

- **Helpful support for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform**

The ALN support for learners and their families is a strength of the local authority partly due to the effective collaboration between Education and Children Services. Leaders and practitioners are positive about the workshops and professional learning opportunities, for example to support Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCO) with the quality of the Individual Development Plans for pupils identified as needing further support in their learning. In addition, they state that lines of communication of relevant information to all partners has been effective.

The regional partnership seems to be strong and helps to ensure consistency across all local authorities.

The Costed Provision Maps inform well to the work of other partners such as Team around the Family provision and this 'joined up' approach is effective. In general, there is a beneficial working relationship with health board which results in positive impact on children and their families.

- **In general, the Curriculum for Wales (CfW) support meets the needs of leaders and practitioners**

The local authority reports that all primary schools are implementing CfW. Individual meetings with all schools by GwE Support Improvement partners provide informative plans to support their 'journey'. Leaders state that they need time to 'run with it' before being able to evaluate and make further progress, for example providing guidance regarding a deeper understanding of assessment in line with the Progression Steps.

Only 1 of the 8 secondary school (Ysgol Glan Clwyd), has officially implemented CfW since September, 2022. The Director of Education states that all 7 secondary schools are 'trialing' the principles/methodology in preparation for the statutory Y7 & Y8 implementation in September, 2023.

- **Ambitious Welsh Language in Education Strategic Plan**

The plan was approved by Cabinet members on 25 August 2022. The 5 year interim plan has been drafted with the seconded lead officer putting systems in place, for example in establishing committees responding to all 7 outcomes of the plan.

We also highlighted the following risks that we feel you should consider as part of your improvement planning.

- **16 out of 55 (29%) of schools in the LA have newly appointed headteachers since summer term 2020**

The local authority has a well-established induction process for newly appointed headteachers which includes a business manager and finance manager to support them in their new roles. . This support is evaluated on an annual basis and adapted following feedback provided by the new leaders. The number of new leaders highlights a potential risk in terms of sustaining effective and strong leadership. The impact of support has not yet been evaluated.

- **Providers in non-statutory and statutory follow up / schools causing concern**

- Since February 2022 - 2 providers have been placed in Estyn Review, 0 in SI & 1 in SM
- Non-maintained: 1 in ER (Early Learners Day Nursery)
- Primary: 1 in ER (Ysgol Fron Goch)
- Secondary: 2 in SM (1 in SM [Christ the Word & Well-being letter was issued highlighting concerns about safeguarding]) & Denbigh High has been in SM since 2016 [7 follow up visits])

The effectiveness of the support in helping schools to improve and be removed from follow-up is variable for example Denbigh High has been in SM for a very long period of time.

- **EOTAS (Pupils not transferring from Y10 to Y11) is variable**

Following on from the Estyn's thematic visit in Autumn term 2022 focusing on EOTAS, there seems to be a lack of clarity about the number of learners who successfully return to mainstream education and maintained their placement in the last academic year or any other previous years prior to the pandemic. This also includes learners moving on to further education, training, or employment.

- **Evaluations of services clearly focus on measuring the outcomes of young people's children in receiving the support**

The local authority processes are developing to be more focused on the impact of its services on the well-being, attainment and outcomes of learners. The newly developed regional consortia platform (C360) supports leaders in providers and officers in the local authority to share documentation and relevant papers in a more cohesive and collaborative manner. The aim is that the system will allow transparency between all partners which will result in a more bespoke and aligned support package to meet the needs of individual schools. However, it is too early to measure the impact on this new 'system' on learners' experiences and progress in providers.

Variable circumstances regarding the LA's budget

Currently, there are 3 secondary schools: (Ysgol Dinas Bran, Rhyl High School and Ysgol Glan Clwyd) with substantial reserves. Local authority officers monitor the deficit budget of 3 schools through a financial recovery plan and the local authority predicts that more schools will be managing a deficit budget in the near future.

- **The effectiveness of Scrutiny Committee members**

Scrutiny sessions are currently more about sharing information than the impact of systems and services on learners' well-being and progress. Nearly all members are new to their posts and need a lot of background information prior to moving the agenda forward during this academic year.

Kind regards,

Richard Thomas
His Majesty's Inspector
of Education and Training