

To: Members of the County Council

Date: 6 November 2024

Direct Dial: 01824 712589

e-mail: [democratic@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@denbighshire.gov.uk)

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **COUNTY COUNCIL** to be held at **10.00 am** on **TUESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2024** in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN LL15 1YN AND BY VIDEO CONFERENCE.**

Yours sincerely

G Williams  
Monitoring Officer

## **AGENDA**

### **1 APOLOGIES**

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Pages 5 - 6)**

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

### **3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

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

### **4 CHAIRMAN'S DIARY (Pages 7 - 8)**

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

### **5 MINUTES (Pages 9 - 22)**

To receive the minutes of the meeting of County Council held on 10 September 2024 (copy enclosed).

**6 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND PLAN FOR 2025/26 - 2027/28** (Pages 23 - 48)

To consider a report by the Head of Finance and Audit (copy enclosed) setting out the current version of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan for 2025/26 – 2027/28 and providing an update to Council on the implications for setting next year's (2025/26) budget including savings under consideration.

**7 NOTICE OF MOTION** (Pages 49 - 50)

To consider a Notice of Motion by Councillor Martyn Hogg on behalf of the Green Party (copy attached).

**8 NOTICE OF MOTION** (Pages 51 - 52)

To consider a Notice of Motion by Councillor Delyth Jones on behalf of the Plaid Cymru Group (copy attached).

**9 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 53 - 60)

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

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **Councillors**

Councillor Peter Scott (Chair)

Michelle Blakeley-Walker  
Joan Butterfield  
Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones  
Ellie Chard  
Kelly Clewett  
Ann Davies  
Karen Edwards  
Pauline Edwards  
Gwyneth Ellis  
James Elson  
Chris Evans  
Hugh Evans  
Justine Evans  
Bobby Feeley  
Jon Harland  
Elen Heaton  
Huw Hilditch-Roberts  
Martyn Hogg  
Carol Holliday

Councillor Arwel Roberts (Vice-Chair)

Delyth Jones  
Paul Keddie  
Diane King  
Geraint Lloyd-Williams  
Julie Matthews  
James May  
Jason McLellan  
Barry Mellor  
Terry Mendies  
Raj Metri  
Merfyn Parry  
Will Price  
Anton Sampson  
Gareth Sandilands  
Rhys Thomas  
Andrea Tomlin  
Cheryl Williams  
David Williams  
Elfed Williams

Alan Hughes  
Hugh Irving  
Alan James  
Brian Jones

Eryl Williams  
Huw Williams  
Emrys Wynne  
Mark Young

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## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

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### Code of Conduct for Members

### DISCLOSURE AND REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

I, *(name)*

a \*member/co-opted member of  
*(\*please delete as appropriate)*

**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:-

*(\*please delete as appropriate)*

Date of Disclosure:

Committee *(please specify)*:

Agenda Item No.

Subject Matter:

Nature of Interest:

*(See the note below)\**

Signed

Date

\*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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# Agenda Item 4

## Digwyddiadau wedi'u mynychu gan y Cadeirydd / Events attended by Chairman

03.09.24 – 14.10.24

<b>Dyddiad / Date</b>	<b>Digwyddiad / Event</b>	<b>Lleoliad / Location</b>
<b><u>MEDI/SEPTEMBER</u></b>		
<b>03.09.24</b>	Seremoni codi Baner y Llynges Fasnachol Merchant Navy Flag flying Ceremony	<b>Rhuthun/Ruthin</b>
<b>08.09.24</b>	Gwasanaeth Dinesig Cadeirydd Cyngor Sir y Fflint Chairman of Flintshire County Council's Civic Service	<b>Bwcle/Buckley</b>
<b>09.09.24</b>	Seremoni codi Baner y Gwasanaethau Brys Emergency Services Flag Flying Ceremony	<b>Rhuthun/Ruthin</b>
<b>12.09.24</b>	Seremoni Dinasyddiaeth/Citizenship Ceremony	<b>Rhuthun/Ruthin</b>
<b>29.09.24</b>	Gwasanaeth Dinesig y Cadeirydd Chairman's Civic Service	<b>Gadeirlan Llanelwy St Asaph Cathedral</b>
<b><u>HYDREF/OCTOBER</u></b>		
<b>11.10.24</b>	Cyflwyno blodau ar achlysur Penblwydd Priodas 60 mlynedd Presentation of flowers on occasion of 60 year Wedding Anniversary	<b>Rhuddlan</b>
<b>14.10.24</b>	Dathlu llwyddiant pedwar prosiect Celebration of the success of delivery of four projects	<b>Corwen</b>

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## COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin LL15 1YN and by video conference on Tuesday, 10 September 2024 at 10.00 am.

### PRESENT

Councillors Michelle Blakeley-Walker, Joan Butterfield, Ellie Chard, Kelly Clewett, Ann Davies, Karen Edwards, Pauline Edwards, Gwyneth Ellis, James Elson, Chris Evans, Hugh Evans, Justine Evans, Bobby Feeley, Jon Harland, Elen Heaton, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Martyn Hogg, Carol Holliday, Alan Hughes, Hugh Irving, Alan James, Brian Jones, Delyth Jones, Paul Keddie, Diane King, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Julie Matthews, James May, Jason McLellan, Barry Mellor, Terry Mendies, Raj Metri, Merfyn Parry, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, Peter Scott (Chair), Rhys Thomas, Andrea Tomlin, Cheryl Williams, David Williams, Elfed Williams, Eryl Williams, Huw Williams, Emrys Wynne and Mark Young

### ALSO PRESENT

Chief Executive (GB); Corporate Director: Governance and Business (GW); Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer (LT); Corporate Director: Communities (NS); Corporate Director: Economy and Environment (TW); Democratic Services Manager (SP); Zoom Host and Webcast (KJ); and Committee Administrator (SLW)

### 1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

### 3 NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts put forward the following Notice of Motion – Proposal for the removal from office of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet submitted by Councillors Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Pauline Edwards, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Paul Keddie, Merfyn Parry, Andrea Tomlin, Hugh Evans, Bobby Feeley, Huw Williams, Karen Edwards and Chris Evans.

*'We, wish to propose the motion for the removal of Leader Councillor Jason McLellan and his Cabinet. Recent events surrounding the leadership of the council have raised serious concerns about their effectiveness. The disastrous and inefficient execution of the new waste recycling system, coupled with the lack of clarity and ownership highlighted in a recent briefing, has resulted in a complete loss of confidence among residents.*

*Moreover, the ripple effects of this new system have placed a significant strain on other departments within Denbighshire County Council, as staff resources have*

*been diverted to address the failures of the recycling initiative. This diversion has led to a noticeable increase in operational costs, which in turn has negatively impacted front-line services that are vital to the community.*

*The lack of strategy and effective leadership has caused considerable challenges for residents throughout the county, and the financial implications for the authority have been immense. It is no longer sustainable to maintain this approach, and the priority must be the well-being of Denbighshire residents. Therefore, as members of the independent group, we strongly call upon the Leader and his Cabinet to resign.'*

Councillor Hilditch-Roberts clarified that the motion was not personal and bringing it had been one of the most difficult decisions the named members behind the motion had had to make. He advised that the intention was to raise the concerns of residents about issues that affected the whole of Denbighshire. Councillor Hilditch-Roberts reported that all councillors had received complaints and vulnerable people were struggling. Therefore, the motion had been brought to debate the performance of the council.

Councillor Hilditch-Roberts stated that the concept of the new waste collection system had been brought in during the previous Cabinet but there was a difference between concept and implementation and the implementation of the new waste collections was not working. He voiced his concerns that Denbighshire was becoming an officer led authority and he thought this was evident from an officer-led response to questions at a recent briefing to members on the waste roll out.

Councillor Hilditch-Roberts highlighted:

- Reduced or low levels of stakeholder confidence reported to Council in July 2024 in respect of Denbighshire's economy, transport infrastructure and cultural heritage.
- The current Cabinet's approach to investment in new school buildings, a reduction in the number of Welsh language speakers in the county and in the council and the recent decision to dispose of the Caldefryn offices, which Councillor Hilditch-Roberts described as the Council's most eco-friendly offices.
- The number of new council houses built during this administration was a disappointing figure.
- The Council's budget had been passed despite £3million savings required to balance the budget not being confirmed at the time the budget was passed.
- Problems relating to the Queens Market in Rhyl which was currently empty and without the management in place to run the building. Councillor Hilditch-Roberts stated that Cabinet should have engaged the Council's leisure services provider, Denbighshire Leisure Limited, to manage the Queen's Market.
- Widespread concerns regarding the reduced library opening hours and he reported poor communication with members on proposals to close public toilets.
- Planning permission delays which held back Denbighshire's economic growth.

- Increasing rises in council tax.
- The increasing costs of the waste collection system, the reputational damage inflicted on the council from the roll-out problems, the impact on other services of the council from re-deployment of staff to assist the waste collection service and the difficulties residents experienced contacting the council over uncollected waste.

In closing his address, Councillor Hilditch-Roberts reflected that the council had worked over many years to be close to the community but now he felt the council's leadership to be closer to Cardiff than Denbighshire's communities and he urged members to support the motion.

At this juncture, the Chair informed members that the political group representatives would address the motion, following which, other members would be able to speak.

Councillor Hugh Irving on behalf of the Conservative Group reported that the present administration had little to be proud of after two years in office. He put to members that the current Cabinet had inherited a reasonably satisfactory financial situation but now saw financial difficulties and cost overruns particularly with the new waste collection service.

Councillor Irving highlighted:

- A reliance on staff cuts and other cutbacks which resulted in delivering many of the council's essential services to the levels the public expected of them and resulting reports of low staff morale.
- His disagreement with the budget process that had left some of the required savings unidentified.
- The focus on cuts to much-loved services such as to libraries and public toilets.
- Cabinet's inability to grasp where residents' priorities lay, for example, in Cabinet's promotion of expensive green policies.

In closing, Councillor Irving viewed the problems he had mentioned as highlighting a lack of regard from the Leader and the Cabinet to the residents' concerns and he described the disillusionment evidenced from feedback, press reporting and social media with the administration. For these reasons, he stated that the Conservative Group supported the motion.

Councillor Martyn Hogg, on behalf of the Green Party Group referred to the council's decision to have a thorough enquiry into the roll out of the new recycling system. He viewed the motion before Council to be predetermining the outcome of the enquiry for political reasons and advocated awaiting the outcome of the enquiry.

Councillor Hogg highlighted:

- The motion contained valid issues of general concern, but members needed to have more information to make informed decisions.
- His disagreement with the Independent Group's conclusion that the waste collection problems resulted from a failure of the Council's leadership. He

regarded this as a premature conclusion, that could be properly reviewed the enquiry.

- How the waste collection changes had been instigated during the last Council term by the Cabinet in office at that time yet prior to its launch, it had become embroiled in political controversy. Some of the former Cabinet members who had advocated for the new system became vocal critics of it which Councillor Hogg considered to be political opportunism.
- A successful vote of no confidence at this time would not benefit the residents of Denbighshire and undergoing changes in the Council's administration would be an untimely distraction.

Councillor Delyth Jones on behalf of the Plaid Cymru Group thanked Councillor Hilditch-Roberts for bringing the motion and allowing members the opportunity to look at the issues surrounding the new service change in waste and recycling as well as other relevant matters.

Councillor Jones highlighted:

- A full acknowledgement that the waste collection roll-out had not been acceptable and aspects of the changes had caused many challenges, frustrations and stress to residents, members, and officers alike.
- The Plaid Cymru Group supported the full scrutiny enquiry of the roll-out issues as requested by the Leader and the lead member as it was imperative that conclusions and decisions must be based upon the facts as opposed to opinions.
- Currently lacking the detailed information that the scrutiny enquiry would provide, Councillor Jones summarised key points and timescales in the formation of the new waste collection model under the previous Cabinet from 2018 to April 2022 where a final revised Business Case was approved by the previous Cabinet at one of their last meetings before the end of the Council term. These key points included decisions to move to the new waste and recycling system for environmental and financial reasons, development of the new business and service delivery model, the tendering and procurement processes and approval of the final business case.
- The current Leader and Cabinet had inherited the advanced plans for waste collection change from the previous administration and taken these forward in good faith in contrast to a number of councillors who were involved in the previous administration and had been fully supportive of the changes whilst they had been on Cabinet but had sought to undermine them in opposition.
- The Plaid Cymru Group did not believe that today's Cabinet was responsible for any mistakes made by the previous administration and there had been a number of operational problems that had undermined the effectiveness of the new service that could not be attributed to political leadership failures.
- It was not yet possible to come to a clear and balanced view of where the burden of responsibility for the waste roll-out problems lay but this would be clearer following the scrutiny enquiry.

Councillor Jones then addressed other points that had been made in connection with the motion:

- Councillor Jones referred to the numerous discussions led by Cabinet with all members aimed at understanding and tackling the challenging budget shortfalls which were beyond the Council's control. Denbighshire was experiencing the need to make large budget cuts in common with all of the other county and county borough councils in Wales and beyond.
- Producing a balanced and lawful budget in the current financial climate required difficult decisions and all members had been afforded the opportunity to any offer credible, achievable alternative solutions.
- In respect of the difficult decision to reduce library opening hours Councillor Jones stated that the public consultation responses had not been ignored, and the Lead Member, Councillor Emrys Wynne, had challenged officers robustly and lowered the proposed reduction from 50% to 40%. She confirmed that the closure of libraries, though happening in some authorities, had not been considered in Denbighshire. A Library Task Force formed to investigate how the service could flourish for the future was another example of a positive approach to a challenging situation.

Councillor Jason McLellan, Leader of the Council and of the Labour Group, acknowledged that the waste collection roll-out problems had occurred on his watch and that he had publicly and repeatedly apologised to the residents affected and sought to address and correct the failings. Councillor McLellan regarded household waste collection as a fundamental, core Council service, and the roll-out of the new service had gone wrong. He thanked members for assisting their residents in addressing missed collections.

Councillor McLellan advised members of his decision to ask the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group to instigate a full investigation into the waste roll-out issues.

Councillor McLellan highlighted:

- His agreement with Councillor Delyth Jones's assertion that the current Council and Cabinet had inherited a developed, costed project with a business plan from the previous administration for the waste service changes. He rebuffed the notion that his Cabinet had inherited only a concept or brief idea of a new collection system.
- How the previous Cabinet's decisions from 2018 until the end of its term in April 2022 had set in place tenders for vehicles and the waste collection station and the detailed modelling for the collection routes.
- He acknowledged that there were councillors who would like to have retained the old recycling and collection system but stated that reversing the direction taken would have cost the Council millions of pounds and not delivered the waste recycling, environmental and other benefits that had prompted the previous administration to change the waste collection system.

In addressing the motion's claims about his leadership, Councillor McLellan emphasised that he had taken responsibility for the problems and he and the lead member, Councillor Barry Mellor had been thoroughly involved and working hard with officers in challenging the route designs and the service delivery to resolve the problems. He outlined how there were clearly errors made in the way the new service and its business plan had been designed to be delivered in terms of the

service's capacity to collect refuse from the intended routes. The commencement of the roll-out demonstrated how the assumptions did not meet the reality on the ground. Councillor McLellan did not want to make judgements about the errors that had been found in the assumptions, as that would be part of the scrutiny enquiry's role. Councillor McLellan offered his apologies to residents who had experienced missed waste collections.

In addressing the waste collection service problems Councillor McLellan outlined that:

- Deploying additional resources meant incurring additional costs.
- He reported the collection figures for the last week which showed a 99.4% collection rate and an improving situation.
- The numbers of staff from other departments in the Council used as temporary support for the waste collection service was relatively low, from zero to 8 staff members per day, and averaging 3 staff members a day. These staff were taken from a large pool of Council staff and did not include front-line staff.
- During the roll-out period the opposition groups had not submitted any viable suggestions to resolve the problems that had been encountered, other than to revert to the old system, which it was not possible to do.

In conclusion, Councillor McLellan addressed the other challenges to his leadership made during the discussion of the motion:

- Councillor McLellan did not view challenges around budget decisions as an attack on his leadership. The severe financial situation the Council faced required him as Leader to be prepared to take difficult decisions. All members were invited to observe and participate in the regular budget updates and briefings.
- The closure of the Caledfryn offices reflected the changes in the working world, with the Council no longer needing three large offices. Disposal of Caledfryn as a capital asset made the most sense.
- In reference to Councillor Hilditch-Roberts' criticism of the current investment in school buildings, Councillor McLellan stated that Councillor Hilditch-Roberts' term as lead member for education had occurred during the period the Welsh Government had been providing funding to Denbighshire to build schools, including two Welsh medium schools.
- Referring to the Queen's Market, the Welsh Government had required the building to be built before the operator was chosen and there had been real difficulties arising from potential operators having different views on the design of the building. This was therefore not a Cabinet failing and was under discussion and Councillor McLellan expressed confidence that the issue would be resolved.
- The Council had 39 audit reports in the last 2 years since Councillor McLellan had been elected Leader. Thirty of those had received a high assurance rating, 9 had received a medium assurance rating and there had been no low assurance audits. He stated that demonstrated good governance and good leadership was in place.

The Chair opened the debate to other members whose comments included the following points.

- Councillor Brian Jones stated that as the former lead member for waste he had been personally opposed to scrapping the blue bins in favour of the trolley-box system, but Cabinet had then been provided with further reports and information, including from WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) that were advising the Council. Ultimately, Councillor Jones stated that the previous Cabinet had been forced to change the waste collection system because of changes to the Welsh Government's funding of the service. He reported that he had proposed a solution for the Queen's Market this summer that had not been accepted and urged members to consider their residents' priorities when voting on the motion.
- Councillor Karen Edwards reviewed the waste collection problems she had experienced in her ward and that, although partially improved, was still not delivering the expected statutory services. She informed members of the complaints she had received including video evidence of waste collection staff dumping segregated batteries in a hedge and the co-mingling of the segregated recycling and waste. Councillor Edwards criticised the Leader and lead member for a failure of leadership and referred to continuing cost overspends arising from the failures in the waste roll-out scheme.
- Councillor Bobby Feeley summarised her past career as Councillor in Denbighshire. Regarding her support for a vote of no confidence in the Leader and Cabinet she reflected on wider concerns than the waste collection problems which she stated had been disastrous, referring to her dissatisfaction of council tax and budget setting processes, the effect of experienced staff leaving and not being replaced, and corporate priorities being missed.
- Councillor Terry Mendies confirmed he would support the vote of no confidence not only due to the new waste collection issues but also because of the council tax rises over the past 2 years and those that were likely to be set in future years, the operation of the Queen's Market, cuts to the library services, and planning application and enforcement backlogs.
- Councillor Huw Williams referred to the scrutiny review process.
- Councillor Pauline Edwards expressed concern regarding newly elected Councillors being elected on to Cabinet and felt backbench member perspectives was not properly considered by the current Cabinet and her concerns about the council's ability to set a balanced budget.
- Councillor Hugh Evans, former Leader of the Council, outlined the roles of Cabinet, lead members and officers in projects like the waste collection service changes. He stated that Denbighshire did have good services, officers and members but given the difficulties the Council faced it risked being placed in special measures in future. Councillor Evans was concerned about the vulnerable people within the communities who relied on Council services. Councillor Evans queried how savings from services were being identified and stated that the corporate plan was struggling and now needed to be focussed on the Council's key service delivery areas. Councillor Evans suggested to the lead member, Councillor Mellor, that a member task and finish group be convened urgently to guide the implementation of the waste collection service changes.

In order to convey an understanding of the difficult financial situation Councillor Evans queried whether Cabinet could operate with 8 members instead of 9.

- Councillor Justine Evans stated she had been elected to represent the people of Rhyl and it had become increasingly difficult to defend decisions made and therefore she would be supporting the vote of no confidence.
- Councillor Mark Young referred to his membership of the Cabinet during the last administration and he raised concerns regarding the budget and the future for services.
- Councillor Merfyn Parry encouraged all members to think what their vote would mean and he requested a recorded vote to be held following the debate, which was agreed by members.
- Councillor Julie Matthews clarified that the Corporate Plan had been revised in consultation with members at a member workshop and with the Group Leaders to recognise the financial constraints and release service capacity. Councillor Matthews as lead member for the Corporate Plan, agreed that the corporate plan priorities could be revised if it was appropriate to do so. Importantly, Councillor Matthews urged all members to come together as one Council to work co-operatively.
- Councillor Chris Evans highlighted the un-business-like position where the Council was obliged to spend an additional £60,000 of public money per week to rectify the problems of the new waste collection service. He listed other public services that could have benefited from such an investment.
- Councillor Andrea Tomlin referred to the situation in Prestatyn, which she said had suffered as the result of poor Cabinet decisions and communication and a reluctance to allow other members to engage during her time as a councillor including on library opening hours, late night car parking charges and 20mph designations. Councillor Tomlin said the waste collection problems had been particularly acute in Prestatyn and she challenged the Leader's earlier summary of the current performance of the waste collection service. Councillor Tomlin also referred to a deterioration in street scene operations and she confirmed her support for the motion to remove the Leader and Cabinet.

Councillor Barry Mellor, lead member for Environment and Transport thanked Councillor Hugh Evans for his advice and confirmed he would look into the suggestion of setting up a Task and Finish Group. He admitted that the waste collection service roll-out had been flawed and further actions were required to ensure the viability of the service in the long-term. However, he was confident that the service was adapting to the challenges and had learned key lessons and information from the initial implementation. Councillor Mellor was confident that the new rounds would work once they became established though he noted that no waste collection service could guarantee a service without any missed collections.

Councillor Mellor referred to the roles played by the previous Cabinet members in instigating and designing the new waste collection system.

Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts as mover of the motion summarised the purpose of the motion and the stances taken at the beginning of the meeting by some of the political groups. He reported the ideas he had offered at the outset of the roll-out



and his disappointment that the roll-out had not been trialled by area instead of countywide. He clarified that a major concern from the impact on other services as a result of the collection problems had been the inability of residents to contact the council because the customer service channels had been congested from the thousands of calls made by residents owing to their missed waste collections.

Councillor Jason McLellan, Leader of the Council thanked the Chair for his skill and fairness in presiding over an important debate. He summarised the position that had been debated about future actions and the scrutiny enquiry into the roll-out. He expressed his surprise at the comments of the previous lead member for waste, regarding the professed influence of the Welsh Government in pushing the new system forward, because he had not found reference to it in the minutes of meetings where he said the former lead member had shown support for the new system.

Finally, Councillor McLean stated he would continue to address the serious funding and austerity problems the Council faced, which would require taking difficult decisions and he thanked his lead member for finance and the Council's finance officers for their contributions to this work.

**A RECORDED VOTE TOOK PLACE – proposed by Councillor Merfyn Parry and seconded by Councillor Karen Edwards**

In favour of the motion:

Councillors Ann Davies, Karen Edwards, Pauline Edwards, James Elson, Chris Evans, Hugh Evans, Justine Evans, Bobby Feeley, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Hugh Irving, Brian Jones, Paul Keddie, Geraint Lloyd-Williams, Terry Mendies, Merfyn Parry, Andrea Tomlin and Huw Williams

Against the motion:

Councillors Michelle Blakeley-Walker, Joan Butterfield, Ellie Chard, Kelly Clewett, Gwyneth Ellis, Jonathan Harland, Elen Heaton, Martyn Hogg, Carol Holliday, Alan Hughes, Alan James, Delyth Jones, Diane King, Julie Matthews, James May, Jason McLellan, Barry Mellor, Raj Metri, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, Rhys Thomas, Cheryl Williams, Elfed Williams, Eryl Williams, and Emrys Wynne

Abstentions: Councillors David G Williams, Mark Young and Peter Scott

**FOR – 17**  
**AGAINST – 25**  
**ABSTAIN – 3**

***RESOLVED*** that the Council does not support the motion to remove the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet.

**4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR OF COUNTY COUNCIL**

The Chair, Councillor Peter Scott, requested nominations for the appointment of a new Vice-Chair of the Council for the remainder of the 2024-2025 municipal year.

Councillor Rhys Thomas proposed Councillor Arwel Roberts and the nomination was seconded by the former Vice-Chair of Council, Councillor Diane King.

No further nominations were proposed.

All members present affirmed their assent to the appointment of Councillor Arwel Roberts who duly declared his acceptance of the office of Vice-Chair.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Arwel Roberts be appointed as Vice-Chair of Denbighshire County Council for the remainder of the 2024-2025 municipal year.

## **5 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

No urgent matters were raised.

Question put forward by Councillor Terry Mendies –

*“Why has an Enforcement Notice issued to a Property in Llandegla on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 not been enforced despite the notice having its fourth Birthday 3 days ago.”*

The Lead Member for Local Development and Planning, Councillor Alan James, responded as follows:

“This case has been a legally complex situation. Officers served a Planning Enforcement Notice. The Notice was not complied with and, therefore, the council decided to undertake works in default to seek compliance with the Notice. All works were completed, and the site has reverted back to its previous condition. Officers also successfully applied for a Court Injunction to ensure that no unauthorised changes take place again on the land. In addition, officers also prosecuted the landowner securing a fine.

In my view, the main point here is that the site has been remediated, the adverse impact on public amenity has, therefore, been remedied in full”.

Councillor Terry Mendies indicated his satisfaction with the response to his question.

## **6 MINUTES**

The minutes of Full Council held on 9 July 2024 were submitted.

Matters Arising –

Page 19 – Appointment of Director of Denbighshire Leisure Limited - Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts raised his concerns about the heavy workload pressures on the Corporate Director: Environment and Economy and asked that this comment be minuted.

Page 14 – Item 4 Minutes – Councillor Julie Matthews stated she had not circulated the letter of response sent to Mr. Gonzalez to all councillors but would circulate it following the meeting.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the above, the minutes of Full Council held on the 9 July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

## **7 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF DENBIGHSHIRE LEISURE LIMITED**

The Corporate Director: Governance and Business, introduced the Appointment of Director of Denbighshire Leisure Limited report (previously circulated). He confirmed that a board director had been appointed at the last Council meeting for a Senior Leadership Team member vacancy. The Corporate Director advised that the Denbighshire Leisure Limited Board now had a further vacancy for a backbench councillor after the previous incumbent, Councillor Diane King, had been appointed to Cabinet and had taken a Cabinet member seat on the board.

Councillor Merfyn Parry nominated Councillor Paul Keddie, seconded by Councillor Karen Edwards.

Councillor Diane King nominated Councillor James May, seconded by Councillor Gareth Sandilands.

A vote took place by a show of hands and the result was as follows –

For Councillor Paul Keddie – 19  
For Councillor James May - 17

**RESOLVED** that Council appoints Councillor Paul Keddie to the role of non-Cabinet elected member Director of Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL).

## **8 COUNCIL POLICY ON MEMBER TRAINING**

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the Council Policy on Member Training report (previously circulated) and guided members through the report.

A programme of member inductions, training and development commenced immediately after Council elections in May 2022. The sessions initially delivered had been focussed on inducting new and returning members and included training on the Council's Code of Conduct, Members ICT provision, familiarisation with services, equality and diversity, safeguarding and an introduction to Scrutiny. The Council continued to provide training and development opportunities for members on an ongoing basis.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that a survey had been conducted between February and March 2024, open to councillors, senior officers and lay members with the results shown in Appendix 2 of the report. He advised members of the contents of the proposed council policy on mandatory member training which was contained in appendix 1 of the report.

In response to a question from Councillor Bobby Feeley, it was confirmed that member training was mostly resourced from officer time, as officers usually provided training on their service areas to members. Where external facilitation was preferable or required, it was often delivered free of charge to the Council, particularly by the Welsh Local Government Association. Occasionally, the Council needed to buy-in external training provision using a small corporately funded member training budget, which was managed carefully and usually underspent. Members unanimously voted to adopt the policy.

**RESOLVED** that Council adopts the draft Council Policy on Member Training, as attached to appendix 1 to the report.

## 9 NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Delyth Jones put forward the following Notice of Motion:

*'With the demand for social services support for children and young people increasing on a scale not previously seen in our county, and the enormous pressure this places on our budget as a council. The Plaid Cymru Group propose that we, as a council write to all the members of parliament who represent our county in Westminster on the matter. We propose that we ask all relevant members to re-look at their position on the issue of the two-child benefit cap and support the need to abolish it. In so doing, to show their support for Denbighshire's most vulnerable families as well as helping to reduce the demand on our social services locally.'*

Councillor Jones spoke in favour of the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Julie Matthews. Councillor Matthews and Councillor Rhys Thomas supported the motion with statements, including references to the two-child benefit cap's contribution to child and family poverty, which was a particular concern in the county because some areas of Denbighshire suffered amongst the highest levels of deprivation in Wales, the demands family poverty placed on the Council's social services and the negative effects the benefit cap could have in terms of seeking or moving to higher paid employment. Members unanimously voted in favour of the motion.

**RESOLVED** that Council approves the motion and a letter be issued to the members of the UK Parliament who represent Denbighshire constituencies urging their support for the abolition of the two-child benefit cap.

## 10 COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Corporate Director: Governance and Business, introduced and summarised the latest position of the Council and Council Workshop Forward Work Programmes.

**RESOLVED** that the Council's Forward Work Programme and the Council Workshop Forward Work Programme be noted.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1.35 P.M.**

<b>Report to</b>	Council
<b>Date of meeting</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Assets / Head of Finance and Audit
<b>Report author</b>	Head of Finance and Audit
<b>Title</b>	Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan for 2025/26 – 2027/28.

## 1. What is the report about?

1.1. The report sets out the current version of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 – 2027/28. The report provides an update to Council on the implications for setting next year's (2025/26) budget including savings under consideration.

## 2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. To engage all Members at an early stage in setting the 2025/26 budget and to facilitate early budget discussions.

## 3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. Council endorses the MTFP as set out in Appendix 1 and the current assumptions and estimates upon which it is based.
- 3.2. Council reviews, considers, and feeds back any comments on the savings proposals as set out in Appendix 2 to Cabinet.
- 3.3. Council endorses the MTFS at Appendix 3, and the on-going work to set a balanced budget in 2025/26.
- 3.4. Council acknowledges that should the funding position from Welsh Government not improve, setting a balanced budget will require (i) reductions to some services (ii) increased funding to other services due to increased costs and demands of statutory

functions that predominantly protect our most vulnerable residents and (iii) increases in Council Tax.

## **4. Report details**

4.1. Cabinet agreed to receive periodic updates of the MTFS and MTFP 2025/26 – 2027/28 throughout the year and has considered updated versions at its April, July, and October meetings. Both the April and July versions of the MTFS and MTFP have been considered by the Governance and Audit Committee and Performance Scrutiny Committee. Feedback from both these committees was summarised and considered by Cabinet.

### **Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan 2025/26 – 2027/28 – Appendices 1, 2 and 3**

- 4.2. Appendix 1 (MTFP) sets out the current budget projections for 2025/26 – 2027/28 along with the assumptions that underpin the projections. As we move closer to setting our budget for 2025/26 cost pressures have been refreshed to reflect current information available in the MTFP. The table continues to include a range of assumptions to provide a low, medium and high estimate of costs for each pressure, illustrating both the uncertainty of the figures and the ongoing work to continue to refresh and refine these projections over the coming months. The impact of estimated increases in Council Tax and funding from Welsh Government is also included in the MTFP.
- 4.3. Appendix 3 is the MTFS which sets out the council's strategic approach to the management of its finances and outlines the financial issues that will face the council over the next three years.
- 4.4. This is the third iteration of these documents and has been compiled with data and information available as at early October 2024 (prior to announcements made in the UK Government's autumn 2024 budget). The documents will continue to be updated as set out in the MTFS as the council prepares to set its budget for 2025/26 in February 2025.
- 4.5. The Council has faced a significant financial challenge in setting its 2024/25 budget, which is set to continue in the medium term due to a combination of no increases in funding from Welsh Government (working assumption), the continued impact of

inflation and increases in demand for and complexity of needs for services. The scale of the financial challenge facing the council should not be underestimated. Key points are:

- Cost pressures are difficult to forecast but are currently ranging from £12m to £26m in 2025/26 with a mid-range of £18m. Similar ranges are forecast for 2026/27 and 2027/28.
- The 2024/25 funding settlement from Welsh Government provided no future indication of funding as it has done in the past couple of years. Future funding within the MTFP is based on assessments by Wales Fiscal Analysis at slightly negative reductions in the absence of anything else currently available.
- Assumptions made about Council Tax increases range from 6% - 12% for 2025/26 with a 5.5% long term average thereafter for both years. It is important to note that no decisions regarding Council Tax levels for 2025/26 have been made yet. This is a matter that will be decided by Council at its meeting in February 2025. A mid-range assumption of a Council Tax increase of 9% for 2025/26 yields an additional £6.8m which only addresses a third of the current funding gap.
- The council has been planning to act to significantly reduce the projected net expenditure in 2025/26 to set a balanced budget as set out within the MTFP.

4.6. At current forecasts for cost pressures, current assumptions for WG funding and the working assumption for Council Tax at 9% the remaining budget gap is substantial at £12m.

4.7. As set out within the MTFP the approach to setting balanced budgets over the next few years will need to both identify savings and invest in transformational projects. To deliver savings in 2025/26, target percentage service reductions have been issued which services have been working towards achieving whilst balancing the impacts on service delivery, many of which are statutory. Included in the first table at Appendix 2 for Council's consideration are early savings proposals that Lead Members and Heads of Service consider are sufficiently developed. The second table at Appendix 2 for Council's consideration are savings proposals that Lead Members and Heads of Service are actively working on to provide further savings for setting the 2025/26 budget.

4.8. There continues to be much uncertainty around at present that could change the financial position, for example pay assumptions may need to change, funding from Welsh Government may change (especially considering the recent UK government budget). Every Head of Service continues to develop their savings proposals which will need to be considered alongside all other options available to set a balanced budget including decisions around Schools' Budgets, any savings from corporate budgets and Council Tax as the Council gets closer to setting its budget for 2025/26 which is a legal requirement.

4.9. It is clear if the funding position from Welsh Government does not improve the Council will have to make difficult decisions to balance the 2025/26 budget. Those difficult decisions will mean increased Council Tax and reductions in some services, to fund cost pressures, outside of the council's control, including nationally set pay awards and increases in complexity for demand led statutory services in adults' and children's social care.

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

5.1. 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?**

6.1. As set out within the budget reports to date for 2025/26. Financial and other implications for future budgets will become clearer as we progress the budget strategy.

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

7.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) was completed for each major savings proposal in setting the 2024/25 budget. All assessments were collated and reviewed by strategic planning and performance officers to highlight any themes and patterns emerging to provide regular updates on the aggregate impact in respect of each of the well-being goals and whether the savings were disproportionately affecting any particular protected group. These were collated



to form an overall WIA of the combined budget reduction measures. This has been updated throughout 2024/25.

7.2. A similar process is being implemented for 2025/26 budget setting.

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

8.1. A Communication Plan has been developed for the budget to ensure that the following groups are consulted at the appropriate times: Governance and Audit 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**

9.1. The Council, along with all other Welsh councils, faces unprecedented financial challenges. The aim of the MTFS is to ensure that the council delivers future balanced budgets. Setting out the projections and strategy 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?**

10.1. 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. Failure to agree these proposals without viable alternatives will risk not achieving a balanced budget for 2025/26.

10.2. A detailed section on risk is included in the MTFS in appendix 3.

## **11. Power to make the decision**

11.1. 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**

MTFP Summary	Forecast 2025/26			Forecast 2026/27			Forecast 2027/28		
	Low Gap	Medium Gap	High Gap	Low Gap	Medium Gap	High Gap	Low Gap	Medium Gap	High Gap
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Pay Pressure	2,769	3,462	4,154	2,880	3,635	4,403	2,995	3,817	4,668
Pay Grades Pressure	-1,760	-1,760	-1,760	1,760	1,760	1,760	1,300	1,300	1,300
Price Inflation	250	250	250	250	250	500	250	250	500
CTRS	500	500	950	350	500	700	350	500	700
Fire Levy	500	600	700	200	300	400	200	300	400
Adults Social Care	2,565	4,165	5,969	1,500	2,000	4,000	1,500	2,500	3,500
Childrens Services	2,600	4,284	5,900	2,000	3,000	4,000	2,000	3,000	4,000
Schools Inflation	3,000	4,000	5,000	3,000	4,000	5,000	3,000	4,000	5,000
Schools Demography	350	700	800	350	700	800	350	700	800
Investment in Priorities	0	250	500	967	967	1,500	892	892	1,000
Additional Service Pressures	1,000	1,875	3,197	1,000	1,500	2,000	1,000	1,500	2,000
<b>Total Pressures</b>	<b>11,774</b>	<b>18,326</b>	<b>25,660</b>	<b>14,257</b>	<b>18,612</b>	<b>25,063</b>	<b>13,837</b>	<b>18,759</b>	<b>23,868</b>
Inc/dec in Revenue Support Grant	-2,008	602	2,008	-2,002	1,001	2,002	-2,002	0	2,002
Council Tax Increase	-8,944	-6,822	-4,700	-4,764	-4,764	-4,764	-5,055	-5,055	-5,055
<b>Total Increase in Revenue</b>	<b>-10,952</b>	<b>-6,219</b>	<b>-2,692</b>	<b>-6,766</b>	<b>-3,763</b>	<b>-2,762</b>	<b>-7,057</b>	<b>-5,055</b>	<b>-3,053</b>
<b>Annual Budget Gap</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>12,107</b>	<b>22,968</b>	<b>7,491</b>	<b>14,849</b>	<b>22,301</b>	<b>6,780</b>	<b>13,704</b>	<b>20,815</b>
<b>Cumulative Budget Gap</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>12,107</b>	<b>22,968</b>	<b>8,313</b>	<b>26,955</b>	<b>45,269</b>	<b>15,093</b>	<b>40,659</b>	<b>66,084</b>

**Note on Main Assumptions:**

- Pay: based on 4% (L), 5%(M) and 6% (H) increase for each year
- Pay Grading: Pressure has been moved 2 years due to WG commitment to a revised national pay spine
- Priorities: 25/26 - Carbon Project only  
26/27 - Carbon (£250k), and Coastal Schemes (£717)  
27/28 - Carbon (£250k), Schools Building (£506k) and Archives (£136k)
- Childrens Pressure: 25/26 - Forecasts updated in October based on current placements and estimates for inflationary uplifts. Worst case assumes additional new complex placements will occur
- Adults Social Care Pressure: 25/26 - Forecasts updated in October assuming real living wage increase Oct 2024 at 3.75% and CPI at 2.2%. Includes pressures for Complex Disabilities - re-contracting and a forecast increase in demand, and Extra Care Housing at Llys Awelon Ruthin
- Additional Service Pressures: 25/26 - Waste (£1.067m), Winter Maintenance (£600k), Indexation on corporate contracts (£165k), Strategic Assets cost increases (£45k)
- Schools Pressure: No detailed calculation done yet but broadly in line with pay pressure elsewhere (most of inflation is pay)
- Revenue Support Grant: Based on Wales Fiscal Analysis data (-0.3%, -0.5%, 0%). Further analysis likely available after UK Gov Budget in
- Council Tax: 25/26: 6% (L), 9% (M) & 12% (H)  
26/27 and 27/8: all scenarios based on the long term average of 5.5%

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## Appendix 2 : 2025/26 Budget - Early savings proposals

Service	Brief Description	Estimated Saving (£k)	Category	Service Total
Adult Social Care and Homelessness	Reforming the model for delivering homelessness services. Focus on prevention and moving away from temporary emergency accommodation through use of hotels and B&Bs. Moving towards the use of leased accommodation, dispersed, primarily within the private rented sector	1,100	Transformation project	<b>1,168</b>
	Voluntary exit scheme - reduction in employees	68	Reduction in service delivery	
Corporate Support, Performance Digital and Assets	ICT rationalising contracts/ licensing	61	Efficiency	<b>263</b>
	Recharging more ICT support costs to grants	60	Grant maximisation	
	Climate and ecological change service - cost recovery	50	Internal fee income	
	Property budget reduction	36	Efficiency	
	Service redesign - property condition surveys	10	Efficiency	
	Property service - cost recovery	46	Internal fee income - capital projects	
Corporate Support Services: People	Recharging of management costs of procurement	10	Increase in income - fees and charges	<b>10</b>
Education	Review of local authority school improvement services	300	Efficiency	<b>338</b>
	Review of contracts and contributions to third parties in light of changes to grants and other income streams available	38	Reduction in service delivery	
Finance and Audit	Reduction in Accountancy team - part year effect of voluntary exit scheme	45	Reduction in service delivery	<b>87</b>
	Reduction in Revenues and Benefits Service by deleting vacant posts	42	Reduction in service delivery	
Capital and Corporate	2023/24 Pay Awards - reduction of budget in line with costs	1,000	Reduction in budget not required	<b>2,000</b>
	Energy - reduction of budget in line with forecast costs	1,000	Efficiency	
Housing and Communities	Restructuring with Youth Services and Community Resilience Team	14	Efficiency	<b>72</b>
	Charging for street naming	14	Increase in income - fees and charges	
	Review of external contracts within libraries service	23	Efficiency	
	Removal of base budget - working denbighshire	21	Grant maximisation	
Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services	Further reduction in Economic and Business Development Team through not recruiting to a vacant lead officer post. Impact - further deminishment of service unable to bid for external funding such as Level Up Funds etc.	57	Reduction in service delivery	<b>76</b>
	New income from the issuing of licenses for certain procedures eg acupuncture, tattooing, etc	10	Increase in income - fees and charges	
	Review of fees charges for administering Home to college transport for Post 16 Learners	9	Increase in income - fees and charges	

**4,014**

## 2025/26 Budget - Savings proposals under consideration

Service	Brief Description
Adult Social Care and Homelessness	Review of all contracts for commissioned care
	Review Mental Health Services
	Review packages of care across older people's service to ensure the package is the right size. Will cover residential, day services, and domiciliary care with a real focus on reablement. In line with the revised Social Services and Wellbeing Act Code of Practice
	Review of telecare contract
	Removal of base budget so that costs at Cefndy are recovered in full from income received
Children's Services	Review of model of delivery of Community Equipment Store
	Continuation of existing project to recruit more in house foster carers and avoiding the use of Independent Fostering Agencies as much as possible
	Transformational programme to explore expanding in house residential provision through the use of small care homes.
Education	Reviewing preventative services delivered by third parties and other internal departments
	Review Education Support Services offered to schools
Corporate Support, Performance Digital and Assets	Review early intervention and prevention non-statutory services
	Capitalisation of ICT costs
	Review of vacant posts across the service
	Reduction in capacity strategic planning and performance by not filling vacant post
Corporate Support Services: People	Review of commercial rents
	Review commissioning arrangements in property services
	Review of service provision and resources, including recruitment and vacancy controls.
Finance and Audit	Service wide review of income
	Changes in systems used corporately and across the service
Highways and Environmental Services	Review of roles / posts across service
	Review service model for collection of green waste
	Review of Streetscene service provision and resources
	Review of Strategic Highways service provision and resources
	Review building cleaning budgets - aim to reduce costs or increase income
	Corporate review of fleet service provision and resources
Housing and Communities	Review of winter maintenance - priority routes
	Income maximisation from commuted sums
Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services	Review of countryside services and the way in which we manage the 50 sites we operate.
	Statutory fees for planning will be increased by Welsh Government
	Review fees charges for administering 10 Welsh County Penalty Processing Partnership
	Further reduction to planning enforcement service – non statutory service running with vacancies.
	Consideration given to introduce new discretionary charges for meetings with Planning Officers (seperate to pre-application charges)
	Review home to school transport
	Review routes classed as hazardous under home to school transport policy
	Annual increase of parking fees

## **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2027/28 (Oct 2024 Update)**

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the Council's strategic approach to the management of its finances and outlines some of the financial issues that it will face over the next three years.

This is the third iteration of the MTFS 2025/26 – 2027/28 and it has been compiled with data and information available as at October 2024. The document will be subject to refinement as the financial year 2024/25 progresses and updated as workstreams identified progress during the year.

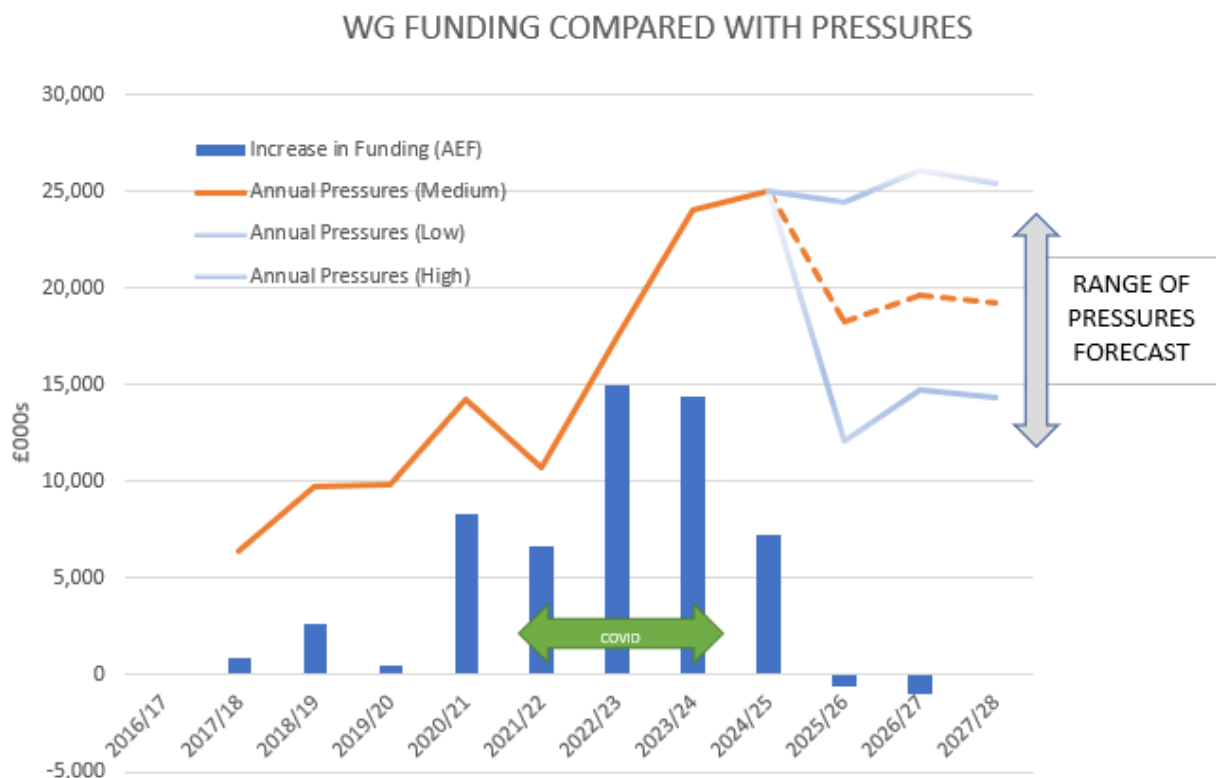
### **Summary of the Financial Outlook**

The medium term economic and political environment within which the Council operates remains extremely uncertain making forecasting budget projections with accuracy difficult. Demand for services from our communities continues to grow and the complexity of needs has intensified in areas such as education and children's services and adult social care. Whilst inflation has eased it will continue to have an impact by increasing costs of service delivery by exerting pressure on pay, commissioned care, food and fuel prices etc. There is often a time lag between the headline rate of inflation and the increase in cost of the expenditure that the Council incurs, particularly on pay related expenditure which feeds through to expenditure on commissioned care.

The 2024/25 funding settlement from Welsh Government provided no future indication of funding as it has done for the past 2 years. As circa 75% of the council's budget (net) is funded by the settlement this adds a level of uncertainty. The current predictions for future funding from Welsh Government are based on forecasts from the Wales Fiscal Analysis for cash flat and even slightly negative funding settlements. More recent forecasts from the Wales Fiscal Analysis reflecting the post-election fiscal outlook for Wales look slightly more positive, however this will not materially alter the Council's financial outlook.

The graph below shows how funding received from Welsh Government compares with the cost pressures the council is subject to. It covers a 10-year period, looking back to

2017/18 and forecasts forward to 2027/28 using current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) estimates of pressures using a range of cost assumptions from low to high.



The council has faced a significant financial challenge in setting recent budgets as outlined in the table below:

	Pressures requiring additional budget (£m)	Council Tax (£m)	AEF (Funding from WG) (£m)	Savings (£m)
2023/24	25	3 (3.8%)	14 (8.2%)	8
2024/25	25	7 (9.34%)	7 (3.8%)	11

The significant financial challenge is set to continue in the medium term due to a combination of no increase in funding from Welsh Government (working assumption), increases in demand for and complexity of needs for services and the continued impact of inflation. At the time of updating the strategy the Council awaits the incoming UK governments first budget statement on 30<sup>th</sup> October. This will be followed by the Welsh Government publishing its budget and draft funding settlement for local government in



early December. It is possible that the Council will receive a higher than forecast funding settlement, but this is highly unlikely to change the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council in the medium term, which should not be underestimated.

Appendix 1 sets out the current budget projections in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 – 2027/28 (revised at October 2024) along with the assumptions that underpin the projections. The MTFP has been updated to reflect latest estimates of known pressures whereas the impact of increases in Council Tax and funding from Welsh Government remain as high-level estimates. The table includes a range of assumptions to provide a low, medium and high estimate of costs for each pressure, illustrating both the uncertainty of the figures and that work will continue to refine these projections.

### **Budget Pressures**

Corporate pressures currently included in the MTFP;

- Pay pressure - Non-Teaching Pay Awards. Current estimates are on the high side, when compared with current rates of inflation and these may be revised down in future updates.
- Pay Grades Pressure - In recent years increases to the National Living Wage driven by high levels of inflation has had an impact on the Council's pay structure. Grades have compressed at the lower end of the structure due to the removal of some spinal points and there is an increasing need to review the structure. The pressure whilst still included in the MTFP has been pushed back reflecting the commitment made by the national employers in recent pay negotiations to redesign the national pay spines and the time that may take. The Council recognises the need to review its pay structure, but it would not be feasible to complete that review when changes to the national pay spine are planned.
- General price inflation
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Funding for CTRS transferred into the Local Government settlement a number of years ago and has not changed. Additional costs as a result of increases in Council Tax fall on the council
- Levy from North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
- Schools inflation – covering teaching and non-teaching pay awards for those employees working in schools, and price inflation.

- Schools Demography – reflecting changes in overall pupil numbers.
- Investment in Priorities - impact of capital programme repayment of borrowing and interest costs.

Service Pressures currently included in the MTFP;

- Adult Social Care – updated to reflect current estimates for increases in inflation, demand / complexity.
- Children’s Services – updated to reflect current estimates for increases in inflation, demand / complexity.
- Additional Service Pressures – added to reflect short, focused business cases submitted by Head of Service and approved by CET.

All pressures will continue to be reviewed and refined as the year develops to reflect updated demands. Demands for some service provision is increasing in Adults and Childrens Services but also the complexity of care required by individuals is increasing.

The majority of the pressures faced by the council are outside of its control, for example pay inflation is set nationally.

### Risks

This section of the MTFs provides details of the strategic risks that the council is facing that it has not been possible to quantify in the MTFP at this stage, or there is still a degree of uncertainty if it will materialise.

- Pay Award (non-teaching) – The 2024/25 pay award was confirmed as this update of the MTFs was being written and will be paid in November. The Council has budgeted for 5% in 2024/25 which will be sufficient to cover costs and this risk can now be removed.
- Teachers Pay Award – The Cabinet Secretary has indicated that the Teachers Pay Award for September 2024 is 5.5%, higher than most Council’s would have budgeted for. Denbighshire Schools budgets were increased by 5% (full year) to cover the teachers’ pay award. We await confirmation of additional funding from Welsh Government. Should no funding to cover the additional costs be available

the Council would need to correct the base budgets in 2025/26 which adds to the overall pressure in the MTFP for 2025/26.

- Clwyd Pension Fund Triennial Review – revised employer contributions would take effect from 2026/27.
- Children’s Services Placements – demand is difficult to forecast, complexity of needs coupled with inflation have driven up costs significantly in recent years. WG have set a priority of eliminating private profit from the care of looked after children, this could have an impact on the market in Wales.
- Adult Social Care – care fees and an increase in the number of complex cases could be in excess of budgeted levels.
- Homelessness – The general lack of social and affordable housing coupled with changes in legislation during the pandemic has seen a significant increase in the number of people presenting as homeless in recent years. This has led to significant additional cost, particularly in relation to temporary accommodation. Whilst there are a number of workstreams being progressed with positive results to reduce the costs and numbers in temporary accommodation the situation can change quickly.
- Council Tax Reforms – WG consulted on plans to reform the way CT is calculated and charged, this has the potential to impact on how much funding the council receives. Changes will now not take place until 2028 which therefore reduces the immediate risk.

### **Funding Additional Pressures**

The net revenue budget is funded from Aggregate External Finance (AEF) (75%) and Council Tax (25%). The AEF is made up of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Non Domestic Rates Pool funding (NDR).

Aggregate External Funding - Projected funding from Welsh Government.

The 2024/25 funding settlement from Welsh Government provided no future indication of funding as it has done for the past 2 years. Future funding within the MTFP is based on assessments by Wales Fiscal Analysis at slightly negative reductions of -0.3% in 2025/26, -0.5% in 2026/27, and 0% in 2027//28 in the absence of anything else. More recent forecasts from the Wales Fiscal Analysis reflecting the post-election fiscal outlook for

Wales look slightly more positive, however this will not materially alter the Council's financial outlook in the medium term.

At the time of updating the strategy the Council awaits the incoming UK governments first budget statement on 30<sup>th</sup> October. This will be followed by the Welsh Government publishing its budget and draft funding settlement for local government in early December. It is possible that the Council will receive a higher than forecast funding settlement if recurring funding for the increase in Teacher Pensions in April 2024, any recurring funding for above inflation pay awards is included in the settlement, etc. At this point in the year there is no certainty that this will happen and therefore we have been cautious and have not increased the funding forecast in the MTFP.

It is essential that we continue advocating for more resources from national governments especially considering increasing demand in services or rising costs as a result of policy decisions. It is worth noting that a 1% increase in AEF equates to an additional c£2m in funding.

### Council Tax

In 2024/25, Denbighshire's Band D Council Tax is £1,679 which compares to the Welsh average of £1,631 and the North Wales average of £1,666. Across Wales, Band D Council Tax varies between £1,446 (Caerphilly) and £1,975 (Merthyr Tydfil) and in North Wales between £1,572 (Ynys Mon) and £1,755 (Gwynedd). The Band D Council Tax of our immediate neighbours is £1,733 at Conwy and £1,658 at Flintshire. We are the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in North Wales.

Assumptions made about Council Tax increases in the MTFP range from 6% - 12% for 2025/26 and a 5.5% long term average thereafter for both years though it is important to note that no decisions have been made yet. A mid-range assumption of a Council Tax increase of 9% for 2025/26 yields an additional £6.8m but only addresses a third of the funding gap, the remaining gap is substantial at £12m.

To the extent that increases in AEF and Council Tax are insufficient to meet the financial demand, then the Council is faced with the need to make budget reductions, generate income or use its one-off reserves and balances to fund any remaining resource shortfall.

### Budget Reductions, Savings and Efficiencies

Given the scale of the Council's current financial position and the cumulative impact of finding annual efficiencies for over a decade, no service can be protected in its entirety from the need to find savings, and this unfortunately includes front line services.

Prioritisation of services will need to feature in future discussions.

- We will need to invest more in provision of statutory services to our most vulnerable (eg children and adults needing social care), the demand for these services are going up and the costs are increasing. These are services we need to prioritise in terms of additional year on year investment.
- Other services are highly valued, and we will need to continue to provide additional funding, their budgets will increase year on year in cash terms, but in real terms additional funding may not keep pace with inflation. For example, the position with schools this year.
- Other services will receive less budget than last year. For example, as seen with libraries this year.
- It will be necessary to remove the budgets for some functions entirely and therefore we will either cease to provide that service or work with partner organisations, if possible, for them to run the service or at least pay the full costs for delivering it. For example, the current position with public toilets.

It is important to understand that there are some budgets within the overall net revenue budget where it is not possible to implement any savings, for example the Levy to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, Members' allowances etc. The council cannot operate without support services functions; however they will need to be reshaped so that they operate effectively and as efficiently as possible.

The scope for efficiencies is limited given the scale of budget reductions over the past ten years, which has delivered a wide range of efficiencies. However, technologies and other practices continue to evolve, and we therefore need to work hard to identify and deliver further efficiencies where we can in order to preserve services for residents.

There is a need to develop a more transformational approach to the council's need to reduce its costs (see below). Our approach to transformation is a priority and is under development but it will take time and investment. For the next few years, the approach will

be to identify savings and invest in transformational projects. In terms of 2025/26 savings, target percentage service reductions have been issued which services are working towards achieving and considering what services will look like as a result. The combined percentage reduction to budgets will equate to the Council's funding gap. Percentages are being treated in a broad sense, and it is not considered appropriate to apply a consistent level of budget reductions across all services. Appendix 2 provides an update of savings proposals to date, though the work continues.

Budgetary control measures introduced covering recruitment, and use of overtime and agency will continue into 2025/26.

### Fees and Charges

Annual work on fees and charges has always been undertaken every year as part of budget setting. The fees and charges policy is under review and will be updated as necessary. A more focused review of fees and charges had been planned this year. Whilst it has not been possible to conduct that review due to capacity within the Finance team, Heads of Service in developing savings proposals are actively considering ways of generating income and these will be clearly identified in savings proposals brought to Members.

### Capital

The Council's capital plan has an impact on its revenue budget. Schemes funded from borrowing have associated interest and debt repayment costs (minimum revenue provision) which must be charged to the revenue account. There is also the additional day to day running costs associated with large capital schemes that develop additional / new services. The Council has a well-developed process for assessing individual capital business cases and associated revenue costs. In setting its revenue and capital budgets for the current year the Council recognised the need to limit the impact of the capital plan on the revenue budget as much as possible and introduced the additional principles.

- The Council should work towards capping the annual block allocations at the level of the capital funding received from Welsh Government.
- Urgent Health and Safety issues should be prioritised.

- Consideration given to Invest-to-save schemes, even if the benefit is reducing pressures in the medium term.
- Capital receipts or delays to other projects will be the only source of funding available for 2024/25 and 2025/26
- Grant Funded Schemes – more reliance on using grant funding as effectively as possible. 100% grant funded schemes are obviously preferable, but it is recognised that sometimes match funding will be required. Consideration should also be made on any ongoing revenue impact of capital grant, on-going maintenance costs for example.

A workstream continues to review how the block allocations are funded in the capital budget. All block allocations are being reviewed, including those funded from capital receipts or prudential borrowing, with the aim that in total they match available funding from Welsh Government through the settlement, as far as possible. The results of the review will be brought forward for Members discussion as part of setting the Capital Plan for next year. Affordability and links to the Council Plan will guide those discussions and outcomes. We are also reviewing the policy for repaying debt and have engaged our Treasury Management advisors to assist with the review whilst also undertaking an independent review of the impact of the capital plan on the revenue budget. The results of these reviews will be available for wider consideration in the autumn.

### Schools

The approach, as it has been in recent years, will be to continue to fully fund inflationary pressures including pay awards, pension contributions, energy, etc and demography, and then apply a budget reduction. In 2024/25 this equated to a gross increase to schools of £7.616m before we applied savings of 3% which equated to £2.7m. The net position was an increase of £4.916m a 5.82% increase in the schools' budget. The schools' budget is our biggest budget, the council cannot fund all inflationary pressures without expecting our schools to contribute to the savings effort. The additional level of funding the Council received from WG in broad terms at 3.8% in 2024/25, did not cover inflationary costs including that of our schools. The impacts of decisions and changes in 2024/25 will need to be assessed and considered in reaching decisions on the percentage reduction for schools in 2025/26. A range of between 3 – 5% is under consideration.

## Reserves and Balances

The Council will hold many different reserves at any point in time, though the amounts are only confirmed at the end of a financial year. The Statement of Accounts will split reserves into 2 categories usable and unusable reserves. As the name suggest unusable reserves cannot be used and relates to technical reserves associated with timing of accounting adjustments relating to fixed assets and pensions. Usable reserves are split into capital and revenue reserves. This section of the MTFs focuses on the revenue reserves and the strategy for their use over the medium term.

The table below set outs the useable reserves held by the Council as at the end of financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24.

<b>Useable Reserves</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 (£m)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 (£m)</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Council Fund balance	5.577	5.577	Sums set aside for more general purposes to meet any unforeseen costs pressures and unexpected events outside of the council's control.
Earmarked Revenue Reserves – Services	14.514	14.178	Sums set aside for specific purposes to support Service needs.
Earmarked Reserves - Corporate	17.147	17.607	Sums set aside for specific purposes to support corporate needs.
Earmarked Revenue Reserves - Schools	8.939	3.681	School reserves which are delegated to school governing bodies.
Housing Revenue Account Reserve	1.566	1.178	Housing reserves which are ringfenced for housing purposes as required in law.
Earmarked Capital	19.240	22.186	Capital monies set aside for funding ongoing capital schemes per the Capital Plan.
Capital Reserves	15.122	12.845	Capital receipts and grants to fund ongoing capital schemes per the



(capital receipts reserve and capital grants unapplied account reserve)			Capital Plan. These sums generally cannot be used to support Revenue expenditure.
Total Useable Reserves	<b>82.107</b>	<b>77.252</b>	

The Council Fund balance currently stands at £5.6m. In setting its 2024/25 budget the council agreed to keep this minimum £5.6m unearmarked reserve, to meet any unforeseen cost pressures and unexpected events outside of the council's control. Should there ever be a call on this reserve, there would need to be a plan to replenish the reserve to its level of £5.6m.

There is no determined level of reserves that is necessary for councils to hold as that is a matter of judgement for each council to make. Previously £5m has been the level for some years and as the council's net revenue budget has increased (due to high levels of inflation) in recent years its value has been eroded. £5m is 1.84% of the current net revenue budget (2024/25) and it is an aim to increase the level of unearmarked reserves over the medium term. Given the scale of the financial challenge it is not be feasible to plan to build our general balance by earmarking budget however the intention is to increase the balance should any opportunity arise, e.g., from windfall income etc.

The Council also has earmarked reserves which are set aside for specific purposes, to fund a known future pressure, loss of income or to mitigate against a possible risk. Some are restricted in their use by, for example, the terms and conditions of grants where their source is government funding. Earmarked reserves are also used by services to manage their budgets and are regularly reviewed and challenged as part of budget monitoring and work on setting annual budgets.

The Council holds limited centrally held earmarked reserves including its budget mitigation reserve which is used to fund any in year overspend. In setting the 2024/25 budget the council approved targeted use of corporate earmarked reserves to cover one-off exit costs, and as mitigation for risks from ongoing discussions around reviewing the Council's pay structure which is necessary given the unprecedented financial position faced.

A workstream to review the council's policy for reserves continues and includes a review and challenge of both corporate and service reserves held to confirm that they are still needed for the purpose they were set aside for.

### Transformation

The Council has a Transformation Programme of coordinated, accelerated activity to deliver change projects across the Council's services and functions to enable the organisation to respond to the current and future financial and demand challenges. The Programme will reshape the way in which services are delivered, ensuring they operate as efficiently as possible, while also investigating creative ways to best serve our residents. The Programme's financial targets will align with the Council's MTFS / MTFP with the goal to be a financially sustainable Council.

Projects within this Programme will take some time to develop and, in all probability, may not materialise in time for 2025/26 budget setting.

The projects within the Programme will be organised into 3 main workstreams with each Corporate Director providing day to day cross-council challenge and strategic direction. The workstreams are as follows;

- Commercialisation and Enterprise
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Influencing Demand and Digital

The programme will be managed by the Budget and Transformation Board which consists of Cabinet Members and the Corporate Executive Team (CET). The Board meets regularly and will review and decide on which projects should progress through various project gateways, allocation on funding, etc.

Although most decisions in respect of transformation proposals will be taken by the Executive arm of the Council, i.e., officers, lead members and Cabinet, there will be regular engagement with the wider membership of the Council as proposals are developed. There will be opportunities for all members to be briefed informally in a workshop setting but there will also be a need for formal consideration of more significant proposals by Scrutiny Committees.

### Processes for keeping Members informed and Governance of the Budget

The process for setting the 2024/25 budget evolved during the last financial year reflecting the severity of the budgetary situation.

Heads of Service came forward with proposals for budget reductions following discussions with Lead Members. Proposals were categorised into 2; Major Savings Proposals and Non-Strategic Savings.

Each Major Savings Proposal was reviewed by CET for deliverability before being reported informally to Cabinet for political challenge/acceptability. If a project was informally supported by Cabinet, the relevant Lead Member ensured that all Members were advised of the project by sharing a brief report and a Wellbeing Impact Assessment. Each project was the subject of a virtual Teams meeting for all Members so the proposal could be further explained, and any initial questions answered. Some projects needed to be reported to Scrutiny and were the subject of a public consultation. Final decisions were taken as appropriate e.g. at Cabinet, Lead Member Delegated Decision, Head of Service delegated decision etc.

Heads of Service also proposed a range of non-strategic efficiencies/smaller scale reductions to budgets. These efficiencies/reductions to budget were discussed with Lead Members and in most cases were progressed via a Head of Service delegated decision.

These processes for sharing information with Members will continue going forward as in general feedback from Members has been that they did feel informed about the budget.

Regular Council Workshops/Member Briefings will be arranged to update Members on development of MTFS (overall budget approach), latest projections in MTFP, progress on delivery regarding closing the budget gap and the transformation agenda.

There will also be more reporting to update the MTFS and MTFP this year, with updates for Cabinet planned in July, October and January, before the budget is set a month later in February. These reports will be the subject of agenda items for Governance and Audit Committee for assurance that the council has robust processes in place to make effective decisions in a timely manner to deliver balanced budgets in future and a scrutiny committee to review those decisions. It is also planned to debate budget setting proposals at Council much earlier on than in recent years and a report is planned for November.

Final budget proposals will need to be approved with Council Tax setting at a Council meeting in February, when the settlement from WG is known.

### Communications Plan

The communications plan for the budget is as follows:

- Elected Members – as per processes for keeping Members informed section (above).
- The Leader, Chief Executive and Corporate Director Governance & Business meet regularly with Group Leaders, who update their Groups. Groups can invite Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Section 151 Officer to any of their meetings to discuss the budget proposals.
- Employees - Regular updates on budget are provided at the monthly Staff Council meetings. Staff roadshows took place on 12th March – 1st May to give employees an opportunity to better understand the Council's financial position and to ask questions / offer feedback. Further briefing sessions will be arranged as necessary.
- Trade Unions - Senior Officers meet regularly with the Unions to update them on saving proposals.
- Schools - Senior Officers attend the School Budget Forum on a regular basis to update them on saving proposals, particularly regarding implications for schools. Senior Officers attended the annual Headteachers conference to discuss the Council's financial position and school budgets.
- Public / residents - Major projects have and will continue to be subject to specific public consultation e.g. reduction in library opening hours, and public conveniences. Engagement with the public last year focused on developing budgetary information on the council's website which was shared through our social media channels. Further work is needed this year to develop our residents understanding of the council's financial challenges and the impact it will have on our ability to deliver services.
- City, Town and Community Councils – We held an information session with all of our City, Town and Community Councils to fully brief them of the council's financial situation in July. Further briefing sessions will be arranged as necessary.

Wellbeing impact assessments were completed on all major savings proposals along with an overarching assessment for the whole of the budget. This is being updated periodically as proposals are refined and reported to the Strategic Equalities and Diversity Group.

### Timetable

Table below includes a timetable of likely budget activity for the year;

<b>Budget Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Staff Roadshows - Budget	12 <sup>th</sup> March – 1 <sup>st</sup> May
Members Budget Workshop - Governance and Business	13 <sup>th</sup> March
Members Budget Workshop – Economy and Environment	15 <sup>th</sup> March
Members Budget Workshop – Social Service and Education	11 <sup>th</sup> April
Cabinet – Medium Term Financial Strategy (including MTFP update) and assessment of financial resilience report.	23 <sup>rd</sup> April
Governance and Audit Committee - Medium Term Financial Strategy (including MTFP update) and assessment of financial resilience report.	24 <sup>th</sup> April
Budget discussion with Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny	20 <sup>th</sup> May
Performance Scrutiny – Medium Term Financial Strategy (including MTFP update) and assessment of financial resilience report.	6 <sup>th</sup> June
Members Workshop - Transformation	6 <sup>th</sup> June
Members Budget Workshop – MTFS / MTFP update	19 <sup>th</sup> June
Cabinet MTFS / MTFP update	30 <sup>th</sup> July
Governance and Audit Committee MTFS / MTFP update	24 <sup>th</sup> July
Performance Scrutiny MTFS / MTFP update (For information)	26 <sup>th</sup> September
Members Budget Workshop – MTFS / MTFP update	16 <sup>th</sup> October
Cabinet MTFS / MTFP update	22 <sup>nd</sup> October
UK Government Budget	30 <sup>th</sup> October
Members Budget Workshop – MTFS / MTFP update	6 <sup>th</sup> November

Full Council – Early debate – Budget 2025/26	12 <sup>th</sup> November
Governance and Audit Committee MTFS / MTFP update	20 <sup>th</sup> November
Performance Scrutiny MTFS / MTFP update	28 <sup>th</sup> November
Welsh Government Budget and LG Draft Settlement	Early December
Members Budget Workshop – MTFS / MTFP update	December / January
Cabinet MTFS / MTFP update	21 <sup>st</sup> January
Governance and Audit Committee MTFS / MTFP update	22 <sup>nd</sup> January
Cabinet – Set budget 2025/26 and proposed Council Tax	18 <sup>th</sup> February
Full Council – Set Budget 2025/26 and Council Tax	20 <sup>th</sup> February

## **Conclusion**

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) sets out the financial forecast for the next three years. It is based on a range of assumptions, most of which at this stage are uncertain and are likely to change. However, the level of uncertainty, in terms of the UK economic outlook, funding from governments and service demands, leaves us with significant risk. As a result of the volatility, the plan will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Whilst the plan does not provide us with any real certainty, it nonetheless does provide a clear indication of the direction of travel and scale of the financial pressures, to determine actions and strategic considerations we need to take in the immediate term (to set the 2025/26 budget) and mid-term (to set the 2026/27 and 2027/28 budgets) and sets out the need for transformation.

# Agenda Item 7

## NOTICE OF MOTION PUT FORWARD BY COUNCILLOR MARTYN HOGG ON BEHALF OF THE GREEN PARTY

"We confirm that Denbighshire Council supports the campaign to devolve management of the Crown Estate and its assets in Wales to the Welsh Government and that the funds raised be used by Local Authorities to support the social needs of the people who live in Wales.

"We ask the Leader to write to the Welsh Government outlining our support to help persuade Westminster to devolve the Crown Estate as a matter of urgency."

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## **RHYBUDD O GYNNIG GRŴP PLAID CYMRU AR GYFER YSTYRIAETH AR GYFER CYFARFOD LLAWN NESAF O GYNGOR SIR DDINBYCH.**

Yn ngoleuni'r argyfwng cyllidebol sy'n wynebu Cyngor Sir Ddinbych, ynghyd â holl gynghorau eraill Cymru ar hyn o bryd. Argyfwng sy'n anorfod yn mynd i effeithio ar allu'r awdurdod i gyflenwi'r ystod llawn o wasanaethau fel y dymunem i'n trigolion. Argyfwng fydd yn sicr o ddylanwadu hefyd ar waith y Cynghorau Dinas, Tref a Chymuned o fewn y Sir.

Yn sgîl hyn, credai grŵp Plaid Cymru y dylai Cyngor Sir Ddinbych gymryd y camau rhagweithiol canlynol er mwyn cryfhau ein perthynas gyda a chefnogi gwaith y cyrff allweddol bwysig hyn.

1. Creu swyddogaeth benodol o fewn y tîm Democrataidd i gefnogi'r cynghorau trwy fod yn bwynt cyswllt uniongyrchol iddynt.
2. Datblygu rhestr o wasanaethau taladwy y gall yr awdurdod eu cynnig i gynghorau lleol.
3. Datblygu cynlluniau ar y cyd gyda'r cynghorau dinas, tref a chymuned a allai greu incwm iddynt.

Considering the budget crisis facing Denbighshire County Council, along with all other councils in Wales at the moment. A crisis that is inevitably going to affect the authority's ability to supply the full range of Services as we would wish for our residents. A crisis that will almost certainly also influence the work of the City, Town and Community Councils within the County.

Due to this, the Plaid Cymru Group believe that Denbighshire County Council should take the following proactive steps in order to strengthen our relationship with and support the work of these key and important bodies.

- 1) Create a specific function within the Democratic team to Support City, Town and Community councils by being their direct point of contract.
- 2) Develop a list of payable Services that the authority can offer to the councils.
- 3) Develop joint plans with the City, Town and Community councils that could generate income for them.

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COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Meeting	Item (Description / Title)	Purpose of Report	Council Decision Required (yes/no)	Lead member and Contact Officer	Date Entered-Updated / By
<b>28 January 2025</b>	1. Budget 2025/26		Yes	Lead Member – Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Head of Service – Liz Thomas	06.08.24 SLW
	2. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26		Yes	Lead Member – Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Head of Service – Liz Thomas Report Author – Paul Barnes	06.08.24 SLW
	3 Petition Scheme	To approve a Petition Scheme for the Council	Yes	Lead Member – Cllr Julie Matthews Report Author – Gary Williams / Catrin Roberts	25.10.24 KEJ
	4 Corporate Joint Committee Governance Arrangements	To approve the creation of a Joint Scrutiny Committee for the CJC	Yes	Lead Member – Cllr Jason McLellan Lead Officer/Report Author – Gary Williams	26.04.24 KEJ, rescheduled 25.10.24 KEJ
<b>20 February 2025</b>	1. Council Tax 2025/2026 and associated matters		Yes	Lead Member – Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Head of Service – Liz Thomas	06.08.24 SLW

COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

	2.	Capital Plan 2025/26 and recommendations of the Strategic Investment Group		Yes	Lead Member – Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Head of Service – Liz Thomas	06.08.24 SLW
	3.	Treasury Management Strategic Statement (TMSS) 2025/2026 and prudential indicators 2025/26		Yes	Lead Member – Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Head of Service – Liz Thomas	06.08.24 SLW
	4.	Panel Performance Assessment Final Report & Management Response	To report to Council on the Panel Performance Assessment undertaken in September 2024.	No	Lead Member – Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Head of Service – Helen Vaughan Evans Report Author -	19.09.24 SP, rescheduled 25.10.14 KEJ
<b>13 May 2025 (Annual Council)</b>	1.	Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of County Council	To appoint the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council for the 2025/26 municipal year	Yes	Gary Williams	06.08.24 SLW
	2.	Pay Policy Statement 2025/26	To approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26	Yes	Lead Member – Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Head of Service – Catrin Roberts Report Author – Sophie Vaughan	06.08.24 SLW
	3.	Annual Review of Political Balance and Appointment of Scrutiny Chairs	To consider a report on Political Balance and Committee related issues	No	Lead Member – Cllr Julie Matthews Head of Service – Catrin Roberts Report Author – Steve Price	06.08.24 SLW

COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

<b>8 July 2025</b>	1.	Council Performance Self-Assessment 2024 to 2025 (year-end)	To consider a report on the Performance Self-Assessment	Tbc	Lead Member – Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Head of Service – Helen Vaughan Evans Report Author – Emma Horan	03.10.24 KEJ
<b>9 September 2025</b>						
<b>11 November 2025</b>						

**FUTURE ITEMS**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Item (Description / Title)</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Council Decision Required (yes/no)</b>	<b>Lead member and Contact Officer</b>
TBC	Review of Polling Places and Stations	To consider a statutory review of the county’s polling places and polling stations.	Yes	Cllr Julie Matthews / Steve Price / Shellan Rowley

COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

***Note for Officers – Full Council Report Deadlines***

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
10.09.2024	27.08.2024	12.11.2024	29.10.2024	28.01.2025	14.01.2025
20.02.2025	06.02.2025	13.05.2025	29.04.2025	08.07.2025	24.06.2025
09.09.2025	26.08.2025	11.11.2025	28.10.2025		

Updated 25/10/2024 KEJ

## Council Workshop Forward Work Programme

DATE OF COUNCIL WORKSHOP	TOPIC(S)	LEAD SLT / LEAD MEMBER	DATE ENTERED / UPDATED BY
<b>2024 DATES</b> Tuesday 2pm			
<b>5 November</b>	The National Park Proposal with Natural Resources Wales	Councillor Alan James / Emlyn Jones / Huw Rees	4.9.24 SP
<b>10 December</b>	Public Protection	Councillor Alan James / Emlyn Jones / Gareth Roberts	19.9.24 SP
<b>2025 DATES</b> Tuesday 2pm			
<b>14 January – HYBRID MEETING</b>	Panel Performance Assessment final report.	Councillor Julie Matthews / Robyn Lovelock / Heidi Barton-Price	15.10.24 SP
<b>11 February</b>	Third Sector	Councillor Julie Matthews / Liz Grieve / Tom Barham (CEO of DVSC)	19.9.24 SP
<b>11 March</b>	Planning Enforcement / Planning Compliance Charter	Councillor Alan James / Emlyn Jones / Paul Mead	19.9.24 SP
<b>8 April</b>	Active Travel	Councillor Barry Mellor / Emlyn Jones / Mike Jones	19.9.24 SP

## Council Workshop Forward Work Programme

<b>6 May</b>		DCC Economic Strategy – Key priorities and actions	Councillor Jason McLellan / Emlyn Jones / Gareth Roberts	19.9.24 SP
<b>10 June</b>		Approach to Homelessness	Councillor Rhys Thomas Ann Lloyd / Nigel Jones	4.9.24 SP
<b>15 July</b>		North Wales Police Chief Constable Amanda Blakeman. To discuss the chief constable’s priorities for NWP and how these relate to the communities of Denbighshire. (final confirmation required from the Chief Constable’s office)	Graham Boase Councillor Rhys Thomas	21.5.24 SP, rescheduled from 1 Oct
<b>2 September</b>				
<b>7 October</b>				
<b>4 November</b>				
<b>2 December</b>				

### Reserve and Future Items List

1. Workshop on performance expectations and budgetary impacts
2. Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) update including the regional transport plan (Gary Williams / Emlyn Jones / Mike Jones) – 28.8.23 SP
3. Promotion of Welsh Language (within the Council, Communities and Schools - Welsh Education Strategic Plan, New Language Categorisation). This was the topic for the 10 Oct 2023 Workshop which meeting was cancelled, with the intention of being rescheduled.
4. Strategic Flooding approach (inc DCC Strategy) - Tony Ward & Emlyn Jones / Councillor Barry Mellor
5. ALN Reform, the New Curriculum for Wales and the support provided by The Regional School Improvement Service (GwE)
6. Inclusion Service & Pupil Referral Unit
7. How we support Schools through Admissions, Transport, Governance and Resource Management.
8. Tackling Poverty/Deprivation
9. Tourism, including destination management and Tourism Strategy



## Council Workshop Forward Work Programme

10. Culture/Arts/Heritage
11. Young People in democracy
12. NWEAB work, including Growth Deal
13. LDP
14. Town Centres
15. Flying Start, Family Support and Early Prevention
16. Safeguarding & Community Safety
17. Levelling up Funds and Shared Prosperity Fund
18. Regional Integration Fund (RIF) Projects & Funding
19. NWOW & Office Strategy
20. Corporate Plan
21. DLL & DCC
22. Workshop for each of the Corporate Plan themes.

**Revised 30/10/24 KEJ**

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