

To: Members of the Cabinet

Date: 17 January 2024

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Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **CABINET** to be held at **10.00 am** on **TUESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2024** in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, RUTHIN AND BY VIDEO CONFERENCE.**

Yours sincerely

G. Williams  
Monitoring Officer

## **AGENDA**

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

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

#### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

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

#### **3 URGENT MATTERS**

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

#### **4 MINUTES (Pages 7 - 18)**

To receive the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19 December 2023 (copy enclosed).

**5 OUTCOME OF COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S REVIEW OF CABINET'S DECISION RELATING TO THE LIBRARY/ONE STOP SHOP SAVINGS PROPOSAL (Pages 19 - 28)**

To consider the outcome of the review of the decision taken by Cabinet on 19 December 2023 relating to the Library/One Stop Shop Savings Proposal which had been subject of a call-in and considered by Communities Scrutiny Committee on 11 January 2024.

**6 COUNCIL BUDGET 2024/25 (Pages 29 - 56)**

To consider a report by Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets (copy enclosed) setting out the implications of the Provisional Local Government Settlement 2024/25 and proposals to set a balanced budget for 2024/25.

**7 WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON "FAIRER COUNCIL TAX" (Pages 57 - 76)**

To consider a report by Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets (copy enclosed) seeking Cabinet approval of the proposed consultation response to the Welsh Government Consultation on "Fairer Council Tax".

**8 FINANCE REPORT (Pages 77 - 92)**

To consider a report by Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets (copy enclosed) detailing the latest financial position and progress against the agreed budget strategy.

**9 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 93 - 96)**

To receive the enclosed Cabinet Forward Work Programme and note the contents.

**PART 2 - CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It is recommended in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because it is likely that exempt information as defined in paragraphs 12 and 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed.

**10 DISPOSAL OF PERONNE FARM, FFORDD COPPY, DENBIGH (Pages 97 - 122)**

To consider a confidential report by Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets (copy enclosed) seeking Cabinet approval to declare Peronne Farm surplus to the requirements of the Council and to approve its disposal.

**MEMBERSHIP**

Councillor Gwyneth Ellis  
Councillor Gill German  
Councillor Elen Heaton  
Councillor Julie Matthews  
Councillor Jason McLellan

Councillor Barry Mellor  
Councillor Win Mullen-James  
Councillor Rhys Thomas  
Councillor Emrys Wynne

**COPIES TO:**

All Councillors for information  
Press and Libraries  
Town and Community Councils

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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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## **CABINET**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Tuesday, 19 December 2023 at 10.00 am.

## **PRESENT**

Councillors Jason McLellan, Leader and Lead Member for Economic Growth and Tackling Deprivation; Gill German, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Education, Children and Families; Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets; Elen Heaton, Lead Member for Health and Social Care; Julie Matthews, Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities; Barry Mellor, Lead Member for the Environment and Transport; Win Mullen-James, Lead Member for Local Development and Planning, Rhys Thomas, Lead Member for Housing and Communities, and Emrys Wynne, Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture and Heritage

**Observers:** Councillors Ann Davies, Chris Evans, Bobby Feeley, Karen Edwards, Pauline Edwards, James Elson, Huw Hilditch-Roberts, Hugh Irving, Alan James, Brian Jones, Delyth Jones, Terry Mendies, Merfyn Parry, Arwel Roberts, Gareth Sandilands, Peter Scott, David Williams, and Huw Williams

## **ALSO PRESENT**

Chief Executive (GB); Corporate Directors: Social Services and Education (NS), Governance and Business/Monitoring Officer (GW), and Environment and Economy TW; Heads of Service: Finance and Audit (ET), Housing and Communities Service (LG), Adult Social Care and Homelessness Service (AL), Highways and Environmental Services (PJ) and Corporate Support Service: People (CR); Lead Officer – Community Housing (GD); Service Manager – Business Support and Communities (NJ); Property Operations Manager – Housing and Communities Service (MC); Waste and Recycling Manager (SL); Collaborative Procurement and Framework Manager (KB), and Committee Administrators (KEJ & RTJ [Webcaster])

### **1 APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declaration of interest had been raised.

### **3 URGENT MATTERS**

No urgent matters had been raised.

### **4 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 21 November 2023 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

## **5 LIBRARY/ONE STOP SHOP SAVINGS PROPOSAL**

Councillor Emrys Wynne presented the report outlining how savings could be achieved by reducing Library/One Stop Shop Services.

The proposal had been put forward due to the unprecedented financial challenge facing the Council and requirement for all services to deliver significant savings. The report detailed the potential savings from the Library/One Stop Shop Service; the potential impact of making the savings; particular considerations for Cabinet and CET to inform future discussions, and recommended Cabinet approve the proposal to reduce Library/One Stop Shop opening hours by c.40% together with associated savings in other service areas, to release an expected saving of £360k.

Councillor Wynne was clear that the proposal did not sit well with him but given the financial context many difficult decisions needed to be made and he explained the reasoning behind the option to reduce opening hours across all libraries rather than closing individual libraries completely as a fairer way to deliver savings. Changes had been made to the original proposal in response to consultation feedback. The current proposal was based on a 40% reduction in opening hours rather than 50% resulting in an extra 30 hours per week of library opening hours overall which delivered around £90k less savings but also enabled third party user groups to access library buildings outside normal library opening hours. Councillor Wynne believed the current proposal to be more balanced and better for library users and staff than the previous proposal. The proposal protected libraries to the extent that it was currently possible to do so and would ensure that no library had to close. It was with great sadness that Councillor Wynne recommended the proposal, but he believed it to be the best deal possible for libraries in the current financial situation.

The Corporate Director: Environment and Economy explained the process leading to the current proposal as part of the wider budget setting process to ensure the Council set a balanced budget, with the proposal changing over time in response to the consultation feedback. The proposal was considered proportionate and realistic given the financial situation and level of savings required. The Head of Housing and Communities added that the proposed budget cut was around 21% of the service budget and included reducing library opening hours but also some associated savings in other parts of the service which were equally valued. She drew attention to Appendix 2 detailing the proposed 40% service model which had been developed in consultation with unions and staff. If Cabinet approved the proposal, there would be a formal staff consultation which may result in minor operational revisions, but the model was broadly what would be implemented.

Cabinet thanked the Lead Member for his work in putting forward such a difficult but balanced proposal taking all considerations into account. Councillor Julie Matthews also voiced her frustration over the cuts made by the UK Government over the past thirteen years and cumulative effect of austerity on local government finances which had led to the current dire financial situation. Whilst no one was in favour of library cuts it was accepted that given the dire financial situation, all services would need



to make savings to deliver a balanced budget, and in that context, Cabinet considered the proposal to be fair and proportionate. However, Cabinet was keen to avoid any further cuts to the library service going forward and to mitigate the impacts. Assurances were sought both in that regard and requests for a review of the proposed model to ensure parity of reductions in the opening hours of libraries across the county (taking into account City/Town Council contributions); further work involving all stakeholders working together to look at alternative models of delivering library services and future growth, and ensuring that going forward there would be provision of warm hubs/safe places in each town/community for people to access. The positive engagement and valuable feedback from the consultation process was highlighted together with how that feedback had changed the original proposal and further questions in that regard.

The Lead Member and officers responded to the issues raised as follows –

- agreed to review the library opening hours to ensure the reductions were balanced and equitable across all libraries and that fair consideration was given to the financial contributions of City/Town Councils
- further work would be carried out with interested stakeholders, including staff, community groups and City/Town/Community Councils to consider alternative models of delivering library services with a view to future proofing and growing that provision, mitigate cuts and seek other sources of income
- the option of reducing opening hours over library closures meant it would be easier to reintroduce the previous opening hours or expand provision in future if the financial situation improved or alternative funding could be secured, and all libraries were potentially viable for community use outside library opening times
- much work would be carried out to protect the library service from future budget cuts which would absolutely be a last resort and not envisaged at this point
- elaborated on plans for library buildings to be utilised outside of library opening hours for community use with a more commercial model being developed to facilitate that provision and amendments to opening hours following consultation feedback with fewer 'part day' openings and amended opening days
- highlighted the use of libraries as warm hubs/safe places and aim to protect and expand that provision in the community when considering the new model; the Community Resilience Team had been signposting funding to the third sector for access to food/warm hubs across the county and it was agreed to undertake a mapping exercise across the county with a view to maximising that provision.

The Leader opened up the debate to non-Cabinet members who took the opportunity to express their views and raise questions on the proposals.

Main points of debate focused on the following –

- Councillor Peter Scott set out St. Asaph City Council's position given that they contributed financially to the library service in St. Asaph and yet would still be subject to a reduction in opening hours. Rhuddlan Town Council was in a similar position. Officers appreciated the partnership approach with both Councils. The proposed model detailed the opening hours for individual libraries and had taken into account the financial contributions for St. Asaph and Rhuddlan libraries. If the contribution was removed the hours would need to be

reduced further. Councillor Arwel Roberts expressed the views of Rhuddlan Town Council and their disappointment over the proposed reductions but hoped financial contributions would continue given the importance of the service. Officers welcomed further discussions with both Councils on the way forward

- Councillor Bobby Feeley was against the proposal, highlighting the importance of the service as outlined in the report together with its valued and loyal staff, the overwhelming opposition to the cuts evidenced by the consultation, and she felt a 21% reduction in such a small service to be unfair and disproportionate. Officers responded to those and further points raised as follows –
  - the value of the service was undisputed, and the proposal had not been put forward willingly or lightly but in response to the dire financial situation
  - the library service had not been targeted; all services were being asked to find significant savings with further difficult decisions to be made in future
  - the report detailed the maximum redundancy costs but until a decision was made formal discussions could not be started with staff and costs could be zero depending on whether all staff at risk could be redeployed
  - the impact on other services had been discussed with the Senior Leadership Team and more creative ways of accessing services outside of library hours may be needed and would be further discussed once a decision was made
  - the library service would still have a central role to play in community cohesion and providing safe spaces and community hubs but some of those may need to be done in a different way going forward
  - the decision-making process was clarified with the library service being an executive function which fell to Cabinet; officers had requested that the item be considered at a Scrutiny Committee but that request had been declined
- Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts referred to the Wellbeing Impact Assessment with no positive impacts on Wellbeing goals and impact on town centre usage, associated income, and likely redundancies. No examples could be provided as to the reinstatement of services once they had been cut. The consultation had demonstrated overwhelming opposition to the proposal which would have a real impact on residents across the county. With that in mind, and given the largest saving was from staffing costs, he asked Cabinet to consider the outcome of the staff voluntary redundancy scheme in January, before taking a decision on the proposal. The Leader acknowledged the value of the service which had been recognised by Cabinet, but savings were required to set a balanced budget. The Head of Finance and Audit reminded Cabinet of the massive budget pressures facing the authority and need for timely decisions to be made to set the budget in January. Councillor Gwyneth Ellis added that the savings made from the voluntary redundancy scheme would not make a sufficient difference and a decision on the proposals for the library service would need to be made as part of the wider process of ensuring a balanced budget was set
- Councillor Pauline Edwards explained why she could not support the proposal, highlighting the tragic loss of valued staff and impact on residents, particularly with regard to warm hubs/safe spaces which should be addressed beforehand. Officers responded to questions raised by Councillor Edwards on the timescale for the proposal; paid tribute to the highly trained and experienced staff with further discussions around delivery models to minimise the impact on staff with a redeployment option elsewhere in the council; and provided assurances that discussions would continue throughout the process going forward regarding alternative models for warm hubs/safe spaces

- Councillor Ann Davies felt that the impact of the cuts to library services would cause pressures in other service areas and questioned the council's legal duty. The Corporate Director: Governance and Business referred to the relevant legislation advising that whilst there was a duty to provide an efficient library service it was for local authorities to consider how to provide that service in light of the resources that were available to them
- Councillor Hugh Irving supported the views of Councillors Bobby Feeley and Huw Hilditch-Roberts and felt further work should be carried out on the proposal before a final decision was made; he also highlighted the impact on town centre footfall. The Leader reiterated the need to take decisions in a timely manner to ensure a balanced budget. Officers confirmed that libraries made a positive economic impact on town centres which was why alternative models were being explored to make use of library buildings outside library opening hours.

Councillor Emrys Wynne thanked everyone who had contributed to the debate and had taken note of the issues raised with a view to working with officers and including them within the proposals to mitigate impacts. He reiterated the difficult decision to be made but gave assurances that he would work with officers to rebuild library services and increase opening hours when the financial situation improved.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

- note the report and approve the proposal to reduce Library/One Stop Shop opening hours by c.40%, together with associated savings in other parts of the service, to release an expected saving of £360k, and*
- confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 1 to the report) as part of its consideration.*

## **6 HOUSING RENT SETTING AND HOUSING REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS 2024/25**

Councillor Rhys Thomas presented the report seeking Cabinet approval for the Denbighshire Housing annual rent increase, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital & Revenue Budgets for 2024/25 and Housing Stock Business Plan (HSBP).

The report included the latest forecast outturn for the HRA and the proposed budget for 2024/25 which had been calculated to enable delivery of revenue services, the capital investment programme and to develop the new build programme. In terms of the annual rent increase, the Welsh Government had set a maximum rent increase of 6.7% and it was proposed to increase weekly rents by that amount due to pressures on the HRA to invest in homes to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and strive to deliver the corporate plan target for new homes.

Councillor Thomas highlighted that 72% of council tenants received support with their rent payments; the council would support the remaining 28% of tenants if they were in financial difficulty; 85% of respondents to the tenant's survey agreed their rents represented value for money, and neither the Council nor the Welsh Government evicted tenants due to financial hardship. The report had been considered by Communities Scrutiny Committee who had approved its contents.

The Head of Housing and Communities explained that the age of the existing housing stock was such that it required constant investment and meeting the new WHQS created additional pressures. There was also a pressure to fund new build programmes with challenging times ahead. It was proposed to increase rent by the maximum amount set but there was confidence that the rent was affordable for tenants. The Lead Officer – Community Housing provided an overview of the affordability assessment and explained how the rent had been calculated using the Joseph Rowntree Foundation living rent model based on the 30% lowest Denbighshire incomes with rents not exceeding 28% of the weekly income of those earnings. That work had demonstrated that rents were affordable, and all rental income would be reinvested back in the housing stock.

Councillor Huw Williams, Chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee reported on the discussions of the Scrutiny Committee following consideration of the report on 7 December 2023. Councillor Williams paid tribute to the work of the Community Housing Team and thanked them for all their hard work and achievements, advising that the feedback from scrutiny had been extremely positive and the report recommendation had been approved. One area of concern related to air source heating and the need to explore secondary heating to ensure tenants were not without heating for any period of time. The Head of Housing and Communities confirmed that the matter was being given further consideration and risk assessments were being carried out. The Leader thanked Councillor Williams for his feedback following scrutiny and welcomed more of that approach going forward.

Main areas of debate focused on the following –

- it was clarified that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was ringfenced and completely separate from the council budget and budget setting process
- members congratulated the Community Housing Team on the achievements made in social housing, both in improving existing provision and creation of new social housing, for the benefit of tenants and residents in the county
- officers detailed the improvement to the existing council housing stock via the retrofit programme with grant funding provided to deliver improvements such as solar panels, new roofing, and external wall insulation together with planned improvement arising from the new WHQS in terms of 'affordable warmth' and energy improvements via air source heat pumps, solar panels and external wall insulation which created new budget pressures going forward
- reference was made to the commitment in the Corporate Plan for an additional 170 homes and officers reported on a number of developments nearing completion in Rhyl, Prestatyn and Denbigh and work was also ongoing to buy back ex-council properties and bring those properties up to standard
- housing was a corporate priority, and it was acknowledged that the general demand for housing was not being met and much work was ongoing to best meet that need and homelessness in the county. The issue of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) continued to be addressed through planning policies and enforcement teams in terms of planning permission and was also being considered as part of the Local Development Plan. A mixed tenure of both social rented and private sector housing was the foundation of a thriving community.

The Leader welcomed the positive feedback from members on the work of the Community Housing Team and thanked officers for their contributions.

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) *the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2024/25 (Appendix 1 to the report) and the Housing Stock Business Plan (Appendix 2 to the report) be adopted;*
- (b) *rents for Council dwellings be increased in accordance with the Welsh Government Policy for Social Housing Rents to an average weekly rent of £109.34 with effect from Monday 1 April 2024;*
- (c) *the additional report (Appendix 3 to the report) on the considerations taken into account when deciding on the recommendation be noted, and*
- (d) *Cabinet confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 4 to the report) as part of its consideration.*

## **7 PROCUREMENT OF NEW ACCOMMODATION SUSTAINMENT SUPPORT PROJECT (HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION)**

Councillor Rhys Thomas presented the report detailing proposals for a new holistic, housing related support project and sought Cabinet approval to commence the procurement of the service.

The project was designed to support people living in Denbighshire to sustain their accommodation and prevent homelessness and was part of the recommissioning of housing related support services to align with the transition towards Rapid Rehousing. The contract would be fully funded by the Housing Support Grant allocated by Welsh Government and would be for a period of three years with the option to extend for a further two years subject to satisfactory performance and continued funding and strategic relevance. The service would replace three existing floating support services delivered by three separate organisations. Details of the procurement had been set out in the Commissioning Form appended to the report.

The Service Manager – Business Support and Communities highlighted the need to increase the level of support for people in tenancies and continue that support to ensure those tenancies were maintained to avoid repeated homelessness. Current suppliers were being encouraged to work collaboratively to provide a multi-disciplinary service. Whilst a contract value indication had not been given it was anticipated that the project would result in a saving which would address pressures elsewhere within the service. Councillor Julie Matthews referred to the Wellbeing Impact Assessment and welcomed the shift to person centred outcomes and raised further questions in that regard. Officers explained the current process and intention to ensure the right support provision tailored to the individual/household to meet their needs and maintain their tenancy throughout and that approach would be carried through to all providers of the new project.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

- (a) *approve the commencement of the procurement as set out in the Commissioning Form at Appendix 1 to the report, and*
- (b) *confirms that it has read and considered the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 3 to the report).*

## **8 CONTRACT FOR HAULAGE, SORTING AND BROKERAGE OF DRY MIXED RECYCLING (DMR)**

Councillor Barry Mellor presented the report regarding the Council's contract for the processing of Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) (blue bin recycling) and sought Cabinet approval to extend the current contract in line with the Contract Variation Report.

Some background to the current position was explained given that the Council's contract for the processing of DMR had reached its end date but the recycling collection service was not expected to commence until Quarter 1 of the financial year 2024/25 resulting in the Council needing to make interim arrangements until the start of the new service. The report set out the reasoning behind the recommendation to extend the current contract with Shotton Mill including assurance over service costs/levels; disproportionate demand on current resources arising from a full procurement exercise, and value for money considerations.

Councillor Mellor reminded members that the Council used to be paid £25 per tonne for its recycling but currently had to pay a considerable amount for its disposal. However, he was pleased to announce that Natural Resources Wales had issued a permit for the new Waste Transfer Station and he paid tribute to the hard work of all those involved in the project which had been a huge undertaking which was nearing completion and would benefit the Council going forward. The Leader added his thanks to all those involved in the project for their hard work.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

- (a) *had considered the content of the accompanying Contract Variation Report (Appendix 1 to the report), and*
- (b) *approves an extension to the contract for the reasons given as set out in the report, i.e., the brevity and uncertainty of contract period, best use of resources and the degree of confidence that the terms offered by the supplier offer value for money.*

## **9 FINANCE REPORT**

Councillor Gwyneth Ellis presented the report detailing the latest financial position and progress against the agreed budget strategy.

A summary of the Council's financial position was provided as follows –

- the net revenue budget for 2023/24 was £250.793m (£233.696m in 2022/23)
- an overspend of £3.325m was forecast for service and corporate budgets

- highlighted current risks and assumptions relating to corporate budgets and individual service areas
- detailed savings and efficiencies and increases in fees and charges (£8.172m)
- provided a general update on the Housing Revenue Account, Treasury Management, Capital Plan and major projects.

The Head of Finance and Audit guided members through the detail of the report. There was a slight increase in the forecasted overspend on service and corporate budgets and main areas of overspend continued to be due to pressures in Adults Social Care and Homelessness, Children's Services and Highways and Environmental Services. There were no changes to report in relation to the Housing Revenue Account and in relation to schools there was a slight increase in the forecast use of reserves that schools would need to use in year. The usual appendices had been included on the Capital Plan and Major Projects.

Cabinet was also asked to approve the Council Tax base for setting the 2024/25 budget together with capital business cases relating to Ysgol Bro Cinmeirch and Ysgol y Llys. Both school projects would seek to draw down 100% of the funding costs from the relevant Welsh Government Capital Grant Programme.

The Corporate Director: Environment and Economy responded to a question from Councillor Terry Mendies regarding the internal fit out of the Queen's Market development. He explained that the construction phase was nearing completion and the intention had been to agree the nature of the final fit out with the operator of the facility. As the proposed partnership with Mikhael Hotel and Leisure Group had not been taken forward, work would be undertaken within the funding available to fit out the facility as appropriate to enable the facility to be opened. It was agreed that further questions relating to other aspects of the Queen's Market development be raised by Councillor Mendies outside of the meeting given that they did not relate to the Cabinet finance report currently under consideration.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

- note the budgets set for 2023/24 and progress against the agreed strategy;*
- approve the Council Tax Base for setting the 2024/25 budget as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report;*
- approve the Ysgol Bro Cinmeirch business case for submission to the Welsh Government Capital Programme as detailed in Section 6.9 and Appendix 6 to the report, and*
- approve the Ysgol y Llys business case for submission to the Welsh Government Capital Programme as detailed in Section 6.9 and Appendix 7 to the report.*

## **10 CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Cabinet forward work programme was presented for consideration and members noted the following amendments –

- Care Home Fee Setting 2024/25 – moved from January to March
- Disposal of Peronne Farm, Denbigh – added to January

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet's forward work programme be noted.

## **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

### **11 NORTH WALES CONSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK 3 - APPOINTMENT OF CONTRACTORS**

Councillor Julie Matthews presented the confidential report on the outcome of the procurement process for the third generation of the North Wales Construction Framework and sought Cabinet approval to appoint the successful contractors.

The framework was a collaboration between the six North Wales authorities hosted by Denbighshire with the main aim to deliver value for money and community benefits across the region. The report detailed the procurement process and lotting strategy and recommended the appointment of a pre-qualified group of contractors that all North Wales authorities or any other public sector body could utilise, saving the lengthy procurement process resulting in significant time and cost savings.

Councillor Mathews drew attention to the Wellbeing Impact Assessment and positive outcomes in terms of wellbeing goals, creating a large investment in the region and training initiatives. The Head of Corporate Support Service: People outlined the report and the Collaborative Procurement and Framework Manager guided members through the framework detail. In response to questions, the commitment to working with local companies was reiterated with the expectation that a large proportion of spend would be local/regional and there was also a commitment from those larger companies from outside the area to the local supply chain and local employment. An annual report was produced measuring key performance indicators including local spend. The first two iterations of the framework had been hugely successful in terms of local spend and community benefits and had been very well received. Councillor Gill German was proud that those values had already been embedded in Denbighshire and that the Welsh Government had also taken the lead in this area with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act. Thanks were conveyed to officers and the Lead Member for their diligent work in that regard.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

- (a) approve the appointment of the successful contractors as set out in the report, and



*(b) confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Wellbeing Impact Assessment (Appendix 2 to the report) as part of its consideration.*

The meeting concluded at 12.40 pm.

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<b>Report to</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>23 January 2024</b>
<b>Chair of Scrutiny</b>	<b>Councillor Huw O Williams, Chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Head of Service</b>	<b>Catrin Roberts, Head of Corporate Support Service: People</b>
<b>Report author</b>	<b>Rhian Evans, Scrutiny Co-ordinator</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Outcome of Communities Scrutiny Committee's Review of Cabinet's Decision relating to the Library/One Stop Shop Savings Proposal</b>

## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1. The conclusions reached by Communities Scrutiny Committee following its review of Cabinet's decision of the 19 December 2023 relating to the 'Library/One Stop Shop Savings Proposal'.

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

- 2.1. To present Cabinet with the conclusions and recommendations following Communities Scrutiny Committee's review of the Cabinet decision relating to the 'Library/One Stop Shop Savings Proposal'.
- 2.2 To seek Cabinet to review its original decision taking into account Scrutiny's conclusions and recommendations.

### 3. What are the Recommendations?

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 acknowledges Communities Scrutiny Committee's observations, conclusions and recommendations following its review of the Cabinet decision relating to the 'Library/One Stop Shop Savings Proposal'; and
- 3.2 agrees to the Committee's recommendation to postpone the implementation of the decision until further exploratory work is done to identify alternative funding sources available to the Council or other partner bodies whether in the private or public sector.

### 4. Report details

- 4.1 On 19 December 2023 Cabinet considered a report on 'Library/One Stop Shop Savings Proposal'. At the conclusion of its discussion Cabinet's decision was to:
  - (a) *note the report and approve the proposal to reduce Library/One Stop Shop opening hours by c.40%, together with associated savings in other parts of the service, to release an expected saving of £360K, and*
  - (b) *confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix 1) as part of its consideration."*
- 4.2 The Council's 'call-in' procedure defines a process for Scrutiny to exercise its statutory powers to review or scrutinise executive decisions, and to request that the decision-maker reconsiders a decision that has been taken, prior to it being implemented.
- 4.3 The Cabinet's decision was published on the Council's website on 21 December 2023. Between the 29 December 2023 and 2 January 2024, 'Notice of Call-In' e-mails by the required number of non-Cabinet councillors were received in respect of the above decision. This was within the 5 working day timescale stipulated in the Council's 'Call-in Procedure Rules'. The grounds for the Call-in can be seen in Annex 1 attached.
- 4.4 The Council's 'call-in' procedure stipulates that a special meeting of a scrutiny committee should be convened within 5 working days of receipt of the Notice of

Call-In of Decision unless a scrutiny committee has a scheduled meeting within that period. The procedure also states that this timeline can be extended if both the decision-maker and the Chair of the scrutiny committee agree to an extension. As there were no meetings of any of the Council's Scrutiny Committees scheduled within the prescribed timescale an extension to the timeline was agreed between the decision-maker and the Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the convening of a Special Meeting for the purpose of discussing the decision called-in for scrutiny. This Special Meeting was held on 11 January 2024. A copy of the [report](#) and appendices presented to the Committee are available on the Council's website (agenda item 4). The Committee's [debate](#) on the above can also be viewed on the Council's website.

4.5 An extensive discussion took place at the meeting on the matters outlined in the 'Call-in of Decision Notice' (see Annex 1), with particular reference being made to the high number of responses received to the public consultation.

4.6 The Committee had particular concerns with respect of the potential impact the reduction in opening hours would have on the availability:

- and accessibility of library and one stop shop services to residents, particularly the most vulnerable and digitally excluded citizens in the county.
- of library facilities for use as 'warm spaces' for those most adversely affected by the cost-of-living crisis, those experiencing social isolation, as well as individuals living with long-term health issues and their carers.
- of library facilities for children and young people to use for study or research work, or as safe havens away from chaotic personal or family situations.
- of libraries for use by community groups/voluntary organisations to hold well-being events/support groups, or for business organisations to deliver valuable advice services to residents.

4.7 In addition to the above, the Committee was also concerned about the decision's anticipated adverse affect on staff morale and the impact the potential loss of experienced staff would have on the Service's future capacity

to deliver high quality services. Committee members also had concerns on the potential unintended negative consequences the decision may have on other Council services which are already experiencing severe pressures i.e., education and children/adult social care services.

4.8 At the conclusion of its discussion the Committee resolved to refer the decision back to Cabinet for reconsideration. The basis of the referral is that the Committee felt that, prior to Cabinet taking the decision to reduce the Library/One Stop Shop opening hours, not enough investigations had been made with outside bodies or external organisations in a bid to secure other funding or resources to help maintain current service levels. Consequently, in determining to seek Cabinet to reconsider its original decision the Committee recommends that Cabinet postpones the implementation of the original decision in order to facilitate exploratory work to be undertaken with private, public and voluntary organisations with a view to securing potential alternative funding sources to help sustain and potentially enhance service provision for the future.

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

5.1. See Section 5 of the Cabinet report dated 19 December 2023.

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

6.1. See Section 6 of the Cabinet report dated 19 December 2023.

6.2. Please see the Chief Finance Officer's Statement, Section 9 below regarding the potential costs associated with endorsing Scrutiny's recommendations.

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

7.1. See Section 7 of the Cabinet report 19 December 2023.

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

8.1 This report presents the conclusions of the Scrutiny process and the recommendations arising from it.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1 The Cabinet report dated 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023 states that the proposal will release an expected annual recurring saving of £360k. These savings have been included in proposals to set a balanced budget for 2024/25 (included elsewhere on the Cabinet agenda). In reaching its decision Cabinet should consider the impact on the 2024/25 budget. To postpone is likely to result in this level of savings not being met, meaning that an equivalent alternative level of savings needs to be found, Council Tax is increased further, or reserves are drawn down.

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

10.1. The endorsement of Scrutiny's recommendations in relation to the original Cabinet decision should mitigate the risk to the Council of adverse community reaction and/or negative media coverage in relation to this savings proposal.

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

11.1. Sections 21(2) and (3) of the Local Government Act 2000; and

11.2 Section 7.4.2(a) of the Council's Constitution stipulates that "Scrutiny Committee may review and scrutinise the decisions...of the Cabinet" whilst Section 7.4.2(d) states that they may "make recommendations to the Cabinet...arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process."

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## **NOTICE OF CALL IN OF DECISION**

**To: Head of Legal and Democratic Services**

We, the undersigned, wish to call in the following decision (*see note 1*).

**Decision taken by** (*see note 2*): **Cabinet**

**Date decision was taken:** **19<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Report Title:** **LIBRARY/ONE STOP SHOP SAVINGS PROPOSAL**

**Decision** (*see note 3*): **Parts (a) and (b)**

### **Reason for Call In:**

The reasons for further scrutiny are as follows:

- (i) The decision to reduce library opening hours by 40% is inappropriate as the reductions will prevent a high performing service maintain its standards and will affect the Council's Key Performance Indicators. This effect is yet to be clarified.
- (ii) One stop shops located in libraries provide significant support to the community particularly for less able residents who will no longer be as fully supported. Public access to IT technology will be reduced and opportunities for residents just to enter a warm environment for social reasons will be diminished.
- (iii) Potential Redundancy Costs and the impact of losing fully trained experienced staff have not yet been fully calculated or included in figures for corporate savings. Detail anticipated savings have not yet been provided to members.
- (iv) The town/city Councils of Rhuddlan and St Asaph have not yet indicated whether they will continue their financial support for their local libraries in light of the reduced service proposed. These figures need to be known and considered before final decisions are made.
- (v) Outside organisations providing services through library premises have not yet indicated whether they will continue to do so with the resultant effect on community well-being. Financial losses from commercial organisations such as banks from loss of access to library facilities have not yet been calculated or their loss to the community taken into consideration.

# Annex 1

We (*see note 4*) request that according to the Council's approved 'call-in' procedure rules (*see note 5*) a meeting of the most appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held within 5 working days (*see note 6*) of the date of your receipt of this notice.

1. Hugh Irving (print) e-mail dated 29/12/2023
2. Terry Mendies (print) confirmation e-mail dated 30/12/2023
3. James Elson (print) confirmation e-mail dated 01/01/2024
4. Justine Evans (print) confirmation e-mail dated 02/01/2024
5. Brian Jones (print) confirmation e-mail dated 02/01/2024

Dated: as above

## Guidance Notes

1. Five working days are allowed for a decision to be called-in following its publication on the Council's web-site and notification to Members of the Council. Urgent decisions may proceed despite a call-in if the decision-maker has the agreement of:
  - (i) the chair of the relevant scrutiny committee, or
  - (ii) if there is no such person or that person is unable to act, the Chair of the Council, or
  - (iii) if there is no chair of the relevant scrutiny committee or Chair of the Council, the Vice Chair of the Council.
2. Please state the name of the decision maker e.g. Cabinet or the Lead Member for.....
3. If the decision contains more than one part, please state which are to be called-in, e.g. parts (a), (b), and (d) of the Resolution.
4. Signatories must be non-executive members. Councillors with a prejudicial interest in the decision may not be a signatory to the Notice of Call-in.
5. The Denbighshire Call-in Procedure Rules appear in the Council's Constitution *Part 4.5 – Scrutiny Procedure Rules*.
6. Timescales may be extended in exceptional circumstances with the agreement of the decision-maker and the chair of the relevant scrutiny committee.

### **For Office use only**

Received by: Gary Williams Date: 29/12/2023

Date decision was published: 21/12/2023

Notification sent to Leader and the Decision taker (date): 02/01/2024

Notification sent to Chief Executive (date): 02/01/2024

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date: 11/01/2024 Time: 10am Venue: Hybrid (County Hall & Video Conference)

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<b>Report to</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of meeting</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2024
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets
<b>Report author</b>	Liz Thomas, Head of Finance and Audit
<b>Title</b>	Council Budget 2024/25

## 1. What is the report about?

The report sets out the implications of the Welsh Government's (WG) Provisional Funding Settlement for Local Government 2024/25 and proposals to set a balanced budget for 2024/25.

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

2.1 The Council is legally required to set a balanced and deliverable budget before the start of each financial year and to set the resulting level of Council Tax to allow bills to be sent to residents.

2.2 There is a statutory duty on the Head of Finance and Audit (Section 151 Officer) to report to full Council, at the time the budget is considered and the Council Tax is set, on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of financial reserves.

2.3 To set out the impact of the Provisional Settlement and to approve the budget for 2024/25, including the level of Council Tax.

## 3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 To note the impact of the Provisional Settlement 2024/25.

3.2 That Cabinet supports the proposals outlined in Appendix 1, and detailed in Section 4, and recommends them to the full Council in order to set the budget for 2024/25.

3.3 To recommend to Council the average Council Tax rise of 8.23% for council services plus an additional 1.3% for the increase in the levy to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. This equates to an overall uplift of 9.53% proposed (paragraph 4.4).

3.4 To recommend to Council that authority is delegated to the Head of Finance and Audit, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance, to adjust the use of cash reserves included in the budget proposals by up to £500k if there is movement between the draft and final settlement figures in order to allow the setting of Council Tax in a timely manner.

3.5 That Cabinet supports the strategy for use of reserves as set out in paragraph 4.5, and recommends to the full Council.

3.6 That Cabinet confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessments as set out in Section 7.

## **4. Report details**

### **4.1 Provisional Funding Settlement for Local Government 2024/25**

4.1.1 The Provisional Settlement for 2024/25 was received by the Council on 20th December 2023 and resulted in a cash increase of £6.720m or 3.6% when compared with the level of funding received in 2023/24. WG have produced tables so that funding levels in 2023/24 and 2024/25 can be compared on a like for like basis across all Welsh councils. Denbighshire's percentage increase at 3.7%, is higher than the cash comparison above as the council tax base (the number of properties used in the calculation of council tax) has been adjusted for in the 2023/24 comparator WG have used (and has been adjusted for all Welsh councils).

4.1.2 Denbighshire's increase compares favourably to the Welsh average of 3.1% and follows increases in population and free school meals data used in the formula to distribute funding to councils. The increase in the data will result in higher demands for services.

4.1.3 Within the announced figure WG have advised the following:

- All pay increases for both teaching and non-teaching posts are included within the settlement.
- The costs of enabling authorities to continue to meet the additional costs of introducing the Real Living Wage (RLW) for care workers are included in the

settlement. This includes paying the RLW to both our own social care employees and the private social care sector.

4.1.4 The UK Government's Autumn Statement referred to changes in costs of employers' contributions to teachers pensions. Whilst the WG recognises the implications for local authority budgets in the covering letter, they expect funding to be provided by UK Government during 2024/25 financial year and are seeking assurances on amounts and timing from the Treasury. The increase in the costs of employers' contributions to teachers pensions is certain and therefore has been included in the Council's cost pressures (see paragraph 4.2.4). Uncertainty remains around funding for this cost pressure from both UK and Welsh Governments.

4.1.5 Part of WG Programme of Government commits to ensuring local authorities are not hampered by unnecessary bureaucracy. A programme of work to reduce the number of separate grants paid to local authorities from 2024-25 and to move grants into the Settlement is ongoing. Some areas have already been identified for change, in particular education specific grants with grants previously paid to regional educational consortia such as GwE in North Wales (the regional school improvement and effectiveness service) transferring to local authorities. As this work continues, we expect more changes to be presented as part of the Final Settlement, WG has committed to transparency in this respect.

4.1.6 The Final Settlement is expected in early March. WG cannot guarantee that there will be no other changes between the provisional and final settlements, but do not intend to make changes to methods or data underpinning the distribution of the settlement.

4.1.7 The provisional settlement provides no indication of what future year settlements are likely to be as it has done in the past couple of years.

4.1.8 There were no 'transfers in' included in the draft settlement, referring to grant funding that ceases to be ringfenced for a specific purpose or initiative, with the grant 'transferring into' the settlement alongside the ongoing responsibility to deliver that initiative.

4.1.9 In summary, whilst the increase in the settlement is above the planning assumption used in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is positive and welcomed it does not

materially change the unprecedented financial challenge the Council faces in setting a balanced budget in 2024/25 and in the future.

## **2024/25 Budget Setting**

### **4.2 Pressures**

4.2.1. The proposals to balance the 2024/25 budget are shown in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in Appendix 1. The main areas of growth and pressures are:

- Pay pressures of £4m for non-schools assuming an April 2024 pay award of 5%.
- Allowance for increase in Council Tax Reduction Scheme of £0.350m
- Schools' inflationary pressures are recognised amounting to £5.486m. This includes funding for teaching and non-teaching pay awards estimated at 5%, utilities, NDR and service level agreements.
- Schools demographic pressure of £0.213m recognising an overall increase in the number of learners.
- £7.969m to recognise increases in demand and forecast costs in Adult Social Care and Homelessness. This is part of the Council's long-term strategy to manage care budgets as well as recognising the agenda to ensure all care staff are paid the Real Living Wage. A pressure to fund the increase in demand for homelessness has also been included within the figure.
- £2.000m to recognise existing pressures in Education and Children's Services relating to children's social care placements.

4.2.2 Pay Grading 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. It is hoped that this will also assist in addressing the recruitment and retention issues the Council has been experiencing. Though final decisions around implementation will need to be considered carefully during 2024/25, initial modelling has been undertaken and a cost pressure equating to the minimum changes required has been included for 2024/25 at £1.759m. This work can only be concluded once details of the April 2024 pay award are known. It is proposed to set aside a reserve to fund the costs of additional changes under consideration in 2024/25 (see reserves paragraph 4.5), which are built in as additional pressures within the MTFP from 2025/26.



4.2.3 Arrangements to fund the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority are that a levy based on population is charged on all 6 North Wales councils. The levy is set by the Fire Authority, not by the councils, which ultimately must be paid. Following a public consultation to review a set of options for emergency cover, the Fire and Rescue Authority is currently planning to increase the levy by 10.8% in total across the region. Due to changes in population data used in the settlement, Denbighshire's increase is likely to be 13.8% and equates to a pressure of £0.838m.

4.2.4 The employers' teachers' pension contribution rate will increase by 5% from April 2024 and this equates to an additional £1.917m cost pressure for schools which has been included in the increased funding to schools. As set out previously in the report (para 4.1.4). Funding is anticipated from governments to cover the costs but has not been confirmed at this stage.

4.2.5 In recent years the Council has invested significantly in highways resurfacing, with £4m being the current annual capital allocation (in addition to revenue funding and any WG capital funding available). The £4m allocation is funded by borrowing which costs c£300k every year for 40 years from revenue. Given the Council's current financial position, funding through borrowing at this level every year is unsustainable. It is proposed to review the funding approach and reduce the capital allocation to £2m in 2024/25 which requires an estimated £150k increase in the capital financing budget (labelled as Investment in Priorities in Appendix 1).

### **4.3 Efficiencies, Savings and Reductions to Services**

4.3.1 The pressures identified above amount to £24.682m. A draft settlement of around 13.13% would have been required to fund all these pressures. The provisional settlement generates £6.720m additional revenue leaving a funding gap of £17.962m. The following items are included in the proposals to bridge that gap:

- Major Savings Proposals amounting to £2.388m (see Appendix 2 for details) – Heads of Service were tasked with bringing forward large-scale saving projects, in discussion with Lead Members. Each proposal has been considered by CET and at informal meetings of Cabinet, before a report is issued to all Members and being discussed at a virtual meeting arranged.
- Services have also identified non-strategic savings/efficiencies amounting to £1.367m (summarised in Appendix 3) along with capital and corporate savings of £0.928m that have been identified (summarised also within Appendix 3). Bringing the total non-strategic savings/efficiencies to £2.295m.

- Schools were also asked to plan for 3% savings which amount to £2.7m, after receiving funding increases to cover inflationary pressures totalling £7.616m as set out in section 4.2 of this report (schools position is summarised in full paragraph 4.6 below).

4.3.2 Despite efficiencies, savings, and reductions in costs/services to date, in total they are insufficient to set a balanced budget without an unsustainable use of reserves. All Heads of Service have therefore been issued with further savings targets totalling £3m. These savings are being worked on now and will need to be delivered as soon as practical. In March 2024 separate budget sessions for Members will be arranged and will involve each Head of Service presenting the savings they have found, what services are impacted and how those impacts will affect our communities. Ordinarily, these further savings proposals would have been identified before the budget is set but given the scale of the challenge this year and that the Provisional Settlement was not released until late December 2023 this has not been possible.

#### **4.4 Council Tax (Appendix 4 for Council Tax sensitivity analysis)**

4.4.1 Based on the final additional budget requirement of £24.682m, an overall annual increase of 8.23% is required on Council Tax for Council Services plus an additional 1.3% for the increase in the levy to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. This equates to an overall uplift of 9.53% and provides overall additional yield of £7.580m in 2024/25.

4.4.2 This amounts to an average increase of £126.36 per annum (£2.43 per week equivalent) and brings the amount to £1,661.71 on a Band D equivalent for council services, and an average increase of £19.96 per annum (£0.43 per week equivalent) on a Band D equivalent for the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Levy.

4.4.3 The council services increase combined with the fire levy equates to an average increase of £146.32 per annum and brings the amount to £1,681.67 on a Band D equivalent (£2.81 per week equivalent).

4.4.4 This increased level is on a par with indicative increases across North Wales.

#### **4.5 Reserves**

4.5.1 Unearmarked reserves currently stand at £5.6m. The current convention is to keep a minimum £5m unearmarked reserve, to meet any unforeseen costs pressures and unexpected events outside of the Council's control. It would be imprudent to plan to use the first £5m of this reserve. Furthermore, it is not proposed to plan to use the £0.6m

above the £5m base level reserve given the increased level of risk that will be inherent in the budget set in 2024/25. Should there ever be a call on this reserve, there would need to be a plan to replenish the reserve to its target level of £5m.

4.5.2 The Council also has earmarked reserves which are set aside for specific purposes. Some are restricted in their use by, for example, the terms and conditions of grant where their source is government funding. Earmarked reserves are also used by services to manage their budgets and are reviewed regularly as part of budget monitoring. The Council holds limited centrally held earmarked reserves and it is appropriate to consider the need to use these reserves cautiously to assist the Council to set annual budgets as set out within the paragraphs below.

4.5.3 The Council is currently forecasting a net 2023/24 in-year overspend which will need to be funded from reserves. The level of overspend is currently £3.3m (December Finance update to Cabinet). The earmarked Budget Mitigation reserve will be used to support the overspend. The reserve currently stands at £4.7m, leaving a forecast balance of £1.4m available to assist with future funding gaps.

4.5.4 The Council has limited other earmarked reserves that it is proposed are re-assigned to assist with the current financial situation:

- Pensions reserve £3.6m – the aim of this reserve is to mitigate the risk that the triennial review of the Clwyd Pension Fund will return to a deficit position requiring a significant budget pressure in 2026/27. It is proposed to re-assign the Pension reserve for the pay regrading costs in 2024/25 over and above the pressure included within the MTFP (paragraph 4.2.2 relates) and exit costs associated with the Voluntary Exit Scheme that has been running since November 2023. After funding both initiatives there is likely to be very little left in this reserve.
- Modified Loan reserve £4.4m – this was created as a result of discussions with external auditors and a change in the way the Council accounts for a set of historical loans. It is proposed to re-assign the modified loan reserve and to transfer the balance to the budget mitigation reserve. Re-assigning the reserve requires the inclusion of a budget pressure to be included in the MTFP (£100k) within the capital financing budget which will need to increase each year by a relatively small amount of £5k.

4.5.5 The Council has, and will have to, utilise reserves available to fund;

- 2022/23 net in-year overspend - £1.6m

- 2023/24 forecast in-year overspend - £3.3m
- 2023/24 and 2024/25 funding the costs of the voluntary exit scheme – unquantifiable at this stage
- 2024/25 pay regrading at the maximum estimate of additional costs for 2024/25 £2.7m (over and above £1.7m pressure included in MTFP).

The Council is having to make considerable use of its reserves, which is necessary given the unprecedented financial position. Reserves can only be used once however, and reliance on reserves is not sustainable. A significant in-year overspend in 2024/25, of the like seen in 2023/24, would leave the Council with little financial resilience going forward which is concerning given the Council's forecast for 2025/26 and 2026/27 is just as challenging as 2024/25, if not worse.

4.5.6 The strategy for use of reserves therefore is to minimise the use of cash reserves in setting future budgets as far as possible and the proposal is not to use reserves in balancing the 2024/25 budget.

## **4.6 Schools**

4.6.1. Schools will receive a combined increase in funding of 5.82% in 2024/25. This includes all increases in funding as set out in section 4.2 of the report and then the application of a 3% reduction. The Schools and Non-delegated School Budgets are currently £84m+ and account for 33.7% of the Council's budget, its largest budget. In recent years the Council has protected schools. Given the scale of the financial challenge the Council faces in setting balanced budgets in the medium term, schools cannot be exempt from finding savings and reducing their levels of expenditure. The Council has committed to regular communication with schools regarding its budget through regular updates to the Schools Budget Forum and Headteacher meetings. Schools have been notified to expect a reduction in funding of between 2-4% after inflationary funding some months ago. The Council provides schools with indicative 3-year funding allocations which has included a 3% reduction in funding in 2024/25, and so schools have been preparing and developing their plans in readiness.

## **4.7 Medium Term Financial Plan – 2024/25 to 2026/27**

4.7.1 Appendix 1 MTFP also shows the headline financial projections for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Funding is based on Council Tax increases of 3.8% for both years and on latest forecasts from the Wales Fiscal Analysis for WG future funding levels at slightly negative reductions of -0.3% in 2025/26 and -0.5% in 2026/27. With modest forecast pressures

included for pay and price inflation, demography and increases in demands in Social Care resulting in a shortfall in funding of £15m in 2025/26 and £13m in 2026/27. The cumulative shortfall over the 3 years is £38m. To put that into context, that equates to 15% of the current budget (2023/24 budget equates to £251m). The financial challenge therefore continues into future years, and the Council will need to reconsider its strategic approach to delivering services within the funding available, a more transformational approach will need to be adopted in future. A refreshed MTFP is planned for April, and there will be opportunities for all Members to fully engage in future transformational discussions.

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

Effective management of the Council's budgets and delivery of the agreed budget strategy underpins activity in all areas. The proposals include allocations to continue to support both corporate and service priorities, but the Council will need to reflect on the future financial outlook and consider realistically what can be achieved within available funding.

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

As set out within the report.

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

The 2024/25 budget is being viewed as an evolving process rather than a one-off event in January. The Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) for the budget is similar and is evolving alongside saving proposals.

WIA for each of the major savings proposals of significant impact are tabled for informal discussion with CET and Cabinet. Upon being progressed, each Head of Service has completed a full Well-being Impact Assessment to support understanding more fully the impact of the reduction in service and develop further the possible mitigations.

All assessments to date have been collated and reviewed by strategic planning and performance officers to highlight any themes and patterns emerging to provide CET and Cabinet with 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. This has been collated to form an overall WIA regarding the impact of necessary budget reduction measures at Appendix 5. It should be noted that this WIA focuses on a high-level aggregation of the combined budget reduction measures, and this work will continue as savings proposals are refined.

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

In addition to regular reports to the Governance and Audit Committee, the budget process has been considered by SLT, Cabinet Briefing, Group Leaders and Council Briefing meetings. The School Budget Forum have been included in the proposals through-out the year. Trade Unions have been consulted through Local Joint Consultative Committee.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1 There is a statutory duty on the Head of Finance and Audit (Section 151 Officer) to report to full Council, at the time the budget is considered and the Council Tax is set, on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of financial reserves. The Council must have regard to this report in making its decisions on its budget.

9.2 The Council, along with all other Welsh councils, faces unprecedented financial challenges. Whilst the report contains proposals for setting a balanced budget in 2024/25, the details of some of those proposals are currently being worked through and therefore the work to ensure the budget can be delivered is ongoing with further updates to be provided to Members in the coming weeks. As set out in paragraph 4.7, the medium term financial outlook for financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27 looks equally as challenging as 2024/25 and must be considered when making decisions for the 2024/25 budget.

9.3 Cost pressures have been included within the budget that recognise and remedy in-year and forecast service pressures as much as possible in order to build in resilience. These have been estimated based on latest forecasts of demands and costs and are therefore considered to be reasonable having regard to statutory services' spending needs in 2024/25 and the financial context within which the budget is set.

9.4 The budget proposals for 2024/25 contain a level of financial estimates due to the uncertainty of the impact on the Council of current economic events. Having considered

the level of funding required by services and the savings / budget reductions proposals put forward, I am satisfied that they are reasonably robust. It is clear, however, that there continue to be some significant risks within the 2024/25 budget proposals (as set out in section 10 of this report).

9.5 The position with regard to financial reserves is set out in section 4.4 of the report. I recommend that the council maintains unearmarked reserves at the current level (£5.6m) and minimises as far as possible further use of reserves to balance the budget in 2024/25. It is important to protect current levels of reserves to safeguard the Council's position against potential risks.

9.6 Due to the very late date for the Final Settlement it is recommended that Cabinet and Council delegate authority to the Head of Finance and Audit in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance to adjust the use of reserves included in the budget proposals by up to £500k. WG has indicated that there are unlikely to be any material changes, however it is sensible to have a contingency plan agreed beforehand.

9.7 It is important to note that if the proposals in this report are not accepted, alternative proposals must be submitted so that the Council's statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget can be met.

## **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 2024/25.

10.2 The allocation of savings targets now to be achieved as soon as practical is not a strategy that the Council has previously had to use in balancing its budget and therefore exposes the Council to a level of risk it has not experienced before. A number of initiatives, however, are under development which will assist every service in meeting that service savings target and include the voluntary exit scheme, and the fees and charges review to increase income. These initiatives have yet to be concluded and therefore at this stage it is difficult to assess how sufficient they will be. The finance team will work to

support services throughout the coming weeks to calculate savings and report the total level of savings proposals to Members before the beginning of the new financial year.

10.3 The total savings / reductions to budgets needing to be found for the 2024/25 budget at £7.683m (excluding schools) is significantly higher than in recent years. Savings listed have been given a Red, Amber, Yellow and Green rating purely in terms of being able to achieve the savings and are shown in Appendices 2 and 3 (please note that this does not assess risk to service delivery). A system is being developed to track and measure savings delivered ensuring that progress can regularly be reported at an appropriate level of detail at various committees. This will strengthen the effectiveness of the Council's financial management and ensure prompt action can be taken to mitigate any impacts should variances occur in year. It is likely that a savings / reductions tracker will be added to budget monitoring processes and will feed through to the monthly finance report to Cabinet, and further consideration will be given to the roles of the Scrutiny and Governance and Audit Committees.

10.4 Forecasting cost pressures has been challenging in setting budget proposals for 2024/25 and are driven by both increases in demands for services and increases in costs by higher levels of inflation. Despite the use of the most up to date demand forecasts in budget calculations, these are estimates and risks remain that expenditure could exceed budgets even though budgets have been increased in the new financial year. In particular specific demands for statutory services within social care, homelessness and waste services. The Council's reserves mitigate against such risks materialising in year, and also a prudent approach has been adopted with regards to future inflation increases, for example, pay inflation has been included at 5%, at the time of writing this is higher than some economic forecasts are predicting for 2024. Should such forecasts be confirmed this will provide further mitigation to demand led risks.

10.5 Despite careful monitoring of costs and tracking of savings proposals, ultimately if a significant in-year over spend materialises in 2024/25 of the like seen in 2023/24, and, if savings proposals cannot be delivered, this will lead to reserves being called upon in 2024/25. This will reduce the Council's level of financial resilience and sustainability going forward. The financial situation is extremely challenging and effective and disciplined in-year financial management is essential by all budget holders.



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

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

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**Appendix 1**  
**MTFP - as at December 2023**

	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
<b>Funding</b>				
Revenue Support Grant & NNDR (AEF)	188,024	194,743	194,159	193,188
Council Tax	62,768	70,348	73,497	76,783
<b>SSA / Budget Requirement</b>	<b>250,792</b>	<b>265,091</b>	<b>267,656</b>	<b>269,972</b>
<b>Use of Balances</b>				
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>250,792</b>	<b>265,091</b>	<b>267,656</b>	<b>269,972</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
<b>Base Budget</b>	<b>233,696</b>	<b>250,792</b>	<b>265,091</b>	<b>282,746</b>
<b>Inflation / Pressures:</b>				
Pay	3,269	4,000	3,000	3,000
Pay Grading Issue		1,759	2,655	
Price - targeted	2,902		100	100
Price	150		150	150
CTRS	350	350	500	500
Fire Levy	535	838	100	100
Income Inflation			(250)	(250)
Adults Social Care and Homelessness	8,187	7,969	3,000	3,000
Childrens Service	2,700	2,000	1,500	1,500
Covid Contingency	(1,000)			
CJCs	(200)			
School Transport	1,000			
Schools - Teachers Pension		1,917		
Schools Inflation	3,936	5,486	4,000	4,000
Schools Demography Adjustment	310	213	700	700
<b>Other known items:</b>				
Investment in Priorities	500	150	700	700
Service Non-Strategic Pressures	1,282		1,500	1,500
Transfers into/out of Settlement	148			
<b>EFFICIENCIES / SAVINGS:</b>				
Savings Target (tbc)		(3,000)		
Capital and Corporate Savings	(1,067)			
Pensions Triennial Review	(3,828)			
Non-Strategic Savings	(961)	(2,295)		
Major Savings Proposals	(300)	(2,388)		
Schools Efficiency Target	(816)	(2,700)		
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>250,792</b>	<b>265,091</b>	<b>282,746</b>	<b>297,746</b>
<b>Funding Shortfall / (Available)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>15,090</b>	<b>27,775</b>
<b>Annual increase/(decrease) in shortfall</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>15,090</b>	<b>12,684</b>
<b>Key Assumptions</b>				
Settlement %	8.20%	3.71%	-0.30%	-0.50%
Council Tax Increase % Band D	3.80%	8.23%	3.80%	3.80%
Council Tax Increase % for Fire Levy		1.30%		
Total Council Tax Increase % Band D	N/A	9.53%	N/A	N/A

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Budget 2024/25 - Major Savings Proposals

APPENDIX 2

Title	Brief Description	CET	Cabinet / CET	Members - Teams Meeting	Final Decision	Estimated Savings £000	Notes	RAYG - (Achieving Savings)
Childrens Services: Fostering Care	Project to invest to save in the fostering service - aim to reduce reliance on external agencies and increase in house foster carers.	10.07.23	05.10.23	17.11.23	Delegated - HofS	141	Proposal being actively progressed.	RED
PPP: Car Parking fees and project to review provision	Report detailing proposals went to Scrutiny in October - main aspect to review fees that has been delayed due to the pandemic.	25.09.23	02.10.23	13.12.23	Delegated - HofS	700	Aiming to implement from the 1 <sup>st</sup> of February 2024	AMBER
H&C: Review of Libraries Provision	Reduction in opening hours but keeping all libraries open.	24.07.23	19.09.23	26.10.23	Cabinet - 19.12.23	360		GREEN
CSSP: Managed reduction in headcount	Scheme to help reduce headcount on a voluntary basis	16.10.23	24.10.23	17.11.23	CET - January 2024	TBC	Scheme closes 8th January, difficult to forecast takeup in total and across different services.	YELLOW
ASC&H: Social Care Packages & Homelessness prevention	Homelessness Prevention Service - Rapid rehousing plan, and review of adult social care packages.	13.11.23	21.11.23	19.01.24	Cabinet - 23.01.24	837	Savings will form part of 2024/25 budget solution	RED
CSSPDA: Asset Strategy	Review of all aspects of asset management. Revenue savings on a number of properties already agreed for disposal. Consideration to reduce office accommodation and possible alternative uses.	27.11.23	08.12.23	13.02.24	Delegated - HofS	150	Savings will form part of 2024/25 budget solution	YELLOW
HES: Public Conveniences	Project to review provision	20.11.23	21.11.23	TBC	Cabinet - TBC	200	Savings will form part of 2024/25 budget solution	YELLOW
Education/PPP: Non statutory school transport	Review of non-statutory school transport provision.	06.11.23	09.11.23	TBC	TBC	TBC	Awaiting legal opinion	RED
Education/PPP: School Transport	Review of procurement, costs and management of school transport.	05.02.24	Feb-24	TBC	TBC	TBC		RED
HES: Review Fleet Services	Medium Term project to look at all aspects of fleet services	12.02.24	Mar-24	TBC	TBC	TBC		RED
PPP: Review Bus Services	Review subsidised bus services provision	08.01.24	Jan-24	TBC	TBC	TBC		RED
PPP: Review Heritage Services	Project to review all aspects of provision.	08.04.24	Apr-24	TBC	TBC	TBC		RED
CSSP: Review democratic calendar/meetings	Project at initial stage to review options	Jan-24	Jan-24	TBC	TBC	TBC		RED
<b>Total to date</b>						<b>2,388</b>		

Proposal below are reductions in pressures and not included in the total savings on the MTFP

HES: Reduction to capital investment in highways	Highways capital budget is funded by prudential borrowing, by reducing the capital budget the associated costs of borrowing (revenue) also reduce.	20.11.23	21.11.23	21.12.23	Cabinet - 20.02.24 Council - 27.02.24 (Capital Plan)	150	Highways capital budget approved in capital plan in February. Revenue implications in budget report in January.	GREEN
CSSPDA: Reduce net carbon zero and ecologically positive council 2030 pressure	During 2024/25 prioritise workstreams that reduce costs as well as carbon (buildings and fleet) at an investment level that enables the prudential borrowing costs in 2024/25 and 2025/26 for new projects initiated in 2024/25 to be funded from reserves held.	02.10.23	24.10.23	17.01.24	Cabinet - 23.01.24	200	Savings will form part of 2024/25 budget solution	GREEN

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### Appendix 3: Non Strategic Savings (including Capital & Corporate Savings)

Service	Category	Saving (£k)	RAYG Status	Service Total
Childrens Service	Insourcing of contracts	30	Yellow	43
	Service Change	13	Amber	
Adult Social Care and Homelessness	External Income Maximisation	8	Red	227
	Service Review	75	Red	
	External Income Maximisation	108	Red	
	External Income Maximisation	36	Red	
Corporate Support, Performance Digital and Assets	Technical Budget Reduction	40	Green	248
	Technical Budget Reduction	14	Green	
	New Ways of Working	50	Yellow	
	Systems Changes	43	Green	
	Service Review	31	Green	
	Technical Budget Reduction	27	Green	
	Review of vacant posts	43	Green	
Corporate Support Sevices: People	Review of vacant posts	28	Green	110
	Review of vacant posts	14	Red	
	Systems Changes	15	Green	
	Service change	1	Green	
	Service Review	52	Green	
Education	Service Review	22	Green	66
	Service Review	44	Green	
Finance and Audit	External Income Maximisation	150	Yellow	200
	Systems Changes	50	Green	
Capital and Corporate	Technical Budget Reduction	500	Yellow	928
	Technical Budget Reduction	300	Yellow	
	Capital Financing Budget	128	Green	
Highways and Environment Service	Service Change	136	Yellow	276
	Service Change	10	Green	
	Technical Budget Reduction	50	Green	
	Service Change	55	Red	
	External Income Maximisation	25	Yellow	
Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services	Service Review	20	Amber	198
	Service Review	51	Red	
	Collaboration	10	Green	
	Review of vacant posts	32	Yellow	
	Review of vacant posts	30	Green	
	Technical Budget Reduction	5	Green	
	Service Review	40	Green	
	Service Change	10	Green	

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## APPENDIX 4

### Council Tax Sensitivity Analysis

					EXCLUDING Impact of CT Base Increase	INCLUDING Impact of CT Base Increase	
2023/24	Increase %	Increase in Band D £	Proposed Band D £	Total Funding £000	Inc/Dec in Funding £000	Change from Current Assumption £000	Inc/Dec in Funding £000
	0.00%	0.00	1,535.35	64,222	0		1,454
	0.50%	7.68	1,543.03	64,544	321		1,775
	1.00%	15.35	1,550.70	64,865	643		2,097
<b>Fire Levy Additional (13.8%)</b>	1.30%	19.96	1,555.31	65,058	836		2,289
	2.00%	30.71	1,566.06	65,508	1,286		2,739
	2.50%	38.38	1,573.73	65,829	1,607		3,061
<b>2022/23 Increase</b>	2.95%	45.29	1,580.64	66,118	1,896	<b>-3,394</b>	3,350
	3.00%	46.06	1,581.41	66,151	1,928		3,382
	3.25%	49.90	1,585.25	66,311	2,089		3,543
	3.50%	53.74	1,589.09	66,472	2,250		3,704
<b>2023/24 Increase</b>	3.80%	58.34	1,593.69	66,665	2,443	<b>-2,848</b>	3,897
	4.00%	61.41	1,596.76	66,793	2,571		4,025
<b>2020/21 Increase</b>	4.30%	66.02	1,601.37	66,986	2,764	<b>-2,526</b>	4,218
	4.50%	69.09	1,604.44	67,115	2,893		4,346
	5.00%	76.77	1,612.12	67,436	3,214		4,668
	5.50%	84.44	1,619.79	67,758	3,536		4,989
	6.00%	92.12	1,627.47	68,079	3,857		5,311
<b>2019/20 Increase</b>	6.35%	97.49	1,632.84	68,304	4,082	<b>-1,209</b>	5,536
	6.50%	99.80	1,635.15	68,400	4,178		5,632
	7.00%	107.47	1,642.82	68,722	4,500	<b>-791</b>	5,954
	7.50%	115.15	1,650.50	69,043	4,821	<b>-469</b>	6,275
	8.00%	122.83	1,658.18	69,365	5,143	<b>-148</b>	6,596
<b>Current Assumption</b>	<b>8.23%</b>	<b>126.36</b>	<b>1,661.71</b>	<b>69,513</b>	<b>5,290</b>		<b>6,744</b>
	8.50%	130.50	1,665.85	69,686	5,464	<b>174</b>	6,918
	9.00%	138.18	1,673.53	70,008	5,785	<b>495</b>	7,239
<b>CT Plus Fire Levy Element</b>	<b>9.53%</b>	<b>146.32</b>	<b>1,681.67</b>	<b>70,348</b>	<b>6,126</b>		<b>7,580</b>
	10.00%	153.53	1,688.88	70,650	6,428	<b>1,138</b>	7,882

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## **Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2024 to 2025 Budget Proposals, as at January 2024**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This document provides a cumulative view of impact of major budget saving proposals currently being progressed as of January 2024 on Denbighshire's people and places. It is based on the evidence provided by officers within the relevant Service areas through the Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) tool, outlines the key findings of the cumulative impact assessment and makes recommendations for the next steps. It is intended that this cumulative assessment work is updated as existing WIAs are revised, and as new budget saving proposals are developed.

### **2. Approach**

2.1 Major budget saving proposals that have an impact on Denbighshire's people and places have completed the Council's Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) tool as part of their consideration and development and to aid decision making by Cabinet and the Corporate Executive Team (CET). WIA is an important and useful tool in identifying impacts, ensuring exposure of opportunities and consequence and a way of exploring mitigation action and controls. Eight savings proposals have been included within this cumulative assessment as of January 2023 and include:

- Review of Libraries Provision
- Car Parking fees
- Reduction to capital investment in highways
- Social Care Packages and Homelessness prevention
- Public Conveniences
- Asset Strategy
- School Budgets
- Increase in Council Tax

# Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2024 to 2025 Budget Proposals, as at December 2024

2.2 Consideration of budget savings for the 2024 to 2025 budget will be a continuous process rather than a single event. This cumulative assessment will be revisited and updated along this continuous process as additional future saving proposals are put forward for consideration that have an impact on Denbighshire's people and places and a WIA is completed.

2.3 The cumulative assessment work has been undertaken by officers within the Council's Strategic Planning Team. The framework for assessing and analysing the cumulative impacts of savings proposals to date is based on the evidence provided by officers through the Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) tool, and takes into account important legislation:

- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
- The Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and The Equality Act (Authorities subject to the Socio-economic Inequality Duty) (Wales) Regulations 2021
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016
- Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

2.4 A core pillar of the approach is about balancing the needs of the present with the needs of future generations. This framework considers the sustainable development principle and considers risks for the future.

2.5 Evidence within the saving proposals WIAs has been reviewed and summarised. In some cases, existing WIAs have been challenged by officers within the Council's Strategic Planning Team where it is felt there is some possible optimism (and in some cases pessimism) bias. In these cases, overall impacts have been amended (e.g., from positive to neutral or negative to neutral) and indicated where impacts are probable or possible, pending additional evidence.

2.6 Taking the eight budget saving proposals together and analysing the distribution of their impact, conclusions have been drawn about those impacts and whether certain

# Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2024 to 2025 Budget Proposals, as at December 2024

people, groups or places are affected differentially or disproportionately negatively impacted. Where a negative impact has been identified, an analysis of the ‘impact severity’ has been provided based on Public Health Wales methodology. This is to provide members and officers with an understanding as to the extent or degree to which a negatively identified impact may affect people or places (minimal, moderate, or major).

2.7 It should be noted that savings proposals are at different stages. Some are further developed and have a more comprehensive Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) – e.g., parking charges. The majority are new and are still in development. Those WIAs tend to be in the form of a light-touch screening of impacts, with some gaps and a lack of supporting evidence.

## 3. Summary of findings: cumulative impact for people and places in Denbighshire

3.1 The table below provides a summary of the analysis of cumulative impact of the eight proposals taken together and provides a conclusion on nature of the impact (positive, negative, or neutral) and, where the impact is negative, the possible severity.

Locality Impact	Cumulative impact of the seven proposals	Possible severity* where negative (minimal, moderate, or major)
Rhyl	Negative (probable)	Moderate
Prestatyn	Negative (probable)	Moderate
Elwy	Negative (probable)	Moderate
Denbigh	Negative (probable)	Moderate
Ruthin	Negative (probable)	Moderate
Dee Valley	Negative (probable)	Moderate
Well-being Goals		
Prosperous Wales	Neutral	-
Resilient Wales	Positive (probable)	-
Healthier Wales	Negative (probable)	Minimal
More Equal Wales	Negative (probable)	Moderate <i>(Taken with impacts in areas with socio-economic deprivation the severity could be at least moderate).</i>

## Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2024 to 2025 Budget Proposals, as at December 2024

Locality Impact	Cumulative impact of the seven proposals	Possible severity* where negative (minimal, moderate, or major)
A Wales of Cohesive Communities	Negative (possible)	Minimal
A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language	Negative (possible)	Unknown <i>(Following inclusion of the Schools Budget proposal into this cumulative assessment, the overall impact is considered to be Negative (possible). Subject to how the savings proposals are achieved. There could be some reduction in support for cultural and Welsh-medium extra-curricular activities).</i>
A Globally Responsible Wales	Neutral	-
<b>Sustainable Development</b>		
Long Term e.g., impact and opportunities for recovery	Negative (probable)	Unknown <i>(Impacts could be felt over the longer-term, and service standards could be difficult to recover).</i>
Prevention e.g., likely impact on public service partners (and impact on demand for services)	Negative (probable and possible)	Minimal to moderate
Integration e.g., of sustainable development into all aspects of operation	Unknown <i>(Some proposals need to consider their impact on wider organisational objectives).</i>	-
Collaboration e.g., between departments, organisations, and sectors	Unknown <i>(Some proposals have not considered their impact on other partners.)</i>	Unknown <i>(Subject to how the savings proposals are achieved. There could be some impact on opportunities for collaboration).</i>
Involvement e.g., extent to which community can be involved and shape the proposal	Negative (probable)	Moderate.

\*Possible severity is based on Public Health Wales Methodology and descriptions as follows:

# Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2024 to 2025 Budget Proposals, as at December 2024

- *Major: Significant in intensity, quality, or extent. Significant or important enough to be worthy of attention, noteworthy.*
- *Moderate: Average in intensity, quality, or degree.*
- *Minimal: Of a minimum amount, quantity, or degree, negligible.*

3.2 Overall, there is a negative impact for all areas in the County. It is likely to be most acutely felt in areas with existing socio-economic disadvantage, and areas where it is more likely that people with protected characteristics live (which, the [evidence](#) suggests, tends to be areas of disadvantage). Pre-existing well-being inequality could be exacerbated for people (including children, young people and families) due to reduced capacity within schools or changes to public conveniences for example, which is likely to affect most negatively vulnerable or disadvantaged people. However, subject to mitigations the reduced service could have impacts that amount to some short-term disruption.

3.3 The severity of negative impacts for people in areas of socio-economic disadvantage / possessing one more protected characteristic is unknown and largely depends on how proposals can reduce negative impacts or design them out entirely, either by changing our proposals and / or by working alongside our partners.

3.4 The proposals offer some potentially positive long-term gains for sustainable development, e.g., by reducing our carbon emissions. However, the need to deliver savings quickly means that proposals are unlikely to be perfect in terms of whether they can safeguard the well-being of future generations; whether the proposals have been developed and informed by those affected by them; and in terms of how a proposal from one service could deliver budget savings in one area but increase costs or demands in another. It was observed that there is little scope for communities to have their say on savings proposals currently. It is likely that over the long-term, the proposals may result in poorer performance and standards. The ability to improve and recover is unknown at this time and depends on the extent to which services could be readily built back up again should financial recovery and

# **Cumulative Impact Assessment for 2024 to 2025 Budget Proposals, as at December 2024**

investment into public services occur sooner or to a greater extent than might be expected.

## **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 All WIAs, but less developed ones in particular, will need to be revisited and updated as proposals develop. As proposals develop, mitigating controls should be identified through the WIA process to help minimise the severity of impact.
- 4.2 All existing and new WIAs should be undertaken as a group. Officers should seek advice from the Strategic Planning Team where there is uncertainty as to who to involve, or where facilitation may be required. Officers should engage, where that is possible, with groups likely to be affected.
- 4.3 Going forward, in line with budget savings being considered as continuing process rather than a single event, impact assessment will also need to be a continual process. All major budget saving proposals which have an impact on Denbighshire's people and places must continue to complete the Council's Well-being Impact Assessment (WIA) tool as part of their consideration and development. Impacts should be identified as confirmed, probable or possible. The Strategic Planning Team should continue to appraise and update the cumulative impact assessment to support CET and Cabinet in keeping a watchful eye on overall impacts arising from the whole set of budget proposals.
- 4.4 The council should share its assessment work with the Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and the North East Wales Community Cohesion Team to look at ways in which we can support each other and mitigate any unintended disproportionately negative impacts. A meeting to do so with representatives has already been arranged for January 22.



<b>Report to</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of meeting</b>	23rd January 2024
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets
<b>Head of Service</b>	Liz Thomas, Head of Finance and Audit
<b>Report author</b>	Liz Thomas – Paul Barnes – Leah Gray
<b>Title</b>	Welsh Government consultation on “Fairer Council Tax”

## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1. The report sets out the proposed response from Denbighshire County Council to the Welsh Government (WG) consultation on “Fairer Council Tax”.

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

- 2.1. The purpose of the report is to provide information to Cabinet regarding the consultation and our proposed response, while identifying/ highlighting any risks, issues and benefits to the Council and its communities.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1. That Cabinet approve the proposed consultation response as set out in appendix 4. Supporting officers’ recommendations on the Expanded proposal and delivered through an incremental approach.
- 3.2. That this decision be implemented immediately as an Urgent decision under Section 7.25 of the Council’s Constitution. The rationale for this is in paragraph 4.4

## **4. Report details**

### **4.1 Background**

WG have commenced a consultation on the proposed changes to the Council Tax system with the objective to make the tax fairer and more progressive. WG have stressed that this is not a revenue generating exercise and are expecting it to be revenue neutral. The consultation is requesting views on:

- 3 approaches to changes to the Council Tax system and re-valuation
- The periods of revaluation in future years
- Updates to discounts and exemptions
- A more transparent system with a more effective appeals process.

#### 4.2 **Welsh Government Proposals**

The proposed changes aim to make the distribution of taxes more equitable by reducing Council Tax for those in lower bands who may struggle to contribute, while increasing it for those in higher bands. There are 3 options under consideration:

**Minimal** reform: Proposal to revalue existing properties within the current 9-band structure with adjusted thresholds. The last revaluation in Wales was in 2005 with the proposal to have all properties valued as at April 2023. This would mean a significant decrease in Denbighshire tax base as residents would pay less Council Tax, (see Appendix 1). This would be compensated by an increase in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) (the main source of general grant funding all councils in Wales receive from WG).

**Modest** reform: This proposal is similar to the minimal reform, but with proportional changes to tax rates, shown in Appendix 2, making the system fairer. For example, a Band I property would pay 3 times more than a Band D, compared to the 2.3 times more it pays now. As another example, a property in Band A would pay 5/9<sup>ths</sup> of a Band D Council Tax charge, which is less than the 6/9ths those in Band A pay now. As the examples show, this would result in lower bills at the bottom and higher at the top. This reform moves closer towards fairness in the system.

- **Expanded** reform: This proposal is the most progressive and involves increasing the number of bands from 9 to 12 (the addition of a band below current Band A, and 2 additional Bands J and K above current Band I) and adjusting band widths. As with the previous proposal, this would mean lower taxes for lower bands, as shown in Appendix 3. WG deem this reform would be the biggest step towards fairness.

**It is recommended DCC support the Expanded reform proposal, as it is deemed to be the fairest form of taxation option within the consultation for DCC residents. The potential risk to the council through increased reliance on RSG funding has been highlighted in the proposed response to the consultation with a request for WG to provide further assurances on corresponding impacts of RSG.**

#### **4.3 Welsh Government Timeframes**

The consultation also asks for opinions on the pace of the proposed changes:-

- All changes by 2025
- Defer any changes until the next Senedd term, which will be 2028 at the earliest
- An incremental approach: minimal or modest reform to take place from April 2025, and the expanded approach taking place from 2028

**It will be recommended that DCC propose the incremental approach, to ensure that any impacts are fully understood and implemented at a pace that can be managed by the council. At a time where cost of living remains high and the financial pressures within councils are a challenge any sudden shock to a vital funding stream may cause significant issues**

#### **4.4 Consultation deadline**

The WG consultation is open until 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024, the full proposed response by the council is outlined within Appendix 4. As it would not be possible to comply with this deadline if the decision were to be delayed by a Scrutiny Call-In, the decision to approve the consultation response is required to be implemented immediately. Any non-members of the Council who wish to provide alternative responses can do so by submitting their views directly to WG by 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024.

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

- 5.1 There would be a positive impact on the majority of Denbighshire residents, under any of the 3 options. Households in a current Band D or below would see a decrease in their Council Tax charge. The more progressive the reforms, the more the lower bands

will reduce. Those in higher bands however would see a greater increase in their bands. Properties valued at £1.6m+ would see the greatest increase.

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

- 6.1 Under any of the options, DCC's tax base would significantly decrease (see appendices 1, 2 & 3). This means the council would raise less of its funding through Council Tax. WG has assured that the RSG would offset any decrease in the tax base. However, there is a potential risk if the RSG is ever reduced, this could heavily impact DCC.
- 6.2 It is expected that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) expenditure will decrease. Most who claim CTRS sit within property bands A-C. With these band seeing a decrease in Council Tax, the CTRS claim will be lower. As CTRS is not fully funded by WG, this saving will be seen for DCC provided CTR funding formula remains the same. A specific consultation on proposed changes to the CTR Scheme is expected early 2024, WG have said there is no intention to withdraw or reduce support.

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

- 7.1 This is a consultation about WG proposals, so as such WG would need to carry out the assessment rather than Denbighshire County council.

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

- 8.1 The lead member has been engaged during the development of the response. As this consultation is from WG it has not been through the Scrutiny process.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

- 9.1 The proposed changes to the Council Tax system will impact on all our rate payers and has the potential to impact on the level of funding the council receives. Whilst a more equitable system is supported enough time must be allowed for changes to the system to be fully understood. Councils are already managing a number of legislative changes at a time when funding received is not keeping pace with increases in demand and high levels of inflation causing unsustainable financial pressures. There are also operational considerations including the need to prepare to support residents with queries and ensure IT systems are in place to manage the change.

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

- 10.1 The potential risk to the council through increased reliance on RSG funding has been highlighted in the response, with a request for WG to provide further assurances on corresponding impacts of RSG
- 10.2 Denbighshire would see a substantial reduction in the tax base under any of the three proposed options, as illustrated in Appendices 1,2 & 3. Consequently, the Council would generate less revenue through Council Tax.
- 10.3 If the expanded proposal was implemented, this could reduce the amount of Council Tax required to be collected from lower banded properties in Denbighshire by circa £8m. WG have committed to ensuring any loss in Council Tax collection will be compensated via the RSG. The proposed reforms shift reliance from Council Tax to RSG on Denbighshire more than most other Welsh Councils
- 10.4 The increase in future years' financial receipts as a result in the percentage rise in the Council tax rate will be impacted by reducing the Council Tax base in this way

## **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. Table 4 of Appendix 1 to Section 13 Consultation Constitution sets out that the Cabinet determines responses to consultative documentation likely to have authority-wide implications.
- 11.2 Section 7.25 Council Constitution provides for a decision to be implemented immediately in exceptional circumstances.

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## Consultation on a Fairer Council Tax:Phase 2

### APPENDIX 1

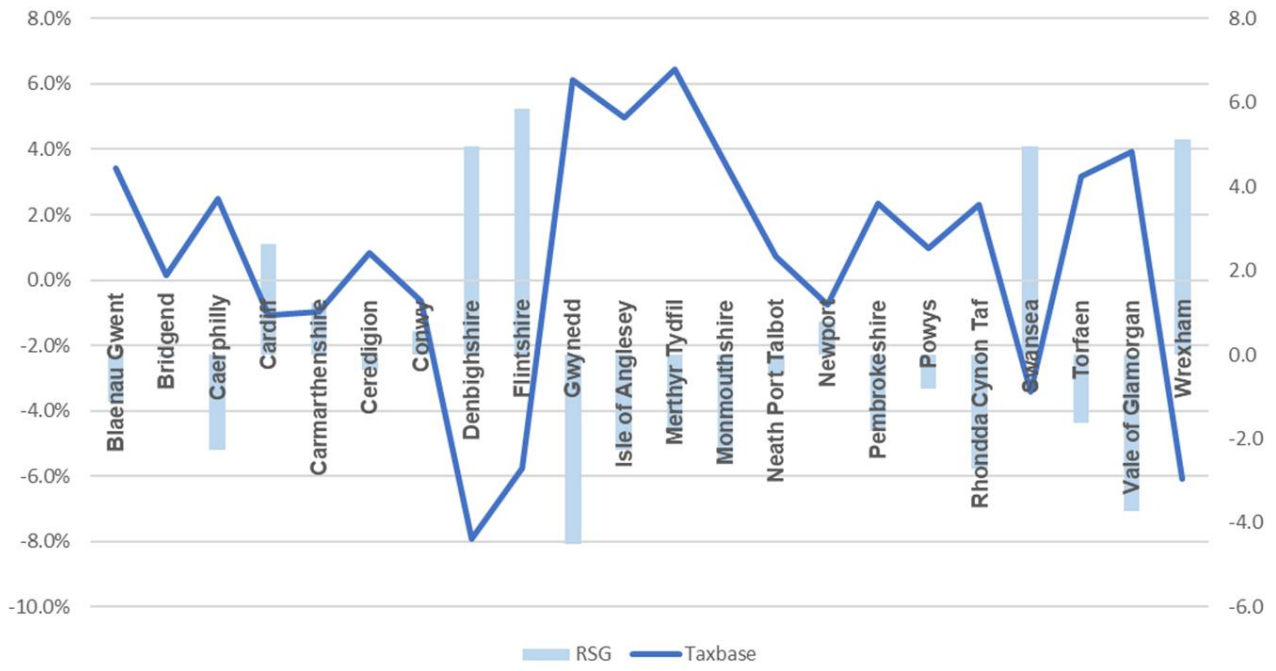
- **Minimal reform** – revaluation of all existing properties within the existing 9 band structure with revised thresholds. The last revaluation was in 2005 with properties valued as at April 2023.

#### Current

#### Proposed

Band	Value threshold	Band	Value threshold
A	Up to £44,000	A	Up to £112,000
B	£65,000	B	£155,000
C	£91,000	C	£211,000
D	£123,000	D	£278,000
E	£162,000	E	£376,000
F	£223,000	F	£516,000
G	£324,000	G	£748,000
H	£424,000	H	£987,000
I	over £424000	I	over £987000

The graph below shows DCC will see a big reduction in the Tax base from a revaluation. This will be compensated by an increase in the Revenue Settlement Grant (RSG).





## Consultation on a Fairer Council Tax:Phase 2

### APPENDIX 2

- **Modest reform** – As the minimal reform above, however this reform will change the tax rates as shown below. This will result in lower bills at the bottom and higher at the top. This reform moves closer towards fairness in the system.

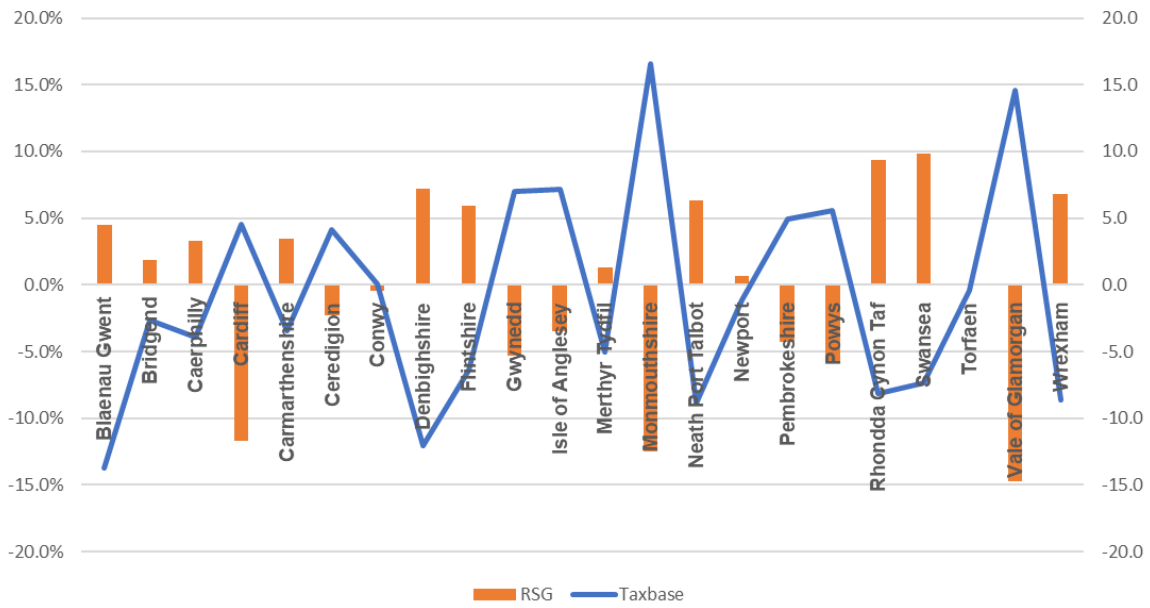
#### Current

#### Proposed

Band	Value threshold	Tax Rate	Band	Value threshold	Tax Rate
A	Up to £44,000	6 / 9	A	Up to £112,000	5 / 9
B	£65,000	7 / 9	B	£155,000	6 / 9
C	£91,000	8 / 9	C	£211,000	7.5 / 9
<b>D</b>	<b>£123,000</b>	<b>9 / 9</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>£278,000</b>	<b>9 / 9</b>
E	£162,000	11 / 9	E	£376,000	12 / 9
F	£223,000	13 / 9	F	£516,000	15 / 9
G	£324,000	15 / 9	G	£748,000	18 / 9
H	£424,000	18 / 9	H	£987,000	22 / 9
I	over £424000	21 / 9	I	over £987000	27 / 9

The graph below shows DCC's Tax Base will decrease further than minimal reform with a heavier reliance on the increase on the RSG

# Members Brief – Fairer Council Tax



## Consultation on a Fairer Council Tax:Phase 2

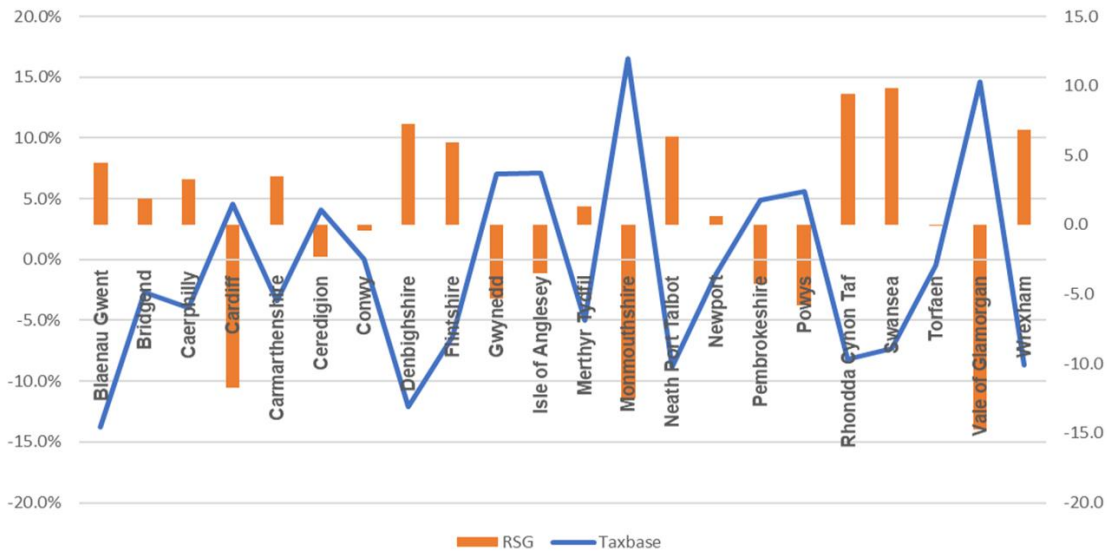
### APPENDIX 3

- **Expanded reform** – This proposal is the most progressive. There would be an increase in the number of bands from 9 to 12 as well as changing the band widths within the bands. As with the previous proposal, those in the lowest bands will pay less. WG deem this the reform with the biggest step towards fairness within the system.

### Proposed New Bands and Rates

Band	Value threshold	Tax Rate	%
A1	Up to £80,000	3.5 / 9	3.2
A2	£110,000	4.5 / 9	10.3
B	£150,000	5.5 / 9	19.6
C	£200,000	7.25 / 9	20.5
D	£270,000	9 / 9	18.1
E	£360,000	11.5 / 9	13.5
F	£480,000	14.5 / 9	8.5
G	£650,000	17.5 / 9	4.2
H	£880,000	21.5 / 9	1.5
I	£1.2m	26 / 9	0.5
J	£1.6m	28 / 9	0.1
K	over £1.6m	30.5 / 9	0.0

# Members Brief – Fairer Council Tax



# A Fairer Council Tax: phase 2

Organisation (if applicable):

Denbighshire County Council Revenues and Benefits

Responses to consultations may be made public. To keep your response anonymous (including email addresses) tick the box:

## Questions about Council Tax bands and tax-rates

Please read about the 3 possible approaches to designing a new Council Tax system before answering the following questions. We welcome evidence about the possible benefits for, and impacts on, households and councils. We are particularly interested in the views of people with lived experience of disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have experience working with people with protected characteristics.

### Question 1

What Council Tax band are you currently in? Please choose an option, you may wish to refer to your latest Council Tax bill or [you can check your council tax band by looking up your address or postcode](#).

- Band A
- Band B
- Band C
- Band D
- Band E
- Band F
- Band G
- Band H
- Band I
- I don't pay Council Tax
- Not applicable

### Question 2

Which council area do you live in?

- Isle of Anglesey / Ynys Mon
- Cyngor Gwynedd
- Conwy
- Denbighshire
- Flintshire
- Wrexham
- Powys
- Ceredigion
- Pembrokeshire
- Carmarthenshire

- Swansea
- Neath Port Talbot
- Bridgend
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Caerphilly
- Blaenau Gwent
- Torfaen
- Monmouthshire
- Newport
- Cardiff
- Not applicable

### Question 3

The Welsh Government has shown 3 possible approaches for how to design a fairer Council Tax system. We want to ask you about your appetite for reform.

Do you think we should aim for:

- approach 1: minimal reform
- approach 2: modest reform
- approach 3: expanded reform

Or do you have other views or ideas about the approach we should take to the scale of reform (please specify)?

The expanded reform allows for the more progressive and fairer element to reach those tax payers who are in the lowest value properties and who are more likely to be on a low income, living alone or receiving Council Tax Reduction.

We support approach 3, however there are concerns in Denbighshire as the Tax Base will significantly drop, with more reliance on the RSG. If the RSG was to be reduced, the impact will be greater due to the fact the Tax Base is low.

There is also a risk that those LA's where the Tax Base reduces, will increase Council tax significantly if RSG decreases, meaning the fairness of the scheme becomes a postcode lottery and will erode the rationale for the changes.

Denbighshire would ask that WG provide assurances if approach 2 or 3 is progressed that the decrease in Tax Base will be mitigated by the increase in RSG on a long term basis

### Question 4

The Welsh Government has described when the changes could be made to the Council Tax bands and tax-rates. Again, we want to ask about your appetite for reform:

Do you think we should make changes according to the:

- fastest timetable: minimal, modest or expanded reform by 1 April 2025
- slower reform: minimal modest or expanded reform starting in 2028
- staged reform: minimal or modest reform in 2025, moving to expanded reform in the next Senedd term

Or do you have other views or ideas about the approach we should take to the pace of reform (please specify)?

Denbighshire support the revaluation to be implemented by 2025 to allow this to be up to date before implementing the further changes. It would also allow time for any appeals with the VOA to be considered, as well as the complex transitional arrangements to be detailed before the further changes are implemented.

CTR will also be impacted by the revaluation. WG will need to review the funding arrangements for this. Currently Denbighshire have over £1m shortfall on CTR expenditure compared to what is funded. Revaluation will allow for this to be evaluated and the impact considered before the further approaches commence.

## Questions about discounts, disregards and exemptions

### Question 5

Do you agree there should be an overall time-limit on Exemption F to discourage properties being left empty and exempt from Council Tax for an indefinite period?

A Class F exemption is currently provided for properties that have been unoccupied since a former resident's death where the only person liable for Council Tax would be the deceased's personal representative, and no grant of probate or letters of administration has been made.

- Yes
- No

### Question 6

What do you consider is a reasonable period for obtaining probate or letters of administration?

- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- Other (please specify)

Agree there should be a time bound period. Properties on a Class F exemption have increased in Denbighshire. Many properties are left empty for a number of years. Some are potentially being used as second homes but this is not possible to administer with the current legislation.

6 months period to apply for probate

6 months period after probate is granted.

This would give the payer 1 year to administer the estate. A S13a can always be considered for any exceptional cases, however the norm would be 12 months maximum and then a full charge or potential premium if applicable.

### Question 7

Which title do you think should replace the term 'severely mentally impaired'?

- Option A: significant brain impairment
- Option B: significant brain condition



## Question 8

Do you agree with the proposed definition to describe a person with a significant brain impairment or condition?

The definition is: "Significant (and permanent) mental condition or change that impacts on the brain's ability to function."

- Yes
- No
- Any other views (please specify)

In a lot of cases we have customers that have capacity to deal with their own affairs but they are considered SMI by their GP. However the title doesn't necessarily mean any 'severe' mental challenges.

Possibly a term that does not include mental or impairment as these are deemed derogatory terms in the context that they are used for this exemption. Perhaps something around capacity should be more appropriate.

## Question 9

Do you have any views on the qualifying criteria for a person with a significant brain impairment or condition to be entitled to an exemption or disregard?

The current qualifying criteria are for a person to be entitled to a qualifying benefit and to have medical certification from a registered practitioner.

- Option A: remove the requirement for a person to be entitled to a qualifying benefit in order to qualify for the exemption or disregard but retain the need for a medical certification
- Option B: where a person can provide proof of clinical diagnosis, the requirement for a person to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit could be removed at the discretion of the council
- Other (please specify)

If the intent of the exemption is to award to individuals who lack capacity, the criteria possibly needs to change to reflect the severity. The GP certificate is often signed for conditions that possibly don't impact on the persons life significantly or may be a degenerative condition that may not initially but in 5 years may mean they qualify.

We have seen individuals have a GP certificate for conditions that allow a person to still work full time and not need additional support. It therefore raises a question about the rationale for the exemption.

## Questions about Welsh language

### Question 10

We would like to know your views on the effects that these proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

It is believed there will be a neutral impact on the Welsh language. By Wales becoming a more progressive and fairer nation in terms of Council Tax, this could increase the likelihood of younger people remaining in Wales as a place to live, however it equally could encourage people to move into Wales.

### Question 11

Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy approach could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

All of the public communications regarding Council Tax is always bilingual, possible using some Welsh medium business to support the promotion and information of the changes.

## Any other views

### Question 12

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related points which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to record them.

The process of gaining a Liability Order within the Magistrates Court seems outdated and burdensome on LA's and the justice system. It also generates costs for tax payers already struggling to pay. Could the recovery process be considered to allow the recovery paths to be utilised once a certain stage is reached without the need for Court or costs. Housing Benefit Overpayments operate in this way and it works well.

It is suggested that Council Tax Reduction is applied consistently across Wales by way of a DWP notification if all information is provided rather than customers having to make a separate application. This will reduce the numbers of households missing out on entitlement.

Non Domestic Rates currently has too many loop holes to allow companies not to pay with no avenues of recovery for LA's to utilise. Often shell companies are used to buy properties. The property is the only asset of the company. Without the ability to do a Charging Order, as with Council Tax, Wales is writing off millions in uncollected NDR debts. It is also too easy for Ltd companies to avoid paying by dissolving a company with no challenge and again leaving no recourse for LA's to collect the monies owed, often with the same directors etc occupying under a new company name. There needs to be some form of liability of the directors and again being able to utilise Charging Orders for this purpose would help.

Many town centres have partly occupied buildings, whereby the ground floor is a shop/café or other retail outlet but upstairs is empty. Could there be an incentive to have the remainder of the building utilised for domestic purposes to enhance town centres, increase foot fall as well as assist with the strategy to increase affordable housing. Many town centres have 3 or 4 stories empty and capable of being occupied.

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<b>Report to</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of meeting</b>	23 January 2024
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	Councillor Gwyneth Ellis, Lead Member for Finance, Performance and Strategic Assets / Liz Thomas, Head of Finance and Audit
<b>Report author</b>	Liz Thomas, Head of Finance and Audit
<b>Title</b>	Finance Report (December 2023/24)

## 1. What is the report about?

The report gives details of the council's revenue budget and savings as agreed for 2023/24. The report also provides a summary update of the Capital Plan as well as the Housing Revenue Account and Housing Capital Plan.

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

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the council's current financial position and confirm the agreed service budgets for 2023/24.

## 3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 Members note the budgets set for 2023/24 and progress against the agreed strategy.

## 4. Report details

4.1 The report provides a summary of the council's revenue budget for 2023/24 detailed in Appendix 1. The council's net revenue budget is £250.793m (£233.696m in 22/23). The position on service and corporate budgets is a forecast overspend of £3.229m (£3.325m overspend last month) mainly due to pressures within Adults Social Care and Homelessness, Children's Services and Highways and Environmental Services offset this

month by services' actions to achieve in-year temporary savings. The budget mitigation reserve can cover this overspend in the current year, however that will reduce the resources available to meet unforeseen pressures in future years. Services need to continually review expenditure and income in their areas to mitigate the impact of the overall budget overspend. Narrative around the current risks and assumptions underlying this assessment are outlined in Section 6 and Appendix 2.

The 2023/24 budget required service savings and efficiencies of £8.172m to be identified and agreed as detailed below:

- Capital Financing Budget & Corporate contingencies budget reduced (£2.267m)
- Impact of the triennial actuarial review of the Clwyd Pension Fund (£3.828m)
- Savings from bringing Revenues & Benefits service back in house (£0.300m)
- Fees and Charges inflated in line with agreed Fees and Charges policy (£0.423m).
- Operational efficiencies (£0.538m) within Head Service delegated responsibility in consultation with Lead Members.
- Schools were also asked to plan for 1% efficiencies (£0.816m).

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

Effective management of the council's revenue and capital budgets and delivery of the agreed budget strategy underpins activity in all areas, including corporate priorities.

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

Significant service narratives explaining variances and risks are detailed in Appendix 2, however the following should also be noted:

**6.1 Corporate Budgets** – It is estimated that corporate contingencies amounting to £391k and capital financing budget of £750k will be available to be released. Call on other contingencies and inflationary pressures continue to be monitored closely.

**6.2 Education and Children's Service** – Although an additional pressure of £2.7m was included in budget for 2023/24 this service area remains a risk. The current outturn prediction is £2.389m overspend (previously £1.909m) due to pressures in children's social care (£2.441m), and a small surplus in Education services (-£52k). The movement this month is mainly due to increased costs for two children's placements, where the needs of the young person have increased recently.

**6.3 Adult Social Care and Homelessness** – Although an additional pressure of £8.187m was included in the budget for 2023/24 this service remains an area of concern. The current outturn prediction is £1.938m overspend (previously £2.033m) due to pressures in Adult Social Care (£1.095m) and in Homelessness (£0.843m). Increased pressures within Adult Social Care this month are offset by a slight reduction in Homelessness costs.

**6.4 Schools** - The budget agreed by Council for 2023/24 included a total net additional investment (excluding increases in Welsh Government grants) in schools delegated budgets of £3.03m. The latest projection for school balances to be carried forward into 2024/25 is a net credit balance of £1.723m, which represents a decrease of £7.216m on the balances brought forward into 2023/24 of £8.939m. The majority of the movement is as expected as the high opening balances were mainly due to receipt of one-off funding to be spent on catch-up and recovery programmes in school. Education and Finance colleagues work closely to help ensure that these balances are used in a timely and effective manner, and monitor closely those schools projecting deficit balances. There is a small underspend of £162k on non-delegated school budgets.

**6.5 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA).** The latest revenue position assumes a decrease in balances at year end of £814k compared to £922k at the time the budget was approved. This movement relates to a reduction in estimated rental income, offset by a reduced contribution to the HRA capital programme. HRA balances are therefore forecast to be £754k at the end of the year. The Capital budget of £17m is largely allocated between planned improvements to existing housing stock (£9m) and new build developments and acquisitions (£8m).

**6.6 Treasury Management** – At the end of December, the council's borrowing totalled £300.943m at an average rate of 4.36% and our investments were £22.1m at an average rate of 5.18%.

**6.7** A summary of the council's **Capital Plan** is enclosed as Appendix 3. The approved capital plan is £103.9m with expenditure to date of £54m. Appendix 4 provides an update on the major projects included in the overall Capital Plan.

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

A Well-being Impact Assessments for the Council Tax rise was presented to Council on 31 January 2023.

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

In addition to regular reports to the Corporate Governance Committee, the budget process has been considered by SLT, Cabinet Briefing, Group Leaders and Council Briefing meetings. The School Budget Forum have been included in the proposals through-out the year. Trade Unions have been consulted through Local Joint Consultative Committee. The budget process for 2024/25 includes plans to consult and engage with the public and other stakeholders.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

The substantial level of overspend across services is a grave concern. All services were asked to find in-year savings by ceasing non-essential spending and delaying expenditure where possible. These savings have offset an increase in demand for high cost placements in Children's Services this month. The earmarked Budget Mitigation reserve will be used to support the overspend, but further risks and pressures in the coming months mean continued positive management action is required to reduce in-year expenditure. The services need to continually review the expenditure and income in their areas to mitigate these budget overspends. Significant investment has gone into these specific service areas in recent years and the demand pressures continue on the services. Substantial work has been undertaken to set a balanced budget for 2024/25 and current service pressures are reflected in the recently refreshed Medium Term Financial Plan.

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

This remains a very challenging financial period and these specific service issues, along with inflationary pressures across all services, are becoming increasingly hard to finance as our funding fails to keep up with inflationary, service and demographic pressures. The level of budget pressures in year reduces our level of contingencies for the future and puts pressure on the financial resilience of the Council when faced with the financial position



projected within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Although the financial outlook looks uncertain, the Council has a robust Budget Process in place which will help identify these pressures and identify savings and methods of funding which will help maintain the Council's financial health going forward.

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

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

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## Appendix 1

### DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

Dec-23	Net Budget	Budget 2023/24			Projected Outturn							Variance
	2022/23	Expenditure	Income	Net	Expenditure	Income	Net	Expenditure	Income	Net	Net	Previous Report
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£'000
Housing and Communities	2,755	3,603	-763	2,840	4,253	-1,622	2,631	650	-859	-209	-7.36%	-123
Education and Children's Service	19,160	38,370	-16,288	22,082	38,495	-14,025	24,470	125	2,263	2,388	10.81%	1,909
Corporate Support: Performance, Digital, Assets	6,966	11,842	-3,819	8,023	14,089	-6,273	7,816	2,247	-2,454	-207	-2.58%	28
Corporate Support: People	3,868	6,286	-1,953	4,333	6,145	-1,961	4,184	-141	-8	-149	-3.44%	-112
Finance and Audit	3,323	5,324	-2,124	3,200	5,466	-2,433	3,033	142	-309	-167	-5.22%	-149
Highways and Environmental Services	17,275	30,928	-12,562	18,366	34,547	-15,262	19,285	3,619	-2,700	919	5.00%	1,048
Planning, Public Protection and Countryside	11,168	19,630	-7,480	12,150	20,072	-8,060	12,012	442	-580	-138	-1.14%	-162
Adult Social Care and Homelessness	44,174	74,329	-21,931	52,398	72,010	-17,674	54,336	-2,319	4,257	1,938	3.70%	2,032
Leisure - Retained Budgets	3,654	3,402	0	3,402	3,397	0	3,397	-5	0	-5	-0.15%	-5
<b>Total Services</b>	<b>112,343</b>	<b>193,714</b>	<b>-66,920</b>	<b>126,794</b>	<b>198,474</b>	<b>-67,310</b>	<b>131,164</b>	<b>4,760</b>	<b>-390</b>	<b>4,370</b>	<b>3.45%</b>	<b>4,466</b>
Corporate	17,699	47,523	-29,271	18,252	47,132	-29,271	17,861	-391	0	-391	-2.14%	-391
Precipitation & Levies	5,381	6,064	0	6,064	6,064	0	6,064	0	0	0	0.00%	0
Capital Financing	15,943	15,243	0	15,243	14,493	0	14,493	-750	0	-750	-4.92%	-750
<b>Total Corporate</b>	<b>39,023</b>	<b>68,830</b>	<b>-29,271</b>	<b>39,559</b>	<b>67,689</b>	<b>-29,271</b>	<b>38,418</b>	<b>-1,141</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-1,141</b>	<b>-2.88%</b>	<b>-1,141</b>
<b>Council Services &amp; Corporate Budget</b>	<b>151,366</b>	<b>262,544</b>	<b>-96,191</b>	<b>166,353</b>	<b>266,163</b>	<b>-96,581</b>	<b>169,582</b>	<b>3,619</b>	<b>-390</b>	<b>3,229</b>	<b>1.94%</b>	<b>3,325</b>
<b>Schools &amp; Non-delegated School Budgets</b>	<b>82,330</b>	<b>93,575</b>	<b>-9,135</b>	<b>84,440</b>	<b>101,785</b>	<b>-10,291</b>	<b>91,494</b>	<b>8,210</b>	<b>-1,156</b>	<b>7,054</b>	<b>8.35%</b>	<b>7,054</b>
<b>Total Council Budget</b>	<b>233,696</b>	<b>356,119</b>	<b>-105,326</b>	<b>250,793</b>	<b>367,948</b>	<b>-106,872</b>	<b>261,076</b>	<b>11,829</b>	<b>-1,546</b>	<b>10,283</b>	<b>4.10%</b>	<b>10,379</b>
<b>Housing Revenue Account</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19,302</b>	<b>-18,380</b>	<b>922</b>	<b>18,703</b>	<b>-17,889</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>-599</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>-108</b>		<b>-122</b>

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## Appendix 2 - Service Variance Narrative

Service	Variance Last Month £000	Variance This Month £000	Change £000	Description
Housing and Communities	-123	-209	-86	Underspend, and increase this month, due to vacancy management and maximisation of grants.
Education and Children's Service	1,909	2,388	479	See body of report for summary. Overspend in children's social care (£2.441m) mainly due to placements costs, further increasing this month due to two specialised placements. All placements have been costed to realistic timescales, however no allowance has been made for any further placements throughout the year. Underspend in Education services (-£52k) due to pressures in Additional Learning Needs offset by grant maximisation .
Corporate Support: Performance, Digital, Assets	28	-207	-235	Underspend due to in-year savings from vacancy management, grant maximisation and reduced spend on supplies.
Corporate Support: People	-112	-149	-37	Underspend, and increase this month, due to vacancy management.
Finance and Audit	-149	-167	-18	Underspend, and increase this month, due to vacancy management
Highways and Environmental Services	1,048	919	-129	Overspend due to pressures in highways maintenance, streetscene and waste services offset this month due to increase in fees and reduced spend on supplies.
Planning, Public Protection and Countryside	-162	-138	24	Underspend due to vacancy management offset this month by reduced Planning and Parking income. Current School Transport contracts are included in the projection, but risks remain as there is no allowance for any further emergency or discretionary transport requirements.
Adult Social Care and Homelessness	2,032	1,938	-94	See body of report for summary. The £1.938m overspend is due to an overall pressure in Adult Social Care (£1.095m) and in Homelessness (£0.843m). The pressures in Adult Social Care increased this month (+£92k) with further pressures in mental health services. The pressures in Homelessness reduced this month (£187k) due to a slight reduction in average rate per night in temporary accommodation.
Leisure - Retained Budgets	-5	-5	0	Minor variances
Corporate & Miscellaneous	-391	-391	0	Release of contingencies held for pay and energy inflation. See body of report for details
Precepts & Levies	0	0	0	See body of report for details
Capital Financing	-750	-750	0	Reduced capital financing costs in-year due to delayed expenditure on some capital projects. The position on capital financing is very much related to progress on capital projects and variances do not fully crystallise until the final outturn is known. Whilst in previous years any underspend on this budget has been carried forward to help support the capital programme, this will not be possible this year due to the level of overspend currently being reported on revenue.
<b>Council Services &amp; Corporate Budget</b>	<b>3,325</b>	<b>3,229</b>	<b>-96</b>	

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# Denbighshire County Council - Capital Plan 2022/23 - 2025/26

## APPENDIX 3

### Position to end December 2023

#### Capital Expenditure

Total Estimated Payments - Other

25,658      22,464      41,162      19,178      5,356

Total Estimated Payments - Major Projects:

Housing Improvement Grants

1,303      1,500      1,912      0      0

Highways Maintenance

4,713      4,713      4,484      1,004      0

Central Prestatyn Coastal Defence Scheme

496      16,420      11,149      9,199      5,250

Central Rhyl Coastal Defence Scheme

626      35,052      30,424      24,340      10,636

Rhyl Queens Market Redevelopment

3,662      2,848      2,709      175      0

Waste Service Remodelling

4,372      8,847      11,687      0      0

Contingency

500      329

**Total**

**40,830      92,344      103,856      53,896      21,242**

#### Capital Financing

External Funding

26,922      21,253      33,426      14,076      5,197

Receipts and Reserves

2,329      3,980      7,764      0      0

Prudential Borrowing

11,579      67,111      62,666      39,820      16,045

Unallocated Funding

0      0      0      0      0

**Total Capital Financing**

**40,830      92,344      103,856      53,896      21,242**

Note: 2023/24 Original Estimate is the position as approved by Council on 28 February 2023

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**Major Capital Projects Update – December 2023**

<b>Rhyl Queens Market Redevelopment</b>	
Total Budget	£13.253m
Expenditure to date	£12.847m
Estimated remaining spend in 23/24	£0.231m
Future Years' estimated spend	£0.175m
Funding	WG £8.060m DCC Asbestos £0.272m. DCC £4.921m
<b>Narrative:</b>	
<p>Construction commenced on Monday 15 August 2022 and scheduled handover is Friday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024.</p> <p>The operating model for the Queen's Market is under review.</p> <p>The Council's Facilities Management Team will be responsible for the building in the interim.</p>	
Forecast In Year Expenditure 23/24	£2.709m

<b>Waste Service Re-modelling</b>	
Total Budget	£21.992m
Expenditure to date	£15.314m
Estimated remaining spend in 23/24	£6.678m
Future Years estimated spend	£0
Funding	WG £12.022m, DCC £9.970m
<b>Narrative:</b>	
<p>A number of work streams are being taken forward including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is ongoing with Phase 2 of the construction of the new waste transfer station (WTS) at the Colomendy Industrial Estate in Denbigh. Completion is currently anticipated in early 2024 – c. end February.</li> <li>• Permit application for new WTS - NRW issued a Permit on 14th December 2023.</li> <li>• At present working towards a go live of the new recycling collections model in June 2024 subject to recruitment of new staff required to serve the new model.</li> <li>• In advance of the main service change, a roll out of AHP weekly collections for those who wish to sign up was launched at the end of September 2023 in an initial Pilot area (LL16 / LL17) before sign up launched County wide in January 2024 for implementation in June 2024 in conjunction with the switch to the new recycling collections model.</li> <li>• Specification and procurement of the new fleet required to support the new model has been completed with delivery of this new fleet anticipated to commence in early 2024 ahead of the roll out of the new service to allow for commissioning and training on the new fleet before it goes operational.</li> <li>• Procurement of the new containers complete and deliveries to DCC have commenced ahead of roll out in 2024 from the end of February through to end May to deliver the new containers to households ahead of the go live switch to the new recycling collections model in June.</li> <li>• A number of mobilisation and communication activities are ongoing to prepare for the service change and include developing the new collection routes; planning for any staffing changes/requirements and ongoing engagement and communication with stakeholders and residents.</li> </ul>	
Forecast In Year Expenditure 23/24	£11.687m

<b>Sustainable Communities for Learning – Band B</b>	
Total Budget	£51.9m
Expenditure to date	£1.176m
Estimated remaining spend in 23/24	£0.417m
Future Years' estimated spend	£50.307m
Funding	WG £36.1m, DCC £15.8m
<b>Narrative:</b>	
<p>The various schemes included within Band B of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme in partnership with Welsh Government are progressing as follows.</p> <p>The Outline Business Case for the Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn project was approved by Welsh Government and the pre planning consultation with the community on the proposed design of the new school has now taken place. The statutory notice for the proposed extension in capacity was published on the 8<sup>th</sup> November and the period for objection ran until the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022. Two objections were received and Cabinet approved the proposal to increase the capacity of the school in February 2023. In September 2023 Cabinet approved to proceed to submit a planning application for development on the Ystrad Road site. Work on the project is progressing with a view to a formal submission of the planning application.</p> <p>The Denbigh High project is linked to the Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn scheme. The design brief is currently being developed with the view of commissioning concept designs for the site. As part of the process discussions are taking place with the school.</p> <p>The findings of the feasibility report for Ysgol Bryn Collen / Ysgol Gwernant in Llangollen have been assessed and a way forward for this project identified. Further design work is being commissioned in the context of the constraints regarding phosphates around the Dee Valley area which could impact on planning approvals.</p> <p>Design and Construction have completed initial feasibility works that identified and assessed options for Ysgol Pendref. The findings were presented to the Modernising Education Programme Board in September. Further feasibility work has now been commissioned on the potential options which will involve input from the school with a view to a creating a concept design which identifies the preferred solution for the project.</p> <p>The projects under Band B are required to meet Net Carbon Zero requirements and Welsh Government have agreed to meet these additional costs to an agreed benchmark. Discussions have also taken place with Welsh Government regarding likely cost pressures for individual projects and how this will impact on the overall programme affordability. The 4 Band B projects will need to be considered as part of the next phase of the delivery of Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme whereby a rolling programme of projects will need to be submitted to Welsh Government in early 2024.</p>	
Forecast In Year Expenditure 23/24	£0.640m

**Central Prestatyn and Central Rhyl  
Coastal Defence Schemes – Construction Phase**

Total Budget	Prestatyn £26.094m Rhyl £66.026m
Expenditure to date	Prestatyn £8.798 Rhyl £19.596m
Estimated remaining spend in 23/24	Prestatyn £2.848m Rhyl £11.453m
Future Years' estimated spend	Prestatyn £14.448m Rhyl £34.977m
Funding	Prestatyn: WG £22.18m; DCC £3.914m Rhyl: WG £56.122m; DCC £9.904m

**Narrative:**

Prestatyn

Construction has commenced by Balfour Beatty and is scheduled to finish September 2025.

Aggregate has been placed to embankment. There was a design requirement that after the first metre of fill had been placed there was then a nine-month period to allow for settlement before re-commencing with fill operations. As there has been no settlement this requirement has now been waived which should, ultimately create a saving on the overall contract time and cost. Other works undertaken include: remedial works to the existing promenade stepped revetment; installation of offices at the east end of the scheme; and development of the detailed design for the refurbishment of Rhyl Golf Club. Costs relating to the refurbishment of the golf club are still being reviewed and will be discussed at the January Board meeting.

Rhyl

Construction has commenced by Balfour Beatty and is scheduled to finish October 2025.

The promenade rock toe protection, eastern Rhyl, has been constructed. An exclusion zone has been enforced 100m from the Seal Cove. Piling is now complete until the exclusion zone is lifted. There is a reinforced concrete toe beam being constructed from the west end of the pile installation. Construction on the promenade of the crane pad has been undertaken, as has installation of the Cofferdams for the beach access steps foundations. Other works undertaken include construction of revetment mass concrete and stone foundations and the installation of the precast stepped revetment units has commenced.

Works within the exclusion zone are still suspended but will hopefully be able to restart in January 2024 but if this isn't possible then there will be an inevitable delay to the contract with a consequent increase in costs.

Agreements with SC2 and the Kiosk owners have now concluded, and the associated payments are included within the expenditure to date figure. It's likely further compensation will have to be negotiated prior to the end of the financial year in respect of the SeaQuarium as these discussions reach a conclusion. The current position is that costs have been agreed with both SeaQ and the various locations who will be taking the livestock on a permanent basis. A Delegated Decision report has been signed and all livestock were removed by January 5<sup>th</sup> 2024 so that construction can now continue within the previously restricted area.

Forecast In Year Expenditure 23/24	Prestatyn £11.149m Rhyl £30.424m
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## Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
<b>20 February</b>	1	Void Property Refurbishment Framework	To seek Cabinet approval for the tendering of a new voids framework. Value £16M	Yes	Cllr Rhys Thomas Lead Officer/Report Author Mark Cassidy
	2	Finance Report	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Lead Officer/Report Author Liz Thomas
	3	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention	Tbc	Lead Officer – Scrutiny Coordinators
<b>19 March</b>	1	Care Home Fee Setting 2024/25	To seek Cabinet approval for the Fee Structure 2024/25	Yes	Cllr Elen Heaton Lead Officer/ Report Author Nicola Stubbins/Ann Lloyd
	2	Denbighshire's draft Local Housing Market Assessment	To seek Cabinet approval of the assessment for submission to Welsh Government	Yes	Cllr Win Mullen-James Lead Officer/Report Author – Angela Loftus
	3	Sustainable Communities for Learning – Rolling Programme	To approve the draft proposals for the next stage of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme for submission to Welsh Government	Yes	Cllr Gill German Lead Officer – Geraint Davies Report Author – James Curran

## Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
	4	Finance Report	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Lead Officer/Report Author Liz Thomas
	5	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention	Tbc	Lead Officer – Scrutiny Coordinators
<b>23 April</b>	1	North East Wales Archive Project	To update Cabinet in respect of the NLHF application outcome, and to seek a decision re the next steps	Yes	Cllr Emrys Wynne Lead Officer – Liz Grieve Report Author – Craig Berry/Sian Lloyd Price
	2	Finance Report	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Lead Officer/Report Author Liz Thomas
	3	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention	Tbc	Lead Officer – Scrutiny Coordinators
<b>21 May</b>	1	Finance Report	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Lead Officer/Report Author Liz Thomas
	2	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for	Tbc	Lead Officer – Scrutiny Coordinators

## Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
			Cabinet’s attention		
<b>25 June</b>	1	Council Performance Self-Assessment 2023 to 2024 (year end)	To consider a report by the Strategic Planning Team for Council to approve the Performance Self-Assessment 2023 to 2024.	Tbc	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Lead Officer/Report Author – Helen Vaughan-Evans, Iolo McGregor, Emma Horan
	2	Reviewed and updated Denbighshire County Council’s Climate and Ecological Change Strategy (2021-2030)	To present the reviewed and updated Climate and Ecological Change strategy document for Council to decide on whether to adopt it	Yes	Cllr Barry Mellor / Liz Wilcox-Jones / Helen Vaughan-Evans
	3	Finance Report	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Lead Officer/Report Author Liz Thomas
	4	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet’s attention	Tbc	Lead Officer – Scrutiny Coordinators

## Cabinet Forward Work Plan

### FUTURE ITEMS

<b>19 Nov</b>	Council Performance Self-Assessment Update – July to September (QPR2)	To consider a report by the Strategic Planning Team for Council to approve the Performance Self-Assessment July to September	Cllr Gwyneth Ellis Lead Officer/Report Author – Helen Vaughan-Evans, Iolo McGregor, Emma Horan
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### Note for officers – Cabinet Report Deadlines

<i>Meeting</i>	<b><i>Deadline</i></b>	<i>Meeting</i>	<b><i>Deadline</i></b>	<i>Meeting</i>	<b><i>Deadline</i></b>
<i>20 February</i>	<b><i>6 February</i></b>	<i>19 March</i>	<b><i>5 March</i></b>	<i>23 April</i>	<b><i>9 April</i></b>

Updated 12/01/2024 – KEJ

Cabinet Forward Work Programme.doc



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