

Annual Performance Review 2019 to 2020

This document presents the council's performance against its priorities in 2019 to 2020, including the Public Sector Equality Duty; outlines our plans for Corporate Plan delivery in 2020 to 2021; shows the progress of council projects; and highlights the council's progress in managing its risks.

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Introduction

2020 brought with it significant challenges for the public sector, and Denbighshire did not escape the reach of Covid-19. Our staff, many of who took up new roles this year to aid our response to the virus, have been working tirelessly to keep communities safe. It has been an “all hands on deck” effort to help mitigate the worst case scenario and ensure that our service operations continue, albeit in a different way. We begin this report by thanking all of our staff, partners and providers who are working so hard to make sure Denbighshire residents have the essential services they need.

Every year we review our performance to evaluate our success in delivering benefits for our communities, and this year is no different, despite the disruption to services that we have experienced. 2019 to 2020 represents the third year of our ambitious Corporate Plan, which seeks to build on strengths and opportunities, but also address the very real challenges and risks faced by our communities. The Plan can only be delivered through working in partnership with residents, public sector partners, not-for-profit sector colleagues and the private sector; and this report evaluates our progress so far. It also seeks to capture the good work we have seen in response to the pandemic.

Despite Covid-19, we are proud to say that the council continues to make good progress with its priorities, seeing impressive flexibility in the way projects and services have adapted to change. Inevitably there has been slippage in some timescales, but in the main projects remain on course to deliver the benefits that we want for our communities. During July, our Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team took the opportunity to hold a second Tranche Review on the Plan, a health-check on where things were up to (considering especially the impact of Covid-19), and a chance to confirm still our commitment to the projects that we have chosen to deliver.

We know the Covid-19 outbreak has had a devastating impact on every aspect of the County's social and economic well-being. Residents, businesses, communities and the council have been severely affected and the repercussions for everyone will mean that the world in front of us will be different to the one we knew. We will learn from the experience of the last few months to transform the way the council works for the benefit of our residents, and continue to plan for a Denbighshire that is equal, greener, healthier, and on the road to recovery.

Finance

The council sets a revenue budget each year. This is a budget that it will provide for services in the year, which is paid for by service users, Welsh Government Grants, Council Tax and Business Rate payers. For 2019 to 2020, this gross expenditure budget was £309.5m.

As part of the ongoing reductions to public spending, the funding available to local government has continued to reduce in real terms and the council has had to identify savings to balance the budget. To deliver its budgets for 2019 to 2020, the council underwent a rigorous budget process to identify areas for savings and cuts. We asked all services to identify efficiency savings. In the autumn a series of meetings involving Cabinet members and Heads of Service considered the budget proposals, service reserves and further possible savings. All of this information informed the Medium Term Financial Plan, which sets out how the council will make these savings and takes account of known and likely changes to the council's budget settlement. Prior to approval by County Council, the savings were agreed with Heads of Service and Lead Cabinet Members, and presented to a series of councillor budget workshops.

After budgeted use of Reserves, savings of £5.672m were required and successfully identified to achieve a balanced budget as summarised below:

- Corporate savings identified in 2018 to 2019 (£0.5m)
- Schools savings of 2% (£1.32m)
- Service efficiencies and savings (£3.852m)

The table below shows council spend across its services:

| Services | Budget (£'000) | Outturn (£'000) | Variance (£'000) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Communities and Customer Services | 3,611 | 3,497 | (114) |

| Services | Budget (£'000) | Outturn (£'000) | Variance (£'000) |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Education and Children's Service | 16,061 | 17,095 | 1,034 |
| Business Improvement and Modernisation | 4,589 | 4,478 | (111) |
| Legal, HR and Democratic Services | 2,606 | 2,423 | (182) |
| Finance and Property Services | 3,950 | 3,897 | (53) |
| Highways, Facilities and Environmental Services | 16,043 | 16,038 | (5) |
| Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services | 9,312 | 9,806 | 495 |
| Community Support Services | 35,834 | 36,490 | 656 |
| Denbighshire Leisure Ltd | 2,375 | 2,411 | 37 |
| Total Service Budgets | 94,380 | 96,136 | 1,756 |

The table below shows council spend for schools:

| Schools: | Budget (£'000) | Outturn (£'000) | Variance (£'000) |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Schools Delegated | 74,351 | 75,567 | 1,217 |

| Schools: | Budget (£'000) | Outturn (£'000) | Variance (£'000) |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Schools Non-delegated | (5,066) | (5,138) | (71) |
| Total Schools Budgets | 69,284 | 70,430 | 1,145 |

The table below shows council spend across its corporate budgets. Please note that 'Levies' refers to the levy paid to the Fire Service; and Capital Financing is the annual loan repayment and interest costs of council debt incurred to fund capital expenditure.

| Corporate Budgets: | Budget (£'000) | Outturn (£'000) | Variance (£'000) |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Corporate | 16,416 | 14,015 | (2,401) |
| Capital Financing / Investment Interest | 13,652 | 13,339 | (313) |
| Levies | 4,806 | 4,806 | None |
| Total Corporate Budget | 34,874 | 32,160 | (2,714) |

The table below shows our total spend across services, schools and corporate budgets:

| Services, Schools and Corporate Budgets | Budget (£'000) | Outturn (£'000) | Variance (£'000) |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total | 198,538 | 198,725 | 187 |

The table below shows the funding that we received:

| Funding | Budget (£'000) | Outturn (£'000) | Variance (£'000) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Welsh Government Funding | 143,637 | 143,637 | None |
| Council Tax and Balances | 54,901 | 54,161 | 741 |
| Total Funding | 198,538 | 197,797 | 741 |

The final table shows our final allocation against our net and overall position:

| | Variance (£'000) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Net Position | 928 |
| School Balances Carried Forward | 1,217 |
| Service Underspends Carried Forward | (289) |
| Overall Position | 1,856 |

By the end of the year, the council had spent £0.9m more than it budgeted for on services and corporate budgets. Specific pressures remain evident in social care budgets (both Adults' and Children's), School Transport and Waste services, despite the investment included in the 2019 to 2020 budget. These are base budget and therefore ongoing pressures, and these pressures have been reflected in the Budget Proposals for 2020 to 2021. However, despite the 2020 to 2021 Budget approved in January addressing a number of the key pressures and investing in core priority services such as schools, the new financial pressures associated with Covid-19 represent a huge challenge for the council. Strategies are currently being worked on that will help the council cope, although ultimately additional Welsh Government funding will be required.

Although school balances have decreased this financial year, this largely relates to a small number of schools and the position will be kept under close review. Not only are Education Finance working closely with schools to help develop robust plans, but chief and senior officers in Education and Finance meet regularly to review those plans and take remedial action if necessary. We are working particularly close with a small number of schools who are experiencing difficult circumstances.

Service requests to carry forward underspends amounting to £0.289m were approved by Cabinet in June. The funds will be used to help mitigate against known pressures and provide funds for service investment.

Funding the Corporate Plan

Some projects that support our Corporate Plan priorities require significant capital investment, whereas others are revenue funded, and some may be delivered at no additional cost. We think we need to invest somewhere in the region of an additional £135m in our corporate priorities during the life of the Plan, if we are to achieve all that we'd like. To pay for the capital investment identified, we will need to commit revenue budget and cash to the priorities. During 2017 to 2018 we identified £0.5m of our revenue budget for 2018 to 2019, and £1m cash to support corporate priorities. A further revenue contribution of £0.5m was secured through the 2019 to 2020 budget process. Further annual budget allocations will be required but it is recognised that this will be difficult to achieve as the council's total budget reduces.

Although £135m is a large sum, the council would not have to provide all of this money itself, in reality contributing around £71m of the £135m. For example, we plan to use income from housing rent to help fund the new council housing; and we expect that grants from the Welsh Government will be available to help fund the planned work to our flood defences, and to improve schools.

Capital Expenditure

The table below shows the total capital expenditure across council service areas:

| Expenditure | £'000 |
|--------------------|--------------|
|--------------------|--------------|

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Legal, HR and Democratic Services | 14 |
| Finance and Property Services | 3,888 |
| Highways, Facilities and Environmental Services | 7,187 |
| Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services | 2,787 |
| Community Support Services | 301 |
| Communities and Customer Services | 11 |
| Business Improvement and Modernisation | 1,899 |
| Education and Children's Services | 12,408 |
| Housing Revenue Account | 8,500 |
| Total | 36,995 |

Responding to Covid-19

The ongoing nature of the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to put adverse pressure on the council's ability to deliver its services. Crucially we can expect increased budgetary pressures (including loss of income); reduced staff capacity; and delayed timescales to the projects that we want to deliver. Covid-19 also challenges the resource capacity of our partners and the providers that we work with. These factors, combined with the restrictions necessary to deal with the virus, ultimately means that we must continue to be flexible in how services are delivered. This may mean changes to what our residents expect from us.

During the pandemic the council has introduced a range of new innovations to support our communities:

- The council established 17 'hub' schools for key worker children. We had 625 children registered to access the provision, and on average 220 to 250 pupils attended per week. When all schools opened to deliver the provision, we saw 5,252 pupils (week commencing July 6) and 4,696 pupils (week commencing July 13) attend at least one session during the respective weeks. Our last term counts for pupils were 8,755 primary pupils (including Nursery) and 5,924 secondary pupils (7 to 11 years only).
- 1,724 families received a free school meal payment, supporting 3,089 children. Over £1.1m was paid between March and August.
- Working with Welsh Government and the army, and supported by community donations and volunteers, we established new mechanisms to store and distribute vital Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies to care settings across the County, including to private care homes and providers. The council also established new mechanisms to ensure adequate provision and support was made available to keep schools and council staff safe as services were maintained or prepared to reopen.
- The council, with the support of Denbighshire Leisure Ltd, proactively contacted more than 9,250 shielded people and residents aged 70 or over who have been isolating. The purpose of the calls was to offer advice and support and ensure

residents could access the supplies and services they needed whilst remaining at home. This work has included making referrals to community groups, local charities and council services for tailored help, including grocery shopping, medication collection, telephone befriending, and basic care needs assessments. Working alongside our external partners, including Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and the British Red Cross, we have referred more than 250 people for Welsh Government food boxes, and more than 300 people to DVSC to find help with shopping and collecting medications.

- Contacting businesses, providing advice and signposting to help available in Wales, as well as processing and paying grants to small businesses. So far 2,584 businesses have applied for Welsh Government Business Rate Relief administered by Denbighshire County Council. 2,287 have received £10k grants, and 297 have received £25k grants, with the overall total being over £30.2m.
- Setting up a 'redeployment bureau', which moved over 200 staff to new roles including front line social care, community calling and support response, drivers, and contact tracing and testing.
- Pro-active communications through our website, social media and press releases saw over 170 press releases being issued between March and August, with 7.4 million social media impressions. 383,918 people engaged with these, with 52,424 post link clicks. Two of the most successful videos on social media were the NHS video thanking NHS staff for their efforts, being watched 546,000 times (our highest performing social media message of all time), and a video of tenants at Gorwel Newydd, Rhyl, singing on VE Day being viewed 146,000 times. We have also created around 30 new webpages on our website because of Covid-19 to keep our public informed and better able to access our services during lockdown.
- Coronavirus Act flexibilities have enabled the council to maintain sufficiency of care for its vulnerable citizens while creating 'surge capacity' to ensure effective and timely 7-day a week discharges from hospitals. Flexibilities were also utilised to reduce bureaucracy, streamline process and facilitate quick and effective action.

- A team of staff at the council are helping the national efforts to tackle Covid-19 by working as contact tracers, as part of the Welsh Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) programme. The team are provided with details of any confirmed or suspected cases locally and then have the role of tracing people who may have come into contact with the individual. This alerts those contacts, where necessary, and notifies them they need to self-isolate to help stop the spread of the virus. By following instructions to self-isolate, people who have had close recent contact with someone with Covid-19 will be protecting their family, friends, colleagues and other people around them, and will play a direct role in stopping the spread of the virus. During June to August, from a total of 162 tests, 89 proved to be positive cases. 81 of these cases were followed up (91%) and led to 170 new contacts being generated. 141 of these were eligible for tracing, 126 of which were followed up (89%).
- Use of our CAG software, where users access the council's systems remotely, has risen during this period from around 200 per day up to nearly 1,600. Nearly all meetings, operational and democratic, are currently 'virtual'. Working in this way has broadly brought about a number of benefits, including improved work life balance for many; a reduction in local congestion and pollution; a reduction in commute and business mileage (which will contribute significantly to the council's carbon reduction agenda); and significant time savings.

Business critical activities

In addition to the above, we have also focussed on maintaining business critical activities. In a number of cases this has meant we have had to adapt the way in which services are delivered:

- Community Support Services, working with the health board to support those with the virus, providing care at home and residential care.
- Child care, establishing safe child care for key workers and vulnerable children.
- Continuity of learning, ensuring pupils continue to learn and have access to educational resources and support.

- Reopening our schools and arranging transport in a way that is safe for pupils, parents and teachers.
- Homelessness, supporting those needing to be brought indoors and adequately housed.
- Public protection, maintaining public health, which includes enforcing closures of premises where necessary, and managing local contact tracing.
- Highway maintenance, ensuring essential repairs are carried out and an emergency response is available.
- Refuse and recycling, ensuring that our general waste and recycling collections were maintained.
- Children's services, ensuring children are protected and safeguarded.
- Libraries, re-opening in a phased approach.
- Customer services and communications, ensuring that the public, our councillors and our staff are regularly updated and informed.
- Maintaining essential corporate support services, including workforce, finance and ICT.

Case study

Preventing Street Homelessness

At the start of the pandemic, Denbighshire County Council followed the Welsh Government's directive to ensure that everyone presenting as homeless was accommodated and that we did not have anyone sleeping on the streets. This formed Phase 1, the Crisis management phase of Welsh Government's 3 phase plan.

Firstly, we were encouraged to make use of local Bed and Breakfast provision to ensure that people were able to adequately socially distance and self-isolate if required. Information was provided for citizens and we made arrangements to ensure that people did not have to share washing or toilet facilities, and had access to either prepare their own meals or for food provision on site.

Phase 2 of the plan started from June onwards. The expectation from Welsh Government is that we do not return anyone to being street homeless and to look at how we could permanently accommodate everyone we have in emergency accommodation during lockdown.

Historically, we usually accommodate in the region of 80 to 90 households but the demand has doubled during Covid-19 and we are currently accommodating over 180 households. This is made up of single people, couples and families.

As a result, Welsh Government invited bids, both capital and revenue, totalling £20m across Wales. Following a successful bid Denbighshire have secured revenue funding to provide additional support for some of our most complex households. Critical Intervention workers have been recruited and recently started in post, whilst recruitment is underway for Homelessness Support Practitioners. They will focus on considering social, health and well-being needs that will assist in ensuring that households are able to get the support they need to help them sustain their accommodation and well-being going forward. In addition, funding was granted as part of a regional bid for a Mental Health well-being worker, in partnership across the 6 North Wales authorities with the Area Planning Board and CAIS.

What are we doing in 2020 to 2021?

- We are currently surveying our staff in order to make arrangements for them to receive the seasonal flu vaccination in October 2020. This year, it is even more important for staff to receive the vaccination in order to lessen the impact of seasonal flu alongside any potential cases of Covid-19 amongst staff.
- We will be reminding customers and businesses about the importance of the Test, Trace, Protect strategy. The strategy is key in controlling the spread of new outbreaks, particularly as public spaces start to re-open. Customers are being

assured that it is safe to provide contact information and that it is vital to help isolate an outbreak.

- We have seen many of the council's functions being delivered successfully through virtual working during the pandemic, and we are now considering how we operate in the future. We are currently surveying our staff to ask them about their experience of working during the pandemic. The pandemic has meant that staff that are able to work from home have had no choice but to do so, and although by and large people have been able to do the bulk of their normal work, the softer side – networking, creative work, the companionship of colleagues - has suffered. If we are to implement more dispersed working in future, we also need to think about how to make these things possible as well.
- We worked much more closely with the Third Sector and Community Groups during lockdown. We intend to continue nurturing and building on these relationships in the future to ensure our communities are resilient.
- We will continue our work to prevent street homelessness following our successful bid, which will enable us to purchase a large property e.g. a former Bed and Breakfast to provide our own 'family' emergency accommodation. In addition to this, we have been allocated £1.5m to consider new build properties using modern methods of construction. However, the challenge we are faced with is to complete the required processes and work to spend the funding by March 2021. The planning process for phase 3 is underway with plans to look at developing a model of Rapid Re-housing for homelessness services. This will include a triage hub with our own emergency provision staffed by a multi-disciplinary team, with a view to rapid assessment and ensuring that households have the support they require to move to sustainable, permanent accommodation.

Summary position for our Corporate Plan 2019 to 2020.

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

Housing: Everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs

Measures: Good

Projects: Acceptable

Connected Communities: Communities are connected and have access to goods and services locally, online and through good transport links

Measures: Priority for improvement

Projects: Good

Resilient Communities: The council works with people and communities to build independence and resilience

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Good

Environment: Attractive and protected, supporting well-being and economic prosperity

Measures: Good

Projects: Excellent

Young People: A place where younger people will want to live and work and have the skills to do so

Measures: Priority for improvement

Projects: Good

A Note on Measuring Performance

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

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

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

Housing: Everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs

Measures: Good

Projects: Acceptable

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

As at the end of March 2020 there were 1,152 people registered on the SARTH waiting list. This is consistent with the previous year's count of people registered. SARTH was suspended for a temporary period so that we could concentrate on housing the families who have been in emergency accommodation during the pandemic.

A full survey of current housing register applicants was planned for early 2020, but due to Covid-19 this was postponed. The survey is now due to be sent out late October / early November 2020.

Annual Indicators relating to Homelessness Prevention and Relief have now been added to the Corporate Plan Framework. As at the end of March 2020, 57% of households were successfully prevented from homelessness (Section 66 duty). This fell slightly from 58% the previous year because of an increase in the number of individuals presenting to the service at crisis point and requiring direct intervention and emergency accommodation. During 2019 to 20, new service provisions have been put in place and continue to develop with the aim of avoiding people reaching crisis point.

30% of households were successfully relieved from homelessness (Section 73 duty) during 2019 to 2020, down from 38%. This represents 168 successful outcomes from a total of 566 cases. Finding temporary / emergency accommodation has proved difficult due to the availability of suitable long-term accommodation.

To provide equal emphasis in addressing the housing and homelessness priorities, both the existing Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy have been reviewed and merged into a single Strategy and Action Plan. Going forward the priorities identified within the Strategy will be monitored primarily by the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Lead Member and Officer Group who are now meeting on a bi-monthly basis. The major role of the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group is to enable a more strategic approach to

Housing and Homelessness, continuously reviewing progress on the Housing Strategy and Homelessness Action Plan.

Data for the number of private sector homes improved in standard and quality due to intervention from the council fell slightly in 2019 to 2020 from 819 to 810.

Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update

Extra Care Housing

Both Ruthin and Denbigh Extra Care Housing projects have faced significant disruption due to Covid-19, building works being largely suspended. New dates for completion are to be ascertained, but work has continued as the lockdown has eased, and within the limits of what social distancing allows.

Additional Homes

2019 to 2020 saw 242 additional homes being provided in Denbighshire. This has almost doubled from last year's figure of 124. The council also added 10 homes to its own stock during 2019 to 20, up from 4 the previous year.

In terms of the council's own council housing programme, confidence remains that this can still be delivered successfully despite the pandemic; however, there will inevitably be delays in timescales. Work continues to progress a number of projects in Rhyl, Prestatyn, Dyserth, and Denbigh, including our Passivhaus scheme in Denbigh; a potential residential conversion at Lllys Anwyl in Churton Road, Rhyl; and the redevelopment of the former library site in Prestatyn.

Affordable Housing

Achieving delivery of an additional 260 affordable homes is currently on target and delivery confidence will improve as work progresses on site on a number of significant schemes. During 2019 to 2020 a total of 139 new affordable homes were completed throughout the County, which comprised of: 4 Empty Homes; 104 New build dwellings; 3 Supported units for tenants affected with learning difficulties; an adapted property for a specific family in need; 23 additional leased homes for people affected by homelessness; and 4 existing properties.

This is the highest number of additional supply of affordable housing, including social housing, provided during a year since 2010 to 2011 when we had two Extra Care facilities completed. 22 of the new build dwellings have been financed through Innovative Housing Project funding, a short term funding pot made available by Welsh Government to integrate Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) into affordable house developments to improve energy standards and increase build rates. 28 of the new build houses are available through the Rent to Own scheme.

Empty Homes

This project has exceeded its original target, with 179 properties being returned to use during 2019 to 2020. During the year, over 800 letters were sent out to owners and people responsible for empty properties to help us understand why a property is empty and how we can assist in bringing it back into use.

Annual or Biennial Measures

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|--|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| The percentage of residents reporting they felt satisfied with the availability of housing in their area – Benchmarked Locally | 42 | Does not apply No Survey | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of residents reporting they are satisfied with the standard of housing in their area – Benchmarked Locally | 52 | Does not apply No Survey | Acceptable |
| The number of people who were on the Complex Disabilities Specialist Housing Needs Register for whom supported housing has been secured – Benchmarked Locally | 10 | 9 | Good |
| The additional supply of council houses provided – Benchmarked Locally | 4 | 10 | Does not apply County only |

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of additional homes provided in Denbighshire – Benchmarked Locally | 124 | 242 | Excellent |
| Number of empty properties brought back into use (old definition) – Benchmarked Locally | 181 | 179 | Excellent |
| The number of private sector homes improved in standard and quality due to intervention from the council – Benchmarked Locally | 819 | 810 | Good |
| The additional supply of affordable housing, including social housing, provided during the year – Benchmarked Locally | 23 | 139 | Excellent |
| Percentage of households successfully prevented from homelessness (Section 66 duty) – Benchmarked Nationally | 58 | 57 | Priority for Improvement |
| Percentage of households successfully relieved from homelessness (Section 73 duty) – Benchmarked Nationally | 38 | 30 | Priority for Improvement |

Our measure concerning additional Extra Care Homes supported by the council will not be reported until those schemes are completed.

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

| Measure | Quarter 4 2018 to 2019 | Quarter 1 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 2 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 3 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 4 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Number of people on SARTH waiting list – Benchmarked Locally | 1148 | 1148 | 1160 | 1000 | 1152 | Excellent |

Project Progress

The following projects are on target:

- Additional affordable homes

- 500 empty properties back into use

The following projects are experiencing obstacles:

- Denbigh extra care housing
- Ruthin extra care housing
- Additional council housing

Case Studies

Eyesore property transformed into a family home

A property that had been empty for 15 years was turned into a family home with help provided by the council in supporting and advising the property's new owners. The property on Brighton Road, Rhyl, was in a poor condition and had become a hot spot for fly-tipping. This former eyesore property has now been renovated to a very high standard and is benefiting the local community.

The council has previously purchased and renovated another property on Brighton Road, which has been converted into three self-contained energy efficient apartments.

Housing Tenant Awards 2019

Improving housing is a priority for the council and hosting our first awards was a way of honouring individuals and communities for their commitment. In May 2019, Denbighshire Housing held its first ever Tenant awards. These awards celebrated the achievements and participation of council tenants within their communities and projects that are happening across Denbighshire. Over 80 guests attended the event, including tenants, local business sponsors and key housing and council professionals.

Our first Denbighshire Housing Tenant Awards winners were:

- Stuart Nield-Siddall – Tenant of the Year, sponsored by Liberty Gas

- The Marsh Community Association – Housing/Resident Group of the Year, sponsored by AICO
- Shirley Rippingale – Denbighshire Housing Customer Service of the Year, sponsored by Denbighshire Leisure
- Bethan Owen – Young Tenant of the Year, sponsored by G Parry
- Trem Y Foel Residents Association – Communal Garden of the Year, sponsored by CAPITA
- Angela Carrington-Roberts – Tenant Garden of the Year, sponsored by Greenspace Team
- Friends of Pengwern – Community Project of the Year, sponsored by NOVUS
- Gina Jones – Denbighshire Housing Award for special recognition

The Chief Executive of Denbighshire County who spoke at the event said, “It was an honour to recognise the tremendous amount of work and commitment that our tenants and our own workforce give to their communities. They are great ambassadors and really show how individuals and communities can work together to improve lives. Well done to everyone who were nominated, shortlisted and those that went on to win.”

Sustainable Development

As the council looks ahead to the development of its action plan for reducing carbon and becoming ecologically positive, sustainable development has to be put at the centre of this important priority. The council has a responsibility to not only promote and foster environmentally positive development, but it must also do so through its own actions too, including the building of any new council housing. This is why the council is pursuing the construction of Passivhaus developments.

We are committed to raising the energy efficiency standards of our current housing stock. Originally we had pledged that all of our stock would reach the energy efficiency rating of

'C' by 2022. However, as we have developed our approach we now know that this would not be financially realistic. We anticipate, however, that 70% will achieve the standard by the end of the Corporate Plan. This pledge complements our Environment Priority, and will also prevent the risk of fuel poverty for our residents.

We have made a joint commitment to end homelessness in North Wales. The six counties of North Wales have joined in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru, recognising that homelessness, and the issues that cause it, have no regard for local authority boundaries. This has been a good opportunity to integrate our goals and share resources.

Equality and Diversity

Our Corporate Plan outlines our commitment to increase the supply and accessibility of housing to people with protected characteristics, particularly those of age and disability. In response we are collaborating with Registered Social Landlords, private landlords, and homebuilders. By managing a diversity of housing stock and creating acceptance for alternative living, Denbighshire County Council endeavours to facilitate everyone's right to a safe and secure place to live.

Denbighshire have successfully resettled 19 Syrian families since April 2016. Our target figure of housing 20 families by end of March 2020 was unfortunately missed by one family because of the Covid-19 outbreak. The Home Office has brought this scheme to an end and has replaced it with a new and wider UK Resettlement Scheme from April 2020 onwards. At Cabinet in January 2020 it was agreed to continue to support the settlement of refugees in Denbighshire through the Global Resettlement Scheme.

Enabling people to better maintain their independence and continue to live safely in their own homes is important to us, and we are continuing to support people to achieve this. A total of 106 Disabled Facilities Grants were delivered during 2019 to 2020.

Long-term Specialist Housing for people with Complex Disabilities was secured for 9 people during 2019 to 2020. These efforts have reduced the specialist housing waiting list. However, some long-term complex cases will take more significant efforts to resolve.

Case Study

Housing First

Covid-19 has reminded us all of the fundamental importance of good-quality affordable housing, and a safe and secure home. Late August 2020 the Conwy and Denbighshire Housing First scheme received the first accreditation from the Minister for Housing and Local Government during a web event hosted by Cymorth Cymru. Housing First is an effective way to support individuals with the most complex needs into long-term, sustainable housing. Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach that moves people experiencing homelessness into independent, permanent housing as quickly as possible, rather than waiting for them to be 'housing ready'. Choice and control, as well as strengths based, multi-agency support is key. Aimed at people who have been sleeping rough with complex or co-occurring mental health and substance misuse issues, international evidence suggests that 80% of people on the scheme maintain their tenancies. Central to the success of the model is maintaining fidelity to the Housing First principles, which have been developed internationally and adapted specifically for the Welsh context.

What are we doing in 2020 to 2021?

We will continue to deliver against the projects that support this priority throughout 2020 to 2021.

Extra Care Housing: We will progress with our Extra Care Housing in both Ruthin and Denbigh. Denbigh is anticipated to be completed during the summer of 2021, and at the same time, demolition of buildings on the Ruthin Extra Care site will begin.

Additional Council Housing: Our first new build homes in Dyserth will have been completed by summer 2020, and we continue to make progress with the development of sites across the County. During the financial year ending in March 2021, we will have provided a further 12 council homes; construction will have started on developments that will provide 55 council homes; and we expect that planning permission will have been granted for developments that will deliver a further 47 council homes.

Affordable Housing: The outstanding number of affordable housing is now 50, which we comfortably expect to achieve by 2022 due to the good number of active development sites progressing in the County.

Empty Homes Back in to Use: We will continue to raise awareness of the issue of empty homes and the role that the council can play in assisting to bring them forward by attending landlord forums, City, Town and Community Council meetings, and other interested parties. We will also continue to work with Registered Social Landlords, private landlords and internal partners to explore innovative ways of bringing more empty homes back into use.

Connected Communities: Communities are connected and have access to goods and services locally, online and through good transport links

Measures: Priority for improvement

Projects: Good

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

The latest WIMD release confirms that 14% of Denbighshire LSOAs remain in the top 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Access to Services. This equates to eight LSOAs out of 58 in Denbighshire.

During April to June 2020 we have seen during some modest improvement in our measures around superfast broadband, coverage above 30mbps increasing from 91.3% at the end of the year to 92% in July. Conversely there has been a drop for those households experiencing less than 10mbps, from 6.54% at the end of the year to 4.63% in July. Both, however, remain a priority for improvement for us.

The latest data published through Ofcom's Connected Nations and Infrastructure report shows that 45% of all A and B roads in Denbighshire had mobile 4G signal, from all four network operators. Our ambition at this stage was to have 60% availability as a minimum. By comparison, the all Wales figure is also at 45%, but this is significantly behind the England figure of 62%.

New data on the use of the internet by adults in Denbighshire and Conwy was anticipated in May 2020. For the time being the only available data remains that which was published in May 2019. This showed that 87.7% of people were estimated to have used the internet from a sampling period of three months (January to March 2020). Compared to the previous year, this had increased from 86.8%. It will be particularly interesting in the months ahead as data becomes available to review internet use for the months of March to August 2020, and hopefully identify those at risk of becoming digitally excluded in our communities.

Through 2019 to 2020 we have seen an increase from 38% to 46% of transactions undertaken via the web compared to the total number of transactions undertaken using all access channels. Most significantly but not surprising, however, during April to June we

saw a significant 13% increase in online transactions, achieving 52% during lockdown. A great deal of work was done during this time to increase available transactional services on our website to ensure that residents continued to benefit from the access that was no longer physically available.

Due to the disruption caused by Covid-19 there will be no national comparative data published for the A, B and C Road Condition Indicators for 2019 to 2020. Local scanner figures, however, suggest that there has been a slight decline in the condition of A (from 3.4% to 3.6%) and B (from 4.7% to 5.3%) roads during 2019 to 2020, with C roads staying the same (8.2%). Unfortunately, there persists an issue with obtaining data for the 6 monthly Road Condition Score, which we hope to resolve soon.

90% of the 256 category 1 defects for damaged roads and pavements were made safe within the target time of seven days during January to March 2020. This is a slight decrease in performance from 93 in October to December. The average for 2019 to 2020 was 92%, addressing 885 of 962 defects in total.

Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update

Travel to Work, Education and Services

When we developed our Corporate Plan, travel to work, education, and services was identified from our conversations with residents as an important area in need of improvement, particularly for our rural communities. Unfortunately, it is, we acknowledge, an area that still requires considerable work and expenditure. During 2019 to 2020, supported by the Welsh Government's Public Services Board support grant, we commissioned Glyndŵr University to research specific barriers to travel, not just for Denbighshire, but for North Wales. We will use this information to inform our business case to improve travel within the County; however, it is likely now that further analysis is needed given the changes brought about to travel, education, work, and service delivery because of Covid-19. Funding also remains a considerable issue for this area of work.

The pandemic has led to unprecedented changes that are affecting transport. The council has been looking at how we can safely reopen our town centres for visitors and this includes making sure there is space for people to adhere to social distancing and to offer alternative forms of transport by making walking and cycling easier. The council has

secured nearly £1 million of transport funding through the Local Sustainable Transport Covid-19 Response Fund, to provide improved access to town centres and schools for pedestrians and cyclists and facilitate social distancing in public spaces and on public transport.

The lockdown period has seen increases in the numbers of people walking and cycling, and many of the measures proposed will further encourage people to choose these modes of transport by providing measures such as wider pavements. Funding has been secured for projects in Rhyl, Llangollen, Ruthin and Denbigh, as well as outside schools throughout the County. Projects include the reallocation of road space for pedestrians and cyclists by introducing one-way systems, and making spaces outside schools safer for social distancing and reducing the number of car journeys outside schools. By making our town centres more accessible for active travel we can help support the County's businesses, improve air quality in our towns, help protect the environment, and improve the health of our residents.

Superfast Broadband and Mobile Networks

In partnership with Cadwyn Clwyd and Wrexham County Borough Council, the council has recruited a Digital Support Officer in 2020 to help promote connectivity options to businesses and rural communities in Denbighshire. The Digital Officer performs a connectivity diagnostic on each client's premise to inform them of their options to improve their digital access. If a resident is in a poorly connected area they are encouraged to form an action group in order to apply for a fibre connection through Openreach's Community Fibre Partnership. There is currently work on-going with six groups around Denbighshire, assisting them to communicate the message to other residents, collating their information as new residents join, and mapping the premises out to enable the group leader to visualise their target area. Once enough premises have joined the group, the Digital Officer assists the group leader to submit the initial Openreach Community Fibre Partnership form. Following this, quotes will be received and a plan of action will be formulated; this is the planned next stage for 2020 to 21. Funding will be available via the Rural Gigabit Voucher scheme, which with the Welsh Government top up are worth £3000 for a residential premises, and £7000 if a business is being run from there. There are currently 4,509 premises in Denbighshire where there are no qualifying networks and none are likely to be developed within 3 years. They are below the target download speed of

10Mbps, often being around 1 to 3Mbps. In addition to this, residents are informed about other available technologies to improve their connections and assistance is provided to diagnose any problems within their home network that may be causing a poor connection.

We are also exploring options to encourage local schemes to improve connectivity where:

- Housing exists in areas of poor broadband coverage and speed;
- Falls into either an area with no superfast coverage, or is not likely to be part of Superfast Cymru 2 roll out.

The focus on this work will be community-led, with the council and social housing partners taking a supportive role. The council is also promoting the Welsh Government's Local Broadband Fund, encouraging community groups to submit bids by September 2020. Discussions are also being held with the Clocaenog Wind Farm Fund, which will hopefully allow for community broadband applications. The fund is to be launched in the autumn, 2020.

Access to Information and Services

This project has experienced some delays as a direct result of both the web team and the web developer being redeployed to support the response to Covid-19. However, based on the current position it is not anticipated that this will delay the 'Go Live' date of our new website, planned for September 16. The scale of the work that has been involved in producing new webpage templates and converting all our documents and information to meet new accessibility standards has been considerable, but we hope residents will agree that it has been worth the effort. Around 30 new pages were also added to our website during the pandemic to better inform and help residents access our services during lockdown.

Our social media presence has continued to grow during March 2019 to August 2020, recording over 18 million impressions, 844,000 engagement and 108,844 post link clicks. We have also issued some 500 press releases in this time. Feedback on our press coverage returned 1,262 positive responses, 134 negative, and 254 that were neutral.

Digital Exclusion

Covid-19 restrictions have caused significant disruption to this project, particularly our work around staff training, volunteer development in libraries, and digital intergenerational work between schools and residential care homes. The only aspect of the project that we have been able to progress is the digital skills audit in libraries and housing services. The current project was due to end in December, but we anticipate that this may now be pushed into 2021 by at least 4-6 months.

In support of this agenda, however, it is worth noting that during the lockdown period residential care homes have acquired new devices to help better connect residents with their families and friends.

Infrastructure for Events

During March to August this project was placed on hold because of Covid-19. However, during a recent tranche review of all Corporate Plan projects in July, senior managers and cabinet members renewed their commitment to this work as an important strand for stimulating the economic recovery of Denbighshire, and in particularly looking at how we can attract larger events to the County.

Roads and Bridges

The council has carried out a number of bridge strengthening works during 2019 to 2020. The arches and cantilevered section of Pont Cilan, a Scheduled Ancient Monument on the River Dee, have been strengthened and reinforced internally by a concrete beam; the bridge now looks identical to how it used to. Pont Llyn Y Gigfran, which carries a road over the Afon Alwen to the west of Bettws Gwerfil Goch, has also had its stonework and arch rebuilt using historic hot lime mortars. We have also carried out emergency repairs to Pont Drefechan and Pont Penstryd following the February floods. Pont Eyarth, which has been a three-year project, was scheduled to be complete this Summer, but has been delayed due to Covid-19.

Over the last 12 months the council has continued its programme of surface dressing considerable lengths of the 'A' Class network, plus small scale resurfacing on urban roads in a number of towns and villages. Higher profile works include the road by Morrisons in Rhyl and on the A525 in St. Asaph. Both locations were challenging in terms of minimising

disruption, but both went well. Both these projects represent nearly £600k of investment by the council in the County's road network.

Annual or Biennial Measures

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| The percentage of principle A roads that are in overall poor condition – Benchmarked Nationally | 3.4 | 3.6 | Acceptable |
| The percentage of non-principal/classified B roads that are in overall poor condition – Benchmarked Nationally | 4.7 | 5.3 | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of non-principal/classified C roads that are in overall poor condition – Benchmarked Nationally | 8.2 | 8.2 | Good |
| The percentage of adults (aged 16 or over) who have used the internet within the last 3 months (Conwy and Denbighshire) – Benchmarked Locally | 87.7 | Data pending | Acceptable |

| Measure | 2014 | 2019 | Status |
|--|------|------|------------------------------|
| Percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Denbighshire in the 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of Access to Services (Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation - WIMD) | 14 | 14 | Does not apply Count only |

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

| Measure | Quarter 1 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 2 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 3 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 4 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 1 2020 to 2021 | Status |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| The percentage of Superfast Coverage in Denbighshire (>30 Mbps) – | 91.2 | 91.3 | 91.3 | 91.29 | 92 | Priority for improvement |

| Measure | Quarter 1 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 2 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 3 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 4 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 1 2020 to 2021 | Status |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Benchmarked Locally | | | | | | |
| The percentage of premises with Broadband of 10 Mbps or below – Benchmarked Locally | 6.57 | 6.54 | 6.54 | 4.93 | 4.63 | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of transactions undertaken via the web, compared to the total number of transactions undertaken using all access channels | 38 | 38 | 47 | 46 | 52 | Does not apply Count only |

| Measure | Quarter 4 2018 to 2019 | Quarter 1 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 2 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 3 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 4 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| The percentage of mobile 4G road signal (all operators) – Benchmarked Locally | 43.08 | 49.59 | 47.46 | 45.68 | 45.31 | Priority for improvement |
| Percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale) – Benchmarked Locally | 97.5 | 100 | 98.9 | 92.8 | 89.7 | Priority for improvement |

| Measure | Quarter 4 2018 to 2019 | Quarter 1 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 2 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 3 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 4 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 6 monthly Road Condition Score for around 75% of the remaining network (some C roads and almost all unclassified roads) | Does not apply 6 monthly | 393337 | Does not apply 6 monthly | Data pending | Does not apply 6 monthly | Does not apply Baseline year |

Project Progress

The following projects are on target:

- Superfast broadband and mobile network
- Digital exclusion

The following projects are experiencing obstacles:

- Access to information and services
- Infrastructure for events

The following project is at the business case stage:

- Travel to work, education and services

Case studies

Fflecsi

Fflecsi allows people to request a demand-responsive bus to pick them up near home, work or shops for essential travel, rather than following a set timetable at fixed bus stops. Following a successful pilot scheme in 2019 to 2020 we are now working in partnership with Transport for Wales (TfW), MandH Coaches and Townlynx to extend the 'fflecsi' pilot scheme to Denbigh and Prestatyn. Using ViaVan's technology it will direct passengers to a

nearby “virtual bus stop” for pick-up, allowing for quick and efficient shared trips without lengthy detours, fixed routes or schedules.

Community-led broadband improvement

We have been working with the community at Nantglyn to produce a database of local residents interested in a community broadband scheme. 155 residents have signed up to this, including 49 businesses. A technical broadband option is ready to pursue (FTTP) and work is now focused on developing costs with Openreach and looking for funding options.

Sustainable Development

As a council, we recognise the importance of staying connected. This means investing in the technologies that will keep our communities connected in the long-term, which is why we are working with partners such as the Welsh Government's Superfast Cymru project.

We also recognise that connectivity is complex. While we want to improve travel infrastructure in Denbighshire, we also recognise that some people may want to remove the need to travel at all, by accessing goods and services (or working) online. We know some residents may not feel confident, or lack the skills or means to access services online. For this reason, all of our Corporate Plan projects are managed together as a programme to ensure we plan in a joined-up way that maximises opportunities.

Active Travel means walking and cycling, including electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters, for everyday short-distance journeys, such as journeys to school, work, or for access to shops, services and bus and rail stations. By investing in active travel we are encouraging people to adopt healthier lifestyles and promoting lower carbon transport. This is a preventative approach that integrates complementary goals, and will require working with our partners to design and deliver the solution.

Equality and Diversity

Keeping our communities connected allows everyone to have a voice. Whether this means the ability to access the internet, reach a meeting, or communicate in their chosen language.

Our Corporate Plan projects to improve council information and services online and to tackle digital exclusion will include interventions to ensure services are accessible for everyone. Our website is one of the key platforms for the council to provide advice and information to the public. We have been trialling out our brand new website in order to hear the public's views. The website has been completely redesigned to meet the requirements of the Equalities Act, which expects all public sector organisations to have accessible websites by September 2020. Making a website accessible means that it can be used by people with impaired vision, motor difficulties, learning disabilities, deafness or impaired hearing. The new website has a very different look and feel from the old one. It has a clear and simple design; it should be easier to read in terms of font, colours and contrast, and the language should be easy to understand. It has also been designed so that it can be used on as many digital devices as possible.

Social distancing and hygiene related signage has been erected in our busiest town centres. Some additional signs were developed specifically with Vision Support to highlighting the need to be mindful of guide dog and white cane users when social distancing. We also hope that improvements to active travel routes are also benefiting people with disabilities through improved accessibility, particularly in relation to routes linked to schools.

We continue to monitor the percentage of people reporting they were able to communicate with us in their preferred language. 97.7% of Community Support Services' service users say they are able to communicate in their preferred language.

What are we doing in 2020 to 2021?

We will continue to deliver against the projects that support this priority throughout 2020 to 2021:

Travel to Work, Education and Services: We will continue to invest in active travel and parking improvements.

Superfast Broadband and Mobile Networks: During 2020 to 2021 we will continue our work with the Nantglyn community; ensure new housing developments are fit for purpose from a connectivity perspective; continue to promote options for improving connectivity;

and explore further improvements that we need to make to our own assets to improve connectivity.

Access to Information and Services: Subject to feedback and any necessary amendments our brand new-look website will go live in September 2020. We will focus on providing more services online and allowing customers to access a wide range of information about council services, as well as registering requests, making payments and getting involved in consultations.

Digital Exclusion: Our Digital Support Officer will continue to work with identified groups, businesses and residents to improve connectivity. We will review and update IT provisions within libraries, housing services, sheltered homes and residential settings. We will progress with training front line staff in social care, libraries and housing to help them and their clients, also targeting wider council staff that were identified as having poorer digital skills during the Covid-19 redeployment work. It is also our hope to progress virtually with our intergenerational pilot between Ysgol Caer Drewyn and Cysgod y Gaer residential home, which seeks to raise IT understanding amongst older people.

Finally, since July 2020 the project has started to scope out where it can help with the economically vulnerable. Libraries will be bidding for funding in September 2020 to create IT resource rooms to help the public with virtual spaces for job interviews or other virtual appointments. Other possibilities are being looked into.

Infrastructure for Events: Recognising this as an important strand for stimulating the economic recovery of Denbighshire, as restrictions allow we will work through the remainder of this financial year to continue our investment in key infrastructure, and in particular see how we can attract larger events to the County.

Roads and Bridges: During 2020 to 2021, we will deliver the fourth year of a 10-year maintenance programme for bridges and other highway structures. The aim of this programme is to minimise the need to implement weight restrictions on our bridges.

Resilient Communities: The council works with people and communities to build independence and resilience

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Good

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

Denbighshire has seen an 11% increase in the number of repeat victims of domestic abuse during 2019 to 2020 when compared with the previous year, rising from 428 to 475. As a whole, North Wales saw a -1.4% decrease in repeat victims of domestic violence in 2019 to 2020. Figures for April to June 2020 also show an increase of 14.5% since the same period last year, rising from 110 to 126 repeat victims.

Denbighshire saw an increase the number of repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse in 2019 to 2020, from 93 to 98 (+5.4%). The overall picture for North Wales shows repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse decreased by -12.7%. Between April to June 2020 there were 23 repeat offenders of domestic abuse, compared to 14 for the same period last year. Repeat offenders are classed as people who have committed a Domestic Abuse offence on three or more occasions in 12 months; therefore, the value for each month is a snapshot of the previous 12 months.

The number of resources provided by Denbighshire on the Dewis Cymru website increased through 2019 to 2020 to 536, but fell in April to June 2020 to 470. The council does not control Dewis Cymru resources, but does, however, encourage all services and service users to look to this for community information. The number of resources on Dewis for North Wales has also fallen since our last report to 2,381. The number of national resources published have increased to 10,583.

Data for the average length of time adults (aged 65 or over) are supported in residential care homes has decreased throughout 2019 to 2020 from 1021 to 970. A small increase to 984 was then seen during April to June. Although we remain high in relation to the Wales average (800), it is understood that Denbighshire has a high average age population. Our agreed target was to remain below 1,200.

Finally, data for the end of the year reveals that the council carried out 1124 assessments of need for support for carers during 2019 to 2020. During April to June 2020 111

assessments were completed. This is a new measure so we are unable to compare for the same period in the previous year.

Unfortunately, disruption to reporting caused by Covid-19 means that there is no new data for a number of this priority's performance indicators. These have been highlighted in the tables below with our last known position.

Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update

Involvement in shaping and improving services

Our confidence in the delivery of this project remains high, though not as originally intended. Aspects that required building strong face-to-face engagement opportunities are now having to be reconsidered. Over the coming months we will assess the ongoing impact of Covid-19 to determine a safe way forward with delivering our engagement work, particularly for those vulnerable and digitally isolated residents who may struggle with more innovative digital engagement mechanisms.

Supporting Carers

The work that we did under this project prior to the onset of Covid-19 and the lockdown put us in a stronger position when it came to responding to the outbreak. Good lines of communication and a skilled project team had already been established. The aim of the project, that all carers in Denbighshire feel supported, has been more important than ever and work is continuing to identify and support carers of all ages, including young carers. It was agreed that the best way forward was to develop a joint approach with the third sector, focusing on the immediate response and the support needed.

Community Resource Teams

A significant project is that of designing seamless health and social care services in the form of Community Resource Teams. Denbighshire is working in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) to deliver this project, with BCUHB being the lead delivery partner. The aim of the Community Resource Teams is to deliver comprehensive, flexible and responsive multi-agency and multi-disciplinary community health and social care services. These are easily and seamlessly accessible from the citizen's perspective. Ruthin's Community Resource Team was established in February

2019. Rhyl's has been in place since 2017. This year a new hub has been established in Denbigh, and despite Covid-19, staff have successfully collocated to those premises.

Community Planning, Windfarms

The community development website resources that Denbighshire developed during 2018 to 2019, which sought to give communities and groups the tools and advice they need to see their ideas and projects come to fruition, has continued to reap significant benefits during the response to Covid-19 as the immediate priorities of our communities changed. Community Development officers have been supporting our City, Town and Community Councils and other community groups to help access new streams of funding that have emerged, as well as promoting what is available through the various windfarm funds Denbighshire can access. The Brenig Windfarm Fund, for example, launched an early third round of funding, which closed in August, in response to Covid-19 to help community resilience. This led to a significant increase in community development enquiries as groups begin planning for Covid-19 recovery and to resume the development of longer term project plans.

Covid-19 has caused a delay in the launch of the Clocaenog Windfarm Fund, which has meant that other project milestones relating to the delivery of community development workshops are unlikely to be met now. Alternative methods of delivering themed information and guidance to our communities will instead be explored. However, the Grant Manager has been appointed and the launch of the fund is now anticipated in the autumn, 2020.

Reduce Domestic Abuse

This is such an important area of work for the council, particularly recognising the rise in domestic abuse that has been seen in our County over the last year, and in recent months during the lockdown. Denbighshire has now appointed a dedicated Project Manager to coordinate the work of this project and we have identified several work streams to take forward during 2020 to 2021. These include supporting the North Wales Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Strategy 2018 to 2023, and ensuring a more consistent approach to identifying those who experience violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The council will work to ensure that we meet our legislative requirements, and the National Training Framework for VAWDASV.

Access to Information

The Denbighshire Library Strategy 2019 to 22 aims to ensure that ‘People can access the resources and information they need to live well’ and that ‘People can access information and services locally’. Libraries deliver this by ‘being the access point in each community to local and national information to support individuals and communities’ employment, health, well-being, and learning’. Libraries host a wide range of well-being services, including Talking Points and Citizens Advice, and are the location of choice for services to meet their clients and raise awareness of their services, as libraries are perceived as trusted, neutral and local.

In addition to this, as mentioned under our ‘Access to Information and Services’ project under our Connected Priority, Denbighshire’s new website will meet strict accessibility standards and hopefully be another tool to support the independence and resilience of our residents.

Dementia Friendly Council

February 2020 saw Denbighshire County Council being given national recognition for its efforts to work towards becoming a dementia friendly council. The council achieved Alzheimer’s Society recognition through its Dementia Friendly Communities initiative for its work to raise awareness and support those living with dementia.

There are 11,000 people living with dementia in North Wales, with 1,511 of those in Denbighshire. The number of people living with dementia in North Wales is expected to almost double by 2030. As part of its work to support those with dementia the council has delivered Dementia Friends information sessions for staff and councillors, set up a staff engagement network, and libraries offer a books on prescription service. There is a reduction in council tax for people living with dementia, while free fire safety checks in homes and help with wheelie bins is also provided. Future plans include an e-learning package to inform staff and councillors; a premises audit for dementia friendly buildings; and libraries will be introducing the loan of memory boxes. The council will be inviting people living with dementia to inform and influence changes in working practices, as well as working with the County’s Dementia Friendly Towns to share learning and experiences.

Rhyl Community Development

The council has made significant inroads with its work to support community development in Rhyl, working closely with partners and the third sector, including Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Welsh Water, the Regional Community Cohesion Team, and colleagues in Waste Management. Several projects have been progressed, including a review of the effectiveness of support services and providers available in Rhyl; the development of a Rhyl Community Grant Fund to allow environmental improvements; and the Denbighshire Diverted Giving Scheme, which is to be piloted in Rhyl. Our work was disrupted due to Covid-19 but is now being picked up again, including plans to address Anti-Social Behaviour on the High Street, and a project to stimulate community cohesion and community action through a street cleansing initiative.

Annual or Biennial Measures

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|--|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| The percentage of people reporting they have received the right information or advice when they needed it – Benchmarked Locally | 88 | No data due to Covid-19 | Acceptable |
| The percentage of carers reporting they feel supported to continue in their caring role – Benchmarked Locally | 55 | No data due to Covid-19 | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of people reporting that they know who to contact about their care and support – Benchmarked Locally | 84 | No data due to Covid-19 | Acceptable |
| The percentage of people who agree "my local area is a place where people will pull together to improve the local area" – Benchmarked Locally | 59 | Does not apply No Survey | Acceptable |
| The percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area – Benchmarked Locally | 27 | Does not apply | Priority for improvement |

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|---------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| | | No Survey | |

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

| Measure | Quarter 1 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 2 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 3 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 4 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 1 2020 to 2021 | Status |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat victims of Domestic Abuse including non-crime occurrences (3 or more in 12 months, measured as year to date) | 110 | 231 | 370 | 475 | 126 | Does not apply Count only |
| The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse (3 or more in 12 months) | 14 | 36 | 63 | 98 | 23 | Does not apply Count only |
| The number of live resources on the Dewis Cymru Platform – Benchmarked Locally | 482 | 459 | 531 | 536 | 470 | Excellent |
| The number of assessments of need for support for carers undertaken during the year | No data | No data | 876 | 1224 | 111 | Does not apply Count only |
| The average length of time adults (aged 65 or over) are | 1021 | 1008 | 977 | 970 | 984 | Priority for improvement |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| supported in residential care homes – Benchmarked Nationally | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Progress on projects

The following projects are all on target for completion:

- Community Resource Teams
- Dementia Friendly Council
- Act to reduce domestic abuse

The following projects are experiencing obstacles:

- Community planning, windfarms
- People are involved in shaping and improving services
- Supporting carers

The following project is closed:

- Access to information

Case study

A carer's story

A district nurse visited a carer recently, only to discover that they had absolutely no food except one box of cereal. This was reported to the emergency duty team who in turn contacted North East Wales Carers Information Service (NEWCIS) to see what support could be put in.

NEWCIS delivered a food box to the carer that same day, which provided them with fresh food and produce. The carer was over the moon and very relieved. It was clear that the carer was not confident in understanding what support was available to her and she had not been able to put in place the support that was needed to keep herself and her family safe.

Sustainable Development

Within this priority we are taking forward an important engagement project that intends to both strengthen our approach to managing our involvement processes, and also move towards more of a co-production type model of delivery. This will see residents being involved with shaping services much earlier than is usually the case, and in an ongoing manner. Developments here will lay the foundations for stronger involvement in general. A number of areas, driven by a desire to prevent further need, are planned that will require a collaborative approach, namely:

- Improving support for carers.
- Integration of health and social care.
- Tackling domestic abuse.

Case Study

Digital Library

The Library Service continued to provide a valued service during lockdown, despite the buildings being closed and the staff team being redeployed to our proactive calling work. Our Digital Library offer was heavily promoted through social media and other channels and 428 new members joined online since mid-March. The offer was strengthened by a £250k investment from WG into the all-Wales Borrowbox service of downloadable e-books and e-audiobooks to increase the range and volume of stock available to meet the surge in demand. Registered users in Denbighshire increased by 75% and loans by 85% (March to May). Denbighshire also invested in Pressreader, giving free digital access to over 3000

worldwide newspapers and magazines, and library members were also able to access Ancestry free from home.

The Bookstart team, working from home, produced a live bilingual rhymetime on Facebook every week, and recorded and published online rhyme and story videos. They were invited to record a video for Booktrust Cymru's website to encourage new parents to share songs, rhymes and books with their babies.

Equality and Diversity

Since the start of lockdown and up until August 16, 2020, the council, with the support of Denbighshire Leisure Ltd, had proactively contacted more than 9,250 shielded people and residents aged 70 or over who have been isolating to offer advice and support and ensure that they can access the supplies and services they need whilst remaining at home. This has included referrals to community groups, local charities and council services for tailored help, including grocery shopping, medication collection, telephone befriending and basic care needs assessments.

The feedback from residents has been very positive with many telling us how appreciative they were of the calls. Over 80 staff from across the council were involved, with many officers quickly adapting to working in a completely different way. Staff were thanked for their dedication and hard work during the process alongside our external partners, including Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) and the British Red Cross.

Residents can still use the [community resource list](#) for contact details and web addresses of local shops willing to deliver supplies, and where to go for local and national help and support. Residents can also access information, advice and assistance, which includes our Telephone Befriending Service, by contacting Single Point of Access on 0300 456 100.

In line with WG guidance, Libraries have gradually reintroduced services through a phased approach to ensure the safety and confidence of customers and staff. In mid-June we introduced an Order and Collect Service, offering customers an opportunity to select and order their own books from the online catalogue, or ask staff to choose books for them. The books are then collected by appointment. The Home Library Service was also re-introduced, making deliveries direct to people's homes. 2,677 customers have used the

Order and Collect to date, and feedback demonstrates how it is valued by customers and the positive impact having access to library books has on people's well-being.

Children have been able to participate in the Summer Reading Challenge online and by collecting a challenge pack and books from the library. Families of young children can also collect a Bookstart pack from their local library as part of a national pilot scheme with Booktrust Cymru.

In late July / early August, after the fitting of safety screens on all our counters, we reintroduced access by appointment to public ICT facilities and printing, and to the One Stop Shop Service dealing with council enquiries and payments. To date, over 500 customers have used these services.

The council has been working to respond to the requirements of the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 through its programme to modernise the way social services deliver. This work places greater emphasis on the outcomes of individuals, including outcome-focussed conversations. Children and adults receiving support and service provision are offered a "What Matters" conversation for individual support packages.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales launched their strategy for "Making Wales the Best Place in the World to Grow Older" in 2019. We have examined the Strategy in detail to ensure that our work aligns with the three key priorities identified by the Commissioner, and we are confident that we will be delivering against the activities outlined, either through our Corporate Plan projects, or within our service provisions. Further, we have done considerable work to review our Ageing Well in Denbighshire Action Plan so as to respond to the Commissioner's strategy, and we were nearly there with our final document until Covid-19 struck. We now aim to have this finalised by the end of 2020.

Case Study

Click and collect

"I just wanted to say how wonderful it is that even though it is closed the library is doing an Order and Collect service. I've been so alone, my family live abroad and all I have are books. It's wonderful to see the friendly faces of the staff, but most of all the books. It's like having friends returning from a long trip, and the gift is the stories locked up inside them. The library is an essential service for a lonely man living in uncertain times."

“I just wanted to extend a big thanks of gratitude to the Library and their wonderful Click and Collect service, as someone who was self-isolating this has been a wonderful highlight to very long days. It's lovely that the Library is just a phone call away and they'll try their very best to get the books I would like to read and even throw in a book I would never think about reading - big thank you to whomever chooses the random crime book for me, you've never let me down yet.”

What are we doing in 2020 to 2021?

We will continue to deliver against the projects that support this priority throughout 2020 to 2021:

Involvement in shaping and improving services: We will continue to enhance use of the County Conversation Portal to ask for resident input, giving them the opportunity to get involved with as much as possible.

Supporting carers: We will continue our work to identify and support carers of all ages, increasing awareness that carers don't have to cope alone and that help is available. We will promote online training for carers, including webinars and courses from Promas and TIDE, and we aim to identify key themes of support for young carers.

Community Resource Teams: During 2020 to 2021 we will be progressing plans for another Community Resource hub in Prestatyn, working in partnership with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Community Planning: We will be developing resources to support access to approximately £850k of all Wind Farm community grant funding by March 2021.

Reduce Domestic Abuse: We will work with our partners, including the North Wales Police, to develop a County-wide approach to reducing violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence against men and women. Thirteen strands of work have been identified for this project, ranging from training, awareness raising, improvement in processes, and work with victims and perpetrators. It is a significant undertaking and we will endeavour to progress these through 2020 to 2021.

Access to Information: We will continue to deliver on our Library Strategy 2019 to 22, which aims to ensure that ‘People can access the resources and information they need to

live well' and that 'People can access information and services locally'. We will also launch our new accessible website in September 2020.

In early September 2020, we will be able to offer library visits by appointment to enable customers to browse and select their own books, and to use library spaces for private study and Wi-Fi access.

Should Welsh Government introduce a second lockdown, the council will be in touch with residents who are advised by the Chief Medical Officer for Wales to shield again.

Dementia Friendly Council: We remain confident that in the next 12 months we will complete our action plan and maintain an annual recognition process. In partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, we will continue our programme of training for staff, including training Dementia Champions who will offer the resource within our organisation to train other colleagues. We also intend to set up a forum for individuals and their carers living with Dementia.

Rhyl Community Development: During 2020 to 2021 we will continue with a number of key engagement projects, and in particular seek to recruit 10 to 15 local people to act as Community Champions for West Rhyl, assisting in the monitoring of environmental crime, improving community safety, and be involved with creating community green spaces in the area. We will also launch a waste management campaign, and progress with our Diverted Giving pilot.

Environment: Attractive and protected, supporting well-being and economic prosperity

Measures: Good

Projects: Excellent

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

Our measures framework for this priority is at the moment entirely concerned with annual data, and actually there is very little new data to report on. Three measures are derived from our Residents' Survey, which was not planned to take place this year; and two further measures, highlighted in the table below, are not yet ready to report on.

What we can say is that the council has continued to reduce carbon emissions from its estate, seeing a reduction of 15.69% in 2019 to 20, compared with emissions levels the corporate plan was developed. This was achieved by a reduction of 8,822.65 (tonnes) in our own buildings where we pay the bills and 1,908.17 (tonnes) in our fleet. This has exceeded our ambition of a 15 percent reduction by 2022.

Finally, the council's tree planting programme has continued, seeing 4,300 trees planted in 2019 to 2020. A total of 10,100 trees have now been planted through the project over three years. Volunteer planting activities have obviously been impacted by Covid-19, but Year 4 planting activities remain on track to be delivered between November 2020 to March 2021.

Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update

Carbon Emissions

Since the council's Climate and Ecological Change Emergency declaration, work has taken place to develop the following objectives for the council:

- For the council to become a net carbon zero organisation at the latest by 2030.
- For the council to become an ecologically positive organisation at the latest by 2030.

A very popular and well attended public workshop was held in February to capture residents' concerns and hopes for the future. These in turn were fed into workshops that have been held virtually during the pandemic with every service management team across the council, seeking to further draw out actions that the council can take forward in the next ten years. This work will be developed in the coming months for input and public consultation in the autumn, leading eventually to a Strategy and Action plan document for Scrutiny appraisal, and Cabinet and Council approval in early 2021.

Reducing Plastics

During 2019 to 2020 the council consulted with its staff about how to reduce the use of plastics in its civic offices. Some simple steps were agreed, which included the removal of all automated coffee machines. Coincidentally then, these machines were switched off during the pandemic because our offices were not in use, but we are now waiting for the contractor to return to normal operations to remove the machines. Water coolers, again, have been turned off and all plastic cups have long been removed.

The next phase of the project will consider plastic reduction by our school catering service. This work was placed on hold during the closure of schools, education and catering teams instead concentrating on providing free school meals to those eligible. As schools begin to return to some normality, we will again consider how to progress this project with them.

Tree Planting and Open Space

As we have seen from the data, work on our Tree Planting project has continued to progress well. In Rhyl, we were actually able to plant more trees than our initial target, contributing to the council's efforts to regenerate the town and increase the canopy there. In Denbigh, however, we fell slightly short of our target because of a lack of planting space. This, however, will not be a problem in Year 4, as the council has now purchased a piece of land adjacent to Denbigh allotments to provide much needed planting space. It is also worth noting that, prior to Covid-19, a record number of volunteers and community groups attended the volunteer planting days. It is always great to work with the community on such activities and support this important area of work.

In response to Covid-19 guidelines the car park at Glan Morfa was closed during the early stages of the pandemic to reduce the number of visitors travelling to the site by car.

However, the council left the site open for the benefit of residents in Rhyl. Similarly, Glan Morfa, Brickfields Pond and Rhyl Cut played an important role during the difficult lockdown period, ensuring residents had access to green space. To encourage and enable social distancing, signage was erected and the paths and access points were regularly maintained by Countryside Service staff.

Flooding

A significant two-year project to defend 1,650 properties in East Rhyl from flooding started in April 2020. The main contractor, Balfour Beatty, put in a range of additional measures adhering to the latest UK guidelines around Covid-19 to ensure that the work could continue. The Scheme represents a £27 million investment by Welsh Government and Denbighshire County Council to place 128,000 tonnes of rock armour in front of existing sea defences, as well as 600 metres of new sea defence wall and promenade.

Improving Biodiversity and Nature Corridor

Prior to the pandemic, this project was performing well. 2019 to 2020 was a successful survey year, seeing an increase in all aspects from 2018: the numbers of sand lizards recorded; total number of records taken; number of common lizards recorded; volunteer hours spent on the dunes; scheduled and unscheduled surveys undertaken; and the overall total number of surveys conducted on site. Also our work to grow native locally sourced wildflowers with the Woodland Skills Centre in Denbighshire has been used as a case study of good practice by Welsh Government.

Conservation and volunteering guest lectures at Glyndŵr University progressed well through 2019 to 2020, seeing an increase in the number of students applying for dissertation projects and volunteering opportunities. A day of Natterjack Toad pond restoration was also arranged for the students to participate in. We also began a new project to create a green / blue corridor linking and improving natural resources across the three counties of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Conwy, funded by a Welsh Government grant.

However, many of our activities have been or are still on hold because of Covid-19. The 2020 sand lizard survey rota was issued to volunteers and staff but then cancelled; and the Bee Friendly project was stopped while schools were closed. All group surveying has

been cancelled due to Covid-19, but in the meantime we have supplied students with historical data to ensure they were still able to complete their assignments and dissertations. Activities will hopefully resume soon, but only when it is safe to do so.

Moorland Management

In response to the Llantysilio fire in summer 2018, the council's Communities Scrutiny Committee produced a comprehensive report into all aspects of the fire. It found the need for better communication between all stakeholders, improved management of the moorland, and a proactive approach to prevent further wildfires. To achieve this, the Committee recommended the appointment of a Moorland Officer to coordinate activity and help landowners and graziers to manage the moorland to improve its general health. Working in partnership with Natural Resources Wales, funding for 3 years has been secured for this role, the post being advertised in the summer, 2020. Further funding has been secured through Natural Resources Wales for restoration works on Llantysilio Mountain.

Living Assets

This project seeks to develop a sustainable approach to the management of trees in our ownership, as well as promote the benefits of trees to residents. During 2019 to 2020 the council appointed a new Tree Officer to progress the project, which will also include responding to difficult challenges posed by the Ash Tree Dieback. Our delivery confidence for the work remains on target, though there was inevitable disruption resulting from lockdown measures. Nonetheless, progress has been made with our tree mapping and management software, which has started to be put to use; and work has begun on researching and developing a council Tree and Woodland strategy.

Energy Efficient Council Homes

During 2019 to 2020 we have carried out further energy assessment work and insulation improvements to help us reach our ambition that 70% of our council housing stock will achieve at least a 'C' energy rating by 2022. 50 properties have benefitted from the installation of cavity wall insulation, using Thermabead insulation; and as part of our Welsh Housing Quality Standards Maintenance Programme, a further 30 properties have benefitted from A rated windows. A further work programme has also been undertaken to

identify properties where only a small energy gain is required to reach a 'C' rating, which saw the energy efficiency of 21 additional properties successfully lifted.

A high proportion of the housing stock that is off the gas network will require innovative heating improvements in order to achieve our desired rating. We have therefore piloted the installation of Air Source Heat pumps, which has proved successful. Our aim is to roll this out to over 300 properties.

One aspect of our work is at risk due to a lack of clarity from Welsh Government on de-carbonisation targets in Wales. It is anticipated that the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) threshold will be raised above our current target, which will have consequences on the kind of improvements we make, and significantly add to the cost.

Tourism Strategy

We have published a new Tourism Strategy for 2019 to 2022, which supports this priority. [This can be viewed on our website.](#) At the heart of our strategy is a particular focus on delivering things sustainably, and working in partnership with others in the sector. The three key aims that we want to achieve for Tourism in Denbighshire are:

- People visit Denbighshire throughout the year
- People stay in Denbighshire longer
- People spend more money in the County

However, we are also very clear in our strategy of our responsibility to ensure that by increasing tourism in the County we must not jeopardise the assets that attract our visitors in the first place.

Annual or Biennial Measures

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|---|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| Percentage reduction - from a 31/03/17 baseline – in carbon emissions (tonnes) from council assets – Benchmarked Locally | 13.69 | 15.69 | Excellent |

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| STEAM - Total Economic Impact of Tourism (£ million) – Benchmarked Locally | 509.01 | Data pending | Excellent |
| The percentage of existing and acquired council housing stock (1st April 2017 baseline) achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of C or above – Benchmarked Locally | 33 | Data pending | Priority for improvement |
| The cumulative number of trees planted to increase canopy cover in Rhyl and Denbigh – Benchmarked Locally | 5800 | 4300 | Excellent |
| How satisfied are people with their local open spaces? – Countryside – Benchmarked Locally | 87 | Does not apply No Survey | Excellent |
| How satisfied are people with their local open spaces? – Beaches – Benchmarked Locally | 70 | Does not apply No Survey | Good |
| How satisfied are people with their local open spaces? – Parks – Benchmarked Locally | 64 | Does not apply No Survey | Good |

Our measure around the number of properties with a reduced risk of flooding (1,000s) will not be reported until the completion of identified flood schemes, starting in 2020.

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Our measure on the percentage of all new build council housing achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of A will not be reported until the completion of new builds in 2021.

Progress on projects

The following projects are on target:

- Climate and ecological change programme
- East Rhyl coastal defence
- Urban tree planting
- Protect and enhance Denbighshire's 'living assets'
- Moorland management and wildfire prevention

The following projects are experiencing obstacles:

- Improving biodiversity
- ENRaW nature corridor
- Reduce the council's use of plastics (phase 2)

The following project is at risk:

- Improving energy efficiency in council houses

Case studies

Little Tern Colony

The work of protecting the Little Tern colony at Gronant, the only colony of its kind in Wales, has carried on over recent months, despite the Covid-19 outbreak, with Denbighshire Countryside Service introducing safe working measures to protect the colony from human disturbance, predation and extreme weather events.

The colony is among only a few colonies implementing protection for the little terns this season, making our efforts more important than ever. It is of vital importance that we continue to protect the last little tern colony in Wales, despite these exceptional circumstances.

The work is carried out by wardens with support from volunteers, but due to the Covid-19 restrictions, staff from Denbighshire Countryside Services have taken over warden duties. To date, the counts of birds has been 300+, with 172 nests created and many pairs that lost their nests have now re-laid.

Waste and Recycling Parks

The online booking system developed as restrictions were lifted for the use of Denbighshire County Council's waste and recycling parks proved to be extremely popular by site users and staff. Many residents asked us to keep the system in place. It reduces any queueing of traffic, the visits to the waste and recycling parks are quicker and more efficient, and it is generally a safer way to operate the sites. For these reasons we have decided to run with this system indefinitely. We will monitor future performance of the new way of working to evaluate and implement any process modifications as required.

Changing Ranger Role

Our rangers faced some significant changes to their roles during the lockdown, especially when England started to relax their restrictions. We found our sites were getting busier and busier even though Wales was still in full lockdown. Rangers had to start patrolling Moel Famau on a regular basis, helping advise visitors of the lockdown regulations, and liaising with North Wales Police. On weekends in the early stages between 50 and 60 cars were turned away from Moel Famau each day, but towards the end of lockdown this increased to nearly 100. We are pleased now to have reopened our sites to welcome people back to enjoy our beautiful country parks.

Sustainable Development

Our Corporate Plan's focus on the preservation of the natural environment and maintenance of its biodiversity was as a result of our County Conversation engagement. As part of this exercise voices from young people in the community were heard and listened to. They were concerned about the future of the environment and wanted the council to more actively pursue change under this theme.

We are working closely with Natural Resources Wales to plant 18,000 trees by 2022, a long-term commitment to the environment, and to provide shaded community recreation spaces.

During 2019 to 2020 we have agreed important changes in our waste and recycling collections, which include:

- A new weekly collection for recyclables such as paper, glass, cans, and plastic.
- A new weekly collection for nappies and incontinence wear.
- A weekly collection for food waste.
- A new fortnightly collection for clothes and small electrical items.

The aim is to encourage more recycling on top of the council's current rates (64%) to meet the Welsh Government's 70% target by 2025, with an expectancy that the target will rise to 80% in future. The new facilities that are needed to support the service should be in place early 2021, with the aim of the whole County being moved across to the new service by July 2021.

In-keeping with the low carbon theme, we plan to reduce the level of our carbon emissions from our own assets and we'll ensure that all new-build council homes have an energy efficiency rating of 'A'. This demonstrates our approach to maximising benefits from projects, and integrating with our Housing Priority.

Equality and Diversity

In Denbighshire we have made huge progress to not only safeguard our astounding natural resources, but to also make it easier than ever for all people to experience them. The [Accessible Denbighshire webpages](#), for example, provide interactive maps that allow user to decide whether they feel the route is suited to their individual needs and ability. Numerous routes are available to explore, with a link to each site featured.

As lockdown restrictions were eased, we progressed a number of important community engagement activities. This included the induction of the Syrian families to the allotment site in Rhyl, supporting them to grow their own food and create their own patch of green. They now have free access to the site and we have made as much provision as possible for them to get off on the best foot, such as weeding the beds, filling with topsoil, providing

tools, seeds and assistance. This group will continue to be supported through monthly Zoom sessions and seasonal practical sessions.

Pebble snake art workshops took place in August 2020, another way of fostering community cohesion. This came about after the snake created by residents during lockdown around the Brickfields pond was removed to continue to allow safe access to the site, particularly for those with disabilities. The workshops have been a way of continuing to capture the community energy and enjoyment of residents in an art project that grew spontaneously during difficult times.

Case Study

Access to the Beach

The East Rhyl Coastal Defence Scheme will protect 1,650 properties in East Rhyl and is funded through the Welsh Government, as well as part funding by Denbighshire County Council. Work started on site in April and is on target to be completed by December 2022.

Material including large rock will continue to be delivered to the site to enable the construction of the rock armour revetment, which will commence in October. The revetment is expected to take around eight months to build. Work is progressing well and by the end of August, preliminary works will start on forming the first of three permanent beach access points.

In response to requests from beach users, the contractor for the East Rhyl Coastal Defence Scheme has been able to provide access to be the beach at weekends from Marine Drive, near Old Golf Road. A visitor centre has also been set up at the site compound and members of the public are welcome to drop by to discuss the scheme with the public liaison officer. Further information about the project can also be found on [this website](#).

What are we doing in 2020 to 2021?

We will continue to deliver against the projects that support this priority throughout 2020 to 2021:

Climate and Ecological Change Programme: We will consult upon and publish our Action Plan to become a net carbon zero and ecologically positive organisation by 2030.

Tree Planting: We will continue with our ambitious programme to plant 18,000 trees by the end of 2022. Year 4 planting in Rhyl is on track to be delivered between November 2020 to March 2021. The target of 2,400 trees will actually be exceeded by 2,000 trees this year as additional planting opportunities and external funding has been secured. A community orchard will also be planted in Denbigh in November 2020 where the Vale of Clwyd and Denbigh Plum will feature strongly.

East Rhyl Coastal Defence: Our contractor will continue the work on this project, which is anticipated to take two years. By 2022, 500 properties will be protected.

Improving Biodiversity and Nature Corridor: We will manage a pilot of 21 sites, which amounts to 62 acres, in a more environmentally friendly way to create wildflower meadows. The pilot includes sites in Prestatyn, Rhyl, Corwen, Cynwyd, Denbigh, Henllan, Llanferres, Llanrhaedr, Pwllglas and Ruthin.

We will work with partners in Flintshire and Conwy to deliver year 2 of our nature corridor delivery plan, nurturing healthy and resilient ecosystems along a large habitat corridor that links some of the most deprived populations in Wales to the wider countryside.

Moorland Management: Aerial seeding of upland grass mix and heather will take place in the autumn, 2020. We will also begin restoration works on Llantysilio Mountain.

Living Assets: Our new tree officer will continue work to map trees in our ownership, progressing with the development of our Tree and Woodland Strategy. We will also aim to understand better the threat and liabilities arising from the Ash Tree Dieback.

Energy Efficient Council Homes: We will continue our programme of energy efficiency improvements to our council stock during 2020 to 2022, including the roll out of Air Source Heat Pumps to 300 properties.

Tourism Strategy: We will continue our Tourism Ambassador Scheme, which includes a website with training modules and resources on the area's natural and cultural assets. The Tourism Team have [a new video](#) highlighting the scheme. You can find details of the scheme [on our website](#).

Young People: A place where younger people will want to live and work and have the skills to do so

Measures: Priority for improvement

Projects: Good

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

Validated attainment data for 2019 to 2020 financial year (which relates to 2018 to 2019 academic year) shows that the percentage of children achieving 5 GCSEs A*-C (Level 2, Key Stage 4), including English or Welsh (1st language), Maths and English Literature, places Denbighshire at 50.9%, against the Wales average of 53.8%. Five out of eight secondary schools performed above the national average. The three schools that did not serve areas that have high levels of deprivation. We had hoped that we were starting to see the beginning of some stabilisation to what has been very volatile data in recent years; and based on Denbighshire's position this certainly seemed to be the case as our performance was more around where we would expect it to be (when compared to the Welsh position) for the cohort / Free School Meal profile of pupils in the County. Covid-19 has introduced a whole new world of volatility of course to pupil assessment, and there will be no published data for attainment this year, or next year. This poses a real challenge to the council in understanding how our schools are performing, but we will continue to work with our School Improvement partners in GwE to ensure that the very best outcomes are being achieved by our pupils.

The Welsh Government has replaced the indicator concerning the percentage of Yr11 pupils who achieved KS4 Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate at National Level (Level 2), and Local Authority data is no longer published. This has meant that we have had to again amend how we assess our performance. The new indicator now presents a local authority points score average, against which Denbighshire achieved 33.8 against the Wales average of 36.4 for 2019 to 2020 (financial year). This has improved from 32.4 the previous year and again appears consistent with our profile position against the rest of Wales.

Based on our last Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) survey, the percentage of pupils who respond positively against pupils' feelings about school shows good

consistency at 86%. The closure of schools due to Covid-19 meant that our end of year surveys could not be completed, however.

The last published data (which relates to 2018 to 2019 academic year) for primary school attendance increased from 94.5% to 94.9%. The Wales median was 94.7%. In Denbighshire there were 93,628 authorised absences (down from 98,933 for 2017 to 2018), against 42,931 unauthorised (up from 40,969). This represents a (-)2.3% decrease in absence from the previous year (136,559, down from 139,902).

Secondary school attendance fell slightly from 93.5% to 93.4%. The Wales median was 93.8%. In Denbighshire there were 89,682 authorised absences (up from 87,092 for the previous year), against 30,432 unauthorised (up from 28,403). This represents a 3.9% increase in absence from the previous year (120,114, up from 115,495). The council continues to work closely with schools to ensure that they are engaging with the council's fixed-penalty process and that the correct coding is applied to absences. The council has also put interventions in place where it has found school procedures around absence are not robust.

Currently 30 schools are providing education in buildings that have the lowest suitability and condition categories (C and D). The completion of Band A and the progression of Band B of the 21st Century Schools Programme will reduce this figure further.

Latest data released from the Child Measurement Programme for Wales reveals a continuing decline in the healthy weight of Denbighshire's 4-5 year olds (68%), placing us now in the 4th quartile (15% below the Wales median) and 2nd worst in Wales. 343 children were measured as overweight or obese.

The Denbighshire data for 18 to 24 year olds claiming work related benefits is an area of concern for us. Not only were we seeing a steady rise in claimants throughout 2019 to 2020, but most significantly now the impact of Covid-19 on the economy has been made clear, with April to June figures placing Denbighshire 4.1% behind the Wales average. Prior to the pandemic, Denbighshire was 2% behind the average. It is a situation that we will continue to monitor, but it underlines the importance of all our recovery efforts and support for businesses. Analysing the data for just 2019 to 20, the economically inactive estimate for our population remained relatively consistent, while the youth claimant count was rising and had been for long enough to argue that there was a trend. Therefore, we

cannot put the rise we were seeing down entirely to the impact of welfare reform, there appearing to be a worsening of the labour market for young people in Denbighshire immediately prior to Covid-19. This was an exaggerated example of the national trend where business confidence is the issue, considering as well the impact of Brexit of course.

Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update

Modernising Education Programme

Supporting young people is a priority for the council under our Corporate Plan and so far more than £90 million has been invested in Denbighshire's schools which has seen more than 3,500 pupils benefit from improved facilities.

Christ the Word Catholic School

The new school, which opened in September 2019, has replaced Ysgol Mair and Blessed Edward Jones Catholic high school and is part of the Diocese of Wrexham. It provides for 420 full time pupils aged 3-11 and 500 pupils aged 11-16, funded in partnership by Denbighshire County Council and the Welsh Government through its 21st Century Schools Programme. More than £9million has been spent with local businesses during the construction, more that 70 percent of which were within 30 miles of the site. External works at the new 3-16 Christ the Word Catholic School in Rhyl have now been completed and the full site was handed over to the school in July 2020.

Ysgol Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd

The brand new £5.3million bilingual church school opposite Bron y Clwyd opened in February 2020. The project was jointly funded between Denbighshire County Council and Welsh Government as part of the Welsh Government's 21st Century Schools programme, in partnership with the Diocese of St Asaph.

Welsh Language Centre

During 2019 to 2020 the council has progressed with work on a new Welsh Language Centre in St Asaph, following £1.3m of funding from the Welsh Government. Extensive refurbishment works have been undertaken to transform the former science block at Ysgol Glan Clwyd. The centre will provide Welsh language provision for all ages including, pre-school pupils, support for latecomers to Welsh Medium education in KS 2 and 3, a facility

for the development of Welsh Language resources, and a potential base for Welsh Language delivery partners. In addition, the building will provide a location for the delivery of sabbatical courses by Bangor University, which will boost the language skills of teachers. Our intention was to deliver this by September 2020, and despite significant disruption to works caused by Covid-19, this is still achievable.

Childcare Settings

The council also secured £2.8m for 7 Child Care Centre projects across the County. During 2019 to 2020 the council has been working to progress plans to extend the Oak Tree Centre in Rhyl, and to provide a childcare facility at Ysgol Twm o'r Nant. We are still at the early stages with this work, and there have of course been delays caused by Covid-19.

School Nutrition Project

Our school nutrition project had a great first year, employing a new School Nutrition Coordinator to engage with 9 schools initially, working in close partnership with Public Health Wales, BCUHB, and School Catering. Evaluations so far from staff, parents and pupils have been wholly positive of the programme. Some aspects of the project have been unable to continue during school closures, but our project group have met during the summer to consider alternatives ways of delivery that may ultimately make the project more sustainable in the longer term. How year 2 of the project is to be delivered is being worked through currently and will depend on guidance from Welsh Government and how well schools are able to accommodate the programme alongside Covid-19 safety measures.

Supporting for Parents

Positive progress has been made during 2019 to 2020 with the review of our Parenting Strategy for Denbighshire. The progression of the workstream has been impacted by Covid-19, but the work we did to implement the Solihull approach has been particularly beneficial during the lockdown period, seeing a strong uptake in our online course with over 500 parents accessing provision. We have also changed the way we deliver support, instead offering a telephone service in place of face-to-face parenting groups. It is another great example of flexibility being shown by our projects. In partnership with Betsi

Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) the Solihull course has been made available online for parents until November 2022.

Entrepreneur Space

During 2019 to 2020 the council has progressed with the conversion of the former Costigans pub in Rhyl to provide a digital skills and entrepreneurial hub for enterprising business start-ups, with the advice and networks needed to help them succeed in a growing digital sector. Despite delays caused by Covid-19, Capital works are nearing completion. It will be an exciting new space for our residents.

TechZone

We have effectively placed this project on hold until external funding can be secured. Nonetheless, we have continued to develop our business case for the project and guide the project through the authority's approval processes to help gain that external support.

Young Person Employment Bursary

Despite initial concerns about the slow take up of the bursary, the project was achieving its estimated outputs at less cost than originally anticipated during 2019 to 2020. We expected to help between 10 to 40 individuals with an initial budget of £20k; however, the bursary has approved its applicants using only half its allocated budget, which may potentially allow us to assist more individuals than anticipated. The Covid-19 pandemic has obviously affected the bursary project with fewer applications having been submitted during the lockdown period, and many education and training course providers not delivering. There is uncertainty at the moment what the future demand for the bursary will be, but the council remains committed to having the offer available, not least as a way to help stimulate recovery.

Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS)

As mentioned, our last PASS data continues to paint a positive picture of pupil feelings towards school, but also giving schools valued insight to the well-being of their pupils. Going forward this will be as important as ever, as children readjust to the new normal in schools after lockdown. As we learn more about how schools will operate going forward we will consider how the PASS survey might best be used. We have held discussions to

vary our contract subject to how and when schools will re-open to pupils, but above all we want to ensure that the survey will continue to be available to all schools during the current academic year.

Working Start

Prior to the lockdown, the project was delivering excellently against its outcomes, successfully recruiting and providing 16 paid placements, and 10 unpaid placements. 5 further placements were due to commence in March but were unfortunately placed on hold due to Covid-19.

We have now agreed a new, but ultimately more sustainable model of delivery for Working Start, which will build on the existing scheme and hopefully add value for participants and the council. Participants can expect a more inclusive package of support and training that enhances their employment perspectives post-placement by delivering pre-employment skills and accredited training alongside the work placement. We will also offer small businesses across the County the opportunity to join in with this scheme, providing a package of support where necessary to give them the opportunity to use a work placement to support business survival or growth at little or no risk to themselves.

Working Denbighshire Ready for Work

Working Denbighshire, in partnership with Careers Wales, held three well-attended and successful Ready for Work careers fairs; one in Denbigh, one in Prestatyn, and one in Llangollen. Over 70 employers and providers attend the events offering a widespread selection of sectors to help enrich the experience for students and stretch them beyond the school environment. The careers fairs this year were highly interactive with all exhibitors having an engaging element or activity included at their stand. On leaving the event each student was invited to feedback if they thought the event was 'very useful', 'useful' or 'not useful'. 75% of students found the event was 'Very Useful', 24% considered it to be 'useful' and only 1% deemed the event 'not useful'. Focus groups have been held with some of the students that attended the events with feedback consisting of quotes such as it 'opened a whole world of opportunities all in one room'.

Research is currently underway to explore platforms available to deliver the project virtually in future, and discussions with other organisations and employers to help inform

how the careers events can look to meet the 'new ways of working'. An options appraisal and remodelled plans will be submitted to our Corporate Plan Programme Board for consideration.

Community Benefits Hub

During 2019 to 2020 the council established a new Community Benefits Hub, which aims to maximise the impact of the £100 million that the council spends each year with 3rd party suppliers and contractors. Denbighshire wants to work with those 3rd party suppliers and contractors to bring wider social, economic and environmental benefits to our communities. The Community Benefit approach is becoming more and more common in public sector procurement and it can add value, and increase resources available to communities within Denbighshire. Community benefits can include: targeted job and training opportunities; help and support to local groups and organisations; real and measurable commitments to maximise access to opportunities for local labour, local sub-contractors and local supply chain; improvements to local area such as development; and maintenance of common community assets, general tidying up, planting of trees etc. Our Hub has been operational since March 2020.

Volunteering

We want to make it easier to attract and recruit volunteers. We now promote all volunteering opportunities through [a single centralised volunteering webpage](http://www.denbighhire.gov.uk/volunteering) with a short URL: www.denbighhire.gov.uk/volunteering. A supporting policy and documentation are being developed with HR Direct. These will be made available on the webpage once consulted upon and adopted.

Annual or Biennial Measures

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools – Benchmarked Nationally | 94.5 | 94.9 | Acceptable |
| Percentage of pupil attendance in secondary schools – Benchmarked Nationally | 93.5 | 93.4 | Priority for improvement |

| Measure | 2018 to 2019 | 2019 to 2020 | Status |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| The percentage of children aged 4-5 years who are a healthy weight or underweight (reported one year in arrears) – Benchmarked Nationally | 67.7 | Data pending | Priority for improvement |
| Local Authority Points Score Average - KS4 Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate Indicator – Benchmarked Nationally | 32.4 | 33.8 | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of children achieving 5 GSCEs A*-C (Level 2, Key Stage 4), including English or Welsh (1st language), Maths and English Literature, by the end of secondary school, against the percentage that achieved the expected standard at the end of primary school (Level 4, Key Stage 2) – Benchmarked Nationally | 48.7 | 50.9 | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of residents that are satisfied that there are job opportunities for young people at the start of their career – Benchmarked Locally | 19 | Does not apply No survey | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of residents that are satisfied that there are opportunities for young people to develop their skills – Benchmarked Locally | 28 | Does not apply No survey | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of residents that are satisfied that there are leisure opportunities that appeal to young people – Benchmarked Locally | 50 | Does not apply No survey | Acceptable |
| The number of schools providing education through suitability and condition categories C and D – Benchmarked Locally | 34 | 30 | Priority for improvement |

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

| Measure | Quarter 1 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 2 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 3 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 4 2019 to 2020 | Quarter 1 2020 to 2021 | Status |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 claiming Job Seekers Allowance – Benchmarked Nationally | 6.1 | 6.2 | 6.5 | 6.7 | 13.1 | Priority for improvement |
| The percentage of pupils (using Pupil Attitudes to Self and School - PASS) who respond positively against pupils' feelings about school – Benchmarked Locally | 81.7 | Does not apply Bi-annual | 86.1 | Does not apply Bi-annual | No data due to Covid-19 | Good |

Project Progress

The following projects are on target:

- Entrepreneur space, Rhyl
- Pupil Attitude to Self and School Survey
- School Nutrition Project
- Community Benefits Hub

The following projects are experiencing obstacles:

- Young Person Employment Bursary
- Working Denbighshire Ready for Work

- Modernising Education Programme
- Techzone
- Supporting Parents

The following project is at risk:

- The Denbighshire Working Start Scheme

Case studies

Dan's Story

Lockdown due to Covid-19 has been a very challenging time for many individuals and Dan was no exception. He has had support from a Communities for Work mentor for over a year, and during that time he has shown great determination and commitment, completing work placements, training courses and started volunteering. Volunteering increased Dan's skills, confidence and helped improve his mental health greatly. However, when lockdown was enforced, Dan struggled with his mental health as he could no longer volunteer and his interaction with people decreased as he lives on his own. His mentor continued to keep in regular contact with him over emails and phone calls and supported Dan to engage with tasks that could keep him occupied while also increasing his skills. A job opportunity then arose in the third sector and Dan's mentor informed him of this opportunity. Dan was very interested in the role as he had been wanting to pursue a career in helping people. He was supported by his mentor to complete the application and was successful in securing an interview. Dan was then supported by both his mentor and the Working Denbighshire Employment Co-ordinator with interview preparation through a number of video calls. Dan was successful at interview and he is now in full time employment; the first time in 9 years. Dan has shown great determination, and even though he has struggled during the very uncertain times, he has not let this stand in his way of reaching his goal of returning to employment.

Sustainable Development

There is a strong focus within this priority on the mental well-being and 'life skills' preparation of young people. This emphasis is as a direct result of involving young people with the County Conversation exercise, with a view to preventing circumstances that would compromise a young person's ability to thrive. Through our County Conversation with young people, we have also been able to better understand their aspirations for the future, and in particular the types of jobs young people will find rewarding, profitable and fulfilling. It is with this in mind that a number of projects in this priority aim to not only provide young people with qualifications, but to provide the jobs and skills needed for the next generation of work.

Our modernising education programme, Band A of which has just been completed, has evolved over the years but from it we have learned valuable lessons about involving pupils, parents, residents and staff in shaping the design of our schools, and as far as possible striving to compliment environmental standards that will ensure the longevity of our settings for generations to come.

The council has also placed significant investment into Rhyl, through a strategic programme of projects named the 'Rhyl Master Plan'. As part of this programme, the renovation of the Rhyl waterfront has received a £25m investment with the intention to provide a boost to the Rhyl economy and creation of over 250 jobs.

Equality and Diversity

In Denbighshire we know that young people need the best start in life to continue to grow be happy, healthy and prosperous. Through the Corporate Plan we have made provision to offer the same opportunities to all young people.

Further work has been done in 2019 to 2020 to embed and understand the output from the Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS) Survey, which has now been rolled out to all primary and secondary schools. This survey scores the attitude and behaviour of our young people against key well-being factors, benchmarked against other UK schools that also use the tool. At a school and pupil level the data can help reveal inequalities at an early stage because the data is broken down by gender, year, ethnicity, free school meal uptake, and pupils with English as an additional language. The project seeks to support

schools to consider areas for improvement, removing barriers to learning for our young people.

The 21st Century schools programme also considers key concerns in relation to the learning environment:

- Access – particularly for people with mobility impairments, a range of planning guidance and building regulation can be considered.
- Gendered facilities – the provision of appropriate facilities for trans pupils has been an issue in the past within the County and needs to be considered.
- Provision of facilities for religious worship.

To diversify the voices being heard in the running of our schools, the council developed a promotional campaign to encourage individuals from diverse backgrounds to become school governors.

Working Denbighshire has continued with its initiative to support people who don't speak English or Welsh as a first language. It aims to help them on their route to employment, cultural orientation, volunteering placements, and to help them integrate into their local community and reduce social isolation. The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses are being delivered in partnership with Adult Learning Wales.

Case Study

Julie's Story

Julie continuously applied for roles prior to lockdown and had attended numerous interviews. However, as lockdown began to see job interviews put on hold or cancelled, Julie missed out on several opportunities due to the uncertainty of the ever changing situation. However, this did not deter Julie and with telephone support from her mentor she continued to apply for roles within administration, particularly in the NHS as this is where her passion lay. With ongoing support and encouragement from her mentor, Julie secured an interview for a relief position within the NHS. Intense interview practice and research into the role then commenced with her mentor, meaning Julie headed into her interview

confident and enthusiastic. Julie received a call later that week saying that they did not want to offer her the relief position, instead wanting to offer her a full time permanent position! Julie was over the moon and could not believe they had offered her this opportunity during the Covid-19 uncertainty.

This was, however, not the end, as Julie had underlying health conditions, and due to Covid-19 her new manager had to complete checks with her specialists before she was able to start her position in the hospital. This took a lot longer than normal and meant Julie had to wait nearly 2 months before she was able to start her new role. Throughout this uncertainty she received support from her mentor who was on the end of the phone whenever help was needed. Julie is now thoroughly enjoying her new role and loves the challenge of her new position within the NHS.

What are we doing in 2020 to 2021?

We will continue to deliver against the projects that support this priority throughout 2020 to 2021.

Modernising Education: We will continue to deliver on the 21st Century Schools programme, modernising our school facilities to ensure that our children have a learning environment that supports their education. Specifically, this will involve work on developing Band B of the programme, focusing on Llangollen, Denbigh and Rhyl.

School Nutrition Project: As appropriate we will continue with the second year of the project, whilst also exploring virtual options for delivery. A further 10 schools will hopefully be recruited.

Support for Parents: During 2020 to 2021 we will finalise our Parenting Strategy, exploring our options for long-term delivery under Covid-19 restrictions.

Entrepreneur Space and TechZone: We will complete works on the Costigans site to deliver a new business space for residents. Pending funding, we will also progress with our business case for the Techzone, providing 'move-on' accommodation in St Asaph for growing businesses.

Young Person Employment Bursary: The council will continue to offer the bursary to help young people in employment progress their careers. We remain committed to this

offer especially during a time when economic recovery is so important. The Employment Bursary can help up to 80 individuals a year with funding of between £250 and £2,000 per person. [More information is available on our website.](#)

Pupil Attitude to Self and School: It remains as important as ever to us that schools have the right tools to assess the well-being of their pupils. Pending the way in which schools will operate from the autumn term, we will continue to explore options for primary and secondary schools to make valued use of the survey.

Working Start and Ready for Work: We will implement from October 2020 new models of delivery for both these projects so that the benefits of the work are not lost under Covid-19 restrictions.

Communities Benefit Hub: We will be offering information sessions from the beginning of September 2020 for Denbighshire staff to increase awareness of Community Benefits and the Hub's work. These will be targeted especially at those involved in commissioning goods, works or services.

Volunteering: By March 2021 we will develop a revised volunteering policy for the council that supports our ambitions as an authority for both staff well-being and development, but also the needs of the community and the environment.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is embedded in the way that we do things at Denbighshire County Council, and is a key consideration for our programme board approach to delivering our corporate priorities.

Our [Well-being Impact Assessment website](#), which is well-used by staff and referenced by councillors to better enable informed decision-making, checks the extent to which the Sustainable Development principles have been applied for any given project, as well as the likely impact (positive or otherwise) within the context of the seven well-being goals.

A process for considering and responding to Community Risk has been devised, by which County-wide risks are recorded and reflected in our Local Assessment of Well-being in order to enable us to identify priorities.

We have also recognised that our approach to engagement needed to shift, so that residents are involved in discussions about decisions that affect them much earlier on in the process than was previously the case. To facilitate this, a new [County Conversation Portal](#) has been launched to better enable us to organise our engagement activity, and to monitor the approach that is taken in order to enable us to look for opportunities to continuously improve.

Equality and Diversity

Through the projects that we deliver, our Corporate Plan commits the council to:

- Engage, where appropriate, with groups that represent people with protected characteristics.
- Consider limitations to physical access, in particular with new builds, but also with regard to access to information and services.
- Consider the appropriateness of the facilities that we have available within the council's estate for use by those people with protected characteristics.

- Engage, challenge and, where possible, remove barriers to opportunities (including work) for those with protected characteristics.
- Condemn hate related bullying and harassment.

Our project and programme management processes, which support the delivery of all projects in the Corporate Plan, enforce these principles; and in particular the council's approach to Well-being Impact Assessments of all projects, plans and policies requiring decision is well embedded and understood by staff and councillors.

Our Equality and Diversity pages on our website also celebrate diversity and promote equality in everything that we do to improve the quality of life for everyone living, working and visiting Denbighshire.

Other actions in support of our Public Sector Equality Duty include:

Training

We provide equality training for staff via an online equality e-learning module. This training is provided for all new employees, and is mandatory for all personnel.

Engagement

Our County Conversation Portal is used to find out what's most important to our communities and helps us to make sure we focus on the right areas. All the work undertaken previously on our County Conversation included contact with groups from protected characteristics.

The council is also a member of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network (NWPSSEN), which is a valued forum for sharing best practice and learning around equality issues that the public sector is facing. NWPSSEN membership includes the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Welsh Government.

Equality Reporting Elsewhere

Each year we are required, as a Local Authority, to publish reports detailing our commitment and compliance with equality legislation, and to regularly report on pay systems and assess the equality of pay.

At Denbighshire County Council we support the principle of diversity and equality as we need people from diverse backgrounds to ensure that we are representative of the County. We are committed to providing equal pay for work of equal value and aim to provide an equitable pay structure.

We have produced the Public Sector Equality Duty report for 2018 to 2019 detailing our commitment and compliance with this legislation. We have also created a Gender Pay Report 2018 to 2019 reviewing the average earnings between men and women within the council. [Click here to view the most recent reports.](#)

Welsh Language

Denbighshire County Council is fully committed to responding positively to the Welsh language standards, and this has been reflected in our 5 year Welsh Language Strategy. That commitment has not changed and we continue to play our part towards national efforts to increase the number of Welsh speakers to a million by 2050.

The duties arising from the standards mean that the council should not treat the Welsh language less favourably than English, as well as promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language (making it easier for people to use their Welsh language skills in everyday life). The strategy will need to be reviewed in 2020 to 2021 so that it is operational by 2022, therefore our priority is to deliver a strategy for the next 10 years that will set an ambitious goal and targets to ensure Denbighshire is a County where Welsh culture and heritage is alive and the Welsh language thrives.

Each service within the council has a Welsh Language Champion who regularly monitors progress with the standards, shares best practice, and acts as a 'critical friend'. They carry out 'mystery shopper' checks and arrange awareness sessions and activity for colleagues and learners.

The council recently held its second staff Eisteddfod as it proved to be a very popular event last year. The event is part of the council's efforts to raise the profile and understanding of the language, and to celebrate the culture of Wales. It comes at a time when there is a lot of focus on the Welsh language and the Eisteddfod's return to Denbighshire in May 2021. The response and support received was overwhelming, with over 60 members of staff entering the competitions. Plans are already in the pipeline for 2021.

We want to support employees on their language journey. We encourage employees to practice, and we arrange various informal opportunities throughout the year including:

- Tea and Talk: Informal sessions to increase staff confidence in speaking Welsh.
- Staff Choir: Formed in 2018, Côr Sain y Sir has over 20 members ranging from Welsh learners to fluent speakers. They sing Welsh songs and perform in various events such as the council's carol service and community housing awards.
- Welsh Walking Club: Going on walks once a week during lunchtime in order to practice spoken Welsh.
- Organize various ways / activities of celebrating Wales' national events such as St Dwynwen's Day, St David's Day, Owain Glyndŵr, Shwmae Su'mae, Welsh language Music day, and many more.

All services are also required to produce an annual workforce plan which must consider the number of Welsh speakers employed within services. All Heads of Service are asked to consider whether they have enough Welsh speakers to provide a fully bilingual service to the public.

We have introduced a new framework for staff to self-assess their language skills based on the types of communication tasks (reading, writing, speaking and understanding) they could undertake through the medium of Welsh. This is an effective way of being able to monitor what level of skills are needed for the job, and what course employees need to move to the next level.

The council is an active partner of the Welsh language partnership. The forum is made up of a number of organisations, both local and national, working towards the promotion and strategic development of the Welsh language here in Denbighshire.

Our vision is for greater opportunities for the use of the Welsh language in the workplace, with more emphasis on including specific Welsh language requirements for new posts through:

- Supporting staff to further develop their skills in order to be able to work naturally bilingually, and to encourage and support staff without Welsh language skills to learn the language over a period of time.
- Adopting a recruitment policy that will enable the council to normalise the use of the Welsh language in its daily administration and the services it provides. As a priority, it will focus on the departments that offer a front-line service to customers.

We have developed a mandatory e-learning module which provides a background to the development of the Welsh language, and there is also an opportunity for employees with little or no Welsh Language skills to complete 10 hour online courses through the 'Work Welsh' scheme.

Project Register

Every six months the council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) receives an update on all corporate projects that are underway in Denbighshire. The Project Register (Appendix I) provides the most recent status information extracted from Project Highlight Reports, written by the Project Manager, and approved by the Project Executive.

Currently two projects on the register show a 'compromised' position:

- **Queen's Buildings, Rhyl:** The delivery confidence status remains as 'compromised' at this stage due to the funding shortfall to deliver Phase 1, and the extent of asbestos that needs to be removed prior to demolition.

- **Rhyl Town Centre Gateway Schemes 1 and 2 (123-129 High Street and 129-131 High Street):** The project is experiencing obstacles due to the tenders received exceeding the client budget.

Currently five projects on the register show an 'at risk' position:

- **The Denbighshire Working Start Scheme:** The established model for delivery of this project cannot operate under Covid-19 restrictions. A review has determined upon what we hope will be a more sustainable model of delivery for Working Start, building on the existing scheme and adding value for participants and the council.
- **Improving Energy Efficiency in Council Houses:** The pandemic has impacted upon the schedule of works for this project. The council is also seeking clarification from Welsh Government with regards to all-Wales targets for de-carbonisation, which will likely increase the required Energy Performance Certificate thresholds for our housing. Any increase above our existing ambition will influence the type and cost of improvements.
- **Marketing:** Delivery confidence is very low for most actions in the project at present due to the virus. However, work has continued on the draft marketing policy as business as usual activity becomes more possible for the project manager.
- **Remodelling Waste Service Operations:** Delivery of the new Depot has been delayed due to a number of challenges, including progress with the detailed design due to impact of Covid-19, and delays around completing on the purchase of the site, which in turn has restricted ability to progress works with utilities (again slowed due to Covid-19). In addition, complications of working in collaboration with four businesses to make progress in a coordinated manner through land purchase, design and planning has been challenging and generated significant workload.
- **Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project:** Covid-19 has and will continue to have an impact on this project directly in terms of timeline and issues, but also indirectly in terms of the financial and political landscape in which a match funding request to Denbighshire County Council in November will be made.

Risk Management

The council's Corporate Risk Register (Appendix II) enables us to manage the likelihood and impact of significant risks to our business and services. It evaluates the effect of any current actions that we are undertaking, and highlights areas where tighter control may be needed. The register is developed and owned by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Cabinet, and is formally reviewed twice yearly. Informal reviews can occur at any time as necessary, however. We also manage risk registers for our Corporate Plan programmes, projects and services.

During the year, we did not experience any unforeseen risks and none of our risks developed into an adverse issue. Our risk which is concerned with the council's ability to respond to such emergencies as a public health event (i.e. Covid-19) actually stood the test of the virus outbreak as we continued to maintain statutory services, and more as we responded to the crisis, for the benefit of our residents. The virus has also of course increased the likelihood of a number of our other risks occurring, specifically the risk of a downturn in the economy and increase financial liabilities. Our most recent Corporate Risk review (September 2020) reflects these increased pressures.

Three new risks were created this year:

- The risk that the council does not have the funds or resources to meet its statutory obligations under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.
- The risk of Ash Dieback Disease (ADB) in Denbighshire leading to significant health and safety issues that represent a potential risk to life.
- The risk that the council is unable to deliver the agenda of Council and external organisations within existing resources.

In our February 2020 review we adapted our approach to mitigating two of our risks:

- The risk that effective partnerships and interfaces between Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and Denbighshire County Council do not

develop, leading to significant misalignment between the strategic and operational direction of both organisations. The likelihood of this risk occurring has been mitigated by the completion of our Denbigh Community Resource site, and plans for a further site in Prestatyn.

- The risk that even if the WG financial settlement is as anticipated, decisions that are necessary to identify and deliver the savings programme and enable a balanced budget are not taken or implemented quickly enough. In response to this risk, it was agreed that the council would review its Strategic Investment Group (SIG) process.

In September 2019 we introduced a new risk appetite approach, which was a natural step for the council to mature its application of risk management. At the end of its first year we reviewed our risk appetite statement and have consequently made some enhancements, including the addition of safeguarding as its own appetite classification, and, adhering to accessibility guidelines and responding to feedback from staff, we have made the scoring, escalation and appetite criteria more clear and easy to apply. You can read more about our risk management policy and appetite on our website.

External Regulators

The work of all councils in Wales is scrutinised by external regulators to ensure that we use public money efficiently and effectively to deliver benefits for our communities. Specific to Denbighshire County Council, seven reports were published by our regulators during 2019 to 2020:

Well-being of Future Generations Examination: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

The council is taking promising action to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to reduce the risk of flooding, but needs to consider its next steps to further embrace the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Annual Improvement Report: 2018 to 2019

Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by Audit Wales and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to

continuous improvement, but, as will all councils in Wales, it faces challenges going forward.

Delivering with Less: Leisure Services

The council's continued investment in leisure facilities has secured good customer satisfaction, but later stages of its otherwise effective arrangements for considering alternative delivery models were rushed compromising governance.

Review of Corporate Arrangements for Safeguarding

The council has effective arrangements for safeguarding, but it needs to improve monitoring and performance reporting.

Financial Sustainability Assessment

Overall Audit Wales found that the council is in a relatively strong financial position, but needs to strengthen its Medium Term Financial Strategy and control some service overspending to support future financial sustainability.

Inspection of Older Adults Services

During August 2019 Care Inspectorate Wales and the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales undertook a joint review to explore how well the council promoted independence and prevents escalating needs for older adults. Our strengths and weaknesses against the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act are published in this report.

Local Authority Annual Performance Review Letter 2019 to 2020

This annual letter from the Care Inspectorate Wales provides a summary of the council's strengths and weaknesses against the implementation of the principles behind the Social Services and Well-being Act.

There were no other local reports with recommendations for the council, published by the WAO, Estyn, or Care Inspectorate Wales in 2019 to 2020.

National Data Collections

Public Accountability Measures 2019 to 2020

The decision was made by WG Government and Data Cymru at an early stage of the pandemic to suspend national collection of the Public Accountability Measures (PAMS) to allow Local Authorities to better concentrate on responding to the pandemic. It is not yet clear what the process for the coming year will look like.

Code of Practice: Performance and improvement of Social Services in Wales

The Code of Practice in relation to the Performance and Improvement of Social Services in Wales came into force March 2020. Again, due to unprecedented challenges facing local authorities, the decision was made that there would be no requirement to submit data for 2019 to 2020. Further, accepting the extent of the disruption caused, which will impact on 2020 to 2021 data, it is not anticipated that there will be a requirement to submit data for those years either.

Appendix 1: Project Register (August 2020)

| Project Name | Delivery Confidence |
|---|------------------------|
| Young Person Employment Bursary | Experiencing obstacles |
| Working Denbighshire Ready for Work | Experiencing obstacles |
| The Denbighshire Working Start Scheme | At risk |
| Deliver a co-working space for new enterprises at the former Costigans building | On target |
| TechZone / ParthDechnoleg: Growth Sector Move-on Accommodation | Experiencing obstacles |
| Denbigh Extra Care Housing | Experiencing obstacles |
| East Rhyl Coastal Defence Scheme | On target |
| New build- Christ the Word 3-16 Catholic school in Rhyl | Experiencing obstacles |
| Ruthin Review - New School for Llanfair DC | On target |

| Project Name | Delivery Confidence |
|---|------------------------|
| Ruthin Extra Care Housing (Phase 2) | Experiencing obstacles |
| PLANT Project : Urban Tree Planting | On target |
| Improving biodiversity in Denbighshire | Experiencing obstacles |
| Monitoring and supporting positive pupil attitudes to self and school/well-being | On target |
| Additional Council Housing Developments | Experiencing obstacles |
| Target those most likely to be digitally excluded so they have the skills and means to use digital services | On target |
| Supporting Parents in Denbighshire | Experiencing obstacles |
| People are involved in shaping and improving services | Experiencing obstacles |
| Work with RSLs and the private sector to deliver additional affordable homes | On target |
| Bring 500 Empty Homes back into use | On target |

| Project Name | Delivery Confidence |
|--|------------------------|
| Supporting Carers in Denbighshire | Experiencing obstacles |
| Make superfast broadband and mobile networks available to everyone | On target |
| Improve infrastructure to make it easier to stage events | Experiencing obstacles |
| Ensure Council Information and Services are Accessible Online | Experiencing obstacles |
| Improving Energy Efficiency in Council Houses | At risk |
| Community Resource Teams | On target |
| Community Planning - Windfarms | Experiencing obstacles |
| Community Benefits Hub | On target |
| Health and Well-being - Nutrition and Cooking Skills | On target |
| To maintain, enhance, protect and preserve Denbighshire's 'living assets' for future generations | On target |

| Project Name | Delivery Confidence |
|---|------------------------|
| Working towards becoming a Dementia Friendly Council | On target |
| Develop options to reduce plastics use within Denbighshire County Council (Phase 1 and Phase 2) | Experiencing obstacles |
| Moorland Management and Wildfire Prevention Project | On target |
| Act to Reduce Domestic Abuse | On target |
| Marketing | At risk |
| Remodelling Waste Service Operations | At risk |
| Corporate Support Services Review | Experiencing obstacles |
| Implementation of an ADMC | On target |
| Queen's Buildings- Rhyl | Compromised |
| Rhyl Public Realm Strategy | Experiencing obstacles |

| Project Name | Delivery Confidence |
|--|------------------------|
| Rhyl Town Centre Gateway Schemes 1 and 2 (123-129 High Street and 129-131 High Street) | Compromised |
| West Rhyl Neighbourhood Management | On target |
| Rhyl Town Centre Focussed Enforcement | Experiencing obstacles |
| Edward Henry Street | On target |
| Housing Renewals Theme Project | On target |
| Traffic modelling and design traffic improvement works | Experiencing obstacles |
| Victorian Post Office | On target |
| Centralised Mailroom Project | Experiencing obstacles |
| Commercialisation of the Digital Records Bureau | Experiencing obstacles |
| Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project | At risk |

| Project Name | Delivery Confidence |
|--|------------------------|
| CRM | Experiencing obstacles |
| Working Denbighshire Strategy | On target |
| Welsh Language Centre | Experiencing obstacles |
| Oaktree Centre Extension | Experiencing obstacles |
| Childcare Facility at Ysgol Twm o'r Nant | None |
| Capita Regional MIS | Experiencing obstacles |
| Universal Credit in Denbighshire | On target |
| Former North Wales Hospital | Experiencing obstacles |

Appendix 2: Corporate Risk Register (September 2020)

| Risk Description | Inherent Risk | Residual Risk |
|---|---|---|
| The risk of a serious safeguarding error where the council has responsibility, resulting in serious harm or death | B2 Critical Risk, Likely / High Impact | D2 Major Risk, Unlikely / High Impact |
| The risk that the economic and financial environment worsens beyond current expectations, leading to additional demand on services and reduced income | B1 Critical Risk, Likely / Very High Impact | B2 Critical Risk, Likely / High Impact |
| The risk of an ineffective response to a serious event, such as severe weather, contamination, public safety (including cyber-attack), or a public health event (such as Covid-19). | A2 Critical Risk: Almost Certain / High impact | C3 Moderate risk: Possible / Medium Impact |
| The risk of a significantly negative report(s) from external regulators | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact | D3 Moderate Risk, Unlikely / Medium Impact |
| The risk of significant liabilities resulting from alternative models of service delivery | B2 Critical Risk, Likely / High Impact | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact |
| The risk of a health and safety incident resulting in serious injury or the loss of life. (Where Health & Safety is referred to, this incorporates fire safety) | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact | E2 Moderate Risk, Rare / High Impact |

| Risk Description | Inherent Risk | Residual Risk |
|---|--|---|
| The risk that the impact of welfare reform (Universal Credit) is more significant than anticipated by the council. | B2 Critical Risk, Likely / High Impact | D3 Moderate Risk, Unlikely / Medium Impact |
| The risk that programme and project benefits are not fully realised. | B2 Critical Risk, Likely / High Impact | D2 Major Risk, Unlikely / High Impact |
| The risk that effective partnerships and interfaces between Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and Denbighshire County Council (DCC) do not develop, leading to significant misalignment between the strategic and operational direction of BCUHB and DCC. | A1 Critical Risk, Almost Certain / Very High Impact | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact |
| The risk that even if the settlement is as anticipated, decisions that are necessary to identify and deliver the savings programme and enable a balanced budget are not taken or implemented quickly enough | B1 Critical Risk, Likely / Very High Impact | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact |
| The risk that appropriate capacity and skills to sustain service and corporate performance is not available | C3 Moderate Risk, Possible / Medium Impact | D3 Moderate Risk, Unlikely / Medium Impact |
| The risk of fraud and corruption resulting in financial and reputational loss and possibly impacting on service delivery | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact | E2 Moderate Risk, Rare / High Impact |

| Risk Description | Inherent Risk | Residual Risk |
|--|--|---|
| The risk that the cost of care is outstripping the council's resource | B1 Critical Risk, Likely / Very High Impact | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact |
| The risk that demand for specialist care cannot be met locally | B2 Critical Risk, Likely / High Impact | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact |
| The risk that the return on investment that Denbighshire receives from the Regional Growth Deal is disproportionate | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact |
| The risk that any negative impacts of leaving the European Union cannot be mitigated by the council | B1 Critical Risk, Likely / Very High Impact | B1 Critical Risk, Likely / Very High Impact |
| The risk that partners don't have the resources, matching priorities or commitment to support delivery of shared plans and priorities | B1 Critical Risk, Likely / Very High Impact | C2 Major Risk, Possible / High Impact |
| The risk that the council does not have the funds or resources to meet its statutory obligations under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 | B2 – Critical risk: Likely / High Impact | D3 – Moderate Risk: Unlikely / Medium Impact |

| Risk Description | Inherent Risk | Residual Risk |
|---|---|--|
| The risk of Ash Dieback Disease (ADB) in Denbighshire leading to significant health and safety issues that represent a potential risk to life | A1 – Critical Risk: Almost Certain / Very High Impact | A2 – Critical Risk: Almost Certain / High Impact |
| The risk that the council is unable to deliver the agenda of Council and external organisations within existing resources | A3 – Major Risk: Almost Certain / Medium Impact | C4 – Moderate Risk: Possible / Low Impact |
| Failure to progress the replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) to adoption | A2 – Critical Risk: Almost Certain / High impact | A2 – Critical Risk: Almost Certain / High impact |