

<b>Report to</b>	Cabinet Briefing
<b>Date of meeting</b>	2 November 2020
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<b>Report author</b>	Judith Greenhalgh, Chief Executive
<b>Title</b>	Covid 19 – The Future Shape of Denbighshire County Council

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

1.1. This report sets out a vision for how the Council's officers and functions will work to strengthen the Council, maximise use of resources and focus on outcomes for citizens as it emerges from the Covid-19 crisis and focusses on operating safely, efficiently and effectively in the new world.

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

2.1. To share this vision and invite comments from SLT and subsequently cabinet before engagement with the wider workforce and members

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

3.1. That SLT consider and suggest amendments to the vision set out in this report, based on their experiences of Covid-19 and their views on how the Council can operate safely, efficiently and effectively in the future.

## **4. Report details**

### **Background**

4.1. In March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic struck North Wales, the Council very rapidly shifted its focus and priorities to ensuring that our essential services were maintained, the public kept safe, the most vulnerable in our communities

were supported and our business had access to information, funding and advice.

- 4.2. The Council was able to make this shift rapidly, with a clear focus on what was important – this was a view also shared by the political leadership of the County – and the Council worked effectively by sharing resources, using staff and budgets flexibly and by freeing staff and managers up to make decisions quickly. We have received praise from the regional emergency planning team for the operational management of the crisis by our SLT and held up as a regional exemplar.
- 4.3. Throughout this period, and to date, outside of front line operational services, the Council has worked almost entirely remotely. We are of course, not alone in this – all Councils and many businesses right across Wales have seen a seismic cultural shift away from office based working and the need to be present in a building to justify your productivity. Of course, there is a balance to be had between home and office working in the future, but it is unlikely that we will ever go back to the way it was before
- 4.4. At the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, the Council had already faced and managed 10 years of real terms budget reductions, after demographic and other pressures. During the Covid crisis we have experienced not only additional costs, but significant income losses; whilst WG have committed to making good some of these losses, it is unlikely they will be met in full and the national cost of the pandemic is likely to lead to far tighter settlements in the future. As a consequence of Covid, the Council's financial position is likely to be squeezed still further
- 4.5. The Council has learnt many lessons from its experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, which it is important are not lost. In setting out this vision, that learning has been considered and incorporated. It should be seen that this vision is entirely co-terminous with and sits alongside the Council's recovery strategy and thematic approach, which also incorporate learning from our experiences in the pandemic and the likely business, community and financial landscape that will face Denbighshire County Council in the future

## **The Corporate Plan**

- 4.6. The Council's plan was adopted at the beginning of the current political administration and ends in 2022. It was informed in part by the 'County Conversation'
- 4.7. The five priorities set out in the Council's corporate plan held well during Covid, remained priorities during the response phase and can be seen clearly reflected in the Recovery Themes and Priorities adopted by cabinet and by SLT
- 4.8. The vision that follows builds on and holds true to those corporate plan priorities, with an intention to focus more clearly on the spirit and intention of those

## **The Vision**

- 4.9. Much of what follows is not new; it reflects the way that we have been working for the last two years to maximise our use of Council resources, and to focus on delivery for communities
- 4.10. However, in the light of lessons learned from Covid, it is timely to set out and articulate how the Council will seek to work going forward, to create a common focus and understanding.
- 4.11. The overall approach can be summarised under three headings as set out below
- 4.12. **We Will Operate as One Council** As the staff of Denbighshire County Council, we share a collective responsibility to work together across services to achieve the best outcomes for the people of Denbighshire. A resident contacting us should receive a single response and joined up, co-ordinated support. We will work to further break down silos between departments, share information and support and use our corporate resources most efficiently and effectively and where they are most needed. Staff should feel supported and enabled to use their expertise to best effect and building on the lessons from Covid, will work with managers to find the best balance between office and home working that suits the Council, Services and individual well-being.

**4.13. We Will Focus Our Resources on What Matters** A clear lesson from Covid-19 has been that a sharp focus on a smaller number of things enables us to get things done quickly and successfully. At the present time, the Council monitors its performance by tracking the corporate plan but also by tracking the WG National Performance Indicator Set. The National Indicator set is a crude basket of measures, does not give an overall view of performance in Denbighshire, nor does it reflect what cabinet and senior officers would view as priorities. The time is right to develop a Denbighshire 'Balanced Scorecard', building on the corporate plan and developing indicators that are a true measure of performance and 'what matters' to this Council. The 'scorecard' would also include corporate health indicators, including financial, governance and HR matters.

**4.14. We Will Focus on Communities** This Council already has a track record of investing in community engagement, community development and in supporting communities more widely. During Covid-19, we established a community support and calling service, supported by local voluntary organisations, which has received outstanding feedback from the public and provided valuable intelligence to us, and partners. We also made a number of excellent connections with local community and voluntary groups which enabled us to stay informed and direct resources to where they are most needed. Whilst 'community resilience' is a key component of our recovery strategy, we should put community involvement at the heart of everything we do and work to empower communities to do things for themselves. A key element of our current strategy, the development of the Climate and Ecological Change Strategy, for example, has a significant element of community development behind it and has been shaped by representatives of communities themselves. Involving and engaging with communities not only enables us to be closer to the people that we serve but also to harness the resource and commitment of those communities – including Councils – to work with DCC for the benefit of all.

### **Next Steps**

4.15. The purpose of this report is to summarise and encapsulate a number of existing and developing themes and approaches and to set them out in an unambiguous and structured way to set out a clear message for how the Council wants to emerge from Covid and be taken forward in to the 'new

normal'. It builds on existing intentions, whilst learning from our experiences during the pandemic

4.16. The vision set out above will be clearly set out to staff, discussed with middle managers and adopted alongside the Council's existing 'vision and values'. It will be embedded in the Council's leadership framework

4.17. The development of the 'Balanced Scorecard' will begin in consultation with lead members, with a view to presenting something to Full Council later in the year

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1. The Council has responded well to the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020 and has gained some valuable insights in to working differently and working effectively which should be retained

5.2. The Council has scarce resources, which should be deployed efficiently and effectively and where the Council wishes to prioritise and deliver performance.

5.3. The Vision and Principles as set out above will give a clear strategic vision for staff to discuss and contribute to, and provide a string sense of direction to guide our decision making in the 'new normal' and beyond.