

# **Appendix 2 – Corporate Plan Performance Update: January to March 2022**

This document presents the council's performance against its priorities and governance areas between January to March 2022, including our application of the Sustainable Development principle, the Public Sector Equality Duty, and Socio-Economic Duty.

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

**By EMAIL:** [strategicplanningteam@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:strategicplanningteam@denbighshire.gov.uk)

**By TELEPHONE:** 01824 706291

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

**By POST:**

Strategic Planning and Performance Team,

Denbighshire County Council,

PO Box 62,

Ruthin,

LL15 9AZ

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

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## Summary position

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: Good

**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: Excellent

**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

**Corporate Health:** The council is efficient, well-managed and environmentally sustainable

Measures: Acceptable

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' performance. 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: Good

### **Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update**

As at the end of March 2022, there were 2,050 people on the Single Route to Housing (SARTH) waiting list, which is a decrease from the last period, October to December (2,378). Our second SARTH measure considers the number of people housed from the register into either council stock or a Denbighshire Registered Social Landlord property. During 2021 to 2022 a total of 261 people were housed, down from 328 the previous year.

We have delivered 422 additional homes during 2021 to 2022. This is slightly down from 435 the previous year. In terms of the additional supply of council houses provided, 13 units were successfully added to our stock and all of these were 'buy backs' with no new builds completed in this period. There have been 222 additional affordable housing, including social housing, provided during the year. This is an exceptional return and the highest since we began recording figures in 2006, bringing our total since 2017 to 586.

The increase is because:

- The council has taken on 43 homelessness leases this year. Performance is normally around 10 annually, but there has been additional funding provided for long-term leases with the private sector.
- Grŵp Cynefin completed the Extra Care scheme in Denbigh, bringing forward 74 dwellings.
- Adra have substantially completed the development in Meliden, and did complete the development in Trefnant, which has added 38 dwellings so far.

Another area of success within this priority includes the Empty Homes project. 196 Empty Homes have been brought back into use during 2021 to 2022, bringing the total to 695 since 2017, exceeding the target of 500 homes.

Our measure around the number of private sector homes improved in standard and quality has fallen significantly below our usual standard due to Covid-19 restrictions on work. 325 homes were improved during 2021 to 2022, down from 415 the previous year.

The percentage of households successfully prevented from homelessness (Section 66 duty) has fallen from 52% to 42% during 2021 to 2023. This equates to 31 successful outcomes out of a total of 81. The percentage of households successfully relieved from homelessness (Section 73 duty) has also seen a decline since the same period last year, from 31% to 22%, which equates to 108 successful outcomes out of a total of 501.

Our previous report overlooked two new data items from our 2021 Stakeholder Survey. There were two satisfaction measures pertinent to this outcome, covering:

- The percentage of residents reporting they felt satisfied with the availability of housing in their area (30%, down from 42% in 2018).
- The percentage of residents reporting they are satisfied with the standard of housing in their area (40%, down from 52% in 2018).

## **Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update**

### **Closed: Denbigh Extra Care Housing**

Following some delays with the handover date at the beginning of this period, we are now pleased to report that the scheme is fully open and the provider, Abacare, are on site.

### **Experiencing Obstacles: Ruthin Extra Care Housing**

We are still waiting on Grŵp Cynefin to set a firm date to start works on site. Preparatory works were due to begin during April, 2022, but there is slight delay due to bats. A construction programme is being drawn-up and an overall scheme programme is being developed. Grŵp Cynefin are anticipating demolition works to begin in full around June and we are currently working to a construction end date of February 2024.

### **Experiencing Obstacles: Additional Council Homes**

The delivery confidence for delivering additional council housing developments has improved as progress has been made on various sites.

- The former [Prestatyn Library](#) will be demolished and the site will be redeveloped to create a new commercial space and apartments available for social rent, providing 14 older persons' apartments. Energy in the apartments will be generated by ground source heat pumps and solar panels on the roof to create improved energy efficient living for future residents.
- At its [meeting in March](#), Cabinet approved tenders for the renovation of a terrace of eight properties in Aquarium Street in Rhyl. A contract notice with an estimated value of £2 million was published on the Sell2Wales procurement portal in December. Four tender submissions were received, and following an evaluation exercise a preferred contractor has been selected.
- The purchase of three former council houses in Rhyl has been completed.

The application for planning permission for a residential development on land adjacent to Ysgol Pendref in Denbigh was refused, which would have included 22 affordable units for social rent to be offered to the council. Despite this and the schedule over-run that has been caused by the pandemic, the programme is still confident of successful delivery.

### **Closed: Affordable Housing**

As described above, delivery of our Corporate Plan target for an additional 260 affordable homes has been exceeded, with 222 delivered during 2021 to 2022. Since the start of the Corporate Plan in 2017 we have delivered a total of 586 affordable homes. The affordable housing delivery action is now being taken forward within the Service Plan for Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services.

### **Closed: Empty Homes Back into Use**

Again, the Empty Homes project has met and exceeded the Corporate Priority target of bringing 500 empty homes back into use, with 695 empty properties having been brought back into use since 2017. The Empty Homes delivery action will now be taken forward within the Service Plan for Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services.



## Annual or Biennial Measures

Measure	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	Status
The number of people who were on the Complex Disabilities Specialist Housing Needs Register for whom supported housing has been secured – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	5	13	Excellent
The additional supply of council houses provided	14	13	Does not apply Count only
Number of additional homes provided in Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	435	422	Excellent
Number of empty properties brought back into use (old definition) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	184	196	Excellent
The number of private sector homes improved in standard and quality due to intervention from the council – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	415	325	Priority for improvement
The additional supply of affordable housing, including social housing, provided during the year – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	154	222	Excellent
Percentage of households successfully prevented from homelessness (Section 66 duty) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	52	42	Priority for improvement
Percentage of households successfully relieved from homelessness (Section 73 duty) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	31	22	Priority for improvement
Number of additional Extra Care Homes supported by the council	0	74	Does not apply Count only

Measure	2018 to 2019	2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of residents reporting they felt satisfied with the availability of housing in their area – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	42	30	Priority for improvement

Measure	2018 to 2019	2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of residents reporting they are satisfied with the standard of housing in their area – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	52	40	Priority for improvement

## Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Measure	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Quarter 2 2021 to 2022	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Status
Number of people on SARTH waiting list – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	2,139	2,297	2,283	2,378	2,050	Priority for improvement
Cumulative number of people housed from the SARTH register	328	67	153	209	261	Does not apply Count only

## Well-being and Equality

This priority applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity**, environmental **resilience**, **health**, **equality**, **cohesive communities**, and a **globally responsible** Wales with a **vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**. Below are some further highlights from the last year of work that we have undertaken in support of the Well-being Goals and the Sustainable Development Principle; but also benefiting those with protected characteristics or who are at a socio-economic disadvantage.

### Accommodation Provision for the Homeless

In November, Internal Audit completed a follow-up review of homelessness accommodation, giving again a low assurance rating. The report was presented for information to the Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in March](#). The review found that overall the council is taking a more strategic approach to homelessness, involving a number of key services in decision making. Operationally there have been restructures to help better meet demand and comply with the Welsh Government's rapid

rehousing model, but there remain a number of vacancies in the team that are putting pressure on capacity. Diary notes were not always kept up-to-date, and housing plans were not always in place. There was limited documented guidance, and while some quality assurance checks were initially put in place, these stopped when the administrator left their post. However, an accommodation officer has recently been recruited and they will be responsible for carrying out document checks going forward.

We have found that **collaborating** and **integrating** across services in strategic decisions around homelessness prevention is having a positive impact on effective decision making. It is now important that the council addresses any remaining issues around capacity to provide a service that meets growing demands, and **involves** individuals in ways in which we can meet their **long-term** well-being needs and **prevent** homelessness. This will particularly benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

## **Delivery of Housing and Homelessness Strategy**

Denbighshire's [Housing and Homelessness Strategy](#) was adopted by Council in December 2020. Since its adoption there have been many key areas of progress within the Action Plan, which is being monitored by the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group. Of the 40 actions identified, 9 have been embedded in operational delivery as 'business as usual', and 23 actions are on track to be delivered within the set time scales. There are some minor delays on 8 actions in accordance with the original deadlines set, which is due to the impact of Covid-19. The first three themes of the strategy have been reviewed. Theme four, which deals with homelessness in Denbighshire, will be reviewed in detail at the group's meeting in March, however, some actions are already well on the way to completion, including the acquisition of a building to provide temporary homelessness accommodation for families in Denbighshire; the review of the Housing Support Grant to ensure different levels of support are available for a variety of needs; and integrating the Housing First programme into the Homelessness Support Pathway. Theme five, 'Homes and support for vulnerable people', and Theme six, 'Promoting and supporting communities', will be reviewed in June.

This Strategy supports those at a **socio-economic disadvantage** and those who have protected characteristics such as **Age, Disability, Religion and Belief, and Race**. The Strategy and the action plan take a **long-term** approach to **prevent** and end homelessness within Denbighshire, promoting **collaboration** and **integration** with

partners, and **involving** communities to address issues and encourage community cohesion.

## **Housing Support Programme Strategy**

At Cabinet's [meeting in February](#), approval was given for the vision outlined within the new Housing Support Programme Strategy. The Strategy is required of local authorities in Wales by the Welsh Government to outline their strategic direction for housing support and homelessness prevention. It has been aligned to the existing Housing and Homelessness Strategy, which is monitored by the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group.

This work **integrates** with the Welsh Government's ambition for housing and homelessness. A thorough needs assessment was undertaken in **collaboration** with a range of stakeholders, also **involving** citizens who have experienced homelessness and accessed services, and providers delivering support services (including Third Sector organisations and other statutory partners such as BCUHB, Police and Probation Services). A draft action plan has been produced to support the delivery of the Strategy, which will be reviewed annually. The next stage is to add **long-term** actions with agreed timeframes prior to publishing the Strategy, which will seek to benefit those at **socio-economic disadvantage** and **prevent** homelessness.

## **Housing Maintenance Materials Supply Contract**

Approval was given by Cabinet at its [meeting in January](#) on the direct award of the council's next materials supply contract to Travis Perkins through the Adra All Wales Materials Framework. In recent years, the supply of building materials to the council's council house repairs and maintenance team had been provided by Jewson's, who were awarded their current contract back in 2017, and was due to expire in early 2022.

A major benefit of the All Wales Framework is Travis Perkins' commitment and ability to support the **long-term** provision of renewable technologies, as well as carbon conscious materials for the construction of dwellings, including modular and timber frame solutions. It also offers opportunities across Wales for **collaboration** with other authorities and housing providers, offering potential material cost savings through economies of scale. Bulk transport and local storage solutions will also **prevent** and reduce carbon emissions through our supply chain.

## **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**

Data for the condition of A, B and C roads for 2021 to 2022 is now available, though we do not yet have the national comparative data. There has been improvement in all measures, with the condition of A roads now at only 2.6% in poor condition, improved from 3.5%; B roads at 3.8%, improved from 5%; and C roads at 7.5%, improved slightly from 7.6%. The overall score is 5.7% for A, B & C combined, the third consecutive year of improvement in condition.

At March 2022, the coverage of superfast broadband in Denbighshire was at 93.9%, a very small increase of 0.53% since January. 3.95% of premises had broadband of 10mbps or below. This is a 0.23% decrease since January 2022. The picture is still one where Denbighshire's constituencies are among those with the poorest superfast broadband coverage when compared to the rest of the UK.

53% of public transactions with the council were undertaken through its website during January to March 2022, compared to the total number of transactions undertaken using all access channels. This is a 2% increase on October to December's figure.

During January to March 2022, 43% of damaged roads and pavements were made safe within target time. This remains a priority for improvement and a concern for the council. Essentially there is an identified reporting issue between two systems that is showing performance to be worse than it actually is, exacerbated by capacity issues and staff absence. These issues are being actively addressed by the Service with the expectation of improvement from the first quarter.

## **Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update**

### **Closed: Superfast Broadband and Mobile Networks**

Despite significant efforts by the community and the council, we are yet to receive a quote from Openreach for the Nantglyn (and surrounding villages) project. This has taken considerably longer than we had anticipated, and as part of the closure of the project it has been agreed that the pilot has been taken as far as it can. A webpage has been created on the council's website to help communities and local business find out about internet connectivity options; this includes ADSL broadband, Wi-Fi boosters and satellite broadband. All enquiries and communication between potential 'white properties' and the council have gone through the Digital Support Officer for the past two years, and that post will continue until at least September 2023.

The project has mapped current connectivity in Social Housing (both council and RSL owned), and our planning service has included advice about connectivity in relevant guidance notes and commentary for applicants. Following discussion with mobile providers, we have established a principle contact to encourage the extension of coverage across the county. It was decided that a written protocol was not needed. Lessons learned from the project have been recorded and a closure report is being prepared to offer recommendations as to how best to allocate the remaining budget.

### **Closed: Digital Exclusion**

Although this project has come to an end, Community Navigators and the Edge of Care Team will continue to support people to increase their digital inclusion. We are planning intergenerational activity in collaboration with the Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council, Social Care Volunteers, Working Denbighshire, Book of You and Age Connects, linking with plans to create an Age Friendly Community. Virtual events between Cysgod y Gaer and the local school, and digital surveys of council housing tenants will also take place following formal closure of the project. We are working on digital inclusion webpages on our council's website with some simple pointers on how to get help; for example, from the digital buddies or through the support and resources available in libraries, all established by the project. This and additional information and signposting to support will also be available from [DataMapWales](#), as part of the Centre for Digital Public Services' review of digital inclusion.

Although there was a delay in the delivery of IT equipment for the Virtual Reality workstream, this is now being progressed and service leads will take this forward as business as usual. A group has been established to evaluate the benefits of introducing Virtual Reality technology into care homes and the community. The council is also revisiting discussions with Llandrillo Menai College to explore how robotics could be integrated into Bangor University's degree programme. We are looking at ways to develop the assistive technology suite at the Rhos-On-Sea campus in-line with current and future technologies.

### **Closed: Infrastructure for Events**

All mobile equipment for our inventory has been purchased and delivered. The terms and conditions, process and booking system for the hire scheme are in development, but have been delayed due to staffing and flooding at the Rhyl Pavilion. We expect these systems to be in place by the end of May 2022. We are still waiting to take delivery of the van and trailer to support the scheme, but are hoping to launch the service this summer.

Meanwhile, £121,249 has been awarded to groups across the county (including town councils, village halls and a community centre) to improve local events infrastructure. Examples of improvements include digital enhancements at Llangollen Town Hall to enable live streaming; a stair lift in Neuadd Eleanor, Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd; kitchen upgrade at Carrog Village Hall; and external electrical points for event purposes at Parliament Street car park, Rhuddlan. It is expected that this workstream will be complete by November, 2023. Interviews with promoters are also now complete, and the Market Research report has been produced and shared with the council. A work programme needs to be produced based on the report, and this was discussed at the Project Board's meeting in March to agree a way forward. All outstanding aspects of this project will be managed through service business upon closure of the project.

### **Project Brief: Travel to Work, Education and Services**

As reported previously, a business case for a 'Sustainable Transport Plan' is not yet available, but a report on the development of a Sustainable Transport Plan was presented to Performance Scrutiny at its [meeting in November](#). During the meeting members made observations in relation to the electric vehicle charging infrastructure; the need to include the views and needs of disabled people; the importance of linking with regional and national transport strategy; and the need to involve and engage users and communities.

## Annual or Biennial Measures

Measure	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of principle A roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	3.5	2.6	Excellent
The percentage of non-principal/classified B roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	5	3.8	Excellent
The percentage of non-principal/classified C roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	7.6	7.5	Excellent
The percentage of adults (aged 16 or over) who have used the internet within the last 3 months (Conwy and Denbighshire) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	89.8	Data pending	Priority for improvement
The percentage of mobile 4G road signal (all operators) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	49.8	50.63	Priority for improvement

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 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Quarter 2 2021 to 2022	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of Superfast Coverage in Denbighshire (>30 Mbps) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	92.23	92.63	92.75	93.37	93.92	Priority for improvement



Measure	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Quarter 2 2021 to 2022	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of premises with Broadband of 10 Mbps or below – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	4.45	4.34	4.33	4.18	3.95	Priority for improvement
The percentage of transactions undertaken via the web, compared to the total number of transactions undertaken using all access channels – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	50	56	48	51	53	Good
Percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	87	67	64	51	43	Priority for improvement

## Well-being and Equality

This priority applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity**, environmental **resilience**, **health**, **equality**, **cohesiveness**, **global responsibility**, and a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language**. Below are some further highlights from the last three months that we have undertaken in support of the Well-being Goals and the Sustainable Development Principle; but also benefiting those with protected characteristics or who are at a socio-economic disadvantage.

## Llannerch Bridge

Following Cabinet's commitment to support the principle of replacing Llannerch Bridge, made in December 2021, we are funding the initial cost of ground surveys and other specialist work that will inform a business case and bid for external funding to design and construct a replacement bridge. In January, we published a press release informing residents of signs of activity at the Llannerch Bridge site as the specialist surveying and mapping work commences. The council will be publishing quarterly newsletters to keep residents informed of the latest activity and, subject to Covid-19 restrictions, public meetings will be held to give residents the chance to discuss any concerns.

Any project to replace the bridge will apply the five ways of working under the sustainable development principle, looking for a **long-term** solution that **prevents** further harm, **integrating** and **collaborating** with stakeholders and partners to seek a solution, whilst of course **involving** local residents in the development of an option for any replacement structure. Such a project would also benefit local residents at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

## Public safety and the Rhyl Vision

During this period, work was undertaken to stabilise and prepare for the demolition of buildings at 123-125 High Street, Rhyl, deemed unsafe by structural engineers. The works were necessary in the interests of public safety, and the council communicated with surrounding businesses to offer support where possible throughout the period of the regrettable but necessary road closure. Although no formal plans have been drawn up or adopted for the site, we will work with the community to carry out a full consultation on any plans as they develop. Demolition was completed in early April, with the lower high street again being opened to traffic.

These works also support the council's vision for Rhyl, which focuses on key areas of regeneration, including improving the appearance of the town centre and linking it with the promenade. It has support from the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns project, and will complement the Queen's Market development and those developments that have already been completed on the waterfront.

The project to make safe, demolish and subsequently regenerate the site will apply the five ways of working under the sustainable development principle, looking for a **long-term** solution that **prevents** further safety issues and disruption to businesses and the public, **integrating** and **collaborating** with stakeholders and partners, whilst of course **involving** local residents during the demolition and to determine a future plan for the site. Our vision for Rhyl will also benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

## **Llangollen 2020 Castle Street Improvements**

[The Llangollen 2020 Castle Street Improvement](#) project, which started in October and is due to be completed in May, is being undertaken by Denbighshire County Council in partnership with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales. Phase one will involve resurfacing Castle Street between its junction with the A5 and the Market Street junction. Phase two, which will involve surfacing Castle Street between the Market Street junction and the Mill Street / Abbey Road junctions, will commence in early May.

This **collaborative** project has engaged extensively to **involve** and **integrate** with partners, local residents, business and stakeholders; and where possible a number of changes have been accommodated that complement the overall scheme. These improvements provide **long-term** benefits for residents and visitors, giving more space for pedestrians to walk around the town centre, improved crossing facilities, and upgraded traffic signals to improve the flow of vehicles. Enhancements to access will also benefit the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Disability**, improving safety and **preventing** any harm to individuals and congestion in the town.

## **Decarbonising Travel**

Since its launch in September 2021, the zero emission Green Taxi scheme, funded by the Welsh Government, has (up until January) covered 15,501 zero emission miles across the county, providing an average of 969 zero emission miles each week, mainly on home to school journeys. Denbighshire is hosting the only North Wales pilot of the zero emission Green Taxi scheme as part of a wider national pilot to support the Welsh Government's goal to de-carbonise the taxi fleet entirely by 2028. Twenty-eight taxi drivers have stepped behind the wheel of four wheelchair-accessible Nissan Dynamo E-NV200 taxis to use as part of the 'try before you buy scheme'. The taxis have operated across Prestatyn, Rhyl, Bodelwyddan, St Asaph, Denbigh, Ruthin and Corwen. In response to feedback from the

drivers, the council is exploring the potential to extend the scheme with the offer of a vehicle capable of delivering 300 plus miles on a single charge.

Separate to this project, the council has secured a total of £57,400 grant funding from the UK Government's Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, supported by the Energy Saving Trust, to support the delivery of an Electric Vehicle Public Charging Pilot. The pilot will provide fast charging points in eight public car parks across Denbighshire for use by the public. Work on the pilot is expected to be completed by early summer. The chargers will be in place to support residents to transition to an electric vehicle where they didn't previously have access to a charging facility.

Finally, the council, together with Transport for Wales, launched a pioneering demand responsive public transport scheme in March for residents in and around the Ruthin area, joining pilots in Denbigh and Prestatyn. Ruthin's Fflecsi service will be available within the town of Ruthin itself, being able to travel around most of Ruthin's urban housing cul-de-sacs. This will introduce a bus service for many people in Ruthin for the first time, thanks to support from the Welsh Government and the Welsh Government Energy Service. Fflecsi will also serve a number of villages and hamlets, notably Bontuchel, Clawddnewydd, Clocaenog, Cyffylliog, Derwen, Graigfechan, Llanelidan, Pentrecelyn and Rhydymedwy. The Fflecsi bus is Wales's first-ever zero emission, 100 per cent battery-operated, 16-seat minibus. Intending passengers can book their demand responsive transport one hour ahead either through the Fflecsi app (available from the [Fflecsi Wales website](#)), or by phoning a dedicated call centre on 0300 234 0300. Where Fflecsi has previously been introduced in rural areas, it has seen an increase in passenger demand over the previous timetabled bus services.

These examples of zero emission travel and demand responsive travel apply the five ways of working under the sustainable development principle. They seek to **integrate** objectives at a national and local level, **collaborate** with partners, and **involve** users in **long-term** solutions that **prevent** further harm and damage to the environment. By improving access in and around our key settlements, the Fflecsi service will benefit those with the protected characteristics of **Disability** and **Age**, as well as those who are at a **socio economic disadvantage**.

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

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Excellent

### **Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update**

Denbighshire saw a 23% increase in the number of repeat victims of domestic crime during 2021 to 2022, rising from 551 to 678 by March 2022. This is slightly higher than the North Wales figure for the year, where there has been a 17.7% increase in repeat victims of domestic violence. The number of repeat offenders of domestic abuse in Denbighshire has decreased 28% from 115 to 83. In North Wales there has been a 27% decrease overall.

Within the national Dewis Cymru website the number of resources for Denbighshire stands at 533. This is consistent with the figure we saw for October to December, but is a decrease of 15% on the same period the previous year. There are currently 10,970 resources for Wales on Dewis Cymru, and 2,675 for North Wales.

390 carer assessments took place between January to March. This is 56% decrease on the same period last year (reduced by 488 from 878). Support for carers has continued and community support has been available regardless of whether carers have received an assessment.

Data for the average length of time adults (aged 65 years or over) are supported in residential care homes has reduced slightly from 1,044 (October to December) to 1,028 days for the period covering January to March.

To align with our interim Strategic Equality Plan, an additional measure has now been included in our Resilient Communities framework concerning the number of families resettled within Denbighshire under UK Resettlement Project. During 2021 to 2022 there were 6 families settled in Denbighshire, one more than the previous year. This brings our total to date under the scheme to 28 families (although two families have subsequently moved out of the county). The council has also pledged to support 10 families under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy project, and we are well on our way to achieving this. We are also now working with the Homes to Ukraine Scheme and working with hosts.

Our previous report overlooked two new data items from our 2021 Stakeholder Survey. There were two satisfaction measures pertinent to this outcome, covering:

- The percentage of people who agree "my local area is a place where people will pull together to improve the local area" (63%, up from 59% in 2018).
- The percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area (20%, down from 27% in 2018).

## **Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update**

### **Experiencing Obstacles: Involvement in shaping and improving services**

Due to the elections it was agreed to postpone our year 3 research until the summer, as the engagement policy will need to be agreed by the new council. The policy document has been drafted, but further work is needed to take account of the new Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 to support the development of a Participation Strategy (in addition to the existing draft engagement policy, supporting framework, templates and toolkits already developed). This, however, would take the work beyond the scope of the project and more into 'business as usual', therefore it is proposed to close this project and streamline the remaining project objectives into the Communities and Customers general communications and engagement workstream.

### **Closed: Supporting Carers**

Although this project is now closed, representatives at the final project team meeting in February agreed that they wish to continue working together to identify and support carers of all ages in Denbighshire. The local action plans and progress update for the North Wales Regional Strategy were discussed, and it was decided that future meetings should be held quarterly to coincide with the North Wales Regional Carers Operational Group's work programme. It was also suggested that a carer's representative should be invited to join the group. The group recognised that there is more need than ever to ensure unpaid carers are identified as soon as possible, and have better information and support to ensure that they are able to continue with their caring role. The aim is that the joint approach, including working closely with Third Sector organisations, will be maintained, prioritising early intervention and prevention and developing supportive communities.

Community Support Services have also started to develop a plan to address issues highlighted in the State of Caring survey report 2021.

### **Closed: Reduce Domestic Abuse**

This project has now been formally closed, with the last project board meeting held in February. Remaining workstreams will now be absorbed into the usual business of services, including Ask and Act training, Caring Dad's awareness training, and Spectrum training in schools. An additional children's support worker is also to be recruited within the Domestic Abuse Service Unit. One outstanding piece of work is to look at a domestic abuse housing tenancy policy; this will be taken forward by our Community Housing Team.

### **On Target: County-wide Community Development**

The Community Development Team have continued to oversee and monitor the delivery of the 14 UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF) projects in Denbighshire, and all are progressing well. The UKCRF project period has now been extended until December 2022.

The latest round of Open Space Commuted Sums fund applications were recently assessed by the team, with a total of £204,929 being awarded to 13 projects. £17,888 of Welsh Government Funding was also distributed to support 16 food initiatives across the county, including all known foodbank and foodshare schemes.

The team have offered guidance to at least 23 different community initiatives during this quarter, including offering support to one group who subsequently secured £65,000 of grant funding for their project. The Digital Officer continues to support several communities to explore broadband connectivity improvement options, with one community recently celebrating the completion of their Openreach fibre broadband upgrade.

### **On Target: Assistive Technology**

This project was identified in our interim Strategic Equality Plan, and is being reported here for the first time. It is aimed at helping dementia patients and citizens experiencing loneliness and low mood. Additional innovative dementia equipment has been purchased and installed within the council's care facilities, and training has been provided. For example, PARO, therapeutic robot baby harp seals that have a calming effect, have been

introduced at Dolwen and Nant-Y-Môr, and have been well received by residents and staff. Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activities (RITA) have also been used in both Extra Care facilities during weekly group sessions and one-to-one sessions. The Welsh Language content on RITA has also been positively received. We are now waiting for the installation of the Reminiscence Pods (Rempods), which are unique pop-up therapy tools that turn any space into a calming environment for people living with dementia. Links have also been re-established with Llandrillo Menai College to look at how a robotics project there can be resurrected with Bangor University's degree programme. Discussions have also been had to develop the assistive technology suite at the Rhos-On-Sea campus, in line with current and future technologies being deployed.

### **On Target: Digital Information, Advice and Assistance**

As with Assistive Technology above, this action was identified in our interim Strategic Equality Plan to help people better access our services. The council has launched web pages for sensory loss, and updated our carers web pages to include links to internal and external sources of information, advice and support. We have also launched webpages to aid workforce development, giving access to relevant training opportunities for external providers and unpaid carers to support them in their roles; and web pages to give information about autism. We are working on moving financial assessment forms online. Information about dementia that had been developed for staff on our intranet is now being adapted for the public and moved onto our website. We are aiming to publish this in time for Dementia Action Week, May 16 to 22.

### **Annual or Biennial Measures**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>2018 to 2019</b>	<b>2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
The percentage of people reporting they have received the right information or advice when they needed it – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	88	No data No survey	Acceptable
The percentage of carers reporting they feel supported to continue in their caring role – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	55	No data No survey	Priority for improvement



Measure	2018 to 2019	2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of people reporting that they know who to contact about their care and support – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	84	No data No survey	Acceptable
The percentage of people who agree "my local area is a place where people will pull together to improve the local area" – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	59	63	Good
The percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	27	20	Priority for improvement

Measure	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	Status
The number of families resettled within Denbighshire under UK Resettlement Project – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	5	6	NA

### Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Measure	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Quarter 2 2021 to 2022	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	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)	555	148	332	509	678	Does not apply Count only
The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse	108	18	35	60	83	Does not apply Count only

(3 or more in 12 months)						
The number of live resources on the Dewis Cymru Platform – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	623	565	620	532	533	Acceptable
The number of assessments of need for support for carers undertaken during the year	878	114	221	302	390	Does not apply Count only
The average length of time (measured in days) adults (aged 65 or over) are supported in residential care homes – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	1,053	1,053	1,050	1,044	1,028	Priority for improvement

## Well-being and Equality

This priority applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity, health, equality, cohesiveness, global responsibility**, and a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language**. Below are some further highlights from October to December that we have undertaken in support of the Well-being Goals and the Sustainable Development Principle, and benefiting those with protected characteristics or who are at a socio-economic disadvantage.

### Vulnerable friends and relatives

The council has maintained efforts to protect vulnerable individuals from harm, encouraging residents to look out for their neighbours, friends and family during the ongoing pandemic, particularly those who may be lonely and their usual visitors may be self-isolating. As Covid-19 cases rose due to the Omicron variant, the council reminded the public about the need for good hand hygiene, ventilation, social distancing and face

coverings. People were also urged to help support the vaccination effort and book online or attend designated drop in clinics to get their first, second or booster jabs.

Working **collaboratively** with our partners and **integrating** our common desire to keep everyone safe and **prevent** any harm, the council continues to work to keep residents informed and help protect the most vulnerable (we know Covid-19 can be particularly adverse on those with a **Disability**, or from Black and Asian backgrounds. Those at a **socio-economic disadvantage** are also most likely to present with cases).

## **Regional Memory Support Assessment Service**

North Wales has secured additional and recurring funding of £672k per annum from Welsh Government for developing an enhanced regional approach to supporting individuals who have memory issues / concerns or dementia at the pre-assessment and post-diagnosis stages. At its [meeting in November](#), Cabinet agreed that the council would act as the lead commissioner on behalf of the Regional Collaboration Team. At its [meeting in February](#), Cabinet awarded three contracts following the completion of a tendering exercise. With a combined potential value of up to £3.36m over 5 years, these three contracts will support the implementation of the North Wales Dementia Strategy.

**Integrating** and **collaborating** with partners, the service will directly support the protected characteristic of **Age** and **Disability**; it will encourage **involvement** and will bring new support to improve health for those living with dementia, **prevent** harm and meet unrealised needs in the **long-term**.

## **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022 to 2023**

Council approved the adoption of the all Wales Council Tax Reduction Schemes (and prescribed requirements) at its [meeting in January](#). This was in respect of the 2022 to 2023 financial year. Amendments within the regulations include an increase in line with the cost-of-living for personal allowances in relation to working age, carer and disabled premiums. Pensioner rates have been aligned with Housing Benefit and uprated by different mechanisms. Income bands and deductions made in relation non-dependants have been uprated. Additional amendments have also been made to support Afghan Nationals and UK nationals from Afghanistan; to provide redress for survivors of historical child abuse; and a higher rate of personal allowance for pensioners in Wales. Council also

agreed to three discretionary elements concerning the administration of the scheme, including to disregard 100% of the War Disablement pensions and War Widows Pensions when calculating income.

**Integrating** and **collaborating** with the Welsh Government and other local authorities on this scheme will benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage** and hopefully prevent greater hardship. Specific amendments will also benefit the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Race**.

## **Library Standards and Performance**

At its [meeting in January](#), Performance Scrutiny reviewed the performance of Denbighshire's Library Service against the 6th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards, and its progress in developing libraries as places of individual and community well-being and resilience. The performance data for 2020 to 2021 included twelve core entitlements that Denbighshire continued to meet, together with six quality indicators, for which a self-assessment has been carried out and included in the report. It was noted that, in line with general levels of town centre footfall, library visits had not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels, and that this situation was being mirrored across Wales. Levels of use is slowly increasing, however, and work is being carried out to re-engage with schools and welcome back partner service provision and group activities in libraries to increase attendance. Libraries are also now being used in different ways of course, seeing more people using digital means to access the service, including Order and Collect. It was acknowledged in the meeting that the partnership with Rhuddlan Town Council and St Asaph City Council had worked well for the libraries in those localities; and also that reductions in staffing levels had been carried out in such a way as to minimise any impact on library users and that there had been no negative feedback as a result.

Our libraries are critical hubs within our communities, directly benefiting those who are at a **socio-economic disadvantage**, and offer **long-term** solutions that **prevent** isolation, exclusion, and information poverty by **integrating** and **collaborating** with partners, whilst **involving** users.

## Community Catalysts

The council is directing entrepreneurs to a new initiative that is now up and running across Denbighshire, providing professional advice to help individuals work for themselves to offer quality care and support. Many people in Denbighshire need some extra help to live the way they want to, perhaps because they are older, disabled or have a long-term health condition. The project, funded by the council, is being run by social enterprise [Community Catalysts](#).

**Integrating** and working **collaboratively**, this initiative directly benefits the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Disability**. It encourages **involvement** and will hopefully help grow our care offer in the county, **prevent** harm, and meet individual needs in the **long-term**.

## Winter Fuel Support Scheme

The council administered the Welsh Government Winter Fuel Support Scheme, which offered eligible households to claim a one-off £200 payment to provide support towards paying winter fuel bills. 5604 applications were received, with 4608 being approved. Applications closed in February. The scheme was open to households where one member is in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Based Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit or Working Tax Credits.

**Integrating** our mutual ambition to **prevent** hardship, at least in the short-term, this **collaborative** initiative between Welsh Government and the council directly benefits those living within **socio-economic disadvantage**. Due to the nature of eligibility for this funding, this should support those with protected characteristics, such as **Age**, **Disability**, **Marriage** and **Civil Partnership** (particularly in supporting unpaid Carers looking after family members).

## Supporting Democracy

In the run-up to the County Council and Community Council elections in May, the council reminded residents of the importance of registering to vote. Voting ensures residents have a say on the issues of the day, and being on the electoral register can maintain people's credit rating. Everyone is responsible for registering themselves, and can do so at any time online: [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote).

In March, the council held an information event aimed at the county's residents who were thinking of becoming a county councillor. Council representatives were on hand to provide information on the role of the county councillor, how the council works, the issues county councillors will face after the elections, the nomination and election process, and the support available to councillors once elected.

It is important that our democracy is accessible to all residents, and that they are supported to be **involved** in it. In September, Council committed to being a diverse council that represents its residents. Equal representation will benefit our communities in the **long-term**, removing any barriers that **prevent** those with protected characteristics from being heard, including **socio-economic disadvantage**.

### **Armed forces support**

At Council's [meeting in February](#), Air Commodore Adrian Williams OBE and Tony Fish, Regional Employer Engagement Director (North), presented the Chairman with the Silver Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Award. The council is one of 24 Welsh organisations and private sector employers to have received a Defence ERS Silver Award in 2021 from the Ministry of Defence. The ERS encourages employers to support defence and is open to employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant. Denbighshire County Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2019.

The Covenant and our work in Denbighshire will directly benefit the protected characteristics of **Age, Disability, Marriage and Civil Partnership** and those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**. This work shows **collaborative** working, **long-term** thinking and an **integration** of ideals to support and protect veterans. It also seeks to **involve** interested stakeholders and **prevent** loneliness and isolation.

### **National Awards**

The Social Care Accolades recognise, celebrate and share notable work of groups, teams and organisations in social care and childcare, play and early years in Wales, as well as individual care workers from across the public, private, voluntary and co-operative sectors in Wales. Two members of staff have been shortlisted in the Caring in Welsh category. This category honours individuals who make a positive difference to people's lives by

providing high-quality care through the medium of Welsh. Alaw Pierce, Service Manager, was nominated on behalf of Denbighshire's operational management team for her work in championing people's rights to use Welsh, and for being a role model for staff. Catherine Roberts, Assistant Manager at Cysgod y Gaer, was nominated in the same category for regularly going above and beyond the call of duty in her role, for being a dedicated carer, and for leading the team with exceptional examples of good practice. Sheila Mullins, a care assistant at Dolwen, has been shortlisted in another category to celebrate individual care workers in Wales who have a positive impact on people's lives. The North Wales Together Learning Disability Transformation programme, a partnership involving the social care departments of the six local authorities in North Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, has also been shortlisted in the promoting equality, diversity and inclusion category. The award winners will be announced at a ceremony in Cardiff in April.

We are proud of the commitment and dedication shown by our social care teams, **collaborating** and **integrating** across organisations to deliver high quality services every day with care, compassion and empathy. We **involve** people in deciding the right care solutions for their situation in the **long-term**, **preventing** harm to the most vulnerable (particularly those with the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Disability**).

## **Ukrainian Refugees**

The council has processes in place and is making preparations to extend and accelerate the offer of resettling families from Ukraine. The council has a long history of accommodating and supporting refugees and has pledged to welcome families every year. As always, the council has received many kind offers of help from residents of Denbighshire. If anyone has any enquiries, they should email [ukresettlement@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:ukresettlement@denbighshire.gov.uk).

We will work **collaboratively** and **integrate** with national governments and volunteers to resettle refugees in Denbighshire, **involving** the refugees themselves in determining the best ways to support their **long-term** integration and **prevent** further hardship. This will benefit the protected characteristics of **Race, Religion and Belief, Age, Pregnancy and Maternity**, as well as helping those who are likely to be at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

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

Measures: Good

Projects: Excellent

### **Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update**

During 2021 to 2022, the council planted 3,500 trees, achieving our ambition of planting 18,000 trees during the term of the Corporate Plan.

The completion of our East Rhyl Coastal Defence project means that we can now report that 1,650 properties have a reduced risk of flooding.

Final data for the percentage of council housing stock achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of C or above saw an increase from 46 to 53% during 2021 to 2022.

Data is currently pending for the four measures pertaining to the Climate and Ecological Change Programme for 2021 to 2022 (covering the species richness of council land, and carbon emitted through staff commuting, business travel and supply chains). This data is anticipated to be included in this report prior to publication.

We also have no information as yet for the total economic impact of tourism (£ million) for 2021 to 2022, for which data is normally published in October.

### **Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update**

#### **Experiencing Obstacles: Climate and Ecological Change**

At its [meeting in February](#), Council was presented with an update on year 1 of its Climate and Ecological Change Strategy. Although the in-year delivery confidence for the programme is reported as experiencing obstacles, progress thus far has been progressive and commendable. The first ever analysis of local councils' climate action plans reveals that Denbighshire is the only authority in the region to score above the Welsh national average (47% against an average of 31%), and came second only to Cardiff City Council (who scored 70%). It was during this meeting that Council supported the creation of a dedicated Cabinet Lead Member for Climate and Ecological Change.



In December 2020 to June 2021, Audit Wales undertook a review of the council's ability to deliver on its environmental ambitions, which was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in January](#). It concluded that the council is making excellent progress in embedding its environmental ambitions, having moved quickly to make changes to its strategic planning frameworks, and allocating significant resources. The council has communicated well with citizens, trying to inform, influence and change behaviours; but more comprehensive stakeholder mapping would further strengthen engagement. Good work has been undertaken to train both councillors and staff, and though understanding is developing well, more detail is needed on what 'ecologically positive' means to the council, and how the ambitions influence the daily work of staff. Finally, the council has put baseline measures in place using an established performance framework, and reporting over the next year will help the environmental ambitions to embed and the measures to evolve.

At its [meeting in February](#), Cabinet approved the introduction of the new scheme of delegated decision making for land acquisition (freehold and leasehold) for carbon sequestration and ecological improvement purposes. This will increase the number of hectares of council owned and operated land in the highest species richness categories and the amount of carbon tonnage sequestered. However, at its [meeting in March](#), Communities Scrutiny requested that the decision be reconsidered by Cabinet at the first available meeting after the election, making recommendations for speeding-up the decision making process for land purchases; requesting that farming unions are again consulted with now that Covid-19 restrictions have eased; that local members are consulted about prospective purchases; the staffing levels within Countryside Services are reviewed to ensure adequate capacity to deliver; and that clarity is given with regards to land grading.

### **Closed: Living Assets**

Our understanding of Denbighshire's 'living assets' is now much clearer. Survey work and inspections have been carried out in several locations across the county to develop a dataset containing information on species, condition, location, management requirements, etc. The project has now been closed; however, activity to maintain, enhance, protect and preserve Denbighshire's living assets for future generations will continue as usual business within Countryside Services.

## **Closed: Improving Biodiversity**

Throughout Denbighshire there are now around 100 wildflower meadow project sites, including highway verges, footpath edges, cycleways and amenity grasslands. Along with the 11 roadside nature reserves, these sites are equivalent to nearly 35 football pitches worth of grassland managed as native wildflower meadows, boosting the welfare of native insects in Denbighshire. This project has now been closed, but further activity will be taken forward through the Service Plan for Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services.

At the request of Partnerships Scrutiny, a report was presented at their [meeting in February](#) about the council's policy with respect to verge and hedge maintenance and pesticide application. The main principle underpinning the policy is that verges must be managed to ensure the safety of all road users. However, verges are also increasingly recognised as important habitats for maintaining biodiversity, to the benefit of pollinating insects, wild flowers and other wildlife; as well as acting as vital wildlife corridors connecting habitats together. The council's policy therefore aims to address these desirable outcomes in a realistic and economic way. The policy can be found on the [council's website](#).

## **Closed: Tree Planting**

Utilising funding from Welsh Government and administered by Natural Resources Wales, since 2017 the council has supported the planting of 18,000 trees at Glan Morfa in Rhyl and available sites in and around Denbigh. Overall, the completion of the PLANT project has resulted in the creation of an additional 80 acres of quality green open space strategically located adjacent to some of the more disadvantaged wards in Wales.

Additional benefits from this project include new access routes across the Glan Morfa site, along with picnic benches and seating. The site has been historically blighted by unauthorised motorbike activity and fly-tipping. As part of the project, site security has been improved with access barriers and boundary fencing installed. Trespass on the site has reduced significantly and Countryside Services will continue to work in partnership with North Wales Police to ensure that the site remains secure and fulfils its function as a safe and attractive green open space. Community engagement has been an important part of the project and has included a 'Wild Rhyl' celebratory event, numerous school tree

planting events, practical volunteer sessions through the 'Out and About' volunteer programme, and regular sessions under the 'Nature for Health' programme. Going forward Countryside Services will continue to maintain the tree stock and the Glan Morfa site, and to ensure future sustainability, engage with local organisations and groups, as well as schools and volunteers.

In addition to the above project, nearly 5,000 further new trees have been planted across Denbighshire through The Woodland Creation Project, which will help the council achieve its net carbon zero goal. By the end of March 2022, volunteers and council staff have planted 800 trees at Llanrhydd, 2,500 at Maes Gwilym, 1,500 at Cae Ddol, and 150 trees at Maes Esgob. Schools have been involved in planting in Ruthin and Rhyl.

Through Welsh Government funding, the Local Nature Partnerships Cymru ENRaW project, and the Local Places for Nature grant, a new site at Green Gates farm on the edge of St Asaph has been developed for a local provenance tree nursery. This new site aims to produce 5,000 trees and 5,000 native wildflower plants a year, with the hope to expand in the future. As the work at the tree nursery increases the council is keen to involve local people as volunteers. Volunteer work would include potting and maintaining the plants, surveying the surrounding fields as they develop, and potentially assisting in planting activities. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch through [biodiversity@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:biodiversity@denbighshire.gov.uk).

### **On Target: Nature Corridor**

Project funding is now coming to an end and focus has been on ensuring that all budgets are spent. For the most part this has been achieved, apart from a couple of areas that were set back by Covid-19 and other reasons. This has been discussed with Welsh Government, and they are happy with the progress of the project, and budgets have been amended where possible to ensure we were able to use it where needed. Several aspects of the project have been completed or at near completion, including the tree planting, the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) project, and school ground improvements. Volunteer sessions and public engagement continue weekly, and we have engaged with many schools through tree planting on school grounds. Staff salaries continue until July to finish the project, and the calendar remains full until then with school engagement, site maintenance and improvement, volunteer sessions, and the well-being and walking sessions.

## **On Target: Moorland Management**

The hydro-seeding of 5 hectares of Moel Y Faen in October 2021 has shown some success with the germination of the upland grass seed in areas. It is hoped that as we move into the spring that the effects of the seeding will become more evident. Heather cutting on Llantysilio Mountain and Llandegla Moor will be undertaken during March 2022, funded by the Natural Resources Wales Biodiversity Ecosystem Resilience Fund (BERF).

The wildfire risk assessment process is being developed and will generate thematic mapping using MapInfo GIS software, which will enable the monitoring of changes in wildfire risk on moorland areas over time. This project is ongoing with a completion date of October 2023.

## **Closed: East Rhyl Coastal Defence**

This East Rhyl Coastal Defence project was completed ahead of schedule and within budget in February 2022. The successful placement of 128,000 tonnes of rock armour in front of the existing sea defences and the newly added 600 metres of sea defence wall and promenade will reduce the risk of flooding to 1,650 properties.

A public exhibition on proposals for a central Rhyl coastal defence scheme was held at Rhyl Town Hall between January 12 and February 9. It is anticipated that existing defences there could fail within the next 10 to 15 years, putting 550 residential and 45 non-residential properties at risk. If the council successfully obtains planning consents for the scheme, we expect construction to start in the autumn or winter periods of 2022, and take approximately two and a half years to complete. For more information on the scheme, [visit our website](#).

A further planning application for the Central Prestatyn Coastal Defence Scheme is also under development, comprising of the formation of flood embankments, ramps, outfall structures and rock armour, including landscaping, habitat enhancements, and works to existing culverts. This is currently being consulted upon and it is anticipated that a decision will be made in July. For more information, [visit our website](#).

Working in partnership with Natural Resources Wales and Dŵr Cymru, the council has also been exploring flood risk from inland watercourses and riparian land ownership. A report was taken to the Communities Scrutiny Committee [meeting in March](#), which

recommended potential methods for strengthening communication channels and building effective working relationships between all parties and organisations that have responsibilities for managing flood risk. It was agreed that a Flood Risk working group, comprising of the flood risk management authorities and land owner representatives, continue to meet on an annual basis and report on progress to Communities Scrutiny; that the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy page be re-launched, including links to Natural Resources Wales and Dŵr Cymru, and an explanation of the responsibilities of flood risk authorities and riparian land owners; that information on the responsibilities of riparian land owners is distributed to properties adjacent Rhyl Cut and Prestatyn Gutter; and finally, that the report is circulated to and Town, City and Community Councils.

### **At Risk: Energy Efficient Council Homes**

Although delivery confidence has been impacted by Covid-19, a number of works contracts have now been re-established since the pandemic, with more projects planned during 2022 to 2023. These still mainly relate to external works, including insulation measures and heating installation works that are generally easier to deliver to the housing stock in this current time. We are also still waiting for further information from the Welsh Government with regards to the new Welsh Housing Quality Standard, which has been delayed due to the pandemic. We have been informed that consultation will be commencing in the summer, with a draft document expected by the end of the year. We believe the new policy will heavily impact targets on a national level, and may potentially influence future programmes of work and key asset management decisions for our housing stock.

### **Annual or Biennial Measures**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>2020 to 2021</b>	<b>2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
Total carbon tonnage emitted through staff commuting – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	1,719	TBC	Good
Total carbon tonnage emitted through business travel – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	126	TBC	Excellent
Total carbon tonnage emitted through supply chains – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	22,206	TBC	Good

Measure	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	Status
Percentage of council owned and operated land in the highest categories of species richness – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	38.1	TBC	Acceptable
STEAM - Total Economic Impact of Tourism (£ million) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	213.00	Data pending	Priority for improvement
The percentage of existing and acquired council housing stock (1st April 2017 baseline) achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of C or above – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	46	53	Priority for improvement
The annual number of trees planted to increase canopy cover in Rhyl and Denbigh – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	4400	3,500	Excellent
The number of properties with a reduced risk of flooding – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data	1,650	Excellent

Measure	2018 to 2019	2021 to 2022	Status
How satisfied are people with their local open spaces? – Countryside – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	87	85	Excellent
How satisfied are people with their local open spaces? – Beaches – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	70	69	Good
How satisfied are people with their local open spaces? – Parks – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	64	59	Acceptable

## Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Our measure on the percentage of all new build council housing achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of A for 2021 to 2022 is not applicable as none were completed during this period. However, it is anticipated that 40 new builds will achieve an EPC (Energy) rating of A when completed in 2022 to 2023.

## Well-being and Equality

This priority applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around environmental **resilience, prosperity, health, equality, cohesiveness,**

**global responsibility**, and a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language**. Below are some further highlights from the last year of work that we have undertaken in support of the Well-being Goals and the Sustainable Development Principle; but also benefiting those with protected characteristics or who are at a socio-economic disadvantage.

### **Tidal Lagoon Project**

A notice of motion presented to Council at its [meeting in February](#) acknowledged proposals for a large scale tidal lagoon project off the coast of Denbighshire. Councillors supported in principle of the development of this energy project off the Denbighshire coastline, and agreed to set-up a member and officer group to represent Denbighshire, and to monitor and evaluate progress. With the potential for over 5000 construction jobs, in addition to the environmental benefits, the project has the potential to significantly benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage** and boost the region's economy.

### **Non-Recyclable Goods in School Catering**

Following a recommendation from Performance Scrutiny's [meeting in January](#), Cabinet resolved at its [meeting in March](#) that it writes to the Welsh Local Government Association to seek their support in lobbying the Welsh Government to progress the measures set out below:

1. Work with local authorities across Wales in a bid to reduce and eradicate the practice of using single use plastics and non-recyclable goods in the supply, preparation, and serving of school meals.
2. Provide sufficient financial resources to all local authorities to enable them to realise the above objectives and facilitate carbon reduction measures within their School Catering Services, whilst securing the delivery of a sustainable school meals service.

This activity demonstrates the council's commitment to **prevent** harm to the Environment. Only through working **collaboratively** and **integrating** with the ambitions of others will it be possible for us to achieve this key, **long-term** ambition, which has been articulated clearly to us through our **involvement** of young people.

## Diseased Larch Trees

Between January and March, Natural Resources Wales began to fell diseased larch trees at Moel Famau in Denbighshire to help slow the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum*, commonly known as larch disease. They covered around 26 hectares, or the size of 30 football pitches. A popular destination, felling work was carefully managed to keep disruption to a minimum and to keep people safe. The 4,500 tonnes of trees removed will be put to use for house building, fencing and wood fuel, and Natural Resources Wales will replant the forest areas with alternative trees for timber production. Areas surrounding the car park, road and trails will be planted with a mix of broadleaf species to help wildlife.

This was a major, but essential operation where we **collaborated** with Natural Resources Wales to **prevent** the rapid spread of this disease. We also kept the public informed at every stage. We will support the replanting of trees on this site for the **long-term** benefit of the environment. Further information on tree health in Wales is available on the [Natural Resources Wales website](#).

## Dark Skies

Currently only 2% of the UK's population receives a truly dark sky, but Wales has the highest percentage of protected dark skies in the world. On average 95% of the three national parks and five Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) of Wales fall within the highest two categories of dark skies, including our very own Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). During the very first Welsh Dark Sky Week in February, the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB hosted activities and events to celebrate our protected dark skies, and to help our communities learn, discover and be inspired by the night sky.

**Involving** people and raising awareness about the importance of our dark skies will help **prevent** harm and protect them for the **long-term** benefit of future generations, whilst also positively impacting biodiversity (60% of which relies on darkness to survive), and gives the local economy a boost during the quieter season. It will also reduce light pollution and CO2 emissions of course.



## **Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan**

A consultation was launched in March for members of the public to have their say on a draft management plan for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB covers approximately 390 square kilometres, stretching from the coastal hills near Prestatyn to the north, and extending as far south as the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and the Berwyn Mountains. It includes land in Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham and is managed by the three county councils, with Denbighshire County Council as the lead authority for the joint AONB committee.

Developed in **collaboration** and **integrating** with partners, this draft management plan seeks to **prevent** harm to the natural environment and maintain its beauty for the **long-term** benefit of future generations. This consultation now seeks to **involve** stakeholders more broadly in our plans. Improved access to our countryside for the benefit of recreation, health and well-being is also an important strand within the plan, supporting **Disability** and **Age**, as well as those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

### **February Storms**

Denbighshire faced two significant storms in February, Eunice and Franklin, which the council proactively shared communications about and made some changes to services in the interests of safety. This included the closure of libraries; the County Hall One Stop Shop; and schools, moving all pupils to remote learning. Additionally, due to the temporary closure of the composting site, the council did not operate its garden waste recycling service. We initiated our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol to provide emergency accommodation for rough sleepers. We monitored the situation hour by hour and had teams on stand-by to deal with any issues caused by the storm and to try and keep our roads clear from debris. The main impact in Denbighshire was expected to be the wind, so we called for people to stay away from coastal promenades during the storm for their own safety. We also closed key areas such as Central Car Park in Rhyl, The Nova Centre, Prestatyn, and all of our coastal public conveniences. There were also a number of flood alerts in place in Denbighshire, and crews were in attendance where we knew of surface water and flooding on roads to advise motorists to be aware and drive with caution. Storm

Franklin caused some damage to the roof of SC2, and Denbighshire Leisure closed the facility until repairs could be undertaken.

By working in **collaboration** and **integrating** with our partners, emergency services and Natural Resources Wales to gather as much information as possible to track the storms and their effects, we were able to take **preventative** measures to keep residents safe. By initiating the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, we also benefited those who were at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

### **Ambassador Scheme**

A scheme providing people with training and knowledge about tourism in North Wales is proving popular, with over 2,000 people signed up, and over 1,350 who have become Ambassadors, including Denbighshire Tourism Ambassadors. Denbighshire was the first to launch an online scheme of this kind in Wales. The Denbighshire scheme offers 12 online training modules on a variety of themes, including walking, cycling, towns, history, arts, coast, Welsh Language and food tourism. There are 3 levels of awards – bronze, silver and gold – depending on the number of modules completed. The scheme will deepen people's knowledge and understanding of the area as well as giving them the opportunity to attend events and visit some of our key sites across the county. It's totally free and open to everyone. For more information on the scheme and to sign-up please visit [www.ambassador.wales](http://www.ambassador.wales).

Working **collaboratively** with partners, **integrating** with them and local businesses, and **involving** people in this kind of scheme showcases our fantastic attractions here in Denbighshire, and will benefit our tourism in the **long-term**, and **prevent** the stagnation of our economy. The scheme also seeks to improve people's access to our unique historic and natural assets, which, combined with a thriving economy and more local work opportunities, will benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

### **Waste and Recycling Update**

From April the three main sites in Denbigh, Ruthin and Rhyl will be managed by social enterprise Bryson Recycling, as part of a joint contract with Conwy County Borough Council. The new contract will increase recycling rates, introduce more reuse activities, and implement a local circular economy approach to recycling. It will also see earlier

opening times, improved access, a wider range of items accepted at the Ruthin and Denbigh sites, free compost to site users, a new 'Choose to Reuse' area at each site, access to two Conwy recycling and waste parks at Abergele and Mochdre for Denbighshire residents, a charity run re-use shop at the Rhyl site, and more support of reuse projects within our communities.

As part of the changes, a small charge will apply from April 1 for residents choosing to bring in non-household waste, such as DIY and construction waste from works or improvements. This waste is classified as industrial waste, not household waste, and Council Tax only covers the cost of collecting, recycling and disposing of household waste.

**Integrating** and working **collaboratively** with Conwy County Borough Council to appoint a single operator will enable us to provide more **long-term** value to our residents and encourage responsible recycling, **preventing** harm to the environment. It will in particular benefit the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Disability**, as Bryson is pledging £1 be donated to St Kentigern Hospice for every tonne of waste recycled.

### **New Moorland Path**

Early in 2022, contractors working for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty busily repaired a key section of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail as it crosses Ruabon Moor, having secured funding through Natural Resources Wales. Small sections of the Trail have been upgraded each year since 2016, but with this additional funding over 850 metres of path has been resurfaced to complete the 1.4km of path across the moor. Sleepers, which made up the majority of this section of the National Trail, have been replaced by 250 tonnes of stone flags airlifted onto the moor to prevent vehicle damage to fragile habitats. This provides a more sustainable surface that will protect the moorlands fragile soils, which are important for the absorption and storing of carbon.

Working **collaboratively** with Natural Resources Wales and **integrating** our ambition for the National Trail and the moorland has helped to sensitively deliver this key milestone for the trail, which will benefit future generations in the **long-term**, whilst also **preventing** harm to the moor's delicate habitats. These access improvements will also benefit the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Disability**, as well as those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**, and allow for greater **involvement** in our natural environment.

## **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**

There are two new data items to report on from our framework for this period. We have reintroduced our measure around the success of the Employment Bursary Project, as we are now able to provide data for this. During 2021 to 2022, there has been a 16% increase in the salaries of those enrolled on the scheme, which is consistent with the 17% increase recorded the year before. Since the project started in 2018, there has been an average increase of 20% in the salaries of those enrolled.

The second measure relates to the 18 to 24 claimant count. In line with national trends, data for January to March reveals that the fall seen previously in Denbighshire's claimant count continues to slow as it returns to pre-pandemic levels (6.5%), resting now at 6.4% (down from 6.9% in December). We remain behind the Wales average, which is now at 4.8%. It is worth noting that prior to the pandemic, Denbighshire was 2% behind the Wales average, but are now 1.6% behind. The UK claimant count has not yet recovered its pre-pandemic levels (which were historically lower than Wales), remaining just above the Welsh average, now at 5.0%.

There continues to be no published data in relation to school attainment and attendance due to the impact of the pandemic. However, through dialogue with colleagues in other local authorities, we are assured that Denbighshire's performance in terms of attendance is consistent with that of all Wales school attendance, with high levels of Covid-19 and illness unfortunately impacting absence across the year.

We can also share some positive data around our Supporting Parents in Denbighshire project that closed in September, but is continuing as usual business within Education and Children's Services. Since the initiation of the project in 2018, 130 practitioners and 48 settings in Denbighshire have benefitted from training opportunities offered through the Solihull Approach. Before and after Covid-19 restrictions, 139 parents received face-to-face training, but most significantly 2,362 have registered online.

## **Corporate Plan Programme Board: Project Update**

### **Experiencing Obstacles: Modernising Education**

Consulting with the school and stakeholders, good progress has been made on the development of plans for Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn in Denbigh, which caters for pupils with Autism Spectrum Condition from the ages of 3 to 19. The proposal is to bring three of the school's four sites together in one brand new building, which will be built on the playing field next to Denbigh Leisure Centre. The initial outline concept proposal has been completed and will now be developed further for wider consultation. Options continue to be explored for Ysgol Pendref, and the options developed for the Ysgol Bryn Collen / Ysgol Gwernant scheme by the external architects are being assessed. Initial dialogue has also commenced with Denbigh High School regarding investment at the site.

At Council's [meeting in January](#), a Notice of Motion was raised concerning the condition of Prestatyn High School, and it was agreed to task the Modernising Education Board to review the condition surveys of all schools to see whether they would call into question the current priority order of schools within the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (formerly the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme). The outcome of this review will be reported to Cabinet, together with any recommendations the Board may have as a result.

Another Notice of Motion was raised at Council's [meeting in February](#), concerning funds for a hydrotherapy pool at Ysgol Tir Morfa. It was again agreed that options would be considered by the Modernising Education Board and recommendations taken forward as appropriate.

### **Experiencing Obstacles: Childcare Settings**

Although our start was delayed by two planning conditions, construction on the Oaktree Centre's extension finally started in February, with completion now expected in autumn, 2022. This represents a £1 million investment and will create three new childcare rooms, increasing overall capacity and supporting both English and Welsh language provision. The project is funded by the Welsh Government's Childcare Offer Capital Grant Programme and forms part of an overall investment of more than £3million in improving childcare facilities in Denbighshire.

Both childcare projects at Ysgolion Twm o'r Nant and Dewi Sant have unfortunately seen increases in their anticipated costs, and have consequently been paused until additional funding can be secured from the Welsh Government.

### **Closed: Welsh Language Centre**

The building having been fully delivered and now in use, the final account has been settled and retention released. This project is now closed.

### **Experiencing Obstacles: School Nutrition Project**

With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, it is steadily becoming easier to arrange training sessions. Year 1 schools are starting to pick up where they left off, and despite three postponements owing to increased Covid-19 cases in schools, 6 trainees from our year 2 tranche finally received the Come and Cook 'bolt-on' training. Five schools have been recruited for Year 3 of the project, and two have completed their Level 2 training and await a date for their 'bolt-on' day. All trainees have also been signed up for their food safety course online. It is hoped by the next report that some of the Come and Cook lessons will have been cascaded to pupils. Across the three years of the project, 21 schools have engaged in the programme, with 25 members of staff trained.

### **Closed: The Employee Training Grant**

It was agreed at the last Corporate Plan Programme Board meeting that the bursary project would now close, it being acknowledged that full spend would not be achieved. However, the project has successfully supported 20 individuals (with one application still pending), and as reported above, has led to a 24% increase in the salaries of applicants accumulatively.

### **On Target: Work Start**

The project has secured agreement from the Corporate Plan Programme Board and the Budget Board to bridge upcoming funding gaps until December 2022, looking ahead to opportunities provided through the Shared Prosperity Fund. A total of 110 placements have been sourced and advertised by the Work Start Team to date, with work underway to secure 30 further placements internally and with local businesses between April and

December. We have seen a decline in uptake, but we are reviewing our communications to help address this.

### **Closed: Working Denbighshire Ready for Work**

Careers Events scheduled for April were unfortunately cancelled after 70% of schools were no longer able to attend due to staffing pressures. The conclusion is that it is not practical to arrange meaningful career fairs for students while Covid-19 rates remain high. An alternative was offered in that all schools were invited to attend the Skills Olympics Event at Rhyl College, organised by Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. The event offered an alternative platform for students to engage with the various college departments and employers to help inform future career options. Unfortunately, only three schools attended, but feedback was positive.

The project will now move into the closure stage as its funding comes to an end. Learning from the project will inform the needs outlined in the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.

### **On Target: Volunteering**

We still hope to recruit service representatives to the Internal Volunteers Network where gaps have been identified. Work will be undertaken alongside HR to promote the benefits of services engaging with volunteers and they will be encouraged to promote their opportunities. We are hopeful of reviewing and updating all opportunities in time for Volunteers Week (June 1 to 7), at which time we will also run an active social media campaign. In the same week the council hopes to have a presence at the Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council's volunteer drop-in session in Llangollen to promote our opportunities.

### **Annual or Biennial Measures**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>2020 to 2021</b>	<b>2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
Percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	No data due to Covid-19	No data due to Covid-19	Excellent (Based on 2019 to 2020)

Percentage of pupil attendance in secondary schools – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	No data due to Covid-19	No data due to Covid-19	Priority for improvement (Based on 2019 to 2020)
The percentage of children aged 4-5 years who are a healthy weight or underweight (reported one year in arrears) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	71.8	Data pending	Priority for improvement
Local Authority Points Score Average - KS4 Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate Indicator – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	No data due to Covid-19	No data due to Covid-19	Excellent (Based on 2019 to 2020)
The percentage of children achieving 5 GCSEs 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) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	No data due to Covid-19	No data due to Covid-19	Acceptable (Based on 2019 to 2020)
The number of schools providing education through suitability and condition categories C and D – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	27	27	Priority for improvement
The percentage of pupils (using Pupil Attitudes to Self and School - PASS) who respond positively against pupils' feelings about school – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	87.2	No data No survey	Good
The percentage increase in the salaries of young people enrolled in the Employment Bursary Project – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	17	16	Excellent

Measure	2018 to 2019	2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of residents that are satisfied that there are job opportunities for young people at the start of their career – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	19	19	Priority for improvement
The percentage of residents that are satisfied that there are opportunities for young people to develop their skills – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	28	26	Priority for improvement



Measure	2018 to 2019	2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of residents that are satisfied that there are leisure opportunities that appeal to young people – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	50	29	Priority for improvement

### Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Measure	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Quarter 2 2021 to 2022	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Status
Percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 claiming Job Seekers Allowance – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	12.4	10.0	7.5	6.9	6.4	Priority for improvement

### Well-being and Equality

This priority applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity, health, equality, cohesiveness, global responsibility**, and a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language**. Below are some further highlights from the last year of work that we have undertaken in support of the Well-being Goals and the Sustainable Development Principle; but also benefiting those with protected characteristics or who are at a socio-economic disadvantage.

### Keeping Our Schools Safe

As schools returned for the spring term, the council reminded pupils and staff of the importance of taking regular lateral flow tests to help stop the spread of Covid-19, and to not attend school if they were displaying any symptoms. School staff were asked to wear a face covering in all indoor areas where physical distancing could not be maintained with secondary learners, and also asked to wear face coverings in classrooms. Both staff and pupils were encouraged to practice good hygiene, which includes regular handwashing and sanitising. Parents and carers were also advised to be aware of disruption to school transport at short notice, and to make contingency plans where possible. Where possible

though the council worked to make alternative arrangements and to keep those affected informed.

The rapid spread of the Omicron variant put significant pressure on schools, and unfortunately difficult decisions had to be made by schools to close classes or year groups due to the impact on staffing levels. The council is grateful to all of our school staff for their continued dedication and hard work, and to parents and pupils for their support for helping control the virus. Working **collaboratively** with schools at this time remains as important as ever, **integrating** our common desire to keep everyone safe and **prevent** any harm, particularly to the most vulnerable (we know Covid-19 can be particularly adverse on those with a **Disability**, or from Black and Asian backgrounds. Those at a **socio-economic disadvantage** are also most likely to present with cases).

## **Supporting the Economy**

Residents have been reminded that if they are struggling to secure work, they can apply for free support through the council's Working Denbighshire Team. The service aims to support individuals by providing access to a network of services that can help with career opportunities. Over 300 participants have already secured a job through the scheme, and over 100 have already completed a placement of their choice. For more information, visit our [Working Denbighshire webpages](#).

Businesses impacted by the pandemic were encouraged to apply for additional funding available through the Welsh Government's Emergency Business Fund, which was administered by the council. The funding was available for retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism business, and their supply chains, affected by the move to alert level 2.

Applications for the fund closed in February. Support is also available from the council through an extended Welsh Government scheme where occupiers of properties wholly or mainly being used as retail, hospitality and leisure businesses may be eligible for a 50% rate relief. For more information, visit our [Business Rates pages](#).

Working **collaboratively** with the Welsh Government and **integrating** our shared ambition to support business and to help individuals out of **socio-economic deprivation** will **prevent** stagnation of our local economy and help it grow. By **involving** small businesses and individuals through our work, we are hopefully supporting their **long-term** stability and prosperity, and removing barriers to their success.

## Winter of Well-being

Denbighshire County Council provided a range of free sporting, cultural and play based bilingual activities as part of the Welsh Government's Winter of Wellbeing Programme. Events took place throughout the county for a wide range of ages, creating plenty of safe places for free play and physical activity to encourage children and young people to come together and have fun while also strengthening their social, emotional, and physical well-being. The council launched its Winter of Well-being programme through its libraries, urging Children and Young people to nominate the books that made a positive difference to how they feel. Public libraries across Wales teamed up with The Reading Agency on this campaign, and the seasonal celebration of reading continued through to the end of March with a programme of activities and events delivered online and in libraries.

This work, delivered **collaboratively, integrating** with other organisations and **involving** children and young people, will **prevent** social isolation and skill deprivation, and benefit well-being in the **long-term**. It directly benefits the protected characteristic of **Age**, and those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

## Ending Period Poverty

Denbighshire County Council, through the Welsh Government Period Dignity Grant, has been running a subscription service for young people in Denbighshire where period poverty could be a barrier to their education. So far 220 education-based subscriptions have been provided, but now the scheme is to be expanded to a further 520 community subscriptions for those on low incomes from March. The free service, run in conjunction with social enterprise Hey Girls, will run until March 2023, providing either a one off delivery of re-usable period products, or a monthly delivery of eco-friendly disposable products directly to subscribers' homes. This is in addition to disposable 'In Case of Emergency' (ICE) single-use products that are available from schools, libraries, One Stop Shops, leisure centres, youth centres, Citizens Advice Denbighshire offices, foodbanks, and other organisations that have registered to receive products, provided by TOTM – an eco-friendly company. Sign up by visiting [our website](#), or contact [DCCHG@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:DCCHG@denbighshire.gov.uk).

This **collaborative** and **integrated** approach seeks to **prevent** barriers to education, encourage participation, and support good health in the **long-term**. It directly supports the protected characteristics of **Age**, **Sex**, and those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

## **Protecting Safety**

The decision was made to close Ysgol Brynhyfryd on Friday, March 18, after an electrical fault in the Ruthin area affected both the school and the neighbouring leisure centre. A contractor was brought in to carry out an investigation into the cause of the fault, in partnership with Scottish Power, also carrying out additional safety checks for health and safety reasons.

This action was unfortunate but necessary to guarantee the safety of pupils, staff and residents on the site. Working **collaboratively** and in an **integrated** way with Scottish power and the school, we were able to ensure that the school could reopen as soon as possible, **preventing** further incident or disruption. Although perhaps causing short-term negative impacts, this directly benefitted the protected characteristic of **Age** in the **long-term**.

## **Corporate Health: The council is efficient, well-managed and environmentally sustainable**

Measures: Acceptable

Governance: Good

### **Corporate Health Performance Framework: Measures Update**

With this report, 47% of our Corporate Plan measures currently present as a priority for improvement, up from 43% in the last report. One of our corporate projects is currently presenting as 'compromised' (Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project), with 100% of projects being regularly updated by project managers. The status of the Archive Project reflects the fact that a large proportion of the funding has yet to be secured, and a site interface issue has emerged with the Theatr Clwyd redevelopment, which will delay access for at least a year. In the meantime, the project is looking at opportunities to progress the collaborative service in advance of the building, to both develop the service and improve resilience.

64% of our Corporate Risks are currently inconsistent with our risk appetite, but these are being addressed by senior managers and Cabinet, and justify their inclusion in our Corporate Risk Register as the most serious risks faced by the council. We have received no formal recommendations for improvement from external regulators (Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and Audit Wales). There has been one further low assurance follow-up report in this period from internal audit, covering Accommodation Provision for the Homeless (see [Housing above](#)). This was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in March](#).

Although our measure on the mean hourly rate of pay for women showed that women were being paid more than men during both 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021, the difference in pay has now swung back to favour men by 6.7% in 2021 to 2022. 79% of the lowest paid jobs that the council offers continue to be occupied by women (down only 0.6% on the previous year).

We have seen a decline in our measure for equal appointments. This is a complex measure and looks at the protected characteristics for which we readily have data (based on what people have declared). The protected characteristics that we particularly look at

here are Race, Disability, Sexuality and Gender Reassignment. Based on recently published data for 2020 to 2021, we see a decline in appointments from 15% to 4%. This compares to 11% when looking at those that do not have these characteristics and were appointed.

Member attendance at meetings (where they were expected to attend) has fallen slightly to 84% for 2021 to 2022, down from 89% the previous year. This remains up from before the pandemic when attendance was at 79%.

Our measure on budget variance (i.e. what we have and receive versus what we are spending) has decreased from 2,731k in December 2021 to -2,399k in March 2022. The council's reserves remain at £7.135m.

The percentage of negative news stories about the council (taken as a proportion of all news stories about the council) has risen by 1% between January to March, to 9%. This represents 19 negative stories out of a total of 216. The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter has increased from 52% to 60%. This represents 38 of 63 complaints upheld or partly upheld. This number is slightly higher (57%) for the same period the previous year, and the rate upheld is consistent with our annual average for 2021 to 2022 (60%).

As at March 2022, sickness absence stood at 9.57 days, up from 9.03 in the last period. This compares to 6.47 days in March 2021. As at March 2022, the percentage of staff who have had at least 3 one-to-one meetings in the last 12 months stood at 43%.

By the end of March, 36% of the council's spend from between April 2021 to March 2022 was with local suppliers (£62,126,180). 88% of contracts (over £25k and under £1,000k) contained community benefits. One collaborative procurement activity (Denbighshire Music Collaborative between Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham Councils) was undertaken during the period, and one collaborative procurement opportunity was missed due to timing (Phase II Road Resurfacing Programme between Denbighshire and Flintshire). There are 16 potential collaborative procurements on the horizon and these will be explored and developed in the coming months.

Our final measure considers the council's efforts to support residents into work through placements that we ourselves offer within the council. During January to March we successfully supported 9 additional placements, bringing our annual cumulative total to

143. This is a sharp increase on our performance in the previous year, aided of course by the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

Data is currently pending for our Net Carbon Zero measure, but is anticipated to be included in this report as soon as it is available. We are also waiting on confirmation of data for our two finance measures, pending the final Statement of Accounts.

## **Corporate Health Self-Assessment: Governance Areas**

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

### **Corporate Planning**

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

#### **Senior Leadership Team**

A [special meeting](#) of Council was held in March where the Chief Executive sought approval to proceed with a review of the Senior Leadership Team, which is to be tackled in two phases. Initially the Chief Executive wishes to address capacity issues at the Corporate Executive Team level by introducing a new Director of Governance and Business, increasing from two directors to three. This post, plus the current vacant director post (Director of Economy and Environment) are to be appointed by the new Council following the election. Following these appointments, the review will then look at the leadership structure at the Head of Service level. In the meantime, interim arrangements are in place with four middle managers acting up to cover the two heads of service roles recently vacated through retirement (Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation, and the Head of Community Support Services).

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

The New Ways of Working Project is now being led by the Corporate Director for Communities following the retirement of the Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation. The project team continues to meet monthly and minutes are published on the council's internal website. A position statement was issued in March following the

move to 'alert level 0' and the removal of most restrictions. Following a review of office spaces for what is needed (especially as desks, chairs and IT equipment may have been moved) and completed risk assessments, from April the council is managing a phased return to the office, with the option of one day a week initially, increasing to two days from May. Those who wish to come in more frequently must discuss this with their manager. Workplace controls will also remain in place, including adequate ventilation, sufficient cleaning, and good hand hygiene. All arrangements will continue to be under review, and feedback on how it is working is welcomed.

Another development is that the ground floor of the Caledfryn office building in Denbigh is being shared with NHS staff, following a request to set-up a call centre. This is for approximately 30 staff, 7 days a week. This has resulted in some Denbighshire teams being relocated within the building, but there is sufficient space to accommodate these moves.

### **Develop a new Corporate Plan by October 2022.**

In this period, the Strategic Planning and Performance Team have pressed on with work to develop the next Corporate Plan, with phase 2 of our County Conversation running from January 28 to March 11. Responses received confirmed the themes that were consulted upon, namely:

- **Housing:** Provide sufficient and affordable good quality housing, particularly addressing the provision of was affordable to young people in the area.
- **Economy:** Support post-pandemic economic recovery, including identifying and capitalising on opportunities to upskill residents and enable them to access decent employment and income.
- **Young People:** Support schools to provide excellent standards of education, through the provision of support and care for all learner preservation of mental health and well-being.
- **Connected Communities:** Maintain a good quality road infrastructure with good transport links and broadband connectivity.
- **Environment and Climate:** Protect our natural assets and defend communities against climate change



- **Addressing Deprivation:** Tackle entrenched deprivation and its associated challenges that some of our communities face.
- **A well-run, high-performing council:** To be a council that is fair, transparent, performs well, represents value for money, and responds to its customers.

Following the consultation, however, one additional theme has been identified as a gap and will be included in the draft proposal going forward:

- **Ageing Well:** Strong community networks enable people to live safely, happily and independently, but receive good support when needed.

Staff workshops are to be held in late April and May to gather more detailed professional input around our 'pledges' and possible actions to take forward under each of the themes proposed in the next Corporate Plan. The draft document will then be put forward for the consideration of the new Council during a workshop planned for July.

This period also saw the closure of the consultation on the content of the Conwy and Denbighshire Well-being Assessment in March. Feedback on the assessment has been positive with only very minor amendments or additions to make. The final version is being updated [online](#).

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

With the publication of this report (plus the three quarterly update reports before it) and the accompanying Executive Summary, the council has met statutory requirements in relation to the Self-Assessment of performance against its functions. Arrangements for a Panel Assessment will be discussed with the new council following the elections.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act also required a number of changes to be made to the council's Constitution, as well as the introduction of a Constitution Guide to help members of the public understand its provisions. The changes and the Guide were reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in March](#). At the same meeting, members agreed the process for appointing lay members to the committee (including a chair) from May, which again is a requirement of the Act. The law also

requires that the council has in place a Petition Scheme. This will be the subject of a report to Council in May.

**Service Challenge Action: Ensure a question is asked at each Service Performance Challenge regarding commitment to customer service.**

This action has not progressed as intended in this period as consideration needs to be given to the senior management restructure. Nonetheless, a paper summarising lessons learned and proposals for the 2022 to 2023 Service Challenge Programme has been prepared. It is felt that the format of the challenges during last summer worked well for its condensed timetable and reduced paperwork. Consideration does need to be given, however, to how service level data is reviewed, as this is an important part of our Performance Management Framework. Following a recent Audit Wales review of Performance Management ([see below](#)), proposals will also include a recommendation for the publishing of service level performance data.

**Other developments in the last period**

**Governance and Decision Making**

Of relevance to this chapter, an Internal Audit Report on Governance and Decision Making was completed in February, and presented within the Internal Audit Update to the Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in March](#). The review gave a medium assurance rating and broadly found that existing governance arrangements worked well, with good levels of engagement between members and officers. However, there could be an opportunity to learn from the Covid-19 pandemic to balance quicker decision making with maintaining transparency and accountability. It was felt that roles and responsibilities could also be clearer (an issue that may be addressed by the council's new Constitution Guide); and there is a lack of awareness in relation to the Chief Officer delegated decision process, and a lack of evidence or clear audit trail to delegated decisions generally, making them difficult to scrutinise. Concerns were also raised around the capacity within scrutiny and democratic functions, but these have since been addressed following agreement to recruit additional support staff.

## **Annual Governance Statement Update**

An update on the council's progress against improvement actions identified within the Annual Governance Statement for 2020 to 2021 was provided to the Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in January](#). Overall it was reported that the council was making good progress on all actions.

## **Local Government Elections and Member Training**

The council has made significant preparations for the Local Government elections in May, and arrangements are in place for the induction and training of councillors. This includes ICT handover and induction, code of conduct, holding effective hybrid meetings, equality and diversity, information on how the council works, and specific committee training and procedures.

## **Financial Planning**

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

## **Budget and Council Tax**

A report presented to [Cabinet](#) and [Council](#) meetings in January set out the implications of the Local Government Settlement and proposals for the finalisation of the budget for 2022 to 2023. The council is legally required to set a balanced and deliverable budget before the start of each financial year, and to set the resulting level of Council Tax to allow bills to be sent to residents. The final proposals to balance the 2022 to 2023 budget are shown in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The main areas of growth and pressures totalled £17.628m. A draft settlement of around 11% would have been required in order to fund all these pressures. The net +9.2% settlement generates £15.005m additional revenue, leaving a funding gap of £2.623m. The following items were included in the proposals in order to bridge that gap:

- Income budgets have been inflated in-line with the agreed Fees and Charges policy, which increases external income by £0.120m.

- Operational efficiencies amounting to £634k have been identified, which are within Head of Service delegated responsibility in consultation with Lead Members. No savings have been requested from Community Support Services or Schools.
- Council Tax increases by 2.95%, which, along with minor changes to the Council Tax Base, will generate £1.869m additional revenue. This compares to last year's increase of 3.8%, and 4.3% the year before that.

The budget for the 2022 to 2023 financial year has now been approved. The increase in funding comes with a number of new responsibilities the council will be required to fund, including pay increases, ensuring the Real Living Wage for social care workers, and mitigation for the end of the Covid-19 Hardship Fund.

### **Finance Update Reports**

The Head of Finance presented updates on the council's finances for 2021 to 2022 to Cabinet in [January](#) and [February](#). The council's net revenue budget was £216.818m. There was a forecast overspend of £1.553m as of February 2022 (down from £1.641m in the month before). The 2021 to 2022 budget required service savings and efficiencies of £2.666m to be identified. Operational savings and fees and charges increases are assumed to have been achieved, and the school savings are delegated to governing bodies to monitor and deliver.

### **Capital Plan 2021 to 2022**

A report went to Council's [meeting in February](#) to update members on the 2021 to 2022 element of the Capital Plan, whilst also attaching the recommendations of the Strategic Investment Group of capital bids recommended for inclusion in the Capital Plan. The Estimated Capital Plan is now £41.16m. Major projects include:

- Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (formerly the 21st Century Schools Programme) – Ysgol Llanfair; Rhos Street School and Ysgol Pen Barras; Christ the Word, Rhyl.
- Rhyl Queens Market Redevelopment.
- New Waste Services Remodelling.
- East Rhyl Coastal Defence.

The Capital Plan is dependent for part of its funding on capital receipts generated by the sale of council assets. The table below shows those gross receipts achieved in 2021 to 2022. In addition, a number of potential disposals are also currently in development.

<b>Property (2021 to 2022)</b>	<b>£000</b>
Bodelwyddan Castle	500
Land at Meliden	544
Geufron Farm, Corwen	470
Land at Rhos Street, Ruthin	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,584</b>

The Strategic Investment Group, which includes representatives from the three scrutiny committees, has met to consider block allocation capital bids received for inclusion in the 2022 to 2023 Capital Plan, prepared by each service. The recommendations of the Strategic Investment Group for the inclusion in the 2022 to 2023 Capital Plan were supported and agreed by Cabinet at its [meeting in February](#).

### **Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022 to 2023, and Prudential Indicators 2022 to 2025**

A report presented to Council's [meeting in February](#) outlined how the council will manage its investments and its borrowing for the coming year, and sets the policies within which the Treasury Management function operates. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the "CIPFA TM Code") requires the council to approve the statement and Prudential Indicators annually. The Capital Strategy Report is intended to give a high level, concise and comprehensible overview to all elected members of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of the council's services.

### **Planning for the Statement of Accounts 2021 to 2022**

The council has a statutory duty to produce a statement of accounts that complies with approved accounting standards. A report presented to Corporate Governance

Committee's [meeting in January](#) provided an update on the planning and timing of the Statement of Accounts 2021 to 2022. Last year the Welsh Government again issued guidance that clarified that, due to the ongoing impact of Covid-19, the statutory deadlines for the completion of the draft and audited accounts would be extended. The council took the early decision to issue a notice to say that we would not be aiming for the statutory early deadline, but the revised deadlines would be achieved. This decision was taken in consultation with Audit Wales and informed by their assessment of their ability to complete the required audit work. There was recognition that this would be a challenging year for all concerned to ensure all the information was available on time.

Firstly, the delay has meant that we have not had time to correct misstatements that we would normally have – these corrections will be made for next year's accounts. Secondly, in a usual year the focus and energy of the Capital and Technical team from September turn to strategic capital planning, budget setting, addressing Internal Audit recommendations, and planning for next year's closure of accounts processes. All these activities have been put on hold for 3 additional months and will have an impact on service delivery going forward.

### **Housing Rent Setting and Housing Revenue Budget**

At its [meeting in January](#), Cabinet approved the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2022 to 2023 and the Housing Stock Business Plan. It is a statutory requirement to set budgets and rent levels before the start of the new financial year. The budget must be consistent with the assumptions within the Housing Stock Business Plan, which has been designed to maintain Welsh Housing Quality Standard throughout the 30-year business plan. The budget has been calculated to ensure we can deliver our revenue services; the capital investment programme to maintain the quality standard of our homes; and to develop our new build programme. We are anticipating significant additional costs in future years due to likely new decarbonisation standards for our existing stock.

Cabinet also approved the decision for rents for council dwellings to be increased in accordance with the Welsh Government Policy for Social Housing Rents to an average weekly rent of £97.27, which is an increase of £2.92 with effect from April 4, 2022. As part of the Welsh Government rent policy the council will be required to ensure that any rent increase considers affordability for tenants, value for money, and an assessment of cost

efficiencies. Whilst 2021 has been a difficult year for household finances – and this will continue into 2022 – we are satisfied as to the affordability of our weekly rents.

## **Performance Management**

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

### **Implement annual process for stakeholder engagement on council performance.**

Lessons learned from the first year of the Stakeholder Survey (2021) have been evaluated and the project team are currently exploring options for ongoing annual stakeholder engagement. Future surveys will likely focus only on statutory questions required under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, covering the performance of our corporate objectives and governance. It will be promoted through a targeted communications campaign.

### **Provide clarity to the Senior Leadership Team on the role of the Project Management Team.**

A report was taken to the Corporate Executive Team in March to provide an update on progress with the review of the Corporate Programme Office. This included:

- Progress on the reconfiguration of Verto (our project management system) and its expected development up to the end of June 2022.
- The development of a Corporate Programme Office Guide that describes the roles and responsibilities of the team and what support they can offer. A draft will be presented to the Corporate Executive Team at the end of May.
- Two project support officer roles now in place in the team in response to organisational need.

### **Other developments in the last period**

#### **Embed interim Strategic Equality Plan**

We have ensured that this report captures all outstanding actions towards the delivery of our interim Strategic Equality Plan (which covers October 2021 to October 2022). Actions

already completed will have been captured in the preceding quarterly update reports that accompany this document (published on [our website](#)) and make up the set that form our Self-Assessment of performance.

## **Annual Complaints Report**

The first Annual Complaints Report, required under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act, was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in March](#). Broadly it was felt that the council's complaints processes were robust, with its response rate to stage 1 and stage 2 complaints during 2021 to 2022 being generally excellent, with only two stage 2 complaints extending beyond the target response time (out of 25). The number of complaints received is also down from 262 the previous year to 237. Attached to the report is a letter from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales, which reveals that 32 complaints relating to Denbighshire County Council were referred to them, split quite evenly over a number of areas, but the larger number relating to Children's Social Services (six), Complaints Handling (five), and Environment and Environmental Health (four). It was noted that it is very rare for the Ombudsman to intervene and challenge complaints decided on by the council, which should give further assurance as to our processes. However, compared with other local authorities in Wales and as a proportion of residents, the Ombudsman did receive the third highest number of complaints about Denbighshire County Council.

## **Queen's Buildings**

An internal Audit follow-up report on the Queen's Buildings project, a key part of the council's wider programme to regenerate Rhyl, was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in January](#). The original report, received a year before this, had given the project a low assurance rating. However, this follow-up identified that progress had been made, with eight of the twelve identified actions being fully implemented, providing instead a medium assurance rating. A further follow-up report will be needed in July to establish the progress against outstanding actions that were delayed due to the project management system undergoing tendering and the current [review of project management](#) mentioned above.

An update on Queen's Building project was also given to Cabinet at its [meeting in February](#), where unforeseen rising costs were discussed. Additional funding was required



to deliver phase one of the project due to a number of factors, including a 25% rise in the cost of construction, due to the availability of labour and materials globally. The ground floor level of the new development also needs to rise by 740mm to protect against flooding. The Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme has part funded the project to date.

With construction due to start in April, but the letting of the construction contract falling after the last Cabinet [meeting in March](#), Cabinet agreed that approval of the construction contract through a Delegated Decision by the Chief Executive was required to ensure that the tight timescale for project delivery was achieved. All of the outputs need to be delivered and funding drawn down by the end of February 2023 or the council could face a significant claw-back of the grant funding. Cabinet further agreed, to stay ahead of long lead-in times for some items, to underwrite £500k of construction costs (covering groundworks, steel, and specialist piling) to ensure that the contractor can start in time and deliver the outputs required by the deadlines set by the funding bodies.

### **Planning Compliance**

A report presented to [Communities Scrutiny in March](#) examined the effectiveness of the council's Planning Compliance Charter. The purpose of the Charter is to streamline the process of remedying alleged planning breaches by helping complainants, alleged contraveners, and other interested parties understand how the council's planning compliance function operates. The Charter has broadly been seen by officers and members as an effective tool for advising stakeholders how the council investigates and remedies alleged breaches of planning control. However, some minor amendments have been made to improve the process further and help better manage expectations. In response to feedback from elected members, further information will also be included about how stakeholders are updated on the progress of cases. Combined with the recent recruitment of a second compliance officer, performance in this area should continue to improve.

### **Audit Wales**

Audit Wales presented their [Annual Audit Summary](#) for Denbighshire County Council at the Governance and Audit meeting [held in March](#). It confirmed:

- An unqualified true and fair opinion on the council's financial statements, and no significant issues with grant claims and returns.
- The council met its remaining Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 duties to secure continuous improvement.
- The council is well placed to maintain its financial sustainability over the medium term.
- In recovering from the impact of the pandemic, the council benefited from proactive engagement regionally and locally, showing strong collective leadership in planning and decision-making.
- The council is making excellent progress in embedding its environmental ambitions, though more comprehensive stakeholder mapping would further strengthen engagement, and reporting over the next year will help the environmental ambitions to embed and the measures to evolve.
- In reviewing Older People's Care Home Placements there are complex national processes that result in a significant focus on costs, which causes division amongst partners and has the potential to impact adversely on services users. Strengthening accountability and developing a regional strategy and delivery plan have the potential to drive positive change and better partnership working, especially in relation to complex and more specialist care. Audit Wales have reported locally to councils, and nationally to the Welsh Government recommending actions that should be taken.

## **Delivering Sustained Improvement**

Audit Wales have published a [review of the council's performance management arrangements](#), seeking assurance that they are robust and likely to support continuous and sustainable improvement. It concluded that the council's Performance Management Framework and arrangements for measuring and reporting performance are effective, with some opportunities to improve the use of the performance management software. The council could also look to improve performance reporting of non-priority areas, how finance and performance information are considered simultaneously, and that staff 1:1s are recorded in an accurate and timely manner.

## Care Inspectorate Wales

The Care Inspectorate for Wales issued a [letter in November](#) that summarised its findings of an assurance check (undertaken during June and July) of whether social services continue to help and support adults and children, with a focus on safety and well-being. The letter highlights a number of positive areas of practice across both adults and children's social services, as well as areas requiring improvement within children's services. Agreed actions are being taken forward within relevant services, and the progress of these will be reviewed through performance evaluation review meetings between Care Inspectorate Wales, relevant heads of service, and the Director for Communities.

Care Inspectorate Wales issued a [letter in February](#) after a follow-up review on the safety and well-being of children and families. This included the local authority's practice of reviewing, analysing and making decisions in relation to risk, and whether the local authority was meeting its statutory responsibilities under the Social Services and Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. Again, the review identified some strengths and areas for improvement, and agreed actions will be monitored through the service's Service Plan and routine performance evaluation review meetings going forward.

## Risk Management

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

### Understanding Risk Appetite

During the last two years we have seen a growing number of corporate risks that are beyond our risk appetite. This feels consistent with the global challenges we have been facing and continue to face. Our February review continued conversations about those risks, and we have identified assurance work (internal and external) that is planned or has already taken place to help us understand the effectiveness of our controls. For example, our review took account of a recent Audit Wales Review of Commissioning Older People's Care Home Placements by North Wales Councils and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. A report about this review was also presented to Governance and Audit Committee at its [meeting in March](#).

As was reported previously, following the May elections, training will be provided to councillors to ensure that they understand the council's risk management methodology.

**Service Challenge Action: Consider the provisions of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, particularly in regard to Corporate Joint Committee and any associated risks for the council.**

Our review of this risk in February 2022 found the risk to be static. The North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) set its budget in January 2022. Its functions (strategic development planning; regional transport planning; and regional economic development) must be operational from June 2022. Scrutiny arrangements have yet to be confirmed. The CJC offers opportunities to establish a strategic and regional approach to these three functions to develop Denbighshire's economy and communities. However, there is a risk that there is insufficient clarity, time and engagement to capitalise on these opportunities. Conversely, there is a risk that the council puts in a lot of effort but doesn't receive a proportionate return on investment.

### **Other developments in the last period**

#### **Measuring our controls**

We have specified relevant recent or planned internal and external audit work that gives risk owners assurance around the effectiveness of our controls, and furthered conversations around performance measures that can be used to better understand the success. Any relevant measures have now been identified in the register.

#### **Communicating our Risks**

As global events have grown in significance for our council and our community over the last two years, so too have the number of active risks on our corporate risk register. For this reason, a summary of our corporate risk register has been developed and approved for use in internal communications. A full update report will be presented to Performance Scrutiny at its [meeting in June](#).

#### **Recruitment and Retention**

Our February review highlighted the controls that are being implemented to manage this risk:

- Some services are taking specific actions. Highways and Environmental Services, for example, are working with Working Denbighshire; and Community Support Services are working with the Communications Team to deliver a targeted recruitment programme.
- A new group has been established looking at recruitment issues in care, chaired by the council's Corporate Director for Communities.
- HR has completed workforce planning with all services in November, and included discussion about recruitment and retention. The subsequent Corporate Workforce Plan has been discussed and recruitment and retention has been identified as a corporate concern with a number of actions being agreed in the delivery plan.
- Alongside services, HR are exploring a range of different strategies that could be put in place to support recruitment activities and help with retention, such as upskilling our own employees; working with partners; job redesign; and market supplement payments.

### **Updates to the Corporate Risk Register (February 2022 review)**

Our February review resulted in a number of changes to the corporate risk register. The most significant changes included:

- Risk 14: The risk of a health and safety incident resulting in serious injury or the loss of life. The risk score was downgraded and is now within our risk appetite.
- Risk 16: The risk that the impact of welfare reform (Universal Credit) is more significant than anticipated by the council. This was successfully managed and is no longer a risk.
- Risk 18: The risk that programme and project benefits are not fully realised. The risk score was increased to reflect the economic challenges we are facing and is no longer within our risk appetite.
- Two new risks were introduced. The first about future funding to support the most vulnerable learners and disengaged young people; and the second regarding placements for Looked After Children.

## **Workforce Planning**

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

### **Complementing New Ways of Working, we will review training, development and mental-health needs for staff.**

Following the development of the induction programme, policies and guidance, dedicated training sessions for employees and managers are being developed to support the new ways of working. These sessions will commence, subject to approval being obtained, from July 2022.

We have asked the Staff Council to support us in recruiting Mental Health Champions. HR Business Partners are also working with services to support this. A Well-being Survey will also be launched in June.

### **Improve the information we have about our workforce, including equality information, to support more detailed analyses in future Public Sector Duty Reports.**

The Public Sector Duty report has been published, but despite the continued effort to capture increased amounts of equality information we still have a large proportion of staff (around 50 per cent), who choose not to complete equality information. Many of these are not office-based. We are working on new, more accessible ways to enable these staff to update their information more easily.

### **Improve our workforce planning programme and consider how best to plan for posts requiring a specific level of Welsh above Level 1.**

Following consultations with our Corporate Executive and Senior Leader Leadership Teams, the new council-wide plan for workforce planning is in place.

The proposal for how best to plan for posts requiring above level 1 Welsh will be presented to our Senior Leadership Team between April and June 2022.

At Council's [meeting in January](#), councillors raised urgent questions with regards to recruitment and retention issues experienced in the care sector. This was acknowledged to be an issue that pre-dated the pandemic, and was not of course unique to

Denbighshire. Assurance was given that a range of measures and initiatives have been agreed and were being monitored by a new Denbighshire County Council Social Care Recruitment and Retention Group, chaired by the Corporate Director for Communities. This will include looking at pay rates for all roles across adult and children social care and promoting our benefits. Additional dedicated HR resource has also been put in place to support social care recruitment and retention. We have accessed additional Covid-19 recovery funding to support recruitment to care for both external care providers and our internal services. Providers are also taking up initiatives to boost recruitment and retention.

Performance Scrutiny also examined staff absences, turnover and workforce planning as part of its [meeting in March](#). There has been an increase in staff absences during 2021 to 2022, with the three main reasons being muscular / skeletal; depression / anxiety and personal stress; and of course, Covid-19. Staff turnover is below the Wales average, however, there are some services where there are known issues, particularly within Highways and Environmental Services; Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services; and, as previously covered, social care. Grades seeing the largest churn were Grade 4 and below, where people generally leave for personal reasons, or Grade 10 and above where people have re-evaluated and are looking more towards retirement. Again it was acknowledged that the council, like public sector organisations, are facing recruitment and retention issues in a number of areas for different reasons. The workforce was praised for its excellent resilience over the last two years, dealing with the worst possible circumstances that anyone in local government has faced within living memory. Services have continued to deliver despite everything without significant impact on provision.

**Service Challenge Action: Consider the staff resource requirements associated with the additional burden of managing / supporting virtual meetings, and the increasing number of Member Task and Finish Group meetings, and consider what, if any, actions are required.**

We have recruited to the new post of Senior Committee Administrator to support democratic governance activities. It was an internal appointment; therefore, we now need to recruit to the vacant post, as well as that of a new Scrutiny Officer.

**Service Challenge Action: Establish the latest position and level of risk associated with DBS / risk assessment indicators that are, or have been, a priority for improvement / acceptable.**

Work to address the issue of compliance with Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and risk assessment (except for employees under Social Care Wales or CSIW) is ongoing. Compliance continues to be over 90% across DCC.

**Revise one-to-one measures for Highways and Environment Services and Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services.**

Our previous performance update report identified the need to revise our one-to-one measures for Highways and Environmental Services, and for Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Services. From April 2022, we will only measure the completion of one-to-one meetings with staff who are expected to undertake at least three meetings within a 12-month period.

**Other developments in the last period**

**Audit Wales Study**

During December 2021 to February 2022, Audit Wales conducted a local study of Denbighshire's asset management and workforce planning. The draft report is now being considered. The final report is expected during May to July 2022.

**Business Improvement and Modernisation**

Following the retirement of the Head of Business Improvement and Modernisation, two new interim posts have been created and appointed to oversee the work of the service. The Strategic Planning Team Manager will oversee Strategy and Performance, Projects, Climate Change, Community Development, and Internal Audit; while the Chief Digital Officer will oversee Digital and ICT Services, Corporate Business Continuity, Digital Records and Archives.

**Assets**

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



## **Asset Management strategy**

A five-year Asset Management Strategy has been drafted and will be presented to the council's Asset Management Group in June. This will include new terms of reference that will reflect the impending restructure of the Senior Leadership Team, and any changes to Lead Member responsibilities following the election.

## **Highways Maintenance Policies for Unclassified Roads**

At its [meeting in January](#), Communities Scrutiny examined the council's policy for maintaining unclassified roads, along with the criteria and formula that will be applied for spending additional funding allocated for highways in the county. Maintaining the roads is a Statutory Duty laid down by the Highways Act, 1980, but there is interpretation between highway authorities as to the minimum standard, constrained by budgetary limitations, resources, the use (and type of use) its network gets, and a few other considerations. For this reason, each local authority lays down its minimum standards in a Code of Practice, which was ratified in Denbighshire by Cabinet in January 2020.

It was reported that it is much harder to evaluate the condition of unclassified roads. Since 2011 we have used a points system based on visual appearance, with high scores meaning the surface is visually poor e.g. potholed and requiring patching or resurfacing. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, this method was suspended for quite some months, so a recent evaluation is unavailable. The most recent trend showed that (after an improvement from 2011 to 2016) these roads were worsening, and we expect that new figures will show the roads to be back to, or worse than, the 2011 position.

## **Measures introduced to stop vandalism at public toilets**

The council has taken action following incidents of vandalism at a number of public conveniences in Rhyl, Prestatyn and Corwen. The vast majority of the vandalism was happening between the hours of 6pm and 9pm, and the decision was taken to bring forward the closure time from 9pm to 6pm. The new closing time will be kept under review, but it is unfortunately needed at present to take action to try and prevent these issues, as they undermine the sustainability of the service and result in facilities being out of use completely for periods of time whilst we repair them.

**Service Challenge Action: Develop proposal to improve ICT provision, fibre security, business continuity, school ICT provision, and digital Denbighshire**

The proposal has been accepted by the Corporate Executive Team and the budget board to begin the process of rebuilding capacity within ICT to deal with the issues raised. 85% of schools have signed up to support contracts with Denbighshire ICT, and the other 15% have been advised. There is a rolling program in place to ensure the council's Digital Perimeter Security is up-to-date and operating at optimum levels. This activity has now been completed.

**Service Challenge Action: Create hubs in areas across Denbighshire where there is poor broadband connection, to assist and enable remote meetings**

We are awaiting confirmation from the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) with regards to what is happening with the LFFN project, as the project extension officially expired in September 2021.

Across Denbighshire sites there have been six PSBA routers installed and circuits activated. 18 further sites have fibre fully complete and they are ready for PSBA circuits to be activated. Denbighshire router equipment has been ordered and will be provided. The roll-out for all of these will commence from April, 2022. There have been 22 sites removed from the current project scope, although there are current negotiations ongoing to secure funding for a 'Phase 3' roll-out. Unfortunately, no further details have been released to date.

**Service Challenge Action: Work to enable translation provision with Microsoft Teams software**

This activity is experiencing obstacles, but work continues nationally to make progress towards enabling the translation provision within Microsoft Teams. However, this action is dependent on intervention from Microsoft.

**Service Challenge Action: Create a plan to support external partners and businesses to take forward the climate and ecological change programme**

The plan was originally proposed to be complete by the end of April 2022; however, this has not been possible due to staff changes. It is proposed to be developed by the end of

October 2022, for wider behaviour change initiatives to be taken forward from 2022 to 2023 onwards. This will be supported by the 1.5 FTE new dedicated roles within the corporate communication team to work on this agenda.

**Service Challenge Action: Ensure lessons learnt are captured from previous purchases of buildings**

This action is now closed as it is business as usual. We will in future ask for any asbestos reports at acquisition stage. In addition to this, we will endeavour to ensure that we will still be assuming asbestos removal costs if we're demolishing or remodelling a property.

**Procurement**

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

**Integrate biodiversity protection and improvement into our procurement processes and drive through community benefits that improve the environment. We will work with businesses and suppliers in Denbighshire to encourage lower carbon practice. We will also develop a new procurement strategy.**

The Legal Services Manager continues to provide interim managerial support to the Procurement Team, in the absence of a Procurement Manager being in post. There continue to be capacity issues and these are still affecting the pace of progress in relation to these actions. Despite these challenges, during the period a joint task and finish group was convened to develop a new procurement strategy. The new strategy is intended to be presented for adoption between June and September 2022.

A paper, 'De-Carbonisation in Procurement', was presented to the Climate Change Board in February and will be presented to Cabinet following the May elections.

A new action that will be delivered from April 2022 will hopefully secure agreement for more specialist experience within the team to progress decarbonisation in our procurement. For example, we need to develop a bank of specific carbon-related questions that could be used as part of the tender evaluation process. These will need to be scored and weighted appropriately as part of the quality assessment of tenders. We are awaiting training and guidance from Welsh Government. Progress in this area will

undoubtedly help us to progress our aims to decarbonise our procurement and the supply chain.

We recognise we need to have a clearer vision for the type of benefits that have the potential to contribute to ecological improvement and carbon reduction, e.g. energy efficiency measures that can be accepted as contributing to Denbighshire's carbon emissions, as well as those indicators expected by Welsh Government. We will be using a tender currently in the pipeline to pilot ways to encourage and measure carbon reduction in the contract, using a Welsh Government template to support our approach and calculations.

During the period, Brenig Construction has been committed to delivering carbon reduction through their supply chain. Creating Enterprise, a social enterprise part of Cartrefi Conwy, were responsible for manufacturing the timber for the council's Passivhaus developments in Denbigh, creating one full-time job, and are now manufacturing timber in a new factory in Rhyl. In establishing this relationship, we've connected Creating Enterprise with our Community Resilience Team to explore additional areas of potential co-working; and also to secure more community involvement in landscape management, by introducing the Community Resilience Team to Denbigh in Bloom (one of the recipient organisations of Llwyn Eirin Community Benefits).

### **Review Contract Procedure Rules to ensure compliance with new procurement regulations and the Socio-Economic Duty**

We have not yet progressed this review due to the difficulties we have faced in recruiting to the management role.

### **Service Challenge Action: Promote adherence to the Procurement Policy across the council**

As reported previously, we have training slides about contract procedure rules and procurement generally, which our procurement business partners will present to their client departments in the coming months.

**Ensure staff involved with managing contracts are suitably trained. Training will be rolled out across the council to all staff who are involved in contract management**

A new Contract Management Officer came into post during the period, to progress with rolling out the Contract Management Framework across services. The post holder is responsible for facilitating and co-ordinating contract management best practice amongst staff. In the interim period, before the appointment was made, the Contract Management Framework and initial training was undertaken by the Chair of the Contract Management Forum and the Performance and Contract Manager.

**Internal Audit Action: Procurement forward work plans to be compiled by each Service to include existing and horizon scanning of projects and activities**

Procurement Business Partners attend service management teams for Denbighshire and Flintshire Councils. They have begun collating a list of existing contracts on Proactis and active tenders for each service in each county, and have started to ask management teams about other procurement needs that may be on the horizon. These are useful discussions for identifying opportunities for collaborative procurements.

**Service Challenge Action: Explore long-term options for sustaining the Community Benefits Hub**

The tender for the Bwthyn y Ddol Child Assessment Centre, being built by Conwy and Denbighshire Councils, includes some promising community benefits and we hope to secure monies from this contract to contribute funding for the Hub. Contract finalisation has been delayed, but project meetings are planned from May 2022 to gain pace.

The Community Renewal Fund has secured two fixed-term contracts, with one post holder being in post since March 2022 to deliver the economic empowerment project. One of its aims is to align community benefits with community need and ensure work placements are those that have a future; with skills in sectors predicted to grow. This will involve deeper engagement with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. We are also building evidence to demonstrate the positive outcomes of the Hub.

## Other developments in the last period

### Denbighshire Leisure Limited

At its [meeting in January](#), Cabinet agreed to grant an extension for a period of twelve months to the term of the leisure services contract made between Denbighshire County Council and Denbighshire Leisure Limited. The rationale for the recommended contract extension was to reflect a lost year of operation due to Covid-19, which severely disrupted the company's ability to deliver services, obtain grants and grow future new business.

### Revenues and Benefits

At the same [meeting in January](#), Cabinet agreed to progress the recommendation of bringing the revenues and benefits service back into the council in an effective transformation from Civica, with no adverse impact on service delivery or additional cost, and would in fact generate savings. The decision was necessary because Civica, for commercial reasons, wished to refocus their strategic direction and end all partnership arrangements with local authorities at the earliest opportunity. It was noted that the partnership had otherwise been an effective one, but that this was also an opportunity to provide a more efficient service.

### Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	Status
The percentage of new appointees from applications where it was disclosed that they are either from a racial or religious minority group, have a disability, are gay or bi-sexual, or had their gender reassigned	15	4	Does not apply Count only

<b>Title</b>	<b>2020 to 2021</b>	<b>2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
The percentage difference in the mean hourly rate of pay for women – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	-13.5	6.7	Acceptable
The percentage of the lowest paid salaries (bottom quarter) that are women – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	79.9	79.3	Priority for Improvement
Member attendance (expected and present), year to date – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	89	84	Good
Net Carbon Zero – Total carbon tonnage emitted and absorbed by the council (excluding supply chain) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	10,277	TBC	Excellent

<b>Title</b>	<b>2018 to 2019</b>	<b>2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
Overall satisfaction with the council (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	40	32	Priority for Improvement
Partners that agree the council works well with them (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	62	Good
Councillors and council employees who agree that there is a good working relationship between political leaders and senior management (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	60	Acceptable
Stakeholders who agree that the council manages its performance well (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	28	Priority for Improvement

Stakeholders who agree that the council manages it risks and challenges well (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	30	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council manages its finances well (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	26	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council has long-term plans in place (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	31	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council treats it workforce well (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	35	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council makes best use of its assets and resources (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	20	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council purchases its goods and services in a fair and efficient way (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	New to 2021	25	Priority for Improvement

### Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Quarter 2 2021 to 2022	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of Corporate Plan Measures showing as 'Priority for Improvement' – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	49	41	45	43	47	Acceptable



<b>Title</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
The number of projects on the project register showing as 'compromised' – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	1	2	2	2	1	Good
The percentage of projects whose delivery confidence was updated in the last three months – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	94	96	90	84	100	Excellent
The percentage of corporate risks inconsistent with the council's risk appetite statement – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	55	No data Six-monthly	62	No data Six-monthly	64	Priority for Improvement
The cumulative number of negative reports	0	0	0	0	0	Excellent

<b>Title</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
from external regulators – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>						
The cumulative number of Internal Audit low assurance reports, financial year to date – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	4	0	1	3	4	Acceptable
Corporate and Service Budget Variance (£k)	-718	708	2,445	2,731	-2,399	Does not apply Count only
Council reserves (£k)	7,135	7,135	7,135	7,135	7,135	Does not apply Count only
Negative news stories as a percentage of all news stories about the council –	24	10	6	8	9	Priority for Improvement

<b>Title</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Benchmarked Locally</b>						
The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	57	62	67	52	60	Acceptable
The rolling average number of working days / shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	6.47	7.12	7.54	9.03	9.57	Priority for improvement
The percentage of staff who have had at least 3 one-to-one meetings in the last 12 months	45	44	42	36	43	Priority for Improvement

<b>Title</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>– Benchmarked Locally</b>						
The percentage of spend with suppliers based within Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	36	33	38	40	36	Good
The cumulative percentage of Denbighshire contracts over £25k and under £1m containing community benefits – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data New to quarter 1 2021 to 2022	75	88	88	88	Excellent
The cumulative number of work experience placements offered within the council	36	64	110	134	143	Does not apply  Count only

## **Improvement Actions**

Below are new improvement actions that have been identified through this report:

- Secure specialist experience within the council to progress decarbonisation in procurement.

## **Equality and Diversity**

### **Equality and Diversity Campaigns**

In support of the Interim Strategic Equality Plan, the council will regularly promote campaigns in support of people with protected characteristics or living at a socio-economic disadvantage. Since November (when the Strategic Equality Plan was adopted), the council has supported:

- White Ribbon Day (25 November 2021) for the Eradication of Violence against Women.
- Carers Rights Day (also 25 November 2021), to help people understand their rights, and to ensure that they are able to access support that is available to them.
- Holocaust Memorial Day (January 27 2022), to pay tribute to those persecuted and killed during the Holocaust and other genocides throughout the world.
- LGBTQ+ History month (February), marking the 50th anniversary of the very first Pride March in the United Kingdom in 1972.
- Time to Talk Day (February 3), in support of mental health.

On March 8 the council also celebrated International Women's Day by recognising the contribution and commitment of women working right across the organisation. There are a number of great examples of women that have progressed in their careers within the council, there being four women on our Senior Leadership Team. That sends out a clear message that women have the skills and ability to achieve their dreams and goals and to reach senior management positions within the authority. This also demonstrates the inclusive approach to employment, and the council has worked hard to ensure gender equality in the workplace. Women's careers are too easily derailed by life events and it's important that organisations have a full understanding of their impact.

## **Additional Learning Needs Implementation**

In February, Internal Audit conducted a review of the council's arrangements to implement the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs (Wales) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and subsequent 2021 regulations, which came into force in September 2021. The report gave a high assurance rating, and its findings were presented within the Internal Audit Update to the Governance and Audit committee at its [meeting in March](#).

Overall the report gave assurance that the council is working effectively to implement the statutory guidance. Due to the delay with the roll-out of clear guidance nationally, Education and Children's Service colleagues have endeavoured to ensure that it complies with the Act through regular engagement with Legal and documenting the rationale and information available at the time for key decisions taken. An action plan has been developed to monitor performance across the various workstreams, which is regularly monitored. Dedicated resources are in place, and there are designated leads for each workstream. Local authorities are working regionally with the aim of adopting a consistent approach to implementation. The council and schools have also been supported by the Additional Learning Need Regional Transformation Lead for North Wales who has provided self-assessments to prepare for implementation, along with advice and templates. Training and engagement with schools has been extensive, and schools have been collaboratively working in clusters to prepare for the Act.

The Internal Audit review did highlight some areas that need to be developed further, including an Additional Learning Needs Strategy, provision mapping, and data retention periods, etc. These have been discussed with the relevant officers who are aware of the further work required.

## **Standards of Behaviour**

At Council's [meeting in January](#), a Notice of Motion was put forward to ask for a review of the council's current grievance policy and process to ensure that councillors, officers and others are held to account for their behaviour, to include bullying and harassment. It was agreed that a member group be established to work with the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee to review the current resolution process and make recommendations in respect of any changes to be adopted. It was acknowledged that the council was establishing a new Strategic Equality and Diversity Group, and that it would be

useful for that group to take into account the overlap between equalities and the ethical framework. It was also agreed that the council would provide training, support and guidance to Town and Community Councils within the context of the ethical framework and the recent [Independent Review of the Ethical Standards Framework for Wales](#), but that it had no direct role in resolving disputes within those councils.

## **Young Person's Champion**

In [December](#), the Council approved the creation of the role of Young Persons' Champion. This role will play an important part in acting as a strong strategic leader on raising and promoting young people's issues; arguing, supporting and defending the concerns, issues and needs of young people in the county. At its [meeting in January](#), Council considered the role description that had been created and elected Cllr Cheryl Williams to be the Young Person's Champion.

## **Diversity Champion**

In [December](#), a Notice of Motion was accepted by the Council to create the role of Diversity Champion. At its [meeting in February](#), Council agreed the role description, which has been recommended by the Democratic Services Committee. The role will act as the council's conscience and advocate for diversity issues, including encouraging those from diverse communities to stand for elections.

## **Safeguarding Welsh Place Names**

There is a legal duty on local authorities in Wales to have due regard for Welsh heritage and language in the naming of places in the county. However, there is no specific duty to have strict Welsh Language naming. Nonetheless, at the Communities Scrutiny Committee [meeting in January](#), it was confirmed that the council had recently adopted a policy for street naming and numbering that went beyond the legal duty, requiring any new street named in the authority to be in the Welsh Language. At the time we were one of only two counties in Wales to adopt a Welsh only policy in this regard. Scrutiny confirmed that they were satisfied that the council was utilising all its powers to safeguard Welsh and historical names in both the natural and built environment, but put forward a request that the Cabinet Lead Member remove the prefix / suffix 'Dreif' / 'Drive' from the New Street

Names list within the policy, as it is not a word that is found in the Welsh Language apart from perhaps verbally.

## **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment**

The council's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment has now been submitted to Welsh Government. However, the project is experiencing a technical obstacle that it is seeking clarity on from Welsh Government. The Project Board met in March to discuss the initial response from Welsh Government, which unfortunately gave no advice on the issue. The council will again write to Welsh Government and outline the steps that we intend to take. There is a risk that if this issue is not resolved, it will impact on our deadline for the Local Development Plan, as the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment needs to be agreed first for it to progress.

## **Well-being Impact Assessments and Decision Making**

Well-being impact assessments are the council's integrated screening tool to assess the likely impact that a proposal will have on the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Denbighshire, Wales and the world. These well-being impact assessments include consideration of the likely impact, over the longer term, on equality, Welsh Language and the environment. Our process has recently been updated to include the new Socio-Economic Duty, which in turn is incorporated into the council's reporting templates. Sessions were also held with elected members to raise awareness about the new Socio-Economic Duty. The council has also improved the publication of well-being impact assessments on its websites, so that they may be accessible and readily available for public scrutiny. However, more work is needed to ensure that officers diligently complete Well-being Impact Assessments, and training will also be given to the new council on their effective scrutiny. The Scrutiny Coordinator has also reviewed the Scrutiny aspects of the Socio-economic Duty in order to inform committee proceedings.

A further activity identified in our Interim Strategic Equality Plan was to review the well-being impact assessments of all HR policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Socio-Economic Duty. This will be done as each policy reaches its review date.



## **Employability Support**

The council has been delivering employability support through specialist mentors for council housing tenants, homelessness citizens, veterans and refugees. Through these areas we have seen a large number of referrals and support activity. The work is likely to be extended, with the exception of veteran support where the demand has been smaller than expected and the dedicated funds are coming to an end. Employability has also recently been embedded in Youth Service as part of the new Community Renewal Fund Project, Barod / Ready. We are exploring further employability support that may be offered through Children's Services.