

# **Corporate Plan Performance Update: October to March 2024**

This document presents the council's performance against its Corporate Plan themes and governance areas between October to March 2024, including our application of the Sustainable Development principle, the Public Sector Equality Duty, and Socio-Economic Duty.

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## Summary position

The chapters below provide a summary of activity that has taken place during the last period beneath our Corporate Plan themes, with a round-up of contributing news and committee items. Before we get into this detail, it is important to note the changes that have recently been agreed in relation to our Corporate Plan.

The increasingly difficult and unprecedented financial environment that the council is operating in has resulted in us needing to rationalise and focus our efforts. In February, [Council](#) agreed to a proposal to reduce the size of the [Corporate Plan](#) from nine to six themes. The following are the council's revised Well-being and Equality Objectives.

- A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs
- A prosperous Denbighshire
- A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire
- A learning and growing Denbighshire
- A greener Denbighshire
- A well-run, high performing council

Although we have had to rationalise our ambitions, we remain aspirational, and the Plan is underpinned by our desire to work as 'One Council', where our diverse services are working together towards shared goals more effectively. We will continue to provide a focus on preventative actions that protect people from harm and address the challenges that our communities face, such as the cost-of-living crisis and the climate emergency, ensuring sustainable economic growth, promoting well-being, and quality of life. We still want to work collaboratively with our residents, communities, businesses, and partners to help shape the services we provide and the way in which we provide them in challenging times. Accepting that the financial context is going to remain difficult for some time, as a council we must continually keep our Corporate Plan commitments and Performance expectations under review.

Each Corporate Plan theme below includes an update for each pledge in the theme, although titles have been truncated. Hyperlinks to the full detail of the theme and its pledges are included.

## **Corporate Plan theme summary**

The measures evaluation for each theme below 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.

### **A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs**

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

The Corporate Plan Housing and Homelessness Board continues to oversee this theme and has recently reviewed the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, which had some minor issues in terms of time slippage, mainly because we are currently awaiting new Welsh Government Flood Risk guidance. We are working on the development of the Development Viability Model, which will form the basis of the work to review the current approach and thresholds for affordable housing requirements in Local Development Plan (LDP) policies. Our Capital Works Programmes continue to be delivered but cost increases are impacting on the volume of work in terms of affordability. Budgets are being closely monitored and programmes of works amended and prioritised accordingly. Welsh Government launched Wales Housing Quality Standards in October 2023 with newer measures to be introduced from 1 April 2024; we are still considering the implications of these, ahead of their introduction. The number of people on the SARTH register increased to 1,706 this period, and remains a concern. However, we successfully secured 25 additional council homes for people in Denbighshire by the end of March 2024.

### **A prosperous Denbighshire**

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

The measures status for this theme has been summarised overall as a 'Priority for Improvement', however, it should be noted that these include broad and long-term indicators such as those from the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation and stakeholder survey responses. Recognising the local and global economic challenges it faces, the council is currently developing (April 2024 onwards) an Economic Strategy to include green, rural, and urban economic growth plans as well as enhancing tourism. The new

Economic Strategy should take into account the county's cultural offer and how it contributes to wider economic and well-being outcomes.

### **A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire**

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: On Target

Overall, the status of measures for this theme is 'Acceptable', however, we are awaiting the verification of some data for 2023 to 2024. A 'Priority for Improvement' is the number of schools achieving trauma informed status – although more schools are working towards this status - and the percentage of stakeholders who agree that they can live safely, happily, and independently, in Denbighshire. Excellence is being achieved in adult safeguarding and social care through micro providers, and there is a status upgrade to 'Good' for the percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has the social infrastructure needed to support personal and community well-being. Access to advice and assistance continues to be provided through the Single Point of Access (SpoA) and Talking Points and an encouraging 92% of citizens receiving assistance from Talking Points did not need to be referred into Adult Social Care during January to March 2024. We now monitor hate crimes reported in Denbighshire to North Wales Police. During January to March, 34 hate crimes were reported, the majority of which were categorised as racial.

### **A learning and growing Denbighshire**

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

The measures in this theme have been graded overall as 'Acceptable,' however, we await the end of the academic year for a fuller picture of the data relating to schools. Some data relating to care leavers for 2023 to 2024 is also awaited pending verification. A 'Priority for Improvement' is the nationally benchmarked percentage of Year 11 Leavers from schools known not to be in education, employment or training. For 2023 to 2024, Denbighshire's figure of 2.4% is higher than that of 17 of the other 21 local authorities in Wales. The support provided to promote the development of children in the early years has continued to strengthen, with excellent rates of children taking part in the childcare offer and continued excellent performance in supporting entry to nursery. Projects related to early years child development are progressing well, with the expansion of Flying Start 'On

Target' as well as the completion of two other projects as seen in the table below. Whilst the number of schools providing education through suitability and condition categories C and D is considered 'Excellent', the Modernising Education Programme continues to be at risk due to delays in the progression of work. By January 2024, the universal free school meals offer was made available to all primary pupils across Denbighshire, with uptake of increasing to 65%.

### **A greener Denbighshire**

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

The Climate and Ecological Change Strategy is scheduled to be reviewed and refreshed every three years; the first of which began in 2023 to 2024. There are a number of key performance indicators that are being used to judge the performance of the council in achieving its 2030 goals, including: reducing carbon emissions the council emits from various sources, increasing carbon sequestration of land the council owns/leases and manages and increasing the species richness of the land the council owns/leases and manages. Whilst we are going in the right direction it is not currently at the pace to suggest sufficient progress is being made to meet the 2030 goal of net carbon zero. The financial pressures all local authorities are facing now and in the coming years will continue to impact on that pace. We plan to maintain our Climate and Ecological Improvement ambition and not adjust targets - despite their challenge - as we go into the next three years of our strategy. A key project for this theme is the introduction of a new recycling system in June of this year to help us meet Welsh Government's 70% recycling target (the target set for all local authorities in Wales).

### **A well-run, high performing council**

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

The Well-run Board is settling into its role in nurturing and ensuring good governance and a positive 'one council' culture. The Board is taking a growing role in a number of key areas; including annual self-assessment, service performance challenges, and the peer-led Panel Performance Assessment. Anecdotally there is a much greater use of Welsh formally at committee meetings, and informally in the day-to-day business of the council. The Board is keen to capitalise on the growing confidence in using Welsh. The general

decline in positive responses to our stakeholder survey has brought the overall status of our measures down from 'Acceptable' to a 'Priority for Improvement'. This decline is perhaps unsurprising given the difficult financial climate and the savings proposals the council has most recently consulted on and begun implementing. Our revised Corporate Plan maintains a clear focus on how the council works, including customer service, engagement, and our performance. It is important that we demonstrate improvement in these areas and respond to the expectations of our customers.

## **Governance areas**

Our [self-assessment against the seven key governance areas](#) has highlighted one key development this period: the revision to the Corporate Plan and performance reporting. Plans are underway for the peer-led Panel Performance Assessment, expected to take place in the autumn. Work is underway on a paper to shape the governance structures required around the council's transformation agenda. Significant work has taken place this period to respond effectively to the significant financial pressures the council is facing in order to try to protect the most vulnerable as far as possible. This report outlines in some detail the process and decisions around budget setting for the year ahead. Some proposals have been subject to more intensive examination by our Scrutiny Committee structure, demonstrating the governance is both effective and challenging. The 2024 to 2025 budget is being viewed as an evolving process rather than a one-off event in January. Significant engagement across the council, with members and with communities, will continue. Stakeholder feedback is very important to the council and in this period, we launched our Stakeholder Survey for 2023 to 2024. Stakeholder perceptions have generally declined across all questions – and, in particular, those relating to governance. This is not surprising given the difficult financial climate and the savings proposals the council has most recently consulted on and begun implementing. There has also been negative speculation in the press and social media regarding the financial sustainability of the council, and this has no doubt informed stakeholders' less favourable responses. The council concluded its annual programme of Service Performance Challenges during this period and the programme for the year ahead has been adjusted to reflect learning to date and to support upcoming budgetary discussions. Processes to support the continued management of the Corporate Risk Register have continued and our Risk Appetite Statement has been updated. A policy to support Agile Working, and development and training support for new managers has been launched. A significant focus for our Human Resources team has been the voluntary exit scheme. Impacts on the workforce (and any



risks to effective governance) as a result of budget proposals and the voluntary exit scheme will be considered by the council's Strategic Equality and Diversity Group in July 2024. The Asset Strategy has been approved by the Corporate Executive Team and is being taken through the democratic process for approval for final ratification this coming summer. During the period, the Corporate Executive Team agreed to the closure of Caledfryn, Denbigh, to council staff, with arrangements in place to relocate all council personnel currently working in those offices to either Russell House, Rhyl or County Hall, Ruthin. Our Procurement Team has been supporting services, businesses and partners to prepare for the changes in procurement legislation, and the opportunities for greater local benefits. The aim is for smaller local businesses to be more engaged in, and benefit from, procurement. The third generation North Wales Construction Framework will be launched in May 2024.

## 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.

Our data tables use this same language, except for 'Priority for Improvement', which is truncated to 'Priority to Improve'. Our data tables also show information about trend. Trend is identified as 'Better', 'Worse', or 'Same', and is based on a comparison with the previous period for which we have data. Where possible, we also show trend for projects and activities, which is determined by comparing the overall status of the project or activity with its status in the previous period. Project and activity statuses are identified as 'On Target', 'Experiencing Obstacles', 'At Risk' or 'Compromised'.

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

# A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

## Corporate Plan Update

### Ensure that there is quality housing that meets the needs of vulnerable people, assisting them to lead independent lives in appropriate accommodation for as long as possible

The Ruthin Extra Care project has now been superseded by Llys Awelon (Phase 2), which is progressing and contributes towards meeting the specialist housing needs of vulnerable people in Denbighshire. Whilst this project continues to progress 'On Target', the completion date has slipped to the end June 2024 and has been challenged to ensure no further slippage occurs. The Corwen Extra Care project remains at business case stage and will enhance this provision further.

### Prevent homelessness, and ensure that any instances of it are rare, brief, and unrepeatable. This includes young care leavers (equality objective)

The number of referrals received into the homelessness Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) service increased from 54 to 64 at the end of March 2024. During the period, there was a slight decrease in the number of Early Intervention and Prevention referrals, that were prevented from presenting as homeless.

The council continues to take steps to ensure early engagement with people at risk of homelessness, and we can report that 40 people were supported by the Citizens Advice Denbighshire Homelessness Prevention Team link officer.

The measure originally entitled, 'total number of care leavers who experience homelessness during the year (As defined by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) within 12 months of leaving care will in future be monitored as a percentage of care leavers rather than total number. Data is currently pending.

The percentages of households successfully prevented from homelessness (Section 66) and successfully relieved from homelessness (Section 73) have worsened since the same period last year and remain a 'Priority for Improvement'. That being said, whilst still considered a 'Priority for Improvement', the percentage of households positively

discharged from homelessness (section 75) has improved: resulting in 251 outcomes, 136 of which were positive.

### **Upgrade the council housing stock to ensure it is safe, secure, and well-maintained and where possible, suitable for the needs of residents, for example, those with disabilities (equality objective)**

The percentage of emergency housing repairs completed within target time for the reporting period has remained at an 'Acceptable' rate of 95.57%. A further 51 disabled adaptations were carried out for council house tenants between January and March 2024.

The most recent Tenants and Residents Survey (STAR) results for council home found that 85% of tenants were "satisfied with Denbighshire Housing, taking everything into account". As a result of the survey, we have: developed an action plan for communicating with tenants about the Welsh Housing Quality Standards and how and when it will impact on our property improvements; we will review our Repairs Policy; we will explore concerns about anti-social behaviour in more detail; and we will develop our Engagement Plan to improve how we listen and communicate with tenants.

The project on Improving Energy Efficiency in Council Houses was closed in April 2024, following changes in the project such as those in relation to the Welsh Housing Quality Standards. Future work will now be incorporated into an activity within the Climate and Ecological Change Programme.

A new activity has been added to this theme, to promote and administer the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) Scheme via Flintshire County Council for energy efficiency in private sector dwellings. ECO4 is a government scheme that helps homeowners improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

### **Deliver more homes to meet local need and demand**

During 2022 to 2023, a total of 256 new homes were completed in Denbighshire. Data for 2023 to 2024 is pending. The delivery confidence has increased for affordable housing projects such as Edward Henry Street and the Additional Council Housing Developments Project. The Planning application for an amended renovation scheme for the Victorian Post Office building on Wellington Road in Rhyl to deliver a residential conversion of the upper storeys was validated during the period; the purchases of two former council flats and a former council house in Rhyl were completed; and terms were agreed for the purchase of a former council house in Prestatyn.

The original Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) project is complete, and we will now report on the next phase of the project called “Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) Site Selection”.

Progress on the Rhyl Residential Strategy now runs under the activity, “Work with Rhyl Regeneration Programme Board to contribute to progressing Rhyl Residential Strategy”.

**Ensure that our residents are informed about available housing options and routes to housing, seeking also to reduce the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) waiting list**

The number of people on the SARTH register increased by 146 to 1,706 and remains a concern.

The number of empty private properties brought back in to use has decreased from 181 in 2022 to 2023 to 150 during 2023 to 2024, however, performance is still considered ‘Acceptable’.

**Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update**

For further measures and activity related to the support offered to those experiencing homelessness please see our [learning and growing theme](#).

**Quarterly or Biannual Measures**

Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2023 to 2024	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
The percentage of emergency housing repairs completed within target time - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	97.22% Acceptable Better	97.06% Acceptable Worse	96.90% Acceptable Worse	95.82% Acceptable Worse	95.97% Acceptable Worse
The number of disabled adaptations carried out for council house tenants – <b>Count Only</b>	56	53	56	68	51

Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2023 to 2024	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
The number of people on the SARTH waiting list (live applications only) - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	1,734 Priority to Improve Better	1,785 Priority to Improve Worse	1,760 Priority to Improve Better	1,560 Priority to Improve Better	1,706 Priority to Improve Worse
The number of referrals received into Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) – <b>Count Only</b>	80	43	64	54	64
The percentage of referrals Early Intervention and Prevention (My Home Denbighshire) that have been prevented from presenting to homelessness prevention service - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	89.36% Excellent	72.26% Good Worse	92.18% Excellent Better	92.59% Excellent Better	90.62% Excellent Worse
The number of people at risk of homelessness supported by the CAD-HPT (Citizens Advice Denbighshire- Homelessness Prevention Team) link officer – <b>Count Only</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	28	39	38	40

### Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The number of dwellings improved with a disabled facilities grant - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	66 Priority to Improve Worse	63 Priority to Improve Worse

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
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>	16 Excellent Better	8 Good Worse
The percentage of households successfully prevented from homelessness (section 66) - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	38.35% Priority to Improve Worse	37.11% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of households successfully relieved from homelessness (section 73) - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	15.96% Priority to Improve Worse	11.68% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of households positively discharged from homelessness (section 75) - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	50.22% Priority to Improve Better	54.18% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of care leavers who experience homelessness during the year (As defined by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) within 12 months of leaving care - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	3 Excellent Better	Data pending
The percentage of council properties compliant with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	100% Excellent Same	100% Excellent Same
The percentage of tenants that were satisfied with Denbighshire Housing, taking everything in to account - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data: does not apply	85% Acceptable
The percentage of existing and acquired Council housing stock achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of C or above - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	41.89% Acceptable Better	46.1% Acceptable Better
The additional supply of affordable housing, including social housing, provided during the year - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	139 Excellent Worse	145 Excellent Better
The additional supply of Council Homes provided - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	15 Acceptable Better	25 Good Better

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The total number of (new) homes completed during the year in Denbighshire - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	256	Data expected summer 2024
The number of empty private properties brought back into use through direct action by the local authority - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	181 Good Worse	150 Acceptable Worse

## Stakeholder Survey

Title	2022 to 2023 With an opinion, and agree	2023 to 2024 With an opinion, and agree
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that there is sufficient, good quality housing in Denbighshire, which meets people's needs - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	40% Priority to Improve	31% Priority to Improve Worse

## Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published infrequently - every four to five years - with the most recent data being available for 2019. Until new data is published (Welsh Government's next WIMD update is expected in late 2025 or early 2026), please refer to our [Performance Self-Assessment Update: July to September 2023 report](#).

## Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

There are fifteen projects and activities listed within this theme in the Corporate Plan. The number of these that are running 'On Target' is seven, three are complete, one is 'At Risk'. One project is 'Experiencing Obstacles', and the remaining three activities are either at project brief, business stage case, or new.

## Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Deliver and monitor the Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	On Target Same	No exception



Title	Status	Exception
Llys Awelon (Phase 2)	On Target Same	No exception
Further develop the extra care offer across the south of the county	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Infrastructure improvements need to occur before we are able to increase capacity at Corwen. A possible site at Llangollen is being explored.
Reduce the reliance on unsuitable temporary accommodation by establishing some in-house emergency housing facilities for homeless citizens	Experiencing Obstacles Same	We are identifying potential sites for a small number of emergency accommodation units with the facilities to provide a support hub and working across the council to identify and develop suitable sites for permanent accommodation (expected to take until December 2024). We also want to ensure the right planning status is in place for any privately-run temporary emergency accommodation used to accommodate homeless households.
Improving Energy Efficiency in Council Houses	At Risk Same	Inflated costs, limited funding and the lack of qualified trades in the sector are all issues contributing to the status of this project. Given this project did not reflect the new Welsh Housing Quality Standards it will be closed in May 2024 and replaced by the activity below.

Title	Status	Exception
Devise and implement a targeted energy pathway by 31 March 2027 to demonstrate how we will achieve SAP / EPC 75 by 31 March 2030, included estimated costs	New activity commencing April 2024	This activity will replace the above project and incorporates the Standard Assessment Procedure /Energy Performance Certificate requirements.
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)	Complete	
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) Site Selection	At project brief stage	No exception
Denbighshire replacement Local Development Plan	On Target	No exception
Edward Henry Street	On Target Better	No exception
Additional Council Housing Developments	On Target Better	No exception
Work with Rhyl Regeneration Programme Board to contribute to progressing Rhyl Residential Strategy	On Target Same	No exception
Develop a tenant involvement framework for Denbighshire Housing	Complete	No exception
Signpost to Welsh Government's NEST Scheme	Complete	No exception
Promote and administer the Energy Company Obligation Scheme (ECO4) via Flintshire County Council – energy efficiency in private sector dwellings	On Target Same	No exception

## A round up of news

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme.

In October 2023, the [Minister for Finance and Local Government visited Ty Pride in Rhyl](#) and [energy efficiency work was completed on 41 council homes](#) in Rhyl.

Communities Scrutiny Committee met in October and December to consider the [revised Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment](#) and [the housing rent increase](#). In December, [Partnerships Scrutiny Committee](#) examined affordable rent levels.

In December, [Cabinet](#) approved the annual housing rent increase, housing budgets for 2024 to 2025; the Housing Stock Business Plan; and a new project to support people to sustain their accommodation and prevent homelessness.

Four new [energy efficient apartments](#) became available in Prestatyn in January 2024.

In February, Communities Scrutiny Committee examined the [management of council housing and estates](#) and considered [feedback from council tenants](#). [Cabinet](#) approved the re-tendering of the Community Housing Voids Framework.

## A prosperous Denbighshire

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

### Corporate Plan Update

#### [Work collaboratively with communities and partners to deliver projects and initiatives that will stimulate economic growth](#)

The measures status for this theme has been summarised overall as a 'Priority for Improvement', however, it should be noted that these include broad and long-term indicators such as those from the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation and stakeholder survey responses. Within this theme there are a number of nationally benchmarked measures that give an indication of performance compared to other local authorities in Wales. However, there are some gaps as we await the publication of new national data. Our Levelling Up funded projects are progressing, albeit with some uncertainty in some areas. We have secured additional Ambition North Wales Growth Deal funding to plug the viability funding gap for the former North Wales Hospital in Denbigh, although the project remains 'At Risk' until all the necessary funding and planning agreements are in place. Another significant project is the new Queen's Market in Rhyl. Negotiations with our previous preferred operator have ceased and an alternative option to operating the Queen's Market is being progressed.

#### [Develop an economic strategy](#)

Recognising the local and global economic challenges it faces, the council is currently developing (April 2024 onwards) an Economic Strategy to include green, rural, and urban economic growth plans as well as enhancing tourism. Our last performance report included an improvement activity to "develop an overview of the cultural offer, with examples from across council services, as part of the plan to be developed setting out how a cultural strategy could connect and contribute to wider outcomes in terms of our economy and personal well-being". The new Economic Strategy should take into account the county's cultural offer and how it contributes to wider economic and well-being outcomes.

The total economic impact of tourism was £628.58m during 2022 to 2023, a significant increase on £432m in 2021 to 2022, evidencing a recovery from social distancing measures during the pandemic. The 2023 to 2024 figures will be released later in the year.

### **Work in partnership to support an economy that promotes fair work, justice, and socially responsible public procurement, benefitting the local supply chain and local communities (equality objective)**

The total spend via procurement, including grant funding, during the 2023 to 2024 financial year was £226,978,810; £83,426,447 of this being spent within Denbighshire (35.2%). 56% of relevant procurements contained community benefits and work is ongoing to align these with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. The North Wales Construction Partnership, the 3rd iteration of the Framework (NWCPF3) is due to be publicly launched in May 2024.

### **Support access to education, employment, services, goods, and activities**

There are a number of benchmarked measures that give an indication of performance compared to other local authorities in Wales. However, there are some gaps as we await the publication of new data, namely the percentage of classified A, B and C roads that are in overall poor condition. Our previous report identified an improvement action to “Provide an update on the reasons for poor performance relating to the percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale).” This is a continuing action, as the service continues to struggle due to resource issues. We are however looking to review the Code of Practice, which is a driver for Category 1 defects. This might help to reduce demand in the future.

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

For further measures and activity in support of skills, training and employment please see our [learning and growing theme](#) and the [well-run, high performing council](#) for further activity connected to the local economy.

## Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
The percentage of working age people who are claiming Out of Work Benefits - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	3.7% Priority to Improve Worse	3.8% Priority to Improve Worse	3.6% Priority to Improve Better	3.5% Priority to Improve Better	3.8% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of spend with suppliers based within Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	35% Good Same	33% Good Same	15.90% Priority to Improve Worse	41.8% Excellent Better	38.6% Good Worse
The cumulative percentage of Denbighshire contracts over £25k and under £1m containing community benefits – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	66 % Excellent Better	66 % Excellent Same	53.3% Good Worse	55.60% Good Better	56.00% Good Better
Year to date average for the percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale) <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	16% Priority to Improve Worse	29% Priority to Improve Better	23.33% Priority to Improve Worse	52.33% Priority to Improve Better	42.00% Priority to Improve Worse

## Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of children in poverty in Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	28.1% Priority to Improve Better	Data pending

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Average gross annual pay for people who live in the area and work full time (£) - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	27,121 Priority to Improve Better	Data pending
External funding (in pounds) secured for economic development – <b>Count Only</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	£1,041,250
STEAM - Total Economic Impact of Tourism (£ million) - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	£628.58m Excellent Better	Expected July 2024
Births of businesses per 10,000 of the population aged 16 to 64 - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	56 Priority to Improve Worse	Data pending
Deaths of businesses per 10,000 of the population aged 16 to 64 - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	69 Priority to Improve Better	Data pending
The percentage of principle A roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	2.2% Excellent Better	Data pending
The percentage of non-principal/classified B roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	3.5% Excellent Better	Data Pending
The percentage of non-principal/classified C roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	16.4% Priority to Improve Worse	Data pending
The percentage of premises that receive less than 30Mbps - <b>Count Only</b>	4.57%	3.88%
The percentage of premises that receive less than 10Mbps - <b>Count Only</b>	2.88%	2.4%

## Stakeholder Survey

Title	2022 to 2023 With an opinion, and agree	2023 to 2024 With an opinion, and agree
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has a prosperous economy that provides access to the right skills, jobs, and income - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	40% Priority to Improve	30% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has the transport and road infrastructure to support thriving, cohesive, and well-connected communities - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	31% Priority to Improve	28% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has the digital infrastructure (such as good broadband connectivity, good mobile internet or mobile phone signal) to support thriving, cohesive, and well-connected communities – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	52.2% Acceptable	52% Acceptable Same
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the rich cultural heritage and natural assets of Denbighshire are being used to their full potential - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	51% Acceptable	49% Priority to Improve Worse

## Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published infrequently - every four to five years - with the most recent data being available for 2019. Until new data is published (Welsh Government's next WIMD update is expected in late 2025 or early 2026), please refer to our [Performance Self-Assessment Update: July to September 2023 report](#).

## Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Overall, good progress has been made with the twenty-four projects and activities identified in support of this theme. Fifteen are 'On Target' and six projects are 'Experiencing Obstacles'. It is worth noting that the success of these projects overall is not reflected in the measures which are, in the main, a 'Priority for Improvement'.



## Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Programme: Shared Prosperity Fund	On Target Same	No exception
Programme: Levelling Up Fund – Clwyd South	Experiencing Obstacles Same	There is uncertainty around the budget of one project that is still to be procured (Active Travel). Overall, the Denbighshire Round 1 Clwyd South LUF projects are making good progress.
Programme: Levelling Up Fund – Clwyd West	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	There is a level of uncertainty and increased risks that require monitoring and action at this early stage of the programme delivery. Overall, round 2 Clwyd West LUF projects are making good progress.
Placeholder: Levelling Up Fund Round 3 – Vale of Clwyd	At project brief stage	Awaiting formal award. Resources are under pressure but project teams are being formed. The delivery approach will take into account resources, timescales and pressures.
Enabling and supporting North Wales Growth Deal projects in partnership with Ambition North Wales	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Quarterly reports are provided to the Partnership Scrutiny Committee. The annual report from Ambition North Wales will be presented in July.
Former North Wales Hospital	At Risk Same	The project remains 'At Risk' until all the necessary funding and planning agreements are in place. The project has made excellent progress, however, in terms of securing additional Ambition North Wales Growth Deal funding to

Title	Status	Exception
		plug the viability funding gap.
Queen's Buildings Rhyl	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Negotiations with our previous preferred operator have ceased and an alternative option to operating the Queen's Market is being progressed.
Coordinating Welsh Government Transforming Towns funding programme streams	On Target Same	No exception
Develop Town Centre Place Making Plans	On Target Same	No exception
Develop the council's new Economic Strategy	On Target Same	No exception
Victorian Post Office (Rhyl)	On Target Same	No exception
Progress the Rhyl Public Realm Strategy	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Discussions continue to take place with the relevant Programme Board to agree a way forward.
Reconnect the top of Rhyl High Street with the beach (Rhyl promenade)	Experiencing Obstacles Better	Work is currently taking place to prepare for the project restarting.
Seeking to improve the appearance of poorly maintained Rhyl Town Centre properties	On Target Better	No exception
Rhyl Gateway	At project brief stage	No exception
Co-Relocation of Rhyl Tourist Information Centre and Rhyl Museum	At business case stage	No exception
Develop the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Tourism Plan and work with local businesses to develop the actions	On Target Same	No exception
Deliver the Denbighshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2027	On Target Same	No exception

Title	Status	Exception
Raise awareness of the provision of Welsh training for adults who work in the business community	On Target Same	No exception
Complete feasibility report for move-on accommodation at St Asaph Business Park	On Target Same	No exception
Develop a Community Benefits Framework to align with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act	On Target Better	No exception
Aim to deliver the most viable option to replace the Llannerch Bridge	On Target Same	No exception
Contribute to the development of the new Regional Transport Plan	On Target Better	No exception
Work with partners on the proposed designation of a National Park in North East Wales	On Target Same	No exception
3rd Generation - North Wales Construction Framework	On Target Same	No exception

## A round up of news

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme.

Levelling Up Funding was awarded to projects at [Loggerheads and Moel Famau](#) and [Horseshoe Falls](#). A project bid for [Tackling Deep Rooted Denbighshire Deprivation](#) was provisionally awarded as part of third round Levelling Up funding.

From February until the end June 2024, [Mill Street car park in Llangollen was be partially closed](#) to enable construction work for the [Four Great Highways project](#).

In December, the council and the Mikhail Hotel and Leisure Group mutually agreed not to take forward their proposed partnership at the [Queens Market in Rhyl](#).

During October we consulted on [new revised table of fares for taxis in Denbighshire](#). [Cabinet](#) approved in October, a procurement to ensure the storage of salt for winter maintenance operations. Our Highways Team were out [gritting](#) and in February we

undertook [Resurfacing Works in Trefnant](#). In November, we consulted on the [Nant Hall Road link to Prestatyn Station](#). We began introducing [active travel enhancements in Lower Denbigh](#) in February and ran an [active travel consultation in Llangollen](#) throughout March. In February, Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the [draft Car Park Investment Plan](#) for 2024 to 2029.

We held some key events during the period, namely a [free Business Support Event](#); [an employment wellbeing event](#) and a [Working Denbighshire's Job Fair](#). We reminded [businesses of the support, advice](#) and [funding](#) that is available, and ran our '[March For Business](#)' campaign. [Two online Tourism Forums](#) and a [Tourism Forum](#) were held in November. We promoted [Wales Ambassador Week](#) and four Denbighshire Businesses were recognised at the [Go North Wales Tourism Awards](#).

In January, communities in South West Llandegla [benefitted from new fibre installations](#) through our Fibre Community Partnership project.

Ruthin Gaol opened over the [Halloween period](#) and offered a [unique Australian experience](#). We launched a podcast about [Castell Dinas Brân](#). We announced the timetable for the [Dee Valley Picturesque Bus Service](#) and launched a new [book](#).

A Notice of Motion was put forward for consideration by [Full Council in February](#) to suspend any further engagement with the proposed new North Wales National Park.

[Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) received a report in March, on the Rhyl Regeneration Programme and Governance.

# A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: On Target

## Corporate Plan Update

### Ensure that the council's social care offer is of a high standard

The council continues to enhance its social care offer. There is a strong safeguarding culture and adult safeguarding enquiries completed within 7 working days have remained high at 98% during this fourth quarter. With increasing numbers of children looked after in Denbighshire, we continue to provide support through our corporate parenting role, and the activity to implement the requirements of Foster Wales continues and is 'On Target.' A number of projects are in place and making good progress in support of those with additional learning or complex needs. The council continues to review care packages to ensure as many as possible are right sized to single handed care with the right type of specialist equipment and there has been excellent progress in developing greater numbers of micro providers in the county, allowing greater access to services for residents.

### Support the well-being, mental-health, and resilience of individuals within communities (equality objective)

The council continues to support the well-being of its citizens. More schools are adopting a whole school approach to mental health and well-being, and school counselling numbers remain at an 'Acceptable' level. Though the number of schools that have achieved trauma informed status is considered a 'Priority for Improvement' at this stage, a further two schools are in the process of working towards this goal. Access to advice and assistance continues to be provided through the Single Point of Access (SpoA) and Talking Points and an encouraging 92% of citizens receiving assistance from Talking Points did not need to be referred into Adult Social Care during January to March 2024. The project to progress towards digitalisation of telecare services has been upgraded to 'On Target', which will promote greater resilience of individuals within communities. Activities supporting age-friendliness and dementia awareness in communities continue and are 'On Target'.

## Promote personal and community well-being

In support of community well-being, the council's Community resilience Team and Edge of Care volunteer service have continued to support a number of projects, groups, and individuals, though the data shows a decrease in these numbers during this period. Several projects aiming to promote community well-being are running 'On Target'. However, the Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project remains 'At Risk' as its delivery is dependent on securing funding.

## Foster community cohesion by ensuring people are protected from harm, abuse, and exploitation (equality objective)

The council continues to monitor rates of reported domestic abuse in Denbighshire. North Wales Police report that there were 490 repeat victims reported and 88 repeat offenders of domestic abuse reported during 2023 to 2024. There have been changes to home office crime recording in that the 'principal offense' approach has been resumed during the year, which explains the fall in the volume of recorded crimes between the second and third quarters. The decrease in reported domestic abuse crime between 2022-23 and 2023-24 may correlate to this change in approach. A further measure has been introduced to this framework to provide a clearer picture - one that is not solely reliant on North Wales Police data - of the rates of domestic abuse in Denbighshire. The number of referrals into the Domestic Abuse Support Unit (DASU) for the fourth quarter was 382, of which 39 were children. Also new to the framework is the figures of hate crimes reported for Denbighshire to North Wales Police. 34 hate crimes were reported between January to March 2024, the majority of which were categorised as racial.

## Continue to support and resettle refugees through the UK Global Resettlement Scheme, in support of Wales' declaration to be a Nation of Sanctuary (equality objective)

The council continues to support and resettle refugees and during 2023 to 2024, the number of families resettles within the county had increased to 50.

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

For information about our work to reduce deprivation and inequality, please see our [prosperous](#) and [well-run, high performing council](#) themes respectively. For further detail

around our work to support learning, development and well-being, see our [Learning and Growing](#) theme.

### Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2023 to 2024	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
The percentage of safeguarding enquiries from adults completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	98.8% Excellent Worse	100% Excellent Better	99% Excellent Worse	96.5% Excellent Worse	98% Excellent Better
The number of referrals and enquiries recorded on Children and Family Support Gateway - <b>Count Only</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	4,350	Data being verified	Data being verified	Data being verified
The number of children looked after in Denbighshire – <b>Count Only</b>	200	203	206	209	Data being verified
The number of care and support packages that have been right sized to single handed care with the right type of specialist equipment – <b>Baseline Year</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	48	11	16	12
The percentage of schools in the county using the Public Health Wales Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Well-being Tool – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	27% Priority to Improve	No data.	66% Acceptable Better	67% Acceptable Better

Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2023 to 2024	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
The number of Single Point of Access contacts for information, advice and assistance – <b>Count Only</b>	5,134	5,307	4,911	4,821	4,259
The number of Talking Point contacts for information, advice and assistance (libraries, One Stop Shops and hosted by Community Navigators etc) - <b>Count Only</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	231	218	214	194
The percentage of citizens receiving information, advice and assistance from Talking Points who did not need to be referred into Adult Social Care - <b>Baseline Year</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	88%	87%	97%	92%
The number of projects or groups supported by the Community Resilience Team - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	61 Excellent Better	78 Excellent Better	73 Excellent Worse	75 Excellent Better	53 Acceptable Worse
The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat victims of Domestic Abuse reported including non-crime occurrences (3 or more in 12 months, measured as year to date) - <b>Count Only</b>	537	99	368	360	490
The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse reported (3 or more in 12 months) - <b>Count Only</b>	56	6	73	63	88



Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2023 to 2024	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
The number of referrals to the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit North Wales (DASU) for Denbighshire to support victims of domestic abuse – <b>Count Only</b>	Data reported from January 2024	Data reported from January 2024	Data reported from January 2024	Data reported from January 2024	382
Denbighshire hate crimes reported (from North Wales Police) – <b>Count Only</b>	42	41	54	52	34
The number of young people referred to the Youth Justice Service during the year from Denbighshire – <b>Baseline Year</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	70	65	78	78
The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) looked after by Denbighshire – <b>Count Only</b>	13	15	20	18	17

### Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of new assessments completed for children during the year that were completed within statutory timescales - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	76.7% Priority to Improve Better	Data being verified
The percentage of child protection conferences held within statutory timescales - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	95% Good Better	Data being verified
The number of contacts by adult carers received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided - <b>Count Only</b>	1,159	1,094

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The total number of carers needs assessments for adults undertaken during the year (cumulative) – <b>Count Only</b>	401	370
Number of micro providers in existence in Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	30 Excellent	57 Excellent Better
The number of schools that have achieved Trauma Informed School status by 2027 - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	1 Excellent	1 Priority to Improve Worse
The number of young people who receive school-based counselling in Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	338 Acceptable Better	301 Acceptable Worse
The number of contacts provided through the council's Edge of Care volunteer service - <b>Count Only</b>	795	333
The cumulative number of families resettled within Denbighshire – <b>Count Only</b>	41	50

## Stakeholder Survey

Title	2022 to 2023 With an opinion, and agree	2023 to 2024 With an opinion, and agree
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that they can live safely, happily, and independently, in Denbighshire and also receive good support when needed to promote resilience and well-being - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	55% Acceptable	46% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire has the social infrastructure needed to support personal and community well-being – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	62% Acceptable	66% Good Better
The percentage of stakeholders who agreed that people in Denbighshire are treated fairly and equally, and have	46% Priority to Improve	53% Acceptable

Title	2022 to 2023 With an opinion, and agree	2023 to 2024 With an opinion, and agree
access to opportunities to promote their well-being and community cohesion - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>		<b>Better</b>

## Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published infrequently - every four to five years - with the most recent data being available for 2019. Until new data is published (Welsh Government's next WIMD update is expected in late 2025 or early 2026), please refer to our [Performance Self-Assessment Update: July to September 2023 report](#).

## Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Of the fourteen projects and activities listed under this theme, eleven are 'On Target', two are 'Experiencing Obstacles', and one is 'At Risk' (the Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project).

### Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Monitor and implement requirements of Foster Wales and monitor effectiveness of national approach.	On Target Same	No exception
Implement Post 16 of Additional Learning Needs work	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Regional work continues to explore provision and funding.
Develop an in-county residential short breaks and emergency care provision for children with complex needs and disabilities within Denbighshire	On Target Same	No exception
Implement and embed the Autism Code of Practice requirements at local authority level across Children's Services.	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Compliance with the Code is progressing, and staff training needs are being addressed.

Title	Status	Exception
Bwthyn y Ddol Phase 2 (Activity) Develop and implement, including staffing, a new Children's Assessment Centre jointly with Conwy County Borough Council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board	On Target Same	No exception
Ysgol Tir Morfa - Hydrotherapy pool	On Target Same	No exception
Work with local unpaid carers to identify the respite opportunities they need, and how barriers are overcome to enable this.	On Target Same	No exception
Work towards becoming an age-friendly Denbighshire, with World Health Organisation, in partnership with Ageing Well in Denbighshire multi-agency group.	On Target Same	No exception
Work in partnership regionally to contribute to the embedding of the All Wales Dementia Pathway of Standards	On Target Same	No exception
Progress towards digitalisation of telecare services before the 2025 deadline for ceasing of analogue telephone services.	On Target Better	No exception
Bruton Park, Rhyl (working with Bruton Park residents to maximise community well-being).	On Target Same	No exception
Develop Croeso Cynnes hubs throughout the County.	On Target Better	No exception
Develop and deliver the county wide Food Strategy and Food Partnership Network (including social supermarket project – Cogog) around Denbighshire	On Target Same	No exception
Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project	At Risk Same	Delivery of the project is dependent on securing funding.

## A round up of news

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme.

The council's [adult social care and health team](#) held a 'meet the team' event, celebrated [Social Work Week](#), and thanked a social worker for their [40 years of service](#). [New electric vehicles](#) will be used to transport equipment and will also be available for [staff providing care](#) in people's homes. [Virtual Reality training](#) has helped staff to better understand trauma and safeguarding. Across Denbighshire [over 50 micro providers](#) have now been set up, providing over [800 weekly care hours](#).

A [Care Inspectorate Wales inspection](#) report (August 2023) has found that Domiciliary Support Service requires no areas of improvement. [Governance and Audit Committee](#) also considered the report.

Foster Wales has been encouraging more people in Denbighshire to consider [local authority fostering](#) to help more children to stay in their communities.

The recommendation for [Care Home fee setting](#) was [approved by Cabinet](#) in March. The [report](#) describes how the uplift will enable providers to pay the Real Living Wage to their care staff.

[Partnerships Scrutiny Committee](#) in March considered the North Denbighshire Community Hospital Project.

In October, the Minister for Finance and Local Government visited [Tŷ Pride](#). In November, the council announced it would be providing free [period pants for PE](#). February's [LGBTQ+ History Month](#) was celebrated. [A notice of motion](#) was put forward and agreed by County Council in February for a commitment to supporting those affected by events in Israel and Palestine.

October's World Mental Health Day was celebrated by the [Mental Health Volunteer Service](#). In January, [North East Wales Archives sought volunteers](#). The Countryside Service announced the revival of an [allotment in Prestatyn](#). A social group has been set up who meet to [knit in Rhuddlan library](#). In March, citizens were urged to check if they are eligible for [Marriage Allowance](#) tax relief.

Welsh Government's consultation on the [proposed changes to the Council Tax system](#) was considered by Cabinet in January. County Council agreed to adopt the [Council Tax Reduction Schemes](#).

Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considered in October an annual performance report about the [Community Safety Partnership](#). In November, Denbighshire landmarks were lit up in white in recognition of [White Ribbon Day](#). A school in St Asaph has become the first in North Wales to be recognised as a '[School of Sanctuary](#)'.

County Council in November agreed to adopt the [revised Gambling Act 2005](#) Statement of Licensing Principles. Following a [public consultation](#), the council and North Wales Police secured a [Public Space Protection Order](#) to address issues of anti-social behaviour in Rhyl town centre. A town centre site was also found for the [new Prestatyn police station](#).

## A learning and growing Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

### Corporate Plan Update

#### Promote the learning and development of our children and young people (equality objective)

During this period the support provided to promote the development of children in the early years has continued to strengthen, with excellent rates of children taking part in the childcare offer and continued excellent performance in Family Link Workers supporting entry to nursery as well as in library services such as Bookstart. Projects related to early years child development are progressing well, with the expansion of Flying Start 'On Target' as well as the completion of two other projects as seen in the table below.

There has been continued collaborative working between the council, schools and GwE, our school improvement partner, to support high standards of education in Denbighshire. The number of schools in either Estyn Review, Significant Improvement or Special Measures is 3, which is 'Acceptable'. Further data is expected from schools in the autumn of 2024 as the academic year draws to a close.

Schools are being supported to deliver against new standards, such as the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, with an increase in the percentage of reception pupils receiving Welsh medium education to 28.4%. The project to deliver the new curriculum for Wales is also 'On Target' as is the implementation of the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs Reform Act.

#### Provide high quality buildings and facilities that meet the needs of pupils, families, and the wider community, including working with the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme

The council continues to progress its long-term plans for the provision of high-quality buildings and facilities for learners. Schools are surveyed annually and categorised in terms of building condition according to Welsh Government definitions as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. The council is working to reduce the number of schools in Denbighshire in the lower categories C and D, despite the

challenges this kind of work entails. The current figure of 27 is rated 'Excellent' and keeps the council within reach of the goal for 2027 for this number to be reduced to 21. Unfortunately, delays in the progression of certain projects within the Modernising Education Programme mean that this stream of work remains 'At Risk.'

### **Work with partners to ensure that people of all ages, including those who are vulnerable or in our care, are resilient and prepared for employment, further education, or training (equality objective)**

The council continues to work collaboratively with partners to enhance people's opportunities for employment, further education, or training. Though the percentage of year 11 pupils leaving school and known not to be in education, employment or training as at 31 August 2023 remains a 'Priority for Improvement', there are fewer year 11 pupils that do not have an identified Post-16 Pathway in place, which is a positive development. Work continues through the Regional Skills Partnership and through the council's Community Benefits Policy in support of this theme.

### **Improving the well-being of children from low income and disadvantaged families (equality objective)**

By January 2024, the universal free school meals offer was made available to all primary pupils across Denbighshire. The uptake of free school meals in primary schools has increased to 65%. There has been a fall in the percentage of eligible secondary school pupils taking free school meals and that figure is now 59% for 2023 to 2024. The School Holiday Enrichment Programme to support children to eat well continues and is 'On Target,' as is the project to reduce the impact of poverty on Education Attainment.

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

For further measures and activity in support of well-being please see our [healthier, happier and caring theme](#) and for further detail around our work to support employment and the economy see our [prosperous](#) theme.



## Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2023 to 2024	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
The number of children taking part in the childcare offer – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	570 Acceptable Better	570 Acceptable Same	624 Good Better	701 Excellent Better	772 Excellent Better
The number of schools in either Estyn Review, Significant Improvement or Special Measures – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	3 Acceptable Same	2 Good Better	2 Good Same	2 Good Same	3 Acceptable Worse
The number of voluntary / work experience placements offered through Llwybrau – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data. New to 2023 to 2024	1 Priority to Improve	13 Excellent Better	20 Excellent Better	Data expected Autumn 2024

## Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of children entering nursery that have been provided with a 'Me in a Nutshell' profile by Family Link Workers, supporting their effective transition – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	82% Excellent Better	83% Excellent Better
The percentage of parents that have reported a positive impact through attending Bookstart and Rhyme-time – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	99% Excellent	99% Excellent Same
The percentage of pupils (using Pupil Attitudes to Self and School - PASS) who respond positively against pupils' feelings about school – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	85.4% Good Worse	Data expected Summer 2024
The number of reported occurrences of prejudice related bullying in schools - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	Data expected Autumn 2024	Data expected Autumn 2024

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	90.8% Priority to Improve Worse	Data expected Autumn 2024
The percentage of pupil attendance in secondary schools – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	86% Priority to Improve Worse	Data expected Autumn 2024
The percentage of pupils engaged through Llwybrau that achieve a positive outcome, including level 1 or 2 qualifications – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	88% Acceptable	Data expected Autumn 2024
The percentage of reception pupils receiving Welsh medium education - <b>Count Only</b>	27.4%	28.4%
The number of schools providing education through suitability and condition categories C and D – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	27 Excellent Same	27 Excellent Same
The percentage of Year 11 Leavers from schools know Not to be in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), at the preceding 31 August in Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	2.3% Priority to Improve Worse	2.4% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of Year 11 pupils that do not have an identified Post-16 pathway in place – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	10.50% Priority to Improve Worse	2.4% Good Better
The percentage of children or young people who are looked after that have a Personal Education Plan in place – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	96% Good Worse	98% Good Better
The percentage of initial Care Leaver Pathway Plans completed during the year that were within the statutory timescales, where the young person has care leaver status – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	71% Priority to Improve Better	Data being verified
The percentage of care leavers in categories 2, 3 and 4 who have completed at least 3 consecutive months of employment, education or training in the 13 -24 months since leaving care – <b>Count Only</b>	63.6% Good Better	Data being verified

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of eligible primary school pupils taking Free School meals (Denbighshire) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	57% Priority to Improve Worse	65% Acceptable Better
The percentage of eligible secondary school pupils taking Free School meals (Denbighshire) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	66% Good Worse	59% Priority to Improve Worse

### Stakeholder Survey 2022 to 2023

Title	2022 to 2023 With an opinion, and agree	2023 to 2024 With an opinion, and agree
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that good quality learning and training is available in Denbighshire, allowing people of all ages to reach their personal and professional potential – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	62% Acceptable	56% Acceptable Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire is a county where the Welsh language is a living, thriving language - Benchmarking Locally	62% Acceptable	56% Acceptable Worse

### Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published infrequently - every four to five years - with the most recent data being available for 2019. Until new data is published (Welsh Government's next WIMD update is expected in late 2025 or early 2026), please refer to our [Performance Self-Assessment Update: July to September 2023 report](#).

### Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

There are sixteen projects and activities within this theme, eight of which are 'On Target', three are 'Experiencing Obstacles', and two are now complete. As reported previously, the Modernising Education Programme remains 'At Risk'.

## Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Flying Start Expansion	On Target Same	No exception
Recommissioning of Families First	Complete	No exception
Review Early Years provision in the context of WG Early Years Transformation funding and the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) agenda	Complete	No exception
Implement School Improvement Guidance: Framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	Impacted by reforms in the Welsh Government School Improvement Partnership Programme.
Support the regional project on Emotional Health, Well-being and Resilience Framework, which will provide resources for parents	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Regional discussion with lead to take place in June 2024 to discuss next steps of implementation.
Support schools in developing digital competency through educational leadership of the EdTech project	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	A digital learning strategy is to be consulted upon this term.
Implement the WESP to support 1 million speakers by 2050	On Target Same	No exception
In partnership with GwE, Support schools and non-maintained settings to deliver the new curriculum for Wales to ensure our learners become capable, ambitious, enterprising, ethical, healthy and confident adults	On Target Same	No exception
Implement requirements of the of ALN Reform Act within Education and Children's Services to ensure compliance	On Target Same	No exception
Modernising Education Programme	At Risk Same	Delays have occurred in the progression of Band B projects.
Community Focussed Schools: Prestatyn High Pilot	On Target Same	No exception

Title	Status	Exception
Engage with the North Wales Ambition Board and the Regional Skills Partnership to ensure that skills and training secured through our Community Benefits Policy is fit for the future and / or transferrable	On Target Better	No exception
Through our Community Benefits Policy, secure business led strategy workshops for the benefit of residents seeking to upskill	Experiencing obstacles Same	Engagement held with Balfour Beatty. We are awaiting a proposal.
Universal Free School Meals for all Primary School Pupils	On Target Same	No exception
Enhance the School Holiday Enrichment Programme to support children to eat well	On Target Same	No exception
Reducing the impact of poverty on Education Attainment, including implementing the Price of Poverty project	Status pending	Update pending

## A round up of news

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme:

The Families First and Flying Start team offered [free family activities during half term](#). In November an extension was completed, and an [open day](#) held, at the [Oaktree Integrated Children's Centre](#) in Rhyl, which provides early years support.

In October, Denbighshire libraries announced that 2,478 children had taken part in the [2023 Reading Challenge](#), and in March 2024, [free book vouchers](#) were provided to celebrate World Book Day. Performance Scrutiny Committee in January considered the [Library Service's performance](#) against National Standards for the year 2022 to 2023.

Performance Scrutiny Committee in January considered a report to promote [school attendance and engagement](#) in education. The Committee in March considered and endorsed the Authority's policies regarding [Elective Home Education](#).

At the end of 2023, Denbighshire's [Young Rangers](#) were given vital life-saving training.

In March, young people in Denbighshire were advised to check if they have any money due to them from an [unclaimed Child Trust Fund](#) account.

Working Denbighshire, the council's employability service, announced in October its provision of [social group sessions](#) and [walks with therapy dogs](#). Another project, the [Work Start scheme](#), has successfully joined Denbighshire-based businesses with residents looking to upskill and gain experience. Working Denbighshire announced it is offering fully [funded training courses](#).

In January, it was announced that by the Spring term every primary school pupil in Denbighshire would be able to have a [free school meal](#) (FSM). The FSM team were honoured with a [national award](#), as were individual staff members from the catering service. Both Denbighshire County Council's Catering Service Team and Street Lighting Team were also named as [finalists at the 2023 APSE \(Association for Public Service Excellence\) performance awards](#).

## A Greener Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

### Corporate Plan Update

#### [Deliver our Climate and Ecological Change Strategy to become a net carbon zero and ecologically positive council by 2030](#)

The Climate and Ecological Change Strategy is scheduled to be reviewed and refreshed every 3 years. The first official review and refresh of the Climate and Ecological Change Strategy began during 2023 to 2024. The draft Year 3 updated Strategy document was out for [consultation](#) during March and May 2024. An [interactive public event](#) was held in November 2023 as part of our engagement around the Strategy Review. Over 50 people attended the session, providing valuable feedback for us to drive fresh ideas forward for tackling county climate change issues.

There are a number of key performance indicators that are being used to judge the performance of the council in achieving its 2030 goals, including: reducing carbon emissions the Council emits from various sources, increasing carbon sequestration of land the Council owns/leases and manages and increasing the species richness of the land the Council owns/leases and manages. Data for the year 2023 to 2024 data will be available in late summer 2024.

Whilst we are going in the right direction it is not currently at the pace to suggest sufficient progress is being made to meet the 2030 goal of net carbon zero. The financial pressures all local authorities are facing now and in the coming years will continue to impact on that pace. We plan to maintain our Climate and Ecological Improvement ambition and not adjust targets - despite their challenge - as we go into the next three years of our strategy.

#### [Improve recycling rates and reduce waste](#)

We will be introducing a new recycling system in June of this year to help us meet Welsh Government's 70% recycling target which has been set for all local authorities in Wales. In October 2023, we released the [winning names of our new Welsh Government funded recycling vehicles](#) which will come into service in 2024. [Young winners of the competition](#) were presented with their prizes at a special event held in January.

In February we announced the [new recycling and waste service](#) which will start on [Monday, 3 June 2024](#). The new system will have many benefits not only for the environment as it will lead to increased recycling rates but also it will be cheaper to run, providing better value for money and will also be good for the local economy. The new service, which is 55% funded by Welsh Government, will require residents to separate their 'dry' recycling using a new three-tier Trolibocs. With over 45,000 new containers required to facilitate the new service, we started to deliver the Trolibocs to households in February, together with a comprehensive information pack, whilst we continue to deliver the current recycling and waste collections service until June. We have provided information on our social media and our [website](#) around [schedules, updates, information packs](#) and [explainer videos](#). [Six drop-in sessions](#) are also scheduled to be held in April and May giving residents the opportunity to ask questions. Following our successful pilot scheme for residents in LL16 and LL17 postcodes areas last year, our [Absorbent Hygiene Products \(AHP\) collections](#) will also be rolled out throughout the county from June 2024.

### **[Support communities to mitigate and cope with the impacts of climate change](#)**

March 2024 marked the [first anniversary of the Coastal Defence Scheme](#) work starting at both the Central Prestatyn and Rhyl sites. A published [case study](#) by Welsh Government evidenced how we have worked with partners to maximise well-being outcomes while working to protect Rhyl from flooding. The case study sets out several beneficial outcomes from the model adopted, including environmental and economic benefits, employment opportunities and health and well-being benefits for participants.

### **[Develop a Sustainable Transport Plan that makes travel and tourism within our county 'greener'](#)**

Whilst we now have quarterly data for 2022 to 2023 for the number of journeys using Fflecsi bus services and the total number of concessionary journeys, data for the number of journeys on service buses is unavailable and we propose to remove this measure. All other 2023 to 2024 data is expected to be available in July. However, no progress has been made in progressing the Sustainable Transport Plan and resources are severely stretched having been focussed on Levelling Up funded projects. Following a discussion with project leads, the Greener Denbighshire Board, and the Senior Leadership Team around the barriers faced by the project, it is now recommended that the project is closed and removed from the Corporate Plan. It has been confirmed that there is no statutory duty



on the council to produce a sustainable transport plan, and there are no financial implications to the council of not having a plan. Working closely with the Corporate Joint Committee on the Regional Transport Plan must be the council's priority going forward.

### [Support our county's green infrastructure](#)

At the end of 2023, our [Electric Vehicle Charging Hub at Rhyl's West Kinmel car park](#) reached its first anniversary. Since becoming operational it has provided over 250,000 miles of greener transport for motorists. The public electric vehicle project is now complete.

### Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Measures Update

For further measures and activity in support of greener initiatives please see our [Housing](#) theme for energy efficiency and our [Prosperous](#) for sustainable travel.

#### Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
Cumulative number of journeys using Fflecsi bus services – <b>Count Only</b>	22,572	Data pending	Data pending	Data pending	Data pending
Number of journeys on service buses	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
Cumulative number of concessionary journeys – <b>Count Only</b>	678,120	Data pending	Data pending	Data pending	Data pending

#### Annual or Biennial Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Net Carbon Zero - Total carbon tonnage emitted and absorbed by the council (excluding supply chains) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	11,832 Priority to Improve Worse	Data expected in September
The percentage of DCC owned and operated land in highest categories of species richness – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	42.00% Acceptable	Data expected in September

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
	Better	
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through fleet – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	2,302 Acceptable Better	Data expected in September
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through business travel– <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	251 Excellent Worse	Data expected in September
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through supply chains– <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	Data pending	Data expected in September
Capacity (in MW) of renewable energy equipment installed in our buildings (owned and operated) - <b>Count Only</b>	1Mw	1.190Mw
The percentage of municipal waste reused, recycled or composted - <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	65.91% Good Worse	67.59% Excellent Better
The number of properties with a high or medium risk of flooding (DCC wide) - <b>Count Only</b>	1,171	1,171
Number of cycle journeys per annum on designated Active Travel routes (Sample)	Baseline data being established	Data pending
Number of pedestrian journeys per annum on designated Active Travel routes (Sample)	Baseline data being established	Data pending

### Stakeholder Survey 2022 to 2023

Title	2022 to 2023 With an opinion, and agree	2023 to 2024 With an opinion, and agree
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that Denbighshire is resilient against the impacts of climate change and nature's decline - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	52% Acceptable	44% Priority to Improve Worse

## Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation Measures

Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is published infrequently - every four to five years - with the most recent data being available for 2019. Until new data is published (Welsh Government's next WIMD update is expected in late 2025 or early 2026), please refer to our [Performance Self-Assessment Update: July to September 2023 report](#).

## Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

This theme is supported by the overarching Climate and Ecological Change Programme 2021 to 2030 and a further 10 projects and activities. Seven are 'On Target', two are 'Experiencing Obstacles' and one is in development.

### Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Programme: Climate and Ecological Change Programme 2021 – 2030	Experiencing Obstacles Same	In year 2023 to 2024 status update: Delays in project delivery, which means benefit realisation will also be delayed.
Deliver the annual programme of Ash Dieback work	On Target Same	No exception
Rhyl Green Infrastructure	On Target Same	No exception
Remodelling Waste Service Operations	Experiencing Obstacles Better	Whilst the permit from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has now been issued, successful completion of the recruitment exercise is crucial, and this remains in progress.
Reduce plastics in schools and promote recycling in relation to the new waste model	Experiencing Obstacles Same	We are continually looking for alternative provision that would eradicate single use plastics.
Develop and implement a new Denbighshire Flood Risk Management Strategy for the county	On Target Same	No exception

Title	Status	Exception
Prestatyn Central Coastal Defence Improvement Scheme	On Target Same	No exception
Rhyl Central Coastal Defence Improvement Scheme	On Target Same	No exception
Develop a Sustainable Transport Plan (to include Active Travel)	At business case stage	No exception
Review, develop and modernise rural, urban and inter-urban transport services, where appropriate, working with partners within the Metro project and alongside the emerging bus reform	On Target Better	No exception
Work with Conwy and Denbighshire Public Service Board to develop and assess our organisation's climate risk resilience	New	No exception

## A round up of news

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this them. The council's website contains a wealth of news about nature, our local environment and community activity around climate change, which can be found on our [news](#) page by applying the filter for "Climate and ecological change".

The Council's Energy Team are working on a range of projects to improve building energy efficiency and support the reduction of running costs over the long term in the Council's non-domestic building estate which is responsible for over 60% of council carbon emissions. Recent highlights include:

- [Community hub \(Ysgol Dyffryn Ial\)](#)
- [Low carbon heat project \(Ysgol Brynhyfryd\)](#)
- [Energy efficiency improvements \(Ysgol Llywelyn\)](#)
- [Reduce carbon emissions and lower long term usage costs \(Ysgol Emmanuel\)](#)
- [Council renewal energy generation](#)

In October, [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a report on the Waste Service Remodelling Project, which gave an update on progress to date and highlighted the risk around the timely approval of the operational permit required for the new Denbigh

Waste Transfer Scheme. [Cabinet](#), in December, approved an extension to the contract for the haulage, sorting and brokerage of Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR).

We announced in March that we are working together with Rhyl Golf Club on a [new Club House](#), which will ensure that the Club gets replacement facilities and that the Central Prestatyn Coastal Defence Scheme will be delivered on time.

## A well-run, high performing council

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: On Target

### Corporate Plan Update

#### [Embed a positive “one council” culture \(equality objective\)](#)

The Well-run Board is settling into its role in nurturing and ensuring good governance. Its focus is on embedding our four [values and five principles](#), which are fundamental to everything we do as a council. Three formal Board meetings have taken place and workshops with staff (office-based and front line) and Members have been successful and well-received. The Board is keen to capitalise on the growing understanding of our culture and what it means to be a part of the “Denbighshire family”, and a communications plan is being put in place, which includes case studies from staff and managers and a video featuring the Lead Member and Chief Executive. The Board is taking a growing role in a number of key areas including annual self-assessment, service performance challenges, and the peer-led Panel Performance Assessment, expected to take place in the Autumn. The Board, at its next meeting in July, will discuss the emerging transformation agenda and how our culture can enable that to happen effectively. The Board has also supported the creation of a small set of service-level people and budget management indicators to include in all service plans, which will bolster this year’s redesigned Service Performance Challenge programme. After some quarters of poor performance, the percentage of staff who are eligible for one or three one-to-ones and who have had at least one or three one-to-ones in the last 12 months (by person) has increased to 91% at the end of March 2023 (from 54% in December). Whilst still considered a ‘Priority for Improvement’, the improvement is significant and positive. Our Performance Challenges had highlighted the improvement needed in this area, and this increase is also likely due to some recording issues being resolved. Our revised Corporate Plan maintains a clear focus on how the council works, including customer service, engagement, and our performance. It is important that we demonstrate improvement in these areas and respond to the expectations of our customers.

## **Reduce inequalities by ensuring that the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds, seldom heard groups, and those at a socio-economic disadvantage are heard and inform decision making (equality objective)**

An engagement network of people and groups with protected characteristics has been developed in partnership with the Community Cohesion Team, the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network and Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC). The final list will be presented to the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group in April 2024, with a view to publishing it on our website. The Well-run Board will also evaluate current workstreams to ensure we maximise our contribution to this pledge. The number of community projects co-produced with the community and third sector increased from 7 last year to 18 this year, which is 'Excellent'. This work supports our [healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire theme](#).

## **Play our part in achieving one million Welsh Speakers in Wales by 2050, by building a culture and ethos that encourages the daily use of Welsh**

As reported previously, officers have been developing guidance to inform recruitment of staff with Welsh essential and Welsh desirable skills. The aim is to move to a position whereby every job has, as a minimum, a Level 1 Welsh language skills requirement (some positions will require a Level 5 skill). There has been some slowing of pace whilst recruitment for a Welsh Language Officer is underway. Anecdotally there is a much greater use of Welsh formally at committee meetings, and informally in the day-to-day business of the council. There has also been an improvement in the percentage of staff that have completed Welsh Language Awareness e-learning, which stood at 85% at the end of March 2024. Corporate Support Services: People has been tasked with an action to support and encourage the greater use of Welsh, informally and formally, throughout the council, following its Performance Challenge in March 2024. Furthermore, the Well-run Board will evaluate current workstreams to ensure we maximise our contribution to this pledge.

## **Working collaboratively to alleviate problems with recruitment and retention**

Whilst the council still faces some recruitment and retention issues the financial pressures all councils are experiencing has resulted in the council having to act during the period to limit spend, including implementation of vacancy control procedures. Recruitment was still able to take place in critical areas such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services, but

vacancies in those services persist. The Social Care Recruitment and Retention Operational Group has pursued a range of actions to alleviate the issues. A Regional Care Career Connector is now hosted by the Regional Collaborative in Denbighshire and council representation at various workforce-related meetings is in place. We have supported students to undertake studies with the Open University, with three students progressing to Stage 2 and one to Stage 3. We are working across the region, with our partners, including with Wrexham University. On the basis that all opportunities are being pursued the Social Care Recruitment and Retention Operational Group has been closed.

## Performance Framework: Measures Update

For further measures and activity in support of procurement and community benefits, please see the [Prosperous](#) theme.

### Quarterly or Biannual Measures

#### Annual or biennial measures

Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2023 to 2024	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
The percentage of projects whose delivery confidence was updated in the last three months – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	96% Good Improved	96% Good Same	100% Excellent Better	98% Good Worse	90% Good Worse
The cumulative number of Internal Audit low assurance reports, financial year to date – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	0 Excellent Same	0 Excellent Same	0 Excellent Same	0 Excellent Same	0 Excellent Same
Corporate and Service Budget Variance (£k) – <b>Count Only</b>	1,585 Priority to Improve Better	2,395 Priority to Improve Worse	3,446 Priority to Improve Worse	3,229 Priority to Improve Better	2,780 Priority to Improve Better



Title	Quarter 4 2022 to 2023	Quarter 1 2023 to 2024	Quarter 2 2023 to 2024	Quarter 3 2023 to 2024	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024
Council reserves (£k) – <b>Count Only</b>	5,531 Excellent Worse	5,531 Excellent Same	5,531 Excellent Same	5,600 Excellent Better	5,577 Excellent Worse
The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	42% Good Better	29% Excellent Better	55% Acceptable Worse	20% Excellent Better	44% Good Worse
The rolling average number of working days / shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	9.8 Priority to Improve Same	8.79 Priority to Improve Better	8.82 Priority to Improve Worse	8.63 Priority to Improve Better	8.55 Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of staff who are eligible for one or three one-to-ones and who have had at least one or three one-to-ones in the last 12 months (by person) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	61% Priority to Improve Better	58% Priority to Improve Worse	56% Priority to Improve Worse	54% Priority to Improve Worse	91% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of employees that have completed all 10 mandatory e-learning modules by the end of the year (excluding schools) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	49% Priority to Improve Better	51% Priority to Improve Better	49.8% Priority to Improve Worse	39.5% Priority to Improve Worse	48.32% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of staff that have completed Welsh Language Awareness e-learning - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	73% Priority to Improve	80.3% Acceptable Better	79.26% Priority to Improve Worse	82.6% Acceptable Better	85% Good Better

## 2020 to 2023 data

Title	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023
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 – <b>Count Only</b>	4%	21%	20%

## 2022 to 2024 data

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of the lowest paid salaries (bottom quarter) that are women – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	80.7% Priority to Improve Worse	80.6% Priority to Improve Better
The number of community projects co-produced with the community and third sector - <b>Count Only</b>	7 Good Same	18 Excellent Better

## Stakeholder Survey 2022 to 2024

Title	2022 to 2023 With an opinion, and agree	2023 to 2024 With an opinion, and agree
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council is transparent, well-run, and high performing – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	49% Priority to Improve	39% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council works well with partners – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	74% Good	63% Good Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that there is a good working relationship between political leaders and senior management – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	55% Acceptable	47% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council manages its	53% Acceptable	43% Priority to Improve

Title	2022 to 2023 With an opinion, and agree	2023 to 2024 With an opinion, and agree
performance well – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>		Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council manages its risks and challenges well – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	55% Acceptable	44% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council manages its finances well – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	48% Priority to Improve	30% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council has effective long-term plans in place – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	56% Acceptable	40% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council treats its workforce well – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	76% Excellent	67% Good Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council makes best use of its assets and resources – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	35% Priority to Improve	30% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council purchases its goods and services in a fair and efficient way – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	54% Acceptable	47% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council acts on the concerns of residents – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	48% Priority to Improve	44% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council treats all people fairly – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	58% Acceptable	51% Acceptable Worse
The percentage of stakeholders who agree that the council's Corporate Plan and priorities reflect the needs of the local community - <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	51% Acceptable	42% Priority to Improve Worse

## Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Projects Update

There are 11 projects of activities in support of this theme. Currently, nine activities are 'On Target', one is 'Experiencing Obstacles', one is complete and one has not yet started.

### Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Exception
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Embed a positive culture of ambition, transparency and continuous improvement by placing our values of integrity, respect, unity, and pride at the heart of everything that we do	On Target	No exception
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Be close to our communities	On Target	No exception
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Have clear performance expectations	On Target	No exception
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Promote strong staff and elected member relations	On Target	No exception
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Ensure Denbighshire County Council is a good employer and is an excellent place to work	On Target	No exception
Implement new Panel Performance Assessment Process and report findings to Council	On Target Same	No exception
Review and revise the Youth Council for Denbighshire	Experiencing Obstacles Same	This activity will recommence after the summer holidays.
Undertake an annual review of the Corporate Workforce Plan 2022 to 2027	On Target	No exception
Improve the information we have about our workforce, including equality information, to support more detailed analyses in future Public Sector Duty Reports	On Target	No exception
Develop a network to engage people and groups with protected characteristics	Complete	

Title	Status	Exception
(through the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group)		
Review requirements for and procure a Corporate CRM system (including undertaking workshops with members and services to inform development of the new system	Not started	Progress expected during next quarter

## 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. Our news round up is included in each governance section.

### Corporate Planning

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Corporate Planning is about how the council sets out and makes arrangements to deliver on its strategic objectives.

### Corporate Plan Governance Arrangements

The increasingly difficult and unprecedented financial environment that the council is operating in necessitated revisions to our Corporate Plan during this period. This was a pragmatic step to reduce the administrative burden on already stretched council services across the board, and to help release some capacity to support our transformational agenda, which will enable us to innovatively respond to the challenges ahead. Discussions were held with senior managers and councillors between January and February 2024 to rationalise the content of the Corporate Plan, focussing on those ambitions that remain important areas of improvement for our communities, and de-escalating the reporting of already embedded, operational activity. This has seen us move from nine themes to six, which are underlined by the importance of Equality and Welsh Language as guiding principles in all of our work.

This revision has also been timely, and will help align the business planning cycles of both our Public Sector Equality Duty (which is on a four-year cycle) and the Well-being of Future Generations Act (five-year cycle) when we come to consider the next iteration of

our Corporate Plan in 2027. This revision, therefore, combined with the [supporting information](#) published on our Equality, Diversity and Human Rights webpage, constitutes our Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 to 2028. In considering this revision, we have again revisited the wealth of information that we gathered in our [Well-being Assessment](#); and in respect of the 2011 Engagement Provisions, through our annual Stakeholder Survey (most recently between September 2023 and February 2024) we have consulted widely with representative stakeholders in our communities on the content and relevance of our Corporate Plan objectives, particularly around the issue of equality and fairness.

The revised Corporate Plan was unanimously adopted by County Council at its [meeting in February, 2024](#). Governance structures have subsequently been amended (including revised terms of reference for our Boards) to align with the new themes. This has resulted in the cessation of the Fairer, Safer, More Equal Denbighshire Board, but will place greater importance on the work of the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group.

In the context of the present difficult financial environment, we expect that as a council we will need to keep our Corporate Plan commitments and performance expectations under continual review going forward.

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

Work continues on the implementation of the one outstanding performance aspect of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, concerning the requirement to arrange a peer-led Panel Performance Assessment within an ordinary term of the County Council. The council has opted to work with the Welsh Local Government Association on this, and a meeting to understand the process and timetable was held in October. Subsequently, an initial scoping discussion was held with Cabinet and SLT during their March Corporate Plan Tranche Review, where it was agreed that a working group of key managers and Cabinet members would meet during April and May to draft the scope and propose some key areas of focus for the assessment. The scoping document will accompany this Self-Assessment Performance Update Report through our committee cycle to obtain further input from the Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet, Performance Scrutiny, the Governance and Audit Committee and finally County Council. The scope and members of the independent panel will then be finally agreed and appointed by Cabinet in July. The Panel Performance Assessment is expected to take place in September.

## **Transformation Agenda**

Work is underway on establishing the council's transformation programme, with governance structures now in place, helping to move the council to a place where it can respond innovatively and collaboratively to the challenges ahead. The Strategic Planning and Performance Team has also developed an Insight Strategy to outline what support that team could potentially provide in support of this key area of work for the council. The Team is presently testing out aspects of this new function on a couple of service areas, and key staff across the council will receive training between May and July in Continuous Improvement theories and practices to support this work.

### **Audit Wales: Corporate Support Functions**

At its [meeting in March](#), Performance Scrutiny considered the findings and management response to the Audit Wales report on the suitability of the council's corporate support functions. The results of the review were positive with only two recommendations:

1. A need to review out-of-date Human Resource policies.
2. Internal Audit Reviews should consider the sustainable development principle.

The report being from May 2023, it was noted that considerable progress had already taken place to address the actions identified in response to these recommendations.

### **Audit Wales: Setting of Well-being Objectives**

At its [meeting in March](#), the Governance and Audit Committee received, for its information, a report by Audit Wales on the way in which the council had set its Well-being Objectives in 2022. It was a very positive report that captured the breadth of good work that had taken place to develop our Corporate Plan. The report makes only one recommendation, encouraging the council to improve on how it draws on the full diversity of residents when designing its objectives. This was an improvement action that we were already aware of and have acknowledged in our assessment and Plan. The response we have provided to the report also outlines the many engagement actions that we have undertaken and continue to undertake to address this issue. It is, however, an area that many councils struggle with.

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

### **New Ways of Working Journey Checker**

In February 2024, the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner wrote to public bodies to publicise the release of a Ways of Working Journey Checker to help organisations reflect on their use of the five ways of working; to assess progress with delivering the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; and to provide some helpful prompts for improvement and next steps to focus future work. Public bodies were requested to complete the exercise by September.

The assessment tool has been completed on behalf of the council by the Strategic Planning and Performance Team, applying their knowledge and understanding as to how the organisation works. The assessment asked 63 questions in total, structured around the five ways of working, and covered both Process and People / Culture within the council. Following completion, an assessment is made as to the overall progress of our journey within each way of working. The possible outcome of the assessment's results range in ascending improvement from No Change, to Simple Change, More Adventurous, Owing Ambition, and finally to Leading the Way. The results of Denbighshire County Council's assessment are summarised below:

- **Process:** The council scored as 'More Adventurous' or 'Owing Ambition', which reflects the great deal of work that has been undertaken within the organisation to embed the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the five ways of working within our systems and processes.
- **People and Culture:** We are broadly satisfied that our scores vary between 'More Adventurous' or 'Simple Change' but acknowledge that perhaps more could be done to support greater collaboration and integration.

The Journey Checker identified some recommendations in respect of integration and collaboration that could help us develop in this area; some of which we may already do to some degree, but perhaps require more consistent application more broadly across the organisation.



## Financial Planning

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Financial planning relates to the management of our income and expenditure.

### Finance Update Reports

At its meetings in [October](#), [November](#), [December](#), [January](#) and [March](#), Cabinet received an update on the council's financial position. In the Update report provided in March, a summary of the council's financial position was provided. The net revenue budget for 2023 to 2024 was £250.793m (£233.696m in 2022 to 2023); an overspend of £2.780m was forecast for service and corporate budgets; the report highlighted current risks and assumptions relating to corporate budgets and individual service areas; detailed service savings and efficiencies for the 2023 to 2024 budget (£8.172m); and provided a general update on the Housing Revenue Account, Treasury Management, Capital Plan and major projects.

There had been a slight decrease in the forecasted overspend on service and corporate budgets at £2.780m with a movement of £60k compared to last month. Main areas of overspend continued to be in Education and Children's Services, Highways and Environmental Services and Adults Social Care and Homelessness budgets. The Housing Revenue Account had reported a slight reduction in underspend at £110k from £126k due to a reduction in rent with a forecast year-end balance of £812k. There was a slight change in the forecasted use of school reserves at £7.026m compared to £7.054m last month.

Cabinet will, in April, receive an update report regarding the Medium Term Finance Strategy and Plan for 2025 to 2026 and a review of the council's financial resilience and sustainability. We will report on these in our next Performance Update report.

### Voluntary exit

In response to the significant financial challenges facing the council, we ran a Voluntary Exit Scheme with the aim of making financial savings from employees leaving the organisation which would reduce the need for compulsory exits in the future. Employees were invited to express an interest in being considered for Voluntary Early Retirement or Voluntary Redundancy. The scheme was open to all council employees except for relief/supply employees and school-based employees who are directly employed by

governing bodies. A total of 138 applications were received and these were considered by Corporate Executive Team (CET) who determined, based on information provided by the relevant Head of Service, whether to approve or decline the application. In making their decision, CET considered the one-off cost of allowing the employee to leave; the recurring annual saving that will be made; and the impact on service delivery. As the scheme is voluntary, the council can decide which applications to accept. Similarly, employees were able to choose whether to apply and accept any offer made. In total, 44 applications were approved by CET with 33 employees accepting the offer made, which will deliver between £1.3-£1.5 million savings per annum. The one-off exit costs funded from reserves are circa £800k. Overall, the scheme has been successful and has contributed towards the overall saving target for 2024 to 2025. The process has taken some time but has been thorough. It has prompted reviews of how services are organised and could be delivered in the future.

## **Budget pressures**

In October, we issued a [press release](#) emphasising the significant financial pressures the council is facing. The press release explained that the council will need to agree and implement significant savings to enable us to set a balanced budget for 2024 to 2025 (with similar challenges facing us for 2025 to 2026). We have been looking at all services and trying to protect the most vulnerable as far as possible. We outlined the approach to budget proposals (how all would be going through the appropriate process with some decisions made by Cabinet while others will be taken via delegated decision either by the Lead Member or Head of Service) and that all decisions likely to result in a significant impact on communities being subject to a public consultation.

At [October's Communities Scrutiny Committee](#), proposed changes to car parking tariffs were presented as part of a corporate approach to savings and as a mechanism for bringing income into the Council. The proposals included a review of payment options available in car parks and a revision of the hours in which the council would be asking for payment. The decision to impose the proposed changes to car parking tariffs would ultimately under delegated powers be the decision on the Head of Service however, it was stated that officers would work closely with Members to gain their thoughts and to engage with the public. Another part of the process would be for officers to work with the Communications Team to develop an Engagement Plan for various groups who would be most affected by the changes. The committee, subject to further consideration being given to the issues raised during the discussion, resolved to support the proposed increase to

parking tariffs and the other proposed changes detailed in the report. The draft Denbighshire Car Park Investment Plan 2024 to 2029 will be presented to the Committee for consideration prior to approval and adoption.

During the period, we invited staff to contribute ideas for areas of savings or efficiencies that could help contribute to ensuring that the council can set a balanced budget over the coming years. We also implemented a series of measures to introduce corporate budget controls (see our [Workforce Planning section](#)).

## **Budget 2024 to 2025**

In November, [Governance and Audit Committee](#) received a report to update the Committee on the budget setting process and to provide assurance on the processes on setting the budget for 2024 to 2025. The Governance and Audit Committee requested that any significant events or deviations from the current projection be shared with the Committee.

We announced in [December](#), that despite an expected increase in funding of £6.7m (3.6%) by Welsh Government, the council still faced a significant funding gap. The settlement was not sufficient to meet the cost pressures we are facing. Like local authorities across Wales, the council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget and must do so through finding savings and efficiencies, increasing charges for services, increases in Council Tax or by reducing or cutting services. Next followed some very busy months of engagement with local members, officers, partners and communities to consider a range of budget proposals, including a [reduction to library and One Stop Shop opening hours](#). This consultation generated a significant response rate, with 4,600 responses, which equates to nearly 5% of Denbighshire's population. The proposal, which was reluctantly approved by [Cabinet](#) in December, is expected to release a saving of £360,000.

A special meeting of our [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) took place in early January, in accordance with the council's Call-in Procedure Rules, to examine the decision taken by Cabinet in December 2023 in relation to the library/One Stop Shop Savings proposal. The Committee recommended a postponement in the implementation of the proposal. [Cabinet](#) acknowledged and thanked the Committee for its recommendations but resolved to proceed as planned. [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) also reviewed the public conveniences savings proposal prior to being submitted to Cabinet for decision.

A finance report was presented to [Cabinet](#) in January on the implications of the Welsh Government's (WG) Provisional Funding Settlement for Local Government 2024 to 2025 and proposals to set a balanced budget for 2024 to 2025. The recommendations within that report were later approved, following a vote, by [County Council](#). The provisional settlement had resulted in a cash increase of 3.6% (£6.720m). Denbighshire's increase compared favourably to the Welsh average of 3.1% and follows increases in population and free school meals data used in the formula to distribute funding to councils. Whilst the increase in the settlement was above the planning assumption used in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and was welcomed, it did not materially change the unprecedented financial challenge the council faces in setting a balanced budget in 2024 to 2025 and in the future. Pressures amounted to £24.682m and the provisional settlement generated £6.720m, leaving a funding gap of £17.962m. These pressures were listed in the [report](#), and in summary related to pay pressures, the allowance increase in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, inflationary pressures, increase to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority levy, increase in demography e.g. the number of learners in schools, and demand e.g. for adult social care and homelessness and education and children's services.

A [Council Tax](#) rise of 8.23% plus an additional 1.11% for the increase in the levy to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority equating to an overall uplift of 9.34% was proposed, and approved, to generate £7.580m additional revenue. The proposed use of earmarked reserves was also highlighted to assist the budget setting. The risks of not achieving a balanced budget had also been set out together with mitigation measures and further work required going forward. The medium-term financial outlook looked equally as challenging. The strategy for use of reserves therefore is to minimise the use of cash reserves in setting future budgets as far as possible and the proposal is not to use reserves in balancing the 2024 to 2025 budget.

The range of financial pressures were outlined together with a list of Major Savings Proposals (amounting to £2.388m) and service-level non-strategic savings/efficiencies (amounting to £1.367m) along with capital and corporate savings of £0.928m that had been identified - bringing the total non-strategic savings/efficiencies to £2.295m. Schools were also asked to plan for 3% savings which amount to £2.7m, after receiving funding increases to cover inflationary pressures. However, despite efficiencies, savings, and reductions in costs/services to date, they have in total been insufficient to set a balanced budget without an unsustainable use of reserves. All Heads of Service were therefore

issued with further savings targets totalling £3m. Budget sessions for Members were held in March, which involved each Head of Service presenting the savings they have found, what services are impacted and how those impacts will affect our communities. Ordinarily, these further savings proposals would have been identified before the budget is set but given the scale of the challenge this year and that the Provisional Settlement was not released until late December 2023 this has not been possible. Detailed information about these savings proposals can be found [here](#).

The 2024 to 2025 budget is being viewed as an evolving process rather than a one-off event in January. Significant engagement across the council, with members and with communities will continue.

## **Statement of Accounts**

The council has a statutory duty to produce a statement of accounts that complies with approved accounting standards. The annual statement of accounts reports on the council's position at the end of the financial year and transactions during that year. The [draft Statement of Accounts for 2022 to 2023](#) is available online. After consulting with Audit Wales, it is currently planned that the audited accounts will be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in spring 2024 for formal approval.

## **Annual Treasury Management**

Treasury Management involves looking after the council's cash, which is a vital part of the council's work because approximately £0.5bn passes through the council's bank account every year. At any one time, the council normally has up to £20m in cash so it needs to ensure that the best rate of return possible is achieved without putting the cash at risk. At its meetings in [November](#) and [January](#), Governance and Audit Committee reviewed the [Annual Treasury Management report](#), which outlines the council's investment and borrowing activity. The [Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024 to 2025 and Prudential Indicators 2024 to 2025 and 2026 to 2027](#) were subsequently agreed by County Council in February.

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

### **Capital Plan and Strategy**

The Capital Strategy provides a high level, concise and comprehensive overview to members about how both the Council Fund (CF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of the council's services. An updated Capital Plan and the Capital Strategy Report for 2024 to 2025 was presented and approved by [County Council](#) in February.

## **Performance Management**

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Performance management means the structures and processes we have in place to ensure that we deliver what we said we would, whilst encouraging active involvement and challenge from across the council, our elected members, and residents.

## **Internal Audit Reviews**

The Chief Internal Auditor attended the Governance and Audit Committee in [November](#) and [March](#), to provide an update on the work of the Internal Audit Team's and a summary of Internal Audit reports. 16 audits had been completed since July 2023, with 15 receiving a high assurance rating and one a medium assurance rating (Resettlement and Refugees). It was noted that the Internal Audit Team had been engaged in seven special investigations during this period, which had hampered the capacity of the team.

## **Self-Assessment of Performance**

During this period the council has revised the frequency of its Corporate Plan performance reports to help release some capacity within the Strategic Planning and Performance Team in support of its new Insight function and the council's transformation agenda. Reports will now be produced on a bi-annual basis, but continuing to be tabled with committees at the end of quarters 2 and 4. Quarters 1 and 3 that were previously produced and circulated by email for information only will no longer be available, but those periods will be covered within the tabled reports. Our previous report to this one (which covered July to September) was tabled with [Cabinet](#) and [Performance Scrutiny](#) in November, and has subsequently been published on our website – [www.denbighshire.gov.uk/performance](http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/performance). Combined with this present report, which now covers two performance quarters (October to March), there are three reports that make up our ongoing Self-Assessment for the year.

## **Corporate Plan Performance Management Framework and Tranche Review**

In March, Cabinet and the Senior Leadership Team held their third tranche review on the Corporate Plan, which on this occasion focussed on reviewing performance information in support of the Corporate Plan's newly revised Performance Management Framework. Considerable work had been undertaken by the Strategic Planning and Performance team to reduce the size of the framework following County Council's approval of the revised Plan, and but for a few small changes, was accepted by the group as still being true to the original ambition of the Corporate Plan. The meeting identified a small number of actions for the Boards and strategic leads to take forward. This Performance Update Report is the first produced on the revised framework.

## **Update the Performance Management Guide**

Following recent revisions to the Corporate Plan, its governance, frequency of reporting, as well as changes to the Senior Leadership structure, it was timely to review our Guide to Improving Services, which explains the council's approach to performance management. The updated guide will be shared with the Governance and Audit Committee for their information in [April](#), and may be viewed on [our website](#).

## **Annual Stakeholder Survey**

In this period, we launched our Stakeholder Survey for 2023 to 2024, inviting feedback on how the council is performing. The Survey ran from September 2023 until February 2024, online and as paper copies available on request at our libraries. It was promoted through our partner networks, social media and the press. Once again we have managed to increase the rate of respondents (494), comfortably falling within ideal sample size for our population (of between 267 and 383). The results of the survey have been included within the data tables in this end-of-year Self-Assessment report, and will in the coming months be shared in more detail with managers to inform service improvement.

## **Service Performance Challenge**

The council concluded its annual programme of Service Performance Challenges during this period, the improvement actions from which have been included in our previous Performance Update reports and this present report. We have carried out a lessons learned exercise reflecting on the programme over this last year, and have held discussions with the Corporate Executive Team and the Senior Leadership Team as to the

format that they should take during 2024 to 2025. It has been agreed that some changes are needed to the panel, frequency of meetings, and focus of the agenda to best respond to the financial situation. At present, it is anticipated that the Challenges will be concentrated over a one-month period during November, helping to inform then upcoming budgetary discussions with a greater focus on finance and transformation. Broadly the agenda is proposed be in three parts – Identified Savings and Performance; Future Savings and Performance; Transformation and Re-Shaping.

## **Audit Wales: Use of Performance Information**

At its [meeting in March](#), the Governance and Audit Committee received for information a report by Audit Wales on the council's use of performance information with regard to service user perspectives and outcomes. The report made three recommendations, and the organisation's response to these were included in the papers. Although the council acknowledges that there is always improvement to be made in gathering diverse user perspectives, at present it is assured that its management of its service user data is robust and proportionate within existing resources.

## **Risk Management**

Risk management refers to our planned approach to identify, assess, control and monitor risks and opportunities facing the council. Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

## **Corporate Risk Register**

The purpose of the Corporate Risk Register is to identify the potential future events that may have a detrimental impact on the council's ability to deliver its objectives, including its corporate priorities. The identified controls and actions are, therefore, crucial to the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027. Our [most recent review of the Corporate Risk Register was carried out in February 2024](#). Whilst all risks were reviewed, no significant changes were made, and the residual risk scores remained unchanged for all of our 13 Corporate Risks. Seven of the 13 risks (54%) are currently inconsistent with the council's Risk Appetite Statement. However, this is to be expected as the Register contains the council's most serious risks.



## **Risk Appetite Statement**

As part of the review above, it was timely to reevaluate our Risk Appetite Statement. Reflecting the present financial environment, the council's previously 'open' risk appetite in relation to project financing was amended to 'cautious'. Our 'cautious' risk appetite in relation to compliance and regulation (non-safeguarding), remains appropriate. However, it was agreed that the description would be amended to include risks about statutory guidelines (hence 'risks about adherence to law, regulations and statutory guidelines').

## **Risk Reporting**

Following a recent challenge from the Governance and Audit Committee as to the frequency with which Corporate Risks are reviewed, we now facilitate quarterly, lighter-touch reviews with risk owners. These can be shared with Governance and Audit Committee meetings throughout the year and are tabled for discussion, as was previous practice, in November. In [its draft annual report of the Governance and Audit Committee](#), the Committee Chair noted the continued effectiveness of the Corporate Risk Register, and highlighted some concerns about the potential impacts and risks to service delivery and key governance functions following difficulties with recruitment and retention.

## **Managing Risk for Better Service Delivery**

Following the changes summarised above, our [`Managing Risk for Better Service Delivery`](#) guide was revised.

## **Information Risk**

[Governance and Audit Committee](#) received a report by the Senior Information Risk Owner for 2022 to 2023, outlining the council's information governance including data breaches of the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information, Environmental Information and Data Protection requests received by the council and information from schools. During the period, there were 27 data incidents involving personal data. Although three of these incidents were considered reportable to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), all of the reports resulted in no further action against the council.

## **Workforce Planning**

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Workforce planning means the process by which we analyse, forecast and

plan workforce supply and demand, and assess gaps to ensure that we have the people and skills - now and in the future - to deliver our services and fulfil our strategic objectives.

## **Staff Training, Development and Mental Health**

The [Agile Working policy](#) is now embedded in the organisation and the Time to Change action plan is complete. All HR Officers that support Services are trained mental health first aiders, and perform the role of Mental Health Champions offering advice, support and signposting, in addition to working with managers to support employees.

During the period, we launched Denbighshire's new Management Induction Programme, which will take new managers through their first 6 months in post and is linked to their probationary period. A new People Strategy is in development and plans are underway for a staff survey, expected to take place during 2024.

Staff remain our biggest asset and the council was pleased to celebrate the achievements of one of [Senior Care Assistants](#), who enrolled onto their dream nursing course, and one of our [Occupational Therapists](#) for winning the 'Innovation Award' at this year's Royal College of Occupational Therapists Celebration of Excellence Awards 2023.

## **Improve the information we have about our workforce**

Due to continual changes in staff, the equality information we have about our workforce tends to fluctuate. HR has completed a data collection survey, which asked staff to update the information we hold about them to ensure that we have as much data in the HR system as possible. It should be noted however that some staff choose not to disclose information about themselves. Updated data will be available from September 2024. This information is used to support our Public Sector Duty Reports.

## **Workforce planning**

During the period, due to the financial pressures all councils are experiencing, the council took steps to limit spend, including implementation of vacancy control procedures. Recruitment was still able to take place in critical areas such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services (see our [recruitment and retention section](#) for more information).

Workforce planning is a continually important area of work and HR Business Partners work closely with all services on a regular basis by issuing monthly reports. Workforce planning will commence in the autumn/winter of 2024 (by which time the senior leadership structure

will have been in place since November 2023) and will focus on supporting the pressures associated with the budget and its impacts. A follow up review of the Internal Audit Review of workforce planning (previously Medium assurance) was due to take place between January and March 2024, but will now be undertaken before the end of June 2024.

The Service Challenge Programme for 2023 to 2024 completed in March 2024. Across all challenges, recruitment and retention issues were highlighted and some services noted how they had potential single points of failure, which rely on key specialists. Loss of those specialists to the organisation is a risk. The Strategic Equality and Diversity Group met in October and received an update on equality and the budget, providing assurance that, through the council's Well-being Impact Assessment approach, the equality implications of any budget decisions made were being considered with due diligence. Impact on the workforce (and any risks to effective governance) as a result of budget proposals and the voluntary exit scheme remains under consideration and a report will be presented for discussion to the council's Strategic Equality and Diversity Group in July 2024.

## **Assets**

Below are updates on areas of governance for assets. By assets we are referring to our management of the council's estate (including office buildings and highway infrastructure owned and / or controlled by the council) and digital assets.

### **Asset Management Strategy**

The Asset Strategy has been approved by the Corporate Executive Team and is being taken through the democratic process for approval: initially going to Asset Management Group in May 2024, Performance Scrutiny in July and Cabinet in September 2024 for final ratification.

The New Ways of Working project continues to progress well, looking at capacity and use of offices to seek ways to maximise the use of space across the council's portfolio. The Corporate Executive Team agreed to the closure of Caledfryn, Denbigh, to council staff, with arrangements in place to relocate all council personnel currently working in those offices to either Russell House, Rhyl or County Hall, Ruthin.

### **ICT strategy**

During November 2023, Audit Wales undertook a [Digital Strategy review](#). The review found that the council has a clearly articulated strategy that is understood by officers and

members; that the strategy informs the development of digital projects within service areas; and is aligned with our other strategic plans. Audit Wales noted the council had not fully costed or identified all of the funding required to deliver its digital strategy, and that the council does not consistently assess the impact or value for money of digital projects or the digital strategy as a whole. These latter findings are now under consideration moving forward. The current ICT Strategy runs until 2025 and preparations will soon be underway to work on a new strategy.

## **Procurement**

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Procurement is the process by which the council meets its needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money and good outcomes for society, culture and the economy, whilst contributing to decarbonisation and nature's recovery.

### **Denbighshire Procurement Strategy**

The council's Procurement Strategy reflects and supports the council's corporate priorities and the seven well-being goals and aligns with the UK Government Procurement Act and the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act. Expectations about what we buy and how we buy it are increasing, and we will be expected to deliver not only value for money but also have a positive impact on the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of our communities, known as socially responsible procurement. A joined up and streamlined approach to commissioning, procurement, contract management and reporting will be required to ensure Denbighshire gains the best possible outcomes from new procurement regulations. This will involve working across the council to support Denbighshire's local supply chain. These outcomes include community benefits.

Two significant projects (costal defences and the Queen's Market in Rhyl) have delivered community benefits during this past year, such as employment, training, deeper engagement with communities and close working between contractors and suppliers to respond to community need. For example, Balfour Beatty, Brighter Futures and Men's Sheds worked together to create a new sleigh for use by the Rhyl community at Christmas time. This enables community events to take place, bringing people together and creates a legacy for the town. The Queen's Market project has delivered 276% of its expected community benefits, leading to sustainable jobs for local people. These achievements are

made possible by approaching community benefits from the perspective of the community; responding to their aspirations and creating meaningful opportunities for residents.

The Procurement Service is a collaborative service shared with Flintshire County Council. The Joint Management Board is the governing body of the joint procurement service, in place until March 2025, established as part of a collaborative agreement in 2014. Between now and March 2025, we will review, refresh or redesign the service, and consider the resources that are available to support and provide greater resilience for the collaboration.

## **Biodiversity Protection and Decarbonisation in Procurement**

The new and updated Denbighshire Procurement Strategy that was approved by [Cabinet](#) in September 2023, includes carbon considerations e.g. Carbon Reduction Plans, and a flexible weighting will be introduced over the next 12-18 months for tenders over £5m (threshold to be determined per project). We will work with our Lead Officer – Ecology and Biodiversity to produce a curated collection of standard questions to be included into tender opportunities. Our Procurement team representative, including the Decarbonisation Business Partner, has attended March for Business and Meet the Buyer events and a series of carbon-themed engagements with Services have been delivered.

We will be seeking agreement to use the WLGA procurement toolkit and to incorporate decarbonisation indicators within that toolkit. We will be expecting suppliers to provide a decarbonisation plan and be in a position to measure carbon savings. Further work is required to work across the council to embed this approach at the earliest stages of procurement; when services are being designed or we are determining what and how something needs to be procured - this where most carbon savings can be achieved.

## **Contract Procedure Rules**

It remains the case that Contract Procedure Rules will be updated to reflect new UK Public Procurement legislation once secondary legislation and statutory guidance is published (expected summer 2024). We will continue to report on progress through this report in the meantime. Cross-council workshops have been taking place to update officers on the changing procurement landscape.

## **Supporting Businesses and Partners to Adapt**

The new and developing legislation from Welsh and UK Governments will represent a change to current practice for the council and its procuring services, businesses, and the

supply chain. The aim is for smaller local businesses to be more engaged in, and to benefit from, procurement. To this end, procurement featured in the [2024 March for Business campaign](#).

As reported previously, Balfour Beatty, as part of the coastal defence schemes, has committed to deliver workshops to community-led organisations on how to develop strategy early in 2024. They will be supported by Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council to deliver a workshop in the north of the county and are aiming to work with the South Denbighshire Partnership to offer an additional workshop in the south. Whilst workshops have not yet taken place, the intention to delivering them remains.

Implementation of the Procurement Act will involve increasing the transparency and visibility of procurements by the council, and more information will be added to our website in the year ahead. We will also be working with schools and learners to increase understanding of procurement and how procurement can achieve community benefits.

### **North Wales Construction Framework Phase 3**

[Cabinet](#) considered, in December, the outcome of the procurement process for the third generation of the North Wales Construction Partnership Framework and approved the appointment of the successful contractors. This is a framework for all North Wales local authorities and has been a catalyst for engagement and upskilling of local contractors operating within the regional supply chain. The NWCPF3 will be launched in May 2024.

### **Improvement Actions**

Service Performance Challenges are an important part of our ongoing self-assessment process in identifying improvement actions. Service Performance Challenges took place for Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital and Assets, Finance and Audit Service and Corporate Support Service: People, thus completing the Service Performance Challenge programme for the year. Many improvement actions were identified and a

summary of all actions emerging from Service Performance Challenges during the year can be found in Appendix III.

Six improvement actions have been identified through discussions about this report:

- Provide an update on the reasons for poor performance relating to the percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale) (this is a continuing action).
- The new Economic Strategy should take into account the county's cultural offer and how it contributes to wider economic and well-being outcomes.
- Following agreement and to allow the council to focus on the development of the Regional Transport Plan, close the Sustainable Transport Plan project and amend the commitment within our Corporate Plan.
- Consider the Stakeholder Survey 2023 to 2024 responses.
- Consider the findings and recommendations of the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner's New Ways of Working Journey Checker.
- To keep Corporate Plan commitments and performance expectations under continual review in the context of the present difficult financial environment.