

Corporate Plan Performance Update: October 2024 to March 2025

This document presents the Council's performance against its Corporate Plan themes and governance areas between October 2024 to March 2025, including our application of the Sustainable Development principle, the Public Sector Equality Duty, and Socio-Economic Duty.

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

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Summary position

The measures evaluation for each 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. This report is based on the revised performance management framework that was mandated by the [Tranche Review](#) that took place in October 2024.

A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: On Target

Completion of new housing in Prestatyn ([Llys Llên](#)) contributes to the Council's commitment to tackling waiting times for accommodation by addressing the need for more local housing provision. A new [Police Station is also accommodated at Llys Llên](#), responding to the community's calls for a base for response officers and the Neighbourhood Policing Team in [Prestatyn](#). Work continues on Passivhaus Council homes in Denbigh, with internal works starting this period and works commenced on eight terraced homes in Rhyl. According to Welsh Government statistics, Denbighshire is ranked second highest in North Wales for the number of additional affordable housing units delivered per 10,000 households between 2023 to 2024 and ranks in the top five in Wales overall. During 2024, 154 affordable housing units were delivered within the county, a 7.7 percent increase on the previous year and 79 percent of those homes were new builds. The number of people on the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) register has significantly reduced by 26.22 percent due to the proactive work of completing thorough reviews of all applications. However, the demand for social housing has grown over the last year meaning that the number of applications awaiting assessment has increased. While we still have a considerable number of households in hotel and bed and breakfasts (120), the number has reduced by half due to the [transformation in homelessness services](#) and a 'One Council' approach to Rapid Rehousing being adopted. While still a 'Priority for Improvement', we have therefore seen an improvement in the percentage of households successfully prevented from, successfully relieved from and positively discharged from homelessness, but almost one fifth of care leavers experienced homelessness during 2024 to 2025.

A prosperous Denbighshire

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

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. Some of the indicators we monitor—such as in-work and child poverty¹—remain poor. These reflect the challenging economic issues affecting the UK and beyond, as well as the need to better target economic development towards our communities. While these outcomes are largely beyond our direct control, they remain central to our ambition of achieving our [*Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want*](#), and therefore continue to be included in our performance framework. The £20m grant from the UK Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods Programme has enabled the establishment of a new Rhyl Town Board to guide how that funding should be invested over the next ten years. The Board, which is separate from the Council and must have an independent Chair, will now develop a ten-year vision and a three-year delivery plan during 2025. Funding and delivery will commence during 2026-27, and this investment will contribute significantly to Rhyl regeneration. The total visitor numbers for Denbighshire in 2023 reached 6.39 million, an increase of almost 6 percent in comparison to 2022. The total economic impact of tourism was £736.05 million, a significant and very welcome increase of 17.1 percent on the previous year. A key development for the year ahead will be Denbighshire's Economic Strategy, which will be presented for approval over the coming months. Our performance in relation to the percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale) worsened to 32.7 percent at end of March 2025. This is explained in more detail in this report and continues to be a 'Priority for Improvement'.

A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire

Measures: Good

Projects: On Target

The rising demand for social care is evident from the growing number of inquiries into both Children's and Adult's Services. The staffing challenges in Children's Services continue to

¹ The Strategic Equality and Diversity Group is establishing a Task and Finish Group in summer 2025 to explore indicators and measures of child poverty.

impact performance in certain areas, such as new assessments completed in statutory timeframes. Teams are therefore prioritising time spent seeing children and families rather than ensuring assessments are recorded on the system within certain timeframes. In support of well-being, performance measures for Community Navigator and Library Services continue to show 'Excellent' results, and schools measures in support of emotional well-being are 'Acceptable' and improving. There have been significant increases in the number of groups and engagement activities in support of community well-being and resilience. The Community Safety Partnership has reported positive progress, and there are slight decreases in the reported rates of repeat domestic abuse and repeat locations of anti-social behaviour. The rate of reoffending within a two-year period for young people is a concern at 59 percent, though the figure is lower for individuals that received Out-of-Court Disposals. The percentage of young people in Denbighshire reached by Youth Services has decreased but is still considered 'Good'.

A learning and growing Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

Out of 55 schools, the number considered by Estyn to be of concern, following inspection, has now reduced to three. Attainment data for Year 11 pupils from 2023 to 2024 is categorised as a 'Priority for Improvement,' falling below the Wales average. School attendance data falls below the national average for Wales but shows a positive increase during 2023 to 2024 when compared with the previous academic year. Results from the survey of Pupil Attitudes to Self and School show an increase in the percentage of pupils responding positively to feelings about school, to 84 percent. It is encouraging to see an improvement in the performance indicator of Denbighshire's Year 11 Leavers from schools known Not to be in Education, Employment or Training – to 2.1 percent, which is below the Welsh average. Delays continue in the progression of Sustainable Communities for Learning projects, meaning that the Modernising Education Programme continues to be 'At Risk.' During this period, we have started to report fixed term exclusion rates per 1,000 pupils. Data shows the rate for Denbighshire pupils eligible for free school meals was 415 in 2023 to 2024, which is more than three times the figure for ineligible pupils (126). There is also an attainment gap with pupils eligible for free school meals averaging lower Year 11 examination points scores in 2023 to 2024. The attainment gap has narrowed though compared to the previous year's data, indicating positive progress is being made. Uptake

of Flying Start, a programme providing enhanced services to families with young children in disadvantaged areas of Wales, is 'Excellent'.

A greener Denbighshire

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

Reducing carbon emissions is a significant challenge for all public bodies. There are a number of key performance indicators that are being used to judge the performance of the Council in achieving its Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive 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. Annual data for the year 2024 to 2025 will be available in September 2025. Recent figures published by the Welsh Government Energy Service show that Denbighshire County Council has the second highest figure in Wales for the proportion of zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) as a percentage of their fleet, at 19.2 percent. A key project for this theme is the new waste and recycling service to be launched to improve recycling rates and reduce waste. Following commencement of the new recycling rounds in June 2024, it soon became apparent that some of the assumptions used to plan the rounds were not correct resulting in an unacceptable number of missed collections. The months that followed were extremely difficult – with officers across the Council stepping out of their day jobs to support the waste and recycling service to get back on track, and due to pressures such as a rapid increase in the volume of customer service calls relating to the new service. Elected members were also placed under pressure while they tried to work with officers and residents facing problems to resolve missed collections. Additional resources were allocated to the service by Cabinet in October, and has been examined twice by Communities Scrutiny Committee in October 2024 and February 2025, with a further report requested in May. Performance Scrutiny Committee in January 2025 considered the proposed arrangements for establishing a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of the roll out. By February 2025, the Remodelling Waste Service Operations project improved from being 'At Risk' to 'Experiencing Obstacles' as new rounds were rolled out and issues continued to be addressed and resolved. Reputationally, the problems associated with roll out have been, and continue to be, damaging for the Council.

A well-run, high performing Council

Measures: Good

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

The revision of the performance management framework for this theme into a tighter more relevant and nationally benchmarked set of measures has meant that the status has improved from a 'Priority for Improvement' to 'Good', which is more consistent with our qualitative assessments of our governance and performance as a Council and in line with external feedback from, for example, the Panel Performance Assessment held in September 2024. Notwithstanding this more positive overall assessment, there remains a significant dichotomy between what staff, our regulators and external peers think about the performance and governance of the Council and what the public responding to our Stakeholder Survey (for example) think. Following the challenges of the waste roll out and its impact on customer contact, it is important that we demonstrate improvement in these areas and respond to the expectations of our customers. We are looking to build on the positive findings from the recent 'Closer to Communities' programme, which seeks to build stronger and more responsive relationships with communities.

Governance areas

The Council, like all Councils, continues to face significant financial challenges in setting balanced budgets on a scale it has not experienced before. Demand for services from our communities continues to grow and the complexity of needs continues to intensify in areas such as Education and Children's Services and Adult Social Care. Our self-assessment about the seven [governance areas](#) contains a detailed analysis and update on progress to ensure continued robust governance. Evidence of Denbighshire being a well-run Council is demonstrated by assurance from our [Governance and Audit Committee](#) and the report received by the [Panel Performance Assessment](#) that took place in September 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' relating to the latest delivery confidence status for the projects within that Corporate Plan Theme. Measures statuses are identified as 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Acceptable', 'Priority to Improvement' relating to the latest performance of Key Performance Indicators compared to the target thresholds. For more information on how we manage performance, view the [Performance Management Guide on our website](#).

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.

A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: On Target

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](#)

Phase 2 of Llys Awelon in Ruthin, comprising of 35 units, is fully occupied and includes two respite flats. The refurbishment of Phase 1 is well underway and the Housing Association report that units will be available for rent from late June/early July 2025.

[Prevent homelessness, and ensure that any instances of it are rare, brief, and unrepeatd. This includes young care leavers \(Equality Objective\)](#)

The [transformation of delivering homelessness services](#) has been a key focus for the Council over the last four years and a 'One Council' approach to Rapid Rehousing has been adopted. Part of this transformational work has seen the implementation of a Multi-Disciplinary Prevention Team, with allied professionals working directly within the team with a focus on delivering a 'person centred' homelessness service. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of households that are temporarily accommodated in hotels and bed and breakfasts. We have therefore seen an improvement in the figures for households successfully prevented from, successfully relieved from and positively discharged from homelessness (although all three remain a 'Priority for Improvement'). This approach has resulted in almost half the number of households being accommodated in hotels and bed and breakfasts (now 120 households). Additionally, the Council has supported forty-five households to find permanent housing solutions during the same period.

While we still have a considerable number of households in temporary hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation, we continue to deliver the Rapid Rehousing Plan looking for more suitable cost-effective solutions. For example, recent acquisition of four properties under management agreement are already improving the model of suitable Temporary Emergency Accommodation. The new model provides advantages on different levels. They are rented on a flat annual rate instead of per room per night. The facilities have

allowed us to start fully utilising the contract that was awarded to The Salvation Army, allowing more intensive support to be delivered to those in need of temporary emergency accommodation. Furthermore, we have more control over the activities taking place within them - especially when dealing with anti-social behaviours; offering greater support than landlords could traditionally offer where people were often ejected resulting in a cyclical pattern of homelessness.

A 'Priority for Improvement' is the percentage of care leavers who experience homelessness during the year, which is also one of our Equality Objectives. During 2024 to 2025, 18 percent of care leavers experienced homelessness (18 of 99 young people). We are continually striving to improve our support and services to young people who have experienced care as they transition into adulthood. We are trying to address the shortage of supported accommodation by increasing capacity in accommodation for our 16- to 18-year-olds locally. We are also working with the Resettlement Team to identify move-on accommodation for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children who are living outside of Denbighshire where they are deemed to have no local connection to the area they are living in. In addition, regular meetings are held with colleagues in our Housing Team to try and better anticipate need to avoid homelessness from occurring in the first place.

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 Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) Government Local Authority Flex Scheme continues to help homeowners improve the energy efficiency of their homes. It is promoted and administered via Flintshire County Council for energy efficiency in private sector dwellings and has resulted in a total of 211 properties having ECO4 measures approved for Denbighshire between October 2024 and March 2025.

The percentage of existing and acquired Council housing stock achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of C or above for the financial year 2024 to 2025 has improved slightly from 46.1 percent last year to 47 percent and equates to 1,597 properties of 3,397 total.

By December, the project to 'Develop a tenant involvement framework for Denbighshire Housing' was completed. This framework is embedded within our day to day work and we will continue to improve our engagement with our customers and tenants. We have also developed an action plan following the results of the STAR survey (Welsh Government's

[Social Landlords' Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2024](#)), to increase tenant satisfaction with Denbighshire Housing. 85% of our tenants were satisfied making Denbighshire County Council the highest performing stock holding Council in Wales.

Deliver more homes to meet local need and demand

During 2024 to 2025, a total of 147 new homes were completed in Denbighshire and a total of 269 empty private properties brought back into use in Denbighshire (from 963) and is considered 'Excellent'.

There was a total of 15 additional Council homes provided for the 2024 to 2025 financial year (12 new build and 3 buy backs). Our plan to deliver a total of 80 new homes (16 per annum average, over 5 years, which will fluctuate from year to year) will be exceeded. With support from Welsh Government funding, we are on track to deliver 105 additional Council homes including 85 new homes.

The Edward Henry Street project has been completed, and tenants have moved into their new homes. The project, a partnership between Clwyd Alyn, Denbighshire County Council and the Welsh Government, has delivered three-bedroom affordable family homes, which form part of the Transforming Towns Scheme for the redevelopment of West End of Rhyl. These provide a more balanced mix of housing types and tenures in Rhyl West, which was previously dominated by small private rented sector flats. Their construction reduces carbon emissions through higher standards of energy efficiency and enhances biodiversity through the introduction of soft landscaping to an urban area.

The activity to 'Work with Rhyl Regeneration Programme Board to contribute to progressing the Rhyl Residential Strategy' arose from the previous incarnation of the Rhyl Regeneration Programme. With the new TAN15 and flood risk in the town being recently clarified, with the imminent appointment of a new Rhyl Regeneration Programme Manager, the Plan for Neighbourhoods (formerly Long Term Plan for Towns) funding and its associated Board, this activity has been closed until there is greater clarity on whether a residential strategy is required.

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 decreased from 1,842 in September to 1,566 in December, decreasing again to 1,359 people on the register by March 2025. This is a 26.22 percent reduction due to the proactive work of completing thorough periodic reviews of all applications, and performance is considered 'Good'. These periodic reviews have resulted in more accurate information being provided to support decisions regarding priority, housing need and suitability – leading to a more efficient allocations process performed by our partnered registered social landlords. However, the demand for social housing has grown over the last year meaning that the number of applications awaiting assessment has increased. Looking ahead, due to the demand, we believe that the number of live SARTH applications will increase as we work through the new applications.

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

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024	Quarter 1 2024 to 2025	Quarter 2 2024 to 2025	Quarter 3 2024 to 2025	Quarter 4 2024 to 2025
The number of people on the SARTH waiting list (live applications only) - Benchmarked Locally	1,706 Priority to Improve Worse	1,831 Priority to Improve Worse	1,842 Priority to Improve Worse	1,566 Priority to Improve Better	1,359 Good Better

Annual or Biennial Measures

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
The number of dwellings improved with a disabled facilities grant - Benchmarked Nationally (Equality Objective)	63 Priority to Improve Worse	123 Excellent Better
The percentage of households successfully prevented from homelessness (section 66) - Benchmarked Nationally (Equality Objective)	37.11% Priority to Improve Worse	44.44% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of households successfully relieved from homelessness (section 73) - Benchmarked Nationally (Equality Objective)	11.68% Priority to Improve Worse	16.81% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of households positively discharged from homelessness (section 75) - Benchmarked Nationally (Equality Objective)	54.18% Priority to Improve Better	64.85% Priority to Improve Better
The percentage of care leavers who experience homelessness during the year (As defined by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) - Benchmarked Locally (Equality Objective)	17% Priority to Improve Worse	18% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of Council properties compliant with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard - Benchmarked Nationally	100% Excellent Same	No longer reported ²
The percentage of existing and acquired Council housing stock achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of C or above - Benchmarked Locally	46.1% Acceptable Better	47% Acceptable Better
The additional supply of Council Homes provided - Benchmarked Locally	25 Good Better	15 Acceptable Worse
The total number of (new) homes completed during the year in Denbighshire - Benchmarked Locally	258	147

² This measure is outdated as we have moved onto a new Welsh Housing standard. We are currently in the process of preparing the first baseline data for the new standard, which has targets into the 2030s. Once data is available we will provide updates on any new measures / set of measures for the standard.

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
The number of empty private properties brought back into use in Denbighshire - Benchmarked Locally	150 Acceptable Worse	269 Excellent Better

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Mitigating statement
Deliver and monitor the Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan (Equality Objective)	On target	None
Llys Awelon (Phase 2) (Equality Objective)	On target	None
Continue to implement the Rapid Rehousing Model and the continued move away from Emergency Hotel / B&B style accommodation and focus on temporary accommodation (leased) (Equality Objective)	On target Same	None
Improving Energy Efficiency in Council Houses	Complete	This has been superseded to reflect the requirements of the new Welsh Health Quality Standard and associated Target Energy Pathway.
Devise and implement a plan to achieve SAP 75 housing by 2030 (including revising current baseline assessment methods and producing a costs analysis) along with a Targeted Energy Pathway	On Target	None
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) (Equality Objective)	Complete	This is being progressed as the project brief below.
Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) Site Selection (Equality Objective)	At Project Brief stage	None
Edward Henry Street	Complete	The project has been delivered, and tenants have moved into their new homes.

Title	Status	Mitigating statement
Denbighshire replacement Local Development Plan	Closed	Local Development Plan is monitored by various governance structures across the Council. Work on Supplementary Planning Guidance has started alongside work on candidate sites and policies progressing. This project business case is therefore no longer in use.
Additional Council Housing Developments (Equality Objective)	On Target Better	None
Work with Rhyl Regeneration Programme Board to contribute to progressing Rhyl Residential Strategy	Closed	This activity has been closed while we determine whether a new residential strategy is required.
Develop a tenant involvement framework for Denbighshire Housing	Complete	This is now embedded in our day-to-day work.
Signpost to Welsh Government's NEST Scheme	Complete	The communications campaign has been completed and included a direct mail out to 950 households in Denbighshire.
Promote and administer the Energy Company Obligation Scheme (ECO4) via Flintshire County Council – energy efficiency in private sector dwellings	On Target Same	None

A round up of news

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme. We have not listed all the items here. The Council's website contains a wealth of news, which can be found on our [news](#) page and filtered by a range of categories.

In October 2024, [Cabinet](#) approved the Council's charging policy for the second home / long term empty Council properties tax premium for 1 April 2025 and the timeline to review the policy for 2026 to 2027.

[The Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a report in December to examine the process for determining the recommendations on the level of weekly rent increases for community housing tenants. [Cabinet](#) approved the Denbighshire Housing annual rent increase, the adoption of the Housing Revenue Account Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2025 to 2026 and the Housing Stock Business Plan.

In February, the [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) considered the Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, and progress made to date. At that same meeting, the Committee reflected on the [process for disposal of a Council house](#), explaining the reasons behind the decision to dispose of a Council property within the housing portfolio (it was noted that such instances were very rare).

A prosperous Denbighshire

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

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. Some of the indicators we monitor—such as in-work and child poverty³ - remain poor. These reflect the challenging economic issues affecting the UK and beyond, as well as the need to better target economic development towards our communities. While these outcomes are largely beyond our direct control, they remain central to our ambition of achieving our [Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want](#), and therefore continue to be included in our performance framework.

The £20m grant from the UK Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods Programme has required the establishment of a new Rhyl Town Board to guide how that funding should be invested over the next ten years. The Board, which is separate from the Council and has an independent Chair, will now develop a ten-year vision and a three-year delivery plan. Funding and delivery will commence during 2026 to 2027, and this investment will contribute significantly to the regeneration of Rhyl.

The Former North Wales Hospital project remains 'At Risk' until all the necessary funding and planning agreements are in place. We are also resolving barriers across other projects being delivered across the county in support of this pledge. For example, delivery of the active travel element of the Levelling Up Fund – Clwyd South Programme has paused while site access issues are being resolved and Levelling Up Fund – Clwyd West and Vale of Clwyd programmes are facing issues due to budget and timescales. Positive progress has been made in the period with the Queen's Buildings. Additional funding has been

³ The Strategic Equality and Diversity Group is establishing a Task and Finish Group in summer 2025 to explore indicators and measures of child poverty.

secured, the fitout is progressing well, and traders are being brought on board to ensure we are able to open by the summer.

Case study: Shared Prosperity Fund

Since 2022, local authorities in North Wales have worked collectively, and with partners in their areas, to make the most of the opportunity provided by the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

All six local authorities were empowered to make funding decisions tailored to their individual needs whilst everyone's efforts were also aligned to facilitate collaboration and maximise the positive impact on the region.

A substantial investment of more than £25.6 million was committed to Denbighshire to be used across the SPF's three core priority areas and Multiply. The core priority areas consisted of:

- Communities and place: to enhance the vibrancy and appeal of local areas.
- Supporting local businesses: to foster growth, innovation, and sustainability within local enterprises.
- People and skills: to equip residents with the skills and opportunities for a thriving future.

Multiply was a national programme funded as part of SPF to help people improve their mathematics skills and confidence in using these skills in everyday life.

Over the course of SPF 3-year programme a total of 48 projects were supported through SPF to deliver in Denbighshire with funding of £24,741,017 committed. Of the 48 delivered projects, it was felt in Denbighshire that the money coming through SPF would have meaningful impact supporting local initiatives and our Denbighshire communities. A result of this was the establishment of Keyfunds and Grant scheme which provided opportunities to secure funding for supporting local businesses, community capacity, town centre improvement, people and skills and community & creative arts scheme. Through the Keyfunds SPF has delivered in Denbighshire, the flexible approach has shown how, by empowering local areas priorities can be efficiently and effectively addressed.

The funding package has delivered significant results for residents, businesses and communities, some notable achievements can be seen below.

- More than 836,000 square meters of public realm created or improved
- More than 800 enterprises in receipt of support
- More than 5000 local events and activities supported

- More than 950 organisations in receipt of support
- More than 170 people supported to gain employment
- More than 5,500 people supported to engage in life skills
- More than 49,000 trees planted
- More than 25,000 volunteering opportunities supported.

Through utilising any programme underspend within our existing projects it has resulted in a £0 return of Denbighshire's Core SPF money to UKGOV.

Develop an economic strategy

The Council wants to support economic recovery; capitalising on opportunities to enable residents to access decent employment and income and reduce inequality and poverty. In March, [Performance Scrutiny Committee](#) was presented with the draft new Economic Strategy and associated Action Plan. A multi-agency group, including businesses and external partners, have developed the Well-being Impact Assessment for the Strategy, which is due to be approved later this year.

Denbighshire's tourism figures known as STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) show that the total visitor numbers for Denbighshire in 2023 reached 6.39 million, an increase of almost 6 percent in comparison to 2022. The number of day visitors to the county for 2023 was 4.72 million, a 7.5 percent increase since 2022. The total economic impact of tourism was £736.05 million, a significant and welcome increase of 17.1 percent on the previous year - considered 'Excellent' progress. 2024 to 2025 figures will be published later this 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)

All relevant procurements contained community benefits and work is ongoing to align these with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. Community benefits were also included in all Denbighshire contracts over £25k and under £1m. Latest data for the percentage of spend with suppliers based within Denbighshire is not yet available due to the transition to our new T1 financial system.

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

Our previous Performance Update Report included the following Improvement Activity to "Consider performance relating to the percentage of damaged roads and pavements made

safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale), which has fallen short of the 95 percent target time for some years. The service continues to struggle with meeting the demands of the asset within the limited budgetary and staffing resources available, and a substantive discussion is needed about the prospects of improvement and what continuing poor performance is likely to mean given expected increased impacts of flooding, landslips and heat risks on road condition and community connectivity.” Our performance in relation to the percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale) worsened to 32.7 percent at end of March 2025. This was due to adverse weather conditions resulting in the Council having to prioritise winter maintenance (gritting) over allocating resource and capacity to carry out highway maintenance repairs. Performance remains a ‘Priority for Improvement’ and the Improvement Activity continues.

Work to deliver the most viable option to replace the Llannerch Bridge continues. The second stage of the project, i.e. the detailed design stage, has been completed, and some challenges and risks have been identified. The Council must now decide whether it is feasible and appropriate to move the project to the construction stage. A report will be presented to [Partnerships Scrutiny Committee](#) in April.

Properties’ access to full fibre has increased over last six months from 78.4 percent to 83.4 percent at the end of March 2025. Commensurate with this expansion is the reduction in the percentage of premises in the county that receive internet of less than 30 or 10 mega bites per second (Mbps). A very small number of premises therefore remain digitally excluded and we continue to [support communities](#) where there are issues.

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

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024	Quarter 1 2024 to 2025	Quarter 2 2024 to 2025	Quarter 3 2024 to 2025	Quarter 4 2024 to 2025
The percentage of working age people who are claiming Out of Work Benefits - Benchmarked Nationally	3.8% Priority to Improve Worse	3.6% Priority to Improve Better	3.8% Priority to Improve Worse	3.8% Priority to Improve Same	3.9% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of spend with suppliers based within Denbighshire – Benchmarked Locally	38.6% Good Worse	78% Excellent Better	36% Good Worse	28.3% Acceptable Worse	28.9% Acceptable Better
The cumulative percentage of Denbighshire contracts over £25k and under £1m containing community benefits – Benchmarked Locally	56.00% Good Better	100% Excellent Better	87% Excellent Worse	90% Excellent Better	100% Excellent 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) Benchmarked Locally	42.00% Priority to Improve Worse	27.60% Priority to Improve Worse	44.00% Priority to Improve Better	34.66% Priority to Improve Worse	32.70% Priority to Improve Worse
The percentage of premises in Denbighshire that receive less than 30Mbps – Count only	3.8%	3.7%	3.6%	2.8%	2.7%
The percentage of premises in Denbighshire that receive less than 10Mbps – Count only	2.4%	2.3%	2.3%	2.1%	2.1%

The percentage of properties within Denbighshire that have access to full fibre to their premises – Count only	73.4%	77.6%	78.4%	81.4%	83.4%
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Annual or Biennial Measures

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
The percentage of children in poverty in Denbighshire – Benchmarked Nationally (Equality Objective)	Data pending	Data pending
Average gross annual pay for people who live in the area and work full time (£) - Benchmarked Nationally	Data pending	Data pending
STEAM - Total Economic Impact of Tourism (£ million) - Benchmarked Locally	£736.05 Excellent Better	Data expected September 2025
Births of businesses per 10,000 of the population aged 16 to 64 - Benchmarked Nationally	52 Priority to Improve Worse	Data expected October 2025
Deaths of businesses per 10,000 of the population aged 16 to 64 - Benchmarked Nationally	54 Acceptable Better	Data expected October 2025

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Programme: Shared Prosperity Fund	On Target Same	None
Programme: Levelling Up Fund – Clwyd South	Experiencing Obstacles	Delivery of the Active Travel project remains problematic. There is

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
	Same	currently no confirmed solution to access the site to construct the active travel route. Alternative provision for access is being explored and costed.
Programme: Levelling Up Fund – Clwyd West	At Risk Worse	Risks in several areas are escalating with mitigation focussed on managing budgets and timescales.
Programme: Levelling Up Fund – Vale of Clwyd	At Risk Worse	Funding has yet to be confirmed beyond March 2026
Enabling and supporting North Wales Growth Deal projects in partnership with Ambition North Wales	Experiencing Obstacles Same	The Partnership Scrutiny Committee received the 2023 to 2024 annual report from Ambition North Wales Board in November 2024. We are strengthening the portfolio of projects.
Former North Wales Hospital	At Risk Same	The project remains 'At Risk' until all the necessary funding and planning agreements are in place.
Queen's Buildings Rhyl	Experiencing Obstacles Better	Legal documentation is nearing completion.
Coordinating Welsh Government Transforming Towns funding programme streams	On Target Same	None
Develop Town Centre Place Making Plans for Denbigh & Corwen	On Target Same	None
Develop the Council's new Economic Strategy (Welsh Language and Culture)	On Target Same	None
Victorian Post Office (Rhyl)	On Target Same	None
Progress the Rhyl Public Realm Strategy	Closed	The guidance is available for all project managers

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
		leading on public realm projects in Rhyl. Rhyl Public Realm Strategy no longer necessary.
Reconnect the top of Rhyl High Street with the beach (Rhyl promenade)	At Risk Same	The project is working at risk until UK Government confirm time extension.
Seeking to improve the appearance of poorly maintained Rhyl Town Centre properties	At Risk Same	The Planning Compliance Team resource is impacting on the ability to undertake all works.
Develop the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Sustainable Tourism Plan and work with local businesses to develop the actions	On Target Same	None
Deliver the Denbighshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2027	On Target Same	None
Raise awareness of the provision of Welsh training for adults who work in the business community (Welsh Language and Culture)	On Target Same	None
Complete feasibility report for move-on accommodation at St Asaph Business Park	On Target Same	None
Develop a Community Benefits Framework to align with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act	On Target Better	None
Aim to deliver the most viable option to replace the Llannerch Bridge	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	The second stage of the project, i.e. the detailed design stage, has been completed, and some challenges and risks have been identified. The Council must now decide whether it is feasible and appropriate to move the project to the construction stage.
Contribute to the development of the new Regional Transport Plan	On Target Same	None

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Work with partners on the proposed designation of a National Park in North East Wales (Welsh Language and Culture)	On Target Same	None

A round up of news

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this theme. We have not listed all the items here. The Council's website contains a wealth of news, which can be found on our [news](#) page and filtered by a range of categories.

We made a new addition to this year's [March for Business](#) month with a [webinar](#) for businesses about the Benefits of Bilingualism - exploring how using the Welsh Language can boost customer engagement, improve brand loyalty, and create a unique identity for businesses.

In March, [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) received a high-level update on the Rhyl Regeneration Programme and the Rhyl Waterfront Masterplan.

A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire

Measures: Good

Projects: On Target

Corporate Plan Update

[Ensure that the Council's social care offer is of a high standard](#)

The demand for children's services continues to increase as evidenced by the number of referrals and enquiries recorded on our Children and Family Support Gateway, which has seen a 14 percent increase from the previous year, to 5,743 in 2024 to 2025. 62 percent of new assessments for children were completed within statutory timeframes which remains a 'Priority for Improvement'. However, this does not mean that the assessments have not been completed. Due to staffing challenges, the team have decided to focus more time for building a rapport and relationship with the family, which leads to a better quality assessment, albeit one that may be documented after the statutory timeframe. Demand in adult's social care is also rising, as demonstrated by the number of contacts made to the Single Point of Access, which has increased by 12 percent this latest quarter, compared with the same period last year. Data also shows that more adult carers are seeking assistance from Social Services and the number of those receiving an assessment of need has increased by 21 percent to 447 in 2024 to 2025. However, as set out in the [Director of Social Services Annual Report](#), during the year we have seen the number of micro-providers increase alongside an increase in the number of people using direct payments to have more choice and control over their care and support needs.

In October, [Cabinet](#) approved the contract award for the national Connecting Care Programme. In November, [Partnerships Scrutiny Committee](#) acknowledged the importance of a corporate approach to adult safeguarding matters. During Wales Climate Week, the Council shared findings of its [Climate Resilience in Social Care](#) project. In January, a campaign highlighted the support provided by [foster care social workers](#). February's [Partnerships Scrutiny Committee](#) meeting included a discussion on the progress of the Royal Alexandra Hospital development. In March, positive findings from the inspection of Cysgod y Gaer were welcomed by the [Governance and Audit Committee](#). At the March meeting, [Cabinet](#) approved and adopted the Foster Friendly Policy, where in recognition of their role as foster carers, eligible employees are entitled to additional leave. The March meeting also saw [Cabinet](#) approve the setting of Care Home fees for 2025 to

2026. In other news, the Council announced its plans to expand [reablement](#) services, helping people to be live independently; [Social Work Week](#) was celebrated; Denbighshire's Community Resource Team were recognised for their [achievements in Social Work](#); and [young carers](#) called for more support.

Support the well-being, mental-health, and resilience of individuals within communities (Equality Objective)

In support of well-being, performance measures for Community Navigator and Library Services continue to show 'Excellent' results. Since the previous reporting period, there has been an increase in the percentage of schools in the county using the Public Health Wales Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Well-being Tool. There was also an improvement in the core score for children and young people who received school-based counselling, which is now at an 'Acceptable' 6 percent.

Case study: Nature for Health

Nature for Health is a **collaborative** programme that engages with individuals and communities to promote the role nature can play in improving health and well-being. It is an example of the way the Council is applying the five ways of working for the well-being of future generations. As part of a project in support of **long-term** health and well-being, residents in [Clawdd Poncen](#) were **involved** in identifying a series of improvements to their green spaces, including a community growing space and a facility where children could develop cycling skills. These improvements have now been completed successfully and will help to **prevent** health problems associated with a lack of opportunity to exercise. The project demonstrates an **integrated** approach to supporting other well-being goals including those that are social and cultural as well as the goals of our partner organisations such as the local health board. The programme has also provided intergenerational [family events](#) at Loggerheads Country Park and collaborated with partners in Health Services at [sustainable craft](#) events in rural areas.

In updates from committees, [Performance Scrutiny Committee](#) met in January and acknowledged the Library Service's performance against the National Standards, noting areas of good service such as the number of events provided in support of well-being. Examples include meet the [author events](#), an [Adults Reading Challenge](#) and [reminiscence sessions](#). In March, [County Council](#) voted in favour of Denbighshire Leisure Limited's proposal to purchase the company to safeguard the future of leisure services in

Denbighshire. At the time of writing, the investment opportunity in Denbighshire Leisure Ltd will now not be progressing as the investor has decided to withdraw the offer.

During the period we publicised topics such as accessing [memory support](#), the [Dementia Friendly Communities Scheme](#), [mindfulness](#), and raising [mental health awareness](#).

Promote personal and community well-being

The local authority has demonstrated its dedication to community engagement throughout 2024 to 2025, facilitating an estimated 24,962 hours of volunteering. With opportunities spanning adult social care, community resilience, countryside, and heritage, this effort highlights a strong commitment to supporting diverse needs. Volunteers have played an important part in the delivery of the Council's services for many years and are greatly valued.

The number of projects or groups supported by the local authority's Community Resilience Team has increased to an 'Excellent' 153 in the latest quarter, which is nearly three times the number recorded for the same period last year. Community engagement activities have also increased, to 76 in the last quarter, which is considered 'Excellent' performance and is double the number recorded for the same period the previous year. The Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project is progressing with successful collaboration between the two organisations. The formal agreement is yet to be finalised.

We publicised a range of news this period related to Welsh language, culture and heritage including [art exhibitions](#) at Loggerheads Country Park; Ruthin Gaol [family events](#) and [seasonal launch](#); [Plas Newydd](#) and [Nantclwyd y Dre](#) Christmas events; [Dee Valley guided walks](#) and a [Spring walk](#) at St Tysilio's Church. We also highlighted the importance of volunteer groups dedicating their time to [food-related community initiatives](#), encouraging them to apply for grants through Cogog, which is a multi-agency partnership who work collaboratively alongside local community groups to reduce food waste and food poverty in the county through developing sustainable food initiatives.

Foster community cohesion by ensuring people are protected from harm, abuse, and exploitation (Equality Objective)

According to North Wales Police records for January to March, the number of repeat victims of domestic abuse in Denbighshire has decreased by about 10 percent compared

to the same period last year (from 500 to 449). In November, the Council supported [White Ribbon Day](#), a national day to end violence towards women and girls.

There is a slight decrease in the number of repeat incidences of anti-social behaviour in Denbighshire, from 57 at this time last year, to 53 during January to March. Public security is expected to improve with the installation of [new CCTV cameras](#).

The percentage of Denbighshire young people who reoffended within a two-year period after receiving a Court Disposal was 59 percent (17 individuals out of a cohort of 29). For young people who received an Out-of-Court Disposal, the rate of reoffending was much lower, at 25 percent (20 out of 81 individuals in a two-year cohort reoffended). The percentage of young people in Denbighshire reached by Youth Services has decreased but is still considered 'Good'. The Community Safety Partnership continues to make positive progress against its Action Plan.

Case study: New Prestatyn Police Station

Denbighshire County Council has worked closely with partners in North Wales Police to secure a [new community police station](#) in the centre of Prestatyn. The new station, which is based at Llys Llên, Denbighshire Housing's latest development on Nant Hall Road, will be the new base for response officers and the Neighbourhood Policing Team in Prestatyn. Llys Llên stands on the site of the old library which has been comprehensively re-developed by Denbighshire Housing to provide new energy efficient apartments for over 55s. The project has addressed concerns among the community about policing as well as helping towards meeting Prestatyn's housing needs.

[Continue to support and resettle refugees through the UK Global Resettlement Scheme, in support of Wales's declaration to be a Nation of Sanctuary \(Equality Objective\)](#)

Denbighshire continues to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, ten of whom were looked after by the Council between October and December, and six between January and March. The number of families resettled in Denbighshire has increased from 50 in 2023 to 2024 to 70 for the year 2024 to 2025.

Case study: Illia's story, helping people in new surroundings

[A Ukrainian teenager who fled the war has helped many families settle in Denbighshire.](#)

Illia arrived in the county in August 2022 with his mother and younger brother. At 17 years of age, he helped his family go through initial settlement in Denbighshire and was one of the first guests under Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme introduced by Welsh Government. He soon became one of the leading Ukrainian volunteers and started assisting Denbighshire County Council's Resettlement Team with interpretation support during meetings with other families. By the winter of 2022, as Illia turned eighteen, he took on an official role as an interpreter within the Resettlement Team. A few months later, he completed a Work Start scheme placement with Working Denbighshire and secured the role of Employment caseworker. There, Illia helped support vulnerable members of the local community in overcoming barriers to employment. Illia got a new job in the summer of 2023, and transferred back to the Resettlement Team as a resettlement caseworker. In his new role, he helped many Ukrainian families to secure long-term accommodation across Denbighshire and the wider UK and was providing one-to-one support and facilitating their successful integration in the community. In September 2024, he applied for an Integration Officer post within the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames in London, and after successfully completing the application process and interview, Illia received a job offer and moved to London in November 2024. Speaking about his journey, Illia said: "Uncertainty on what future holds for you can be exhausting, but I think it worked really well for me and my family. Since I came to Denbighshire, I have met lots of wonderful people and learnt many new things. I am deeply grateful to all British people for supporting Ukraine and its people when we needed it so much."

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

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024	Quarter 1 2024 to 2025	Quarter 2 2024 to 2025	Quarter 3 2024 to 2025	Quarter 4 2024 to 2025
The percentage of new assessments completed for children during the year that were completed within statutory timescales - Benchmarked Locally	79% Acceptable Better	58% Priority to Improve Worse	83% Acceptable Better	70% Priority to Improve Worse	62% Priority to Improve Worse
Number of children on the child protection register – Count Only	91	85	71	81	64
The number of children looked after in Denbighshire – Count Only	210	207	196	196	184
The number of children and young people who are currently in need of a placement where there is no placement secured – Count Only	Data not available	17	11	8	8
The percentage of safeguarding enquiries from adults completed within 7 working days from the receipt of the reported alleged abuse - Benchmarked Locally	98% Excellent Better	98% Excellent Same	97% Excellent Worse	99% Excellent Better	99% Excellent Same
The number of Single Point of Access contacts for information, advice and assistance – Count Only	4,259	4,936	5,075	5,204	4,773

Title	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024	Quarter 1 2024 to 2025	Quarter 2 2024 to 2025	Quarter 3 2024 to 2025	Quarter 4 2024 to 2025
The percentage of citizens receiving information, advice and assistance from Talking Points who did not need to be referred into Adult Social Care - Benchmarked Locally	92% Excellent Worse	97% Excellent Better	99% Excellent Better	97% Excellent Worse	94% Excellent Worse
The percentage of schools in the county using the Public Health Wales Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Well-being Tool – Benchmarked Locally	67% Acceptable Better	67% Acceptable Same	67% Acceptable Same	67% Acceptable Same	69% Acceptable Better
The number of projects or groups supported by the Community Resilience Team - Benchmarked Locally	53 Acceptable Worse	87 Excellent Better	70 Good Worse	95 Excellent Better	153 Excellent Better
The cumulative number of community engagement activities – Benchmarked Locally	38 Excellent Better	46 Excellent Better	55 Excellent Better	62 Excellent Better	76 Excellent Better
The cumulative number of repeat victims of Domestic Abuse reported including non-crime occurrences (3 or more in 12 months) - Count Only (Equality Objective)	500	128	207	369	449
Of the four priority areas in the Community Safety Partnership plan, the number that have a ROYG status of yellow or green –	4 Excellent Same	4 Excellent Same	4 Excellent Same	4 Excellent Same	4 Excellent Same

Title	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024	Quarter 1 2024 to 2025	Quarter 2 2024 to 2025	Quarter 3 2024 to 2025	Quarter 4 2024 to 2025
Benchmarked Locally					
Number of repeat locations of anti-social behaviour in Denbighshire – Benchmarked Locally	57 Good Worse	90 Acceptable Worse	66 Good Better	50 Excellent Better	53 Good Worse
The percentage of young people in Denbighshire reached by Youth Services – Benchmarked Locally	5% Priority to Improve Better	2% Priority to Improve Worse	2% Priority to Improve Same	29% Excellent Better	14% Good Worse
The number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) looked after by Denbighshire – Count Only	17	15	14	10	6

Annual or Biennial Measures

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
The number of referrals and enquiries recorded on Children and Family Support Gateway - Count Only	5,056	5,743
The number of contacts by adult carers received by statutory Social Services during the year where advice or assistance was provided - Count Only	1,094	1,123
The total number of carers needs assessments for adults undertaken during the year (cumulative) – Count Only (Equality Objective)	370	447
The number of people receiving reablement support from Adult Social Care – Baseline Year	Data pending	183

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
The percentage of adults who say their library is an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place – Benchmarked Locally	93% Excellent Same	93% Excellent Same
The percentage reach of Summer Reading Challenge in the primary age population (against Welsh average and Wales rank) - Benchmarked Nationally	23% Good Better	13% Acceptable Worse
The average improvement in young people's core score for children and young people who received school based counselling – Benchmarked Locally	-49% Priority to Improve Worse	6% Acceptable Better
The estimated number of volunteer hours supporting community resilience and development activity (including Edge of care volunteering and Countryside Services volunteering) – Baseline Year	Data not available	24,962
Percentage of Denbighshire young people who reoffended within a two-year period after receiving a Court disposal - Count Only	Data is biennial and available in 2025	59%
The cumulative number of families resettled within Denbighshire – Count Only (Equality Objective)	50	70

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Monitor and implement requirements of Foster Wales and monitor effectiveness of national approach.	On Target Same	None
Implement Post 16 of Additional Learning Needs work	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Further information is awaited from Welsh Government to bring clarity to some aspects of this work.

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Develop an in-county residential short breaks and emergency care provision for children with complex needs and disabilities within Denbighshire	On Target Same	None
Implement and embed the Autism Code of Practice requirements at local authority level	Experiencing Obstacles Same	The lead role has now come to an end and there is work to designate responsibilities across services.
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	None
Ysgol Tir Morfa - Hydrotherapy pool	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	This is delayed due to the availability of funding and design work required to mitigate surface water drainage issues.
Work with local unpaid carers to identify the respite opportunities they need, and how barriers are overcome to enable this	On Target Same	None
Work towards becoming an age-friendly Denbighshire, with World Health Organisation, in partnership with Ageing Well in Denbighshire multi-agency group	On Target Same	None
Work in partnership regionally to contribute to the embedding of the All Wales Dementia Pathway of Standards	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	Certain aspects of this work have been delayed until some regional recording systems are replaced.
Progress towards digitalisation of telecare services before the 2025 deadline for ceasing of analogue telephone services	On Target Same	None
Bruton Park, Rhyl (working with Bruton Park residents to maximise community well-being)	On Target Same	None

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Develop Croeso Cynnes hubs throughout the County	On Target Better	None
Develop and deliver the county wide Food Strategy and Food Partnership Network (including social supermarket project – Cogog) around Denbighshire	On Target Same	None
Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project	Experiencing Obstacles Better	Delivery of the project is behind schedule and the formal agreement is yet to be completed.

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)

The number of children taking part in the childcare offer across Denbighshire has seen a slight increase between January to March to 781, an improvement compared with the same period the previous year. There is also a positive trend in the percentage of parents participating in Families First⁴ with improved ability to support their child's learning and development needs (although the participant numbers are lower this period (3) compared with the same period last year (27)).

Out of 55 schools, the number considered by Estyn to be of concern, following inspection, has now reduced to three. The percentage of pupils responding positively (using Pupil Attitudes to Self and School Survey) in terms of their feelings about school has improved during 2024 to 2025 to 84 percent, up from 81 percent last year, and is considered 'Good'. Averaged across all schools in Denbighshire, we have reported the Capped 9 points score⁵ of Year 11 pupils' best results. The most recent figure available is for the academic year running between September 2023 and July 2024. At 330.4, this is a 'Priority for Improvement' and falls below the Wales average of 352.1. Results for the next academic year will become available in August 2025.

Good attendance supports learning, and schools nationwide are being encouraged to proactively manage issues around non-attendance. It is encouraging to see percentages for Denbighshire maintained schools improve, from 88.1 percent for the academic year 2022 to 2023 to 88.3 percent for 2023 to 2024. However, when compared nationally, Denbighshire's average percentage falls below the Wales average of 89 percent. The

⁴ The Families First Programme provides a range of services to support families in need of support

⁵ The Capped 9 points score is a measure used in Wales that adds up a pupil's nine best examination results, including specific subjects like English or Welsh, Mathematics, and Science GCSEs

Education and Children's Services continue to work closely with schools to ensure that procedures around absence are robust.

Between October and March, there were a number of relevant updates from various committees and news articles. In January, the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) received a report providing information on the process and outcome of the Estyn Local Authority Visit October 2024. [Performance Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a confidential report detailing the progress made to date in delivering the Christ the Word Catholic School post inspection action plan and the joint school support plan. In March, [Cabinet](#) approved ending the regional school improvement service and noted the ongoing work in developing the new model for the school improvement service. Other news included updates on the expansion of [Flying Start in the north](#) and [south](#) of the county; access to free [educational resources](#); and Estyn's praise for Denbighshire's [Additional Learning Needs support](#).

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 continued to progress its long-term plans for delivering this pledge. Progress was made in delivering improvements to [Ysgol Dewi Sant](#), and [refurbishments to Science Laboratories](#) at Denbigh High School and Ysgol Dinas Brân. Unfortunately, delays in the progression of certain projects within the Modernising Education Programme meant that this stream of work remained 'At Risk.'

Case study: High Quality Play Areas

The playground in Cae Ddol, Ruthin, has been redeveloped as an [accessible play area](#), with newly installed environmentally friendly equipment, providing a safe space for children with differing physical abilities and neurodiversity to play comfortably. The Council consulted with local residents to create a design that would be inclusive, accessible and exciting. The result is a medieval castle themed play area in keeping with the heritage of the region. The [Drift Park Play Area](#) in Rhyl will be reinstated in 2025, after community input has helped shape the design into an Ocean Themed Park. These projects emphasise the vital role of play in children's development, and will help to support more children to access and enjoy public play spaces. Projects such as this also support our local economy.

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)

It is encouraging to see an improvement in the percentage of Year 11 Leavers from schools known Not to be in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), at the preceding August in Denbighshire. The figure has decreased and is now at an 'Acceptable' 2.1 percent, which is below the Welsh average. The lower the figure the better performance is considered to be. For care leavers, (in categories 2, 3 and 4) who have completed at least three consecutive months of employment, education or training, performance has declined: falling from 75 to 60 percent (and equates to 59 out of 99 young people). During the period, we reported that Working Denbighshire, in collaboration with Denbighshire Youth Services, Education Services and the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, launched a [Summer Transition Programme](#) to support Year 11 leavers moving into further education. In support of lifelong learning, libraries launched the '[25 books in 2025](#)' challenge.

Our last Performance Update Report identified an improvement action to consider the impact of reduced capacity with a smaller workforce and ceased projects such as Llwybrau, and how these will impact on our ability to deliver the Corporate Plan and outcomes. This forms part of Tranche Review discussions, and in respect of Llwybrau in particular, we are having regular meetings with Grwp Llandrillo Menai at different levels and with secondary schools and officers.

Case Study: Resident achieves dream role while battling medical challenges

Working Denbighshire is part funded through the Welsh Government Communities for Work Plus Programme, which supports those most disadvantaged in the labour market to overcome the barriers preventing them from gaining employment. Emily, a Denbighshire resident, has overcome personal and professional barriers and secured a Teaching Assistant Work Start placement at Ysgol Fron Goch. She said "Being given the opportunity to work at Ysgol Fron Goch after finishing my A levels in high school has been life-changing for me. Working Denbighshire have helped me to improve my interview skills, build my confidence and widen my area of job searches, all of which I am extremely grateful for. This opportunity has shown me that with the right support, anything is possible." Emily's story can be read [here](#).

Improving the well-being of children from low income and disadvantaged families (Equality Objective)

Flying Start is a programme aimed at providing enhanced services to families with young children in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. The uptake of fully funded part-time Flying Start childcare in Denbighshire remains 'Excellent' and the proportion of carers of children benefiting from Flying Start's targeted Speech, Language, and Communication (SLC) intervention who have gained confidence in supporting SLC development continues to be rated as 'Good'.

Eligibility for free school meals serves as a valuable indicator of child poverty. At 22 percent, the rate in Denbighshire is higher than the national average for 2023 to 2024 (19 percent). Nationally, it has been noted that there is an attainment gap between pupils eligible and ineligible for free school meals. The difference in Denbighshire's Capped 9 points scores for the two groups in 2023 to 2024 was 82.3 points, which means the gap has reduced since the previous year (93.6 points in 2022 to 2023). There is also a difference between fixed term school exclusion rates for the two groups at both the national and Denbighshire levels. Data shows the rate per 1,000 pupils of fixed term exclusions for Denbighshire pupils eligible for free school meals was 415 in 2023 to 2024, more than three times the figure for ineligible pupils (126). We will continue to track these data trends in future reports. The Council has developed a comprehensive support package to aid schools in assisting vulnerable learners, including those receiving free school meals and students with additional learning needs. This initiative focuses on enhancing data monitoring systems for various learner groups, strengthening behaviour support, and fostering family engagement.

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

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024	Quarter 1 2024 to 2025	Quarter 2 2024 to 2025	Quarter 3 2024 to 2025	Quarter 4 2024 to 2025
The percentage of Families First participant parents with improved ability to support their child's learning and development needs – Benchmarked Locally	78% Good	100% Excellent Better	100% Excellent Same	100% Excellent Same	100% Excellent Same
The percentage take-up of fully funded Flying Start (antenatal-4 years old) 12.5 hours childcare offers – Benchmarked Locally (Equality Objective)	87% Excellent	Data not available	84% Good Worse	91% Excellent Better	85% Excellent Worse
The percentage of carers of children accessing Flying Start targeted Speech Language and Communication (SLC) intervention who show an improvement in confidence in supporting SLC development – Benchmarked Locally (Equality Objective)	Data not available	Data not available	100% Excellent	78% Good Worse	78% Good Same
The number of children taking part in the childcare offer – Benchmarked Locally	772 Excellent Better	822 Excellent Better	642 Good Worse	646 Good Better	781 Excellent Better
The number of schools in either Estyn Review, Significant Improvement or Special Measures – Benchmarked Locally	3 Acceptable Worse	4 Acceptable Worse	4 Acceptable Same	4 Acceptable Same	3 Acceptable Better

Annual or Biennial Measures

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
The percentage of pupils (using Pupil Attitudes to Self and School - PASS) who respond positively against pupils' feelings about school – Benchmarked Locally	81% Good Worse	84% Good Better
The percentage attendance of pupils aged 5-15 in maintained schools– Benchmarked Nationally	88.3% Priority to Improve Better	Data expected September 2025
The Capped 9 score of Year 11 pupils' best nine results from the qualifications available in Wales – Benchmarked Nationally	330.4 Priority to Improve Worse	Data expected September 2025
The Capped 9 score of Year 11 pupils' (eligible for free school meals) best nine results from the qualifications available in Wales – Benchmarked Nationally (Equality Objective)	276.2 Priority to Improve Same	Data expected September 2025
The percentage of reception pupils receiving Welsh medium education - Count Only (Welsh Language and Culture)	28.4%	28.5%
The percentage of year 6 learners in Welsh-medium schools who go to a Welsh-medium stream in secondary school – Count Only (Welsh Language and Culture)	95.1%	85.3%
The number of schools providing education through suitability and condition categories C and D – Benchmarked Locally	27 Excellent Same	28 Good Worse
The percentage of Year 11 Leavers from schools known Not to be in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), at the preceding 31 August in Denbighshire – Benchmarked Nationally (Equality Objective)	2.4% Priority to Improve Worse	2.1% Acceptable Better

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
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 collection year – Benchmarked Locally	75% Excellent Better	60% Good Worse
School exclusion rate (fixed term) per 1,000 pupils – Baseline Year	185	Data expected January 2026
School exclusion rate (fixed term) per 1,000 for pupils eligible for Free School Meals – Baseline Year (Equality Objective)	415	Data expected January 2026
The percentage of school pupils assessed as eligible for Free School Meals (Denbighshire) – Count Only (Equality Objective)	22%	Data pending

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Flying Start Expansion (Equality Objective)	On Target Same	None
Implement School Improvement Guidance: Framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability	Experiencing Obstacles Same	The transition from regional to a sub-regional approach is ongoing and will have a direct impact on this area of work.
Support the regional project on Emotional Health, Well-being and Resilience Framework, which will provide resources for parents	On Target Same	None
Support schools in developing digital competency through educational leadership of the EdTech project	On Target Better	None
Implement the WESP to support 1 million speakers by 2050 (Welsh Language and Culture)	On Target Same	None

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
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	None
Implement requirements of the of ALN Reform Act within Education and Children's Services to ensure compliance (Equality Objective)	On Target Same	None
Modernising Education Programme	At Risk Same	Delays continue in the progression of Sustainable Communities for Learning projects.
Community Focussed Schools: Prestatyn High Pilot	On Target Same	None
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	None
Through our Community Benefits Policy, secure business led strategy workshops for the benefit of residents seeking to upskill	Experiencing obstacles Same	Other options are being explored due to issues with contractor commitment.
Universal Free School Meals for all Primary School Pupils (Equality Objective)	On Target Same	None
Enhance the School Holiday Enrichment Programme to support children to eat well (Equality Objective)	On Target Same	None
Reducing the impact of poverty on Education Attainment, including implementing the Price of Poverty project (Equality Objective)	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	A number of capital projects are being progressed via the Community Focused Schools projects. Another project is under review.

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](#)

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. Annual data for the year 2024 to 2025 will be available in late summer 2025.

Our 2023 to 2024 carbon emissions data was reported to Welsh Government as part of annual public sector reporting. The Council's Net Carbon Zero position as at 31 March 2024 was 12,653 tonnes, which, by 2030, needs to be zero tonnes. The pace of reductions in carbon emissions indicates that meeting the 2030 goal of net zero remains a significant challenge. The financial pressures all local authorities are facing now and in the coming years will continue to impact on that pace, yet not delivering on the targets and strategy will incur high costs into the future. With this in mind, we have maintained our Climate and Ecological Improvement ambition and have not adjusted our targets - despite their challenge.

Reducing carbon emissions is a significant challenge for all public bodies. Recent figures published by the Welsh Government Energy Service show that Denbighshire County Council has the second highest figure in Wales for the proportion of zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) as a percentage of their fleet, at 19.2 percent.

The new activity around climate risk resilience has seen the three North Wales Public Service Boards committing to work together and with regional partners to develop a regional Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). An initial workshop will be held in April with a view to developing a plan for the CCRA to be progressed.

Case study: Bringing nature into schools and engaging with the students

Throughout the year 2024 to 2025 the Council's Biodiversity Team continued to help [educate young people](#) about what they can do themselves to protect and improve nature on their own doorstep. In October, they visited Ysgol Pen Barras and Rhos Street School to talk to the pupils about the importance of wildflowers for our pollinators and local wildlife; how they benefit both nature and humans alike; and the need to create more wildflower meadows to replace the habitat we've lost and help nature recovery. New meadows were planted on the school sites with the children using native wildflower plants grown at the Woodland Skills Centre. The Biodiversity Officer said: "We had a great day planting with the children from both schools. They were very enthusiastic to get digging and do their bit to help nature thrive on their school grounds. Every area where nature is allowed to thrive helps to tackle the nature emergency, especially wildflower meadows – which support a wide range and abundance of wildlife. These areas will offer many opportunities for students to learn about and interact with nature for years to come."

Case study: Creating a new Nature Reserve – Staff Dig Deep

The Council established a local provenance Council Tree Nursery on the Green Gates site in St. Asaph in 2022. The project is supported by a strong volunteer community, active in helping us to achieve our aim to produce 5,000 native wildflower plants a year alongside 5,000 native trees.

At the end of last year, development began to create a nature reserve at the site, which will eventually grow into a 70-acre area supporting local biodiversity and contribute to our nature recovery goal in protecting and restoring local nature habitats.

During March 2025, staff supported the work by planting 2,150 native trees that had been grown at the Tree Nursery on the site. Species included alder, birch, willow, oak, elm, elder and the rare wild service tree. 66 staff from Corporate Support Services: Performance, Digital and Assets attended volunteer tree planting sessions. Staff, upon being asked to describe what they thought of the tree planting day said it was "Refreshing, Enjoyable, Rewarding and Worthwhile" and enhanced a feeling of teamwork.

Improve recycling rates and reduce waste

In June 2024, we introduced a new recycling system to help us meet Welsh Government's 70 percent recycling target, which has been set for all local authorities in Wales. The new household waste collection model is a specific project within this Greener theme because it will help us to increase the quantity and quality of recycling collected from households and increase opportunities for "closed loop recycling" and income generation⁶. Through adoption of low carbon technologies at the new Waste Transfer Station and inclusion of infrastructure for Zero and Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, the aim is to minimise the impact of the service in support of the wider corporate goal to become net zero by 2030. The project also supports the Prosperous theme, which aims to support economic recovery; capitalising on opportunities to enable residents to access decent employment and income. The project has led to the creation of additional jobs within the waste service. In addition, the building of the new depot enabled the creation and protection of many local private sector jobs. We worked with four important local businesses at the Colomendy Business Park, Denbigh, as part of the development of the new Depot. This allowed them to unlock and develop new employment land to enable those four businesses to remain in Denbigh and expand their operations.

Unfortunately, it quickly became apparent at the start of the roll out of the new service that some of the assumptions underpinning operations were flawed. The main issue being some of the daily recycling rounds had been designed with too many properties requiring collection. While many residents experienced little to no problems, several rounds per day were not completing, resulting in large and unacceptable numbers of missed collections. The months that followed were difficult – with officers across the Council stepping out of their day jobs to support the service to get back on track, and due to pressures such as a rapid increase in the volume of customer service calls relating to the new service. Elected members were also placed under pressure while they supported residents to resolve missed collections and respond to queries.

To address the issues which had emerged and to ensure the new system worked [Cabinet](#), in October, approved the allocation of additional resources to ensure the new weekly trollibocs recycling service and associated waste collection functions could operate as

⁶ Closed loop recycling is a process where waste materials are collected, recycled, and then used to create new products of the same type as the original material.

envisaged. This proposal was then scrutinised by [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) with a further update on the progress made to date in delivering the revised service following the additional resources provided was presented to [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) in February 2025. Closing the discussion the Chair referred to the recommendations in the report and did not feel that the Committee were able to agree them. Instead, there was a proposal that a report be brought back to the Committee in May 2025, which should include figures on the percentage of recycling processed and Welsh Government funding provided.

At the end of January, [Performance Scrutiny Committee](#) received a paper on the proposed arrangements for undertaking a Review of the Roll-Out of the New Waste and Recycling Service. The objective of the review being to identify any shortfalls in the planning, implementation, and rollout, of the new Service with a view to learning lessons that would support the planning of future service changes or large transformation projects. The report recommended that a Task and Finish group be established working to a maximum timescale of 12 months to conclude its work. The Group's first task would be to map out a clear plan and timetable.

By February 2025, the Remodelling Waste Service Operations project status improved from being 'At Risk' to 'Experiencing Obstacles' as new rounds were rolled out and issues continued to be addressed and resolved. Reputationally, the problems associated with roll out have been, and continue to be, damaging for the Council.

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

In line with the aim to mitigate and cope with the impacts of climate change by delivering schemes to reduce coastal and in-land flood risk, both the Prestatyn Central and Rhyl Central Coastal Defence Improvement Schemes remained 'On Target'.

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

Working closely with the Corporate Joint Committee on the Regional Transport Plan is now the Council's priority going forward. The draft Regional Transport Plan is currently under consultation, and as part of the consultation [Partnerships Scrutiny Committee's](#) views were sought on its content. The document sets out strategic policies and interventions for the next five years, covering all modes of transport - including rail, road,

bus, walking, and cycling - and aims to provide better travel options, improve digital connectivity, and reduce environmental impacts. The consultation represents the collective efforts and expertise of the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee, its Transport Sub-Committee and partners, including local authorities, Transport for Wales and the Welsh Government. The plan aims to shape transport policy and investment up to 2030, replacing local transport plans and aligning with national priorities. It is seen as essential to ensure that North Wales meets future economic challenges, supports sustainable travel, and contributes to climate goals. The consultation will run until mid-April 2025. In terms of overall governance, Council, in [January](#), agreed to establish the North Wales Corporate Joint Committee Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

A number of projects looking at improving infrastructure in the county have recently been completed by Streetscene Services. The projects were funded by the UK Government's [Shared Prosperity Fund](#) and worked on improving infrastructure at green spaces across Denbighshire. The restoration of these areas will preserve their longevity and ensure their future use for years to come.

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 economic development.

Annual Measures

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Net Carbon Zero - Total carbon tonnage emitted and absorbed by the Council (excluding supply chains) – Benchmarked Locally	12,653 Priority to Improve Worse	Data expected September 2025
The percentage of DCC owned and operated land in highest categories of species richness – Benchmarked Locally	42.50% Acceptable Better	Data expected September 2025
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through fleet – Benchmarked Locally	2,166 Acceptable	Data expected September 2025

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
	Better	
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through buildings - Benchmarked Locally	9,502 Priority to Improve Worse	Data expected September 2025
Total carbon tonnage emitted (Corporately) through supply chains - Benchmarked Locally	50,233 Priority to Improve Worse	Data expected September 2025
The percentage of municipal waste reused, recycled or composted - Benchmarked Nationally	67.59% Excellent Better	National data expected September 2025

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Project Update

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Programme: Climate and Ecological Change Programme 2021 – 2030	Experiencing Obstacles Same	This is due to delays in some projects and their delivery not being at the pace required to meet our ambition.
Deliver the annual programme of Ash Dieback work	Complete	The annual programme of works is now business as usual
Remodelling Waste Service Operations	Experiencing Obstacles Better	Issues associated with the new Service continue to be resolved.
Reduce plastics in schools and promote recycling in relation to the new waste model	On Target Same	None
Develop and implement a new Denbighshire Flood Risk Management Strategy for the county	On Target Same	None
Prestatyn Central Coastal Defence Improvement Scheme	On Target Same	None

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Rhyl Central Coastal Defence Improvement Scheme	On Target Same	None
Work alongside Transport for Wales to help prepare Denbighshire for the forthcoming franchising of Bus Services. This will include reviewing existing Bus infrastructure i.e.. stops and stations	On Target Same	None
Work with Conwy and Denbighshire Public Service Board to develop and assess our organisation's climate risk resilience	On Target Same	None

A round up of news

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".

A well-run, high performing Council

Measures: Good

Projects: Experiencing Obstacles

Corporate Plan Update

[Embed a positive “one Council” culture \(Equality Objective\)](#)

In October, the Well-run High Performing Council Board held a meeting with the theme of the emerging transformation agenda and how our culture can enable transformation; bringing staff along on that journey and to ensure our values and principles are reflected in the customer experience. The Board also reviewed the performance management framework for the theme settling on a more focussed set of nine indicators. A task and finish group consisting of officers, elected members and partners has progressed ideas about how the Council could build stronger relationships with and improve its engagement, support and collaboration with communities and partners, including City, Town and Community Councils (CTCCs). An action plan was considered by the Board in April and the Senior Leadership Team will be deciding what actions can be undertaken in line with current resources. Positively, a new dedicated coordination and liaison post for CTCCs has been filled on a two-year fixed term basis. The purpose of the post is to facilitate better working relationships between the Council and CTCCs to develop the role as a ‘proof of concept’. It is unlikely that the role will create cashable benefits but will create efficiencies (e.g. by providing a single point of contact for all CTCCs) and help achieve better outcomes for residents. The role will be evaluated to evidence value for money to determine its future.

A full update on our financial management is available in the [Financial Planning](#) section of this report. The key headlines are that we continue to deliver a balanced budget, we have sustained Council Reserves at £5,531,000 (the level considered to be prudent to cover unforeseen financial pressures), and 89% of forecast savings for the year have been achieved.

Concerted efforts over the period of this Corporate Plan so far are paying off, with the percentage of staff who have had at least one or three one-to-ones in the last 12 months increasing from 58 percent in March 2023 to 74 percent by March 2025. Notwithstanding

this improvement, performance is still considered a 'Priority for Improvement' and has remained fairly static over the last four periods.

Sickness levels corporately have decreased slightly to around 9 working days / shifts per full time equivalent. Our sickness performance has generally compared favourably to other local authorities in Wales. However, this has not been reflected previously in these reports because our thresholds were excessively ambitious - comparing absence across all sectors (including the private sector where terms and conditions vary significantly) not just the public sector. Because of this our thresholds were inaccurately showing sickness absence as a 'Priority for Improvement', giving a distorted impression. We are now using 2023 to 2024 data for sickness absence across all Welsh local authorities from Data Cymru. This data has been used to revise our benchmarked thresholds, which have been applied from April 2024. Our performance compares extremely well to other local authorities in Wales and this is now accurately reflected in this report, and is considered 'Excellent'. For example, average sickness absence for all Welsh local authorities was 11.7; with one local authority losing as many as 17 days per year to sickness absence on average per FTE (the lowest was 9.2 days).

We have also incorporated three key indicators from our Staff Survey into the performance management framework for this theme. These temperature test 'staff mood' and provide additional contextual information to sickness absence and completion of one-to-ones. While based on a 48.03 percent response rate⁷ - with a likely greater proportion of desk-based staff responding - these show that there is generally a strong awareness of our principles and values, that staff feel the Council is proactive around supporting the use of Welsh and that staff feel proud to work for the Denbighshire County Council.

[Governance and Audit Committee](#) met in November to review an annual report about complaints in Denbighshire. During 2023 and 2024, 99 percent of Stage 1 complaints and 94 percent of Stage 2 complaints were dealt with on time. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, [in its annual letter to the Council](#), said that of the total 1,108 complaints made to her about local authorities, the Ombudsman received 30 complaints about Denbighshire County Council in 2023 to 2024 and closed 32 (some complaints were

⁷ The Staff Survey 2024 achieved 1,178 responses from a total of 2,439 staff (excluding teaching staff, casual and relief staff). The response rate overall was 48.3%. The response rate by Service varied, with the weakest response rate from staff in the Highways and Environmental Service (with a greater proportion of front-line staff).

carried over from the previous year). The Governance and Audit Committee was keen to look at patterns and trends, and alongside feedback following the October Tranche Review and from elected members generally about a desire to see an increase in the use of benchmarking data, we have included in our refined set of indicators an indicator from the Ombudsman about the number of complaints per 1,000 residents. We are awaiting 2024 to 2025 data from the Ombudsman. Locally from our own data, we can see the increase in the number of complaints as a result of the new waste and recycling service roll out, which impacted on our ability to respond to external stage 1 and 2 complaints within corporate/statutory timescales.

- At the peak of the problems associated with the waste rollout (July to September), 89 percent of external stage 1 and 2 complaints were responded to within corporate/statutory timescales at a time when the number of complaints had increased significantly (251 of 281 complaints were responded to in timescale) – down from 100 percent between April to June.
- Between October and December 71 percent of external stage 1 and 2 complaints were responded to within timescales (33 of 46 complaints in timescale).
- Between January to March 2025, performance deteriorated to 67 percent (116 of 171 complaints in timescale).

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)

Our [Public Sector Duty Reports](#) are published every year as part of our duties under the Equality Act 2010. Our aim is to demonstrate that as a public organisation we consider how we can positively contribute to a fairer Wales through advancing equality and diversity in our day-to-day activities. Using our recruitment data, we can spot any differences in the process and whether or not people with protected characteristics are as likely to be appointed as those without protected characteristics. Overall, 12 percent of new appointees during 2023 to 2024 were 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.⁸ This compares to 16 percent of applications where no protected characteristics had been disclosed. When we break the overall figure of 12 percent down, it is a more complicated picture.

- Of all applications, fewer people with a protected characteristics of 'Race' were appointed (4 percent) than people from a White background (16 percent). However, some data was disclosive and appointments of less than 5 are not published.
- 23 percent of disabled applicants were appointed compared to 15 percent of non-disabled applicants.
- 10 percent of gay or bi-sexual applicants were appointed compared to 16 percent of other applicants.
- 20 percent of applicants whose gender was not the same as at birth were appointed compared to 15.3 percent of applicants whose gender was the same.
- From minority religious groups, we have appointed 1 percent of all applicants; as opposed to appointing 15 percent of individuals that identified as being from a majority or no religious group. However, some data was disclosive and appointments of less than 5 are not published.

79 percent of the lowest paid salaries (bottom quarter) are women's salaries.⁹ This reflects the greater proportion of women that work for the Council and the higher proportion of women that work in part time roles that tend to be lower paid. This also reflects broader societal trends whereby women are less likely to be in more technical, better paid roles. A report about gender pay and the [gender pay gap](#)¹⁰ was reported to the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group in January. The Well-run, High Performing Council Board will consider whether more deliberate action is needed to support our current and future workforce at its next meeting in July 2025.

Our previous report included an Improvement Activity to "Publish details of the engagement network of people and groups with protected characteristics on our website. "An engagement network of people and groups with protected characteristics has been

⁸ This is a decrease from 20 percent in 2022 to 2023 (compared to 16 percent of applications where no protected characteristics had been disclosed).

⁹ It is important to note that 71 percent of the upper quartile of salaries were women's.

¹⁰ The overall Gender Pay Gap across all employees is 6.40% based on the mean hourly rate. This is 0.39% lower than the previous year but still more favourable to male employees, however this is less than the national average of 7.5% on 31st March 2024 (www.ons.gov.uk).

developed in partnership with the Community Cohesion Team, the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network and Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC). The final list was presented to the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group in April 2024 and will be published on our [website](#) shortly.

The Youth Voice continue to meet weekly and discuss a range of topics. The Youth Council, with a membership of 34 young people with 87 contact hours, recommenced in January 2025, with the official launch taking place in March at Ruthin Youth Club. The event included a discussion about hot topics young people were interested in such as youth homelessness prevention, school-based Youth Councils and young people's own local communities. This project is linked to the Closer to Communities workstream led by the Well-run, High Performing Council Board, which also aims to get young people's voices better heard on Scrutiny and Cabinet topics. Work is also planned in relation to the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme to establish a young people's board, which would sit alongside the regeneration board. An update on these developments will be reported in our next Performance Update Report.

[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 \(Welsh Language and Culture\)](#)

The Council has a range of initiatives in place to support staff and elected members to grow their confidence in speaking Welsh and increase the visibility of the Welsh language and Welsh culture. Guidance to inform recruitment of staff with Welsh essential and Welsh desirable skills has been completed. 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). Managers are working with the Welsh Language Officer to categorise all jobs in the county using these new levels, which are now being used on Job Descriptions for new jobs advertised. We continue to advertise and support Welsh language training through the Iaith Gwaith scheme with new bitesize online taster sessions available. A session highlighting the benefits of bilingualism, exploring how using the Welsh Language can boost customer engagement, improve brand loyalty, and create a unique identity for businesses, was delivered as part of the [March for Business 2025](#). Monthly Paned a Sgwrs (Cuppa and Talk) sessions are up and running with growing attendance. These vary from online informal meetings, including seasonal activities such as a Christmas Quiz for Welsh learners and a Taith a Sgwrs (Walk and Talk) session to Celebrate St David's Day. These sessions provide staff with an informal opportunity to practice speaking in Welsh and have other benefits such as networking. Our Welsh

Languages Champions, the Pencampwyr Cymraeg, alongside members of our Senior Leadership Team, elected members and the Welsh Language Officer worked together to create a celebratory [Saint David's Day video](#) to promote the use of Welsh and the history of Saint David. Other initiatives that have taken place during this period include: promoting the Welsh Language Commissioner's "Defnyddia Dy Gymraeg Campaign at our two offices in Rhyl and Ruthin; a Shwmae Sumae video; Santes Dwynwen Quiz and circulation of Iaith Gwaith lanyards and badges among staff to improve the visibility of Welsh speakers. The Council also collaborated with Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych on [Gorymdaith Dewi Sant \(St David's Parade in Denbigh\)](#). Four members of staff helped to steward the event, which was attended by 600 school children, giving staff another opportunity to use their Welsh language skills. Publication of our 2024 to 2025 [annual report](#), which tracks the work done over the past year to comply with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards, is expected in the next reporting period.

Case Study: Staff and elected member experiences of our Paned a Sgwrs sessions

"The Paned a Sgwrs sessions have been an enjoyable way to practice speaking Welsh in a relaxed environment where we do not need to feel afraid to make mistakes or forget words. It's a great initiative to encourage more use of the Welsh language in our everyday lives. Dw i'n mwynhau dysgu siarad Cymraeg yn Paned a Sgwrs!" – Councillor Martyn Hogg

"It gives me the opportunities to speak with others in Welsh and consolidate my learning that I would otherwise miss, and learn new words and motivate me to keep speaking and learning Welsh." – Stephen Tones, Housing Officer

"I prefer reading Welsh and am slow to speak it - the sessions do prompt me to actually speak!" – Kerry Standen, Access to Information Officer

"I haven't been able to attend Panad a Sgwrs for some time because of time commitments but when I do attend, I find it really helpful just to practice my Welsh. Because I work from home and most of my online meetings are exclusively in English I can go for long periods not speaking Welsh, which makes me very rusty. Although I hear Welsh around the village and practice with people for whom Welsh is their first language, it is very helpful to speak to and listen to other learners and to get hints and tips in terms of grammar and vocabulary. I desperately want to go to Nant Gwyrtheryn but am covering my boss' maternity leave so don't feel that I can ask until she returns. Panad a Sgwrs can help to

keep things ticking over.” – Holly Evans, Commissioning & Contracts Deputy Team Manager

Working collaboratively to alleviate problems with recruitment and retention

A formal workforce planning exercise has started and will conclude in May 2025. This exercise involves work with all services to identify their workforce needs and challenges over the short to medium term and contributes to a Corporate Workforce Plan for the whole Council. During the period we have continued to offer careers events to promote careers (such as in [social care](#) and [reablement](#)) and celebrated the efforts and achievements of women working in social care (over 84 percent of Denbighshire’s wider Social Care Team are women), on [International Women’s Day](#) in March.

Performance Framework: Measures Update

Quarterly or Biannual Measures

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024	Quarter 1 2024 to 2025	Quarter 2 2024 to 2025	Quarter 3 2024 to 2025	Quarter 4 2024 to 2025
Corporate and Service Budget Variance (£k) – Benchmarked Locally	513 Excellent Better	0 Excellent Better	-400 Excellent Better	-3,924 Excellent Better	Data expected in July
The rolling average number of working days / shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence – Benchmarked Nationally	8.58 Priority to Improve Better ¹¹	8.49 Excellent Better	9.02 Excellent Worse	9.14 Excellent Worse	9.2 Excellent Better

¹¹ Our sickness performance has generally compared favourably to other local authorities in Wales but our thresholds at this point, which were very ambitious - comparing absence across all sectors not just the public sector – did not reflect our performance accurately (and was not comparing us to a similar group). From April 2024, we have applied thresholds based on national benchmarking statistics for sickness absence for all local authorities in Wales.

Title	Quarter 4 2023 to 2024	Quarter 1 2024 to 2025	Quarter 2 2024 to 2025	Quarter 3 2024 to 2025	Quarter 4 2024 to 2025
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) – Benchmarked Locally	91% Priority to Improve Better	75% Priority to Improve Worse	72% Priority to Improve Worse	72% Priority to Improve Same	74% Priority to Improve Better

Annual or biennial measures

2021 to 2024 data

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
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 – Count Only (Equality Objective)	21%	20%	12%

2023 to 2025 data

Data point, status and trend is provided for each time period.

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
The percentage of the lowest paid salaries (bottom quarter) that are women – Benchmarked Locally (Equality Objective)	79% Priority to Improve Better	Data published in March 2026
Number of complaints received by the Ombudsman per 1,000 residents – Benchmarked Nationally	0.32 Excellent Better	Data pending publication by the Ombudsman

Title	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Percentage of staff that say they know the Council has five principles and four values – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2024 to 2025	80.5% Excellent
The percentage of staff that say the Council supports and encourages the use of the Welsh language in the workplace – Benchmarked Locally (Welsh Language and Culture)	New to 2024 to 2025	84% Excellent
The percentage of staff that say I am proud to work for Denbighshire County Council – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2024 to 2025	69% Acceptable

Corporate Plan Performance Framework: Projects Update

Projects or Activities

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
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	Complete	This workstream has delivered its planned workshops with staff and has been closed to enable leads to support the three other live workstreams (staff and elected member relations; good employer; close to communities).
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Be close to our communities (Equality Objective)	On Target Same	None
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Have clear performance expectations	Complete	This workstream has delivered its planned workshops with staff and has been closed to enable leads to support the three other live workstreams (staff and elected member relations; good employer; close to communities).
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Promote strong staff and elected member relations	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Work with elected members, including development of a survey, will commence in early summer 2025.

Title	Status	Mitigating Statement
Well-Run, High Performing Council workstream: Ensure Denbighshire County Council is a good employer and is an excellent place to work (Equality Objective)	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	The Staff Survey is complete. The Well-run Board has requested that further work on the survey results takes place to increase engagement and the response rate in the future. The People Strategy will be presented to the Board in July.
Implement new Panel Performance Assessment Process and report findings to Council	Complete	The Panel Performance Assessment report, our response and Action Plan are published online .
Review and revise the Youth Council for Denbighshire	On Target Better	None
Undertake an annual review of the Corporate Workforce Plan 2022 to 2027	On Target Same	None
Improve the information we have about our workforce, including equality information, to support more detailed analyses in future Public Sector Duty Reports (Equality Objective)	Experiencing Obstacles Worse	Information held in the HR system (iTrent) is being cleansed and analysed to ensure we have accurate and up to date data. An Equality Survey will be sent out in the summer to increase and refresh equality data.
Subject to the outcome of the corporate conversation regarding corporate contact/customer service, review requirements for and procure a Corporate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system (including undertaking workshops with elected members and services to inform development of the new system)	Experiencing Obstacles Same	Specifications for an advert have been drafted. A Stakeholder Group for the CRM procurement is being scoped.

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. Overall, the Governance and Audit Committee

noted, in its [draft annual report for the year 2023 to 2024](#) that the Council continued to take account of the importance of good corporate governance and the Committee paid particular attention to the challenges in relation to Council finances, the continued effectiveness of the corporate risk register and noted concerns about the potential impacts on service delivery and key governance functions as a result of staff recruitment and retention. These are considered more fully in the sections below.

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 fourth Corporate Plan Tranche Review¹² took place in October 2024. Detailed scrutiny of progress with each Corporate Plan theme also included a review of performance and activities in relation to equality and Welsh language and culture. Two key actions emerged from the Review, which included a commitment to revising the performance framework for the Corporate Plan into a more manageable set of indicators. The new performance management framework has been applied from January 2025 and forms the basis of this report.

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

In February, Denbighshire's [Cabinet](#) welcomed the encouraging feedback received in the Panel Performance Assessment report, which was subsequently approved by [Council](#). The assessment, the first to be carried out in Wales, was held in September 2024 when independent experts evaluated key areas of the Council's performance, with the report issued at the end of 2024. It is a statutory requirement that this evaluation is carried out every five years to gauge how the Council is meeting performance requirements. The

¹² The purpose of a Tranche Review is to review and evaluate performance and delivery, with an opportunity to both reflect and look ahead to consider progress towards achieving the ambitions set out in our Corporate Plan. Tranche Reviews take place around every six months and are attended by Cabinet and the Senior Leadership Team. Also, as per a previous improvement activity, each Tranche Review must review Corporate Plan commitments and performance expectations, considering the impact of reducing capacity and ceased projects.

Panel was led by an independent chair, two senior peers from other Welsh Local Authorities and two peers from the wider public, private, and voluntary sector. The Panel conducted interviews with Cabinet Members, Councillors, staff and a range of partners.

Case study: Panel Performance Assessment

The report concluded that overall, the Authority is well run and exercises its functions effectively, while also acknowledging the challenges it has recently faced. The report also noted the Council has clear process in place to manage resources economically and efficiently and has navigated a decade of local government austerity well while protecting front line services where possible. The assessment found there are positive working relationships between staff and elected members and recognition among staff of the Council's ethos. Staff also demonstrated a strong sense of pride in working for the Authority and showed a real commitment to making a difference to communities and a willingness to support Council staff from other service areas when needed. The Panel noted areas of good practice and innovation, including a high degree of integration across social services and education; good engagement with staff and elected members; and the Member Area Groups whereby elected members and officers meet in designated wards across the County to discuss residents' local priorities and local impact issues. The Panel's recommendations for areas for the Council to continually improve on were all accepted and an [action plan](#) has been put in place and is being delivered.

[Governance and Audit Committee](#), in January, considered a report with a draft action plan, and made recommendations to the action plan prior to officers seeking approval for our response from [Cabinet](#) and [Council](#) in February. The response includes actions to continue:

- Developing the long-term vision for the Council, including embedding the transformation programme
- Reviewing how we communicate (including about our performance)
- Supporting the resilience of our leadership team
- Developing our workforce plan
- Developing proposals for greater collaboration with partners
- Building relationships with City, Town and Community Councils, including through place plans

Councillor Dimitri Batrouni, [WLGA spokesperson](#) for Data, Digital and Improvement said, "We commend Denbighshire County Council for being the first to undertake a Panel Performance Assessment in Wales. It's encouraging to see the Council's proactive approach to sector led improvement and I hope the insights and recommendations of the panel prove useful to the Council in their ongoing efforts to meet the unprecedented challenges facing local government." The final PPA report, response statements and Action Plan responding to recommendations can be found on the [Council's website](#).

Transformation Agenda

The Budget and Transformation Board continues to develop the Council's transformation programme to help to move the Council to a place where it can respond innovatively and collaboratively to the challenges ahead and is focused around the following three themes,: Commercialisation & Enterprise; Collaboration & Partnership; Influencing Demand and Digital. More work is needed to ensure there is clarity and shared understanding about the kind of Council we want to be in the future and how we need to transform ourselves to achieve that. The Strategic Planning and Performance Team has delivered two 'insight' projects during the period about building control and future funding models. These insight projects support the development of transformation proposals.

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. The key headlines are that we continue to deliver a balanced budget, sustain Council Reserves at £5,531,000, with 89% of forecast savings for the year having been achieved.

Council Budget Setting 2025 to 2026

The Council, like all Councils, continues to face significant financial challenges in setting balanced budgets on a scale it has not experienced before. The medium term economic and political environment within which the Council operates, like all Councils, remains extremely uncertain making forecasting budget projections with accuracy difficult. Demand for services from our communities continues to grow and the complexity of needs has intensified in areas such as Education and Children's Services and Adult Social Care. While headline rates of inflation have eased, the inflation that the Council is subject to continues to have an impact by increasing costs of service delivery (we refer to these as pressures). These pressures include nationally set pay awards and increases in

complexity for demand led services in adults' and children's social care that the Council has a statutory duty to provide and are outside of the Council's control. They have the effect of increasing the Council's budget requirement for next year.

Around three quarters of the Council's net budget is funded by the settlement from Welsh Government. In recent years the settlement has not kept pace with demand for services and cost increases. The Council is legally required to set a balanced budget before the start of each financial year and to set the resulting level of Council Tax. Given the gap in funding, the Council continues to have to make difficult decisions, including increasing Council Tax and making reductions to some services. The budget is managed as an evolving process rather than a one-off event every year in January, as it used to be. Significant engagement across the Council, with elected members and with communities continues. The following summaries the key discussions and decisions taken during the period to achieve a balanced budget.¹³

Although the Welsh Government settlement¹⁴ was more favourable than expected and welcomed, it did not resolve the financial challenges the Council faced in setting a balanced budget in 2025 2026, which still required a combination of savings and increases in Council Tax. In [February](#), Cabinet supported the proposals outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2025 to 2026 and 2027 to 2028 in order to set the budget for 2025 to 2026. Cabinet therefore approved the average Council Tax rise of 5.29 percent for Council services plus an additional 0.71 percent for the increase in the levy to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (an overall uplift of 6.00 percent). Delegated authority was given to the Head of Finance and Audit, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance, to adjust the use of cash reserves included in the budget proposals by up to £500k if there was movement between the draft and final settlement figures in order to allow the setting of Council Tax in a timely manner. Cabinet also supported this strategy for use of reserves

¹³ In January, [Cabinet](#) welcomed the better than expected settlement but highlighted that the budget pressures which had been reported during the year remained and, while not as severe as expected, there remained a significant budget gap which needed to be addressed in order for the Council to deliver a balanced budget in 2025 to 2026. Feedback from the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) about the third iteration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan, at its November 2024 meeting, was also reported to Cabinet. [Governance and Audit Committee](#) and [Performance Scrutiny](#) also considered the 2025 to 2026 revenue budget setting in January.

¹⁴ Council set the 2025 to 2026 budget and Council Tax in February 2025 based on the Provisional Local Government Settlement, which resulted in a cash increase of £14.427m or 7 percent when compared with the level of funding received at the start of 2024 to 2025. The Final Local Government Settlement for 2025 to 2026 has since been received and has resulted in a very small increase in funding of £29,659. This sum has been added to the contingency budget within the corporate budget.

to include a £0.5m pressure to contribute to unearmarked reserves to maintain the proportion of unearmarked reserves to net budget.

Cabinet also agreed to make 'savings' ('catch all' term for the different ways in which the Council's budget can be reduced, which can include efficiencies, increases in income in line with the fees and charges policy, savings from transformation projects, and reductions to services amongst other ways). The savings totalled £4.170m. More detail about these can be found at [in our detailed reports online](#). Due to the settlement being better than anticipated the savings proposals have focused on the categories of efficiencies, income, and transformation projects, with a lesser focus on those categorised as reductions to services. The savings proposals that were categorised as 'reductions to services' are ones that have either already been achieved during this year or are so advanced that the most appropriate course of action is to continue. Development and delivery of transformational projects continues. A number of savings proposals have been deferred, mainly due to concerns about the impact on service delivery. In developing the budget proposals much discussion has taken place with all elected members through the use of regular budget briefings and workshops. A full list of savings proposals was discussed at Council in [November](#). Following concerns raised by elected members the proposed reduction to the planning enforcement service and a review of winter maintenance priority routes savings were ruled out. Furthermore, given the pressures in schools and the improved settlement, the schools' budget was not reduced (as the Council had done in the 2024 to 2025 budget) and schools therefore have all inflationary pressures funded with no reductions to budgets (other than reductions relating to changes in the number of learners).

Council considered, debated and approved the Medium Term Financial Plan 2025 to 2026 – 2027 to 2028, including the increase in Council Tax¹⁵ and the strategy for the use of reserves discussed in [February](#). An amendment to the budget was also approved, amounting to £500,000 being pledged to schools to help tackle learners' well-being, attendance issues, behaviour problems, and poverty

Cumulative Impact Assessment

The Council updated its cumulative impact assessment of budget, first developed to support the 2024 to 2025 budget setting process, presented to [County Council](#) in January

¹⁵ See also [item 6](#) for papers considered by Council in February in relation to Council Tax 2025 to 2026 and associated matters.

2024. The updated assessment formed a core part of the report to [Cabinet](#) and [Council](#) seeking approval of the proposals outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2025 to 2026 to 2027 to 2028 in order to set the budget for 2025 to 2026. The full assessment can be found at [appendix seven](#) of the report to Council. Given the cumulative nature of the assessment, it includes the impact of savings proposals already delivered for the 2024 to 2025 financial year together with the predicted impacts of savings proposals for 2025 to 2026, which included:

- Charging for street naming
- New income from the issuing of licenses for certain procedures (presented to [Cabinet](#) in October)
- Annual increase of parking fees (discussed by [Performance Scrutiny](#) in March)
- Review of local authority school improvement services
- Review of contracts and contributions to third parties in light of changes to grants and other income streams available
- Review of commercial rents
- Review of Tourism function
- Council Tax 2025 to 2026

The assessment found that overall the likely severity across some factors has reduced from last year's probable determination to possible, although there is a largely negative impact for all areas in the county. This change reflects the experience we have had in implementing some of the proposals over the course of the last year and changes to what is within the scope of this assessment. That said, it remains the case that impact is likely to be most acutely felt in areas with existing socio-economic disadvantage, and areas where it is more likely that people with protected characteristics live. Pre-existing well-being inequality could be exacerbated for people (including children, young people and families) due to reduced staff capacity and potential reduced non-statutory provision in schools¹⁶,

¹⁶ For example, it is not possible to identify the actual impacts for each school here as schools' budgets are delegated. It is also not possible to say that the following summary of impacts are solely a consequence of the 3 percent budget cut given the other contextual factors at play (see appendix B). In summary though, well-being support (particularly on a one-to-one basis, which is regarded as being more effective than whole class support), extra-curricular activities and the range and depth of the curriculum taught in some schools has reduced. Schools are identifying increasing mental health needs among some learners, particularly since Covid-19, with reducing staff capacity (at teaching, teaching support and strategic levels). Impacts could be more or less severe depending on schools' financial positions, and the level of need within the school/community.

and new or increased charges for services such as street naming, parking and Council Tax as examples (although the latter may be offset by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme¹⁷). All of which is more likely to most negatively affect vulnerable or disadvantaged people. The proposals - particularly those that relate to an increase in charges - balance the impact on individuals (i.e. rate payers) against safeguarding core Council services upon which many vulnerable residents depend. It should be noted though that the conclusions should be viewed cautiously at this stage: the assessment does not take into account those proposals for which the impact is unknown (e.g. tourism review), the review of the impact of the reduction in libraries opening hours is pending and some individual impact assessments need further development and 'testing'.

The cumulative assessment continues to be updated as Well-being Impact Assessments are revised, and as new budget saving proposals are developed. An updated report will be presented to the Strategic Equality and Diversity Group in May 2025. We need to keep a close watch on the development of these impact assessments and the delivery of the mitigating actions required to reduce negative impacts.

Finance Update Reports

During the period, the Council continued to ensure robust scrutiny and decision making around the budget and financial management. This included monthly reports about the medium-term financial strategy and plan for 2025 to 2026 to 2027 to 2028, finance and treasury management reports. These reports can be accessed from Performance Scrutiny, Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and Council papers on our [website](#).

The last finance update report for this period was presented to Cabinet in [March](#). The Council's net revenue budget at that point was £271.021m (£250.793m in 2023 to 2024). The position on service and corporate budgets was a forecast underspend of £102k (£4.559m underspend last month). The movement of £4.457m related mainly to the set-aside to earmarked reserves (£3.956m) approved in the February Cabinet and increased pressures across services (£501k). These pressures are summarised as follows:

- Education and Children's Service –The current outturn prediction is £2.244m overspend (previously £2.319m). The pressures in Children's Social Care in March

¹⁷ A report about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was given to Council in [January](#).

were mainly due to placements requiring more complex needs to be met. The overspend in Education services related to pressures in additional learning needs and education packages in out-of-county settings.

- Highways and Environmental Services – The current outturn prediction is £2.066m overspend (previously £1.564m). This relates to costs for the waste service and winter maintenance (the latter remains a high risk for the service during winter months) offset by saving and additional income.
- Planning, Public Protection and Countryside - The budget projection is an overspend of £751k (previously £627k) due to school transport costs, car park income shortfall (income shortfall remains a risk for planning and parking) and pressures across the service.
- Adult Social Care and Homelessness –The current outturn prediction is £1.086m underspend. The underspend in Homelessness is due to a reduction in emergency temporary accommodation placements. The pressures in Adult Social Care relate to placement costs and demand across the service areas.
- Corporate Budgets – The budget is projected to underspend by £4.268m due to the release of contingency budgets. The movement this month (£3.956m) relates to the set-aside to earmarked reserves of the Welsh Government grant received towards the costs of the Teachers' and Fire service pension costs and NJC pay pressures, as approved in February by Cabinet.
- Schools - The budget agreed by Council for 2024 to 2025 included a total net additional investment (excluding increases in Welsh Government grants) in schools delegated budgets of £4.9m. School balances carried forward into 2024 to 2025 of £3.681m are low compared to recent years. Schools forecast a reduction to school balances of £5.782m resulting in a net debit balance of £2.101m carried forward into 2025 to 2026.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - The HRA revenue balances brought forward to 2024 to 2025 of £1.180m are forecast to reduce by £425k to £755k at the end of the year.
- Treasury Management – At the end of March 2025, the Council's borrowing totalled £316.803m at an average interest rate of 4.49%. Investment balances were £7.9m at an average interest rate of 4.38%.

In setting its budget for 2024 to 2025, the Council required service savings and efficiencies of £10.384m to be identified. Progress in delivering these savings is tracked. A report

presented to [Cabinet](#) in April 2025 reported that 89 percent of forecast savings had been achieved (82 percent of savings have been achieved from major savings proposals and 92 percent from non-strategic savings). The required and expected but not yet achieved savings have been carefully reviewed as part of setting the 2025 to 2026 budget. We have not considered it necessary to reinstate budget in those areas instead we have noted where savings are still required and need to be tracked during 2025 to 2026.

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. The Responsible Financial Officer has not signed and certified the accounts for the years ended on 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024 and due to continuing work on the audit of 2022 to 2023 accounts¹⁸, will work to an extended deadline for completion of the Statement of Accounts. Bringing the production and auditing of the Statement of Accounts back into statutory timescales is a high priority for the Finance team.

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. In January, Governance and Audit Committee examined the Council's governance around [treasury management](#) (including the Council's borrowing, investments and cash flow) and Council approved the [Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025 to 2026 and prudential indicators 2025 o 2026 to 2027 to 2028](#).

¹⁸ The audit of the 2022 to 2023 accounts identified an adjustment required between two unusable reserves. The Council is working closely with, and has informed, the relevant audit authorities while we rectify this issue. It is important to note that this adjustment has no impact whatsoever on the Council's financial position, its budget or Council tax levels, as this was a technical adjustment on unusable reserves.

Other developments in the last period

Capacity in the Finance team and implementation of T1

There are risks regarding the capacity of the Finance Team due to continued development of the new financial system, implemented in April 2024, and due to vacancies in the service. As with the introduction of any new system there has been some disruption as a result, with teams needing to work to find solutions to these issues. To mitigate the risk, the Finance Team is focusing on high-risk areas to update Cabinet on areas of significant risk of overspend. The Council has produced the outturn and the statement of accounts with the new financial system for the first time. There are risks associated with working with a new system, which puts additional pressure on the Finance Team and requires an extended period for closing the accounts, longer than in previous years. This will mean that the final outturn will be reported to Cabinet a month later than usual in June 2025.

Capital Plan

[Cabinet](#), in January, considered a report about the capital block allocations for inclusion in the 2025 to 2026 Capital Plan. It approved the principles for funding capital schemes set out within the report, and supported the projects for inclusion in the 2025 to 2026 Capital Plan. In January, [Council](#) approved the 2025 to 2026 Capital Plan, Capital Strategy and the Prudential Indicators for 2025 to 2026.

Notice of motion

A Notice of Motion was put forward at Council in [November](#) on behalf of the Plaid Cymru Group asking the Council to strengthen its relationship with City, Town and Community Councils especially in the context of the financial challenges the Council continues to face. Working closely with City, Town and Community Councils was confirmed to be a priority and formed a core part of our values and principles. A project focussed on this was already being considered as part of the Transformation Programme, whose purpose is to save money and realign the way the Council works to ensure it works in the most efficient way possible. It was agreed that the Notice of Motion be discussed at the Budget and Transformation Board in the first instance and brought back to Council at a later date.

Draft Local Toilet Strategy

Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act (the “Act”) places a duty on local authorities to prepare and publish a Local Toilet Strategy, which must include an assessment of the

need for toilets, including changing facilities for babies and changing places facilities for disabled people. It is important to note that there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to provide Public Conveniences (PCs). [Cabinet](#) in December approved the Local Toilet Interim Needs Assessment and the draft Local Toilet Strategy and action plan for Denbighshire and gave approval for public consultation to commence. A report was presented to [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) in March providing feedback regarding two public consultations on the provision of PCs in Denbighshire and to enable members to scrutinise the Draft Local Toilet Strategy and the options for future Public Convenience provision, including some savings proposals. The Council ran a consultation to inform the final version of the Local Toilet Interim Needs Assessment, which ran from July to September 2024, and received 1,419 responses.

The Needs Assessment highlighted an “identified need” for Public Conveniences in Rhyl, Prestatyn, Denbigh, Ruthin, Llangollen and Corwen but no “identified need” in St. Asaph, Rhuddlan or Dyserth. Based on the Needs Assessment, a new Local Toilet Strategy was drafted, which we then conducted a public consultation on.

In setting the 2024 to 2025 budget a review of public conveniences was included as a Major Savings Proposal with £200,000 removed from the public convenience budget in Highways and Environmental Services for 2024 to 2025, reducing the budget to £70,000. That decision was largely based on an assumption that at least some public conveniences would need to close unless a way could be found to make the service fit the new budget. Options to be explored included whether it would be possible to transfer public conveniences to partners, including City, Town and Community Councils.

While not within the timelines of this report, but important to note, is that [Cabinet](#) – following lengthy debate with input from back benchers - approved the Draft Local Toilet Strategy and endorsed the proposed next steps for each Public Convenience facility. The plans are complex and vary area to area; involving some areas seeing closures, others a combination of closures and refurbishments; and the introduction of a cashless payment facility. Cabinet noted the importance of working collaboratively with elected members, member area groups and City, Town and Community Councils to explore all possibilities that could result in proposed closures being avoided, and noted the importance of good engagement with residents and in particular businesses in respect of the Community Toilet Scheme. The [cumulative impact assessment](#) of budget will be updated to include the impacts of the decision. Given the detailed nature of the proposal please find all [documents are available online](#).

Audit Wales's Financial Sustainability Review

In August 2024, [Audit Wales](#) published its findings from the 'Financial Sustainability Review – Denbighshire County Council'. Overall, Audit Wales found that the Council engages well with Members and officers when setting its budget but it currently lacks an approach to find sufficient savings or an implemented transformation plan to bridge its funding gap." We were already establishing the Council's transformation programme with governance provided by the Budget and Transformation Board and have clarified the role of Governance and Audit and Performance Scrutiny Committees in relation to oversight of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan.

Denbighshire Leisure Limited

On March 26, Denbighshire Councillors approved, in principle, a proposal to change the operating model for leisure services in the county, which would have potentially resulted in the purchase of Denbighshire Leisure Ltd (DLL) by a private investor. The primary purpose of this proposal was to secure a sustainable future for leisure services for Denbighshire residents. The investment opportunity in DLL did not progress as the investor decided to withdraw the offer in April. This will be reported upon in our next performance report.

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, while encouraging active involvement and challenge from across the Council, our elected members, and residents.

Corporate Plan Performance Management Framework

As discussed in our [Corporate Planning section](#), the revised performance management framework has been applied from January 2025 and forms the basis of this report. Until such time new Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data is available, WIMD is no longer being reported every six months. To view the performance management framework as it was, please see our Performance Update Report for April to September 2023, which was approved by [Cabinet](#) in and considered by [Scrutiny](#) in November. All Performance Update Reports and Annual Self-Assessments are published on our website – www.denbighshire.gov.uk/performance. We are reviewing our Tranche Review and

performance processes (including the presentation of these reports) to strengthen accountability for delivering the improvement actions generated through these reports.

Annual Stakeholder Survey

The Stakeholder Survey results for 2024 to 2025 have now been analysed. The majority of results showed a decline in performance from the previous year. The areas where responses have been positive include those that focus on community well-being. Many respondents felt Denbighshire has the digital and social infrastructure to support thriving, cohesive, and well-connected communities. The main areas that have been highlighted for improvement include perceptions of Denbighshire's economy, transport and road infrastructure. Questions that focus on Council performance, communication, transparency and financial management have also received negative feedback. A report will be presented to our Corporate Executive Team and Cabinet, and individual Corporate Plan Boards will be considering the results and comments that relate to their portfolio.

Ongoing concerns about the methodology associated with the [Stakeholder Survey](#) were also raised during the October Tranche Review and from this point on the results have been pulled into their own Citizen Voice report, which is an appendix to this report. It contains other stakeholder feedback and forms the basis of a new approach to triangulating stakeholder feedback from a range of sources, including the Stakeholder Survey.

Service Performance Challenges

The Service Challenge Programme for 2024 to 2025 took place in November and early December 2024. The Challenges are an essential monitoring requirement of the Council's performance management methodology, and feed into the Council's Self-Assessment process to help us to identify key improvement activity, as required under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Members of the panel included CET / SLT / Cabinet / Political Leaders / Internal Audit, external parties such as Audit Wales, Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales.

The key themes that arose from completion of all the Challenges are summarised below, arranged using the three-transformation programme workstreams:

1. Commercialisation & Enterprise

- Finance, Budget, Diversifying Income.

- Collaborative Work / Partnership Work.

2. Collaboration & Partnership

- Engagement and Consultation including work with City, Town and Community Councils (improving elected member engagement and self-promotion of services).

3. Influencing Demand and Digital

- Recruitment and Retention including Career grade training / personnel well-being.
- New ways of working.
- ICT systems / Digital Enabled Change.

Overall, what emerged is that Heads of Service require greater support from the Corporate Executive Team and Cabinet to develop plans and deliver transformation to their services at a time when resources and revenue are decreasing. Findings were shared with our Senior Leadership Team, Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group and with all elected members.

Internal Audit Reviews

The Chief Internal Auditor attended the Governance and Audit Committee in [January](#) to provide an update on Internal Audit's latest progress (since September) in terms of its service delivery, assurance provision, reviews completed, and the team's performance and effectiveness in driving improvement. Since the last update in September, eight internal audit reports had been completed with two being awarded a high assurance rating, three receiving a medium assurance rating (Coastal Rhyl Flood Defence Project, Closure of Caledfryn and Asset Management) and three not being awarded an assurance rating as they were process reviews. The Internal Audit Action Plan has been revised to reflect the challenges the team has faced during the year due to three members of the Internal Audit team being seconded to support the waste service, special investigations, investigations due to whistleblowing complaints, sickness and the resignation of one of the Career Pathway Senior Auditors resigned in November 2024. In [March](#), Governance and Audit Committee approved the Internal Audit Charter, the Internal Audit Strategy and the Quality Assurance Improvement Programme (QAIP) for 2025 to 2026, in line with the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) in the UK public sector.

Other developments in the last period

Our Catering Services team won '[Best Performing Catering Service' Award](#) by the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE), as well as being nominated as the 'Most Improved Performer' in catering services.

Risk Management

Risk management refers to our planned approach to identify, assess, control and monitor risks and opportunities facing the Council. For more information, please see our guide [Managing Risk for Better Service Delivery](#).

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 crucial to the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027. The February 2025 Corporate Risk Register Review has been completed and the final reports are due to be presented to [Governance and Audit Committee](#) and Performance Scrutiny Committee in April and May. During the period, in response to the difficulties associated with the waste rollout, a new Corporate Risk was developed to capture and mitigate risks now and, in the future, associated with large-scale change projects ("The risk that Transformational Programmes and Major Project benefits are not fully realised").

Risk Appetite Statement

As part of the February 2025 Review, the Risk Appetite Statement was revisited with no amendments being proposed. This is a live document and will continue to be reviewed.

Other developments in the last period

Partnerships Scrutiny Committee considered the Annual Report 2023 to 2024 of the North Wales Regional Emergency Planning Service in [December](#).

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

A People Strategy has been drafted but has faced some delays. It will be presented to the Well-run Board in July. The strategy includes health and well-being, equalities, diversity and inclusion and Welsh language considerations alongside staff voice, pay and rewards. Our new Staff Survey was conducted during the period and achieved 1,178 responses from the total of 2,439 staff in the Council (excluding teaching staff, casual and relief staff). The response rate overall was 48.3% (reflecting a generally lower response rate from staff in front line services). In terms of staff well-being, 73 percent of staff strongly agreed or agreed that they are able to “find the right balance between my home life and work life”; 69 percent felt that health and wellbeing is important to the Council and 63 percent said they receive the support they need for their mental health and wellbeing. 72 percent of staff said they are encouraged to learn and develop but only 50 percent of staff strongly agreed or agreed that there are opportunities for career progression in the Council. The Well-run Board has tasked HR to undertake further work on Staff Survey results (including examining neutral responses) to increase engagement and the response rate in the future.

Improve the information we have about our workforce

Impact on the workforce (and any risks to effective governance) as a result of budget proposals and the voluntary exit scheme remain under consideration and form part of the [cumulative impact assessment](#), which will be discussed again by the Council's Strategic Equality and Diversity Group in May 2025. Analysis of public sector pay, and the gender pay gap is contained at [the 'Reducing inequalities' section of this report](#). An Equality Survey will be sent out in the summer to increase and refresh equality data.

Workforce planning

Progress of the current workforce plan and associated action plan (including recruitment and retention activities) and an update on turnover and sickness absence data for 2024 was provided to Performance Scrutiny in [March](#). It was reported that staff turnover during 2022 to 2023 was at its highest rate at 12.4 percent but has decreased to 9.12 percent for the period April to December 2024. As a general rule, an organisation should be aiming for a turnover rate of 10 percent or less. A high turnover rate can be costly and disruptive to a business; however, it is important to note that our rate is still below average compared to

the UK average of 16 per cent according to the Chartered Institute of Professional Development. Workforce planning commenced with all services in March this year and will culminate in a new corporate workforce plan and action plan in May 2025. The Council has an aging workforce and how we manage that, and risks associated with succession planning are critical. A second Internal Audit follow up review of workforce planning will take place over the next year to examine the differences between the 2023 to 2024 and 2025 to 2026 corporate workforce plans and the changes in process.

Other developments in the last period

Cabinet approval was sought for the [Sexual Harassment Policy and the Redeployment Policy amendments](#) in March.

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.

Approval of the Asset Management Strategy

In [October](#), Cabinet approved the adoption of the Asset Management Strategy 2024 to 2029. The new Asset Management Strategy aligns asset plans and the outcomes being sought by the Strategy with the Corporate Plan; making sure that our property assets play a key role in delivering on these priorities. The underlying principle is that “we will provide the right assets, in the right place, and in the right condition to meet current and projected future service delivery needs, considering who best to own and operate each asset and opportunities for collaboration”. There are four priority outcomes, which are:

- Climate Action and Nature Recovery – including improving energy performance and reducing the overall footprint of our buildings, improving biodiversity on our sites, etc, and improving our assets' resilience to climate impacts.
- Modernising Education – delivered primarily by Education but will involve significant investment in our school buildings over the next five years.
- Regeneration – where the Council is directly intervening in the property market to promote regeneration and economic development, particularly in town centres.

- New Ways of Working (NWOW) and Collaboration – looking specifically at our office portfolio and collaboration opportunities to create an asset ownership and operation model that is sustainable.

Disposal of Caledfryn

In [November](#), Cabinet approved a confidential item proposing the sale of Caledfryn, one of the Council's office buildings in Denbigh. The report included some background to the rationalisation of the Corporate Estate and reasoning behind the decision to close Caledfryn and put the site on the market by way of informal tender. Following the tender process, the [Council agreed to sell the building to Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board](#) subject to terms being agreed between both parties. The sale subsequently completed on March 26, 2025. This move will allow the health board to develop a much-needed health and social care hub in the town, which will be of significant benefit to the residents of Denbigh and further afield. [Plans for the site are still in development](#), but the new Hub is likely to include primary care, adult mental health services, a perinatal hub, midwifery service and space for the Community Resource Team. As well as bringing valuable health and social care services to the town, this new well-being hub will offer significant social and economic well-being benefits to the area.

Senior Information Risk Owner's Annual Report

In [November](#), a report on the Council's information governance during April 2023 to March 2024 was given to Governance and Audit Committee. During the year, there were 33 data breach incidents involving personal data (an increase on the 27 during 2022 to 2023). One of these incidents were considered reportable to the Information Commissioner's Office and remains under investigation. The underlying cause of the majority of these breaches are essentially human error. Potential IT solutions are currently being explored. The report also noted that there was a total of 1,188 Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulation requests during the 12 months up to 31st March 2024. The Information Commissioner's Office require that at least 90 percent of these requests are responded to within deadline; a target we have met for the last two years.

Other developments in the last period

A Notice of Motion was put forward to County Council in [November](#) asking for support for the campaign to devolve management of the Crown Estate and its assets in Wales to the Welsh Government, and that the funds raised be used by Local Authorities to support the

social needs of the people who live in Wales. The Leader agreed to write to the Welsh Government.

In December, the Council were announced as [runners-up in the Ystadau Cymru Awards 2024](#), following the completion of regeneration works in Corwen town centre. The awards celebrated projects that displayed excellence in strategic management of the Welsh public sector estate by promoting collaboration and good practice. The Council were recognised as runners-up for their collaborative works with Cadwyn Clwyd, Llangollen Railway Trust, Corwen Town Council and local elected members to deliver a range of projects that aimed to support local economic growth, job creation and support the sense of local pride to Corwen.

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, while contributing to decarbonisation and nature's recovery.

Denbighshire Procurement Strategy

The Procurement Service is a collaborative service shared with Flintshire County Council. The Joint Management Board, established as part of a collaborative agreement in 2014, is the governing body of the joint procurement service and is in place until March 2026. Between now and March 2026, we will review, refresh or redesign the service, and consider the resources that are available to support and provide greater resilience for the collaboration. We are starting to explore opportunities that may exist for more collaborative working on a regional footprint. We had originally intended to complete the review by March 2025, but our timescales have been extended in line with timescales associated with the Procurement Act and the Social Partnerships and Public Procurement (Wales) Act.

Biodiversity Protection and Decarbonisation in Procurement

We are continuing to work with Welsh Government and other Welsh public sector organisations to reach a common approach to measuring and reporting decarbonisation. This remains a challenging piece of work. The aim is to develop a single approach and

process no matter where the procurement is taking place, which will be of most benefit to suppliers and the market generally. Contractors on the North Wales Construction Partnership Framework will be renewing their carbon reduction plans in June 2025. These Plans set out how companies themselves are seeking to change the way they work to decarbonise, and will support procuring authorities as we move towards a better way to report on carbon emissions in the future. Furthermore, all procurements over £30k now require a Carbon Reduction Plan. We are also working with Denbighshire and Flintshire Climate Change Teams to develop a two-year plan to embed a decarbonisation 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

Contract Procedure Rules have been updated to reflect new UK Public Procurement legislation. They will need to be reviewed again - once all required information is available - to ensure maximum impact from the Social Partnerships and Public Procurement (Wales) Act.

Supporting Businesses and Partners to Adapt

We have made use of the [Supply Chain Sustainability School's](#) free, virtual learning opportunities to support training and upskilling internally and for suppliers. We continue to work closely with our Economic and Business Development to support businesses. As reported previously, Balfour Beatty, as part of the coastal defence schemes, has committed to deliver workshops - supported by Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council - to community-led organisations on how to develop strategies. While workshops have not yet taken place, the intention to deliver them remains.

Other developments in the last period

During July to August 2024, Audit Wales undertook a review of the Council's arrangements for commissioning services and the extent to which this has been developed in accordance with the sustainable development principle and help to secure value for money. It concluded that the Council has set out clear expectations of departments when commissioning services, but that we do not have arrangements in place to ensure that these are consistently met. We have a management response in place to address the two recommendations that were made by Audit Wales following their review. In March,

[Governance and Audit Committee](#) approved the final report. Recommendations impacting procurement included digitisation of the commissioning and contract award form and production of an internal 24 month rolling pipeline plan for forward commissioning. The latter, in particular, will provide an oversight of similar procurements and enable us to forward plan and engage the market to incorporate stronger decarbonisation and community benefits.

Improvement Actions

Nine improvement actions have been identified through discussions about this report (the first is a continuing improvement action and demonstrates the interplay between resources, performance and risk):

1. Consider performance relating to the percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale), which has fallen short of the 95% target time for some years, noting the recent announcement of additional funding by Welsh Government¹⁹. The service continues to struggle with meeting the demands of the asset within the limited budgetary and staffing resources available, and a substantive discussion is needed about the prospects of improvement and what continuing poor performance is likely to mean given expected increased impacts of flooding, landslips and heat risks on road condition and community connectivity.
2. Building on the communication briefings that took place at the start of 2025, the Council needs to improve its communication internally and externally with staff, residents, elected members, partners, businesses and regulators about its Transformation work.
3. Ensure the mitigating actions in the cumulative impact assessment are delivered and provide an update to the Budget and Transformation Board on progress.
4. Review the improvement in completion of one-to-ones and identify the reasons for the remaining quarter of all eligible staff not having had a one-to-one over the last year. The focus of this improvement activity should be on encouraging more one-to-

¹⁹ In May, Welsh Government wrote to Denbighshire announcing an Award of Funding in relation to the Local Government Borrowing Initiative. Put simply, Welsh Government has committed to providing revenue funding of £639,542 to the Council to finance borrowing to fund capital spend on highways maintenance.

ones as an effective means to support staff and embed a positive culture that is focussed on valuing staff, diversity and promoting well-being.

5. The whole Council, both elected members and officers, should consider how reduced or changing capacity will impact our commitments around service delivery and quality, especially where these may fall short of customer expectations, and agree mechanisms for better communicating that to stakeholders.
6. Noting the £250k pressure to fund delivery of the Climate and Nature Strategy as per the budget approved in February, the Council's Greener Board should examine the gap between current performance and our Net Carbon Zero by 2030 target, assess viable pathways to securing funds and assess our appetite for escalating action.
7. In line with the additional £500,000 being pledged to education to help tackle learners' well-being, attendance issues, behaviour problems and poverty, the Council should evaluate the effectiveness of current interventions aimed at reducing the gap in attainment and exclusion rates (between those eligible and ineligible for free school meals) and consider whether more targeted efforts are needed.
8. Consider the Council's compliance with the Welsh Language Standards within our Annual Welsh Language Monitoring Report 2024 to 2025.
9. Assess and cost alternative arrangements for meeting our statutory duties in relation to stakeholder feedback, currently met through the annual Stakeholder Survey, to improve confidence in data gathered.