

# Corporate Plan Performance Update: April to June 2021

This document presents the council's performance against its priorities and governance areas between April to June 2021, including our application of the Sustainable Development principle, the Public Sector Equality Duty, and Socio-Economic Duty.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.

## Contents

Summary position for our Corporate Plan	4
Housing: Everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs	6
Well-being and Equality	10
Connected Communities: Communities are connected and have access to goods and services locally, online and through good transport links	13
Well-being and Equality	16
Resilient Communities: The council works with people and communities to build independence and resilience	18
Well-being and Equality	23
Environment: Attractive and protected, supporting well-being and economic prosperity	29
Well-being and Equality	34
Young People: A place where younger people will want to live and work and have the skills to do so	38
Well-being and Equality	43
Corporate Health: The council is efficient, well-managed and environmentally sustainable	47
Improvement Actions	69
Equality and Diversity	70

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

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

Measures: Good

Projects: Good

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

Measures: Priority for improvement

Projects: Good

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

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Good

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

Measures: Good

Projects: Excellent

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

Measures: Priority for improvement

Projects: Good

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

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Good

## **A Note on Measuring Performance**

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

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

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

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

Measures: Good

Projects: Good

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

We have only two measures with new data to present in this report. As at the end of June 2021, there were 2297 people on the Single Route to Housing (SARTH) waiting list. To understand the reasons for the increase in the number of people on the SARTH waiting list we have set up a task and finish group that includes colleagues from Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Housing Support. The task and finish group met in May 2021 and identified a variety of reasons for the increase in SARTH numbers. The information found has been fed into the current SARTH review and will be used to inform the recommendations and subsequent action plan. The final report is due later this year and no further task and finish group meetings are required.

As the current measure for the SARTH waiting list is a count only, to give some context to our efforts we have now included a second measure in our framework that considers the number of people housed from the register into either council stock or a Denbighshire Registered Social Landlord property. As at the end of June there were 67 housed. It should be noted that there has also been a lower stock turnover throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

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

Denbigh extra care housing is experiencing some issues regarding the steel works and the fire proof coating used by the contractor, RL Davies. This has been chased up by the council and Grŵp Cynefin with Building Control and we are waiting the final solution. The contractor has requested an extension on the handover of the building, but this is still to be confirmed.

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

An update is still expected from Grŵp Cynefin on the appointment of a contractor for Ruthin Extra Care Housing. The delay is due to the costs of the building and insurance requirements that require specific checks to be carried out. An update will be given in the next report.

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

The delivery confidence for delivering additional council housing developments has improved. Demolition of the former auction rooms to provide off street parking for new apartments in the former Granite and Next stores has been completed; tenders have been received for the construction of apartments on land off The Dell in Prestatyn; and the purchase of a former council house in Rhuddlan has also been completed.

In addition to this the following offers were accepted:

- An offer was accepted for the purchase of two former council homes in Prestatyn.
- An offer was accepted for the sale of the land adjacent to Ysgol Pendref in Denbigh with a requirement that 20% of the homes built on the development will be offered to the council.
- The council's offer for the purchase of the affordable units on the second phase of the Cysgod y Graig development at Dyserth was accepted by the developer.

## **On Target: Affordable Housing**

Delivery of our Corporate Plan target for an additional 260 affordable homes has now been achieved, and indeed exceeded as 364 additional affordable homes have been brought forward since 2017. Denbighshire has been allocated a £7m Social Housing Grant of for 2021 to 2022. This money is made available by Welsh Government to social landlords to fund social and affordable housing, and the council is now able to access this funding this year for the first time. Work is underway to ensure that the funding is spent in a way that will maximise the benefits for our residents, bringing forward reserve schemes and exploring new options.

Delivery of affordable housing continues with the completion of 13 social housing dwellings by Adra in Trefnant in April 2021, and 41 apartments by Wales & West for over 55's in Rhyl on the former Grange Hotel site in July 2021.

### On Target: Empty Homes Back into Use

The Empty Homes project is on track to meet the Corporate Plan target of bringing 500 empty homes back into use. The Empty Homes Matching Service continues to seek matches and outcomes. The pilot scheme is due for review in the autumn, 2021.

### Annual or biennial measures

#### 2019 to 2021 data

Measure	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	Status
The number of people who were on the Complex Disabilities Specialist Housing Needs Register for whom supported housing has been secured – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	9	5	Acceptable
The additional supply of council houses provided	10	14	Does not apply Count only
Number of additional homes provided in Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	242	435	Excellent
Number of empty properties brought back into use (old definition) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	179	148	Excellent
The number of private sector homes improved in standard and quality due to intervention from the council – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	810	415	Good
The additional supply of affordable housing, including social housing, provided during the year – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	139	154	Excellent
Percentage of households successfully prevented from homelessness (Section 66 duty) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	57	52.3	Priority for improvement



Measure	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	Status
Percentage of households successfully relieved from homelessness (Section 73 duty) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	30	30.7	Priority for improvement

## Residents Survey 2018 to 2019

2020 to 2021 data for the following two measures is not expected until the Residents' Survey is run in the autumn, 2021.

Measure	2018 to 2019	Status
The percentage of residents reporting they felt satisfied with the availability of housing in their area – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	42	Priority for improvement
The percentage of residents reporting they are satisfied with the standard of housing in their area – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	52	Acceptable

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

## Quarterly or biannual measures

Measure	Quarter 1 2020 to 2021	Quarter 2 2020 to 2021	Quarter 3 2020 to 2021	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Status
Number of people on SARTH waiting list – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	1,508	1,791	1,937	2,139	2,297	Priority for improvement
Cumulative number of people housed from the SARTH register	40	140	237	328	67	Does not apply Count only

## Well-being and Equality

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

### Council Housing Tenants Survey

Denbighshire Community Housing undertakes a Standardised Tenants & Residents (STAR) survey of all council house tenant on a bi-annual basis. Out of the 3,277 surveys sent to council home tenants in October 2020, responses were received from 381 households, which is an 11% response rate. Whilst it was expected that it would be more difficult for tenants to respond as normal during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was felt important to run the survey when it was due to help inform plans for the post pandemic recovery. It has been noted by Welsh Government when comparing landlords' data, that the data supplied by Denbighshire was impacted by the pandemic when many other social landlords submitted pre-Covid data. In response to this, WG have asked all councils and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to re-run the STAR survey again for April 2022. This means we will repeat the survey again later this year. To view the full report and analysis of the survey responses please refer to the [Council Housing Tenants Survey report](#), which went to Communities Scrutiny in July 2021.

The purpose of the survey is to **involve** council house tenants who are likely to be those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**. It will also benefit those with the protected characteristics of **Race, Disability, Age, Religion or Belief**. The survey assess overall satisfaction, seeks feedback on priorities for tenants and to help inform plans for future service delivery by taking a **long-term** approach and aiming to **prevent** any problems occurring in the future.

## Discretionary Housing Payments

In July 2021, figures were released from the Department for Work and Pensions that shows Denbighshire County Council paid £251,600 in Discretionary Housing Payments in 2020 to 2021 to those residents in need of extra help with housing costs. This means that the council spent all of the allocated monies received from the Government. The allocation was a 27% increase on the previous year, the figures show. The money helped 578 claimants across Denbighshire in 2020 to 2021, which is 42 more than the year before.

The Local Government Association said the coronavirus pandemic has exposed the level of pressure on low income families. The payment is intended to provide those already in receipt of housing benefits, who are also likely to be at a **socio-economic disadvantage**, with extra help such as covering rent shortfalls or the costs of moving. This will aim to **prevent** these families from further financial issues in both the short and **long-term**.

## External Enveloping and Energy Efficiency Framework for Council Housing

A decision has been made to proceed with the tender of a four-year framework required to procure external enveloping contracts, to maintain the condition of the council's housing stock in line with the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. The next planned capital works will include new roofs, replacement render, roofline replacements and environmental improvements, as well as increase the energy efficiency measures to ensure both corporate and Welsh Government decarbonisation targets are achieved where financially viable. New ways of working have been trialled on our most recently improved properties with the assistance of the Welsh Government Retrofit Grant programme. The programme is currently delivering energy efficiency improvements to 55 homes as part of the existing external enveloping programme. The improvements have included integrated solar PV, increased wall insulation via external wall insulation (EWI), and the installation of battery technology to harness solar gain.

The work has also seen energy monitoring equipment installed to our homes to allow us to think **long-term** by reporting on the benefits of the retrofit works and to track improvements pre and post improvement works. The new framework will not only help to **prevent** climate change; it will also deliver a significant community benefit contribution to the local economy and include apprentice and training opportunities, particularly benefiting those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

## **Homelessness early intervention project**

The council is seeking views of residents, schools, colleges and other key organisations as it looks to develop a new project to help people identify whether they are at risk of homelessness at a much earlier point. The consultation period is now finished and the results will be analysed to start developing this project. The aim of this engagement is for the council to **involve** residents and key stakeholders to shape what the project should look like. This method aims to take a **long-term** approach to **prevent** homelessness to see if the council and other organisations can work with at-risk individuals earlier. This work will particularly benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

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

Measures: Priority for improvement

Projects: Good

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

As at July 2021, the coverage of superfast broadband (>30mbps) in Denbighshire was at 92.63%; a very small increase of 0.40% since March.

As at July 2021, 4.34% of premises had broadband of 10mbps or below. This is a 0.11% improvement on the previous period; however, we have not seen significant improvements in performance in this area since January 2020. The Wales figure is at 2.33%.

Data for the availability of 4G signal from all operators being available on Denbighshire's A and B roads was published in May 2021. At this point, 49.2% of roads had 4G signal from all operators. Our ambition at this stage was to have 60% availability as a minimum.

56% of transactions were undertaken via the web during April to June 2021, compared to the total number of transactions undertaken using all access channels. This is a 4% increase from the same period in 2019.

67% of damaged roads and pavements were made safe within the target time. During 2020 to 2021 the council suspended its normal highways inspection schedules, focussing only on strategic routes, i.e. our winter maintenance / gritting routes. Once full inspections resumed in 2021 to 2022 we inevitably picked up a large number of Category 1 defects, which subsequently created a backlog of work. We have been working through this backlog during the summer and are confident that performance will improve by quarter 3.

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

#### **On Target: Superfast Broadband and Mobile Networks**

The Digital Support Officer continues to support individuals and businesses struggling with poor connectivity. To date, 116 individuals and businesses have been advised, and 56 of these have found a solution to their issues. Between April and June there were also 11

new enquiries for digital community support, 2 of which identified themselves as business. Work has continued with the 16 Community Fibre Partnerships and Openreach, but was partially held up for some time due to the delay in Welsh Government releasing the second phase of the Gigabit Top-up Vouchers. We are also continuing to pressure Openreach to progress the Nantglyn (and surrounding villages) project. This process is taking longer than expected.

Remaining project budget will be reallocated to pursue solutions to white properties in the county and we will be appointing an additional Digital Support Officer.

### **On Target: Digital Exclusion**

The project successfully launched library digital spaces that include solo digital rooms and 1:1 spaces, and in the case of Denbigh Library, a dedicated pod. These spaces are being prioritised for use by the Department for Work and Pensions, Working Denbighshire, and other providers focussed on supporting people to gain employment.

Some workstreams continue to be delayed by Covid-19 and these will be re-scoped over the next period.

### **On Target: Infrastructure for Events**

Project representatives have attended all six Member Area Groups to communicate the aims, criteria and timelines of the targeted support package fund. And letters explaining the scheme were sent to all City, Town and Community Councils (CTCCs). The [fund is now live for applications / expressions of interest](#), and will close on 30 September 2021.

A vehicle and trailer has been ordered to support the mobile equipment hire scheme and work is underway on vehicle branding. The project is aiming to have a booking system in place by December, 2021.

Promoter engagement has been put on hold until the autumn, 2021, in preparation for Summer 2022.

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

The Corporate Plan Programme Board has asked for a business case to develop a 'Sustainable Transport Plan'. The plan will support the carbon reduction agenda.

## Annual or biennial measures

### 2019 to 2021 data

Measure	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	Status
The percentage of principle A roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	3.6	3.5	Acceptable
The percentage of non-principal/classified B roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	5.3	5	Priority for improvement
The percentage of non-principal/classified C roads that are in overall poor condition – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	8.2	7.6	Good
The percentage of adults (aged 16 or over) who have used the internet within the last 3 months (Conwy and Denbighshire) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	87.7	89.8	Acceptable

### Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014 to 2019

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

## Quarterly or biannual measures

Measure	Quarter 1 2020 to 2021	Quarter 2 2020 to 2021	Quarter 3 2020 to 2021	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of Superfast Coverage in Denbighshire (>30 Mbps) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	92	91.83	91.87	92.23	92.63	Priority for improvement

Measure	Quarter 1 2020 to 2021	Quarter 2 2020 to 2021	Quarter 3 2020 to 2021	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of premises with Broadband of 10 Mbps or below – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	4.63	4.76	4.71	4.45	4.34	Acceptable
The percentage of transactions undertaken via the web, compared to the total number of transactions undertaken using all access channels	52	48	50	50	56	Does not apply Count only
The percentage of mobile 4G road signal (all operators) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	45.48	Data pending	49.8	Data pending	49.2	Priority for improvement
Percentage of damaged roads and pavements made safe within target time (CAT1 - Category 1 defects dealt within timescale) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data due to Covid-19	No data due to Covid-19	No data due to Covid-19	87	67	Priority for improvement

## Well-being and Equality

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



## Electric vehicle charging

New legislation has brought the date for the ban on sales of petrol and diesel vehicles forward to 2030 with the sale of hybrid cars to cease in 2035. Whilst electric vehicle ownership in Denbighshire is still low, it is expected that this will start to change as we move towards this deadline.

A lack of Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure is considered to be one of the major barriers to people making the transition to EV Ownership and there are very few Electric Vehicle Charging Points currently available to the public away from the A55 corridor. In addition, not every residential property will have provision for their own off-street charging.

During the quarter, the council confirmed plans to progress a pilot project to install Electric Vehicle Fast Charging Points in eight locations across the county. This is intended to provide Charging Points both near to key routes in the county, and also to trial the provision of Charging Points near some residential areas to provide an option for residents without off road parking / charging options. We hope to access some grant funding from the Office of Zero Emissions Vehicle Off-Street Charging Scheme towards some of these Charging Points.

This pilot project compliments other EV projects: EV taxis and expansion of the council's own EV fleet and charging infrastructure. As our learning grows we will be in a position to consider future provision and / or other phases.

This pilot project could benefit those who are at a **socio economic disadvantage** because the operational model will allow some council input into the tariff setting. However, whilst the aim is to manage the costs to the consumer, it will still need to be a commercially viable model. The pilot project will apply the five ways of working under the sustainable development principle, looking to **long-term** solutions that **prevent** further harm and pollution of our environment, **integrating** and **collaborating** with existing schemes and partner goals to combat Climate Change, whilst of course **involving** residents in the development of our infrastructure. The locations selected to be taken forward in this Phase 1 pilot scheme were identified following a detailed feasibility study.

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

Measures: Acceptable

Projects: Good

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

Domestic Crime in Denbighshire increased in the first quarter of 2021 to 2022; in terms of the overall trends, the levels fluctuate on a weekly basis. As a whole, North Wales has seen a 4.1% increase in Domestic Crime so far in 2021 to 2022. The cumulative number of repeat victims of domestic violence being identified in Denbighshire for the first quarter of this financial year is 148. This is a 1.4% increase compared to the same time last year (146 victims). As a whole, North Wales has seen a -4.7% decrease in repeat victims of domestic violence in this reporting period for 2021 to 2022. The number of repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse in this reporting period has decreased significantly in Denbighshire by -30.8% compared to the same time last year. The overall picture for North Wales in this quarter shows repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse decreased by -44.6%.

Within the national Dewis Cymru website the number of resources for Denbighshire stands at 565 at the end of June. This is an increase of 20.21% on the figures we saw for the same period the previous year. It is possible that the Covid-19 pandemic has led people and service providers to use this platform more regularly. At the end of June 2021, there were 10,962 resources for Wales on Dewis Cymru, and 2,794 for North Wales.

The number of carer assessments that took place during April to June is 114. This is 2.7% higher than the same period last year (111 assessments). Support for carers has continued and community support has been available regardless of whether carers have received an assessment.

Data for the average length of time adults (aged 65 or over) are supported in residential care homes remains the same as the last reporting period, at 1,053 days. It is likely that this figure is still due to the Covid-19 pandemic guidelines around isolating and shielding of vulnerable residents. Although our figures remain high in relation to the Wales average (800), it is understood that Denbighshire has a high average age population. We are still within our target of 1,200 days.

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

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

Draft documents to support an engagement policy and a framework have been written and will need to be peer-reviewed by Engagement Champions during quarter 2 of the current financial year.

Work is ongoing to investigate a replacement for the County Conversation Portal. A change request report was submitted to the Corporate Plan Programme Board and approved in principle on July 7, 2021. This means that the reallocation of underspend from elsewhere in the project, caused as a result of late project award and Covid-19 preventing some planned activities, can go ahead.

### **Experiencing Obstacles: Supporting Carers**

The Supporting Carers Project Team is continuing to address challenges and mitigate any risks. The Denbighshire Carers Strategy Group has continued to meet and share information throughout the pandemic, including with Third Sector organisations, and is considering how it can resume face-to-face support. NEWCIS organised a test event, a socially distanced walk, organised around the Marine Lake in Rhyl, as part of the local celebrations for National Carers' Week; this provided an opportunity to gauge how carers felt about meeting together after so long and to also risk assess and monitor any practical issues, with a view to resuming more of a hybrid delivery model in the longer-term.

We have learned over the course of the pandemic that some carers have engaged with technology, others have not. A joint pilot project has started with Conwy County Council and Hafal, with funding for the next twelve months, to develop a Push to Talk social network group for carers, who have expressed interest in being part of the pilot scheme. Each carer will have a button to press, which is connected to their telephone line and does not require the Internet. Using this system, carers will be carefully matched according to their stated time preferences when they would like to receive a call from another carer, with the intention of preventing isolation and loneliness and address digital exclusion.

Further progress has also been made with the review of the carer referral process, involving input from NEWCIS and Community Support Services operational team

managers. Business Systems are also continuing their work to ensure that Denbighshire's recording methods are consistent with other local authorities and prepared to collect data against the Welsh Government's improved performance framework (introduced in April 2020).

During Carers Week, which took place June 7 to 13, the council took the opportunity to inform unpaid carers of the support available to access short respite breaks. This allows carers to balance life alongside caring, which is important not only for the carer, but also for the person they care for. A respite break from caring can include overnight stays in a local hotel, with domiciliary agency workers providing a sitting service or a Bridging the Gap voucher to provide home help to allow short periods of respite. Other support includes options for the cared for person to have a short-term stay in local residential homes or extra care housing schemes. The council has also recently refurbished two properties in Ruthin and Corwen, to allow respite stays. For more information, contact [Single Point of Access](#).

### **On Target: Reduce Domestic Abuse**

Early intervention for children Domestic Abuse, Recovering Together (DART) training will not be possible until face-to-face training is permitted. Safety, Trust and Respect (STAR) programmes are also on hold and the staff resources are not available to develop Spectrum (a whole school approach to tackling domestic abuse). The 'Healthy Together' programme, a child intervention off the shelf programme, is being looked into. Spectrum training for schools will be further pursued later in the year

Ask and Act training: thirty-six level 2 train the trainers are available and five level 3 champions. Welsh Government have cut level 2 funding for roll out and a decision was made to use RDA funds to help fund level 2 across DCC. £3,000 will be allocated initially.

The Denbighshire County Council domestic abuse policy (including referral process) has been updated and forms part of the council's wider work to reduce domestic abuse, and will support employees who are experiencing domestic abuse or have experienced it in the past. It provides guidance to managers on how to recognise signs of the domestic abuse and what support is available to their staff, as well as offering domestic abuse leave that will allow employees to seek safe housing or attend medical appointments and counselling.

## **On Target: Working towards becoming a Dementia friendly council**

The Dementia Friendly Council (DFC) Project Team secured recognition from the Alzheimer's Society (AS) for working towards becoming a Dementia friendly organisation. Within the first twelve months of this recognition we have:

- completed the majority of our action plan activities, despite the impact of Covid-19 restrictions and the inability to meet face-to-face.
- Shared good practice across all council services through information on LINC.
- Promoted appropriate training to increase awareness of dementia throughout the council.
- Extended and consolidated our connections with dementia friendly communities and groups across Denbighshire and the Region.
- Submitted our first annual self-assessment of our effectiveness over the first year of recognition with AS, and documented our forward work plan for the coming year, which can be added to and updated after each DFC meeting.

Stronger links have been forged with the DVSC Dementia Aware Communities project and members of this group attend their regular meetings. Representatives from some communities working toward getting Dementia Friendly status also attend this meeting and the joint working has proved beneficial in terms of mutual support and meeting the requirements of the dementia action plan.

Denbighshire was well represented in social media and various awareness raising activities in Dementia Action week, May 17 to 23, 2021, and the Steering Group raised funds for the Alzheimer's Society. The project manager has received training on Digital storytelling and the first regional subgroup has been held to look at the 'Get there Together' Project with support from the council's Communications Team. The group is working more closely with the regional team and working collectively to improve services for those living with dementia. We are currently looking in particular at areas such as short breaks and respite provision, using a creative and flexible approach.

## **Completed: Rhyl Community Development**

All works are now complete for the West Rhyl Safer Streets Project and a celebration event is being held at the new community food garden on August 3, 2021. All involved in the creation and delivery of projects, including the Community Champions, will receive recognition and thanks for their commitment throughout the planning and implementation stages. The event will also see the official opening of the community garden, which will be handed over to the residents to start enjoying and to grow their own food, plant the flower beds, and enjoy social interaction. They will be supported by Denbighshire County Council's Countryside Services going forward.

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

During April to June we have supported 53 new projects / groups and provided ongoing support to 9 others. In addition to our continued support of community projects and promoting awareness of funding opportunities, the Community Development Team, along with colleagues, were involved in the assessment and submission of applications to the UK Community Renewal Fund. In total 31 applications were received, and after a robust assessment process 15 projects were shortlisted for submission to the value of £2,858,838. The outcome of the submission is expected late July from UK Government.

The Community Development Team has been working with ICT to develop its own custom CRM system to record and track all enquiries and requests for support. This is currently in a testing stage. At the same time, we have reviewed website content and included information about how to keep in contact with our mailing list. The team has also been involved in the promotion of the Events Infrastructure Funding, attending Member Area Group (MAGs) meetings to discuss the opportunities available to Denbighshire communities that host events. Community Development Officers have also recently attended grant panels for Burbo Bank and Gwynt y Môr windfarm funds.

## **Annual or biennial measures**

2020 to 2021 data for the following measures is not expected until the carers' and residents' surveys are run in late-summer and autumn respectively.

Measure	2018 to 2019	Status
The percentage of people reporting they have received the right information or advice when they needed it – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	88	Acceptable
The percentage of carers reporting they feel supported to continue in their caring role – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	55	Priority for improvement
The percentage of people reporting that they know who to contact about their care and support – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	84	Acceptable
The percentage of people who agree "my local area is a place where people will pull together to improve the local area" – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	59	Acceptable
The percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	27	Priority for improvement

### Quarterly or biannual measures

Measure	Quarter 1 2020 to 2021	Quarter 2 2020 to 2021	Quarter 3 2020 to 2021	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Status
The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat victims of Domestic Abuse including non-crime occurrences (3 or more in 12 months, measured as year to date)	146	247	371	555	148	Does not apply Count only

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
The cumulative (year to date) number of repeat offenders of Domestic Abuse (3 or more in 12 months)	26	43	70	108	18	Does not apply Count only
The number of live resources on the Dewis Cymru Platform – Benchmarked Locally	470	543	562	623	565	Excellent
The number of assessments of need for support for carers undertaken during the year	111	320	404	878	114	Does not apply Count only



<b>Measure</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
The average length of time adults (aged 65 or over) are supported in residential care homes – Benchmarked Nationally	984	1,028	1,046	1,053	1,053	Priority for improvement

## **Well-being and Equality**

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

### **Time to Change, Wales**

The council has signed up the Time to Change Wales Employer Pledge to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination. It is a national programme run by the charities Hafal and Mind Cymru. We want to help break the silence and end the stigma around mental health. One in four of us will be experiencing a mental health problem at any one time. Nine in ten people who have experienced a mental health problem have faced negative treatment from others as a result. This pledge is a public commitment to changing the way we think and act about mental health at every level of this organisation. By choosing to be open about mental health, we are all part of a movement that's changing

the conversation around mental health and ensuring that no one is made to feel isolated or alone for having a mental health problem.

This work supports the protected characteristic of **Disability** and it is fully accessible to all personnel. It is an excellent example of **collaboration** that seeks to immerse and **involve** personnel who have experienced mental health issues, offering them help and support to motivate them in the **long-term**.

## **Dementia Friendly Organisations**

In response to research revealing the challenges that Covid-19 presents for people living with dementia, the National Health Service Wales' 'Get There Together' project has created a series of encouraging videos. The films are 'digital stories' to reassure anyone who is apprehensive about getting back out into their communities and they aim to lessen anxiety and reduce isolation as restrictions ease. The Alzheimer's Society reported that nearly half (46%) of people living with dementia state that the pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health, with over 1 in 3 reporting having lost confidence in going out and carrying out daily tasks. Denbighshire County Council, through the Dementia Friendly Council and the Ageing Well in Denbighshire groups, has promoted 'Get There Together' and the resources available, particularly the films created. You can see the films using the links below:

- [English](#)
- [Welsh](#)

This initiative directly benefits the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Disability**; however, it is fully accessible to everyone, thus **all the protected characteristics**. It is an excellent example of **collaboration** that seeks to immerse and **involve** people who are living with dementia, as well as their families and friends, offering help and support to motivate them in the **long-term**.

## **Back to Community Life initiative**

Back to Community Life, is a venture from Improvement Cymru, and which provides resources for community leaders to tailor for people in their local area who are struggling since the pandemic to get back to community life. It is felt that the Get There

Together resources are a much-needed helping hand to guide us in Denbighshire, with familiarity and clarity of surroundings and environments that are part of our daily lives and these are available to all counties in Wales. Many of us have been isolated and impacted by the pandemic, with a loss of routine and connection, and Get There Together provides us with insight and increased motivation to re-engage into community life. [Click here](#) to access Back to Community Life resources.

This initiative it is fully accessible to everyone, thus all the **protected characteristics** but in particular those of **Age and Disability**. It is an excellent example of **collaboration** that seeks to immerse and **involve** people who are struggling with mental health issues and need our support. It helps to reduce isolation and loneliness, and to address support on a **long-term** basis.

### **Carer Support and Recruitment**

Denbighshire County Council held an online care recruitment session on 18 May, with a view to recruiting 18 new staff into a number of care positions, including community based health and social care support workers, day care assistants, night care assistants and domestic assistants. The majority of these roles will be based in the south of the county and successful recruits will be working in the community, supporting people in their own homes. There were also vacancies in our residential care homes, Cysgod Y Gaer, Corwen and Dolwen, Denbigh, for both contracted and supply hours.

This recruitment will directly benefit the protected characteristics of **Age, Disability, Sex, Marriage and Civil Partnership** (particularly in supporting unpaid carers looking after family members, spouse, partner etc.), and those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**. This work, delivered in partnership with our homes, shows good **integration** for recruitment, **collaborative** working and **long-term** thinking. Secured employment opportunities may also benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

### **Denbighshire's Armed Forces Covenant**

Denbighshire County Council has been recognised for its support of the armed forces community. The council is one of 24 Welsh organisations and private sector employers to have received a Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Silver Award 2021 from the Ministry of Defence. The ERS encourages employers to support defence and is open

to employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

Denbighshire County Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2019. The official presentation of the award will take place at the Armed Forces in Wales and ERS Silver Awards Ceremony in Cardiff on November 25, 2021.

Working Denbighshire has also recently been awarded a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to employ a 'Force for Change' Employment Mentor. Funding will help support individuals that have served in the Armed Forces and are in or at risk of being in poverty and who need guidance and support to gain employment. This mentoring scheme has already supported many veterans with employment and education gaps. For more information, visit our [Working Denbighshire webpage](#).

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

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

Measures: Good

Projects: Excellent

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

Our measures framework for this priority is entirely concerned with annual data. Three measures are derived from our Residents' Survey, which is next due in the autumn, 2021; and two further measures, highlighted in the table below, are not yet ready to report on.

Following analysis of the baseline data presented in the last report, performance thresholds have now been determined for our new measures around the council's Carbon and Ecologically Positive Programme up until the end of the strategy in 2030. Performance is currently deemed Excellent for business miles and Good for commuter miles, Good for carbon emitted through our supply chains, and Acceptable for land in the highest categories of species richness. Performance in these measures must, however, be caveated with an acknowledgement of the impact of the exceptional circumstances during which performance was recorded under Covid-19 restrictions. It is likely that we will see an increase in our Carbon output during 2021 to 2022.

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

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

Delivery confidence for our Climate and Ecological Change Programme will be reported in two ways going forward, looking at in-year delivery confidence; and delivery confidence at the end of our strategy in 2030, based on performance to date. At present, the in-year delivery confidence is reported as experiencing obstacles. Moving projects from concept / development phase into delivery phase has taken longer than expected due to staff capacity, resulting in sign-off by the Strategic Investment Group for 2021 to 2022 capital projects being secured later than anticipated. This has compressed delivery time and will cause additional risk to projects, particularly in Buildings and Carbon Sequestration workstreams. That said, it is still expected that there is enough time before March 2022 to complete most of the activity intended.

The 2030 delivery confidence is reported as compromised, largely due to deliverability of the carbon sequestration target. Options around trying to do more on the carbon emission reduction side forms part of paper around 2020 to 2021 performance that will be discussed at the next Operational Programme Board meeting.

Highlights since the last report include the launch of our new climate and ecological change intranet pages to help staff understand what the climate emergency means for them; the introduction of a new Climate Change e-learning module; and the publication of our e-newsletter to councillors and those who have signed up to our green mailing list.

### **On Target: Tree Planting**

The Project remains 'on target' and the council has submitted its annual claim and report to Natural Resources Wales, who administer the PLANT Scheme. The status of the project will remain unchanged until the start of the next planting season in Autumn 2021.

### **On Target: East Rhyl Coastal Defence**

The East Rhyl flood defence construction remains on target for construction. Rock revetment work on the shoreline is completed and promenade work is progressing to plan. Financial spend remains on target with 70.76% of the estimated outturn costs now spent. The outturn cost estimate for project construction is £20.3m, whilst the total budget available is £27.5m. Completion date for the overall project is June 2022.

The council is now inviting residents, business and visitors to have their say on a new bid for funding to improve coastal defences in central Rhyl, between the Drift Park and Splash Point. Options include scour protection and concrete repairs to the existing sea wall, a concrete revetment to absorb energy from the waves and to provide access to the beach, a new flood defence wall and raising the height of the promenade and widening the promenade behind the Rhyl Central car park. The consultation will be live from July 21 until August 11. Further details and a questionnaire on the proposals are available through our [County Conversation Portal](#).

### **Experiencing Obstacles: Improving Biodiversity**

Many of our biodiversity project's activities are still paused owing to the pandemic, including group surveying. Surveyors who are able to have members of their 'bubble'

accompany them on surveys are able to continue to undertake their surveys for species, such as adders and sand lizards and dormice. Staff lone surveying is also underway. The North East Wales Adder Monitoring Programme has been successful in locating a population of adders along a roadside near Llandegla, with two other sites locating populations not surveyed since 2017. The natterjack and sand lizard training days will be a mixture of virtual training sessions and on site practical training should pandemic restrictions allow. Guest lectures have concluded for the time being at Glyndwr University.

The Wildflower Project is continuing into 2021 with additional sites being added to the Biodiversity Verge Pilot, bringing the total number of sites now to 58. We have potentially discovered a nationally scarce species growing on one of our Bee Friendly sites; as well as a nationally declining species growing on one of our sites in Prestatyn, called Hound's Tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*) and previously only recorded in Denbighshire 18 times within the last 116 years. Habitat maps for grasslands, freshwater and woodlands have been developed for the Bionet website and will showcase Denbighshire's conservation projects within these habitats. Meetings to expand the Wildflower Project's land coverage have been held with Scottish Power and the Graigfechan Growers Group. An additional 12 acres of land have been put forward by a local resident to be incorporated into the Bee Friendly project. Constructive talks have also been held with the waste services about the disposal of the verge cuttings. The cuttings will now enter the composting stream. Work is underway to coordinate the transfer of the cuttings to designated waste transfer sites.

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

Over the past few months we have been able to steadily return to some amount of community engagement work, including our regular practical volunteer sessions at several sites, and a new weekly session at the Crescent Road allotment, engaging with the community and gaining momentum there. Health walks have restarted, and work has started with a new dementia group to help provide walks and outdoor arts sessions. Several events and school workshops have also been planned for the upcoming months. Support has also been given to the Rhyl Fishing Club and the new community fishing club for kids and young people on the Rhyl Cut, including help maintaining the site.

Habitat works have continued, such as grazing of the new compartment on Prestatyn Wetland and Horton's Nose fencing repairs. The Little tern protection scheme is almost

complete and will soon be dismantled as the colony migrates. Attention will now be turned to carrying out the summer activities and planning for the autumn.

### **On Target: Moorland Management**

Controlled burning training has taken place during this period with North Wales Fire and Rescue Services (NWFRS) and Countryside Staff. The council has also issued joint communications with NWFRS through social media and the press about wildfire risks and safe land management. We have delivered heather and gorse management at three locations on Llantysilio Mountain to reduce fuel load and wildfire risk, including the completion of Phase 1 of the restoration trail.

The council worked closely with the fire Service and local farming community following a recent fire on Llantysilio, with an operational debrief on this event planned for the end of June. We are also networking with the England & Wales Wildfire Forum and Peak District National Park, and working with the North Wales Resilience Forum on a North Wales Regional Wildfire Plan. We have also liaised with a grazier and landowner on the Clwydian Range about proactive management of heather and potential fuel loads.

### **On Target: Living Assets**

Virtual meetings have been held with both Housing and Education to introduce the subject of tree management and our duty of care. Knowledge and understanding of 'Living Assets' is growing within the council as more colleagues seek advice on tree related matters. Support has been provided to colleagues working on the Llangollen 2020 project, for example, to inspect the mature tree on Castle Street, Llangollen. Further discussions will take place with colleagues on a more holistic and strategic approach to tree management. council housing estates will be visited to explore options for tree planting, and will help inform the council's new Tree and Woodland Strategy.

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

Delivery confidence remains at risk due to the impact of Covid-19, but we have nonetheless seen a great many improvements to properties during the last year, not least through the delivery of air source heat pumps (ASHP). We are now aiming to install a further 150 during 2022 to 2023, which will be an upgrade to the majority of the housing stock. Meanwhile, progress continues on our 2021 to 2022 capital works, which mainly



relate to external improvements, including insulation measures and short-term duration heating installation works that are generally easier to deliver to the housing stock in this current time. We are also looking to restart our EPC surveys as soon as restrictions allow.

We are still waiting for further information from the Welsh Government with regards to the new Welsh Housing Quality Standard. We believe the new policy will heavily impact carbon emission targets on a national level and influence future programmes of work, as well as key asset management decisions for our housing stock.

## Annual or biennial measures

### 2019 to 2021 data

Measure	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	Status
Total carbon tonnage emitted through staff commuting – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	1,848	1,719	Good
Total carbon tonnage emitted through business travel – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	550	126	Excellent
Total carbon tonnage emitted through supply chains – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	22,710	22,206	Good
Percentage of council owned and operated land in the highest categories of species richness – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	37.5	38.1	Acceptable
STEAM - Total Economic Impact of Tourism (£ million) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	552.35	Data pending	Excellent
The percentage of existing and acquired council housing stock (1st April 2017 baseline) achieving an EPC (Energy) rating of C or above – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	40	46	Priority for improvement
The annual number of trees planted to increase canopy cover in Rhyl and Denbigh – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	4300	4400	Excellent

### Stakeholder Survey 2018 to 2021

2020 to 2021 data for the following three measures is not expected until the Residents' Survey is run in the autumn, 2021.

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

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

### Quarterly or biannual measures

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

### Well-being and Equality

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

### New Nature Reserve

The council and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) team have worked together with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and European Rural Development Fund, to create a new nature reserve on the former landfill site at Wenffrwd, just outside Llangollen. Visitors are now able to use a small car park at the nature reserve and explore the new site by following the 0.5 miles of new surfaced path that winds through a variety of habitats and offers views of the River Dee and across the valley.

This is a **collaborative** project that will have **long-term** benefits the well-being of residents and visitors, **integrating** the objectives of those partners involved. The reserve will preserve and protect important habitats, **preventing** any harm coming to them. Access improvements on the site will also benefit the protected characteristics of **Disability** and **Age**. Volunteers are invited to get **involved** with future enhancements to the site, including further tree planting, new wildflower areas, and surveys of the wildlife. Contact [clwydianrangeaonb@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:clwydianrangeaonb@denbighshire.gov.uk) for more details.

## **Active Travel**

The second phase of an active travel consultation on improvements to walking and cycling routes in the county was launched in May, working in partnership with Sustrans Cymru. A total of 375 people responded to the first phase, making 456 comments and this feedback has helped inform draft plans for Rhyl, Prestatyn, Meliden, Dyserth, Rhuddlan, Bodelwyddan, St Asaph, Denbigh, Ruthin, Corwen and Llangollen. The project focuses on the 11 towns in Denbighshire selected by Welsh Government as the designated localities in the county. The draft plans show existing routes that already meet active travel standards, routes that require upgrading to meet the standards, and new routes we would like to see built over the next 15 years.

Further work has taken place on a temporary active travel scheme in Llangollen to improve the visibility of temporary rubber kerbs and bollards that were introduced to facilitate social distancing and make it easier for people to travel actively within the town centre, improving air quality and help provide safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Planters will also be introduced, which will be more visually appealing than the rubber kerbs and bollards. Public feedback will continue to be collected throughout the scheme.

**Involving** stakeholders in the development of our active travel routes is key to their **long-term** sustainability and meeting the well-being needs of our residents. Working collaboratively with Sustrans and Welsh Government will hopefully lead to the effective **integration** of national and local objectives, maximising project benefits for our communities, **preventing** disruption and benefiting health. This project also benefits those with the protected characteristics of **Disability** and **Age**, improving access in and around our key settlements

## Dark Night Skies

A public consultation has been launched on Planning for Dark Night Skies in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. One of the recognised special qualities of the AONB is its tranquil nature, which includes the opportunity to experience dark night skies. The AONB has some of the darkest skies in Wales and the draft SPG seeks to conserve and enhance this special quality by providing guidance for developers and others on dark sky friendly lighting design. The consultation will run until 5.00pm on August 9, 2021 and may be accessed through the [County Conversation Portal](#).

Being delivered in partnership with our neighbouring planning authorities, this project shows good **integration** of goals, **collaborative** working, and **long-term** thinking. It seeks to **involve** all interested stakeholders and **prevent** and future deterioration of our unique environment.

## Supporting Tourism

A suite of tourism-related marketing resources for businesses to use has been launched as part of Denbighshire's Destination Management Plan, to encourage a safe and responsible travel ethos. This includes encouraging visitors to plan, prepare and pre-book to ensure a positive experience, coastal safety tips, and outdoor safety messages to ensure people have the right skills, knowledge and gear before venturing out. The new Countryside Code is also highlighted to encourage visitors and residents to protect the environment by taking litter home, keeping dogs under control, following signs and keeping to marked paths, closing gates and parking responsibly. A suite of social media graphics based around the key messages has been produced for businesses and Tourism Ambassadors as well as a bank of professional images to promote the area.

Denbighshire is also encouraging people to learn and appreciate more about the area by becoming a Denbighshire Tourism Ambassador. A series of free, interactive online modules with quizzes have been produced on various themes. There is currently over 275 Ambassadors and the scheme, which started in Denbighshire, is now expanding to other areas across Wales. Denbighshire's two staffed Tourist Information Centres are now open to assist visitors with accommodation, activities, dining out and travelling around the county. Llangollen is open Wednesday, Friday and Saturdays, 9.30am to 5:00pm and Rhyl

Tourist Information Centre is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays, 9.30am to 4:00pm.

Proactively working in this **collaborative** way with partners and business, and **involving** residents and visitors by sharing knowledge and advice in these ways will help to **integrate** our shared ambitions for a safe, protected environment that we can also enjoy and benefit from. Above all it will **prevent** harm coming to our rich heritage and environment, respecting and preserving these important assets for future generations and benefiting the well-being of all.

### **Carbon Offsetting**

Ruthin-based Adventure Tours UK has partnered with the Clwydian Range & Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on a carbon offsetting project, committing to plant one tree for every person that travels on one of its small group adventures or tailor-made activity holidays. Almost two acres of land within Moel Famau Country Park has been designated for the new native woodland project over the next three years. This new woodland at Tyn-y-Pistyll is expected to create an important habitat for a number of native wildlife species.

**Collaborative** projects such as this allow us to **integrate** our ambitions for a diverse natural environment whilst maximising on resources. It will also make visitors feel that they are **involved** in our important work to protect and enhance the countryside for the **long-term**, and **prevent** any harm to native species.

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

Measures: Priority for improvement

Projects: Good

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

As outlined in the previous report, Welsh Government's curriculum reforms and the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic has left us with very few measures against which we can report within this priority. During the last few months of the Summer Term, attendance continued to be adversely affected as class cohorts self-isolated or schools were made to close; and attainment data of course is no longer comparable, being based on teacher assessment and not examination results. This poses a real challenge to the council in understanding how our schools are performing, but we will continue to work with our School Improvement partners in GwE to ensure that the very best outcomes are being achieved by our pupils. A joint report by GwE and the Interim Head of Education was recently taken to [Performance Scrutiny in June](#) on how our regional consortium and the Local Authority are supporting schools in the implementation of the new curriculum for Wales.

There is only one measure with new data in this report, which relates to the 18 to 24 claimant count. First thing to note is that data presented previously has now been revised downward by the Office for National Statistics ([see table below](#)), but our ranking remains amongst the worst in Wales, ranking 19<sup>th</sup> out of 22 as at June 2021. In line with national trends, however, quarter 1 figures reveal that Denbighshire's claimant count has fallen from a high of 12.4% to 10%. We remain behind the Wales average, which is now at 7%. Prior to the pandemic, Denbighshire was 2% behind the Wales average. The UK claimant count also remains above the Welsh average, now at 7.5%.

The only other item of note relates to our Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) measure to do with feelings about school. Our PASS contract has recently come to an end, but has now been renegotiated with the same provider. We will, however, only be reporting this measure annually going forward as a result of the new contract, not every six months as we had been during the initial implementation / monitoring period for the survey.

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

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

Feasibility and design works for Band B have started. All projects are now being progressed on an individual basis and will require separate Business Cases to be developed and submitted via the Strategic Investment Group / Cabinet for submission to the Welsh Government. The Modernising Education Programme Board will continue to provide an oversight of the progression of the Programme. Regular meetings are held with the Welsh Government to discuss progress on the programme.

Work is progressing to enable procurement to commence in the autumn of 2021 for a lead contractor to develop proposals for a new school building for Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn. Design and Construction have been commissioned to examine options for Ysgol Pendref in Denbigh and for Ysgol Bryn Collen / Ysgol Gwernant in Llangollen. Initial discussions have also taken place regarding Denbigh High School.

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

The start of construction for the Oak Tree Centre extension has been delayed due to difficulty in appointing a contractor, although one has now been appointed. Work is scheduled to start on site in September, and the completion date for the project is now anticipated to be in the summer of 2022.

In regards to Ysgol Twm o'r Nant's childcare facility, there have also been delays in receiving information from structural and mechanical engineers (external to the council) to inform the tender documentation. It is hoped that the tender will be issued at the end of June, 2021, with construction starting in the autumn.

### **On Target: Welsh Language Centre**

The centre is finally open for business, with all four rooms being used during the summer term by Cylch Meithrin Llanelwy, Ysgol Glan Clwyd, Mudiad Meithrin and Bangor University. It is expected that usage will increase in September with latecomer provision.

### **On Target: School Nutrition Project**

The project suffered a slight set back in May with the departure of our School Nutrition Coordinator; however, the Project Group has successfully managed to appoint to the role in its final year, to take forward the important work of recruiting schools and delivering classes in partnership with Health colleagues. An evaluation of the project to date has also been produced and shared with the Project Group.

### **Closed: Support for Parents**

This project has now closed following agreement from the Programme Board. The element of the project that was funded by the Corporate Plan, creating staff capacity for the implementation of Solihull Parenting Programme, is now complete. Other areas of work are considered to be ongoing core business now.

### **At Risk: Young Person Employment Bursary**

The council has now broadened the application criteria to the Bursary so as to support more people and businesses in the county during this recovery period. Uptake continues to be slow, however. In order to be eligible you must be living in Denbighshire, earning below the county median salary (£28,199), be in employment (minimum 16 hours), and can clearly demonstrate availability of suitable positions with a Denbighshire based company. Funding of between £250 and £2,000 per person can be awarded for training, development, or accessing mentoring to allow individuals to progress within their current workplace, or with a new employer. So far those who have received the grant have seen their wages increase on average by 24 per cent per annum. Information on the bursary is available on [our website](#).

### **On Target: Pupil Attitude to Self and School (PASS)**

We have reached the end of our four-year pilot of the PASS Survey, and have in this period retendered for a new contract whereby we hope to continue to support schools with this important resource. The final award of the contract is still under consideration.



## **On Target: Work Start**

The reopening of local businesses has seen a dramatic increase in demand across the Working Start scheme. To date the service has allocated 60 placements – 46 paid and 19 unpaid – with a further 15 in the pipeline. Targets for the programme were recently reviewed with the Programme Board to factor in both operational constraints and also the drop in demand experienced during the peak of the pandemic. The financial re-profile, which highlighted a substantive underspend in the cost allocation for placements, has also allowed us to increase the paid placement target from 45 placements to 70 placements. Following the initial dip, demand for the service is now rising rapidly, and to further support the scheme in the remaining 9 months, it has been agreed to recruit to an additional Employment Coordinator and Administration Officer to support business need.

## **Experiencing Obstacles: Working Denbighshire Ready for Work**

It has been difficult to progress this work under Covid-19 conditions and we have again delayed our careers event from May to July. However, school participation remains tentative under the circumstances. Otherwise a platform for the event has been identified, meeting data protection requirements and receiving ICT and Legal Services approval.

## **On Target: Volunteering**

Following the adoption of the new volunteering policy for the council, the 'One Stop Shop' webpage was relaunched to coincide with Volunteers Week 2021 (1st-7th June). Further volunteering opportunities will be added as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. In addition to this, the Internal Volunteer Network Meeting has met for the first time this year and is in the process of drafting a new Terms of Reference and looking to recruit representatives where there are gaps have been identified across services.

## **Annual or Biennial Measures**

### **2020 to 2021 data**

Measure	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	Status
Percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	94.9	No data due to Covid-19	Excellent
Percentage of pupil attendance in secondary schools – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	93.4	No data due to Covid-19	Priority for improvement
The percentage of children aged 4-5 years who are a healthy weight or underweight (reported one year in arrears) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	Data pending	Data pending	Priority for improvement (based on 2018 data – 67.7%)
Local Authority Points Score Average - KS4 Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate Indicator – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	33	No data due to Covid-19	Excellent
The percentage of children achieving 5 GCSEs A*-C (Level 2, Key Stage 4), including English or Welsh (1st language), Maths and English Literature, by the end of secondary school, against the percentage that achieved the expected standard at the end of primary school (Level 4, Key Stage 2) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	55	No data due to Covid-19	Acceptable
The number of schools providing education through suitability and condition categories C and D – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	30	27	Priority for improvement

### Stakeholder Survey 2018 to 2019

2020 to 2021 data for the following three measures is not expected until the Residents' Survey is run in the autumn, 2021.

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

Measure	2018 to 2019	Status
The percentage of residents that are satisfied that there are opportunities for young people to develop their skills – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	28	Priority for improvement
The percentage of residents that are satisfied that there are leisure opportunities that appeal to young people – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	50	Acceptable

### Quarterly or biannual measures

Measure	Quarter 1 2020 to 2021	Quarter 2 2020 to 2021	Quarter 3 2020 to 2021	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Status
Percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 claiming Job Seekers Allowance – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b>	12.2 Revised down from 13.6	11.9 Revised down from 13.2	11.9 Revised down from 13.4	12.4 Revised down from 13.9	10.0	Priority for improvement
The percentage of pupils (using Pupil Attitudes to Self and School - PASS) who respond positively against pupils' feelings about school – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data due to Covid-19	Does not apply Bi-annual	87.2	Does not apply Bi-annual	No data New contract agreed – to be reported annually going forward	Good

### Well-being and Equality

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

## Summer Reading Challenge

Children across Denbighshire are being encouraged to become heroes and join the Summer Reading Challenge through their local library. This year's theme is 'Wild World Heroes', which will inspire children to take action for nature and the environment as they enjoy reading. The Reading Agency and libraries have partnered with WWF to create an exciting adventure in the fictional town of 'Wilderville'. Children can take part at their local library or online through the official digital challenge platform. Please click on to [the Summer Reading Challenge website](#) for further information.

Working **collaboratively** with the WWF is a great way to enhance this summer's reading challenge, but also raise awareness around important **long-term** issues such as climate change, **integrate** partner goals, and increase knowledge about our environment to **prevent** harm coming to it. Engaging and **involving** children in this creative way will also ultimately benefit their reading ability at an important stage of their development, giving them key skills for their **long-term** futures.

## Supporting the Economy

The council has been praised by Raisin UK, an online savings platform, for its continued commitment to protecting, supporting and providing economic prosperity across the county. Denbighshire was ranked number one for Welsh economies when it comes to business and is expected to bounce back quickly after the pandemic. The council's ongoing work in providing help to all business areas to increase resilience in the local economy and support communities has been recognised despite the difficulties of the pandemic.

Maintaining a strong economy is a key priority for the council at this difficult time, ensuring that our residents, particularly those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**, are protected, and any harm is **prevented**. **Collaborating** with the county's businesses allows us to **integrate** our ambitions for **long-term** prosperity in Denbighshire.

## School Meals

The Denbighshire School Catering Service has experienced an average price increase of 8% across food suppliers, which has unfortunately led to the need to increase the cost of school meals by 20p from September. This is the first rise introduced by the council in

three years, and even after this increase, prices will still be relatively low compared to other local authority areas. The School Catering Service has also just been recognised as one of the top six best performing services in the UK for 2019 to 2020.

Providing affordable, nutritious meals is important for the **long-term** development of our young people, especially those experiencing **socio economic disadvantage**. The council is committed to working **collaboratively** with schools and suppliers to guarantee a service that represents good value for money, and hopefully mitigate or **prevent** any adverse impact from further cost increases. Our School Catering Service has been praised for the way in which it **involves** pupils and parents in the design of its menus and services, also **integrating** with Public Health Wales' expectations for providing nutritious meals.

## **Bwthyn y Ddol**

The council is involved in a **collaborative** project with Conwy County Borough Council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to provide a new accommodation and assessment centre for vulnerable children in Eirias Park, Colwyn Bay. The centre will offer a **long-term** solution that **integrates** and **involves** the ambitions of partners and users to provide local services that **prevent** children with complex needs being sent hundreds of miles away for care. The company originally contracted to carry out the works has unfortunately entered administration, but the partnership has now agreed to enter a streamlined tender process. The project is fully funded through the Welsh Government's Intermediate Care Fund (ICF), with a requirement to spend the funding by March 2022 and for groundworks to be completed by the end of November 2021. As soon as the evaluation of any new tenders had been completed Welsh Government would be advised of any impact on the costings and timescales. The project will benefit those with the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Disability**.

## **Additional Learning Needs**

A report was recently taken to [Performance Scrutiny in June](#) on the council's progress in meeting the statutory requirements of the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, which seeks to create a unified system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 years with Additional Learning Needs, in order to deliver a fully inclusive education system in Wales. There are provisions from the Act, which also apply to schools, that will go live in September, 2021, and will impact on provision, documentation /

development plans, ICT systems, budgets and training. The council is working **collaboratively** with colleagues across the region look at these provisions and **integrate** opportunities to maximise resources where possible. The act will benefit those with the protected characteristics of **Age** and **Disability**, and hopefully improve the planning and delivery of provision for learners by **involving** them more and their needs at the centre of the process. This work focusses on the **long-term** needs of pupils and will **prevent** any learners being excluded from beneficial services that will help them to overcome barriers to learning, hopefully identifying needs early and putting timely interventions in place.

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

Measures: Acceptable

Governance Areas: Good

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

Below is a brief update on any new data received for performance measures identified in support of Corporate Health. Please see the tables below for the current outturn and past performance, where the information is available. A performance status has been applied against each measure based on a local determination of excellent performance and reflecting our ambition for the council.

Following analysis of the baseline data presented in the last report, performance thresholds have now been determined for our key measure to become a Net Carbon Zero authority by 2030. Performance is currently deemed as Good; however, this must be caveated with an acknowledgement of the impact of the exceptional circumstances during which performance was recorded under Covid-19 restrictions. It is likely that we will see an increase in our Carbon output during 2021 to 2022.

With this report, 41% of our Corporate Plan measures currently present as a priority for improvement, down from 49% in the last report. Two of our corporate projects are currently presenting as 'compromised' (Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project; and Queen's Buildings), and 96% are being regularly updated by project managers. We have received no formal recommendations for improvement from external regulators (Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and Audit Wales), and there have been no Low Assurance reports from Internal Audit for this period.

Our measure on budget variance (i.e. what we have and receive versus what we are spending) is 708k as at June 2021. The council's reserves remain at £7.135m.

The percentage of negative news stories about the council (taken as a proportion of all news stories about the council) has fallen between April to June, down from 24 to 10%. This represents 21 negative stories out of a total of 210. Our average for 2020 to 2021 was 11%.

The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter has increased slightly from 57 to 62%, moving from an acceptable position to one of Priority for Improvement. This represents 65 out of 104 complaints. By comparison, we received only 49 complaints for the same period the previous year. The rate upheld is also higher than our annual average for 2020 to 2021 (60%).

As at June 2021, sickness absence stood at 7.12 days, up from 6.47 in the last period. Due to Covid-19 we have no comparable data for the same period last year.

The percentage of staff who have had at least 3 one-to-one meetings in the last 12 months has fallen from 45 to 44% this quarter. This measure being new to quarter 4, we have no comparable data for the same period last year. It is also understood to be a complex policy to implement where staff are not desk based or supervised from different locations. HR Business Partners will work with management teams to understand performance better and where improvement can be made.

The council's spend with local suppliers fell from 36% to 33% during April to June. Our ambition is for 40% of all our procurement spend to be with local suppliers in Denbighshire. There are a range of reasons for this falling below our ambition; some of which are outside of our control. For example, we may purchase goods and services from suppliers within Denbighshire that are not included in this figure because the invoice is paid to a regional or head office outside of the county.

75% of contracts (over £25k and under £1,000k) contained community benefits during quarter 1 (9 out of 12 procurements). No collaborative procurement activities were undertaken during April to June, but none were missed either. There are, however, 13 potential collaborative procurements on the horizon and these will be developing in the coming months.

Our final measure considers the council's efforts to support residents into work through placements that we ourselves offer within the council. During April to June we successfully supported 64 individuals. This is a sharp increase on the trend for the whole of last year, aided of course by the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.



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

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

### **Corporate Planning**

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

#### **Appoint a new Chief Executive Officer.**

Following the resignation of the former Chief Executive in April, the council operated well with interim arrangements in place for four months, with both Corporate Directors acting-up in their roles. Following approval of the recruitment process by councillors in May, interviews were held in July, and Graham Boase was successfully appointed as the council's new Chief Executive, starting on August 1, 2021.

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

The project team continues to meet monthly and minutes are published on the council's internal website. The team has considered different workstyles that the council adopts; training and support needed for organisational change; working with other public sector organisations; and new or revised policies that will need to be drawn up. A draft Asset Strategy has also been developed, and work is ongoing on a new "Show Office" in Denbigh. A video outlining what staff can expect on their first day back in the office is also being considered.

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

Throughout the early summer, the Strategic Planning and Performance Team has been running the next instalment of its County Conversation survey, whilst also holding focus groups with residents, councillors and staff to gather feedback on future priorities. The team is also working to update the Conwy and Denbighshire Well-being Assessment in advance of a workshop with Cabinet and SLT in the autumn. Intelligence gathered through these exercises will be presented to the new Council in the summer of 2022 to help guide a final decision on objectives by October.

## **Develop interim Strategic Equality Plan**

An interim Strategic Equality Plan to cover the period between October 2021 to October 2022 has been drafted and will be discussed with Lead Cabinet Members shortly. The document will meet legislative requirements to produce a plan every 4 years, and inform our new Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027.

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

Self-Assessment requirements of the new legislation are already embedded, the council having already agreed its pilot Annual Performance Report in July. A stakeholder survey to be run in the autumn will further satisfy self-assessment requirements, and inform our next report in 2022. Arrangements for a Panel Assessment will be discussed with the new council following the elections in May 2022. Discussions on the arrangements for the implementation of the new Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) will commence from September.

## **Plan for new replacement EU funding arrangements.**

The council continues to monitor the impact of Brexit, and has been working through this period to appoint a Compliance, Monitoring and Administration Officer to support Community Renewal Fund arrangements. The Senior Leadership Team is discussing capacity requirements to manage upcoming Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up funds.

## **Service Challenge Programme re-established for the summer of 2021, giving a particular focus on the strategic direction of services and their recovery post-Covid-19.**

A condensed Service Challenge Programme was held through June and July, during which every service was seen. The shorter timetable and slimmed documentation were well received, facilitating timely discussions about the future direction of services. Regulators were also invited, and again gave positive feedback. A lessons learned document has been created to inform next year's programme. All actions from the Challenges will be included in Service Plans for 2021 to 2022, but the following actions in particular have been pulled out in support of this Corporate Health Outcome and will be reported through this performance update report:

1. Develop proposal to improve ICT provision, fibre security, business continuity, school ICT provision, and digital Denbighshire.
2. Create hubs in areas across Denbighshire where there is poor broadband connection, to assist and enable remote meetings.
3. Work to enable translation provision with Microsoft Teams software.
4. Provide a public statement in support of an accessible and diverse council in advance of the next election period to inform potential candidates.
5. Create a plan to support external partners and businesses to take forward the climate and ecological change programme.
6. Ensure service and corporate risk registers define climate and ecological risks at appropriate levels.
7. Update the Corporate Executive Team on the position with the Corporate Support Services Review.
8. Provide clarity to the Senior Leadership Team on the role of the Project Management Team.
9. Ensure a question is asked at each Service Performance Challenge regarding commitment to customer service.
10. Ensure lessons learnt are captured from previous purchases of buildings.
11. Consider staff capacity to support virtual meetings and the increasing number of Member Task & Finish Groups.
12. Promote adherence to the Procurement Policy across the council.
13. Establish the latest position and level of risk associated with DBS / risk assessment indicators that are, or have been a Priority for Improvement or Acceptable.
14. Explore long-term options for sustaining the Community Benefits Hub.
15. Consider the provisions of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, particularly in regard to Corporate Joint Committee and any associated risks for the council.

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

The council took its draft Annual Governance Statement to the [Governance and Audit Committee in June](#). This document assesses whether the council is complying with the Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (Wales) 2016, and highlights any areas for improvement to governance arrangements. The areas for

improvement that we have identified will be monitored by the Governance and Audit Committee and the Corporate Governance Officers Group.

The Annual Report of the council's Scrutiny Committees for 2020 to 2021 may be read in the papers for [County Council in May](#). It is particularly interesting to note that Scrutiny agreed that the Corporate Priorities, adopted by the Council back in 2017, remained relevant under the pandemic, and perhaps more important than ever. Key topics considered by Scrutiny during the year included service responses to Covid-19; educational achievement; highway maintenance; housing and homelessness; Universal Credit; business recovery; Active Travel; the effectiveness of New Ways of Working; reopening council owned buildings; and Community Resilience. The Cabinet decision around the disposal of land adjacent to Ysgol Pendref was also called in for review.

## **Financial Planning**

### **Delayed Draft Statement of Accounts**

Due to the impact of Covid-19 in 2020 to 2021, the Welsh Government issued guidance that stated the statutory deadlines for the completion of the Draft and Audited accounts would be extended. However, Denbighshire County Council issued a notice to say that we would not be aiming for the statutory early deadline, but would achieve the revised deadlines. The intention was for the draft accounts to be presented to Governance & Audit Committee in July and for the audited accounts in September. However, the production of the Denbighshire Leisure Limited accounts was more complicated than expected and external information took longer to receive than the company expected. Alongside these internal issues, Audit Wales had shared concerns about their capacity to achieve the September deadline for the completion of the audit. We have now agreed to jointly propose that the Audited set of Accounts be finalised and presented to Governance & Audit Committee in November, although they hope to complete the audit work before then. It is important to note that the accounts will still be signed off within the revised regulatory timescales.

### **Internal Audit**

During this period internal audit have conducted three reviews in relation to Financial Planning of the council.

## **Internal Audit of Capital Management**

An internal audit of [Capital Management](#) was conducted in May, 2021. The purpose was to review the controls, procedures and governance arrangements for capital management and investments, including the implementation of the Capital Strategy and Capital plan. The review also considered business continuity and key person risk in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. There were three issues identified during the review as outlined below; which all have agreed actions to diminish the risk:

- Issue 1 – Capital management procedures need to be documented.
- Issue 2 – Finance Asset Register – Control weaknesses, maintenance and reconciliation procedures.
- Issue 3 – Terms of Reference for Asset Management Group and the Strategic Investment Group require review and updating.

Overall, the review identified there were effective controls in place and good examples of working practices, and only minor weaknesses were identified. Therefore, a medium assurance rating was provided.

## **Internal Audit of Treasury Management**

In May, 2021, an internal audit was conducted of [Treasury Management](#). The purpose was to review controls, procedures and practices in relation to treasury management including any changes implemented as a result of Covid-19 and its potential impact on cash flow. There were three issues identified during the review as outlined below; which all have agreed actions to diminish the risk:

- Issue 1 – Weaknesses in risk management – identification and mitigation.
- Issue 2 – Treasury Management procedures are not documented.
- Issue 3 – Recording of Treasury Management decisions.

Overall, the review found effective controls have been identified by the finance team and good examples of working practices including the separation of duties, rota system and Treasury Management approvers checklist. Only minor weaknesses were identified. Therefore, a medium assurance rating was provided.

## **Internal Audit of Revenues & Benefits Service (May 2021) High Assurance**

An annual internal audit review of the [Revenues & Benefits Service](#), working in partnership with Civica was conducted in May, 2021. The review concentrated on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on staff, performance and existing controls. Control Risk Self-Assessment (CRSA) forms were completed and assisted in determining key risks and controls for review supported by sample testing.

On April 1 2015, the council entered into a partnership with Civica to provide its Revenues and Benefits service, and in September 2019, the contract was extended further to March 2025. The Service's work has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the processing of payments for business grants under tight timeframes. The conclusion of the review found 6,887 payments totalling £44 million had been paid to businesses. Another key area of work was the designing of a new process to make payments instead of providing physical Free School Meals (FSMs) to 3,800 eligible pupils.

The Revenues and Benefits service has had to be adaptable in developing new processes quickly and undertaking new activities as a result of Covid-19, but controls and key risks have been managed effectively. Based on the scope of the review, a high assurance was provided overall.

### **Performance Management**

Below is the improvement action that was identified in support of Corporate Health in this area of governance.

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

For year 1, additions have been made to the council's Residents' Survey that will meet new Local Government and Elections Act requirements, help identify areas for improvement, and will inform our Self-Assessment in 2022. The next steps are to work with the Communications Team and Library Services to promote and distribute the Survey, which will be launched in September. The Survey will run for at least six weeks and analysis will be completed in December. The output of the Survey will help inform our annual approach to stakeholder engagement in year 2.

## Other developments in the last period

The Council approved its Annual Performance Report [in July](#), which, together with the implementation of revised service plans from April, discharged its legal duty under sections 2 and 15 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, to secure continuous improvement and assess our performance. The report also piloted our response to the new requirement to self-assess the performance of the council's functions under the new Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act. It was well received by elected members, who specifically challenged the council's performance in relation to the ongoing impact of Covid-19; digital connectivity; the restoration of the Llanerch Bridge; and the sustainability of existing and new housing. The number of people on the SARTH waiting list; the condition of our unclassified roads; youth unemployment; and child poverty were specifically suggested as being areas in need of further scrutiny. The final report is published on our [website here](#), and improvement actions will continue to be monitored through this quarterly performance update and subsequent annual performance / self-assessment reports.

As mentioned [above](#), the Service Performance Challenge Programme was recommenced in June / July, and actions identified through this internal process of self-assessment have been added for monitoring in Service Plans for 2021 to 2022.

The draft Director of Social Services Reports for 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021 went to [Performance Scrutiny in July](#). Overall both reports show that Denbighshire County Council continue to provide good quality social services for children, adults and carers, and that we achieved some excellent performance in areas that are important to our citizens at a time when we were also dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Nine areas for improvement were identified to take forward in 2021 to 2022. The council's Annual Report on Safeguarding Adults was also seen by [Partnerships Scrutiny in July](#), which broadly reported improvement in the consistency and quality of safeguarding work.

Internal Audit have recently reviewed Programme and Project Management arrangements within the council, looking in particular at the project management of SC2, the Queen's Buildings and the Rhyl Regeneration Programme. The report on SC2, which gave a medium assurance, highlighted some inconsistencies with the application of project management methodology, one major risk issue relating to non-compliance with Contract Procedure Rules, and a continuing financial commitment for the site. Overall, however, for

such a large and ambitious project, there was generally a suitable system of governance, risk management and control. A follow-up report on the Queen's Buildings also gave a Medium Assurance rating, following updated project management guidelines; a review of the Stage Review Group process; review of access levels within our Project Management System; and the development of a mechanism to monitor benefits by the Project Board. The Internal Audit review of the [Rhyl Regeneration Programme](#) (Medium Assurance) also highlighted some weaknesses, there being no terms of reference or defined roles and responsibilities for the Programme Board, and no effective mechanism for recording and reporting activities, including risks, benefits and performance. It was recommended that a more permanent solution, consistent with the council's other programme boards, be put in place, also aligning with the work of the Community Development Board.

Finally, Internal Audit conducted a follow-up review of [Contract Management](#) within the council, and concluded again with a Low Assurance rating. Limited progress has been made in addressing the actions as set out in the revised action plan agreed in January 2021. The full implementation of a number of the actions is dependent on the approval of the Contract Management Framework. The draft framework is scheduled to be seen by the Senior Leadership Team in July 2021. Ongoing resource pressures have also restricted the ability to provide appropriate contract management oversight, training and guidance.

## **Risk Management**

Below is the improvement action that was identified in support of Corporate Health in this area of governance.

**Next formal Risk Review in September to give a particular focus to risk appetite to help improve the organisation's understanding of its application.**

This action will be taken forward in the September Review of the Corporate Risk Register, for which meetings with Risk Owners have been scheduled in August. It is our intention to produce a Case Study to share with managers and elected members around the implementation and understanding of Risk Appetite, focussing on a particular risk.

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

Our September review will also take forward actions identified in June's Internal Audit review of Corporate Risk Management, seeking to increase risk owner engagement and



improve the monitoring of control effectiveness. Overall, however, the review found that there were appropriate mechanisms and procedures in place to identify and evaluate the key corporate risks, and there is ongoing progress being made to implement and embed the concept of risk appetite within the council. The summary of the Internal Audit report, which gave a Medium Assurance rating, may be read in the Internal Audit Update that went to [Governance and Audit in July](#).

Internal Audit's Annual Report for 2020 to 2021 may be read in the [Governance and Audit Committee papers for June](#). This concluded that, where significant issues have been identified, overall these have been appropriately addressed, which confirmed that management is responsive and willing to engage to establish good risk and control environments. Internal Audit's work has highlighted some areas of weakness in management of risks and / or controls, which may put achievement of objectives at risk. Improvements are required to address such areas so that the framework of governance, risk management and control is adequate. As in previous years, there were no reports with 'No Assurance' rating issued during the year.

## **Workforce Planning**

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

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

A questionnaire to determine the training and development requirements of managers to effectively manage and lead in the new ways of working has been launched, and feedback from the survey will inform the training plan going forward. A Mental Health policy has now been agreed at Cabinet and will be live shortly. Middle managers are having an awareness session at the Leadership Conference and training has been arranged for all managers and supervisors, commencing in September 2021. Mental Health pages have been published on the internet webpages and the e-learning module will go live once the policy has been published.

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

A new online survey to capture new starter equality information more easily has been in operation for over 18 months. This is resulting in more information being captured (492 records matched to employees since being in operation), and we expect this will be more visible in the next Public Sector Duty report, which will have a full year of new completions. In addition to this, we will be encouraging employees to either complete, or review and update, their equality information held in iTrent when we launch the new version of employee self-serve in early 2022.

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

We complete an annual workforce planning review with all services between October and December each year. The purpose of these reviews is to provide a detailed picture of how effectively the workforce in each service is being supported and managed, the diversity of the service, and to highlight challenges in relation to retaining staff, or indeed challenges that could arise from key personnel moving on from their role. We are working on improving the format and delivery of these reviews over the next year. The need for more formal workplace planning was also identified in a recent [internal audit review](#). The review for posts requiring specific levels of Welsh commenced in December 2019. Unfortunately, this work was paused due to Covid-19, but will restart in October to December 2021.

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

The council's pay policy was updated and approved, following [a report to Council in May 2021](#).

Council gave approval for changes to the Senior Leadership Team structure following a [review of the Education and Children Head of Service role](#). The service will remain as one but with two Heads of Service – one for Education and one for Children's Services. Recruitment is underway.

### **Assets**

#### **Asset Management strategy**

Work has commenced on the drafting of a new asset management strategy and some early internal consultation has taken place. A report is scheduled to be presented to Asset

Management Group (AMG) recommending the proposed priorities for the new strategy on July 19, 2021. If agreed, the first version of the new strategy will be drafted, prior to wider consultation.

The Asset Management Group's Terms of Reference will be reviewed this financial year in order that they remain relevant and align with appropriate legislation and council priorities. We are currently awaiting the revised terms of reference for Strategic Investment Group (SIG), as AMG's terms of reference will need to align and compliment those of SIG.

### **New Ways of Working (NWOW) – Council Buildings Infrastructure**

The council continues to follow the current Welsh Government guidelines in regards to returning to work, and where staff can work from home they should continue to do so. When Welsh Government guidelines change, in the medium-term we are looking to put in place arrangements for a rota system for attendance at the office workplace. This should ensure no more than 50% of staff are in attendance at any one time and allow adequate social distancing.

It should also be noted that the Facilities Management Team have now transferred from Highways and Environmental Services to Finance and Property Services, which should improve efficient working going forward and help with the delivery of the NWOW project.

In terms of building maintenance, business as usual was maintained throughout the pandemic and lock-down periods. Reactive repairs reduced as a result of decreased building utilisation, which enabled more focus on larger planned and capital maintenance projects. Contractor and materials availability were impacted for a short period initially while suitable measures were put in place following risk assessments and clarification of Welsh Government guidance. Similarly, for design and construction aspects, business as usual was maintained throughout these periods. Initial disruption was minimal due to remote working options already being established within the team.

To view the full report and guidance relating to council building, please read the [Covid-19 recovery theme – Council Buildings](#) paper presented to Communities Scrutiny Committee in July 2021.

## School and Non-School Properties Maintenance

A primary function of Denbighshire County Council's property maintenance team is to provide a day-to-day reactive property repair service to both schools and non-schools. Contractors are chosen following a tendering exercise based on cost and quality, and their area of expertise e.g. mechanical or electrical. The framework will support the property maintenance team in maintaining safe and secure public buildings and educational facilities for our young people, whilst utilising local contractors as far as possible, and through the community benefits elements provide work experience opportunities for people finding difficulty securing work placements. The annual spend on repairs and maintenance currently is approximately £2m per annum, so £8m over the life of the Framework. The Framework will allow us to have suitably qualified contractors in place to respond to maintenance issues as required, securing the integrity of our buildings and preventing the closure of buildings that may become unsafe.

## ICT

[Internal Audit reviewed ICT Capacity & Resilience](#) and a moderate assurance rating was given. The scope focused on IT Disaster Recovery Plans and Business Continuity Plans and testing, fall-back arrangements, monitoring and management of network bandwidth capacity, staff capacity including workforce planning specific to ICT.

The number of remote access to the council's network has nearly quadrupled since the pandemic and first national lockdown in March 2020. The review found that despite having mechanisms in place for monitoring the capacity of network bandwidth usage, the current process does not allow monitoring of busy periods.

The council has two server rooms that act as fall-back for each other providing resilience. Arrangements are in place with a supplier to provide a transportable hardware unit to restore systems if servers are inaccessible during a disaster; however, testing of the effectiveness of the arrangements has not been performed in recent years.

Four risks were raised with agreed actions as follows:

1. Timetable developed to prompt review of key ICT policies and plans.
2. Work with external partners to improve bandwidth monitoring reporting mechanisms.

3. Test external disaster recovery solution.
4. HR to lead workforce planning exercises across all services including ICT.

## **Roads**

As part of Denbighshire County Councils £3m commitment to roads in the county during 2021 to 2022, the council is undertaking a £800,000 highways surface dressing programme. This surface dressing programme, designed to seal up roads currently in a reasonable condition to stop further deterioration, will benefit a number of locations across Denbighshire.

Further resurfacing work to improve the condition of our highest priority roads in greatest need will take place this year. The [council's roadworks bulletin](#) will be kept up to date as the details of the roads identified for improvement are publicised.

[A Recovery Plan for Highways and Public Realm](#) was presented to Communities Scrutiny in September 2020 to outline the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic has had. The report details that highways recovery will be in 2 phases:

- Phase 1 is short-term recovery, i.e. the need to resume “normal” highways maintenance activities. This is critical, as the longer we go without returning to “normal”, the harder (and more expensive) it will be to return the network back to the condition prior to the floods of February 2020.
- Phase 2 is the need to establish a more sustainable model of maintaining the highways network to a standard that matches the expectation of our residents and Elected Members in the longer-term.

The recovery plan focusses largely on short-term recovery (Phase 1). Long-term recovery and sustainability (Phase 2) will be debated in greater detail at meetings of the Budget Board, Strategic Investment Group (SIG), and as part of the future budget-setting process.

## **Procurement**

Below is the improvement action that was identified in support of Corporate Health in this area of governance.

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

The procurement team has identified those undertaking procurement on a regular basis to target communication and training on the climate and ecological change agenda, and the contribution that environmentally responsible procurement can make. Work has also started to create a bank of specific carbon and ecologically related questions that could be used as part of the tender evaluation process. The Climate Change team is working with Procurement Officers to develop and deliver the Low Carbon Procurement Workplan, which includes outreach and engagement with business. Progress with developing a new procurement strategy has been limited this period.

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

The procurement team is currently experiencing some capacity issues. Recruitment into the currently vacant procurement manager role should relieve pressures, and see improvement in relation to development of a procurement strategy in particular, over the coming 3 to 6 months.

A [report](#) presented to Governance and Audit Committee on 28 April, 2021, highlighted areas where procurement could be enhanced (in terms of process and outcomes) to secure improvements to well-being, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. A range of actions have been agreed and will be incorporated into the revised procurement strategy.

An internal service performance challenge conducted in June, 2021, identified aspects of procurement that need some further attention. Two actions were agreed. The first to encourage good procurement practice across the organisation by working with services to raise awareness of, and adherence to the procurement policy. This should include supporting services to consider the type and length of contracts they need, and where possible support local businesses with the aim of stimulating our local economy. Consideration should also be given to the level of staffing resources in the procurement team. The second action is to explore long-term options for sustaining the Community Benefits Hub to maximise the benefits for our communities.

To help maximise the potential for joint procurements between Denbighshire and Flintshire councils, a joint procurement policy was approved in quarter 1. The policy sets out an agreed approach to including community benefits (referred to as social value in Flintshire) in our purchases, joint frameworks and dynamic purchasing systems. Having a jointly agreed policy in place will ensure community benefits are not treated as a barrier to future joint procurements.

The Community Benefits Hub also supported a number of significant procurements to feature community benefits, including the Queen’s Market Phase 1 redevelopment; Denbighshire County Council’s Housing Maintenance Framework, and the Llangollen 2020 Regeneration project.

The application of the IMPACT on-line portal became fully operational in documenting and tracking current ‘live’ section 106 agreements. The portal hosts all relevant information on section 106 agreements in one single and easy to access location, and alerts staff at key trigger points. The Community Benefits Hub has worked with planning, affordable housing and open space teams to introduce them to the portal and has delivered some initial training.

### Annual or biennial measures

Title	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2022	Status
Overall satisfaction with the council (%) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	40	No data Survey due in autumn	Priority for Improvement

<b>Title</b>	<b>2018 to 2019</b>	<b>2019 to 2020</b>	<b>Status</b>
The percentage difference in the mean hourly rate of pay for women – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	7.7	-9.7  Next report October 2021	Excellent
The percentage of the lowest paid salaries (bottom quarter) that are women – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	79.4	79.1  Next report October 2021	Priority for Improvement
The percentage of new appointees from applications where it was disclosed that they are either from a racial or religious minority group, have a disability, are gay or bi-sexual, or had their gender reassigned – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	7	15  Next report October 2021	Does not apply  Count only
Member attendance (expected and present), year to date – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	79	89	Good
Net Carbon Zero – Total carbon tonnage emitted and absorbed by the council (excluding supply chain) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	14030	10277	Good



## Quarterly or biannual measures

Title	Quarter 1 2020 to 2021	Quarter 2 2020 to 2021	Quarter 3 2020 to 2021	Quarter 4 2020 to 2021	Quarter 1 2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage of Corporate Plan Measures showing as 'Priority for Improvement' – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data due to Covid-19	47	49	49	41	Acceptable
The number of projects on the project register showing as 'compromised' – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	0	2	0	1	2	Acceptable
The percentage of projects whose delivery confidence was updated in the last three months – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data New to quarter 3	No data New to quarter 3	90	94	96	Good

<b>Title</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
The percentage of corporate risks inconsistent with the council's risk appetite statement – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data New to quarter 2	52	No data Six-monthly	55	No data Six-monthly	Priority for Improvement
The number of negative reports from external regulators – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	0	0	0	0	0	Excellent
The number of Internal Audit low assurance reports, financial year to date – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	1	2	4	4	0	Excellent
Corporate and Service Budget Variance (£k)	7,393	5,107	2,242	-718	708	Does not apply Count only

<b>Title</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
Council reserves (£k)	7,135	7,135	7,135	7,135	7,135	Does not apply  Count only
Negative news stories as a percentage of all news stories about the council – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	5	4	12	24	10	Acceptable
The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	67	63	52	57	62	Priority for Improvement

<b>Title</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
The rolling average number of working days / shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data due to Covid-19	6.57	6.61	6.47	7.12	Acceptable
The percentage of staff who have had at least 3 one-to-one meetings in the last 12 months – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data New to quarter 4	No data New to quarter 4	No data New to quarter 4	45	44	Priority for Improvement
The percentage of spend with suppliers based within Denbighshire – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	30	36	34	36	33	Good

<b>Title</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 2 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 3 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 4 2020 to 2021</b>	<b>Quarter 1 2021 to 2022</b>	<b>Status</b>
The cumulative percentage of Denbighshire contracts over £25k and under £1,000k containing community benefits – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b>	No data  New to quarter 4	No data  New to quarter 4	No data  New to quarter 4	12	75  Now reported as a cumulative indicator	Excellent
The cumulative number of work experience placements offered within the council	28	28	28	36	64	Does not apply  Count only

## **Improvement Actions**

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

- Council to recruit two new Heads of Service for Education and Children's Services

## **Equality and Diversity**

### **Council backs Zero Racism Wales initiative**

In April, the council adopted the Zero Racism Pledge, which states that the council is not willing to tolerate racism in any form and supports Zero Racism Wales' calls for all organisations and individuals to promote racial harmony and implement commitments within the workplace and in their day-to-day lives. The pledge is designed to promote a more inclusive and equal workplace and society that gives every individual in Wales the right to feel safe, valued and included. The council encourages other organisations in the county as well as individuals to also sign up to the pledge.

### **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment**

The council has a legal duty to undertake a new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) every five years. A Communities Scrutiny Task and Finish Group has now been set up to support this work, but it does not include looking for site locations. The group will also assist with the development of a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure good communication about the project. It is expected the consultation process, which will include talking to Gypsy and Traveller families and the wider community, including representative groups, will begin in the summer.

### **A message of unity for our diverse communities in Wrexham, Flintshire & Denbighshire**

*"We need each other, and we can learn so much from each other. We can be diverse together."* These are the words of *Diverse Together*, a new short film by North East Wales Regional Cohesion and Wrexham filmmaker Rob Corcoran. *Diverse Together* celebrates Wrexham, Flintshire and Denbighshire as places of welcome, and offers a positive perspective on living in a diverse community. North East Wales Regional Cohesion will be hosting a *Diverse Together* Forum. If you belong to a local community group, or you deliver community support – or if you just want to get more involved with diversity inclusive activities in your area – then this forum is an opportunity to share resources and ideas. For more information, contact Cohesion Coordinator Emily Reddy at [emily.reddy@wrexham.gov.uk](mailto:emily.reddy@wrexham.gov.uk).