

Performance Self- Assessment Update: October to December 2022

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

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

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Summary position

The new [Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want](#), was [approved by Council](#) in October 2022. The new Corporate Plan includes well-being, equality, and organisational improvement objectives for the council.

The Corporate Plan contains nine themes, which each include a range of pledges. The nine themes are:

1. A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs
2. A prosperous Denbighshire
3. A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire
4. A learning and growing Denbighshire
5. A better connected Denbighshire
6. A greener Denbighshire
7. A fairer, safe, and more equal Denbighshire
8. A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
9. Corporate Health: A well-run, high performing council

Since November, Strategic Planning and Performance Officers have led on discussions with Cabinet members, Corporate Directors, the Senior Leadership team, managers and staff at all levels, to determine the right strategic set of measures and activity to monitor through these performance reports in future. This has been a valuable exercise that has helped better our understanding of current work taking place within services, measures that exist, and to help raise awareness of, and identify interdependencies within the new Corporate Plan. We have also incorporated our Strategic Equality Plan and objectives into this work. There is still a great deal of work to do before a final indicator set is reached, but it is hoped that the basis of the framework will be agreed, and in place, in time for our next report at the end of the financial year.

In the meantime, the chapters below provide a summary of activity that has taken place during the last period (October to December) beneath our new Corporate Plan themes, with a round-up of contributing news and committee items.

It is important to note that each theme cannot be taken forward in isolation of the other themes in our Corporate Plan. Clear interdependencies exist between many of the themes.

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](#).

A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs

This theme applies the five ways of working (**collaboration, involvement, long-term, integration, prevention**) and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity**, environmental **resilience, health, equality, cohesiveness**, a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language** and **global responsibility**

This theme seeks to ensure sufficient good quality housing is available, meeting the needs of all Denbighshire residents for the **long-term**. To achieve this, we will deliver more affordable, council and specialist homes to meet local need and demand. We will **integrate** our work with Welsh Government plans to bring empty homes back into use and regulate the impact of second homes.

This theme involves us working **preventatively** to support those who may be at a **socio-economic disadvantage** as well as to benefit protected characteristics such as **age** and **disability**. To support this, we want to ensure there is quality housing that meets the needs of vulnerable people, assisting them to lead independent lives in appropriate accommodation for as long as possible. We aim to **prevent** homelessness and ensure that if people do experience homelessness, those instances are rare, brief and unrepeatable. We will do this by implementing Denbighshire's Rapid Rehousing Plan, which was agreed and submitted to Welsh Government during the period of this report.

Increasing tenant **involvement** and ensuring our residents are informed about available housing options, including by working **collaboratively** to signpost residents to improve the efficiency of their homes, may benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage** and help to **prevent** fuel poverty. Upgrading council housing stock to ensure it is safe, secure, and well-maintained, energy efficient and well-insulated, and where possible, suitable for the needs of residents - for example, those with **disabilities** - supports our wider themes around a greener and fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire.

All people with **protected characteristics** are considered through all our work as a council, and this is reflected in our plans, policies and procedures.

A round up of news

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

At its meeting in November, Cabinet recommended that the revised delivery agreement for the replacement [Local Development Plan](#) 2018 to 2033 go forward to Council for approval and submission to Welsh Government. The Agreement was subsequently approved by Cabinet in December and by Welsh Government.

Redevelopment works began at Grwp Cynefin's Llys Awelon, Ruthin in October 2022, a [£12.2 m extra care project](#) to create 35 more extra care homes in a modern, low carbon scheme to meet the needs of older people in Denbighshire.

Cabinet approved the local lettings policy for [new homes at Llwyn Eirin, Denbigh](#) which will allocate 22 new homes for social rent to create a mix of households to form a resilient new community whilst meeting local need for housing.

In October, Welsh Government-funded [energy improvements got underway for 17 Denbighshire Housing properties on Canol-Y-Dre, Ruthin](#), which included fitting solar panels and improving external wall insulation.

A confidential report was presented at Cabinet's November's meeting, regarding the outcome of a tender exercise for a new [Temporary Emergency Accommodation Support Project](#). Cabinet approved awarding the contract to the recommended named service provider.

Denbighshire County Council's Cabinet confirmed in November changes under the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, a new legislative framework for the management of council house tenancies, which came into force on December 1, 2022. The Act aims to simplify renting a home in Wales. [New Secure Occupation Contracts](#) replace the use of Introductory Tenancies for council tenants and the Act introduces a new landlord requirement known as the Fitness for Human Habitation (FFHH) standard.

In November, Denbighshire landlords attended the [Denbighshire Landlord Forum](#) and received updates from Rent Smart Wales, the Denbighshire Homeless Prevention team on

the Private Rented Leasing Scheme, and from the National Residential Landlord Association on the Renting Homes Act.

In December, Cabinet approved the [Housing Revenue Account Budget](#) for 2023 to 2024 and the Housing Stock Business Plan, and resolved to increase rents for council dwellings in accordance with the Welsh Government Policy for Social Housing Rents by 5% with effect from April 3, 2023.

A prosperous Denbighshire

This theme applies the five ways of working (**collaboration, involvement, long-term, integration, prevention**) 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**.

This theme contains a number of significant pledges. We aim to work **collaboratively** with communities and partners to deliver projects that will stimulate economic growth for the **long-term**, benefitting those who may be at a **socio-economic disadvantage**. This will include working with Ambition North Wales on North Wales Growth Deal projects; supporting the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme; delivering the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund; completion of the new Queen's Market in Rhyl; and supporting the redevelopment of the former North Wales Hospital in Denbigh.

Our other pledge to develop an economic strategy will provide **integrated** approaches to grow Denbighshire's green economy, support rural businesses, regenerate town centres and enhance tourism. Providing advice and support will help businesses, including community businesses and social enterprises, to strengthen and grow, and help to secure local community benefits through our procurement and social partnerships. This approach should support wider efforts to enable residents to access decent employment and incomes, and to tackle and **prevent** inequality and **socio-economic disadvantage**. We aim to increase **involvement** by providing advice and support to enhance business and economic growth with benefits for our local communities.

This theme does not directly seek to benefit the protected characteristics of **Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Race; Religion and Belief; and Sex**. However, all people with **protected characteristics** are considered through all our work as a council, and this is reflected in our plans, policies, and procedures.

A round up of news

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

A partnership project enabled by Jones Bros at Denbighshire County Council's new Waste Transfer facility for domestic, trade and highway waste won an [ICE Wales 2022 award for Community Engagement](#). The scheme involved a collaboration with four local business owners to develop nine hectares of complex greenfield land.

The council's [Tourism Ambassador Scheme](#), an innovative online course providing free training for those wishing to deepen their knowledge of the county, won The Go Skills Award at the Go North Wales Tourism Awards.

In a bid to support local businesses and communities, the Council ran its ['Free after Three' initiative](#) in most of its car parks between 21 November and 31 December 2022 and a winter [#lovelivelocal campaign](#) to local shopping and local [High Streets](#).

In December, pupils from Tir Morfa and Ysgol Glan Clwyd were invited to sign and add messages onto steel beams to be installed on the site of the new [Queen's Market](#) as part of Rhyl Town Centre regeneration plans.

A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire

This theme 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**.

This theme pledges to ensure the council's social care offer is of a high standard. We want to promote the safety, resilience and well-being of people of all ages using strong community networks and enable people to live safely, happily, independently, and receive support when needed. This includes through promoting a strong culture of safeguarding, providing the best possible care and support through our Corporate Parenting role and supporting those with additional learning or complex needs, benefiting the protected characteristic of **disability**.

We pledge to work **collaboratively** to enhance support and respite for carers (of all ages), and work with the Welsh Government to contribute to the provision of a high-quality national care service. Through **involvement**, we want local sports facilities to bring people together, and we want to ensure access to the right information, advice and assistance through our Single Point of Access (SPoA), Community Navigator and Library Services.

Our pledges to continue to work towards becoming a Dementia Friendly Organisation, and to encourage communities to be age-friendly, intergenerational and inclusive, reducing isolation and loneliness, will benefit the protected characteristics of **age, race and disability**.

There are no specific pieces of work to directly benefit **gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation**, though all our work should benefit people with all **protected characteristics**.

A round up of news

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

The [Older People's Commissioner for Wales visited the Ageing Well in Denbighshire Group](#) at an event in October for organisations in Conwy and Denbighshire supporting older people to access support near where they live.

In December, Cabinet considered and accepted the recommendations of a confidential report on the recommendations of the North Wales Regional Fees Group in relation to [Residential and Nursing Home fees for 2023 to 2024](#). This item will be discussed further at [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) in January 2023.

[National Safeguarding Week ran from 14 to 18 November](#), helping to raise awareness of safeguarding children and adults who are at risk. The council advised that safeguarding is everyone's business, and encouraged participation in local workshops, events and talks that were held in person and online.

In working to keep the general public safe, the council urged people to take extra safe precautions for [Bonfire Night](#) and [Halloween](#). The council also offered advice on [seasonal bird flu for poultry and game bird owners](#) and the new [compulsory housing requirements](#) that were introduced in December 2022 for poultry and captive birds in Wales.

In November, over £100,000 of funding via Commuted Sums – payments by developers when it is not appropriate to provide the required outdoor open space during a development - was made available to [improve open spaces and play areas throughout the county](#).

The Council met in October 2022 to discuss the [North Wales Market Stability Report](#), a joint assessment of the sufficiency and sustainability of the social care market by the North Wales Regional Partnership Board. The report will assist the region to effectively commission and support providers of health and social care services to meet the demands of the population.

The [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) met in December 2022 to receive a presentation from the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust about ambulance response times and callouts in Denbighshire.

A [festive craft afternoon took place at the Cysgod y Gaer residential home in Corwen](#). The session was for residents and staff and was facilitated by the Nature for Health team, a collaboration between Denbighshire Countryside Service and Denbighshire Housing.

A learning and growing Denbighshire

This theme applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity, health, equality, cohesiveness, and vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language**. Indirectly this theme can also support national goals around **global responsibility** and environmental **resilience**, educating our young people about how to make a positive contribution to global well-being, as well as how to maintain and enhance our natural environment and its ecosystems.

This theme seeks to take a **preventative** approach, particularly in terms of early years and parent education, ensuring that our young people have the best start in life and stopping problems from occurring or getting worse. As well as working with schools, colleges and universities, we will **collaborate** with public, third and business sector partners to **integrate** our mutual ambitions for the **long-term** well-being and accomplishment of our residents, supporting a thriving economy that alleviates poverty. At all stages of life, we will ensure that people are **involved** and engaged in education choices that meet their needs.

As well as broadly supporting the protected characteristic of **age**, from early years development to post-16 training and volunteering opportunities, this theme also directly supports those with **disabilities**. Specifically, our pledge to support schools with the delivery of the Additional Learning Needs code. Other pledges too will provide benefits for this group, such as providing high quality buildings that are fit for purpose; the work of our Work Opportunities service for those with complex disabilities; and our Edge of Care volunteer offer. Through our work to support parents too, we are also supporting the protected characteristic of **pregnancy and maternity**, as we look to enhance the good help and advice that we already provide to parents. Our work to remove barriers to learning and ensure that people are resilient, prepared for employment, further education or training will also benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

This theme does not directly seek to benefit the protected characteristics of **gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion and belief; and sex**. However, integrating with our theme for a fairer, safe and more equal Denbighshire, our education settings too should be safe environments that do not prejudice against those with protected characteristics.

A round-up of news

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

Funded through the Welsh Government's Young Person's Guarantee, [a Working Denbighshire job fair](#) took place in Rhyl Town Hall in November. The fair was attended by nearly 100 young residents aged 16 and above, and featured a range of employers, training or education providers and support services.

Work is progressing well on the extension to the childcare facility at [Ysgol Penmorfa](#), Prestatyn, funded through the Welsh Government's Flying Start Capital Grant.

A volunteer from Llanarmon-Yn-Ial, was given the [annual award recognising volunteers](#) by the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), in recognition of the work and support she has given to her community and the AONB.

At its meeting in October, Cabinet reviewed the findings of the formal [consultation on the organisation of Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn](#) and approved the publication of the statutory notification to increase the capacity of the school from 116 to 220 from April 2025, subject to site approvals, planning permission and funding.

In October, Governance and Audit Committee received for their information the recent [Estyn report on Christ the Word Catholic School](#), which placed the school in special measures. Assurance was given that the Denbighshire County Council was working closely with GwE, the Regional School Improvement Consortia, and the school to address the most immediate recommendations around safeguarding and leadership. This will be discussed further at Performance Scrutiny, including the school's action plan and the council response.

A better connected Denbighshire

This theme applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity, environmental resilience, health, cohesiveness**, and a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language**. We want Denbighshire to be a place of thriving, cohesive and connected communities. Our pledges apply the five ways of working to support our aim to have a good road infrastructure and transport links, better digital connectivity, and social infrastructure to support personal and community well-being.

Specifically, we will maintain a quality road network including delivering £20m in resurfacing projects by 2027 and by working **collaboratively** with Welsh Government to replace Llanerch Bridge. We will also work collaboratively to deliver improvements to transport and travel, including making travel within our county 'greener'.

Other pledges to support communities with improved digital networks and skills, and promote personal and community well-being through volunteering and supporting community groups will boost **involvement** in local communities and in decision making.

All of this work will contribute to supporting people with all **protected characteristics**, especially **age** and **disability**, and benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage**.

A round up of news

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

Essential [resurfacing work of the A547 Gronant Road, Prestatyn](#) took place at the end of October 2022.

[Cabinet](#) considered the [Draft Sustainable Transport Plan](#) in November, prior to the forthcoming public engagement on the Plan in early 2023.

In October, work began on the installation of [public electric vehicle charging points](#) across the county. In November, as part of Wales Climate Week, our [Ruthin electric bus](#) - the country's first-ever zero emission 100 per cent battery-operated 16-seat minibus - featured in a talk to showcase how electric power can deliver green public transport opportunities.

In December, a [multi electric vehicle charging hub](#), the largest charging hub in Wales went live in Rhyl.

Being mindful of the dark nights and early mornings for both road users and pedestrians, the council urged people to be [safe and to be seen on the road](#) during the winter.

In November, we ran a consultation on a [new revised table of fares for Hackney Carriages licensed by the council](#). The proposed changes followed a recommendation for review by the Licensing Committee in May 2022.

Throughout December 2022 and into January 2023 we partnered with Sustrans to give staff the opportunity to test out the capabilities of an E-Bike for a week. This gave them the opportunity to compare the use of an E-Bike for commuting and other trips against their normal vehicle to see if they could cut down on their use of fossil fuel power.

[Communities Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a report in December, regarding the introduction of the 20 mph speed limit on the county's road network. The report also provided an overview of the tasks that the council is required to undertake in preparation for when the default 20 mph limit in towns and villages comes into force across Wales on September 17, 2023. The Committee agreed that it would be beneficial for the introduction of the 20mph speed limits be discussed at each Member Area Group (MAG) to allow members to discuss the issue on a local level.

In November, the council's Street Lighting team was nominated for awards in the Association for Public Service Excellence performance networks awards. They were [shortlisted as finalists](#) for Best Performer in their category and for Most Improved Performer.

In November, we reminded residents of support available from Denbighshire's Digital Officer on [how to improve connection speeds](#).

Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) presented a report to the [Partnerships Scrutiny Committee](#) about DVSC's vision and relationship with the council and voluntary organisations across Denbighshire. There was a particular emphasis on the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and, since then, the cost of living.

A greener Denbighshire

This theme embraces the sustainable development principle and applies the five ways of working that directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **resilience, prosperity, health, equality, cohesiveness, global responsibility**, and a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language**. We aim to become a Net Zero Carbon organisation by 2030, and enhance, preserve and improve our natural assets to support biodiversity. We must also mitigate and work with communities to cope with the impacts of climate change.

We have a Climate and Ecological Change Programme 2021 to 2030 to deliver our Climate and Ecological Change Strategy with activities applying the five ways of working for positive change to current and future generations for the **long term**.

Pledges to improve recycling rates and reduce waste by implementing a new waste service and reduce the use of single use plastics in schools aim to support our wider efforts to **prevent** worsening climate change. In recognition that the impacts of climate change are already being felt, we want to **involve** people in our efforts to support communities to mitigate and cope with the impacts of climate change by increasing community food growing opportunities; delivering schemes to reduce coastal and in-land flood risk; and encourage the management of moorland to reduce the risk of wildfires, working with landowners, farmers, communities and statutory bodies.

All of our work will contribute to supporting people with all **protected characteristics** and to benefit those at a **socio-economic disadvantage** as it is aimed to be fully inclusive.

A round up of news

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

A large green energy refit project - the largest the council has undertaken to date - to [reduce carbon emissions at the Pavilion Theatre](#) in Rhyl was delivered in partnership with Denbighshire Leisure Limited in November.

Cabinet considered a report in October regarding the potential of a [district heating system for the village of Betws Gwerfil Goch](#), incorporating the provision of ground source heat pumps to council and privately owned dwellings.

A new scheme of [delegated decision making for land acquisition \(freehold or leasehold\) for carbon sequestration and ecological improvement purposes](#) was approved by Cabinet in October 2022.

Cabinet agreed, in October, that two potential [coastal defence schemes for Central Rhyl and Central Prestatyn](#) be presented to Council with a recommendation to fund the construction phase of both schemes. In November, Cabinet considered [project costs for both schemes](#) and in December, Council supported the projects to be progressed to [construction phase](#), using the grant aid funding model set out by the Welsh Government. This is subject to Welsh Government approving the Full Business Cases and agreeing to provide 85% of the cost of borrowing to fund the scheme.

As at October 2022, our Wildflower Meadows Project included over 100 sites managed for wildflower meadow (including 11 roadside nature reserves). These sites are equivalent to nearly 35 football pitches worth of grassland managed as native wildflower meadows. These wildflower meadows showcase our [innovative grass control scheme](#) and how our efforts are [boosting the protection of wildflowers](#) across Denbighshire, including increasing the biodiversity of [wildflower meadows in schools](#). We have also been using our county Tree Nursery to grow more wildflower for our sites, with our [first crop planted](#) in November. This initiative has also resulted in coastal wildflower meadows becoming a biodiverse home to [rare plant species](#).

During the winter [work began on council owned land to fell or reduce ash trees](#).

November 2022 saw the official launch of the [Maes Gwilym nature reserve site, Rhyl](#), where volunteers, council staff and local members planted 2,500 trees at the site, as well as enhancing the woodland area. We also began to roll out the [school tree planting project](#) with approximately 9,000 trees being distributed across schools throughout the county as part of our commitment to tackle climate and ecological changes. Between November 7 and November 21, as part of our [new woodland creation work](#), we ran a survey seeking the views of residents regarding the creation of new sites in Denbighshire.

During October and November, a number of [seed gathering days](#) took place with seeds and [acorns](#) then being grown at our [Tree Nursery](#). Further work to secure the [future of a rare tree in Denbighshire](#), the Black Poplar, began at the Tree Nursery in December 2022 with a number of male and female trees being cloned using cuttings from an original

surviving tree. We also officially launched the [newly established woodland site](#) on the land at the old primary school field at Llanrhydd Street, Ruthin in December, and commenced the [second phase of woodland management at Pontcysyllte](#). Volunteers supporting these initiatives were recognised and congratulated on [International Volunteers Day](#) in December 2022.

To help us catalogue the continuing impact of climate change across the region we launched a new retro innovative project in October, to encourage people to take photos in three prime locations using [historic style cameras](#).

In November, a year on from the Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) held in Glasgow, we highlighted that we currently have 31 [electric fleet vehicles](#) which are used across multiple services, having clocked up 142,377 miles of green travel.

We announced the [winning schools of our postcards from the future competition](#) in December. Pupils were asked to imagine we have moved ahead to 2050 and send a postcard back to their younger selves to explain how climate change is potentially impacting on their lives.

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's Our Picturesque Landscape Project team held an event in Llangollen to increase awareness of the [need for habitats in the county](#) with a focus on hedgehogs.

At the end of November, we launched a [Recycling A to Z guide](#) to help people recycle as much as they can and dispose of their waste safely.

A fairer, safe, and more equal Denbighshire

This theme applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity, health, equality, cohesiveness, a vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language, and global responsibility**. We want to address deprivation faced by our communities, reduce inequality, and promote diversity and community cohesion.

Our pledges to reduce domestic abuse, tackle anti-social behaviour, promote zero racism and take action against hate crime, will benefit people with **age, disability, race or sexual orientation**. Our participation in the Welsh Government's Community Cohesion Programme further supports people with **protected characteristics of race, religion or belief**. We will be **involving** and ensuring that the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds, seldom heard groups, and those at **a socio-economic disadvantage** are heard and inform decision making, and we want to improve the well-being of children from low income and disadvantaged families, including to reduce the attainment gap.

A significant pledge within this theme is to alleviate poverty by expanding free school meals to all primary school pupils, by working **collaboratively** with the Welsh Government; developing a food waste strategy for the county with our partners; working with our partners to provide information, advice and support to those at risk of fuel poverty; and by stimulating and supporting community groups to help individuals with cost of living pressures. Furthermore, we will encourage broad participation in services delivered by libraries, arts, culture and heritage sectors, and will continue to support and resettle refugees through the UK Global Resettlement Scheme, in support of Wales' declaration to be a Nation of Sanctuary.

This theme will contribute to supporting people with all **protected characteristics**, though no specific work is identified as directly supporting **gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or sex**.

A round up of news

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

Over 100 people from numerous organisations came together at a [Cost of Living Summit](#) hosted at Rhyl Town Hall in October. This was arranged by Denbighshire County Council and Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council, and led to a Cost of Living Roadshow for the general public.

During October 2022, following concerns that up to 4,000 residents had yet to apply for their [Cost of Living £150 payment](#), the council undertook additional work with the Post Office to encourage eligible residents to make their claims. The council also worked with the Post Office to issue 'Pay Out' vouchers to the value of £200 for the [Winter Fuel Scheme](#).

[Reception pupils in Denbighshire schools started to receive universal free school meals](#) in September 2022. The next phase of works, to increase the capacity of primary school kitchens to deliver free school meals to Year 1 and 2 by Easter 2023, has been [brought forward and the council will offer this from January 2023](#). Welsh Government also made funding available to make free school meal payments for eligible pupils during school holidays. [Information was issued by the council](#) for parents and guardians and the scheme commenced from October half term.

Across the county, warm hubs - under the [Croeso Cynnes / Warm Welcome initiative](#) - were set up as [safe places for people to go to keep warm in their local community](#). The hubs offer refreshments and somewhere to relax, through to hot meals, advice and information on energy saving and keeping warm, help to increase digital inclusion and social activities.

The council, in partnership with Llamau and Viva, were awarded ['Excellence in Championing Equality and Diversity'](#) by the Chartered Institute of Housing in the Welsh Housing Awards 2022. The award was for Rhyl-based Tŷ Pride, a project designed to address the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ+ young people who experience homelessness because of their identity.

The council was also awarded the [Employer Recognition Scheme \(ERS\) Gold Award](#) by the Ministry of Defence. The council was one of 12 Welsh employers amongst 156 national organisations given the ERS.

The council's [Catering Service Team was shortlisted as a finalist for the Best Performer award](#) by the Association for Public Service Excellence in November.

The council promoted [Trading Standards Wales Week](#) to raise awareness of the wide variety of work done by Trading Standards officers locally and across Wales. In November, the council and Denbighshire Leisure Limited supported [White Ribbon Day](#), the International Day for the Eradication of Violence against Women, by lighting up its buildings in support of the national campaign.

In the lead up to Christmas, the council advised people to be wary of [scams when doing their on-line shopping](#). Another seasonal campaign - the [Christmas Anti Drink and Drug Driving Campaign](#) - was also supported by the council.

The council's Partnerships Scrutiny Committee met in December to consider the achievements of the [Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership](#) and its priorities for the coming year.

A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

This theme applies the five ways of working and directly supports Wales' Well-being Goals around **prosperity**, environmental **resilience**, **health**, **cohesiveness**, and a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language**. We want Denbighshire to be a county where Welsh is a living, thriving language. We want Denbighshire to maximise its rich cultural heritage and natural assets to support economic prosperity, skills development, and community cohesion.

Our pledge to play our part in achieving one million Welsh Speakers in Wales by 2050 includes delivering strategies and policies that will ensure everyone can access services through the Welsh language naturally, and at all stages of their life. This will benefit the protected characteristics of **age** and **pregnancy and maternity**, through work to support children and families during their early years to develop confidence in using the Welsh language. We pledge to work **collaboratively** to support the broader use of Welsh and the celebration of Welsh culture in the community, including workplace settings. In terms of the council itself, we pledge to build a culture and ethos that encourages the daily use of Welsh by elected members and council staff.

We will continue to work **collaboratively** to deliver an improved and sustainable archive service for North Wales. Developing a cultural strategy to promote Denbighshire's rich culture and heritage could benefit people with all **protected characteristics**, and has interdependencies and **integrates** with many of the other themes in the Corporate Plan.

A round up of news

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

Every year, the council's Senior Information Risk Owner provides a report to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee about the [council's information governance](#). In the report presented in November 2022, it was reported that during the year April 2021 to March 2022, one complaint was made to the Welsh Language Commissioner about a delay in dealing with a Welsh Language Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) request. The council responded that the request was delayed largely due to staff leave, but also in part because of EIR legislation itself and the number of records to be disclosed.

The request, whilst delayed, was therefore not delayed because it was the request was made through the medium of Welsh.

A new restoration and community engagement project started in October at the [Prestatyn Roman Baths](#). Funded by Cadw and the AONB Sustainable Development Fund, the project aims to increase visitor numbers and secure the site for generations to come.

In a drive to encourage more people to visit their local library, and in an effort to remove barriers for people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, Denbighshire Libraries have scrapped [traditional library book fines](#). Throughout November, Denbighshire Libraries held [Fictionfest](#), a series of events to support people to connect, try something different or learn a new skill. In December, the council reminded residents of the [home library service](#), a service for people unable to get to the library because of ill health, disability, or caring responsibilities.

Around 35 tonnes of material was excavated from Castell Dinas Brân gatehouse, as part of the [exciting restoration works taking place at the castle](#). The excavated material was airlifted by helicopter to be used on one of the key routes that meanders to the summit to improve access whilst safeguarding the fragile grassland habitat.

A prestigious [Dark Skies award](#) was given to the Prosiect Nos Officer for her work to reduce light pollution.

The council held its [annual carol service](#) 'A Christmas Celebration' at St Mary's Church, Rhuddlan. It was an opportunity for people to show off their musical talents and a donation was collected in support of the Council Chairman's Charities, namely Save the Children (NSPCC) and dementia charities in Denbighshire.

Corporate Health: A well-run, high performing council

Measures: Priority for Improvement

Governance: Good

This chapter in previous reports was entitled “Corporate Health: The council is efficient, well-managed and environmentally sustainable”. Under our new Corporate Plan, the theme of Corporate Health continues, but as “Corporate Health: A well-run, high performing council”.

This theme underpins the council’s approach to embedding and bolstering our duties under a range of key legislation. For example, in terms of ensuring we exercise our seven core governance functions effectively in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, The Equality Act 2010 and through delivery of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. We expect this to be a significant section of future reports because not only the extent of new commitments in our new Corporate Plan, but also due to the legislative requirements that we are expected to meet to monitor our progress against key council functions (i.e. the seven governance areas in this case).

This theme, in fact the entire new Corporate Plan, applies the Sustainable Development principle, as set out in the Well-being Act, in the following ways. We have used our Local Assessment of Well-being to analyse and understand the **long term** trends (threats, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths), to identify the nine themes within the new Corporate Plan. We have committed to ‘being close to our community’, which means we want to **involve** and **collaborate** with our communities on the matters that concern them most. We are committed to being transparent, clear about our performance, and embed a culture of continual improvement, which, alongside our values of integrity respect, unity and pride, should stand us in good stead for working in an **integrated** way alongside our elected members, communities and partners to **prevent** problems from getting worse, or occurring in the first place.

This theme supports delivery of all seven of Wales’ Well-being Goals. There is a direct contribution to **prosperity**, environmental **resilience**, **health**, **equality** (in terms of the council’s workforce), a **vibrant culture with a thriving Welsh language** and **global responsibility**. This theme includes three specific equality objectives:

- Improving our services through meaningful promotion, engagement and communication with the public, City, Town and Community Councils, and partners
- Working in partnership to support an economy that promotes fair work, justice and socially responsible public procurement, benefitting the local supply chain
- Promoting fairness, equality and diversity

As we explained in the Summary Position section, since November, we have held discussions to determine the right strategic set of measures and activity to monitor through these performance reports in future. Many of the measures and some of the activities previously reported under Corporate Health will continue, and we have updated progress in relation to those below. There is though, still a great deal of work to do before a final indicator set is reached that incorporates new indicators alongside those that will continue.

Corporate Health Performance Framework: Measures Update

We commented on equal appointments in our self-assessment for 2021 to 2022. Given performance in this area it is worth reiterating those analyses. Measuring equal appointments is complex and looks at the protected characteristics for which we readily have data (based on what people have declared). The protected characteristics that we particularly look at here are Race, Disability, Sexuality and Gender Reassignment. Based on recently published data for 2020 to 2021, we see a decline in appointments from 15% to 4%. This compares to 11% when looking at those that do not have these characteristics and were appointed. Furthermore, although our measure on the mean hourly rate of pay for women showed that women were being paid more than men during both 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021, the difference in pay had swung back to favour men by 6.7% in 2021 to 2022. 79% of the lowest paid jobs that the council offers were occupied by women (down only 0.6% on the previous year). We will have updates on these measures in our next report.

Ordinarily, we report on the percentage of Corporate Plan measures that present as a priority for improvement (51% in our last report). However, given the work currently underway to determine the right strategic set of measures and activity to monitor through these performance reports in future, this data does not apply. One corporate project is currently presenting as 'compromised' (Dewi Sant Childcare project), with 95% of projects being regularly updated by project managers, down 5% from our last report.

The corporate risk register is currently being reviewed. As reported previously, 55% of our Corporate Risks were found to be inconsistent with our risk appetite during our last recent review, which concluded in November 2022. These are being addressed by senior managers and Cabinet, and justify their inclusion in our Corporate Risk Register as the most serious risks faced by the council.

We have received no formal recommendations for improvement from external regulators (Estyn, Care Inspectorate Wales and Audit Wales), and there have also been no low assurance reports in this period from internal audit. Preparations will soon get underway for a joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA) in Denbighshire, involving Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), and Estyn, in February, 2023.

Our measure on budget variance (i.e. what we have and receive versus what we are spending) has decreased from £2,661k in September 2022 to £2,189k in December 2022. The council's reserves remain at £7.135m.

The percentage of negative news stories about the council (taken as a proportion of all news stories about the council) has increased slightly from 11% in the previous period to 12% between October and December. This represents 15 negative stories out of a total of 128. The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter has decreased from 67% to 53%. This represents 28 complaints upheld or partly upheld.

As at December 2022, sickness absence stood at 9.8 days, down from 10 in the last period. This compares to 9.03 days in December 2021. As at December 2022, the percentage of staff who have had at least 3 one-to-one meetings in the last 12 months stood at 53%, up from 52% in the last period. During the period, we clarified that this indicator captures all staff eligible for 121s, and measures the percentage of 121s that have taken place, by person (not role), and captures all those eligible for one or three 121s. This is a rolling total.

By the end of December, 35% of the council's spend was with local suppliers and 64% of contracts (over £25k and under £1,000k) during the period contained community benefits (7 of 11 contracts). One collaborative procurement activity was awarded during the period, and no collaborative procurement opportunities were missed. There were 17 potential

collaborative procurements on the horizon, and these will be explored and developed in the coming months.

Our final measure considers the council's efforts to support residents into work through placements that we ourselves offer within the council. During October to December, we successfully supported 8 additional placements (an increase of 4.9%), bringing our annual cumulative total to 171.

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.

Develop a new Corporate Plan by October 2022

County Council approved its new Corporate Plan on October 11, which may now be viewed on our website at www.denbighshire.gov.uk/corporateplan. The Plan outlines nine thematic areas of work that also make up our Well-being Objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and our Equality Objectives under the Equality Act 2010 and subsequent (Wales) Regulations 2011. Since approval, the Strategic Planning and Performance Team have been working to align the council's reporting functions to the new Plan, which includes our governance arrangements and a revised Performance Management Framework that will support the nine themes. Our first Programme meeting for the new Corporate Plan will be held with the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet on March 17 to agree our 'blueprint document' for delivery of the Plan. We will hopefully start to report performance against this in our quarter 4 / end of year Self-Assessment.

Senior Leadership Team

With the new Corporate Executive Team now in place, discussions began in the autumn to determine what Stage 2 of the Senior Leadership Restructure might look like. Formal notification of Stage 2 proposals was sent to those affected in December with two options being outlined. The consultation on these options will end in January, and following consideration of the feedback a final proposal will be published and reviewed by the council's Senior Leadership Team Remuneration Panel. If there are any changes to remuneration, those will be put to County Council for approval. In the meantime, interim arrangements continue to be in place, with middle managers acting up to cover vacant head of service roles.

Committee Appointments and Meetings

At its [meeting in October](#), the work of County Council continued with the appointment of various committees and positions, including to appoint the chair of the Democratic Services Committee; and the appointment of a Lay Member to the Standards Committee. A survey of councillors also opened in December to determine whether meetings held during the day is a detriment to working members where employers are reticent to release staff to attend meetings. The results will be shared with County Council in January.

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

A briefing note was circulated in November that outlined the following position with regard to staff and office / home working:

- The council's three main office buildings are open to all staff (i.e. County Hall, Ruthin; Caledfryn, Denbigh; Russell House, Rhyl).
- No staff are being told they must work from home.
- We accept some staff have no option but to attend their place of work (e.g. teachers, librarians etc.).
- We continue to support staff to work flexibly where they can, i.e. either from home, other suitable locations, or any of our offices.
- Managers must ensure that the business needs of the council come first, whilst considering the welfare and health of each individual member of staff.

- If staff want to work from home, and that supports the business needs of the council, then that is allowed. Such staff will be required to attend the office when the business needs of the council require it (e.g. job role requires workplace working or to attend a face-to-face meeting).
- If staff don't want to work from home for whatever reason (e.g. they feel isolated, poor internet connectivity etc.), then they are supported to attend the office.

Following a survey of staff, the Senior Leadership Team have concluded that this flexible approach is working well, but that continuous monitoring is required. In this regard management is working closely with staff and the unions to understand how we can continue to adapt our working practices to improve efficiency and maintain service delivery. A review of our current Flexible Working Policy is underway to help provide clear guidance to all staff on our new ways of working.

It was also stressed that staff working flexibly should not be a barrier to councillors being able to contact officers. All staff working flexibly should be available to meet or speak either virtually or in person. Any councillors encountering difficulty in contacting staff have been asked to make the relevant Head of Service aware of the situation in order that it can be addressed.

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

One outstanding requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act concerns arrangements for a peer 'Panel Assessment' of council functions, to take place once within the electoral term. We are very clear about the need to discuss these arrangements as soon as possible with elected members, so that they may determine when in their term the assessment should take place. However, we are waiting on the Welsh Local Government Association to provide us with detail on their national Peer Assessment offer, including costs. We have been assured that we will have this detail to discuss with members in the spring, with the first panel assessments of local authorities taking place in the autumn of 2023 at the earliest.

Service Challenge Action: Commitment to customer service

With the Senior Leadership Team restructure moving forward, we have been able to discuss arrangements for the Service Challenge Programme in 2023, proposals being shared with the Corporate Executive Team in December. It is now proposed that the Challenges will return from April, with one Service going through the process each month. The Service will likely prepare a short SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis that will form the basis of the discussion, alongside performance data on their Service Business Plan and Service Risk Register. A set agenda will focus on questions around the SWOT and delivery of service objectives. The proposals will be discussed again with the Senior Leadership Team in early January for their approval. We will also discuss there the recommendation from Audit Wales around the publication of Service Level Information.

Shared Prosperity Fund

Following the submission of the Regional Investment Plan in August 2022, Denbighshire has spent this period working with colleagues across the region to develop the application process, with the hope that we can begin to invite applications later in the year, pending feedback from the UK Government. We have also successfully recruited during this period a new External Funding Manager to help oversee the Shared Prosperity Fund in Denbighshire, taking up post in January.

Financial Planning

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

Finance Update Reports

At its meetings in November and December, [Cabinet](#) received updates on the council's financial position. The net revenue budget for 2022 to 2023 is £233.693m (up from £216.818m in 2021 to 2022). As at December, the position on service and corporate budgets was a forecast overspend of £2.189m (down from £5.535m the previous month). The Head of Finance and Property reported on actions taken to reduce the forecast overspend from £5.535m reported in November to £2.189m, and the importance of this reduction was reiterated; as this will allow for some £2.7m from budget mitigation reserve

to help fund the budget for the next year. £0.754m had been identified through service savings and inflated fees and charges (no savings having been requested from Community Support Services or schools). At the end of November, the council's borrowing totalled £234.058m at an average rate of 4.09%. Investment balances were £6.3m at an average rate of 1.86%.

With regards to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the latest revenue position assumes a decrease in balances at year end of £194k, compared to £4k at the time the budget was approved. The movement relates to a reduction in estimated rental income. HRA balances are therefore forecast to be £1.863m at the end of the year. The HRA Capital budget of £26m is largely allocated between planned improvements to existing housing stock (£15m) and new build developments and acquisitions (£11m).

The reports also gave a summary of the council's Capital Plan. The approved Capital Plan is £51.8m, with expenditure to date of £17.9m. The Capital Plan contingency was increased by £1.676m to £2.176m (up from the £0.500m agreed in February), due to carrying forward the unhypothecated element of a capital grant received from the Welsh Government in March. After an allocation made to the Waste Project, the contingency level at £1m will help mitigate the risks to the overall programme of the impact of inflation on capital costs.

The budget position for Education and Children's Services remains an area of concern, with a current forecast overspend of £2.423m. Much of the pressure (£2.180m) related to new residential and independent fostering placements. The difficulties in predicting spend for that demand-led service has been well documented previously. The Education service overspend (£243k) is due to Out-of-County income budget pressure of £742k offset by grant maximisation and efficiencies across the service. The Out-of-County income budget overspend is due to a reduction in number of pupils from other local authorities. The Community Support Service remains a high risk area, with the current outturn prediction being £2.287m due to an overall pressure of £4.7m (£2.4m was netted off by utilising a cash reserve) from high cost placements and homelessness service.

At October's meeting, Cabinet approved plans to spend a school capital grant of £1.799m to improve ventilation, supporting decarbonisation and reducing backlog maintenance in schools. At December's meeting, Cabinet approved plans to spend a capital grant of

£1.203m to upgrade schools' kitchens and dining facilities to accommodate the Universal Primary Free School Meals scheme.

Statement of Accounts

The council has a statutory duty to produce a statement of accounts that complies with approved accounting standards. At November's [Governance and Audit Committee](#) meeting, the Head of Finance explained reasons why the Statement of Accounts for 2021 to 2022 were not being presented. The approved Statement of Accounts were not in a position to be presented, mainly due to an issue with infrastructure assets and new legislation. The Audit Wales representative in attendance confirmed it was a nationwide issue, with similar concerns being raised by auditors elsewhere regarding signing off accounts without the new legislation. It was hoped that the accounts would be ready to be presented for the next committee meeting.

Annual Treasury Management

At its meeting in October, [Cabinet](#) noted the performance and compliance of the council's treasury management function within the Annual Treasury Management report, which has also been accepted by the Governance and Audit Committee. The report outlines the council's investment and borrowing activity for 2021 to 2022, provides details of the economic climate during that time and shows how the council complied with its Prudential Indicators. Approximately £0.5bn passes through the council's bank accounts every year. The council's outstanding borrowing at the end of March was £234.7m at an average rate of 3.77%, and the council held £28.7m in investments at an average rate of 0.47%.

Budget Process Update

At November's [Governance and Audit Committee](#) meeting, the Head of Finance gave an update on the current Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Timetable. It was highlighted that the council is facing an uncertain time and that figures included in the update report were a snapshot at the time of writing. It was confirmed that service budget meetings had concluded. On November 17, the UK Government Autumn Statement was released, providing the authority with the predicted budget for the next two years. The disparity between expected government funding and inflation and demographic pressures was stressed. Members would be able to attend a workshop, planned for January, to be

briefed on potential proposals for the budget settlement for 2023 to 2024 and for 2024 to 2025. The proposal had included the use of cash reserves in the year 2024 to 2025 to allow time for services to prepare to find savings.

The Head of Finance referenced two possible scenarios within the report. His opinion was that the likely outcome would be in line with the first scenario, in which the Revenue Support Grant would be confirmed as per the indicative settlement. The level of overspend in year for 2022 to 2023 is a complicating factor and any net overspend will need to be funded from cash reserves. Two reserves available for the purposes of supporting the budget are the Budget Mitigation Reserve (which stood at £4.85m), and the Unearmarked Reserve, for which there is a policy in place to keep this at £5m (though the value stood at £7.1m). It was reported that many factors could change depending on guidance and figures from Welsh Government, and it was stressed that work should begin soon to find savings for 2024 to 2025. As projections of funding for 2024 to 2025 stand, the current level of services would be unsustainable.

Other developments in the last period

Capital Process and the Future of the Strategic Investment Group

Having a robust capital budget setting process to set a budget each year is a core duty of the council and is crucial to ensuring good governance.

In November, the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) received an update on a proposed new capital budget setting process and draft changes to the Terms of Reference and name of the Strategic Investment Group. Cabinet was in support of the proposed changes. A strong reason for change had been to adopt a more strategic approach to reviewing capital bids. The proposal included creating a new group called the Capital Scrutiny Group. The role of this new group would be to scrutinise and express their views but not take final decisions. Those decisions would be taken by other decision making bodies as set out in the paper. The report also included details of the proposal to have separate approval arrangements for fully grant funded projects below £250k.

Cabinet welcomed the consultation and supported the new process as a means of strengthening the democratic processes and providing greater transparency of the scrutiny and decision making arrangements involved. Member support and [Cabinet](#) agreement in December means the constitution needs to be amended, and for guidance to be issued to

ensure compliance. Further work is required on the details of the capital bid forms and process. It was expected that the Capital Scrutiny Group would be in place early next year with information available on modern.gov from April 2023.

Awards

At the annual Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation conference in October, [Denbighshire's Revenues team won the Revenues Team of the Year Award](#). The council, in working in partnership with Civica, were said to have delivered excellent customer focused service to residents.

Performance Management

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

Implement annual process for stakeholder engagement on council performance.

Our annual Stakeholder Survey was launched on November 7, and will run until March 19. It is being promoted through our Libraries and receptions, with paper copies available at those locations. It will also be promoted through social media campaigns. The results will be analysed in time for inclusion in our end of year Self-Assessment.

Delivering Sustained Improvement

Following the postponement of their meeting in September, the Audit Wales report on the [council's performance management arrangements](#) was discussed by the Governance and Audit committee at its [meeting in October](#), alongside the management response. The report concluded that the council's Performance Management Framework and arrangements for measuring and reporting performance are effective. Discussion was held around the recommendations, particularly the availability of service-level performance information, requirements around staff 1:1s, and the use of benchmarking information going forward. The committee noted the contents of both the report and the management response.

Address Staff Capacity within Internal Audit

Recruitment into senior audit roles continues to be extremely difficult at the moment, but the Chief Internal Auditor has done a great deal in this period to address vacant posts within the Internal Audit Team, including the introduction of two Career Pathway Auditor roles that have been successfully filled. However, there has been a setback with the appointment of the Principal Auditor role, which will now need to be advertised for a third time.

Self-Assessment of Performance

During this last period, and continuing our ongoing process for Self-Assessment of performance against our functions, the council produced its second in-year performance update report covering July to September. This was discussed at meetings of [Cabinet](#) and [Performance Scrutiny](#). This report highlighted most significantly the issues facing the council around recruitment and retention, which is being looked at closely by the Senior Leadership Team and councillors, and we will continue to monitor within these reports.

This October to December update report is the third of our ongoing self-assessment for 2022 to 2023. The previous April to June, and July to September reports may now be viewed on the [performance page of our website](#).

Other developments in the last period

Annual Corporate Health and Safety Report

At its [meeting in October](#), the Governance and Audit Committee considered the annual Corporate Health and Safety Report for 2021 to 2022. Overall, the council achieved a medium assurance rating for its systems and overall employee engagement with Health and Safety. The council's compliance with Covid-19 safety standards was also given a high assurance rating. The council's accident / incident count (2088) for the year is comparable with the years prior to the pandemic, although one RIDDOR reportable incident (out of 19) was investigated by the Health and Safety Executive, which is rare. The incident related to an electric shock incident at Ruthin Leisure Centre, but the investigation found no fault with the council or the utility supplier, the fault being with an underground cable.

The report also outlined some challenges with regard to the diagnosis of Hand Arm Vibration and Carpel Tunnel Syndrome during 2020 to 2021. It is hoped the appointment of an Occupational Health Advisor in 2022 will help in this regard.

Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: Performance Management Framework

As described earlier in this report, the Strategic Planning and Performance Team are busy currently developing the Performance Management Framework for the new Corporate Plan, discussions taking place at every level within the council. Our Framework will comprise of key indicators that illustrate progress against our nine themes, as well as performance measures, projects and activity that we deem important contributors. The challenge will be determining a meaningful and focussed set, as there is a wealth of information available across the council. We will set performance thresholds / targets that match the council's ambition for the Plan, and, where possible, we will always look to include nationally comparable / benchmarking data. The final Framework, also known as our Blueprint Document, will be agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet in March before being built into our performance management system (Verto), and hopefully first reported on in our end of year performance update report and Self-Assessment in the Summer. This report will be tabled with Cabinet, Performance Scrutiny, Governance and Audit, and finally Council as usual.

Risk Management

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

Corporate Risk Register

Following the review of our corporate risk register conducted in September 2022, we have a total of 20 risks, 11 of which are inconsistent with our risk appetite (55%). The review concluded with a number of risks escalating (or being predicted to escalate), in light of the deterioration in the economy and continuing pressures in relation to recruitment and retention and safeguarding.

In relation to our risk of a serious safeguarding or practice error, the risk score has not changed and remains at the highest level. The risk score remains at an increased level on the basis of our assessment that the chance of this occurring is currently higher than it was

previously. Although we do not regard the likelihood as “almost certain to occur in most circumstances” (which is the definition of Risk Likelihood A in our risk methodology), the risk remains at an increased level. It continues to feel appropriate to keep the Risk Likelihood score at A1 – Critical Risk Almost certain and Very high impact. Keeping the risk score at this level enables the risk to be further prioritised and escalated, which remains appropriate and necessary at this time. Our Corporate Executive Team and Cabinet, at Cabinet Briefing, monitor this risk and the effectiveness of our management of it. Every month, Lead Members, the Corporate Director and Heads of Service provide a verbal update on the level of risk and the actions being taken to manage and reduce it.

In October, [Governance and Audit Committee](#) considered a report outlining the findings of the ‘follow up’ inspection of the Intake and Intervention Service, Education and Children’s Services. The review identified positive findings and areas for improvement, and an action plan was created to improve on those areas of concern. The follow up inspection highlighted some areas of improvement, but recognised the impact of a high number of vacancies across the service that impacted the improvement journey. Again, staff retention and recruitment was recognised as a national concern.

[Performance Scrutiny Committee](#) met in November to discuss the September review of risk, which included a detailed discussion about the challenges associated with recruitment and retention and the effect of those on a number of our corporate risks. The Committee resolved that members who have particular concerns about specific risks contained in the Corporate Risk Register, along with the controls in place to manage those risks, escalate them for detailed examination via the submission of a Member Scrutiny Proposal form to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group.

Other developments in the last period

Risk Owners

Restructuring of the Senior Leadership Team is expected to result in further changes to risk owners, once complete. The consultation on the restructure will end in January, and following consideration of the feedback a final proposal will be published and reviewed by the council’s Senior Leadership Team Remuneration Panel. If there are any changes to remuneration, those will be put to County Council for approval. In the meantime, existing risk owners continue to manage their risks and oversee controls.

Risk Appetite Statement

In November, [Governance and Audit Committee](#) received an update on the application of risk management methodology and discussed the review of risk most recently undertaken in September 2023. Members were in agreement to endorse the proposal to amend the Corporate Risk Appetite Statement.

The council's [risk appetite statement](#) was last reviewed and adjusted in November 2022. The council's minimalist risk appetite in relation to Workforce: Terms and Conditions has been relaxed very slightly to a cautious risk appetite, to reflect the way we are 'flexing' recruitment processes – in a safe way – to alleviate challenges in filling roles. All other aspects of our risk appetite statement have remained the same.

Information Risk Policy

The Information Risk Policy was approved by the Information Governance Group in December, and will be published on our website during the next period. Heads of Service will be asked to review the Data Protection Policy and the Information Asset Register once every year. Any issues will be raised in the annual report produced by the council's Senior Information Risk Owner.

Information risks managed by each service will be considered during service planning arrangements for 2023 to 2024, which will commence in January 2023.

Workforce Planning

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

Staff Training, Development and Mental-Health

A review of our current flexible working policy and guidance is underway to support the new ways of working. A consultation and meetings about the draft guidance took place with trade unions during December. A final meeting with trade unions is due to take place in February 2023, with the policy being finalised and approval sought from the Local Joint Consultative Committee and Cabinet in April 2023. Induction materials and sessions to support staff and managers with the new ways of working will commence early in 2023, once agreement has been sought from the Corporate Executive Team.

HR is appointing a lead Learning and Development Specialist to oversee and deliver the mental health action plan. They will work alongside Mental Health Champions, once they are in place, to ensure support for mental health and well-being is embedded across the council. Work is expected to start once the new Specialist is in post (before the end of the financial year).

Virtual staff roadshows with the Chief Executive and the Leader took place in November. These are valuable opportunities for staff to find out more about strategic direction, to ask questions, raise ideas and network. They are also valued by the Chief Executive and the Leader; giving them an opportunity to meet with staff informally to discuss what is important to them.

Improve the information we have about our workforce

This action includes equality information to support more detailed analyses in future Public Sector Duty Reports. We now have equality information for 72% of staff, compared to 76% previously, and will continue to work to improve this. Due to changes in staff, the equality information we have about our workforce tends to vary, although performance has improved greatly since March 2021; at which point we had information for 52% of staff.

Workforce planning

Workforce planning actions are underway to progress the findings of the corporate and service-level workforce planning reviews. There continues to be a significant focus on recruitment, especially in social care and health roles. A six monthly update report on delivery of the action plan was presented to the Corporate Executive and Senior Leadership Teams during the period. An annual update will be presented in April 2023.

We are working to develop our Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh Language Policy, both of which will impact upon workforce development and service delivery to support and raise the profile of the use of Welsh within the council and in the wider community. The Strategy and Policy are both expected to be approved with delivery starting from April 2023.

In November, [Governance and Audit Committee](#) received an update on the risk review most recently undertaken in September 2023 and an information report about recruitment and retention issues in Social Services. The report summarised the impact of recruitment

and retention challenges in Children's and Adult Social Services and the actions being taken to mitigate these challenges. A detailed report about recruitment, retention and workforce planning across the council will be presented to Governance and Audit Committee by the Interim Head of Service: HR in January 2023.

Service Challenge Action: DBS Compliance

Safer recruitment remains a high priority for the council. A temporary staff member commenced work in October and has been focussed solely on addressing the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) renewal backlog. Compliance is now at 90%, compared to 85% in the last period. One day every week, each member of the HR Assistant Team focuses on safer recruitment monitoring, and this focus is having a positive impact on our performance in this area. Other measures to improve safer recruitment are being considered.

Assets

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

Asset Management strategy

We continue to work on developing the asset management strategy but progress is affected by capacity within the team. Following the withdrawal of the successful candidate to the new asset management post (as reported previously), the post has remained unfilled and has contributed to the in-year savings we were required to make to balance our budget in 2022 to 2023. A new recruitment process will begin in April 2023. Once the new asset management strategy is in place, we will develop and deliver portfolio plans to determine the shape, size and future use of assets for each of the council's asset management portfolios.

Annual SIRO Report

The Interim Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) reported to [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in November on the council's information governance. There is a duty to ensure that information held by the council is managed safely, effectively and in accordance with legislation. The report covered the period from April 2021 to March 2022

and it included information about data breaches of the Data Protection Act that have been subject to investigation. The report this year reflected the council's increased investment in the safe management of data, including greater engagement with schools, additional dedicated officer time made available in Legal Services, an effective cross-council collaboration in the form of the Information Governance Group, and awareness raising across all services through training and dedicated support.

Despite these improvements, data breaches still occurred, though this number could be considered relatively low, given the amount of data that is handled. 36 breaches were recorded, an increase of 14 from the previous year. The SIRO raised concern that, though none of these incidents was considered reportable to the Information Commissioner's Office, this was still a significant increase. This was thought to be linked to the change in working environment. Solutions were being developed (such as the potential to use auto-filled email addresses), and awareness training was going to be targeted at areas of the council with higher rates of breaches. Refresher training on data protection has been launched for all staff. The report also described the council's role in managing Freedom of Information Requests, Environmental Information Requests and Data Protection Requests.

Service Challenge Action: Remote Meeting Hubs

The aim of this work is to support remote meetings in areas where broadband connection is poor. This project is awaiting the outcome of Shared Prosperity Fund grant funding before it can progress any further at this stage.

Supporting Businesses and Partners to Adapt

While a programme has not yet been developed to support and raise awareness among residents, partners and businesses of the role they can play in reducing carbon emissions, activities are taking place through our regular carbon and ecological change communications and the behaviour change work stream associated with the programme. For example, a period dignity campaign with reusable menstrual products has been launched. Furthermore, members of the Communications Team, Bryson's Recycling and Borrow Bus/reSource CIC (a not for profit Community Interest Company) have been working together on the [Design Council's Design Differently programme](#). They are looking at the circular economy and reuse across Denbighshire and have focused in on the Borrow Bus to try and increase its use.

Procurement

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

Biodiversity Protection and Decarbonisation in Procurement

There continue to be capacity issues and these are still affecting the pace of progress in relation to these actions. The Legal Services Manager continues to provide interim managerial support to the Procurement Team, in the absence of a Procurement Manager being in post. The post of Collaborative Procurement and Framework Manager will be advertised again.

A key area of work for the year ahead, working across the council, will be to implement the new procurement strategy, once approved, to deliver decarbonisation and the principles of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill. This will involve working across the council to support Denbighshire's local supply chain.

Simple carbon mitigations are included in our contracts but wider and more substantial reductions in carbon emissions could be achieved once the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill becomes law. That being said, it is now standard practice for major projects (above £1 million in value) to use a connection to the national grid for electricity, where available. Some projects are starting to use off-grid power options, e.g. solar-powered battery floodlighting. One contractor working on coastal projects, Balfour Beatty, now uses site offices that are connected to the national grid instead of using a local diesel generator for a power supply. Smart energy planning used by Balfour Beatty on the Rhyl East Sea Defence project resulted in an independently verified 82% reduction in energy use by the Site Office complex. Going forward, the Community Benefits Hub will promote use of 'green tariff' for electricity grid connection.

Reduction in miles travelled on contract delivery is proving to be challenging to measure and report. The Community Benefits Hub plans to review the approach to measurement in light of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill.

During the period, the Community Benefits Hub also supported countryside procurements and suppliers to request mitigations and improvements from suppliers as they deliver contracts. This is resulting in tree planting taking the approach of 'right tree in right place',

as well as securing other ecological and environmental improvements, such as use of surplus materials, expertise and machinery to support the Countryside team's projects.

Decarbonisation Procurement Expertise

The Procurement Team has secured agreement to recruit jointly, with Flintshire County Council, a new decarbonisation specialist within the team to progress decarbonisation in our procurements and supply chain. However, recruitment across the council and wider public sector remains extremely challenging.

Contract Procedure Rules

Contract Procedure Rules will be updated to reflect new UK Public Procurement legislation due in 2023 to 2024. We will continue to report on progress through this report in the meantime.

Contract Training for Staff

By the end of December, 82 of the 121 officers put forward for Proactis Contract Management Training had received training. The remaining 39 officers were contacted and 4 responded to confirm they still require training. We consider this activity to be a core part of business as usual work, and we will continue to provide training on the Contract Management Module of Proactis as officers require it. This action is considered complete, although we are considering introducing two new measures to capture the number of staff requesting Proactis training and the percentage of those that receive training.

Service Challenge Action: Sustaining the Community Benefits Hub

The Community Benefits Hub manager post has evolved from being a fixed term contract to a permanent role. With a dedicated and permanent manager in post, the Hub is able to continue taking a strategic approach to community benefits across the council. This - together with our leading role as Chair of the Welsh Government Social Value Working Group – secures and raises the profile of our approach This action is now complete.

Annual or biennial measures

2019 to 2021 data

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

2020 to 2022 data

Title	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	Status
The percentage difference in the mean hourly rate of pay for women – Benchmarked Locally	-13.5	6.7	Acceptable
The percentage of the lowest paid salaries (bottom quarter) that are women – Benchmarked Locally	79.9	79.3	Priority for Improvement
Member attendance (expected and present), year to date (%) - Benchmarked Locally	89	84	Good
Net Carbon Zero – Total carbon tonnage emitted and absorbed by the council (excluding supply chain) – Benchmarked Locally	10,277	11,656	Excellent

2018 to 2022 data

Title	2018 to 2019	2021 to 2022	Status
Overall satisfaction with the council (%) – Benchmarked Locally	40	32	Priority for Improvement
Partners that agree the council works well with them (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	62	Good
Councillors and council employees who agree that there is a good working relationship between political leaders and senior management (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	63	Good
Stakeholders who agree that the council manages its performance well (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	28	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council manages its risks and challenges well (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	30	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council manages its finances well (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	26	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council has long-term plans in place (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	31	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council treats its workforce well (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	35	Priority for Improvement
Stakeholders who agree that the council makes best use of its assets and resources (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	20	Priority for Improvement

Title	2018 to 2019	2021 to 2022	Status
Stakeholders who agree that the council purchases its goods and services in a fair and efficient way (%) – Benchmarked Locally	New to 2021	25	Priority for Improvement

Quarterly or biannual measures

Title	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Status
The percentage of Corporate Plan Measures showing as 'Priority for Improvement' – Benchmarked Locally	43	47	51	51	No data: does not apply	No data: does not apply
The number of projects on the project register showing as 'compromised' – Benchmarked Locally	2	1	1	2	1	Good

Title	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Status
The percentage of projects whose delivery confidence was updated in the last three months – Benchmarked Locally	84	100	95	100	95	Good
The percentage of corporate risks inconsistent with the council’s risk appetite statement – Benchmarked Locally (six monthly)	No data	64	No data	55	No data	Priority for Improvement
The cumulative number of negative reports from external regulators – Benchmarked Locally	0	0	0	0	0	Excellent

Title	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Status
The cumulative number of Internal Audit low assurance reports, financial year to date – Benchmarked Locally	3	4	0	0	0	Excellent
Corporate and Service Budget Variance (£k)	2,731	-2,399	1,109	2,661	2,189	Does not apply (count only)
Council reserves (£k)	7,135	7,135	7,135	7,135	7,135	Does not apply (count only)
Negative news stories as a percentage of all news stories about the council – Benchmarked Locally	8	9	10	11	12	Priority for Improvement

Title	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Status
The percentage of external complaints upheld or partly upheld over the last quarter – Benchmarked Locally	52	60	46	67	53	Acceptable
The rolling average number of working days / shifts per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employee lost due to sickness absence – Benchmarked Locally	9.03	9.57	10.18	10	9.8	Priority for improvement
The percentage of staff who have had at least 3 one-to-one meetings in the last 12 months – Benchmarked Locally	36	43	45	52	53	Priority for Improvement

Title	Quarter 3 2021 to 2022	Quarter 4 2021 to 2022	Quarter 1 2022 to 2023	Quarter 2 2022 to 2023	Quarter 3 2022 to 2023	Status
The percentage of spend with suppliers based within Denbighshire – Benchmarked Locally	40	36	39	35	35	Good
The cumulative percentage of Denbighshire contracts over £25k and under £1m containing community benefits – Benchmarked Locally	88	88	100	64	64	Excellent
The cumulative number of work experience placements offered within the council	134	143	155	163	171	Does not apply (count only)

Improvement Actions

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

- Survey of elected members to determine the timing of meetings.
- Briefing for all councillors on the North Wales Growth Deal.
- Information risks to be considered by each service during service planning arrangements for 2023 to 2024.