

Public Document Pack

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Chief Officer (Governance)
Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



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To: Cllr Ian Roberts (Leader)

Councillors: Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Mared Eastwood, David Healey,
Dave Hughes, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones and Billy Mullin

13 December 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF REMOTE MEETING
CABINET
TUESDAY, 19TH DECEMBER, 2023 at 10.00 AM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

The meeting will be live streamed onto the Council's website. The live streaming will stop when any confidential items are considered. A recording of the meeting will also be available, shortly after the meeting at <https://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team on 01352 702345.

A G E N D A

1 **APOLOGIES**

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Purpose: To receive any declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 **MINUTES** (Pages 5 - 16)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2023.

TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING REPORTS

STRATEGIC REPORTS

4 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) AND BUDGET 2024/25** (Pages 17 - 30)

Report of Corporate Finance Manager - Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement

Purpose: To update on the latest position for the MTFS and Budget 2024/25 in advance of receipt of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement.

5 **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 30 YEAR FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN** (Pages 31 - 46)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) - Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

Purpose: The purpose of this report is to present for consideration the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-year Financial Business Plan and the proposed HRA Budget for 2024/25.

6 **DRAFT STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-28** (Pages 47 - 96)

Report of Chief Executive - Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

Purpose: To present the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 for approval prior to formal consultation.

OPERATIONAL REPORTS

7 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24 (MONTH 7) (Pages 97 - 122)

Report of Corporate Finance Manager - Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement

Purpose: This regular monthly report provides the latest revenue budget monitoring position for 2023/24 for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The position is based on actual income and expenditure as at Month 7, and projects forward to year-end.

8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2023/24 (Pages 123 - 148)

Report of Corporate Finance Manager - Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement

Purpose: To present the draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Review for 2023/24 for recommendation to Council.

9 BUSINESS RATES - WRITE OFFS (Pages 149 - 154)

Report of Chief Officer (Governance) - Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

Purpose: To approve the write off of individual bad debts for Business Rates in excess of £25,000.

10 SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW (Pages 155 - 172)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) - Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

Purpose: To approve to undertake a Sheltered Housing Review.

11 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL LETTER 2022-23 AND COMPLAINTS MADE AGAINST FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 2023-24 (Pages 173 - 188)

Report of Chief Officer (Governance) - Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

Purpose: To share the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Letter 2022-23 for Flintshire County Council and an overview of the complaints received against Council services in the first half of 2023-24.

12 **INTRODUCING A CORPORATE FACEBOOK PAGE** (Pages 189 - 192)

Report of Chief Officer (Governance) - Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

Purpose: To agree the need for a Corporate Facebook page that will support digital communications, including good news stories and important information for our communities.

13 **EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS**

Purpose: None.

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - COUNTY COUNCIL, CABINET, AUDIT AND OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY - FOR INFORMATION

Please note that there may be a 10 minute adjournment of this meeting if it lasts longer than two hours

CABINET
21ST NOVEMBER 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet of Flintshire County Council held virtually via Zoom on Tuesday 21st November 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Roberts (Chair)

Councillors: Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Mared Eastwood, Dave Healey, Dave Hughes, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones and Billy Mullin.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy), Chief Officer (Social Services), Corporate Finance Manager, Corporate Manager – Capital Programme and Assets, Corporate Manager, People and Organisational Development, Senior Manager, Portfolio Business Support and School Governance, Revenues and Procurement Manager, and Team Leader – Democratic Services.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors: Bernie Attridge, David Coggins Cogan and Chrissy Gee.

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Paul Johnson declared a personal interest in agenda item number 18 – AURA Leisure and Library Services.

74. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2023 were submitted and confirmed as a correct record.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

75. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 – 2026/27

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and explained the Council had limited capital resources from Welsh Government (WG) to support Council priorities, needs and liabilities. However, it had the powers to fund capital schemes by borrowing - this was temporary and ultimately, the cost and repayment of any borrowing was charged to the Council's revenue budget.

Schemes funded by borrowing were carefully considered due to the long-term impacts on the Council's revenue budget.

The report divided the Council Fund Capital Programme into three sections: -

1. Statutory / Regulatory - allocations to cover regulatory and statutory works.

2. Retained Assets - allocations to fund infrastructure works necessary to ensure service and business continuity.

3. Investment - allocations to fund works necessary to remodel services to deliver efficiencies outlined in portfolio business plans and invest in services as outlined in the Council Plan.

Historically, much of the Council's programme had been funded from capital receipts and grants. The Council's ability to generate significant capital receipts was challenging as the assets the Council had available for disposal diminished.

Wherever possible every opportunity to identify assets for sale and other sources of funding such as specific grants and revenue contributions would be explored. However, the Council would need to use prudential borrowing to finance more of the programme going forward. In particular, the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme, and other schemes included within the investment programme would need to be funded through prudential borrowing.

Details of the proposed allocation 2024/25 – 2026/27 and the proposed schemes for the period 2024/25 – 2026/27 for the Investment section of the Capital Programme were provided.

The Chief Executive said a prudent approach towards schemes had been taken due to the pressures in the revenue budget.

The Corporate Finance Manager explained that the report had been submitted to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week and there were no significant issues raised.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the allocations and schemes in Table 3 for the Statutory/Regulatory and Retained Assets sections of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27 be approved;
- (b) That the schemes included in Table 4 for the Investment section of the Council Fund Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27 be approved;
- (c) That it be noted that the shortfall in funding of schemes in 2024/25 and 2025/26 in Table 5 at this point in the approval process allows flexibility. Options including a combination of future capital receipts, alternative grants (if available), prudential borrowing or the re-phasing of schemes will be considered during 2024/25 and included in future Capital Programme reports; and
- (d) That the schemes included in Table 6 for the specifically funded section of the Council Fund Capital Programme which will be funded in part through borrowing be approved.

76. CAPITAL STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2024/25 – 2026/27

Councillor Johnson introduced the report which detailed the proposed Capital Programme for the period 2024/25 – 2026/27 for recommendation to Council.

The report explained the need for the Strategy, its key aims, and the content of each of its sections.

Under the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code), authorities were required to set a range of Prudential Indicators (PI's). The Capital Strategy included details of the Council's Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 – 2026/27.

The Corporate Finance Manager explained that the report had been submitted to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week and there were no significant issues raised.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Capital Strategy be approved and recommended to County Council; and
- (b) That the following be approved and recommended to County Council:
 - The Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 – 2026/27 as detailed within Tables 1, and 4-8 of the Capital Strategy
 - Delegated authority for the Corporate Finance Manager to effect movements between the separately agreed limits within the authorised limit for external debt and the operational boundary for external debt (Table 6 of the Capital Strategy)

77. RESOURCES AND WASTE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Councillor Hughes introduced the report and explained that the Council supported the declarations made by Welsh Government (WG) for the Public Sector to become net zero by 2030 and in December 2019 the Cabinet Members approved a motion to develop a clear Climate Change Strategy, which will set key aims and actions for creating a carbon neutral organisation.

Reducing consumption and increasing reuse and recycling to save precious resource was a key part of reaching net zero.

The draft Resources and Waste Strategy set out the strategic direction to reduce waste and exceed WG statutory recycling targets. Without action the Authority was at risk of circa £1.13m fines for failing to achieve those targets in 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, as well as a further risk of similar fines in 2023/2024.

The new Strategy demonstrated to the Minister the Council's commitment to make change. The report sought approval to undertake a consultation exercise on the draft Resources and Waste Strategy.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) emphasised the risk of possible infraction fines for not achieving the statutory recycling targets and said that, without significant service changes, it was unlikely that the targets would be met. The Chief Officer also highlighted the compositional analysis, which showed that 58% of what went into the residual waste bin could have been recycled using the existing services, of which 30% was food waste.

The focus of the new Resources and Waste Strategy was to support residents and communities to avoid waste and to promote the reuse of valuable materials and, where that was not possible, then to enable residents to recycle items with disposal through the residual stream as the last resort.

Alongside the mandate to educate the public on recycling and undertaking enforcement, further work had been requested by the Minister for the authority to provide a more well thought through, realistic and evidence-based action plan as part of the Resources and Waste Strategy. It would require a collective effort and the Chief Officer explained that it was important that residents and communities had the opportunity to shape the proposals, which would require that a full consultation take place.

The consultation would be launched on 1st December and run through to 12th January. It would take the form of a short online survey, a series of face-to-face drop-in events, briefings for Members and Town and Community Councils and, where access to the online survey was not possible, paper surveys would be provided.

Members supported the report and the upcoming consultation.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Cabinet acknowledges the progress made on achieving a robust and effective Resources and Waste Strategy to meet net zero targets and mitigate against the risk of fines and achieve statutory recycling targets; and
- (b) That the commencement of a consultation exercise on the authority's draft Resources and Waste Strategy be approved.

78. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24 (MONTH 6)

Councillor Johnson introduced the report which provided Members with the first detailed overview of the budget monitoring position for the 2023/24 financial year for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account and presented the position, based on actual income and expenditure as at Month 6.

The projected year end position was as follows:

Council Fund

- An operating deficit of £3.559m (excluding the impact of the pay award which would need to be met by reserves – currently estimated as £2.727m) which was a favourable movement of £0.101m from the deficit figure reported at Month 5. It was noted that the financial impact of the recent

storm Babet was not currently included in the projection but was expected to be significant

- A projected contingency reserve available balance as at 31st March 2024 of £3.776m (after the estimated impact of pay awards and taking account of the Balances released to Reserves at Month 5)

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in-year revenue expenditure was forecast to be (£0.069m) lower than budget which was a favourable movement of (£0.075m) from the figure reported at Month 5
- A projected closing balance as at 31st March, 2024 of £3.266m

The Corporate Finance Manager explained that the economic outlook remained challenging due to inflation levels remaining high. The impacts of that, together with continued increases in service demand was becoming increasingly hard to deal with as the Councils funding failed to keep up with the scale of those pressures. To assist with managing those risks and mitigating the overall projected overspend, a moratorium on non-contractually committed spend had been put in place alongside a vacancy management process which continued.

In response to a question from Councillor Bithell, the Corporate Finance Manager explained that it was anticipated that costs relating to Storm Babet would be available to report to Cabinet in December.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and the estimated financial impact on the 2023/24 budget be noted; and
- (b) That the change of use for £0.100m of an earmarked reserve for the Carelink service as outlined in the report be approved.

79. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2023/24 (MONTH 6)

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and explained that it summarised changes made to the Capital Programme 2023/24 since it was set in January 2023 to the end of Month 6 (September 2023), along with expenditure incurred to date and the projected outturn.

The Capital Programme had seen a net decrease in budget of (£4.422m) during the period which comprised of:-

- Net budget decrease in the programme of (£1.342m) (See Table 2 - Council Fund (CF) £4.326m, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) (£5.668m);
- Net Carry Forward to 2024/25 approved at Month 4 of (£3.080m)

Actual expenditure was £27.517m (See Table 3).

Capital receipts received in the second quarter of 2023/24 totalled £0.043m. That provided a revised projected surplus in the Capital Programme at Month 6 of

£1.996m (from a Month 4 funding surplus of £1.953m) for the 2023/24 – 2025/26 Capital Programme, prior to the realisation of additional capital receipts and/or other funding sources.

When reported to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was requested that the table on the investment on county towns should cover a longer time period to show investments over time.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be approved;
- (b) That the carry forward adjustments be approved; and
- (c) That the additional allocations be approved.

80. COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2024/25

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and explained that setting of the Council Tax base was integral to the revenue budget and Council Tax setting process for 2024/25. It allowed the Council, Police & Crime Commissioners Office for North Wales, and town/community councils to also calculate next year's Council Tax precept.

The base had been calculated at 66,081 band 'D' equivalent properties, after considering the total number of properties that would be subject to Council Tax, including those that are subject to the Council Tax premium rates, less those which were exempt from Council Tax or where statutory household discounts applied.

Setting the tax base at 66,081 band 'D' equivalents also incorporated the continuation of the Council Tax premium rates of 75% for Long Term Empty properties and 100% for Second Homes. Overall, this represented growth in the tax base of 0.4% compared to the previous year, representing to an extra 266 band D equivalent properties.

RESOLVED:

81. SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

Councillor Healey introduced the report and explained that the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) would deliver £2.5bn of investment until March 2025 across the UK. The aim of the programme was "to build pride in place and increase life chances". United Kingdom (UK) Government had allocated £126m to North Wales to deliver the programme between 2022/2023 and 2024/2025, with £11m allocated to Flintshire for the core programme.

Cabinet approved the criteria and process for allocating funding from the programme to projects on 22 November 2022 and gave delegated authority to the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) and Cabinet Member for Climate

Change and Economy to do so. A rigorous process was undertaken which involved two stages in order to finalise the allocations to worthy projects, a total of 23.

The report provided an update on the allocation of SPF funds to projects and what the expected outcomes of the programme were for Flintshire communities. In addition, the report set out recommendations for how the residual SPF funding and any unallocated funding arising during the delivery of the programme should be allocated.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) explained that the report had been submitted to Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week and Members were broadly supportive of the content of the report. The appendices to the report identified the successful projects and an update report would be submitted on a six-monthly basis.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress made in developing the Shared Prosperity Fund programme both regionally and locally be noted; and
- (b) That the recommended approach to allocating any residual SPF money be approved and delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) and the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy to operate that approach and to manage changes within the projects approved.

82. SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Councillor Healey introduced the report and explained that Audit Wales had recently completed a review of support for the social enterprise sector by Welsh local authorities. They had issued several recommendations and created a self-assessment tool for local authorities to use. Flintshire County Council already had a well-established structure to support the sector and was recently awarded the Social Enterprise Place accreditation to reflect its achievements. However, the Audit Wales report provided the Council with the opportunity to reflect on its performance and to improve the service.

The report presented a proposed response to the Audit Wales report recommendations, a self-assessment exercise undertaken by the Council using the Audit Wales template and finally a revised Social Enterprise Action Plan which reflected any areas for improvement identified.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) explained that the report had been submitted to Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee where details on social enterprise were positively received.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft response to the Audit Wales report '*A missed opportunity*' – *Social Enterprises* be approved; and

- (b) That the draft Social Enterprise Action Plan which had been developed following the publication of the report above be approved.

83. FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CARBON FOOTPRINT REPORT 2022-23

Councillor Healey introduced the report and explained that the Council calculated its carbon footprint annually to measure the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions it was responsible for to monitor and direct decarbonisation efforts towards Net Zero Carbon by 2030. In September 2023, the calculation for the period 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023 was completed and submitted to Welsh Government (WG).

The Carbon Emission Update 2022/23 presented the results of the 2022/23 calculation whilst comparing them against figures from the Council's baseline year of 2018/19, which showed a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in 2022/23. The report also provided explanation as to why emissions had changed, as well as noting any improvements or difficulties relating to the data and methodology.

The report concluded with a recommendation to investigate the use of digital technologies such as Microsoft Power BI to improve data quality for greater emissions management and reduce the time staff spent collecting the data, and also key considerations for the Climate Change Strategy review in 2024/25, in particular baseline emissions and targets for Supply Chain and targets for Mobility & Transport.

The Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy) said data was maturing all of the time and would be better again the following year, particularly in relation to staff travel. Questions were raised at Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the way in which data was presented and in future, different types of renewable energy would be split within the report. A request was also made for additional data on baseline figures and the report was broadly supported.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, including the progress made in the past year to improve data collection for the Council's carbon footprint.

84. HOMELESS PRESSURES

Councillor Bibby introduced the report and explained that within the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2023/24 (Month 4) reported to Cabinet in September 2023 it was recommended that, as required by the Council's Finance Procedure Rules, a separate report was to be prepared by Housing and Communities to expand on the reasons for the significant overspend on the homelessness budget and the mitigations being put in place.

Within the Housing Solutions service there were specific budgets for homeless accommodation settings for 'interim housing'. In addition to that budgeted provision for those locations, including the Homeless Hub, there was a further specific budget for emergency accommodation. That budget was used when there was no remaining

capacity in other budgeted temporary accommodation. The emergency accommodation used was mostly hotel rooms, within and beyond the boundaries of Flintshire, together with some use of other forms of holiday lets, such as caravans and apartments.

Options had been developed for consideration to manage the overspend on the homelessness budget which were outlined in the appendix to the report.

The Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) explained that the report had been submitted to Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee where the options outlined in the appendix were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the latest financial position in relation to homelessness be noted; and
- (b) That the options outlined in appendix 1 to increase supply and mitigate further overspends on the homelessness budget be supported.

85. CORPORATE DEBT POLICY – HOUSING RENT COLLECTION

Councillor Bibby introduced the report and said a recent report to the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided the latest operational update on the collection of housing rent, along with proposals to improve the collections by taking earlier court action.

This report set out proposals to amend the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy and to strengthen the debt recovery process for housing rent.

The key change was a documented threshold for taking court action against contract holders who owed the equivalent of 12 weeks rent and/or £1,500 and who were not engaging with the Council.

Other minor changes to the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy related to write off authorisations and would replicate recent changes to the Financial Procedure Rules whereby the Corporate Finance Manager now had autonomy to write off single debts up to £10,000 (instead of £5,000). Debts between £10,000 and £25,000 would continue to be written off in consultation with the Cabinet Member and debts above £25,000 were referred to Cabinet prior to write off.

The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that the proposed change was presented to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week and was positively received.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed changes to the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy to strengthen the collection of Housing Rent by taking court action, as a default position, in cases where contract holders were not making payment, and were 12 weeks in arrears and/or who owed £1,500 or more be approved.

86. ALLEVIATING FOOD POVERTY OVER THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and said during the Covid pandemic Welsh Government (WG) committed to provide additional funding to support free school meals during the holiday and half term period. The scheme was intended to address 'holiday hunger' and help families struggling during the cost-of-living crisis and the mechanism for delivering that initiative was either a direct payment to families of eligible children, vouchers, or the provision of a lunch.

At the end of June WG confirmed that it was ending its support for free school meal provision for children during holidays and half terms.

At the Council meeting of the 26th September 2023 a Notice of Motion relating to Free School Meals was adopted, the key points of which were:

- *Cabinet will give a commitment to work to find resources during the Christmas holidays for families on free school meals and will bring a report to Cabinet in November with proposals for how this can be achieved*
- *Cabinet will set up a working group to report back to Cabinet. The working group will be chaired by a back-bench Member of the Council but will contain Councillor Paul Johnson and Councillor Mared Eastwood with representatives from across the Chamber*

The Terms of Reference for the working group were appended to the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the payment of £25.00 per eligible pupil to address the period covering the Christmas holiday period, be approved to be taken from the hardship fund (total estimated amount £129,825); and
- (b) That a Member Working Group be set up and that group report back its findings before the 2024/25 budget is concluded. The principle aim of the Working Group will be to consider and recommend sustainable options for future school holidays.

87. EXERCISE OF DELEGATED POWERS

An information item on the actions taken under delegated powers was submitted. The actions were as set out below:-

Housing and Communities

- **Request Permission to Tender a New Housing Support Project**
Flintshire Housing Support Team are requesting permission to commission a new supported housing project for people aged 25+ with multiple support needs. These can include mental health, substance misuse, offending,

moderate learning difficulties, adverse childhood experiences, trauma. The list is not exhaustive.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting for the following items by virtue of exempt information under paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

88. EXPANSION OF SPECIALIST EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Councillor Eastwood introduced the report which sought agreement to the proposed expansion of inhouse specialist education provision and approval to proceed to issue statutory notice for an increase in pupil places at Ysgol Pen Coch primary special school, Flint.

This would be in line with the requirements of The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and School Organisation Code 2018.

RESOLVED:

That approval be given to proceed to issue a statutory notice for an increase in pupil places at Ysgol Pen Coch, Flint.

89. AURA LEISURE AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Councillor Eastwood introduced the report and explained that Aura Leisure and Libraries Limited was established in 2017 to deliver a project, the aims and objectives of which fell within eligibility criteria for grant funding from the Council.

The Council had been in discussion with Aura regarding options for a new longer-term contract and had commissioned work to help aid understanding and decision making.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the high-level principles of a new contractual arrangement be supported and other factors of note be considered;
- (b) That a funding inflationary increase offer of 3.1% to Aura for 2024/25 be supported; and
- (c) That seeking a further extension of the current funding agreement, for 12 months duration, if early agreement cannot be obtained on a new contractual arrangement from April 2024 and/or there are any further slippages in the preliminary work be supported.

86. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and ended at 11.33 a.m.)

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Chair



CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 19 December 2023
Report Subject	Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2024/25
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value & Procurement
Report Author	Corporate Finance Manager and Chief Executive
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the Council's revenue budget position for the 2024/25 financial year in advance of the receipt of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement on 20 December.

In July, Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee were advised of an initial additional budget requirement for the 2024/25 financial year of £32.222m

This was revised upwards to £32.386m in September and the cost pressures and cost reduction options to date were referred to relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees throughout October. At this time there was an estimated funding gap of £14.042m.

Feedback from all Overview and Scrutiny sessions was reported back to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 November.

Two Member budget workshops were also held on 5 and 10 October which included analysis on the future national financial outlook. This is expected to be exceptionally challenging based on forecasts provided by Wales Fiscal Analysis.

The Chancellor announced his Autumn Statement on 22 November and the key components in the main related to reductions in taxation affecting individuals and

businesses. As such there is unlikely to be any additional consequential funding for Local Government to improve the provisional settlement.

This report sets out the changes to the 2024/25 additional budget requirement since the last reported position in September. The report also updates on the progress made to identify solutions to bridge the remaining budget gap.

Following receipt of the provisional settlement a briefing will be provided to members to advise of the impact on the overall 2024/25 budget position.

Whilst progress has been made it should be noted that the Council still has a major challenge to identify the remaining solutions that will enable it to agree a legal and balanced budget by March next year which it continues to address with urgency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To receive and note the revised additional budget requirement for the 2024/25 financial year.
2	To note the progress made and the ongoing work on budget solutions that continue to be urgently addressed to enable the Council to set a legal and balanced budget by March 2024.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET 2024/25
1.01	This report provides an update on the Council's revenue budget position for the 2024/25 financial year in advance of the receipt of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement which is scheduled for 20 December.
1.02	In July, Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee were advised of an initial additional budget requirement for the 2024/25 financial year of £32.222m
1.03	This was revised upwards to £32.386m in September and the cost pressures and cost reduction options to date were referred to relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees throughout October. At this time there was an estimated funding gap of £14.042m. Feedback from all Overview and Scrutiny sessions was reported back to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 November

1.04	Two Member budget workshops were also held on 5 and 10 October which included analysis on the future national financial outlook. This is expected to be exceptionally challenging based on forecasts provided by Wales Fiscal Analysis.																											
1.05	<p>National Context</p> <p>It is clear from a recent Society of Welsh Treasurers survey coordinated by the Welsh Local Government Association that all Councils in Wales are experiencing the same financial challenges. For example, there is an estimated overspend of £220m across the 22 Welsh Councils in the current financial year and total estimated cost pressures of £720m for 2024/25.</p> <p>On the funding side, the planned increase in Aggregate External Finance (AEF) for 2024-25 is £169m, or 3.1%, which will cover just over a quarter of the pressure in the financial year with the aggregate annual budget gap in each of the next three years projected to be £411m, £408m and £412m in the run up to 2026-27. Clearly based on this assessment there is going to be an extended and potentially deteriorating financial position for local authorities across Wales in future years.</p>																											
1.06	The Chancellor announced his Autumn Statement on 22 November and the key components in the main related to reductions in taxation affecting individuals and businesses. As such there is unlikely to be any additional consequential funding for Local Government to improve the provisional settlement position.																											
THE REVISED ADDITIONAL BUDGET REQUIREMENT																												
1.07	<p>Since September there have been some changes to the additional budget requirement, and these are set out in the table below:</p> <p><u>Table 1: Changes to the Additional Budget Requirement 2024/25</u></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="320 1429 1406 1906" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 70%;"></th> <th style="width: 15%; text-align: right;">£m</th> <th style="width: 15%;"></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>September Cabinet Report</td> <td style="text-align: right;">32.386</td> <td>Note</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Increases to Existing Pressures:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Additional Coroners Costs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.027</td> <td>(1)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adjustment for Members Allowances</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.028</td> <td>(2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">New Pressures:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Free School Meals (Term Time)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.615</td> <td>(3)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NDR Transitional Relief</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.131</td> <td>(4)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Revised Additional Budget Requirement</td> <td style="text-align: right;">33.187</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Notes in support of table 1:</p> <p>1. Further increases on toxicology and coroners' costs.</p>		£m		September Cabinet Report	32.386	Note	Increases to Existing Pressures:			Additional Coroners Costs	0.027	(1)	Adjustment for Members Allowances	0.028	(2)	New Pressures:			Free School Meals (Term Time)	0.615	(3)	NDR Transitional Relief	0.131	(4)	Revised Additional Budget Requirement	33.187	
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	<p>2. An increase to the original cost pressure to bring in line with the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW).</p> <p>3. Due to an increase in the cost of free school meals as well as increased demand in the current financial year.</p> <p>4. Impact of transitional relief ending on council buildings</p>																																																																		
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1.08	<p>Since September a significant amount of work has been undertaken to identify solutions to meet the remaining budget shortfall. An update on the latest position is detailed in the table below:</p> <p><u>Table 2: Funding Solutions identified to date</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: right;">£m</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Increase in Welsh Government AEF</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(7.285)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(1)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Council Tax (indicative planning fig only of 5%)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(5.431)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Review of Cost Pressures</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.718)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(3)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Review of 2022/23 Outturn</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.150)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(4)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Review of RAG's</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(1.538)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(5)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Review of Fees and Charges</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.310)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(6)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Actuarial Review</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(4.000)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(7)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reduction in Energy Costs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.600)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(8)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Corporate Loans and Investment Account</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.500)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(9)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Remove Business Recycling Pressure</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.438)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(10)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Croes Atti - reprofiling</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.330)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(11)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reprofile of Borrowing Costs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.312)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(12)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reduction in IT Costs</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.129)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(13)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reduction in GwE contribution</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.099)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(14)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fund one-offs from Reserves</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.089)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(15)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Review of External Partners</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.087)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(16)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reduction in Feasibility Study Budget</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.050)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(17)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fast Track Income</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.018)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(18)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>IT – RSA tags</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(0.013)</td> <td style="text-align: right;">(19)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Funding Solutions identified to date</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: right;">22.097</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Remaining Additional Budget Requirement</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: right;">11.090</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Notes in support of table 2:</p> <p>1. The Distribution Sub Group is considering changes to data sets as a result of PLASC and the latest statutory returns. These changes could reduce the amount of funding for Flintshire by £0.515m.</p>		£m		Increase in Welsh Government AEF	(7.285)	(1)	Council Tax (indicative planning fig only of 5%)	(5.431)	(2)	Review of Cost Pressures	(0.718)	(3)	Review of 2022/23 Outturn	(0.150)	(4)	Review of RAG's	(1.538)	(5)	Review of Fees and Charges	(0.310)	(6)	Actuarial Review	(4.000)	(7)	Reduction in Energy Costs	(0.600)	(8)	Corporate Loans and Investment Account	(0.500)	(9)	Remove Business Recycling Pressure	(0.438)	(10)	Croes Atti - reprofiling	(0.330)	(11)	Reprofile of Borrowing Costs	(0.312)	(12)	Reduction in IT Costs	(0.129)	(13)	Reduction in GwE contribution	(0.099)	(14)	Fund one-offs from Reserves	(0.089)	(15)	Review of External Partners	(0.087)	(16)	Reduction in Feasibility Study Budget	(0.050)	(17)	Fast Track Income	(0.018)	(18)	IT – RSA tags	(0.013)	(19)	Total Funding Solutions identified to date	22.097		Remaining Additional Budget Requirement	11.090	
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2. The Council Tax base and collection rate has now been set. The revised figures (for planning purposes) is an indicative 5% increase are shown.
3. Reduction of Pressures as included in the September Cabinet report.
4. Further efficiencies identified from the review of Outturn as included in the September Cabinet report.
5. Further review of efficiencies has identified some are not achievable and some that will have only a partial impact in 2024/25. These changes have reduced the figure to £1.538m, from the previously advised figure of £1.766m.
6. Increased income from the 2023 review of fees and charges as reported in the September Cabinet report.
7. Impact of year 2 saving from the Actuarial Review comprising a reduction in employer contributions and a surplus return.
8. There has been a recent reduction in energy prices which will reduce costs by an estimated £0.600m.
9. There continues to be a positive return on investment income due to continuation of higher interest rates and therefore a further £0.500m can be included (over and above the £0.500m previously reported)
10. Following further guidance from Welsh Government, this pressure can now be removed. It is now anticipated that we will be able to levy a charge for this service to achieve full cost recovery.
11. Due to the revised time frame for the redevelopment of the Croes Atti residential home, the pressure for 2024/25 can be moved to 2025/26.
12. A review of timescales for a number of Capital Schemes together with the removal of the pressure included for Levelling Up match funding.
13. Following further information regarding the E5 security licences this pressure can be reduced by £0.129m
14. A potential reduction in the contribution paid to GwE which is subject to ongoing discussion.
15. Removal of the one-off pressures for the Mayrise system and for additional ADM support which can be met by reserves.
16. Work is ongoing with our external partners to limit any inflationary increase for 2024/25 to 3.1% which is the anticipated increase in the provisional Local Government Settlement.
17. A review of the feasibility study budget which is held to evaluate potential capital schemes has reduced it by £0.050m.

	<p>18. Anticipated income forecast to be received from the Fasttrack project.</p> <p>19. An efficiency of £0.013m from the cessation of the use of RSA tags across the Council.</p>
1.09	<p><u>ONGOING RISKS</u></p> <p>There are still a number of remaining risks that could affect the budget requirement and these are outlined below.</p>
1.10	<p>Pay Awards</p> <p><u>Impact of National Pay Awards</u></p> <p>Agreement has now been reached for the 2023/24 pay award for NJC (Green Book) employees. As this was in line with previous assumptions this risk is now closed with no additional budgetary impact.</p> <p>Assumptions for teachers pay are in line with current awards communicated by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language.</p> <p><u>Pay Modelling</u></p> <p>No figures are currently included for any impact of the pay modelling review which has commenced to address the difficulties currently being experienced in recruitment and retention. The review is due to be completed later this financial year.</p>
1.11	<p>Homelessness</p> <p>The homelessness service is continuing to see increasing numbers presenting for support and the projected overspend in the current financial year has increased to £2.6m.</p> <p>An additional amount of £2m is currently included in the budget requirement so the longer-term outlook will need to be kept under close review and risk assessed as part of final budget setting.</p>
1.12	<p>Social Care</p> <p>Risks remain within the service such as on-going recruitment and retention challenges, new statutory responsibilities, and the impact of inflationary increases as well as match funding for projects such as the Regional Integration Fund (RIF).</p> <p>On-going support from existing grants is an area on which the service depends, so the continuation of these is critical. Any reduction would clearly present a negative risk to service delivery.</p>

	<p>Potential changes by Welsh Government (WG) to harmonise foster care fees across Wales may lead to a new pressure, however, at this stage indications are that this will be met by WG.</p>
1.13	<p>Streetscene and Transportation</p> <p>The review of the Waste Strategy is likely to impact on future costs of the service in relation to the ongoing risk of potential infraction fines for failing to achieve Welsh Governments statutory recycling targets in 2022-2023 (estimated to be in the region of £470k).</p> <p>The risk that the Sustainable Waste Management Grant (SWMG) may cease or reduced is still a concern. The SWMG is a revenue grant of £0.742m provided by Welsh Government to support the provision of re-use and recycling services, as well as preventing waste. Confirmation of the grant and existing funding levels has been confirmed in the current financial year but not for subsequent years.</p> <p>The funding arrangements for the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) and the Bus Transition Fund (BTF) is also still unknown beyond March 2024 so will need to be kept under close review. These have previously been funded by Welsh Government.</p>
1.14	<p>Education and Youth</p> <p>Confirmation has been received that employer teacher pension contributions will increase by 5% from April 2024. A high-level estimate is that this will lead to a pressure of £3m for schools. At this stage it is anticipated that this will be met by Welsh Government although this is still yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>Increases in demand and complexity for Additional Learning Needs, Specialist Provision and Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) is currently being funded by additional Welsh Government grant. There are a number of risks relating to the continuation of grant funding into 2024/25 which will need to be kept under review.</p> <p>Further work is being undertaken on demography and the impact of any changes on revenue costs due to the school modernisation programme.</p>
1.15	<p>Out of County Placements</p> <p>The position on Out of County placements remains an ongoing risk and the projected overspend in the current financial year is now more than £1m. An amount of £0.500m is included in the current forecast which will need to continue to be kept under close review and risk assessed as part of final budget setting.</p>
	<p>Other Solutions still under consideration</p>
1.16	<p>Council Tax</p>

	<p>The scale of the additional budget requirement due to increases in service demand and persistent higher inflation, together with the significant remaining gap means that it is inevitable that a further increase may need to be considered as part of final budget setting. This is in line with the position in many councils across Wales and is reflective of fiscal analysis presented at a recent presentation by the WLGA.</p> <p>Each further increase of 1% in Council Tax (net of the impact on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme) would provide an additional £0.882m towards the gap.</p>
1.17	<p>Schools Budget</p> <p>The delegated schools budget has been relatively protected in recent years.</p> <p>However, as the Council's largest budget it is inevitable that consideration will need to be given to a reduction in the 2024/25 financial year.</p> <p>School budgets benefitted from a net uplift of £5.761m in 2023/24 after taking into account increases for pay, energy, free school meals, demography offset by a 3% reduction and agreed savings on National Insurance and Pension Contributions.</p> <p>The current additional budget requirement for 2024/25 includes total cost pressures of £8.369m for school budgets for pay awards and other identified pressures.</p> <p>Each further 1% reduction on the schools budget would equate to £1.091m off the cumulative cost pressures currently included.</p>
1.18	<p>Social Care – Commissioning Costs</p> <p>Social Care budgets have also been relatively protected in recent years and commissioning costs increased above average across North Wales for the current financial year.</p> <p>An increase at similar levels is not sustainable due to the Council only expecting to receive an increase of 3.1% in its annual Welsh Government settlement.</p> <p>Therefore, the Council will need to provide a much more prudent uplift in 2024/25 which will be subject to negotiation with care providers over the coming weeks.</p>
1.19	<p>Additional Portfolio Cost Reductions</p> <p>Following the Autumn Statement it is clear that the the remaining options available to the Council will not be sufficient to meet the current funding shortfall.</p> <p>Therefore, all portfolios are revisiting their cost base with a view to achieving further budget reductions of up to 5%. This will be a significant challenge but</p>

	<p>is essential to provide Council with the options it requires for consideration at final budget setting.</p>
<p>1.20</p>	<p>Strategic Programme of Transformation</p> <p>Work on planning and delivering a strategic programme of service transformation to ensure that the Council is developing cost reductions over the next five years in order to protect its ongoing future financial position and ensure it is further prepared for inevitable future budget challenges has commenced. However, these workstreams are to provide financial support from 2025/26 onwards so don't assist with the immediate budget challenge for 2024/25.</p> <p>These workstreams would concentrate on the following areas and be broadly in line with a set of principles defined for previous change projects such as Alternative Delivery Models (ADM's) for example which the Council has already successfully developed and undertaken. In this context overarching and revised set of values and principles would be coproduced to reflect these workstreams.</p> <p>Further areas may fall in scope as transformation work develops: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationalisation and streamlining of services and reductions in service levels; • Rationalisation of the councils land and property estate and the subsequent demolition of its headquarter building in Mold; • The consolidation of services into three core office buildings based on the existing operating model; • A review of the education estate; • Review of opening times for some service areas; • Consideration and future implementation of the outcomes flowing from the waste strategy consultation; • Review of the current leisure estate and provision; • The exploration of regionalisation of services, where appropriate and in the interests of the council; • Increase, where it is in the Councils interest, of joint working with the third sector and building on existing positive relationships and arrangements; • Detailed consideration relating to services which may have to be stopped for financial expediency; • Review and streamlining of internal process linked to greater digitisation/automation <p>The above list is not exhaustive and future engagement with members will be important to ensure that there is an opportunity to contribute and positively influence the programme of activity and ensure that it is progressed on a timely basis.</p>
<p>1.21</p>	<p>Summary and Conclusions</p> <p>The United Kingdom Autumn Statement on 22 November can be described as unhelpful and extremely disappointing from a Local Government viewpoint.</p>

As there is no anticipated additionality for Local Government, the Council clearly still has a major budget challenge for financial year 2024/25.

The expected uplift of potentially less than 3.1% is significantly below the level required to meet current service demand and inflationary impacts – most of which are outside of the Council’s control.

Representations will continue to be made for a better settlement alongside all Welsh Councils through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), although it does appear clear that Welsh Government also have a challenging budget situation which they are continuing to grapple with.

At this stage the amount remaining to be found to reach a legal and balanced budget is in the region of £11m and though there are potential ways this could be met; these are not easy and will have a significant impact on council services. The Council will continue to urgently consider further cost reductions of significant scale to bridge this gap as a matter of priority.

Following receipt of the provisional settlement on 20 December a briefing will be provided to members to advise of the impact on the overall 2024/25 budget position. Further reports and proposals will then be brought to members in January and February 2024 in line with the timeline below.

1.22

Table 3: Budget Timeline

Date	Event
19 December 2023	Report to Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Budget Update
20 December 2023	WG Draft Budget/Provisional Settlement
16 January 2024	Report to Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Proposed budget requirement and solutions
20 February 2024	Report to Cabinet and Council - Final Budget Proposals
March 2024	WG Final Budget/Settlement

2.00

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

2.01

Revenue: the revenue implications for the 2024/25 budget are set out in the report.

Capital: the borrowing needs for the capital programme are built into the revenue estimates for 2024/25.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT	
3.01	Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact	
	Long-term	<p>Negative – the absence of longer-term funding settlements from Welsh Government means that sustainable support for service delivery is challenging for the longer term. Sustainable funding from Welsh Government that provides additional funding for Indexation, Service demands and new legislation will provide a positive and sustainable position for the Council in the longer term.</p> <p>Negative – failure to agree a balanced and legal budget and may lead to potential Welsh Government intervention.</p> <p>Negative – failure to balance the budget may lead to the section 151 Officer issuing a section 114 notice effectively declaring the Council bankrupt.</p>
	Prevention	As above
	Integration	Neutral Impact
	Collaboration	Services continue to explore opportunities for collaboration with other services and external partners to support positive impacts.
	Involvement	Communication with Members, residents and other stakeholders.
	Well-Being Goals Impact	
	Prosperous Wales	Longer term funding settlements from Welsh Government that provide additional funding for indexation, service demands and new legislation will aid sustainability and support a strong economy that encourage business investment in the region. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.

	Resilient Wales	Continuation of services to support communities and social cohesion will have a positive impact. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.
	Healthier Wales	An appropriate level of funding will ensure that communities are supported and will have a positive impact. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.
	More equal Wales	A positive impact with greater parity of funding from Welsh Government for all Welsh Local Authorities. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.
	Cohesive Wales	Appropriate level of funding will support services working alongside partners. The opposite will be true if settlements are inadequate.
	Vibrant Wales	As Healthier and Cohesive Wales above
	Globally responsible Wales	Neutral impact.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Consultation has taken place with Portfolio Management Teams and the Chief Officer Team, the Finance Team, Cabinet Members, Group Leaders and Scrutiny Committees. Workforce conferences have been held for employees.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None to this report

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Cabinet Report 18 July 2023 Cabinet Report 19 September 2023 Scrutiny Reports and Presentations October 2023 School Budget Forums

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Gary Ferguson Corporate Finance Manager Telephone: 01352 702271 E-mail: gary.ferguson@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS): a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period, and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations.</p> <p>Revenue: a term used to describe the day to day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.</p> <p>Capital: Expenditure on the acquisition of non-current assets or expenditure which extends the useful life of an existing asset.</p> <p>Budget: a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.</p> <p>Revenue Support Grant: the annual amount of money the Council receives from Welsh Government to fund what it does alongside the Council Tax and other income the Council raises locally. Councils can decide how to use this grant across services although their freedom to allocate according to local choice can be limited by guidelines set by Government.</p> <p>Specific Grants: An award of funding from a grant provider (e.g. Welsh Government) which must be used for a pre-defined purpose.</p> <p>Welsh Local Government Association: the representative body for unitary councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks authorities in Wales.</p> <p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>Local Government Funding Formula: The system through which the annual funding needs of each council is assessed at a national level and under which each council's Aggregate External Finance (AEF) is set. The revenue support grant is distributed according to that formula.</p> <p>Aggregate External Finance (AEF): The support for local revenue spending from the Welsh Government and is made up of formula grant including the revenue support grant and the distributable part of non-domestic rates.</p>

Provisional Local Government Settlement: The Provisional Settlement is the draft budget for local government published by the Welsh Government for consultation. The Final Local Government Settlement is set following the consultation.

Funding Floor: a guaranteed level of funding for councils who come under the all-Wales average change in the annual Settlement. A floor has been a feature of the Settlement for many years.

External Partners: Organisations outside of the Council that we work alongside to deliver services.



CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th December 2023
Report Subject	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present for consideration the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-year Financial Business Plan and the proposed HRA Budget for 2024/25.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To consider the HRA budget for 2024/25 as set out in the report.
2	To consider the proposed minimum rent increase of 6.5%.
3	To consider a garage rent increase of 6.5%.
4	To consider the increase in service charges to full cost recovery with the exception of aerial charges which will be frozen until a new contract is negotiated.
5	To top up the tenant hardship fund up to a cap of £0.350m from any surplus reserves generated in year, if required.
6	To consider the proposed HRA Capital programme for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix B.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00 EXPLAINING THE HRA BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25 UPDATE

1.01 **Considerations**

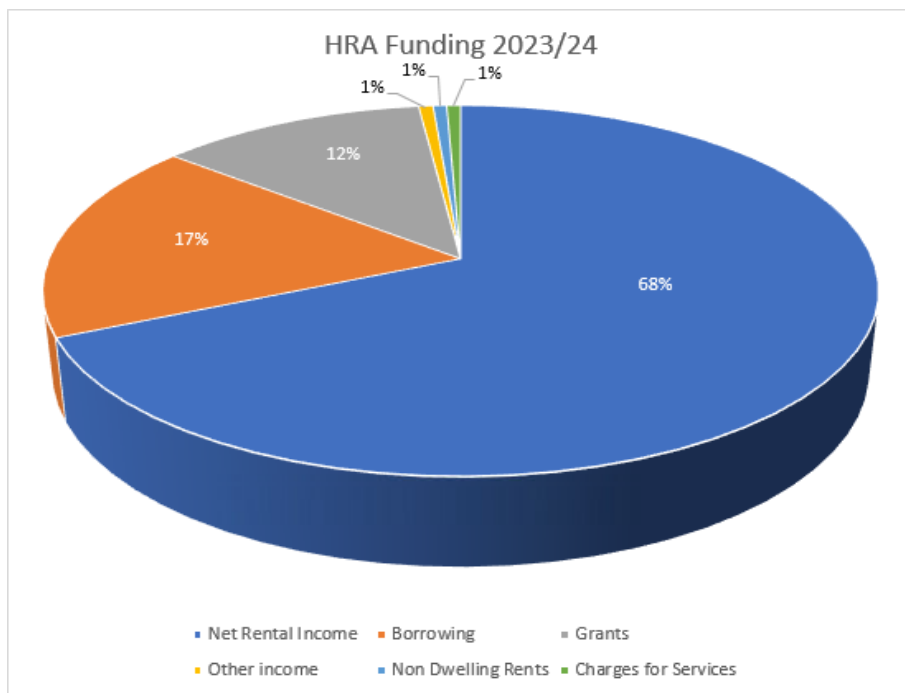
The HRA is required to produce a 30-year business plan.

The strategic context for this year's HRA budget setting includes the following:

- Ensure affordability for tenants is at the core of our considerations.
- Continued drive to ensure all service costs are efficient and that value for money can be achieved.
- Ensure the treasury management strategy continues to meet the Housing Revenue Account's new and ongoing borrowing requirements.
- Setting a balanced budget with a minimum of 3% surplus revenue over expenditure
- Maximisation of revenue efficiencies to minimise the borrowing required to meet Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS)
- Delivery of new build Council housing
- Continued drive to ensure homes are Energy Efficient and explore Decarbonisation.
- Provision of adequate ongoing capital to maintain WHQS levels.

1.02 **HRA Funding**

The HRA is a ring-fenced service and therefore it must be self-financing and not subsidised by the Council.



The graph above indicates that the majority of the HRA income (68%) comes from the rents charged to its customers and a further 29% of its

	<p>funding comes from grants, in the form of the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA), Social Housing Grant (SHG), and borrowing. The remaining 3% comes from other sources such as non-dwelling rents and service charges.</p>
<p>1.03</p>	<p>HRA Pressures and Efficiencies</p> <p>Pressures and efficiencies have been identified and are detailed in appendix A. These also include several risks that we have not included in the business plan but may still materialise at a later point.</p> <p>An additional budget requirement of £1.254m has been identified for 2024/25. Of this, £0.910m relates to uncontrollable pressures such as pay and general inflationary increases and the remaining £0.344m are service pressures.</p> <p>A new pressure of £0.034m has been added since the last report for an additional charge for manager support in the rents team, however this has been offset by a reduction in the bad debt provision of £0.110m</p> <p>We have also identified £0.301m of efficiencies to offset the pressures, which leaves a net pressure of £0.953m in 2024/25.</p>
<p>1.04</p>	<p>Capital Programme</p> <p>The total proposed capital programme for 2024/25 is £29.498m, summarised in Appendix B.</p> <p>Revised Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)</p> <p>Welsh Government have recently released the revised standard for WHQS.2, acknowledging the changes to how people live, work, and feel about their homes. The programme of works to deliver the new standard will run until 2033.</p> <p>WHQS.2 proposes to reduce the carbon emissions from social housing and in doing so contribute to the Welsh target of Net Zero Carbon. The standard sets out how this can be achieved by balancing the performance of homes with a high carbon footprint, against more efficient homes, this approach is proposed because not all homes will be able to reach the required carbon standards.</p> <p>The new standard will place significant additional capital pressures on the HRA over the next ten years particularly due to the net zero carbon agenda and these additional pressures are not yet reflected in the future business plan.</p> <p>The 2024/25 capital budget does increase the energy efficiency programme of works to £4.639m as part of a 2-year programme to assess the best way to achieve net carbon zero homes.</p> <p>Welsh Government have also made grant available for the two years to support this programme of work (Optimised Retrofit Programme - ORP), which allows Local Authorities to trial how they can achieve net carbon zero</p>

homes. Flintshire have utilised this funding in 2023/24 and have assumed an additional £1.6m of ORP funding for 2024/25.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

A total of £1.100m has been allocated for this mandatory service. This service is customer driven and can be volatile dependant on customer demands.

Regeneration

A £4.000m regeneration budget has been allocated in the Capital Programme for 2024/25. The aim is to utilise this allocation to remodel HRA stock where the current stock is no longer fit for purpose. There are several pipeline schemes for consideration including:

- Sheltered Housing Review
- Estate Remodelling

This allocation will also be utilised towards the acquisition of properties to help reduce homelessness, options of which are currently being explored by the Council. Ten property acquisitions have been assumed in the business plan to support this strategy.

SHARP

£4.153m has been built into 2024/25 for the development of Council housing. The capital programme is currently forecasting the addition of 40 units per annum for the next 5 years, based on the Standard Viability Model and assumes receipt of Social Housing Grant (SHG).

Capitalisation of the costs of the development team have now been included in the programme at 6% of the total development budget.

All schemes are required to meet financial hurdle rates set by the Council and should be able to pay back the original investment via rents within 50 years.

Asset Investment Budget Breakdown	£m
Schemes agreed in 24/25 report	4.153
Total	4.153

Capital Funding

The £29.498m capital programme will be funded by:

WHQS & Asset Investment Funding	£m
Revenue Contribution (CERA)	14.467
Major Repairs Allowance	4.978
Energy Efficiency income (FIT) & ORP Grant	1.900
Prudential Borrowing (Regeneration)	4.000
Total	25.345

SHARP Funding	£m
Prudential Borrowing	4.153
Total	4.153

1.05

Rent Setting

In December 2019, Welsh Government released the revised rent policy for a 5-year period beginning in April 2020/21.

The policy is designed to ensure that affordability for contract holders is at the core of our considerations and when setting the rent uplift, landlords should consider value for money and the whole cost of living in a property as part of their rationale for setting rents.

The Rent Policy for Social Housing Rents from 2020/21 sets out the following:

- An annual rent uplift of up to CPI+1%, for 5 years to 2024/25 using the level of CPI from the previous September each year.
- The level of rents for individual contract holders can be frozen or rise by up to an additional £2 over and above CPI+1%, on condition that total rental income collected by the social landlord increases by no more than CPI+1%.

The policy states, however, that should CPI fall outside the range of 0% to 3%, the Minister with responsibility for housing will determine the appropriate change to rent levels to be applied for that year only. CPI as of September 2023 was 6.7% and Welsh Government announced last month a rent cap for social housing of 6.7%.

Due to the impending start of WHQS.2 and therefore an increased capital requirement, we have identified during our modelling, that it is necessary to increase the Councils rents by a minimum of 6.5% to effectively balance the budget in 2024/25.

If we were unable to increase rents by the required amounts the impact would be as follows:

Rent assumption	inflation	Year 1 rent loss (based on 6.5%)	30-year rent loss (based on 6.5%)
6.5%		-	-
4.0%		£1.028m	£41.989m
2.0%		£1.850m	£75.673m
Rent freeze		£2.672m	£109.358m

Setting rent lower than 6.5% will mean the HRA will need to find further efficiencies of circa £0.400m every year for each 1% rent reduction.

In 2023/24 the Council agreed to uplift rents at 5%, which was the lower

than permitted rate, to support tenants during the recovery from the pandemic. When compared to the 6.5% inflationary uplift allowable under the rent policy for 2023/24, the HRA lost potential additional rental income of £0.571m in year one and £23.804m over 30 years.

The table reflects how much potential income can be lost through setting rents lower than WG guidelines and highlights the importance of balancing affordability alongside the key investment required in HRA services and our housing stock.

Whilst affordability for contract holders should always be an important consideration when setting rents, it is also important to note, setting the rents at WG rent cap levels will enable the Council to utilise these additional funds on WHQS.2 which will reduce social housing utilities costs and improve affordability for contract holders.

1.06 Rent Impact on Contract Holders

We have identified that 68% of all contract holders are eligible for Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) support toward their rent and service charges. The table below shows the impact on those in receipt of HB.

HB eligibility	Average % of rent paid by HB	Average impact on tenants p.w.
Full	100%	£0.00
Partial	34%	£4.80
None	0%	£7.28

Wider consultation is also ongoing, a survey was sent to all contract holders to gain feedback on the affordability of rents and consultation took place with the tenants federation.

As part of the 2023/24 budget, the HRA set aside a £0.250m discretionary fund to assist contract holders who face financial hardship and who engage with us as their landlord. This funding has been maintained for 2024/25 in the business plan. Following consultation at Scrutiny committee we are further proposing that available reserves should be used to top up the reserve in year if required.

1.07 Garage Rents and Service Charges (including impact to tenants)

The proposed garage rent and garage plot increase is 6.5% for 2024/25, which equates to £0.70 per week for garage rent and takes the rent per week to £11.44 (based on 53 weeks). The proposed garage plot increase is £0.05 per week taking the garage plot rent to £1.80 per week.

The business plan anticipates income levels of £0.319m for garages and garage plots.

The rent and service charges policy were introduced in 2015 and expected all Local Housing Associations (LHA's) to be achieving full cost recovery for service charges, if this had not yet been achieved a clear transition plan should be identified to achieve this.

To achieve full cost recovery, we would be required to increase service charges as follows:

Service Charge	Current charge per week	Full recovery cost per charge per week	Increase per week	Impact per week with partial HB (ave. 34%)
Aerials	£1.55	£1.55	£0.00	£0.00
Laundry	£0.79	£1.13	£0.34	£0.22
Cleaning	£4.60	£5.23	£0.63	£0.42
Window cleaning	£0.75	£1.05	£0.30	£0.20
Total	£7.69	£8.96	£1.27	£0.84

Not all properties are subject to all service charges. Of all our contract holders, 2.8% are charged for four service charges and 5.6% are charged for three service charges.

Moving three of the existing service charges to full cost recovery would bring in additional income of £0.043m.

1.08 Capital Financing

The deed to terminate the voluntary agreement for the HRA borrowing cap was signed on the 2nd December 2019, it is therefore important that going forward, increased borrowing in the HRA is carefully managed and monitored to ensure that it is sustainable and affordable to the business plan.

Borrowing should only be used for investment expenditure and not day-to-day running costs or maintaining WHQS. The HRA is likely to be required to increase borrowing in the future to fund WHQS.2 as Welsh Government have indicated this will not be fully funded via grant, therefore we need to manage the risk of this future borrowing by keeping current borrowing at prudent levels.

Borrowing undertaken by the HRA is repaid under the Annuity Method which is calculated in line with the useful life of the asset. Our current borrowing levels are shown below:

Capital Requirement	Financing	B/F Capital Financing Balance £'000	Proposed New Borrowing £'000	Less Repayments £'000	C/F Capital Financing Balance £'000
Prior Debt and HRA Subsidy Buyout		91,219	0	(1,184)	90,035
WHQS		19,349	0	(251)	19,098
SHARP		22,613	4,153	(293)	26,473
Regeneration		761	4,000	(10)	4,751
Total Capital Financing		133,942	8,153	(1,738)	140,357

	<p>Interest Rates</p> <p>The HRA is part of the single debt pool for the Council. All borrowing for the Council is managed within one pool and the average borrowing rate for the Council is applied to all new borrowing in the HRA, the rate assumed in the business plan is 3.69% and interest payments for 2024/25 are estimated at £5.062m.</p>										
1.09	<p>Reserves</p> <p>There is a requirement to hold a minimum level of reserves of 3% of expenditure, however, it was agreed as part of the 2023/24 Business Plan, for Flintshire’s HRA to move to reserves to 7% due to the level of financial risk in the HRA rising as a result of increased borrowing levels for new build and increasing costs due to the volatility of the economy.</p> <p>Reserves should not be used to fund recurring pressures to the Business Plan and levels should be reviewed annually in line with the HRA’s proposed borrowing commitments and budgetary risk factors.</p> <p>In the current climate it would be prudent to maintain reserve levels at 7% of expenditure (£2.905m) as we have ongoing risks to the Business Plan which would have to be funded from reserves if they materialised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay award could be higher than budgeted • Inflation could be higher than the provision in the Business Plan • Arrears could increase due to the cost-of-living crisis • Interest rates increasing due to the economic climate 										
1.10	<p>Options to Fund</p> <p>A minimum rent uplift of 6.5% is required for the Business Plan to remain affordable, this is below the WG rent cap of 6.7%</p> <p>If we were unable to increase rents to the levels required, the following savings would need to be made to balance the budget:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="285 1518 1369 1807"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rent inflation assumption</th> <th>Annual saving required to balance budget</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>6.5%</td> <td>£ nil</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.0%</td> <td>£1.450m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.0%</td> <td>£2.700m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rent freeze</td> <td>£3.750m</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This would need to be achieved through a slowdown of the capital programme. A complex review of all HRA services would be required in 2024/25 to identify recurring savings (revenue and capital) to fund the Business Plan in the longer term, however this could lead to reduced HRA services and could impact on the quality of our housing stock provision and the ability to meet WHQS.2.</p>	Rent inflation assumption	Annual saving required to balance budget	6.5%	£ nil	4.0%	£1.450m	2.0%	£2.700m	Rent freeze	£3.750m
Rent inflation assumption	Annual saving required to balance budget										
6.5%	£ nil										
4.0%	£1.450m										
2.0%	£2.700m										
Rent freeze	£3.750m										

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The HRA is a ring-fenced budget. This proposed HRA budget and Business Plan demonstrates that the council can achieve the ongoing WHQS, can meet service improvement plans and commitments and with prudential borrowing can continue its Council house building programme in 2024/25.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	All households will benefit from the Councils WHQS 2023 programme. The impact of the investment planning and efficiencies is being modelled for various customer groups to ensure that there is no disproportionate impact on any groups with protected characteristics.
3.02	The Business Plan assumes a confirmation of Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) for 2024/25 and beyond, however, Welsh Government have indicated that the purpose of the funding will be reviewed in the future.

3.03 Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact

Long-term	Positive – There is a commitment to increase supply to provide the right types of homes in the right location.
Prevention	Positive – It is our aim to provide support to ensure people live and remain in the right type of home.
Integration	Positive - Achieving WHQS for all existing council houses and delivering new social housing will contribute to the integration within communities.
Collaboration	Positive - To deliver in partnership with stakeholders to support positive impacts for all our tenants.
Involvement	Positive - Communication with tenants, Members and other stakeholders.

Well-being Goals Impact

Prosperous Wales	Positive – Existing social homes are WHQS compliant and meet the changing housing needs. Also Providing good quality new social homes aiming for low/zero carbon. Maximising local employment and training opportunities for local people.
Resilient Wales	Positive – Developing low / zero carbon homes through modern methods of construction and technologies. Ensuring that all statutory compliance requirements are adhered to.
Healthier Wales	Positive – Ensuring all existing homes and new homes are fit for purpose and meet the needs of all people.
More equal Wales	Positive - Provide good quality homes for the most vulnerable people in society.
Cohesive Wales	Positive – Contributing to attractive, viable and safe communities
Vibrant Wales	Positive – Ensuring all communities housing needs are supported
Globally responsible Wales	Positive – The HRA Business Plan will contribute to the improvement of the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales.

4.00 CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT

4.01 Detailed consultation will be undertaken with tenants and elected members to inform the preparation of the WHQS 2023 investment programme.

4.02	Full local consultation is carried out for each new build scheme.
4.03	As part of the 2023/24 rent settlement, the Council gave commitment to WG around engagement with contract holders / tenants and therefore a survey was being conducted around affordability to inform rent setting for 2024/25.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix A – Draft Pressures and Efficiencies 2024/25.
5.02	Appendix B – Draft Capital Programme 2024/25.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Rachael Corbelli, Strategic Finance Manager Telephone: 01352 703363 E-mail: rachael.corbelli@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April 2024</p> <p>Revenue: a term used to describe the day to day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.</p> <p>Capital expenditure: money spent by the organisation on acquiring or maintaining fixed assets, such as land, buildings, and equipment.</p> <p>Budget: a statement expressing the Council’s policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.</p> <p>Treasury Management: the Council has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice. Treasury Management is conducted in accordance with the Council’s Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement and Treasury Management Practices which are both reviewed annually. All borrowing and long term financing is made in accordance with CIPFA’s Prudential Code.</p>

	Major Repairs Allowance: Welsh Government grant paid to local authorities in Wales who still manage and maintain their council housing.
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HRA - SUMMARY OF PRESSURES	£m	Notes
Heating - Individual metering/cost of communal Spaces	0.090	Estimate too low last year
Fleet contract renewal	0.200	Corporate contract renewal
Tai Teg Charges	0.020	Gwrp Cynefin
Pay Inflation 2024/25	0.439	Based on 5% uplift
Utilities Inflation	0.151	Budget correction in line with projections
Standard Inflation	0.320	Inflation at 3% uplift
Manager Support - Rents Team	0.034	
Pay Inflation 2023/24 - RISK	0.000	Possible impact of 23.24 pay award if above 4.5%
Pay Model - RISK	0.000	New payscales
Total	1.254	

HRA - SUMMARY OF EFFICIENCIES	£m	Notes
Travel Review	(0.016)	Review of mileage budgets
Laundry Equipment	(0.020)	Laundry review suspended
Reduction in Bad Debt Provision	(0.110)	
Pension surplus	(0.112)	
Service Charges	(0.043)	Full cost recovery
Total	(0.301)	

Net pressure	0.953
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HRA Capital Programme 2024/25

Appendix B

HRA Capital Programme	£'m
WHQS	
Internal Works	4.269
Envelope Works	7.260
Externals	1.360
Renewables / Alternative Technology	4.562
Total WHQS	17.451
Non WHQS	
Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) - Mandatory/ Minor Adaps	1.100
Fire Risk Assessments Work	1.538
	2.638
Fees	
Capitalised salaries	1.255
Regeneration of stock	
Estate remodelling/ Support homeless strategy	4.000
SHARP Programme	
Programme Spend	3.955
Capitalised salaries @ 4%	0.198
Total SHARP Programme	4.153
Total Capital Spend	29.498

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CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th December 2023
Report Subject	Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28
Cabinet Member	Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Report Author	Corporate Manager – Capital Programme and Assets
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the Council's draft equality objectives and Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 for endorsement prior to formal consultation.

All devolved public authorities in Wales are required by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to publish equality objectives and a Strategic Equality Plan every four years.

Engagement must take place with people with protected characteristics when setting equality objectives and preparing and reviewing the Strategic Equality Plan.

The aim of the Strategic Equality Plan is to reduce inequalities and ensure the delivery of positive outcomes for people with protected characteristics.

The Strategic Equality Plan for the period 2024-28 must be finalised and published by 1st April 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	Cabinet approves the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 before wider consultation with stakeholders, members of the public, and employees.
2.	That the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 is presented to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their consideration and review.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-28
1.01	<p>All public bodies are required to publish equality objectives and a Strategic Equality Plan to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The Council's current equality objectives need to be reviewed and republished with a new Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) for the period 2024-28 by 1st April 2024.</p> <p>The purpose of the Plan is to address inequalities experienced by people with protected characteristics.</p>
1.02	<p>The equality objectives have been reviewed and developed by working in partnership with other public bodies in North Wales and through consultation with stakeholders.</p> <p>Cyngor Gwynedd was also commissioned to review equality data from across the six North Wales local authority areas to identify potential inequalities.</p>
1.03	<p>Engagement has taken place with local groups and stakeholders, representing people with protected characteristics, to seek their views on the Council's current equality objectives.</p>
1.04	<p>The outcome of the research and engagement activity has shown that the current equality objectives are still important. This is not surprising, given that these cover areas where there are deeply entrenched and persistent inequalities. Therefore, the proposed new equality objectives are the same as those agreed for 2020-24, with the exception of the last equality objective which relates to the Socio-economic Duty which did not come into force until 2021.</p>
1.05	<p>The draft SEP 2024-28, which can be found at Appendix 1, has been developed with the Corporate Equalities Review Board and incorporates actions from Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Questioning/Queer + (LGBTQ+) Action Plan for Wales.</p> <p>The measures and actions have also been developed to ensure consistency with the Council Plan 2023-28.</p>
1.06	<p>The proposed equality objectives for 2024-28 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve health, well-being and social care outcomes, including outcomes for older people and disabled people.• Reduce gaps in educational attainment between protected groups and implement strategies to improve well-being.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure equal pay within the workplace by having fair, open, and transparent grading and salary strategies in place. • Improve personal safety for all protected groups. • Increase access to services and decision making for all protected groups. • Improve living standards of people with different protected characteristics. • Reduce the impact of poverty and embed the Socio-economic Duty within the organisation.
1.07	<p>Consultation on the draft SEP 2024-28 with members of the public, employees, and other stakeholders will take place during December 2023 and January 2024.</p> <p>A report will be presented to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and review at their December meeting.</p>
1.08	<p>Following the consultation period, a revised final draft of the SEP 2024-28 will be presented to Cabinet for endorsement before being published on the Council website in March 2024.</p>
1.09	<p>Schools are required to produce their own equality objectives and Strategic Equality Plans.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>There are no significant resource implications arising from the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT						
3.01	<p>An Impact Assessment has been started and the draft is included in the background documents. This will be finalised following the outcomes of consultation and will be presented with the final SEP 2024-28.</p> <p>Under the five ways of working principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 will have the following impact:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ways of Working</th> <th>Impact</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>Positive - creating long term change to improve the lives of people who experience inequalities.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> <td>Positive - through reducing inequalities.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ways of Working	Impact	Long-term	Positive - creating long term change to improve the lives of people who experience inequalities.	Prevention	Positive - through reducing inequalities.
Ways of Working	Impact						
Long-term	Positive - creating long term change to improve the lives of people who experience inequalities.						
Prevention	Positive - through reducing inequalities.						

Integration	Positive - the SEP 2024-28 is aligned with the Council's Well-being objectives and Council Plan.
Collaboration	Positive – the Council are working with other public bodies in North Wales to take action to achieve similar objectives.
Involvement	Positive - people with protected characteristics have been involved in the development of equality objectives.
Well-being Goals Impact	
Well-being Goal	Impact
Prosperous Wales	Positive - reducing inequalities in education, and employment, and pay will contribute to a prosperous Wales.
Resilient Wales	No change.
Healthier Wales	Positive - through reducing health inequalities.
More equal Wales	Positive - through increasing access to services and information and reducing known inequalities.
Cohesive Wales	Positive - through addressing hate crime and fostering good relations between people from different protected groups.
Vibrant Wales	Positive - through increasing access to cultural activities and promoting Welsh language through community cohesion activities.
Globally responsible Wales	No change.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Engagement and consultation with stakeholders and services has taken place to identify potential objectives and actions for the draft SEP 2024-28.
4.02	The draft SEP 2024-28 will be released for public consultation in December 2023.
4.03	Formal consultation on the draft SEP 2024-28 will take place with Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, also in December 2023.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Draft Integrated Impact Assessment.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Fiona Mocko - Strategic Policy Advisor Telephone: 01352 702122 E-mail: fiona.mocko@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Protected Characteristics: these are the groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. The characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.</p> <p>Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED): Public Sector Equality Duty, places a General Duty and Specific Duty on public bodies. The General Duty requires public bodies to show due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and foster good relations. The Specific Duty in Wales requires public bodies to develop equality objectives and publish Strategic Equality Plans. It also includes the requirement to train employees, assess impact of decisions and undertake equality monitoring.</p> <p>Socio-economic Duty (SED): The duty places a legal responsibility on listed public bodies, when taking strategic decisions, to have due regard to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage.</p>

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Strategic Equality Plan

2024 - 28

*Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh*

Flintshire County Council Strategic Equality Plan 2024– 2028

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Foreword

Welcome to Flintshire County Council's fourth Strategic Equality Plan. We are pleased to publish this plan which details the objectives, actions and targets that will be undertaken during the next four years and identifies the evidence base and rationale on which the objectives are based.

We have continued to work in partnership with all the public bodies across North Wales and have identified regional as well as local equality objectives. Working in partnership is important in these financially challenging times but it also helps to identify common equality objectives. This means that activity is targeted on tackling specific areas of inequality which will benefit all sections of North Wales. Several organisations working together to create change will have greater impact than a single organisation.

The new objectives are consistent with the equality objectives identified in our previous Strategic Equality Plans. This is not surprising as we are addressing deeply entrenched and long-standing inequalities. We recognise that we are on a journey and making a sustained change will take time. In producing this Plan we will meet our statutory Public Sector Equality Duties under the Equality Act 2010 to advance equality, eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment, and foster good community relations in our employment, policy, procurement and service delivery functions.

This Strategic Equality Plan builds upon the progress we have made through the previous Plans. The Strategic Equality Plan alongside the Diversity and Equality Policy and Welsh Language Standards sets out our commitment to equality. The Strategic Equality Plan is linked to our Council Plan 2023-2028.

We have valued the contributions from everyone who has participated in the development of this plan. If you would like to become involved and contribute to continuing to review our priorities that will reduce inequalities in Flintshire, please contact us.

Neal Cockerton
Chief Executive

Cllr Billy Mullin
Cabinet Member for
Governance and Corporate
Services including Health and
Safety and Human Resources

1. Introduction

1.1 Legal Context

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in employment and services on the basis of the following characteristics: -

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Act introduced the public sector equality duty which places a **general duty** on public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
And
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Specific Duty

Devolved public bodies in Wales have specific duties within the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011; these include setting and publishing equality objectives and developing a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP). This is our fourth Strategic Equality Plan setting out our equality objectives and the steps we will take to achieve them.

The purpose of the plan is to address inequalities to make a real difference to the lives of people across the protected characteristics who live and work in Flintshire. The equality objectives aim to address significant areas of inequality. We have reviewed evidence from a range of sources both qualitative and quantitative to inform the SEP. Welsh language is addressed through implementation of the **Welsh Language Standards** as set out in the Compliance Notice served by the Welsh Language Commissioner.

1.2 The Socio-economic Duty is set out in the Equality 2010 but was not enacted by Westminster. This came into force in Wales on 31st March 2021. The Socio-economic Duty requires the Council to:

must, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising them in a way that is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.

1.3 Human Rights Act

We also comply with the Human Rights Act 1998 which gives effect to the human rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. These rights are called **Convention Rights**.

Examples of Convention or human rights include:

- the right to life .
- the right to respect for private and family life.
- the right to freedom of religion and belief.
- the right not to be discriminated against.

1.4 Equality objectives for 2024 -2028

We have updated and reviewed the Council's equality objectives, going forward from 2024 -2028 the objectives are:

Objective 1: Improve health, well-being and social care outcomes including outcomes for older people and disabled people.

Objective 2: Reduce gaps in educational attainment between protected groups and implement strategies to improve well-being.

Objective 3: Ensure equal pay within the workplace by having in place fair, open and transparent grading and salary strategies in place.

Objective 4: Improve personal safety for all protected groups.

Objective 5: Increase access to services and decision making for all protected groups.

Objective 6: Improve living standards of people with different protected characteristics.

Objective 7: Reduce the impact of poverty and embed the Socio-economic Duty within the organisation.

Achieving these equality objectives will contribute to providing appropriate, accessible, and effective services and facilities meeting the diverse needs of our community and ensuring that the Council is a fair employer in all its

employment practices. Appendix 1 identifies the steps that we will take to meet these objectives and meet the specific duties of the Equality Act 2010.

1.5 Population Profile

Flintshire is a semi-rural Welsh county in North East Wales. It borders Cheshire to the East, Wrexham to the South and Denbighshire to the West.

A summary of the profile of Flintshire residents is set out below:

In Flintshire, on Census Day 2021:

- The total population of the county was estimated at 155,000 (an increase from 152,500 in 2011).
- Those people live in a total of 66,900 dwellings.
- In 2021, Flintshire ranked seventh for total population out of 22 local authority areas in Wales, which is a fall of one place in a decade.
- Flintshire has the largest population in North Wales.
- Flintshire is the 11th most densely populated of Wales' 22 local authority areas.
- There has been a decrease of 3.0% in people aged 15 to 64 years.
- There has been a decrease of 4.2% in children aged under 15 years.
- The proportion of people aged 65+ years in the county has increased to 21.4% (33,200 people) compared to 17.6% (26,836 people) in 2011.
- 1.4% population identified their nationality as Polish.

Ethnic group:

Ethnic group	%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	0.9%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	0.2%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.9%
White	97.6%
Other ethnic group	0.3%

Further details are provided on our [website](#) and the [Office of National Statistics \(ONS\)](#).

1.6 The Council

Elected members

Flintshire County Council has 67 Councillors who represent 46 electoral wards in Flintshire. They are democratically elected every four years. Of the elected members 43 are male, 24 are female (34.5%) compared to 2020 Strategic Equality Plan in which it was reported that there were 53 male elected members and 17 females. This constitutes an increase of over 11%.

Employees

The Council employs 6,235 people delivering services from various sites around the county with the main administrative centre at County Hall, Mold. Services include council tax, education, housing, planning, refuse services, social services, trading standards and transport. A breakdown of the profile of the workforce is provided in Appendix 2. Data in 2023 shows that the majority of Council employees are female 75.99% compared to 24.01% males. Detailed annual workforce information reports are published on the Council [website](#).

The equal pay audit completed in March 31st 2022 shows that the gender gap between men and women in the Council is 13.71% (mean) and 22.45% (median). This is an increase from our last Strategic Equality Plan published in 2020 in which the pay gap was 13.1% (mean) and 20.88% (median). The data for 2023 was not available at the time of writing this Plan. The full details of our annual Equal Pay Audit is published annually on our website and can be found [here](#).

As a Council we have continued to make savings to meet the financial challenge. In doing this we have still managed to protect key services such as maintaining roads, keeping communities clean and tidy, local schools, welfare support and services for older people and vulnerable children.

1.7 Well-being objectives and Council Plan

We have developed Well-being objectives to meet the [Well Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

Our Strategic Equality Plan contributes to all of these Well-being objectives.

Seven priorities are identified in the Council Plan, the table below identifies which equality objective contributes to each priority:

Council priority	Equality objective
Poverty Well-being Objective: Protecting our communities and people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs and to be resilient	Equality Objectives 7
Affordable and Accessible Housing Well-being Objective: Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities	Equality Objectives 1, 6 and 7
Green Society and Environment Well-being Objective: Limiting and enhancing the impact of the Council's services on the natural environment and supporting the wider communities of Flintshire to reduce their own carbon footprint	Equality Objective 5

Economy Well-being Objective: Connecting communities and enabling a sustainable economic recovery and growth	Equality Objective 7
Personal and Community Well-being Well-being Objective: Supporting people in need to live as well as they can	Equality Objective 1
Education and Skills Well-being Objective: Enabling and supporting learning communities	Equality Objective 2
A Well Managed Council Well-being Objective: A responsible, resourceful, and trusted Council operating efficiently as possible	Equality Objectives 3

1.8 Links to other plans and strategies

The Strategic Equality Plan cannot stand alone if equality is to be mainstreamed into everyday practice; it is linked to:

- Accessibility Strategy schools- to ensure that schools are accessible for disabled pupils, parents/carers and employees
- Affordable Warmth Action Plan- ensuring vulnerable residents can access affordable heating to stay warm
- Dignity at Work policy- The long-term aim is to be a responsive authority in every aspect of our service activities; providing appropriate, accessible and effective services and facilities to meet the diverse needs of our community
- Domestic Energy Efficiency Project
- Homelessness Strategy and Local Action Strategy
- People Strategy and other Human Resources policies which aim to ensure that we are fair in all our employment practices.
- Managing Unauthorised Encampments Protocol, which aims to ensure that the way the Council manages unauthorised Traveller encampments is fair and proportionate.
- 21st Century Schools' Strategy ensuring schools are fit for purpose and meet the needs of learners with protected characteristics.

2.0 Equality Objectives

2.1 Meeting our equality objectives.

Progress to meeting our equality objectives is set out in our **annual equality reports**. During the past four years we have improved information on the diversity of our employees.

2.2 Reviewing our objectives

The statutory equality duties require public bodies to set equality objectives in relation to the protected groups. Objectives should be evidenced based and outcome focussed to address the most significant areas of inequality leading to improvements for both employees and customers. The equality objectives should meet the three parts of the general duty. We must also publish an objective to address gender pay difference. The action plan to meet our equality objectives is set out in Appendix 1.

We reviewed our objectives using a variety of approaches:-

Regionally

- We worked collaboratively with other public sector bodies across North Wales to undertake regional and national research on the equality profile of our communities and identify specific inequalities. A detailed breakdown of the population is provided and the research on inequalities in North Wales was undertaken by Cyngor Gwynedd on behalf of the North Wales Public Sector Equality Officers Network (NWPSSEN).
- As a member of NWPSSEN we consulted with stakeholders on our regional equality objectives.
- We completed a consultation exercise and held a workshop in July 2023 to understand the barriers people with protected characteristics faced when applying for employment in the public sector.

Locally

- The Regional Community Cohesion Team held a series of community conversations, to identify issues and priorities and seek feedback on our current equality objectives. Community conversations were held with:
 - North East Wales Multicultural Hub, comprising:
 - CLPW: Portuguese Community Interest (Wrexham)
 - Paallam Arts: Indian Performing Arts Collective (Wrexham & Wales)
 - The Wrexham Africa Community Group (Wrexham)
 - Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam (Wrexham & Flintshire)
 - The North East Wales Chinese Women's Association (Flintshire / North East Wales)
 - The Anglo-Polish Society (Chester and North Wales).
 - Young people (11-19 years) during the Youth Well-being Day held in July 2023.

- Ukrainian Refugees
- Mold Self-Advocacy Group in Flintshire
- We met with local groups, including disabled people to ask about their views on the key priorities that needed to be addressed. Transport was raised a key issue.
- We reviewed progress of our current Strategic Equality Plan and identified those objectives we struggled to find data to measure progress.
- We also reviewed the data we held on the profile of Council employees and customers. We found limited data was available about the profile of customers and employees and where available did not cover all of the protected characteristics. We recognise we need to continue collating data to monitor any inequalities for specific groups and also to identify areas for improvements.

2.3 We have set ourselves seven equality objectives for the period 2024 - 2028. We have identified each equality objectives, why the objective is priority and how we will measure our achievement. Our equality objectives for 2024 - 2028 are set out on the following pages:

Objective 1: Improve health, well-being and social care outcomes.

This is a priority because:

- Feedback from both regional and local consultation said this was important.
- Welsh Government found that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ)+ communities reported experiencing poorer mental health including loneliness, depression, and suicide.
- Previous reports show that LGBTQ+ disabled people continue to face discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity from those providing personal care, and the needs of older people are not always met - Source WG LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales.
- Parts of the LGBTQ+ population are also more likely to be lonely or socially isolated, especially older people (LGBT Foundation 2020).
- In Wales, in 2021 Black, Asian and minority ethnic children made up 8.3% of looked after children (Stats Wales, 2021.)
- Some ethnic minority people reported that their experience of social care services lacked compassion and empathy, and those assumptions were made about them because of their ethnicity and that their needs were not met. Source WG Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.
- WG Report of The Socioeconomic Subgroup found that health and social care is seen as more difficult to access for people from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background because of cultural and language barriers.
- Number of working days lost per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employees lost due to sickness absence 11.87 days.

Achievement will be measured by:

Measure	Baseline
Number of Council employees trained on Mental Health First Aid across the organisation (Increase)	106
Number of Mental Health First Aid Champions across the organisation (Increase)	0
Usage of the Council's Employee Assistance Programme (Increase)	3.54
Ethnicity data number % Social Services service users where ethnicity data is available	Tb be confirmed (TBC)
Number % Social Services employees who attend anti-racism training	New measure
Number /% Social Services employees who attend LGBTQ+ awareness training	New measure
Number of complaints of discrimination/racism made by service users within Social Services.	To be confirmed

Objective 2: Reduce gaps in educational attainment between protected groups and implement strategies to improve well-being

This is a priority because:

- Girls outperform boys at all key stages in our schools (insert data)
- In Wales, A2 outcomes (final year of A-levels) fell steeply for learners with Black, African, Caribbean, Black British ethnic backgrounds. Source WG Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.
- Despite improvements over time, evidence from an Equality, and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) study in 2018 suggests that attainment in early years in Wales continues to differ for children from different ethnic backgrounds. In particular, Black pupils have lower attainment than White British pupils during early year's education (EHRC, 2018).
- Boys are more likely to be excluded from Flintshire schools (both permanent and fixed term).

Sex	Fixed (%)	Permanent (%)	Total (%)
Female	30.21	0.25	30.46
Male	68.54	1.75	70.29

- In Wales, for the year September 2019 to August 2020, pupils with a Gypsy ethnic background had the highest rate of fixed term exclusions (5 days or less), and pupils with a White ethnic background had the highest rate of fixed term exclusions (over 5 days) and permanent exclusions. WG Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.

- Stonewall Cymru, reported that more than half of LGBT young people in Wales (54%) and almost three quarters of trans young people (73%) face bullying at school for being LGBT (Stonewall Cymru, School Report 2017).
- Findings from a UK-wide survey by Just Like Us (Milsom 2021) reported that only 58% of LGBT+ students described feeling safe on a daily basis at school in the 12 months prior – compared to a higher figure of 73% for non-LGBT+ students. In addition, 43% of LGBT+ students reported being bullied, compared to 21% of non-LGBT students.
- According to research undertaken by Show Racism the Red Card, a quarter of teacher/teaching assistant respondents in Wales had observed, responded to or had a pupil report racial discrimination in the last year, with 3 in 10 pupil respondents to the survey admitting to being racist or using racist language towards another pupil (Show Racism the Red Card, 2020).
- Annual School Census (PLASC) shows that only 4 per cent of pupils aged 5+ in Welsh-medium schools were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic at April 2021, compared to 15% in English Medium schools.

Achievement will be measured by:

Measure	Baseline
Number of schools who have implemented the element of the curriculum ensuring Black Asian and minority ethnic stories, contributions and histories are taught.	New measure
Number of schools requiring Black, Asian and minority ethnic stories, contributions and histories are taught as a recommendation by Estyn.	New measure
Number of schools who meet the statutory requirement of the curriculum when inspected.	New measure
Number of schools using the electronic system to report identity-based bullying.	49
Number and type of identity based bullying incidents in schools.	49
Number of schools engaging in professional development opportunities relating to anti-racism and LGBTQ+ inclusion.	New measure
Percentage of fixed term and permanent exclusions by protected characteristic.	New measure

Percentage of children from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background accessing Welsh medium education.	New measure
Percentage of people from ethnic minority backgrounds accessing Welsh language projects through Menter Iaith.	New measure

Objective 3: Ensure equal pay within the workplace by having in place fair, open and transparent grading and salary strategies in place.

This is a priority because:

- the Gender pay gap in the Council is 13.71%.
- In 2019, the ethnicity pay gap in Wales was 1.4%. (ONS).
- Findings from Ethnic Minorities Youth Support Team Wales 2018 All Wales Survey for Ethnic Minority People, an online survey undertaken over a 3 month period (October to December 2018), found a 60% majority of the 143 respondents thought that people from an ethnic minority background are treated unfairly in the workplace (EYST, 2019).
- One third (34%) of LGBT staff hid or disguised their LGBT identity at work for fear of discrimination - Stonewall Cymru 2018.
- 2019-2020 data from the National Survey for Wales reported that 19% of lesbian, gay and bisexual people had experienced bullying at work in the year prior to undertaking the survey. This compares to 11% of heterosexual people.
- A survey and focus groups by Welsh Government 2021 found that whilst 45% of people reported that those in the workplace reacted only positively when aware they were LGBTQ+, 24% reported un-permissible exposure of their LGBTQ+ identity in the workplace (or 'outing') and 10% recounted experiencing verbal harassment.

Achievement will be measured by:

Measures/PI	Baseline
Increasing the quality and quantity of workforce data	To be confirmed
Completing and publishing an annual analysis of workforce data and producing an action plan to address any potential or actual inequalities.	To be confirmed
The number of complaints made by employees of discrimination and identity-based bullying	0
The pay gap between men and women employed by the Council	13.71%

The pay gap between disabled employees and non-disabled employees.	New measure
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Objective 4: Improve personal safety for all protected groups

This is a priority because:

- Consultation identified that hate crime is still an issue for many people.
- For the year April 2021 to March 2022, police recorded sexual orientation hate crimes in Wales increased by 50% on the previous year (from 884 to 1,329) and transgender hate crimes rose by 43% (from 173 to 247 incidents. Source WG LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales.
- Race hate crimes comprise around 66% of all hate crimes recorded in Wales in 2020 to 2021 (UK Government, 2021).
- The number of hate crimes reported to North Wales Police has increased in Flintshire. The number of racially motivated incidents are the most frequently reported.

Type of incident	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2022/23
Racially motivated	37	84	76	99	92	126
Homophobic	6	26	29	40	39	61
Disability Related	9	8	14	20	38	65
Transphobic	1	0	1	4	7	7
Religious	6	5	9	5	7	6
Total	59	123	129	168	183	265

- The majority of LGB and Trans people who had experienced hate crime or an incident did not report it ([Stonewall Cymru 2017](#))
- [Wales Audit Office](#) report that it is estimated that domestic violence costs Wales £826 million annually- £202.6 million in services' costs, £100.9 million in economic costs and £522.9 million in human and emotional costs. Wales Audit Office - Progress in implementing the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2019.
- LGBT Foundation's Domestic Abuse Support Programme has seen demand for support rise since lockdown measures were introduced:
 - a 38% rise in the number of people referred for domestic abuse support, and
 - a 38% increase in calls to the helpline referring to domestic abuse.

Source: LGBT Foundation 2020).

Achievement will be measured by:

Measure/PI	Baseline
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Number of reports of hate incidents by protected characteristic as reported to North Wales Police	265
Number and % of identity-based incidents of anti-social behaviour reported by Contract Holders (Housing tenants)	New Measure
Percentage and number of employees who complete Welsh Government's e-learning training on sexual violence and domestic abuse	TBC

Objective 5: Increasing access to services and decision making for all protected groups.

This is a priority because:

- Engaging with protected groups and undertaking equality impact assessments are statutory requirements of the PSED.
- Access to services has been raised as an issue during consultation by disabled people, in particular access to the countryside and public toilets.
- Voting rates remains low for some groups.
- Elected members in the Council - 43 males (64.1%) and 24 females (35.8%).
- In a survey of candidates for the 2017 local elections in Wales, 2.3% of candidates for county and county borough councils who provided their ethnicity and 1.9% of candidates for town and community councils were Black, Asian, minority ethnic people. Of those elected to county and county borough councils 1.8% and 1.2% in town and community councils were from minority ethnic groups (Welsh Government, 2018).

Achievement will be measured by:

Measures/PI	Baseline
% of people participating in election by race, sex and age	TBC
The number of Digital Surgeries held at Connects Centres	TBC
Number of digital stations available across the libraries' network	TBC

Objective 6: Improve living standards of people with different protected characteristics

This is a priority because:

- Consultation both regionally and locally has identified that this is an issue.
- The average number of days to complete a Mandatory Medium Disabled adaptation is 89 days.
- Average number of days to complete a Mandatory Large Disabled adaptation is 469 days.
- Average length of stay (days) for those households in interim homeless accommodation under Housing Wales Act 2014 is 117 days.
- Number of presentations to the homeless service - 1372 (in 2022)
- Single parent and single adult households are significantly over-represented in homelessness cases. Welsh Government 2022 (Annual Wellbeing Report)
- Women are more likely to be threatened with homelessness while men are more likely to be living with homelessness. StatsWales 2022
- LGBT young people are more likely to find themselves homeless than their non LGBT peers, comprising up to 24% of the youth homeless population. Source LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales
- Shortage of Traveller pitches and many authorised pitches are in unsuitable locations, either too far from local facilities or too close to industrial properties. Price (WCPP), 2021
- There are 9 authorised Traveller sites in the county, and there were 9 incidents of unauthorised encampments during 2022/23.
- In 2011 in Wales, 28.7% of Gypsy or Irish Travellers and 27% of people from a Bangladeshi background lived in overcrowded housing (that is, they had fewer bedrooms than they needed to avoid undesirable sharing), whilst 19.4% of Black people and 18.5% of Arabs did so compared to 4.9% of White British people – Source WG Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.

Achievement will be measured by:

Measures/PI	Baseline
Total number of Small Disabled Adaptations completed	531 (Higher than normal due to Covid-19 20/21 – 349)
Average number of days to complete a Small Disabled adaptation	N/A - New Measure
Total number of Discretionary Medium Disabled Adaptations completed	32
Total number of Mandatory or Discretionary Medium Disabled adaptations	78
Average number of days to complete a Mandatory Medium Disabled adaptation	89

Total number of Mandatory Large Disabled Adaptations completed	11
Average number of days to complete a Small Disabled adaptation	N/A - New Measure
Total number of Discretionary Medium Disabled Adaptations completed	32
Total number of Mandatory or Discretionary Medium Disabled adaptations	78
Number of households rehoused with significant adaptations requirements	10
Average number of days to complete a Mandatory Large Disabled adaptation	469
Total number of Disabled Adaptations completed	652
Percentage of successful prevention outcomes for homelessness under Housing Wales Act 2014	63
Percentage of successful relief outcomes for homelessness under Housing Wales Act 2014	57
Number of households accommodated by the Council under Housing Wales act 2014 homeless duties	101
Average length of stay (days) for those households in interim homeless accommodation under Housing Wales Act 2014	117
Number of referrals received through the Housing Support Gateway	1,328
Number of presentations to the homeless service	1,372
Number and % of Homeless Team who attend specific LGBTQ + awareness training	New measure
% of equality data held on people presenting as homeless	New measure
% of equality data held on Contract Holders (Council Tenants)	New measure

Objective 7: Reduce the impact of poverty and embed the Socio-economic Duty within the organisation

This is a priority because:

- Welsh Government report that:
 - Children are more likely to be living in poverty than adults
 - 28% of children were living in poverty in 2020
 - Households in fuel poverty are generally older. Of all fuel poor households, around:
 - 2 in 5 are headed by someone over 65
 - 1 in 4 are headed by someone over 75
- According to the Family Resources Survey, between 2019 and 2020, 5 million people in the UK lived in food poverty. In 2020, this was 8% of the population but data from The Food Foundation suggests food

insecurity levels rose to 9% of the population in January 2021. Source: Sustain - Food Poverty

- More than six in ten (62%) working aged people referred to food banks in early 2020 were disabled. This equates to more than three times the rate in the general population. Source: The Trussell Trust
- Non-white ethnicity is linked with a greater likelihood of relative income poverty. Source WG Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.
- WG Fuel Poverty Estimates:
 - 169,000 vulnerable households in Wales were estimated to be living in fuel poverty, equivalent to 14% of vulnerable households.
 - 26,000 vulnerable households were estimated to be living in severe fuel poverty, equivalent to 2% of vulnerable households.
 - 141,000 vulnerable households were estimated to be at risk of fuel poverty, equivalent to 12% of vulnerable households.

(Source: Welsh Government – Fuel Poverty Estimates)

- Since 2011, adults over the age of 65 years have consistently made up the largest proportion of the adult internet non-users, and over half of all adult internet non-users were over the age of 75 years in 2018.
- A lower percentage of disabled people indicated that they prefer to shop in person (65% compared with 73% for non-disabled people. Source: ONS, Exploring the UK’s digital divide, 2019.
- There is a strong link between poverty and socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities faced in accessing decent homes by some ethnic minority people. Source WG Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.

Achievement will be measured by:

Measures/PI	Baseline
Total number of households receiving energy efficiency improvements	1,293
Providing advice and signposting support to vulnerable households	TBC
Number of individuals entering employment, learning or volunteering	153
Number of individuals receiving support	367
The number of Sim Cards issued to people in low-income households	TBC
Recording the number of uniform grants awarded	TBC
Average number of calendar days to process new claims for housing benefit and council tax reduction ¹	17

¹ The target for average number of calendar days to process new claims is set by DWP at 20 days.

Average number of calendar days to process change in circumstances for housing benefit and council tax reduction ²	3
Total spend of Discretionary Housing Payments (%)	130
Number of children enrolled in free swimming lessons	N/A – New Measure
Number of free to access outdoor play areas available to children across the county	195
Number of items loaned (physical and digital)	176,184
Numbers of residents enrolled in the “Mobile Meals” service	190
Number of residents supported by the “Hospital to Home” meals service	N/A – New Measure
Number of children attending Fit, Fed and Read sessions during school holidays	5,400

3. Meeting the Specific Duties

3.1 Arrangements for identifying, collating and publishing information

Employment

We currently monitor the profile of employees by age, disability, ethnicity, marital status, religion, sex and sexual orientation. Detailed reports are published annually on our [website](#) and include profiles of:-

- the workforce
- levels of pay
- applicants submitted for jobs
- applicants selected for interview
- successful appointments
- leavers
- incidents of bullying and harassment
- disciplinary action
- employees who have received training

Schools

We also collate data on the profile of school pupils by age, ethnicity, gender, language, in relation to: -

- attendance
- exclusions

² The target for average number of calendar days to process change in circumstances is set by DWP at 8 days.

- free school meal entitlements

Data on attainment at specific key stages is published in the annual equality report. The data is collated as part of Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and published by the Welsh Government.

Services

A profile of customers is collated by Social Services for Adults, Social Services for Children, Housing and Customer Services through the Council's complaints and comments system. This information is published in the annual equality report on our website. Residents' surveys, satisfaction surveys and consultation exercises also capture equality information.

3.2 Arrangements for assessing impact

To meet the specific duty all public authorities are required to set out the methods of impact assessments on policies and practices. This is to ensure that the needs and concerns of all protected groups are taken into consideration.

An Integrated impact assessment (IIA) screening tool and template for a full impact assessment have been developed. A group of stakeholders representing protected characteristics from both employees and members of the public review IIAs and provide feedback to authors. IIAs have been integrated into the performance management system to facilitate more effective monitoring.

We are working with Manchester University, piloting a new tool. An evaluation will take place involving elected members, senior managers and IIA authors. The evaluation will not only look at the usability of the tool but how the results of the assessments are informing decisions.

3.3 Arrangements for promoting knowledge and understanding and identify training needs of employees in relation to public sector duties

This section sets out the Council's arrangements for ensuring employees have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to meet the general and specific duty. We recognise that some awareness raising / training will be generic which all employees will need to attend and other training will be more specifically related to individual job roles and will support them to implement the SEP.

Specific activities to support these arrangements include:-

- Bespoke workshops on Equality.
- Training to support initiatives such as Deaf Awareness Week, Gypsy and Traveller History Month, Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ) History Month and promote awareness and understanding of specific equality issues.

- Resources are available on the Council's intranet including guidance for working with people from the protected groups.
- E-learning modules are available on the Equality Act 2010 and Equality in the workplace. These have to be completed by all new starters.
- Hate crime, Modern Slavery, County Lines and Prevent training is also available.
- Hate Crime, Modern Slavery, LGBTQ+ and Trans awareness training are also available as e-learning modules.

3.4 How we incorporate equality into Procurement

When procuring works, goods or services from other organisations a public body in Wales must: -

- have due regard to whether it would be appropriate for the award criteria for that contract to include considerations to help meet the general duty.
- have due regard to whether it would be appropriate to stipulate conditions relating to the performance of the contract to help meet the three aims of the general duty.

In some contracts equality will be a core requirement and this will be set out in detail within the contract. The Flintshire County Council Procurement Policy states its commitment to: -

- Users of all services
- Council core and policy objectives
- Compliance with service aims and objectives
- Continuous improvement
- Quality and equality
- Operational efficiency

Our Contract Procedure Rules include all the protected characteristics into the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) for tenders. Guidance is available for employees on the inclusion of equality considerations into specific contracts.

4 Monitoring and review

4.1 Actions and measures will be incorporated into the Council's performance management system and progress will be reported to Cabinet annually and as when needed. A report describing progress to meeting the equality objectives will be published annually; relevant equality information will be published in this report. Progress will be monitored through the Corporate Equality Board, Chief Officer Team, Cabinet and relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The objectives will be reviewed annually and revised if necessary or if monitoring indicates that there are emerging areas of inequality that need to


be addressed urgently. The action plan will be updated annually. If the objectives are revised the Strategic Equality Plan will be republished otherwise it will be republished in 2028.

5. Publication

The Strategic Equality Plan will be published on our website and will be available in English, Welsh and Easy Read. A summary will be available in British Sign Language DVD. Other formats and languages will be available on request. Information on the profile of the workforce is published annually.

Thank you for reading our Strategic Equality Plan 2024/2028.

Views and suggestions for the Strategic Equality Plan are welcome.

Email:  corporatebusiness@flintshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1
Action Plan

Equality objective 1: Improve health, well-being and social care outcomes including outcomes for older people and disabled people											
Action	Who	Time frame	Protected characteristic								
			Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion and Belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Continuing to grow the Microcare market, including access to commissioned care packages, to ensure that older people who live in rural areas are able to access care at home.	Commissioning Manager	March 2024	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Providing additional step-down placements for older people within our in-house provision to facilitate timely hospital discharge and promote recovery	Registered Manager Resources and Regulated Services	March 2025	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√

Supporting people to achieve their mental well-being outcomes by promoting personal and community well-being through open access courses delivered by the Learning Partnership	Service Manager Disability and Mental Health Services	March 2024	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Working with Housing to fund a small team of people to support individuals with low level Mental health problems to improve their housing	Service Manager Disability and Mental Health Services	March 2025	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Continue to support disabled people to secure employment opportunities through Project Search	Service Manager Disability and Mental Health Services	March 2024		√								
Exploring the recommissioning of advocacy services on a regional basis to ensure that individuals who need it can access support to achieve their well-being outcomes	Commissioning Manager	March 2024	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Communicate appropriate processes and policies to ensure that any concerns and complaints of discriminatory behaviour are dealt with robustly and transparently (including whistleblowing policy).	Planning and Development Officer	April 2024	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Use the Social Services staff bulletin and Workforce Development training courses to continually drive the message that all employees have a duty to combat all forms of discrimination in the workplace. This includes reporting incidents when they occur; forming like-minded alliances with peers to tackle key issues; raising awareness and making suggestions for positive reform.	Workforce Development Manager	April 2024	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
As policies are developed and/or reviewed, we will ensure their impact on ethnic minority and LGBT employees and service users has been considered through the completion of an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA).	Social Services Planners	On-going						√				√
Undertake a review of complaints received from service users to identify racist behaviours and any associated patterns.	Complaints Officer	April 2024						√				
Anti-racism training and LGBTQ+ awareness is included in Social Services training and development programme	Workforce Development Manager	December 2023	√	√				√			√	√
Implement Welsh Government and Social Care Wales LGBTQ+ training for social care staff when available	Workforce Development Manager	When available from WG	√	√							√	√

Ensure our engagement and co-production activities engages with a wide diversity of individuals reflecting our commitment to race and LGBTQ+ equality.	Planning and Development Officer	On-going	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Increase the completion of ethnicity data for our service users.	Performance and Quality Manager	March 2024						√				
Promoting the Council's Employee Assistance Programme to increase usage		March 2028	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Equality objective 2: Reduce gaps in educational attainment between protected groups and implement strategies to improve well-being												
Action	Who	Time frame	Protected characteristic									
			Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion and Belief	Sex	Sexual orientation	
Support for implementing the new curriculum for Wales through the regional school improvement service (GwE) to ensure that Black Asian and minority ethnic stories, contributions and histories are taught	Senior Manager for School Improvement/ Senior Primary	September 2024						√				

	Learning Adviser											
Ask GwE to include in their monitoring and evaluation work with schools what progress is being made by our schools ensuring Black Asian and minority ethnic stories, contributions and histories are taught throughout the curriculum.	Senior Manager for School Improvement/ Senior Primary Learning Adviser	September 2024						√				
Continue to promote access to Hwb as a digital platform and support for schools to include diversity within the curriculum.	Senior Manager for School Improvement Senior Primary Learning Adviser	On-going		√	√			√	√	√	√	
Analysis of inspection reports for schools to ensure schools include Black, Asian and minority ethnic stories, contributions and histories within the curriculum.	Senior Manager for School Improvement Senior Primary Learning Adviser	Annual						√				
Continue to work with schools to make effective use of the online identity based bullying reporting system.	Learning Advisor – Health, Well-	On-going		√	√	√		√	√	√	√	

	being & Safeguarding										
Support schools to meet the requirements of a Wales-wide identity based bullying reporting and data collection system when implemented	Learning Advisor – Health, Well-being & Safeguarding	September 2024		√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Termly analysis of trends completed. Regular feedback provided to Primary and Secondary Headteacher federations. Bespoke support provided to individual schools as required	Learning Advisor – Health, Well-being & Safeguarding / Learning Advisor – Health, Well-being & Safeguarding Education and Youth Safeguarding Panel	September 2024		√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Ensure a range of appropriate interventions (both universal and targeted) are available to schools to meet the wellbeing needs of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds and LGBTQ+ learners	Healthy Schools team	On-going						√			√
Continue to work with key partners, including Show Racism the Red Card (SRTRC) and the North Wales Race Equality Network (NWREN)to	Healthy Schools team	On-going						√			

support the well-being of Black Asian minority ethnic learners.											
Promote Welsh Government (WG) guidance (when available) on Exclusions from School and Pupil Referral Units in relation to learners who can be disproportionately subject to permanent or temporary exclusions.	Senior Manager for Inclusion / Senior Learning Adviser for Inclusion and Progression	On-going		√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Continue to monitor and review exclusions by protected characteristics to ensure no disproportionality.	Senior Manager for Inclusion Senior Learning Adviser for Inclusion and Progression	On-going		√	√	√		√	√	√	√
Analyse data on Black, Asian and minority ethnic people who attend Welsh-medium education.	Welsh in Education Strategic Forum – provision sub-group	On-going						√			
Increase opportunities for ethnic minority communities to access Welsh Language projects	Schools / Welsh in Education Strategic Forum -	On-going						√			

	Provision Sub-group/ North-East Wales Adult Learning Partnership											
Identify opportunities for and include actions to increase opportunities to access to the Welsh language by ethnic minority communities in the community within the Council's Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2024- 2029	Strategic Policy Advisor	December 2024						√				
Include requirement to complete equality monitoring of beneficiaries of Welsh language projects within Strategic Funding contract with Mudiad Meithrin and Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam	Chief Officer Education and Youth	April 2024 onwards					√					
Implement WG's national trans guidance for schools when available.	To be confirmed	To be confirmed			√							
Continue to work in partnership to provide LGBTQ+ Youth Forum	Information and Involvement Officer	On-going			√							√

Equality objective 3: Ensure equal pay within the workplace by having in place fair, open and transparent grading and salary strategies in place

Action	Who	Time frame	Protected characteristic								
			Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion and Belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Maintaining competitive pay and reward, and terms and conditions of employment	HR Policy and Rewards Advisor	March 2028	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Promoting the Council's Employee Assistance Programme to increase usage	To be confirmed	March 2028	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Complete an annual equal pay audit and take action to reduce any identified pay gaps	HR Policy and Rewards Advisor	Annually		√				√	√	√	
Put in place initiatives to encourage employees to complete equality monitoring data and reduce the number of employees who select "Prefer not to say" category	HR Business Information Officer	To be confirmed	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Publish the Workforce Information report to meet our statutory public sector equality duties	HR Business Information Officer	Annually	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Implement new LGBTQ+ awareness training module	Learning and Development	April 2024 onwards									√

Ensure LGTQ+ employees attend LGBTQ+ awareness training commissioned by Welsh Government when available, to ensure employees understand LGBTQ+ needs, rights and barriers.	Learning and Development	To be confirmed										√
Implement actions to meet Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan	Strategic Policy Advisor	On-going						√				

Equality objective 4: Improve personal safety for all protected groups											
Action	Who	Time frame	Protected characteristic								
			Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion and Belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Record and monitor trends of identity-based harassment experienced by Housing Contract Holders	Housing	On-going	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Provide community hub sessions which target areas that have high anti-social behaviour and crime rates; to support young people who are at risk and to engage them with partners (subject to external grant funding)	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	√								

Continue to participate in Hate Crime Awareness Week	Strategic Policy Advisor	Annually	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Collate hate crime/incidents reports from services and North Wales Police and review at Corporate Equalities Board meetings to identify hotspots/trends and take action to address issues.	Strategic Policy Advisor	Quarterly									

Equality objective 5: Increase access to services and decision making for all protected groups											
Action	Who	Time frame	Protected characteristic								
			Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion and Belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Promoting active travel and further develop the County's walking and cycleway network ensuring accessibility for older and disabled people	Transport Strategy Manager	March 2028	√	√							
Supporting the development of public electric vehicle charging network and ensuring accessible for disabled people, including wheelchair users	Transport Manager	March 2028		√							
Implement Revised Integrated Transport Strategy in line with Regional transport Plan Review	Transport Strategy Manager	From March 2024 onwards	√	√				√			

Implement Public Toilets Strategy	Streetscene Maintenance Manager (South and Structures)	From April 2024 onwards	√	√	√			√	√	√	
To produce a Public Participation Strategy for Flintshire County Council to ensure democracy within Council is transparent, listening and engaging. And anti-racist approach is promoted through democratic process and in how democratic engagement is undertaken.	Democratic Services Manager	March 2025	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
To promote anti-racist and ethical behaviour amongst elected members. Group Leaders required to promote high standards of behaviour amongst their Members.	Democratic Services Manager	March 2024	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Work with the Welsh Local Government association to offer anti-racism training to elected members	Democratic Services Manager	March 2024						√			
Elected Members to attend Welsh Government training (when available) on Gypsy and Traveller communities' culture, needs and strengths..	Democratic Services Manager	April 2024						√			
Standards Committee to produce Annual Report	Monitoring Officer							√			
Implement and report on the Diversity in Democracy Plan	Democratic Services Manager &	March 2025	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

	Chief Officer- Governance											
Create an environment where everyone wants and feels able to participate in democracy, including by exercising their right to vote, through developing materials to encourage people to participate in decision making and promoting awareness of how to become an Elected member.	Elections Manager Democratic Services Manager	May 2026 (i.e. in preparation for the next election which is due in May 2027)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Promote the Access to Elected Office Fund for the next local Government Elections in 2027	Elections Manager	Sept 2026 – May 2027	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Supporting people to use digital technology through Digital Workforce Volunteers	To be confirmed	March 2026	√									
Continue to provide free of charge public access to the internet at Flintshire Connects Centres	Customer Contact Service Manager	March 2026	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Promote Big Word Language interpretation and translation services	Customer Contact Service Manager	On-going		√				√				
Delivering the Rights of Way Improvement Plan with a focus to ensure improved access for all and the promotions of Walking for Health	Access and Natural Environment Manager	2018-2028	√	√			√					
Exploring opportunities to develop the Flintshire Coast Park through the production of a scoping study	Access and Natural Environment Manager	Scoping study complete	√	√			√					

Establishing a Dementia Strategy Implementation Group to ensure that individuals with lived experience of dementia have a voice	Registered Manager Resources and Regulated Services	March 2024	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
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Equality objective 6: Improve living standards of people with different protected characteristics											
Action	Who	Time frame	Protected characteristic								
			Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion and Belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Identify site for a young person's homeless hub offering accommodation and support services	Strategic Housing and Delivery Programme Manager	April 2024	√								
Progress build project for the new homeless hub accommodation	Strategic Housing and Delivery Programme Manager	December 2024	√								
In partnership with Denbighshire County Council, creating a new Dynamic Procurement System in order to ensure CPR's are met and provide a wider opportunity for tendering Disabled Adaptation projects	Disabled Adaptations Manager	December 2024	√	√							
Implementation of the initial recommendations of the sheltered	Service Manager Housing Assets	March 2028	√								

housing review to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of current and prospective tenants												
Homeless Team attend LGBTQ+ awareness training to understand rights and barriers, including the rights of LGBTQ+ migrant groups and LGBTQ+ people facing homelessness	Service Manager Housing and Prevention Services/Training Co-ordinator	March 2028									√	
Improve capture of equality monitoring data of people registering as homeless	Service Manager Housing and Prevention Services	On-going	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Improve capture of equality monitoring data of Contract Holders.	Housing Welfare and Communities Service Manager	On-going	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Work with Tai Pawb to develop actions to become an anti-racist housing service and implement Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales action plan.	Business Manager (Housing and Communities)	April 2024							√			
Develop a transit site for Travellers to reduce the number of unauthorised encampments at unsafe and unhealthy locations and improve access to health services.	Resettlement Co-ordinator	March 2028							√			
Secure Welsh Government funding enable WiFi on Traveller sites including the transit site	Resettlement Co-ordinator	March 2028							√			
Become a Resettlement area for Asylum Seekers and Refugees	Resettlement Co-ordinator	March 2028							√			

Equality objective 7: Reduce the impact of poverty and embed the Socio-economic Duty within the organisation

Action	Who	Time frame	Protected characteristic								
			Age	Disability	Gender Reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race	Religion and Belief	Sex	Sexual orientation
Further develop our community hub approach giving access to a range of programmes, services and agencies together in one place	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	On-going	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Explore development of support schemes to mitigate in-work poverty	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	On-going	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Delivering Welsh Government support schemes linked to the cost-of-living crisis	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	March 2028	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Maximising the number of people signposted for support to facilitate longer term change	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	March 2028	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Ensuring that take-up to benefit entitlement is maximised in a timely way by processing claims efficiently	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	March 2028	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Maximising the take up of the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme and other financial support	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	March 2028	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Continuing to develop delivery of a “Hospital to Home” meals service.	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	On-going	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Continuing to develop delivery of mobile meals service.	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	March 2026	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Further develop of the warm spaces initiative in partnership with organisations and third sector	Service Manager Housing Welfare and Communities	On-going	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Reducing the risk of fuel poverty for residents by increasing the energy efficiency of homes	Regeneration Programme Lead	March 2025	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Engaging, supporting and referring vulnerable households to reduce fuel poverty and improve health and well-being	Regeneration Programme Lead	March 2025	√	√								
Co-ordinating a multi-agency approach to support businesses to recruit people from disadvantaged groups	Communities For Work programme manager	March 2025	√	√				√				
Continue to pilot a new approach to Impact Assessment with Manchester University	Strategic Policy Advisor	April 2024	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Following evaluation improve and or develop new resources to improve quality and quantity of Impact Assessments completed.	Strategic Policy Advisor	March 2025	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Appendix 2 Profile of the Flintshire County Council employees

1. Profile of employees by Ethnic Origin

Table 1.1 Profile of the workforce (including schools) by Ethnic Origin

Ethnic Origin	2019		2023	
	Total employees	% employees	Total employees	% employees
BME	27	0.45%	47	0.75%
White	3820	64.19%	4106	65.85%
Not Stated	2031	34.13%	2082	33.39%
Prefer Not To Say	73	1.23%	0	0.00%
Totals	5951	100.00	6235	100.00

2. Profile of employees who classify themselves as being disabled

Table 2.1 Profile of disabled employees (including schools)

Disabled employees	2019		2023	
	Total employees	% employees	Total employees	% employees
No	3571	60.01%	3906	62.65%
Not Stated	2083	35.00%	1777	28.50%
Yes	137	2.30%	167	2.68%
Prefer Not To Say	160	2.69%	385	6.17%
Total	5951	100.00	6235	100.00

3 Profile of employees by Sexual Orientation

Table 3.1 Profile of employees (including schools) by Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	2019		2023	
	Total employees	% employees	Total employees	% employees
Bi-Sexual	16	0.27%	27	0.43%
Gay Man	14	0.24%	19	0.30%

Gay Woman/Lesbian	18	0.30%	26	0.42%
Heterosexual / Straight	2357	39.61%	3056	49.01%
Not Stated	3378	56.76%	2934	47.06%
Other	8	0.13%	16	0.26%
Prefer Not To Say	160	2.69%	157	2.52%
Total	5951	100.00%	6235	100.00%

4 Profile of employees by Religion or Belief

Table 6.1 Profile of employees (including schools) by Religion or Belief

Religion or Belief	2019		2023	
	Total employees	% employees	Total employees	% employees
Buddhist	>10	>0.15%	>10	>0.15%
Christian	1852	37.33%	2029	32.54%
Hindu	0	0.00%	> 10	>0.15%
Jewish	>10	>0.15%	> 10	>0.15%
Muslim	0	0.00%	> 10	>0.15%
None	994	24.15%	1386	21.94%
Not Stated	2867	33.22%	2588	41.51%
Other	69	1.53%	83	1.33%
Prefer Not To Say	158	3.63%	151	2.42%
Sikh	>10	>0.15%	>10	>0.15%
Total	5951	100.00	6235	

5 Profile of employees by Marital Status

Table 5.1 Profile of employees (including schools) by Marital Status

Marital Status	2019		2023	
	Total employees	% employees	Total employees	% employees
Divorced or in a Dissolved Civil Partnership	134	2.25%	205	3.29%
Married or in a Civil Partnership	2140	35.96%	2201	35.30%
Not Married or in a Civil Partnership	1111	18.67%	1304	20.91%

Not Stated	2446	41.10%	2393	38.28%
Widowed or Surviving Civil Partner	81	1.36%	33	0.53%
Prefer Not To Say	39	0.66%	99	1.59%
Total	5951	100.00%	6235	100%

6. Profile of employees by Sex

Table 6.1 Profile of employees (including schools) by sex

Sex	2019		2023	
	Total employees	% employees	Total employees	% employees
Female	4463	75%	4738	75.99%
Male	1488	25%	1497	24.01%
Not stated	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Total	5951	100%	6235	100%

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CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 19th December, 2023
Report Subject	Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2023/24 (Month 7)
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Report Author	Corporate Finance Manager
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This monthly report provides the latest detailed overview of the budget monitoring position for the 2023/24 financial year for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account and presents the position, based on actual income and expenditure as at Month 7.

The projected year end position is as follows:

Council Fund

- An operating deficit of £3.671m (excluding the impact of the pay award which will need to be met by reserves – currently estimated as £2.727m) which is an adverse movement of £0.112m from the deficit figure reported at Month 6, but now includes the estimated net impact of Storm Babet.
- A projected contingency reserve available balance as at 31 March 2024 of £3.664m (after the estimated impact of pay awards and taking account of previously approved allocations)).

Housing Revenue Account

- Net in-year revenue expenditure is forecast to be (£0.100m) lower than budget which is a favourable movement of (£0.031m) from the figure reported at Month 6.
- A projected closing balance as at 31 March, 2024 of £3.297m

The economic outlook remains challenging due to inflation levels remaining high.

The impacts of this, together with continued increases in service demand is becoming increasingly hard to deal with as our funding fails to keep up with the scale of these pressures.

To assist with managing these risks and mitigating the overall projected overspend, a moratorium on non-contractually committed spend has been put in place alongside a vacancy management process which continues.

At Month 7, £0.530m of deferred and/or delayed expenditure have been identified and is analysed by service within Appendix 2. The robust challenge of budget lines and commitments will continue, and further updates provided in future reports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note the report and the estimated financial impact on the 2023/24 budget.
2.	To approve the transfer of a £0.500m Earmarked Reserve balance relating to Council Tax Income to the Contingency Reserve (paragraph 1.22 refers).

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24
1.01	<p>The projected year end position is as follows:</p> <p>Council Fund</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An operating deficit of £3.671m (excluding the impact of the pay award which will need to be met by reserves – currently estimated as £2.727m) which is an adverse movement of £0.112m from the deficit figure reported at Month 6, but now includes the estimated net impact of Storm Babet. A projected contingency reserve available balance as at 31 March 2024 of £3.664m (after the estimated impact of pay awards and taking account of previously approved allocations)). <p>Housing Revenue Account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net in-year revenue expenditure forecast to be (£0.100m) lower than budget which is a favourable movement of (£0.031m) from the figure reported at Month 6. A projected closing balance as at 31 March, 2024 of £3.297m <p>To assist with managing these risks and mitigating the overall projected overspend, a moratorium on non-contractually committed spend has been put in place alongside a vacancy management process which continues.</p> <p>At Month 7, £0.530m of deferred and/or delayed expenditure have been identified and is analysed by service within Appendix 2. The robust challenge of budget lines and commitments will continue, and further updates provided in future reports.</p>

1.02	Hardship Funding from Welsh Government helped secure £16m of direct financial help in 2022/23 for areas such as self-isolation payments, statutory sick pay enhancement, free school meals direct payments and winter fuel payments. However, this funding ceased on 31 March 2023.																																																								
1.03	<p>Table 1. Projected Position by Portfolio</p> <p>The table below shows the projected position by portfolio:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="300 479 1386 1447"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="300 479 799 674">Portfolio/Service Area</th> <th data-bbox="799 479 1023 674">Approved Budget £m</th> <th data-bbox="1023 479 1219 674">Projected Outturn £m</th> <th data-bbox="1219 479 1386 674">In-Year Over / (Under) spend £m</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 674 799 730">Social Services</td> <td data-bbox="799 674 1023 730">86.803</td> <td data-bbox="1023 674 1219 730">87.482</td> <td data-bbox="1219 674 1386 730">0.678</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 730 799 786">Out of County Placements</td> <td data-bbox="799 730 1023 786">17.285</td> <td data-bbox="1023 730 1219 786">18.622</td> <td data-bbox="1219 730 1386 786">1.337</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 786 799 860">Education & Youth (Non-Schools)</td> <td data-bbox="799 786 1023 860">9.902</td> <td data-bbox="1023 786 1219 860">9.716</td> <td data-bbox="1219 786 1386 860">(0.186)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 860 799 916">Schools</td> <td data-bbox="799 860 1023 916">114.081</td> <td data-bbox="1023 860 1219 916">114.313</td> <td data-bbox="1219 860 1386 916">0.232</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 916 799 972">Streetscene & Transportation</td> <td data-bbox="799 916 1023 972">40.745</td> <td data-bbox="1023 916 1219 972">42.343</td> <td data-bbox="1219 916 1386 972">1.597</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 972 799 1028">Planning Env & Economy</td> <td data-bbox="799 972 1023 1028">7.057</td> <td data-bbox="1023 972 1219 1028">6.533</td> <td data-bbox="1219 972 1386 1028">(0.524)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 1028 799 1084">People & Resources</td> <td data-bbox="799 1028 1023 1084">4.339</td> <td data-bbox="1023 1028 1219 1084">4.184</td> <td data-bbox="1219 1028 1386 1084">(0.155)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 1084 799 1140">Governance</td> <td data-bbox="799 1084 1023 1140">11.460</td> <td data-bbox="1023 1084 1219 1140">11.322</td> <td data-bbox="1219 1084 1386 1140">(0.139)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 1140 799 1196">Assets</td> <td data-bbox="799 1140 1023 1196">11.045</td> <td data-bbox="1023 1140 1219 1196">10.836</td> <td data-bbox="1219 1140 1386 1196">(0.210)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 1196 799 1252">Housing & Communities</td> <td data-bbox="799 1196 1023 1252">15.698</td> <td data-bbox="1023 1196 1219 1252">18.371</td> <td data-bbox="1219 1196 1386 1252">2.673</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 1252 799 1308">Chief Executive</td> <td data-bbox="799 1252 1023 1308">1.608</td> <td data-bbox="1023 1252 1219 1308">1.618</td> <td data-bbox="1219 1252 1386 1308">0.009</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 1308 799 1386">Central & Corporate Finance</td> <td data-bbox="799 1308 1023 1386">32.096</td> <td data-bbox="1023 1308 1219 1386">30.453</td> <td data-bbox="1219 1308 1386 1386">(1.643)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="300 1386 799 1447">Total</td> <td data-bbox="799 1386 1023 1447">352.121</td> <td data-bbox="1023 1386 1219 1447">355.792</td> <td data-bbox="1219 1386 1386 1447">3.671</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="300 1487 1278 1525">There have been no changes to the approved budget since Month 6.</p>	Portfolio/Service Area	Approved Budget £m	Projected Outturn £m	In-Year Over / (Under) spend £m	Social Services	86.803	87.482	0.678	Out of County Placements	17.285	18.622	1.337	Education & Youth (Non-Schools)	9.902	9.716	(0.186)	Schools	114.081	114.313	0.232	Streetscene & Transportation	40.745	42.343	1.597	Planning Env & Economy	7.057	6.533	(0.524)	People & Resources	4.339	4.184	(0.155)	Governance	11.460	11.322	(0.139)	Assets	11.045	10.836	(0.210)	Housing & Communities	15.698	18.371	2.673	Chief Executive	1.608	1.618	0.009	Central & Corporate Finance	32.096	30.453	(1.643)	Total	352.121	355.792	3.671
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1.04	The reasons for the monthly movements over £0.025m are shown in Appendix 1 and overall projected variances over £0.050m are summarised within Appendix 2 together with a summary of minor variances for each portfolio.																																																								
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1.05	<p>Social Services £0.148m</p> <p>The adverse movement relates to:</p> <p>Older People</p>																																																								

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localities £0.118m – Residential Care costs have increased by £0.076m; Domiciliary Care costs have increased by £0.052m, both due to increased demand. <p>Adults of Working Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources & Regulated Services £0.069m – Increase in the estimated costs of care packages due to service user needs. Children to Adult Transition Services (£0.059m) – Decrease in the estimated cost of care packages for young people transferring from Children’s Services. Residential Placements £0.049m – Increase in the estimated costs of mental health care packages. <p>Children’s Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential Placements (£0.060m) – In-house Residential costs have reduced due to recruitment challenges. Professional Support £0.053m – Increasing costs to cover vacancies with Agency to ensure Childrens Safeguarding standards are met, <p>Minor variances across the Portfolio account for the remainder £0.022m.</p>
1.05	<p>Streetscene & Transportation £0.442m</p> <p>The adverse movement relates to:</p> <p>Highways Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional costs of £1m are projected in relation to the clean-up and reinstatement works required following Storm Babet and more recently Storm Ciaran. It is anticipated that Emergency Financial Assistance Funding (EFAS) of £0.246m will be claimable from Welsh Government and the full Severe Weather Reserve of £0.250m will also be required, bringing the net cost down to a projected £0.504m. <p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vacancies within Transport Strategy and moratorium impact on recruitment (£0.080m). <p>Minor variances across the Portfolio account for the remainder £0.018m</p>
1.06	<p>Planning Environment & Economy (£0.112m)</p> <p>The reasons for the favourable movement are as follows:</p> <p>Staff savings from vacant posts across the Portfolio together with the maximisation of Grant Income within Regeneration where staff costs have been allocated against various Welsh Government Grants (£0.123m).</p> <p>Minor variances across the Portfolio account for the remainder £0.011m.</p>

1.07	<p>Governance (£0.128m)</p> <p>The favourable movement relates to the actual cost of the Flare packaged software being lower than previously anticipated (£0.073m) together with reductions in non-contractual commitments and vacancy management across the Portfolio (£0.060m).</p> <p>Minor variances across the Portfolio account for the remainder £0.005m.</p>
1.08	<p>Housing & Communities (£0.097m)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Solutions – mainly due to the internal allocation of a further (£0.116m) of Housing Support Grant. <p>Minor variances across the Portfolio account for the remainder £0.019m.</p>
1.09	<p>Central & Corporate Finance (£0.092m)</p> <p>The Central Loans and Investment Account (CLIA) is projecting a further positive improvement of (£0.100m) due to the Council not taking out any new short or long-term borrowing and continuing to invest a significant amount of short-term cash flow funds gaining an investment return.</p> <p>Minor variances across the Portfolio account for the remainder £0.008m.</p>
1.10	<p>Cumulative minor variances across the Council of (£0.161m) account for the remainder of the total monthly movement.</p>
1.11	<p>Tracking of In-Year Risks and Emerging Issues</p> <p>Members were made aware when setting the budget that there were a number of open risks that would need to be kept under close review. An update on these is provided below.</p>
1.12	<p>Council Tax Income</p> <p>The 'in-year' collection level is 66.1% compared to 66.4% the previous year. The reduction in collections of 0.3% is mainly because the rising costs-of-living are impacting on the ability of some households to make payment of council tax on time. Other local authorities in Wales are also seeing similar reductions in collections.</p>
1.13	<p>Pay Award (Teacher and Non-Teacher)</p> <p><u>NJC (Green Book)</u></p> <p>The pay offer for NJC (Green Book) employees for the current year (2023/24) has now been accepted by all Trade Unions following the GMB union accepting the full and final pay offer in late October. This is at a similar level to that awarded in 2022/23 with an increase on each scale point of £1,925. This equates to more than the 5% included in the 2023/24 budget. The amount of the final award in excess of the 5% will need to be funded from reserves in the current financial year. It will also have the impact of increasing the budget requirement for 2024/25.</p>

The estimated impact of the current pay offer is an additional £2.727m which is included in the forecast but may be subject to change.

The assumptions for the 2024/25 pay award is an increase of 5%.

Teachers Pay

Assumptions for teachers' pay calculations are in line with current awards by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language. They are an increase of 6.5% from September 2022 and an increase of 5% in September 2023. These have not been accepted by all teaching unions and a formal dispute is ongoing.

The 2023/24 budget contained funding for a 5% pay award for Teachers from September 2022. The Minister has increased the pay award to 8%, with 1.5% being a non-consolidated payment, leaving a recurring element of 6.5% which is now included in the forecast.

Grant funding has been made available by Welsh Government to fully fund the additional September 2022 pay award in financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24 (over and above the 5% originally awarded).

However, in relation to funding from 2024/25 onwards, it has been confirmed that there will not be any additionality for the shortfall of the annual cost to the council – an amount of £1.118m has been included in the MTFS forecast.

Pay Modelling

No figures are currently included for any impact of the pay modelling review which is needed to try and address the difficulties currently being experienced in recruitment and retention. It is due to be completed later this year.

1.14 **Waste Recycling Infraction Charge**

The Council did not meet the statutory minimum target, (64%) in 2021/22, for the percentage of municipal waste which must be recycled, prepared for re-use and composted, as specified in Section 3 of the Waste (Wales) Measure 2010. Welsh Government can therefore take steps to impose a penalty on the Council by way of an infraction fine. A potential penalty of up to £0.663m has been confirmed so presents a significant financial risk to the Council.

Discussions took place in March,2023 between Welsh Government (WG) and the Council as to the reasons for not achieving the target. The Council has subsequently been instructed by WG to engage with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and Local Partnerships to review our waste strategy and develop a new action plan. Depending on the outcome of the review, the Minister will take a decision at that point whether to levy the fine.

	<p>Unfortunately, the statutory recycling targets have not been achieved in 2022/23 too (non-verified), which means that a further infraction fine could be levied of around £0.470m should WG choose to do so, and monitoring of the authority's recycling performance for 2023/24 to date shows that the rates of recycling and residual waste tonnages are not improving, which could lead to not achieving the targets in 2023/24 also.</p>
<p>1.15</p>	<p>Homelessness</p> <p>There is a significant and growing demand within the Homelessness service. The Council has a statutory duty to provide suitable temporary accommodation for Homeless persons and families who meet the Welsh Government eligibility criteria which are less stringent than in England. The growth in demand commenced in the second half of 2022/23 and has accelerated markedly since the start of 2023.</p> <p>One of the more significant influences of many is the sparsity of affordable accommodation in the private rented sector which is being influenced by the cost-of-living crisis and an increase in the numbers of no-fault evictions as many private rented sector landlords are leaving the sector and seeking to sell their properties. There is also an acute shortage of suitable available accommodation within the Council's own HRA housing stock and with other Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) within the area. This is particularly the case for single persons below age 55 which make up the highest proportion of those who are currently homeless in Flintshire. The Flintshire position in terms of both demand and supply pressures is known to be consistent on both a regional and national basis within Wales.</p> <p>The Council will continue to lobby Welsh Government via the WLGA in conjunction with other Welsh LA's who are experiencing these pressures to seek additional financial support.</p> <p>WG are currently providing support via the No One Left Out grant for which the 2023/24 allocation is currently £0.382m. One favourable impact of the increase in costs and demand is the ability to recover additional Housing Benefit income over and above the amount budgeted which is currently helping to offset the projected overspend by £0.444m.</p> <p>A separate report on the issues and potential mitigations around homelessness was considered by Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November.</p>
<p>1.16</p>	<p>Storm Babet</p> <p>Storm Babet was an intense extratropical cyclone which affected many parts of the County from 19 October through to the end of 21 October 2023. This was followed rapidly by Storm Ciaran, which although saw less impact, still necessitated significant resources in response.</p> <p>The storm caused severe disruption to travel with many roads closed, railways flooded, schools closed, and properties being affected by flood water. Storm Ciaran also required a priority response and caused some additional costs.</p>

The Council has been incurring the financial impact of the emergency response, assessing damage to infrastructure and arranging the necessary remedial works to be carried out in the aftermath. This is currently estimated at £1m.

There is an Emergency Financial Assistance Fund (EFAS) that Welsh Government have in place. However, Authorities are expected to make reasonable provision in their budgets to deal with contingencies. Therefore, if an Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme is activated, the authority affected will be expected to meet all eligible expenditure up to the level of its threshold.

Thresholds are calculated at 0.2% of authority's annual budget requirement and apply to the whole financial year, not to each incident within the financial year and for Flintshire, this amounts to emergency funding being provided at 85% for costs over and above the threshold of £0.711m.

There is a Severe Weather Earmarked Reserve totalling £0.250m which can assist in funding some of these costs.

The financial impact of Storms Babet and Ciaran is estimated as follows: -

Description	Costs to date £m	Projected future costs £m	Total Costs £m
Clean Up	0.300	0.150	0.450
Priority re-instatement works		0.500	0.500
Other storm damage costs		0.050	0.050
Total Projected Costs	0.300	0.700	1.000
Severe Weather Reserve			-0.250
EFAS Funding @ 85%*			-0.246
Projected net cost of storms			0.504

*£1.0m less £0.711m threshold = £0.289m x 85% = £0.246m

1.17 Other Tracked Risks

In addition, there are a number of risks being tracked which may be subject to change and these are summarised below.

1.18 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Impact

Cabinet considered the latest projection for the MTFS in September which showed an additional budget requirement of £32.386m together with an update on the work completed over the summer on potential cost reduction options. These, together with service cost pressures, have been considered at individual overview and scrutiny meetings during October and a summary of the feedback from these meetings has been reported back to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 November. A separate report on this agenda updates on the latest position.

	<p>All Portfolios consider their financial position, the risks within their service and the impacts on the Medium Term on a monthly basis as part of their Portfolio Management Team meetings.</p>
1.19	<p>Out of County Placements</p> <p>The risks include continued high demand for placements where children and young people cannot be supported within in-house provision, and market supply limitation factors and inflationary pressures leading to higher costs. An additional amount of £1m was approved in the 2023/24 budget to reflect this.</p> <p>However, there remains a projected overspend for the current cohort of placements of circa £1.337m, although with 5 months of the year remaining this is likely to increase and a contingency of £0.500m is currently built into the outturn position for this, £0.250m for Children’s Services and £0.250m for Education placements.</p> <p>The service areas within this pooled budget will continue to do everything possible to manage these risks and additional investment has already been made to further develop in-house provision to help to mitigate against such financial pressures.</p>
1.20	<p>Streetscene & Transportation</p> <p><u>Fleet Contract Renewal</u> The current fleet contract, which has been in operation for 7 years, was renewed for a temporary period of 6 months from October 2023. Due to the current market conditions in re-procurement of contracts of this type, the cost of the new contract is considerably more than what was previously being paid, due to being protected from inflationary increases during the previous contract life. The cost of the contract will further increase from April 2024 and provision is being made within the 2024/25 budget considerations for this.</p> <p><u>Sustainable Waste Management Grant (SWMG)</u></p> <p>The Minister for Climate Change has confirmed that the SWMG grant will be retained at the same level for this financial year. However, those local authorities that are not yet meeting the statutory recycling target of 70% will be required to use the grant to reach 70% and be required to demonstrate this. It has also been confirmed that the SWMG grant will likely become part of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) funding from 2024/25. The current value of the grant is £0.742m per annum, but it is not yet confirmed whether the proportion that Flintshire will receive within the Welsh Local Government settlement will be similar to current levels.</p>
1.21	<p>Education & Youth (Non-Schools)</p> <p><u>Inclusion and Progression</u></p> <p>The services that the Inclusion and Progression teams provide within Education and Youth portfolio are under significant pressure.</p>

	<p>Prior to the pandemic the service had seen increasing numbers of children and young people presenting with an increased level of significant and complex needs, resulting in the council being dependent on non-Flintshire provision.</p> <p>Post pandemic the situation has worsened with increasing numbers of pre-school children needing support and challenging behaviour causing concern across both primary and secondary schools. In addition, there are increased rates of emotionally based school avoidance. As a result, levels of attendance have reduced, whilst all forms of exclusions have increased. All of which contributes to a requirement for more specialist and bespoke intervention.</p> <p>The service is taking steps to actively manage demand, alongside reviewing provision, and seeking to develop and enhance in house provision.</p> <p>The pressures are being experienced across Wales, at a time when schools and central services are implementing the Additional Learning Need (ALN) reforms.</p> <p>Welsh Government have made additional grants available to support schools and councils. However, there are risks over reliance on temporary grant funding and its ability to meet demand within existing budgets and available grants.</p>
1.22	<p>Harpur Trust vs Brazel Case</p> <p>The potential financial impacts are still being determined in response to the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) decision in the case of Harpur Trust v Brazel. The Supreme Court upheld the EAT judgment in the Brazel case in July 2022 which impacts on the calculation of holiday pay entitlements for staff who work for part of the year (i.e., term time). An approved carry forward from 2022/23 for £0.254m will provide some funding towards these costs.</p>
1.23	<p>Achievement of Planned In-Year Efficiencies</p> <p>The 2023/24 budget contains £9.265m of specific efficiencies which are tracked and monitored throughout the year. The Council aims to achieve a 95% rate in 2023/24 as reflected in the MTFs KPI's and fully achieved all efficiencies in the previous financial year.</p> <p>It is projected that 99% of efficiencies will be achieved in 2023/24 and further details can be seen in Appendix 3.</p>
1.24	<p>Unearmarked Reserves</p> <p>The final level of Council Fund Contingency Reserve brought forward into 2023/24 was £9.508m as detailed in the 2022/23 outturn report (subject to Audit).</p> <p>The brought forward balance on the COVID-19 Hardship Reserve was £3.743m. Internal claims for Quarters 1 and 2 in 2023/24 totalling £0.531m for Holywell Leisure Centre, Cambrian Aquatics, Streetscene &</p>

	<p>Transportation and Free School Meals covering the Christmas holiday period have been approved so far. The current balance is £3.212m.</p> <p>The projected contingency reserve available as at 31 March, 2024 is £3.664m (after the estimated impact of final pay awards and previously approved allocations) and is shown in Appendix 4.</p> <p><u>Earmarked Reserve – Council Tax Income</u> Following further review, it is recommended to transfer the remaining Earmarked Reserve balance of £0.500m from previous Welsh Government funding provided to support losses in Council Tax collections during the pandemic.</p> <p>Council Tax collection levels are on track and adequate levels of bad debt provision are available to meet the cost of any losses, so this is no longer required to be kept for this specific purpose and will assist in increasing the Contingency Reserve.</p>
1.25	<p>Housing Revenue Account</p> <p>The 2022/23 Outturn Report to Cabinet on 18th July 2023 showed an un-earmarked closing balance at the end of 2022/23 of £3.786m and a closing balance of earmarked reserves of £2.690m.</p>
1.26	<p>The 2023/24 budget for the HRA is £39.418m which includes a movement of (£0.589m) from reserves.</p>
1.27	<p>Net in-year revenue expenditure forecast to be (£0.100m) lower than budget with a projected closing balance as at 31st March, 2024 of £3.297m. This is a favourable movement of (£0.031m) since Month 6. A breakdown of the variance is in Appendix 5.</p>
1.28	<p>The budget contribution towards capital expenditure (CERA) is £12.712m.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	As set out within the report.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The financial impacts as set out in the report are a combination of actual costs and losses to date and estimates of costs and losses for the future. There is the possibility that the estimates will change over time. The budget will be monitored closely, and mitigation actions taken wherever possible.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
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4.01	None specific.
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Council Fund – Movement in Variances from Month 6 Appendix 2: Council Fund - Budget Variances Appendix 3: Council Fund – Programme of Efficiencies Appendix 4: Council Fund – Movement on Un-earmarked Reserves Appendix 5: Housing Revenue Account Variances

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Various budget records.
7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Dave Ledsham Strategic Finance Manager Telephone: 01352 704503 E-mail: dave.ledsham@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Budget: a statement expressing the Council’s policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.</p> <p>Council Fund: the fund to which all the Council’s revenue expenditure is charged.</p> <p>Financial Year: the period of twelve months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>Housing Revenue Account: the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a local authority account showing current income and expenditure on housing services related to its own housing stock. The account is separate from the Council Fund and trading accounts and is funded primarily from rents and government subsidy.</p> <p>Projected Outturn: projection of the expenditure to the end of the financial year, made on the basis of actual expenditure incurred to date.</p> <p>Regional Integration Fund (RIF): funding provided by Welsh Government to encourage integrated working between local authorities, health and housing.</p> <p>Reserves: these are balances in hand that have accumulated over previous years and are held for defined (earmarked reserves) and general (general reserves) purposes. Councils are required to regularly review the level and purpose of their reserves and to take account of the advice of the Chief Finance Officer.</p>

Revenue: a term used to describe the day-to-day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.

Variance: difference between latest budget and actual income or expenditure. Can be to date if reflecting the current or most up to date position or projected, for example projected to the end of the month or financial year.

Virement: the transfer of budget provision from one budget head to another. Virement decisions apply to both revenue and capital expenditure heads, and between expenditure and income, and may include transfers from contingency provisions. Virements may not however be approved between capital and revenue budget heads.

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Budget Monitoring Report
Council Fund Variances

MONTH 7 - SUMMARY

Service	Movement between Periods (£m)	Narrative for Movement between Periods greater than £0.025m
Social Services		
Older People		
Localities	0.118	Residential care costs have increased by £0.075m and domiciliary care costs increased by £0.052m, both of these are demand lead services. There are £0.009m favourable minor variances.
Resources & Regulated Services	0.038	Movement is due to increased projected costs for in-house homecare, £0.014m, in-house residential care, £0.010m and Extra Care, £0.014m.
Minor Variances	-0.005	
Adults of Working Age		
Resources & Regulated Services	0.069	There has been an increase to care package costs due to service user needs
Children to Adult Transition Services	-0.059	Decreased costs of care packages for young people transferring from Childrens Services
Residential Placements	0.049	Increase to costs of care for people with mental ill health
Minor Variances	-0.036	Cumulative movements
Children's Services		
Family Placement	-0.038	Some fostering allowances have ceased
Residential Placements	-0.060	In-house residential costs have reduced due to recruitment challenges
Professional Support	0.053	Increasing costs to cover vacancies with agency to ensure childrens safeguarding standards are met
Minor Variances	0.051	Cumulative movements
Safeguarding & Commissioning		
Business Support Service	-0.038	Projected costs have reduced due to expected delays in recruiting to vacant posts
Minor Variances	0.005	
Total Social Services	0.148	
Out of County		
Children's Services	0.036	Net impacts of new placements, ended placements and rate changes
Education & Youth	0.007	
Total Out of County	0.043	
Education & Youth		
Minor Variances	-0.049	Staff vacancies and additional grants
Total Education & Youth	-0.049	
Schools	0.040	Adverse movement of £0.040m relates to an increase in school redundancy costs due 31st December 2023
Streetscene & Transportation		
Highways Network	0.506	Additional costs of £1m are projected in relation to the clean up and reinstatement works required following Storm Babet and more recently Storm Ciaran. It is anticipated that some Emergency Financial Assistance Funding (EFAS) from WG can be claimed alongside utilisation of the Severe Weather Reserve, bringing the net cost down to a projected £0.500m.
Transportation	-0.080	Vacancies within Transport Strategy and moratorium on recruitment are contributing to the overall underspend
Other Minor Variances	0.016	
Total Streetscene & Transportation	0.442	
Planning, Environment & Economy		
Access	-0.040	Staff savings from vacant posts
Shared Services	-0.024	Staff savings from vacant post

Budget Monitoring Report
Council Fund Variances

MONTH 7 - SUMMARY

Service	Movement between Periods (£m)	Narrative for Movement between Periods greater than £0.025m
Regeneration	-0.059	Staff savings from vacant posts, maximisation of grant income and minor variances
Minor Variances	0.012	
Total Planning & Environment	-0.112	
People & Resources		
HR & OD	-0.029	Staff savings from vacant post
Corporate Finance	-0.053	Revised projection for Feasibility Study costs and staff savings from vacant posts
Total People & Resources	-0.082	
Governance		
ICT	-0.118	Estimated cost for packaged software application(Flare) lower than previously anticipated £0.076m, commitment challenge and minor favourable movements.
Customer Services	-0.024	£0.015m Deferred spend on Consultation Engagement software
Minor Variances	0.014	
Total Governance	-0.128	
Assets		
Minor Variances	-0.002	
Total Assets	-0.002	
Housing and Communities		
Housing Solutions	-0.098	Mainly due to internal allocation of a further £0.116m of Housing Support Grant, with some offsetting adverse movements of +£0.018m
Minor Variances	0.002	
Total Housing and Communities	-0.097	
Chief Executive's		
	0.001	
Central & Corporate Finance		
	-0.092	At Month 7 further improvement on the CLIA by £0.100m mitigated by minor variances.
Grand Total	0.112	

Budget Monitoring Report
Council Fund Variances

MONTH 7 - SUMMARY

Service	Approved Budget (£m)	Projected Outturn (£m)	Annual Variance (£m)	Last Month Variance (£m)	In-year Moratorium (£m)	Cause of Major Variances greater than £0.050m	Action Required
Social Services							
Older People							
Localities	23.046	22.971	-0.075	-0.194		The Older People residential care budget is projecting an underspend of £0.147m, due to client income from property recharges and expected reimbursements where we are waiting on decisions for deputyships and assets held in trust. Homecare is £0.093m overspent. Locality workforce and professional support budgets are overspent £0.001m and day care is underspending by £0.022m.	
Resources & Regulated Services	9.494	9.558	0.064	0.026		In-house residential care is expected to overspend by £0.180m due to staff and running costs. Homecare is predicted to underspend by £0.173m. The Extra Care budget is projecting an overspend of £0.158m due to staff costs and day care is underspent by £0.101m.	
Minor Variances	1.293	1.284	-0.009	-0.003			
Adults of Working Age							
Resources & Regulated Services	33.469	33.393	-0.076	-0.145		The PDSI (physically disabled and sensory impaired) budget is reporting a £0.437m overspend due to the net costs of care packages. The in-house supported living service is £0.155m overspent due to care hours and agency costs, a £0.350m contribution from reserves is currently offsetting further costs. The care package costs for independently provided care for learning disability services is £0.600m underspent. The learning disability service day provision is £0.068m underspent.	
Children to Adult Transition Services	1.001	0.834	-0.168	-0.109		This is the cost of care packages for young adults transferring from Childrens Services to Adult Social Care. Care packages are usually new to this financial year and often estimated in the first instance, meaning costs can change throughout the year as service costs are finalised.	
Professional and Administrative Support	0.397	0.342	-0.055	-0.050		The underspend is due to in-year vacancies.	
Residential Placements	2.607	2.942	0.335	0.286		This is the overall cost of mental health care packages. This is a volatile service and additional service needs can be identified throughout the year leading to increased costs.	
Minor Variances	3.452	3.321	-0.131	-0.101			
Children's Services							
Family Group Meetings	0.122	0.182	0.061	0.053		Demand for this service is resulting in increased sessional worker hours	
Family Placement	3.175	2.972	-0.203	-0.164		The underspend is due to the number of in-house foster carers within the service being lower than those which we have historically had.	
Integrated Working	0.206	0.263	0.057	0.059		Pressures are due to contributions toward the Integrated Family Support Service and a shortfall in Supporting People Funding.	
Legal & Third Party	0.262	0.542	0.280	0.269		Legal costs are overspent by £0.146m due to the number of cases going through the courts and some use of external professionals. Client support and Section 17 costs are overspent by £0.124m. Direct Payments are overspending by £0.010m due to demand.	
Residential Placements	1.595	1.247	-0.348	-0.288		The in-house residential care provision is in receipt of a significant Welsh Government grant which is offsetting in-year costs.	

Budget Monitoring Report
Council Fund Variances

MONTH 7 - SUMMARY

Service	Approved Budget (£m)	Projected Outturn (£m)	Annual Variance (£m)	Last Month Variance (£m)	In-year Moratorium (£m)	Cause of Major Variances greater than £0.050m	Action Required
Professional Support	5.824	6.734	0.909	0.856		To support adequate levels of child protection, the established staffing structure needs to be at a sufficient level to meet mandatory safeguarding standards. Vacancies are minimised and additional temporary posts are sometimes required to be able to meet the challenges and demands of Childrens Services, the resulting overspend from such arrangements is £0.113m. Two managed agency teams are currently being contracted to support the service, reserves are being used to mitigate most of these costs but there is a projected overspend of £0.523m as a result, cost will increase if there is a requirement to extend contracts further. The Leaving Care budget, which supports young people who were Looked After Children, is overspending by £0.114m due to increasing numbers of care leavers. The cost of some external contracts are £0.080m overspent due to inflationary pressures. Cost of Direct Payments to provide support to children with disabilities is £0.079m overspent due to service demand.	
Minor Variances	0.694	0.752	0.058	0.024			
Safeguarding & Commissioning							
Business Systems & Financial Assessments	0.937	1.025	0.089	0.089	-0.032	A new social services IT system is being implemented which requires additional project management and development costs	
Charging Policy income	-3.385	-3.542	-0.157	-0.155		This is the income from services users who are charged a contribution towards the care they receive	
Minor Variances	2.616	2.661	0.046	0.076			
Total Social Services	86.803	87.482	0.678	0.530	-0.032		
Out of County							
Children's Services	12.281	13.388	1.107	1.070		The service is facing continued high demand for placements together with supply market challenges and inflationary pressures with 34 new placements made in the year to date and contingency provision of £0.250m for new placements.	
Education & Youth	5.004	5.234	0.230	0.223		The service is facing continued high demand for placements together with supply market challenges and inflationary pressures with 17 new placements made in the year to date and contingency provision of £0.250m for new placements.	
Total Out of County	17.285	18.622	1.337	1.293	0.000		
Education & Youth							
Inclusion & Progression	5.298	5.266	-0.032	-0.024		Staff savings from vacant posts.	
Integrated Youth Provision	0.947	0.862	-0.085	-0.068	-0.017	Mainly due to staff vacancies	
School Improvement Systems	1.836	1.719	-0.118	-0.093		There has been a projected reduction in the Early Entitlement service, in payments to settings due to demography. Top-up subsidy continuing and other Welsh Government grants, allowing core budget to be released within the service. The School Improvement service have a reported underspend of £37k. This relates to the pressure budget of £0.028m for the Digital Advisor Post. This role was not appointed to until September 23, therefore creating a saving. Other underspends relate to income from several grants around ACL to offset manager time.	
Minor Variances	1.820	1.870	0.049	0.049			
Total Education & Youth	9.902	9.716	-0.186	-0.136	-0.017		

Budget Monitoring Report
Council Fund Variances

MONTH 7 - SUMMARY

Service	Approved Budget (£m)	Projected Outturn (£m)	Annual Variance (£m)	Last Month Variance (£m)	In-year Moratorium (£m)	Cause of Major Variances greater than £0.050m	Action Required
Schools	114.081	114.313	0.232	0.193	0.000	Redundancy costs £0.290m over budget after taking account of reserves carried forward, Free School Meals price increase and take up totalling £0.126m, mitigated by (£0.100m) underspend in pension added years and a number of minor variances each below (£0.0250m).	
Streetscene & Transportation							
Service Delivery	9.808	10.039	0.231	0.220	-0.077	Service Delivery have implemented tight controls to the allocation of PPE, materials and receptacles through the in-house stores. Changes to the security provision in the Alltami Depot, Greenfield transfer station and HRC sites have generated savings as per MTFS 2023/24, following a review of the service needs. Cleaning costs have also been reviewed and reduced. The service is subject to increasing inflationary pressures and demand for temporary repairs on the road network, largely due to a lack of funding and investment in the highway network and fluctuating costs of tar and traffic management for repairs. Any overall overspend, is partly offset by performance of the in-house construction team delivering work such as 20mph scheme rather than contracting the work externally.	
Highways Network	8.514	9.754	1.239	0.734		The renewal of the fleet contract through contract extension from October 2023 has realised an in-year overspend of £0.658m. The remaining variance of £0.170m is attributable to increases in energy costs in both road fuel and streetlighting energy, increased insurance premiums, and defective highway network infrastructure repairs. Additional costs of £1m are projected in relation to the clean up and reinstatement works required following Storm Babet and more recently Storm Ciaran. It is anticipated that some Emergency Financial Assistance Funding (EFAS) from WG can be claimed alongside utilisation of the Severe Weather Reserve, bringing the net cost down to a projected £0.500m.	Further increases on the Fleet Contract in 2024/25 are being considered within the MTFS.
Transportation	11.118	11.020	-0.098	-0.018	-0.080	Vacancies within Transport Strategy and moratorium on recruitment are contributing to the overall underspend	
Regulatory Services	11.305	11.530	0.225	0.220		The overspend variance is due to sustained high volumes of residual black waste being collected, together with the reduction in income levels for both recyclable materials and a reducing return on electricity generation from gas and solar at the former landfill sites.	
Total Streetscene & Transportation	40.745	42.343	1.597	1.155	-0.157		
Planning, Environment & Economy							
Development	0.024	-0.291	-0.314	-0.328		Receipt of a one-off high value Planning Fee (£0.300m for Northern Gateway)	
Access	1.544	1.666	0.122	0.162	-0.040	Projected cost of Ash Die Back works to March, 2024 mitigated by savings from vacant posts	
Climate Change	0.165	0.102	-0.062	-0.062		Staff savings from vacant posts	
Regeneration	0.846	0.736	-0.109	-0.050	-0.020	Staff savings from vacant posts; Wales Rally GB budget saving; maximisation of Grant Income.	
Management & Strategy	1.354	1.151	-0.203	-0.206		Staff savings from vacant posts together with at Month 7 confirmation of the Welsh Government Flood Risk Management Grant allocation for Flintshire at £0.225m.	
Minor Variances	3.125	3.167	0.043	0.072	-0.024		
Total Planning & Environment	7.057	6.533	-0.524	-0.412	-0.084		
People & Resources							
HR & OD	2.257	2.170	-0.087	-0.058	-0.029	Staff savings from vacant posts	

Budget Monitoring Report
Council Fund Variances

MONTH 7 - SUMMARY

Service	Approved Budget (£m)	Projected Outturn (£m)	Annual Variance (£m)	Last Month Variance (£m)	In-year Moratorium (£m)	Cause of Major Variances greater than £0.050m	Action Required
Corporate Finance	2.082	2.014	-0.068	-0.014	-0.063	Revised projection for Feasibility Study costs and staff savings from vacant posts	
Total People & Resources	4.339	4.184	-0.155	-0.072	-0.092		
Governance							
Legal Services	0.942	1.147	0.206	0.201		Additional costs for locum services covering vacant posts	
Democratic Services	2.411	2.480	0.069	0.069		Backdated Superannuation costs and current level of Members Allowances	
ICT	5.168	5.117	-0.051	0.067	-0.108	Estimated cost for packaged software application(Flare) lower than previously anticipated £0.076m, commitment challenge and minor favourable movements.	
Customer Services	1.040	0.873	-0.167	-0.143	-0.020	Staff savings from vacant posts and higher than anticipated fee income levels	
Revenues	0.566	0.393	-0.173	-0.192		Projected surplus on the Council Tax Collection Fund	
Minor Variances	1.333	1.311	-0.022	-0.012	-0.005		
Total Governance	11.460	11.322	-0.139	-0.011	-0.133		
Assets							
CPM & Design Services	0.674	0.581	-0.093	-0.093		Due to increased fee income	
Minor Variances	-0.674	-0.581	0.093	0.093	-0.005		
Total Assets	11.045	10.836	-0.210	-0.208	-0.005		
Housing and Communities							
Housing Solutions	2.232	4.882	2.649	2.748		The Housing Solutions service is currently reflecting a net projected overspend of £2.649m. This is mainly due to a projected overspend of £3.503m on temporary accommodation within Hotels and B and B provision, which is being offset by additional Housing Benefit income of (£0.444m). There are also other projected underspends and mitigation impacts within the wider Housing Solutions service amounting to a net figure of £0.410m, including additional internal allocation of HSG to fund salary costs, use of reserves, minor salary savings due to vacancies and use of WG grant income. The service are actively exploring a number of mitigation measures, some of which may have operational impacts on other parts of the wider Housing service, which when approved will be incorporated within an action plan to reduce the current level of projected overspend within the Homelessness service.	
Minor Variances	13.466	13.490	0.024	0.022	-0.010		
Total Housing and Communities	15.698	18.371	2.673	2.770	-0.010		
Chief Executive's	1.608	1.618	0.009	0.008			
Central & Corporate Finance	32.096	30.453	-1.643	-1.551		The projection on the Central Loans and Investment Account (CLIA) is an underspend of (£1.550m) due to the Council having not taken out any new short or long term borrowing and continues to invest a significant amount of funds. This pattern has continued from the previous financial year resulting in no short term borrowing costs being incurred and the Council generating increased income from investments, which have increased in line with bank interest rates. The favourable variance increased further following the benefit of a £0.048m NDR windfall at Month 6. The variance has improved further following a review of the CLIA forecast underspend, with an improvement of £0.100m for October.	
Grand Total	352.121	355.792	3.671	3.559	-0.530		

2023/24 Efficiencies Outturn Tracker - Month 7

Efficiency Description	Accountable Officer	Efficiency Target	Projected Efficiency	(Under)/Over Achievement	Efficiency Open/Closed (O/C)	Reason for variation	Mitigating Action if Amber or Red
Portfolio		2023/24 £m	2023/24 £m	2023/24 £m			
Corporate							
Reduction In CLIA	Chris Taylor	0.364	0.364	0.000	C		
Actuarial Review	Gary Ferguson	1.874	1.874	(0.000)	C		
NI Reversal	Rachel Parry Jones	0.474	0.474	0.000	C		
Total Corporate Services		2.712	2.712	(0.000)			
Chief Executives / Assets							
Transport Savings	Neal Cockerton	0.010	0.010	0.000	C		
Vacancy Savings	Neal Cockerton	0.048	0.048	0.000	C		
3rd Sector Budget	Neal Cockerton	0.041	0.041	0.000			
Total Chief Executives		0.099	0.099	0.000			
People & Resources							
Modern Apprentices HR&OD	Sharon Carney	0.072	0.072	0.000	C		
Vacancy Savings Corporate Finance	Gary Ferguson	0.086	0.086	0.000	C		
Transport and Training Savings Corporate Finance	Gary Ferguson	0.016	0.016	0.000	C		
Total People & Resources		0.174	0.174	0.000			
Assets - ADMs							
Newydd	Rachael Corbelli	0.019	0.019	0.000	C		
Newydd NI	Rachael Corbelli	0.023	0.023	0.000	C		
Total Assets - ADMs		0.042	0.042	0.000			
Housing & Communities							
CTRS Reduction	Vicky Clark	0.147	0.147	0.000	C		
Total Housing & Communities		0.147	0.147	0.000			
Governance							
Members Support Budget	Gareth Owen	0.016	0.016	0.000	C		
Members Allowances	Gareth Owen	0.060	0.060	0.000	C		
Central Despatch	Gareth Owen	0.022	0.022	0.000	C		
Mold & Buckley Connects	Gareth Owen	0.060	0.060	0.000	C		
Total Governance		0.158	0.158	0.000			
Planning, Environment & Economy							
Vacancy Savings	Andrew Farrow	0.020	0.020	0.000	C		
Fee Income	Andrew Farrow	0.180	0.180	0.000	C		
Total Planning, Environment & Economy		0.200	0.200	0.000			
Streetscene & Transportation							
Enhanced Enforcement for Recycling	Katie Wilby	0.046	0.046	0.000	O	Side waste enforcement is already taking place with FPNs being issued, but the next steps for enforcing against those who do not habitually recycle will be to take enforcement action if residents place recyclable waste in their black bin. To introduce this will first require a period of education and engagement. Additional x3 recycling officers are currently being recruited and, once appointed, the aim is for these officers to support with door-knocking campaigns and community events in advance of introducing enhanced enforcement	Likely introduction is January 2024.
Part night Street Lighting	Katie Wilby	0.018	0.000	(0.018)	O	Difficult to implement in year due to the consultation required, and the limited opportunity following previous roll-outs. This will also require investment in the equipment to allow the switch-offs	Discussions being held with an update to come how we can achieve this saving.
Review Provision of Public Conveniences	Katie Wilby	0.012	0.000	(0.012)	O	The efficiency is largely reliant on the review of sites following the implementation of the Local Toilet Strategy and capital investment in FY 24/25-26/27.	
Extend, Repair & Reuse Initiatives	Katie Wilby	0.010	0.000	(0.010)	O	When this was put forward, we stated that the initiative would be dependent on investment funding either from WG Circular Economy grant funding or capital programme. We are still awaiting the outcome of our bid to WG, which is now unlikely given the current economic climate. Without the grant funding the initiative cannot be introduced and the efficiency will not be met.	
Waste & Recycling Round Review	Katie Wilby	0.075	0.075	0.000	C		
In House Highways Service	Katie Wilby	0.025	0.025	0.000	C		
Review of Security Arrangements Alltami Depot	Katie Wilby	0.050	0.050	0.000	C		
Apprenticeship Trainee Scheme Reduction	Katie Wilby	0.035	0.035	0.000	C		

Efficiency Description	Accountable Officer	Efficiency Target	Projected Efficiency	(Under)/Over Achievement	Efficiency Open/Closed (O/C)	Reason for variation	Mitigating Action if Amber or Red	
		2023/24 £m	2023/24 £m	2023/24 £m				
Portfolio								
Increase Car Parking Charges	Income Generation	Katie Wilby	0.187	0.187	0.000	C	Decision approved and new charges will come into effect from October 2023 (original date planned was July 2023). Additional initiatives e.g. Free after Three and extension to parking times will mean that the original efficiency will be difficult to achieve unless the utilisation levels increase beyond current levels. Delays in being implemented.	
Introduce Car Parking Charges on all Council Owned Car Parks	Income Generation	Katie Wilby	0.035	0.000	(0.035)	O		
Fleet Workshop	Income Generation	Katie Wilby	0.010	0.010	0.000	C		
Training Facility	Income Generation	Katie Wilby	0.010	0.010	0.000	C		
Funeral Services	Income Generation	Katie Wilby	0.010	0.010	0.000	C		
Total Streetscene & Transportation			0.523	0.448	(0.075)			
Social Services								
Contribution to Regional Team	Reduction in Contribution	Neil Ayling	0.050	0.050	0.000	C		
Reduced Contribution to EDT	Contract Costs Reduced	Neil Ayling	0.011	0.011	0.000	C		
Retendering of HFT	Contract Costs Reduced	Neil Ayling	0.040	0.040	0.000	C		
Total Social Services			0.101	0.101	0.000			
Education & Youth								
Central Management Budget	Vacant Post	Claire Homard	0.060	0.060	0.000	O		
ALN Advocacy	Offset costs from LAEG ALN Grant	Claire Homard	0.020	0.020	0.000	O		
ALN Legal	Offset costs from LAEG ALN Grant	Claire Homard	0.010	0.010	0.000	O		
ALN Resource Provisions	Offset costs from LAEG ALN Grant	Claire Homard	0.100	0.100	0.000	O		
Early Years Entitlement	Budget Reductions	Claire Homard	0.095	0.095	0.000	O		
Youth Club Buildings	Building Closure	Claire Homard	0.017	0.017	0.000	O		
Youth Services	Vacant Posts (1 FTE 1 PT)	Claire Homard	0.056	0.056	0.000	O		
Youth Justice	Offset costs from Grant	Claire Homard	0.016	0.016	0.000	O		
Total Education & Youth			0.374	0.374	0.000			
Schools								
3% Reduction in Delegated Funding		Claire Homard	3.103	3.103	0.000	O		
NI Reversal (Schools & Teachers)		Claire Homard	0.857	0.857	0.000	O		
Actuarial Review		Claire Homard	0.776	0.776	0.000	O		
Total Schools			4.736	4.736	0.000			
Total 2023/24 Budget Efficiencies			9.265	9.190	(0.075)			

	%	£
Total 2023/24 Budget Efficiencies	100	9.265
Total Projected 2023/24 Budget Efficiencies Underachieved	-1	(0.075)
Total Projected 2023/24 Budget Efficiencies Achieved	99	9.190
Total 2023/24 Budget Efficiencies (Less Previously agreed Decisions)		
Total Projected 2023/24 Budget Efficiencies Underachieved	100	0.000
Total Projected 2023/24 Budget Efficiencies Achieved	0	0.000

Movements on Council Fund Unearmarked Reserves

	£m	£m
Total Reserves as at 1 April 2023	19.162	
Less - Base Level	(5.769)	
Total Reserves above base level available for delegation to Cabinet		13.393
Less - COVID-19 Hardship Funding Allocation		3.743
Less - Children's Services Legal Costs		0.142
Add - Transfer to Reserve Budget 2023/24		0.006
Less - Clwyd Theatr Cymru (Month 2)		0.100
Less - estimated impact of the pay award		2.727
Add - Total Balances Released to Reserves (Month 5)		0.648
Less - Month 7 projected outturn		3.671
Total Contingency Reserve available for use		3.664

Brought Forward 9.508

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Budget Monitoring Report
Housing Revenue Account Variances

MONTH 7 - SUMMARY

Service	Revised Budget (£m)	Projected Outturn (£m)	Variance (£m)	Last Month Variance (£m)	Cause of Major Variance	Action Required
Housing Revenue Account						
Income	(38.829)	(38.623)	0.206	0.239	There is a net pressure relating to void properties of £0.231m. This relates to costs such as void rent loss, council tax charges and service charges and is net of additional income relating to new build properties and voids moving to target rent. We are anticipating a variance of approximately £0.023m on garage rents. We are forecasting a reduction in the requirement to top up the Bad Debt Provision of (0.050). Other minor variances of (£0.010m).	
Capital Financing - Loan Charges	7.010	7.010				
Estate Management	3.125	2.865	(0.260)	(0.253)	Projected vacancy savings of approximately (£0.297m) which is being offset by agency costs of £0.175m. Additional allocation of Housing Support Grant (£0.100m). Other minor variances of (£0.011m).	
Landlord Service Costs	1.617	1.506	(0.111)	(0.100)	Projected vacancy savings of approximately (£0.156m). We are also forecasting an increase in fleet costs of £0.028m and materials and hire of £0.043m. There is an anticipated reduction in subcontractor spend of (£0.032m). Other minor variances of £0.018m.	
Repairs & Maintenance	12.150	12.196	0.045	0.043	Projected vacancy savings of approximately (£0.114m). Increased Fleet Contract renewal costs of £0.126m. Other minor variances of £0.033m.	VOIDS Sub Contractor projection is currently to budget. Potential overspend to be met from CERA.
Management & Support Services	2.678	2.697	0.019	0.003	Projected vacancy savings of approximately (£0.077m). Insurance Costs £0.034m. Other minor variances of £0.062m.	
Capital Expenditure From Revenue (CERA)	12.712	12.712				
HRA Projects	0.126	0.126	0.000	0.000		
Contribution To / (From) Reserves	(0.589)	(0.589)				
Total Housing Revenue Account	(0.000)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.069)		

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CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 19 th December 2023
Report Subject	Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023/24
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Report Author	Corporate Finance Manager
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023/24 (attached as Appendix 1).

As required by the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, the report was reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee on 22nd November 2023 where officers responded to questions to the satisfaction of the Committee and there are no specific issues to bring to the attention of Cabinet.

It is recommended that the report be presented to County Council on 23rd January 2024 for final approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet recommends the draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023/24 to County Council on 23 rd January for final approval.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.0	EXPLAINING THE MID YEAR REPORT
1.01	The Council has nominated the Governance and Audit Committee to be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies. The Governance and Audit Committee has previously agreed to include treasury management as a standing item on each quarterly agenda to receive an update.
1.02	On 23 rd February 2023, the Council approved the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24, following the recommendation of the Cabinet and consideration by the Governance and Audit Committee.
1.03	<p><u>Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023/24</u></p> <p>The draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2023/24 is attached as Appendix 1 for review. As required by the Council’s Financial Procedure Rules, the report was reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee on 22nd November 2023 where officers responded to questions to the satisfaction of the Committee and there are no specific issues to bring to the attention of Cabinet.</p> <p>It is recommended that the report be presented to County Council on 23rd January 2024 for final approval.</p>
1.04	<p><u>Summary of Key Points</u></p> <p>UK inflation remained stubbornly high over much of the period compared to the US and euro zone, keeping expectations elevated of how much further the Bank of England (BoE) would hike rates compared to the regions.</p> <p>However, inflation data published in the latter part of the period undershot expectations, causing financial markets to reassess the peak in the BoE Bank Rate. This was followed very soon after by the BoE deciding to keep Bank Rate on hold at 5.25% in September, against the expectation for another 0.25% rise.</p> <p>Following the September MPC meeting, Arlingclose, the Council’s treasury adviser, modestly revised its interest forecast to reflect the central view that 5.25% will now be the peak in Bank Rate.</p>
1.05	<p>No new borrowing was undertaken during the period, while £0.870m of existing loans were allowed to mature without replacement. This strategy enabled the Council to reduce net borrowing costs and reduce overall treasury risk.</p> <p>The Council continues to regularly review the position on its long-term borrowing requirement in conjunction with advice from Arlingclose.</p> <p>The borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.</p>

	Section 4 provides more information on borrowing and debt management during the period.
1.06	The average investment balance for the period was £48.4m and the average rate of return was 4.58%. Section 5 of the report provides more information on the Council's investments.
1.07	The treasury function has operated fully within the limits detailed in the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Financial implications are addressed in the report; no other resource implications directly as a result of this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Arlingclose Ltd, being the Council's treasury management advisors.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Risk Management directly addressed within the report and appendices including identification of risks and measures to mitigate likelihood and impact of risks identified.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	1. Draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023/24.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Chris Taylor - Strategic Finance Manager Telephone: 01352 703309 E-mail: Christopher.taylor@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Authorised Limit: A statutory limit that sets the maximum level of external debt for the Council.</p> <p>Balances and Reserves: Accumulated sums that are held, either for specific future costs or commitments (known as earmarked) or generally held to meet unforeseen or emergency expenditure.</p> <p>Bank Rate: The official interest rate set by the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee and what is generally termed at the "base rate".</p> <p>Basis Point: A unit of measure used in finance to describe the percentage change in the value or rate of a financial instrument. One basis point is equivalent to 0.01% (1/100th of a percent). In most cases, it refers to changes in interest rates and bond yields. For example, if interest rates rise by 25 basis points, it means that rates have risen by 0.25% percentage points.</p> <p>Bond: A certificate of debt issued by a company, government, or other institution. The bond holder receives interest at a rate stated at the time of issue of the bond. The price of a bond may vary during its life.</p> <p>Capital Expenditure: Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of capital assets.</p> <p>Capital Financing Requirement (CFR): The Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes representing the cumulative capital expenditure of the local authority that has not been financed.</p> <p>Certificates of Deposits (CD's): A savings certificate entitling the bearer to receive interest. A CD bears a maturity date, a specified fixed interest rate and can be issued in any denomination. CDs are generally issued by commercial banks. The term of a CD generally ranges from one month to five years.</p> <p>Consumer Price Index (CPI): The UK's main measure of inflation (along with Retail Price Index or 'RPI') The Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England set the Bank Rate in order to try and keep CPI at or close to the target set by the Government. The calculation of CPI includes many items of normal household expenditure but excludes some items such as mortgage interest payments and Council Tax.</p> <p>Corporate Bonds: Corporate bonds are bonds issued by companies. The term is often used to cover all bonds other than those issued by governments in their own currencies and includes issues by companies, supranational organisations and government agencies.</p> <p>Cost of Carry: The "cost of carry" is the difference between what is paid to borrow compared to the interest which could be earned. For example, if one takes out borrowing at 5% and invests the money at 1.5%, there is a cost of carry of 3.5%.</p> <p>Counterparty List: List of approved financial institutions with which the</p>

Council can place investments.

Credit Rating: Formal opinion by a registered rating agency of a counterparty's future ability to meet its financial liabilities; these are opinions only and not guarantees.

Debt Management Office (DMO): The DMO is an Executive Agency of His Majesty's Treasury and provides direct access for local authorities into a government deposit facility known as the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF). All deposits are guaranteed by HM Government and therefore have the equivalent of a sovereign credit rating.

Federal Reserve: The US central bank, the equivalent of the Bank of England. (Often referred to as "the Fed").

Financial Instruments: Financial instruments are tradable assets of any kind. They can be cash, evidence of an ownership interest in an entity, or a contractual right to receive or deliver cash or another financial instrument

Gilts: Gilts are bonds issued by the UK Government. They take their name from 'gilt-edged'. They are deemed to be very secure as the investor expects to receive the full face value of the bond to be repaid on maturity.

IFRS: International Financial Reporting Standards.

LIBID: The London Interbank Bid Rate (LIBID) is the rate bid by banks on Eurocurrency deposits (i.e. the rate at which a bank is willing to borrow from other banks).

LIBOR: The London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) is the rate of interest that banks charge to lend money to each other. The British Bankers' Association (BBA) work with a small group of large banks to set the LIBOR rate each day. The wholesale markets allow banks who need money to borrow from those with surplus amounts. The banks with surplus amounts of money are keen to lend so that they can generate interest which it would not otherwise receive.

LOBO: Stands for Lender Option Borrower Option. The underlying loan facility is typically very long-term - for example 40 to 60 years - and the interest rate is fixed. However, in the LOBO facility the lender has the option to call on the facilities at pre-determined future dates. On these call dates, the lender can propose or impose a new fixed rate for the remaining term of the facility and the borrower has the 'option' to either accept the new imposed fixed rate or repay the loan facility.

Low Volatility Net Asset Value Money Market Funds (LVNAV MMFs): refers to highly liquid money market funds which aim to maintain the level of their worth by investing in very secure instruments.

Maturity: The date when an investment or borrowing is repaid.

Maturity Structure / Profile: A table or graph showing the amount (or percentage) of debt or investments maturing over a time period.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP): An annual provision that the Council is statutorily required to set aside and charge to the Revenue Account for the repayment of debt associated with expenditure incurred on capital assets.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC): Government Body that sets the Bank Rate. Its primary target is to keep inflation within 1% of a central target of 2%. Its secondary target is to support the Government in maintaining high and stable levels of growth and employment.

Money Market Funds (MMF): Pooled funds which invest in a range of short term assets providing high credit quality and high liquidity.

Non Specified Investment: Investments which fall outside the WG Guidance for Specified investments (below).

Operational Boundary: This linked directly to the Council's estimates of the CFR and estimates of other day to day cash flow requirements. This indicator is based on the same estimates as the Authorised Limit reflecting the most likely prudent but not worst case scenario but without the additional headroom included within the Authorised Limit.

Premiums and Discounts: In the context of local authority borrowing,
(a) the premium is the penalty arising when a loan is redeemed prior to its maturity date and
(b) the discount is the gain arising when a loan is redeemed prior to its maturity date.

Prudential Code: Developed by CIPFA and introduced in April 2004 as a professional code of practice to support local authority capital investment planning within a clear, affordable, prudent and sustainable framework and in accordance with good professional practice.

Prudential Indicators: Indicators determined by the local authority to define its capital expenditure and asset management framework. They are designed to support and record local decision making in a manner that is publicly accountable; they are not intended to be comparative performance indicators

Public Works Loans Board (PWLB): The PWLB is a statutory body operating within the United Kingdom Debt Management Office, an Executive Agency of HM Treasury. The PWLB's function is to lend money from the National Loans Fund to local authorities and other prescribed bodies, and to collect the repayments.

Quantitative Easing (QE): In relation to the UK, it is the process used by the Bank of England to directly increase the quantity of money in the economy. It does not involve printing more banknotes. Instead, the Bank buys assets from private sector institutions – that could be insurance companies, pension funds, banks or non-financial firms – and credits the seller's bank account. So the seller has more money in their bank account, while their bank holds a corresponding claim against the Bank of England (known as reserves). The end result is more money out in the wider economy.

Retail Price Index (RPI): A monthly index demonstrating the movement in the cost of living as it tracks the prices of goods and services including mortgage interest and rent.

Revenue Expenditure: Expenditure to meet the continuing cost of delivery of services including salaries and wages, the purchase of materials and capital financing charges.

Specified Investments: Term used in the Welsh Assembly Guidance for Local Authority Investments. Investments that offer high security and high liquidity, in sterling and for no more than one year. UK government, local authorities and bodies that have a high credit rating.

Supported Borrowing: Borrowing for which the costs are supported by the government or third party.

Supranational Bonds: Instruments issued by supranational organisations created by governments through international treaties (often called multilateral development banks). The bonds carry an AAA rating in their own right. Examples of supranational organisations are the European Investment Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Temporary Borrowing: Borrowing to cover peaks and troughs of cash flow, not to fund capital spending.

Term Deposits: Deposits of cash with terms attached relating to maturity and rate of return (Interest).

Treasury Bills (T-Bills): Treasury Bills are short term Government debt instruments and, just like temporary loans used by local authorities, are a means to manage cash flow. They are issued by the Debt Management Office and are an eligible sovereign instrument, meaning that they have an AAA-rating.

Treasury Management Code: CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services, initially brought in 2003, subsequently updated in 2009 and 2011.

Treasury Management Practices (TMP): Treasury Management Practices set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve its policies and objectives and prescribe how it will manage and control these activities.

Unsupported Borrowing: Borrowing which is self-financed by the local authority. This is also sometimes referred to as Prudential Borrowing.

Yield: The measure of the return on an investment instrument.

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FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

DRAFT TREASURY MANAGEMENT

MID YEAR REPORT 2023/24

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To provide Members with a mid-year update on matters relating to the Council's Treasury Management function.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 Treasury management comprises the management of the Council's cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.
- 2.02 The Council's primary objectives for the investment of its surplus funds are to protect the principal sums invested from loss, and to ensure adequate liquidity so that funds are available for expenditure when needed. The generation of investment income to support the provision of local authority services is an important, but secondary, objective.
- 2.03 The Council's policy is to appoint external consultants to provide advice on its treasury management function. In September 2021 Arlingclose Ltd were reappointed as the Council's advisors for a period of 3 years, following a competitive tendering exercise. This period can be extended a further 2 years as per the contract terms to September 2026.
- 2.04 The Council has adopted the 2021 edition of the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice, which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year, a mid-year report, and an annual report after the end of each financial year.

This report includes the new requirement in the 2021 Code, mandatory from 1st April 2023, of quarterly reporting of the treasury management prudential indicators and non-treasury prudential indicators.

- 2.05 In addition, the Welsh Government (WG) issues guidance on local authority investments that requires the Council to approve an investment strategy before the start of each financial year.
- 2.06 This report fulfils the Council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the WG Guidance.
- 2.07 The Council approved the 2023/24 Treasury Management Strategy at its meeting on 23rd February 2023.

3.00 ECONOMIC & INTEREST RATE REVIEW APRIL – OCTOBER 2023.

Provided by Arlingclose Ltd, the Council's treasury management advisors.

Economic background: UK inflation remained stubbornly high over much the period compared to the US and euro zone, keeping expectations elevated of how much further the Bank of England (BoE) would hike rates compared to the regions. However, inflation data published in the latter part of the period undershot expectations, causing financial markets to reassess the peak in BoE Bank Rate. This was followed very soon after by the BoE deciding to keep Bank Rate on hold at 5.25% in September, against expectation for another 0.25% rise.

Economic growth in the UK remained relatively weak over the period. In calendar Q2 2023, the economy expanded by 0.2%. However, monthly GDP data showed a 0.5% contraction in July, the largest fall to date in 2023 and worse than the 0.2% decline predicted which could be an indication the monetary tightening cycle is starting to cause recessionary or at the very least stagnating economic conditions.

July data showed the unemployment rate increased to 4.3% (3mth/year) while the employment rate rose to 75.5%. Pay growth was 8.5% for total pay (including bonuses) and 7.8% for regular pay, which for the latter was the highest recorded annual growth rate. Adjusting for inflation, pay growth in real terms were positive at 1.2% and 0.6% for total pay and regular pay respectively.

Inflation continued to fall from its peak as annual headline CPI declined to 6.7% in July 2023 from 6.8% in the previous month against expectations for a tick back up to 7.0%. The largest downward contribution came from food prices. The core rate also surprised on the downside, falling to 6.2% from 6.9% compared to predictions for it to only edge down to 6.8%.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee continued tightening monetary policy over most of the period, taking Bank Rate to 5.25% in August. Against expectations of a further hike in September, the Committee voted 5-4 to maintain Bank Rate at 5.25%. Each of the four dissenters were in favour of another 0.25% increase.

Financial market Bank Rate expectations moderated over the period as falling inflation and weakening data gave some indication that higher interest rates were working. Expectations fell from predicting a peak of over 6% in June to 5.5% just ahead of the September MPC meeting, and to then expecting 5.25% to be the peak by the end of the period.

Following the September MPC meeting, Arlingclose, the Council's treasury adviser, modestly revised its interest forecast to reflect the central view that 5.25% will now be the peak in Bank Rate. In the short term the risks are to the upside if inflation

increases again, but over the remaining part of the time horizon the risks are to the downside from economic activity weakening more than expected.

The lagged effect of monetary policy together with the staggered fixed term mortgage maturities over the next 12-24 months means the full impact from Bank Rate rises are still yet to be felt by households. As such, while consumer confidence continued to improve over the period, the GfK measure hit -21 in September, it is likely this will reverse at some point. Higher rates will also impact business and according to S&P/CIPS survey data, the UK manufacturing and services sector contracted during the quarter with all measures scoring under 50, indicating contraction in the sectors.

The US Federal Reserve increased its key interest rate to 5.25-5.50% over the period, pausing in September following a 0.25% rise the month before, and indicating that it may have not quite completed its monetary tightening cycle.

Having fallen throughout 2023, annual US inflation started to pick up again in July 2023, rising from 3% in June, which represented the lowest level since March 2021, to 3.2% in July and then jumping again to 3.7% in August, beating expectations for a rise to 3.6%. Rising oil prices were the main cause of the increase. US GDP growth registered 2.1% annualised in the second calendar quarter of 2023, down from the initial estimate of 2.4% but above the 2% expansion seen in the first quarter.

The European Central Bank increased its key deposit, main refinancing, and marginal lending interest rates to 4.00%, 4.50% and 4.75% respectively in September, and hinted these levels may represent the peak in rates but also emphasising rates would stay high for as long as required to bring inflation down to target.

Although continuing to decline steadily, inflation has been sticky, Eurozone annual headline CPI fell to 5.2% in August while annual core inflation eased to 5.3% having stuck at 5.5% in the previous two months. GDP growth remains weak, with recent data showing the region expanded by only 0.1% in the three months to June 2023, the rate as the previous quarter.

Financial markets: Financial market sentiment and bond yields remained volatile, with the latter generally trending downwards as there were signs inflation, while still high, was moderating and interest rates were at a peak. Gilt yields fell towards the end of the period. The 5-year UK benchmark gilt yield rose from 3.30% to peak at 4.91% in July before trending downwards to 4.29%, the 10-year gilt yield rose from 3.43% to 4.75% in August before declining to 4.45%, and the 20-year yield from 3.75% to 4.97% in August and then fell back to 4.84%. The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 4.73% over the period.

Credit review: Having completed a review of its credit advice on unsecured deposits at UK and non-UK banks following concerns of a wider financial crisis after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank purchase of Credit Suisse by UBS, as well as other well-publicised banking sector issues, in March Arlingclose reduced the advised maximum duration limit for all banks on its recommended counterparty list to 35 days. This stance continued to be maintained at the end of the period.

During the second quarter of the period, Moody's revised the outlook on Svenska Handelsbanken to negative from stable, citing concerns around the Swedish real estate sector.

Having put the US sovereign rating on Rating Watch Negative earlier in the period, Fitch took further action in August, downgrading the long-term rating to AA+, partly around ongoing debt ceiling concerns but also an expected fiscal deterioration over the next couple of years.

Following the issue of a Section 114 notice, in September Arlingclose advised against undertaking new lending to Birmingham City Council, and later in the month cut its recommended duration on Warrington Borough Council to a maximum of 100 days.

Arlingclose continued to monitor and assess credit default swap levels for signs of ongoing credit stress and although no changes were made to recommended durations over the period, Northern Trust Corporation was added to the counterparty list.

Heightened market volatility is expected to remain a feature, at least in the near term and, as ever, the institutions and durations on the Council's counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remains under constant review.

Outlook for the remainder of 2023/24

The MPC held Bank Rate at 5.25% in September. Arlingclose believe this is the peak for Bank Rate.

The MPC will cut rates in the medium term to stimulate the UK economy but will be reluctant to do so until it is sure there will be no lingering second round effects. Arlingclose see rate cuts from Q3 2024 to a low of around 3% by early 2026.

The immediate risks around Bank Rate lie to the upside, but these diminish over the next few quarters and shift to the downside before balancing out, due to the weakening UK economy and dampening effects on inflation.

Arlingclose expects long-term gilt yields to eventually fall from current levels reflecting the lower medium-term path for Bank Rate. However, yields will remain relatively higher than in the past, partly due to quantitative tightening, with continued elevated volatility.

	Current	Dec 23	Mar 24	Jun 24	Sept 24	Dec 24	Mar 25	Jun 25	Sept 25	Dec 25	Mar 26	Jun 26	Sept 26
Upside Risk (%)	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Interest Rate (%)	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.75	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.25	3.00	3.00
Downside Risk (%)	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.75	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00

4.00 BORROWING

4.01 CIPFA's 2021 Prudential Code is clear that local authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return and that it is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decision that will increase the capital financing requirement and so may lead to new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the Council. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield unless these loans are for refinancing purposes.

The Council has not invested in assets primarily for financial return or that are not primarily related to the functions of the Council. It has no plans to do so in future.

BORROWING STRATEGY & ACTIVITY

4.02 Borrowing Strategy

As outlined in the treasury strategy, the Council's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change being a secondary objective. The Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.

There was a substantial rise in the cost of both short- and long-term borrowing over the last 18 months. Bank Rate rose by 1% from 4.25% at the beginning of April to 5.25% at the end of September. Bank Rate was 2% higher than at the end of

September 2022.

UK gilt yields were volatile, mainly facing upward pressure since early April following signs that UK growth had been more resilient, inflation stickier than expected, and that the Bank of England saw persistently higher rates through 2023/24 as key to dampening domestic demand. Gilt yields, and consequently PWLB borrowing rates, rose and broadly remained at elevated levels. On 30th September, the PWLB certainty rates for maturity loans were 5.26% for 10 year loans, 5.64% for 20-year loans and 5.43% for 50-year loans. Their equivalents on 31st March 2023 were 4.33%, 4.70% and 4.41% respectively.

A new PWLB HRA rate which is 0.4% below the certainty rate was made available from 15th June 2023. Initially available for a period of one year, this discounted rate is to support local authorities borrowing for the Housing Revenue Account and for refinancing existing HRA loans, providing a window of opportunity for HRA-related borrowing.

The Council submitted its application for access to PWLB lending 2023/24 (including access to HRA and certainty rates) in April 2023.

In keeping with the Council's objectives, no new borrowing was undertaken, while £0.870m of existing loans were allowed to mature without replacement. This strategy enabled the Council to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk.

4.03 The long-term borrowing outstanding at 30th September 2023 totals £292.97million.

4.04 Loans with the Public Works Loans Board are in the form of fixed rate (£269.55m). £18.95m is variable in the form of LOBOs (Lender's Option, Borrower's Option) and £4.47m are interest free loans from government. The Council's average long-term borrowing rate is currently 4.51%.

	Balance 01/04/2023 £m	Debt Maturing £m	New Debt £m	Balance 30/09/2023 £m
Long Term Borrowing	290.49	(1.99)	0.00	288.50
Government Loans	4.71	(0.24)	0.00	4.47
TOTAL BORROWING	295.20	(2.23)	0.00	292.97
Other Long Term Liabilities *	2.75	0.00	0.00	2.75
TOTAL EXTERNAL DEBT	297.95	(2.23)	0.00	295.72
Increase/ (Decrease) in Borrowing £m				(2.23)

* relates to finance leases in respect of Deeside Leisure Centre and Jade Jones Pavilion

- 4.05 No new long or short-term borrowing was undertaken during the period.
- 4.06 The Council has £18.95m LOBO loans where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Council has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. These loans all have call dates within the next 12 months. The Council has liaised with Arlingclose over the likelihood of the options being exercised. If the option is exercised and an increased rate proposed, the Council will repay the LOBO loans with available cash or by borrowing from other local authorities or the PWLB.

4.07 Debt Rescheduling

The premium charge for early repayment of PWLB debt remained relatively expensive for the loans in the Council's portfolio and therefore unattractive for debt rescheduling activity. No rescheduling activity was undertaken as a consequence.

The Corporate Finance Manager, in conjunction with the Council's treasury advisors, will continue to review any potential opportunities for restructuring the Council's debt in order to take advantage of potential savings as interest rates change and to enhance the balance of the long term portfolio (amend the maturity profile and/or the balance of volatility).

5.0 INTERIM INVESTMENT AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5.01 The definition of investments in the Treasury Management Code now covers all the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds primarily for financial return. Investments that do not meet the definition of treasury management investments (i.e. management of surplus cash) are categorised as either for service purposes (made explicitly to further service objectives) and or for commercial purposes (made primarily for financial return).

Investment Guidance issued by the Welsh Government also includes within the definition of investments all such assets held partially or wholly for financial return.

Non-treasury investments, including loans to subsidiaries and purchases of investment property, are not normally considered to be treasury investments, and these are therefore covered separately in Appendix A.

- 5.02 The maximum investments the Council had on deposit at any one time totalled £62m. The average investment balance for the period was £48.4m and the average rate of return was 4.58%, generating investment income of £1.11m.
- 5.03 Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Council to invest its

funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.

As demonstrated by the liability benchmark in this report (paragraph 6.01), the Council expects to be a long-term borrower and new treasury investments are therefore primarily made to manage day-to-day cash flows using short-term low risk instruments. The existing portfolio of strategic pooled funds will be maintained to diversify risk into different asset classes and boost investment income.

- 5.04 Up to 30th September, investments were made in the Debt Management Office Deposit Account, banks, other local authorities and money market funds.
- 5.05 The average of long-term borrowing was £294.04m generating interest payable of £6.659m, in line with budget forecasts to date.

	Investments		Long Term Borrowing		Short Term Borrowing	
	Interest received £k	Interest rate %	Interest paid £k	Interest rate %	Interest paid £k	Interest rate %
2023/24 Apr - Sept	1,112	4.58	6,659	4.51	0	n/a
2022/23 Apr - Sept	304	1.05	6,655	4.53	0	n/a
Difference	808		4			

Year-end projections are as follows:

	Investments		Long Term Borrowing		Short Term Borrowing	
	Interest received £k	Interest rate %	Interest paid £k	Interest rate %	Interest paid £k	Interest rate %
2023/24 est.	1,700	4.58	13,438	4.51	980	5.95
2022/23 act	940	1.87	13,297	4.53	14	4.55
Difference	760		141		866	

5.06 Credit Risk (security)

Counterparty credit quality was assessed and monitored with reference to credit ratings (the Council's minimum long-term counterparty rating for institutions defined as having "high credit quality" is A- across rating agencies Fitch, S&P and Moody's); credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support and reports in the quality financial press.

5.07 Liquidity

In keeping with the WG's Guidance on Investments, the Council maintained a sufficient level of liquidity through the use of money market funds.

5.08 Yield

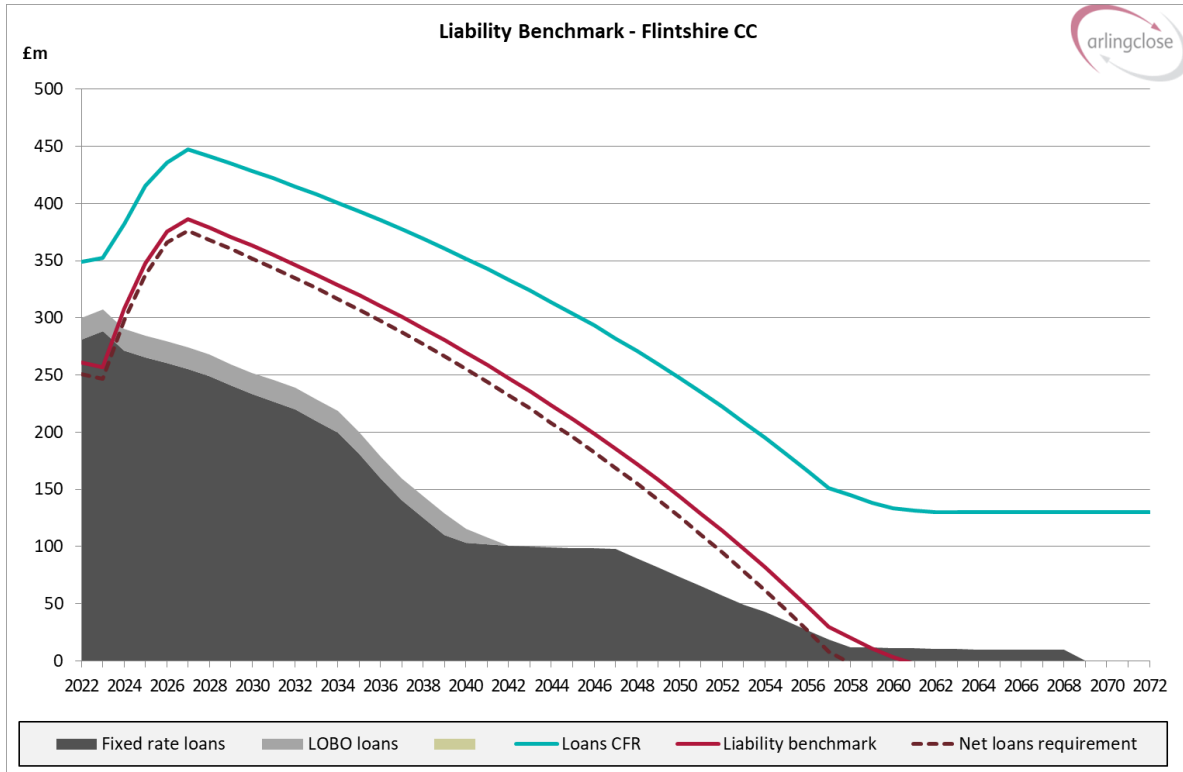
The Council sought to optimise returns commensurate with its objectives of security and liquidity. The Council's investment yield is outlined in 5.0.2.

6.00 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

As required by the 2021 CIPFA Treasury Management Code, the Council monitors and measures the following treasury management prudential indicators.

6.01 Liability Benchmark

This new indicator compares the Council's actual existing borrowing against a liability benchmark that has been calculated to show the lowest risk level of borrowing. The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. It represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.



6.02 Interest rate exposures

This indicator is set to control the Council’s exposure to interest rate risk.

Interest rate risk indicator	30.06.23 £'000	30.09.23 £'000
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	30.2	44.0
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	99.5	101.0

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at new market rates.

Fixed rate investments and borrowings are those where the rate of interest is fixed for at least 12 months, measured from the start of the financial year or the transaction date if later. All other instruments are classed as variable rate.

6.03 Maturity structure of borrowing

This indicator is set to control the Council’s exposure to refinancing risk. The upper

and lower limits on the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing will be:

	Lower	Upper	Actual as at 30.09.23
Under 12 months	0%	20%	1.65%
12 months and within 24 months	0%	20%	2.15%
24 months and within five years	0%	30%	6.41%
Five years and within 10 years	0%	50%	14.75%
10 years and above	0%	100%	75.04%

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

6.04 Long-term treasury management investments:

The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management investments will be:

Price risk indicator	2023/24 Limit	30.09.23 Actual
Limit on total principal invested beyond year end	£5m	£0m

Any long-term investments carried forward from previous years will be included in each year's limit.

6.05 Borrowing Limits

These limits are reported as part of the quarterly monitoring of the capital programme, however, they are repeated here for completeness.

	2023/24 Limit	30.09.23 Actual
Operational Boundary	£403m	£297.67m
Authorised Limit	£438m	£297.67m

7.00 OTHER ITEMS

7.01 Other treasury management related activities that took place during April – September 2023 included:

- Statutory override: In April 2023 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published the full outcome of the consultation on the extension of the

statutory override on accounting for gains and losses on pooled investment funds. The override has been extended for two years until 31st March 2025 and is unlikely to be extended beyond this date. The Council will discuss with Arlingclose the implications for the investment strategy and what action may need to be taken.

- The Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23 was reported to Governance and Audit Committee on 26th July 2023, Cabinet on 19th September 2023 and Council on 24th October 2023.
- The Quarter 1 Treasury Management update was reported to the Governance and Audit Committee.

8.00 COMPLIANCE

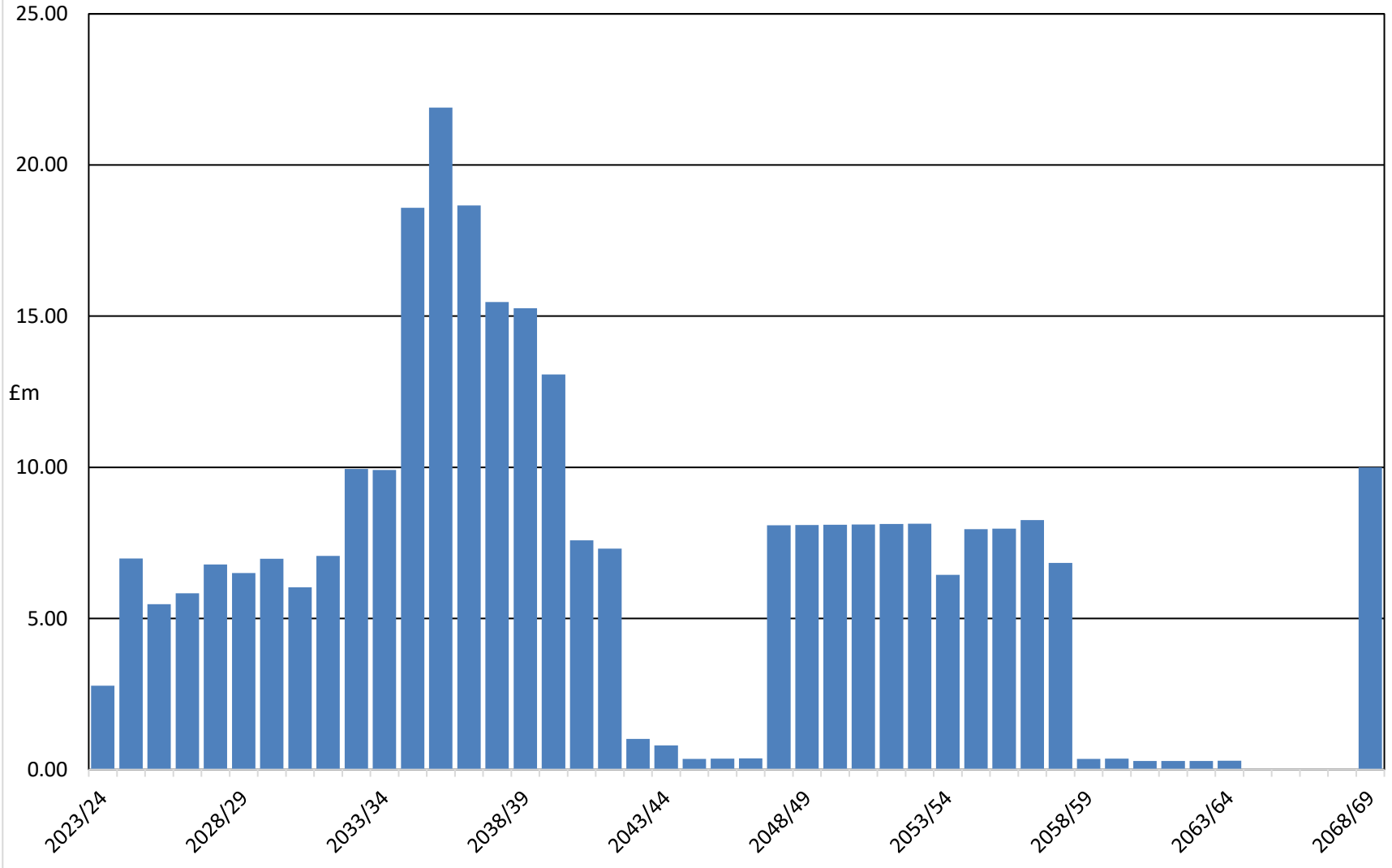
8.01 The Corporate Finance Manager reports that all treasury management activities undertaken during the quarter complied fully with the principles in the Treasury Management Code and the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy. Compliance with specific investment limits is demonstrated in Section 6.00.

8.00 CONCLUSION

8.01 In compliance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice this report provides Members with a summary report of the treasury management activity during the first half of 2023/24.

8.02 As indicated in this report none of the prudential indicators have been breached and a prudent approach has been taken in relation to investment activity with priority being given to security and liquidity over yield.

Debt Maturity Profile - Sept 2023



APPENDIX A NON-TREASURY INVESTMENTS

1.01 The definition of investments in the Treasury Management Code now covers all the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds primarily for financial return. Investments that do not meet the definition of treasury management investments (i.e. management of surplus cash) are categorised as either for service purposes (made explicitly to further service objectives) and or for commercial purposes (made primarily for financial return).

Investment Guidance issued by the Welsh Government also includes within the definition of investments all such assets held partially or wholly for financial return.

The Council has given loans to wholly owned companies for service purposes and has historical non-financial investments in property defined as Investment Properties within the Council's Statement of Accounts. The Council considers both to be non-treasury investments.

1.02 Wholly Owned Companies

The Council's investments in the form of loans to wholly owned companies contribute to its service delivery objectives and/or to promote wellbeing as follows:

- The Council has embarked on an ambitious house building programme as part of its Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP). Over a 5-year period 500 new homes will be built at a range of sites across the county, a mixture of new council houses and affordable homes, alongside commissioning a range of linked regeneration initiatives and community benefits.
- Affordable homes are being developed through the Council's wholly owned subsidiary North East Wales Homes Limited (NEW Homes) in partnership with the Council. Affordable homes for rent are built or purchased by NEW Homes funded by loans from the Council. New affordable homes for rent have been built in Flint, Penyffordd (Holywell), Dobshell, Bryn-y-Baal, Northop and Saltney.

The Council considers that its financial exposure to loans to wholly owned companies is proportionate and has set the limits in the table below. The Council's loan book is currently within these self-assessed limits.

Borrower	Cash Limit
Wholly owned companies	£40m
Treasury management investments meeting the definition of a loan	Unlimited

Yield (net profit)

The loans generate a small income for the Council as there is a margin of approx. 0.25% charged to NEW Homes on the Council's borrowing rate from the PWLB. The income makes a very small contribution to achieving a balanced revenue budget.

1.03 Investment Properties

The Welsh Government guidance includes an investment category covering non-financial assets held primarily or partially to generate a profit, primarily investment property. Proper accounting practice defines an investment property as those that are held solely to earn rent and / or for capital appreciation.

The Council has a portfolio of investment properties, in the form of agricultural property and industrial units. Although these are classified as investment properties, they are legacy assets, and the Council is managing down its agricultural portfolio and is reviewing its position regarding industrial units.

Fair Value of Investment Properties

	31.03.2023 £m	31.3.2022 £m	31.3.2021 £m	31.3.2020 £m	31.3.2019 £m
Fair Value Inv. Properties	28.8	27.6	25.2	25.0	25.2

Yield (net profit)

The profit generated by investment activity makes a small contribution to achieving a balanced revenue budget. The table below details the extent to which funding expenditure to meet the service delivery objectives and or promote wellbeing in the Council is dependent on achieving the expected yield over the life cycle of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Proportionality of Investment Properties

	2022/23 Actual £m	2023/24 Budget £m	2024/25 Budget £m
Net Revenue Budget	326.683	352.121	359.807
Net Investment income	1.67	1.65	1.65
Proportion	0.51%	0.47%	0.46%

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CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th December 2023
Report Subject	Business Rates – Write Offs
Cabinet Member	Cabinet member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bad debts above £25,000 require Cabinet to approve recommendations to write off debts.

Two Business Rates debts, totalling £118,266.44, are deemed to be irrecoverable and the writing off the debts is now a necessary step. The debts relate to:

- PPA Engineering Group Ltd £92,489.86
- Gibbs (Steel Fabricators) Ltd £25,776.58

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet approves the write off of these business rate debts, amounting to £92,489 for PPA Engineering Group Ltd and £25,776 for Gibbs (Steel Fabricators) Ltd.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND TO THE WRITE OFF REQUESTS
1.01	PPA Engineering Group Limited is registered on Companies House (12223464) and liable to pay ongoing business rates from October 2019 for commercial premises listed at Unit 1, Links Commerce Park, Factory Road, Pentre.
1.02	The company initially made business rates payment in full for their 2019/20 liability. However, from 2020/21 to date, payments had been sporadic, and it was necessary for the Council to take legal action in the Magistrates Court on multiple occasions to secure payment. Liability Orders were awarded in July 2021, February 2022, August 2022, and October 2023.
1.03	Throughout 2021, officers from the Council were in dialogue with one of the directors of PPA and a payment plan was agreed whilst the company directors were trying to recover business, attract new investors and introduce additional working capital into the business. Working with the business closely ensured a further £11.6k was recovered towards the outstanding 2021/22 liability.
1.04	The directors stopped engaging with the Council and the last payment was received in November 2021. Further attempts to engage with the company directors to secure payment were unsuccessful and court orders were referred to the in-house Debt Enforcement/Bailiff Agents in March 2022.
1.05	<p>Despite repeated visits to the premises in Pentre to take control of goods, no contact was able to be made with the company or the registered directors and only one further payment of £289.25 was received against the increasing business rates debt.</p> <p>On all visits, there were no signs of the business actively trading from the premises and the unit has always been locked up with no employees on site.</p>
1.06	<p>A Companies House search confirms the PPA is still registered as an active company, but the last filed accounts are dated 30th September 2021 and show fixed assets at the time of £82k and a net worth of -£9k.</p> <p>All company directors have resigned, however one director, aged 18, and whose place of residence is the United States, was appointed to the company in August 2023.</p>
1.07	Specialist external lawyers acting on behalf of the Council have looked at the prospect of recovering the unpaid business rates from PPA, including the 'winding-up' of the company. However, with no sign of any trading activity, overdue company accounts and a negative net worth, there is no prospect of recovering the unpaid business rates, which includes the 2023/24 ongoing liability.

	<p>Measures to 'wind-up' the company would be a pointless and expensive exercise for the Council to undertake and on this occasion, it is not in the public interest to take any further action.</p> <p>The unpaid business rates are therefore deemed irrecoverable and necessary for write off.</p>
1.08	<p>Gibbs (Steel Fabricators) Ltd were a limited company registered with Companies House (06759085) and determined to be responsible to pay business rates from December 2020 to September 2023 for the premises at Llanerch-Y-Mor, Mostyn.</p> <p>Companies House documents that Winding up proceedings commenced against the company on 25th September 2023.</p>
1.09	<p>The company had been liable at a previous unit in Flintshire for over 10 years and paid their business rates liability in full. During 2021, payments were irregular, and this resulted in the Council obtaining Liability Orders in the Magistrates Court.</p>
1.10	<p>Council officers were in dialogue with the company and a payment plan was agreed to recover the unpaid rates. Whenever the payment arrangements were broken, frequent contact was maintained with the company to ensure payments continued and when the business failed to engage or make payment, referrals were made to Enforcement Agents to collect the debts.</p>
1.11	<p>This blend of careful case management, dialogue with the business and referral to Enforcement Agents where necessary, ensured the council received some payments from the business until February 2023. These payments resulted in the liability for 2021/22 being paid in full and £21.8k being paid towards their liability of £31.8k for 2022/23.</p>
1.12	<p>Following the cessation of payments in February 2023, further contact was attempted with the company, but no additional engagement was achieved.</p> <p>The remaining balance for 2022/23 and the new liability for 2023/24 were referred to Enforcement Agents in May 2023. Despite several visits to the premises, enforcement action was unsuccessful, and no payments received, and there were insufficient goods for the Council to take control of.</p>
1.13	<p>Following action taken by creditors, Gibbs (Steel Fabricators) Ltd was placed into liquidation in September 2023 and the voluntary winding up of the company commenced has now commenced.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no prospect of recovering the £25.8k that remains outstanding for business rates.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no direct financial implications for the Council or local taxpayers by writing off these debts as business rates losses are picked up by the National Collection Pool for Wales. As the Collection Pool is supported by Welsh Government, non-payment of rates does though have a wider impact on the Welsh taxpayer.
2.02	Writing off the two debts amounting to a total loss of £118.2k income to the National Collection Pool, is being recommended as a last resort and only on the basis that there is no realistic chance of successfully recovering the debt from either business.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	For those businesses who fail to pay, recovery action is always taken to secure payment. Measures include taking legal action to secure a Liability Order at the Magistrates Court, and in certain circumstances, the use of enforcement agents/bailiffs to take control of goods.
3.02	On some occasions, the cost of taking legal action, such as 'winding-up' a company in the High Court, is not appropriate on the grounds of the cost to the public purse, especially if there is still no prospect of recovering the outstanding debt.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	All write offs must be approved by the Corporate Finance Manager, but in the case of write offs over £25k, Cabinet must be consulted before a decision is taken.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Finance Act 1988 • Financial Procedure Rules (section 5.2) • Companies House Registration - PPA Engineering Group Ltd (12223464) • Companies House Registration - Gibbs (Steel Fabricators) Ltd (06759085)

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: David Barnes, Revenues & Procurement Manager Telephone: 01352 703652 E-mail: david.barnes@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
	<p>Business Rates: are a property based local tax on businesses calculated on the rateable value of the property. Although the rate of tax is set by Welsh Government, rates are administered and collected locally by each local authority and paid into a national collection pool for Wales.</p> <p>National Collection Pool for Wales: all business rates are collected and paid into the Welsh Government's Non-Domestic Rates Collection Pool. Councils in Wales receive a redistributed share based on a formula set by Welsh Government called the Local Government Funding Formula. The formula makes a theoretical comparative judgement on what each council needs according to its population size, its wealth and poverty, and its rurality.</p>

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CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th December 2023
Report Subject	Sheltered Housing Review
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council's sheltered housing review, the proposed methodology and scoring matrix and the communication and engagement plan.

The Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) housing stock consists of circa 7,300 properties with approximately 2,500 of those being classed as sheltered stock.

With future standards increasing in terms of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), Welsh Government's ambitions with regards to decarbonisation, the need to ensure our sheltered properties continue to meet our contract holders needs and the costs associated with investment and future maintenance, the Council are now required to ensure that any future expenditure is allocated appropriately.

The options for those sheltered assets deemed to require significant investment to comply with current and future standards or are no longer meeting the needs of our contract holders, are redesignation to general needs, refurbishment or demolition.

The review will adopt a holistic approach to the sustainability of the sheltered housing stock and reviewed each scheme from an asset management perspective to identify the current and future investment needs of each scheme, WHQS works and de-carbonisation and compliance considerations.

This information will be aligned to housing management intelligence and insight which will review and assess demand / turnover and desirability to determine the sustainability of each scheme.

Each scheme will be assessed against a sustainability matrix with four possible recommendations:

Option 1 – Scheme is sustainable with no recommended changes.

Option 2 Refurbishment / regeneration – Scheme has some issues requiring intervention – for example, additional works required to make the scheme more attractive to existing and future tenants.

Option 3 Redesignation - Scheme has some issues requiring intervention – for example, may benefit from re-designation to a more sustainable client group.

Option 4 Demolition / re-development – Scheme potentially requires significant intervention to address more fundamental demand / sustainability issues and not be able to achieve compliance and therefore considered for demolition / re-development. A full options appraisal will be undertaken to explore all options and associated costs.

It is important for the Council to ensure that its offer to current, and prospective, sheltered housing contract holders is attractive, competitive and meets current expectations and aspirations.

It has been several years since the Council last reviewed its offer to sheltered housing contract holders and it timely that the offer is updated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To support the methodology proposed to assess the Council's sheltered assets.
2	To support the communication and engagement plan proposed to assess the Council's sheltered assets.
3	To support future assessment work to sheltered housing assets and progress to an options appraisal stage if investment concerns are highlighted through its in-depth review.

REPORT DETAIL

1.00	BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY USED TO REVIEW THE SHELTERED HOUSING STOCK
1.01	The Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) housing stock consists of circa 7,300 properties with approximately 2,500 of those being classed as sheltered stock.
1.02	With future standards increasing in terms of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), Welsh Government's ambitions with regards to decarbonisation, the need to ensure our sheltered properties continue to meet our contract holders needs and the costs associated with investment and future maintenance, the Council are now required to ensure that any future expenditure is allocated appropriately.

1.03	<p>SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP</p> <p>A decision was made by the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 8th March 2023 to establish a Sheltered Housing Review Task and Finish Group. This followed the recommendation of the Committee at its meeting on 8th February 2023 following consideration of the Sheltered Housing Review report.</p> <p>The group has met on three separate occasions to consider the terms of reference of the Group, the Scoring Matrix and the Communications and Engagement Plan.</p>
1.04	<p>The group proposed the following changes to the Scoring Matrix and Communications and Engagement Plan:</p> <p><u>Scoring Matrix</u> The Task and Finish Group supported the scoring matrix but suggested the following amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is more than one local Member for a ward, the scores should be combined. • Consideration be given to amending the weighting of scores on the housing estate matrix. <p><u>Communications and Engagement Plan</u> The Task and Finish Group supported the communications and engagement plan with the following amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendation of ‘demolition’ be re-worded to ‘demolition / re-development’ shown on the list of possible recommendations arising from the review of a scheme. • A short explanation of the following terms be added to the document: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Demolition/re-development 2) Refurbishment 3) Redesignation • Consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration be included within the document.
1.05	<p>The review will adopt a holistic approach to the sustainability of the sheltered housing stock and reviewed each scheme from an asset management perspective to identify the current and future investment needs of each scheme, WHQS works and de-carbonisation and compliance considerations.</p> <p>This information will be aligned to housing management intelligence and insight which will review and assess demand / turnover and desirability to determine the sustainability of each scheme.</p>
1.06	<p>The Council have many sheltered assets across the County requiring significant investment. In addition, there are a number of assets that continue to be challenging to let due to location being remote, poor accessibility to local services and transport links and matching need to contract holder’s requirements.</p>

	<p>Adaptations can be undertaken to some assets to improve access / egress, for example, the installation of ramps or lifts to aid tenants accessing their homes, whilst other assets may have improvement works undertaken to increase desirability, including additional security measures and improvements to internal and external areas.</p> <p>However, there are assets / blocks which require significant investment as many components (roof coverings, windows, doors, communal access points etc.) need replacement, and the Council is unable to bring these assets up to the required standard and achieve compliancy. The reasons vary from physical constraint (size, layout, topography etc.) and construction type, which may prohibit or restrict the Council (listed buildings, design, original layout, and location).</p> <p>To assess these assets, a scoring matrix has been developed to inform decision making regarding their future.</p>
1.07	<p>SCORING MATRIX - HOUSING REVIEW SECTION</p> <p>The scoring matrix assesses each sheltered asset against the following main and subheadings along with the rationale utilised for each score (appendix 1):</p> <p><u>Desirability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational issues • ASB incidents • Car parking • Amenities • Travel links • Social networks etc. • Location and accessibility • Existing Tenant Satisfaction Survey • Local Member feedback <p>Scoring rationale:</p> <p><u>High level of concern</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Involvement from North Wales Police, high number of tenancy enforcement cases, negative housing officer feedback, other contract holders and local residents aware of issues. ○ Less than 50% car parking available. ○ No shops, pharmacies, bus routes, social networks in close proximity. ○ Remote location, located on a steep hill / incline with challenging access / egress etc. ○ Contract holder satisfaction survey – score below 60%. ○ Local Member in favour of reclassification / further review. <p><u>Medium Level of concern</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Medium number of tenancy enforcement cases, other contract holders and local residents aware of issues. ○ Between 50% - 80% car parking available. ○ Limited amenities in close proximity. ○ Close proximity to bus routes etc. but low frequency.

- Limited availability of social networks.
- Remote and difficult to access / egress homes
- Contract holder satisfaction survey – score between 60% - 80%.

Low Level of concern

- Low / zero number of tenancy enforcement cases, no contract holders or local residents aware of any issues.
- Over 80% car parking available.
- Sufficient amenities in close proximity.
- Close proximity to bus routes, high frequency.
- High availability to social networks with varied options.
- Close to town centre with good access for all users.
- Contract holder satisfaction survey – score above 80%.
- Local Member against reclassification / further review.

Attributes

- Access / elevator lifts etc.
- Scooter storage
- Security
- Allocated communal garden/ outdoor space

Scoring rationale:

High Level of concern

- Access via steps/ stairs only - very difficult to access.
- Scooter storage - less than 50% available.
- Security low - no security equipment etc.
- No communal garden areas / outdoor spaces.

Medium Level of concern

- Access via steps / stairs only - difficult to access.
- Scooter storage - between 50% - 80% available.
- Security medium - e.g. door entry system installed.
- Limited availability of garden / outdoor spaces.

Low Level of concern

- Access via lifts, stair lifts, no steps - easy access.
- Scooter storage - over 80% available.
- Security high - e.g. door entry system, cameras installed.
- High availability of garden / outdoor spaces with varied options.

Low availability of sheltered stock in area

- Alternative stock

Scoring rationale:

- High, medium or low level alternative suitable stock in local area.

Turnover

- Average length of tenancy
- Number of terminations
- Waiting list / demand
- Number of refusals
- Number of long-term voids

	<p>Scoring rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High, medium or low levels of the sub-headings outlined above. <p><u>Rent loss</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rent income / loss. <p>Scoring rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High, medium or low levels of rent income / loss.
1.08	<p>The scoring matrix can also be used to identify future investment requirements and the associated works. For example, the scoring matrix may identify that a sheltered complex is highly desirable with no future investment concerns, however our contract holders or officers do have concerns over the security of the complex. This requirement would inform the investment teams to commence a review and costing exercise which may lead to any required works / adaptations etc. being integrated into the Council's capital programmes.</p> <p>This may also include the asset being adapted with certain components or attributes removed and replaced with more suitable and fit for purpose solutions.</p>
1.09	<p>Scoring Matrix - Assets Review Section</p> <p>An additional section of the scoring matrix, to be used in conjunction with the housing section or in isolation, is to be used by the Housing Assets Team where there are concerns over future investment requirements, suitability and the feasibility of the asset achieving and remaining compliant moving forwards (appendix 1).</p> <p>The following areas are assessed as part of the scoring matrix:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Number of properties within the scheme / complex. ● Current condition of the assets and the block(s) as a whole. ● WHQS previous investment costs. ● WHQS planned future investment costs. ● Repair and maintenance costs (both previous and forecasted). ● Void costs - property refurbishment costs etc. (both previous and forecasted). ● Current EPC / SAP score. ● Feasibility rating of achieving decarbonisation. ● Decarbonisation investment costs to achieve compliance. ● Other compliance investment costs - fire, security, servicing etc. ● Rental income. ● Rental loss.
1.10	<p>Using the assessment criteria above, the costs are calculated using a formula to ascertain when, and if, the Council will recoup any investment costs and rental loss.</p> <p>There are those assets that may, or may not, break even over a thirty-year period and those that will not be able to reach compliance as the works cannot be undertaken.</p>

At this point the Council will need to assess its options further before any investment or planned works commence or are scheduled.

There may be a requirement to reclassify the asset / complex from sheltered to general needs, as compliance cannot be achieved, i.e., level access / egress is unable to be improved, fire suppression / detection systems cannot be installed, or certain requirements cannot be met due to the construction, type or location of the asset / complex.

There may also be concerns that the asset / complex may be in poor condition, require significant investment, not be able to achieve compliance and therefore considered for demolition. This decision is only reached when all alternative options have been explored.

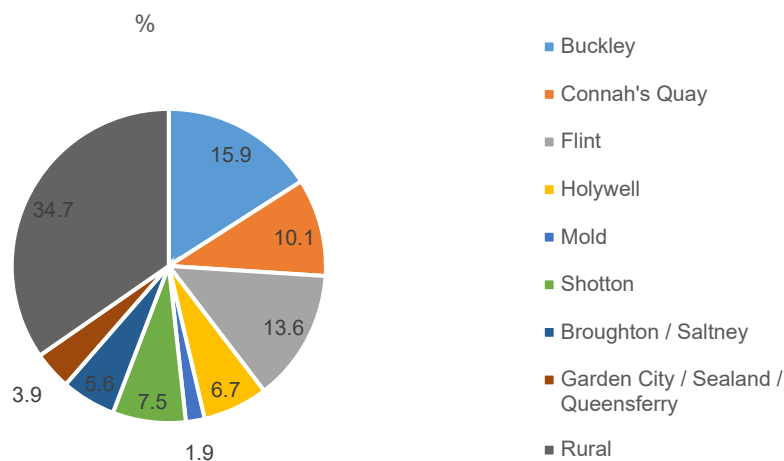
1.11 Next steps of the evaluation process

As mentioned above, the sections of the scoring matrix can be used together or in isolation informed by the final scoring and recommendations from each section.

The financial calculations, alongside the data from the scoring matrix, will provide the Council with a proposed option to consider further.

An options appraisal on the asset should be completed to ascertain what options are available to the Council in terms of adaptation or demolition, including proposals on the use of the land owned by the Council where it is identified as suitable for development.

1.12 The diagram below provides a broad breakdown of the location of the sheltered properties across the county.



Whilst certain areas have higher concentrations of sheltered housing than others, all areas have been evaluated in a consistent manner and will continue to be so through the scoring matrix.

The methodology used for the review has identified that most sheltered schemes are sustainable and viable over the short to medium term. There are, however, a small number of schemes where due to changing aspirations and demographics, compliance requirements and future investment challenges further detailed analysis of these factors are

	required before an assessment can be finalised regarding the medium to long term viability of the scheme. In these circumstances, for a small number of schemes, it is recommended that an options appraisal is undertaken.
1.13	<p>Communication and Engagement Plan</p> <p>Where a sheltered scheme is identified for review via the agreed matrix and methodology and a recommendation is identified it is vital to communicate across all stakeholders effectively.</p> <p>Contract holders must be fully engaged through the process given the potential sensitivities and strong emotions which may be provoked when looking to address changes to homes and indeed those communities.</p> <p>A communication and engagement plan has been developed outlining the key principles and approach to consultation (appendix 2). The activity will be tailored to the recommendation identified and this will be reviewed regularly to inform future engagement activity.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Staff and budgets</p> <p>The review and subsequent proposals shall ensure the housing stock is utilised most effectively and is sustainable over the longer term.</p> <p>The options appraisal process shall involve a detailed technical assessment of schemes and whilst most of this work can be conducted in house there may be a need for some specialist support and input when assessing potential for scheme reconfiguration or new build options.</p> <p>The decision to re-designate schemes or undertake options appraisals shall necessitate a significant investment in staff time particularly from the housing management service which shall lead on any decant process which can be intensive, challenging, and sensitive work. Any decision to de-commission schemes shall present a significant challenge to the housing asset service to ensure the scheme remains safe and secure throughout the decanting process.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There is a significant risk that a small number of sheltered housing schemes will become increasingly difficult to let as a result of changes in aspirations and expectations. Furthermore, it is essential that a strategic review of the future investment and compliance costs for sheltered schemes is undertaken to ensure that all stock is able to meet safety and compliance standards and de-carbonisation requirements.</p> <p>The review will provide the Council with up-to-date intelligence and insight regarding the performance of the sheltered housing stock and identify a</p>

	<p>small number of schemes further appraisal or where intervention may be required.</p> <p>It should be noted that where schemes are re-designated from sheltered housing to general needs accommodation there is a risk that those properties may become eligible for right to buy should the current restrictions on buying Council housing be lifted. There are no signs that Welsh Government is considering lifting the restriction on the right to buy and should it do so then the Council should be consulted and may wish to discuss the potential for re-designated stock to be exempt from such proposals.</p> <p>Each scheme subject to options appraisal and potential re-designation shall be subject to a formal risk assessment as part of the appraisal process. The outcome shall be included in future reports to Chief Officers Team (COT), Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet.</p>
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4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	To date limited consultation has been undertaken. The report proposes a communication and engagement plan to be undertaken with all stakeholders as recommendations are identified for each scheme.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Sheltered Review Housing Estates Matrix
5.02	Appendix 2 – Sheltered Review Assets Matrix Example
5.03	Appendix 3 - Communication and Engagement Plan

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officers:</p> <p>Name: Sean O'Donnell (Service Manager - Housing Assets) Email: Sean.O'Donnell@flintshire.gov.uk</p> <p>Name: Jen Griffiths (Service Manager - Housing Welfare and Communities) Email: Jen.Griffiths@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Capital Programme: The Council's financial plan covering capital schemes and expenditure proposals for the current year and a number of future years. It also includes estimates of the capital resources available to finance the programme.</p> <p>The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS): is a national standard of quality for homes. This is set by the Welsh Government. It means that all tenants in Wales should have the opportunity to live in good quality homes which meet the requirements of that household.</p> <p>Energy Performance Certificate (EPC): utilised to measure an assets energy performance in terms of energy used and thermal retention.</p> <p>Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP): A SAP rating is the calculation that is required in order to produce a Predicted Energy Assessment.</p> <p>Budget: a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.</p> <p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>HRA: The Housing Revenue Account is a ring fenced account derived from rental income and in the main, Welsh Government funding.</p> <p>Components: A part or element of an asset (Kitchen Bathroom, Boiler, Roof, Windows, Doors etc.)</p> <p>Sheltered Stock: Housing for tenants aged 55 and over who may or may not have support needs.</p> <p>General Needs: Housing for tenants which applies to general family housing and dwellings for singles and couples who may or may not have support needs.</p> <p>Anti-social behaviour (ASB): Antisocial behaviour is defined as behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person.</p> <p>Scheme Re-designation/classification – changing the eligibility criteria for a scheme so that it can accommodate a different client group than that for which the scheme was originally developed.</p>

SHELTER REVIEW MATRIX - HOUSING & ESTATES



RATIONALE

REF	MATRIX CATEGORIES	CRITERIA / CONSIDERATIONS	RATIONALE			ADDRESS NUMBER OF UNITS ARCHETYPE			ADDRESS NUMBER OF UNITS ARCHETYPE			ADDRESS NUMBER OF UNITS ARCHETYPE		
			HIGH 10-8	MEDIUM 7-4	LOW 3-0	SCORE ACTUAL DATA	COMMENTS	SCORE ACTUAL DATA	COMMENTS	SCORE ACTUAL DATA	COMMENTS			
1	DESIRABILITY													
a	Reputational issues	NHO INPUT	Police & Ten. Enforcement Involved	Housing Officer & other tenants aware	Oh's tenants/ local residents	0	Good reputation, accessible flats can be sought after	0	Good reputation, accessible flats can be sought after.	0	Good reputation			
b	ASB Incidents	REACT CASES/POLICE STATS	Police Involved, High number, Any cases on React	Medium Number, Any cases on React	Low number	0	Currently only ASB reported is youths gathering outside	4	Currently one case on React re noise nuisance. Also have just mediated a dispute over children from a house adjoining tenants which didn't get as far as React. Generally a quiet scheme.	0	N/A			
c	Car Parking	EASE OF CAR PARKING AND AVAILABILITY	Less than 50% available = 10 Score	Between 50% - 80% available = 5 Score	Over 80% available = 0 Score	10	Parking is poor - on outskirts of scheme so even to access some of Flats can mean a walk that excludes many disabled applicants. Small number of free spaces close by, with only one disabled space. Other carpark accessible by stairs at far end	10	Parking is very poor. There is just one carpark to the rear of the flats, which is usually full. It is also on a substantial slope and has a steep path down to the flats, which runs under trees and can be slippery in autumn/winter.	5	Parking requires review			
d	Amenities	ESSENTIAL AMENITIES WITHIN WANDERATE CATCHMENT AREA	No shops, pharmacies, bus routes in close prox.	Limited amenities in close prox.	Sufficient amenities in close prox.	0	Excellent access to town centre	0	Excellent access to town centre.	0	Excellent access to town centre.			
e	Limited Travel Links	PROXIMITY TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT	Unavailable, exceeds 0.1 mile	Close proxim. Low Frequency	Close proxim. High Frequency	3	Directly outside where buses go from. May have to go down steep down slope on route.	5	The flats have excellent access to bus services. However depending on where the individual flat is located, access can involve a medium walk involving hills and steps.	0	Very good access to all services			
f	Limited Social networks etc.	ASD INPUT	No Availability	Limited Availability	High Availability/ Access with varied options	3	Scheme has a communal room, right by town centre	3	Scheme has communal room and provided people can do the hill, the scheme is right by the town centre.	2	Very good access to all services			
g	Location and Accessibility	REMOTE COMPLEX, SITUATED ON A HILL WITH MULTIPLE STEPS TO ACCESS PROPERTY ETC	Remote, Located on a steep hill with Multiple Steps etc.	Remote and Difficult to Access	Close to Town Centre, Good Access for all users	5	May need to ascend steps. Right next to Town Centre but most direct route does involve walking down quite a steep incline. See car parking issues above.	6	Short walk from town centre - very close but depending on where flat is can mean a walk up a steep hill or stairs.	2	Short walk from town centre			
h	Existing Tenant Satisfaction Survey	SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS WITH REGARDS TO PROPERTY/COMPLEX ETC	Below 60% Satisfaction Score = 10	Below 80% above 60% Score = 5	Above 80% Score = 0	0		0		0				
1	Local Member Approval for Scheme re-designation	LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT	Local Member in Favour = 10 Score		Local Member against reclassification = 0 Score	0		0		0				
2	ATTRIBUTES													
a	Access / Elevator Lifts etc.	ACCESS	Access via Stairs/ Stairs only - Very difficult to access	Access via Stairs/ Stairs only - Difficult to access	Lifts, Stair Lifts, No Stairs - Easy Access	6	First and second floor flats are upstairs, no lifts. Lower ground floor flats may be a distance from parking - no guaranteed parking spaces. Hill to town centre	8	Second and first floor flats are upstairs, no lift. Many "ground floor" flats are accessed only by long walks and steps or steep paths. Access via flats very steep.	2	Very good			
b	Storage Storage	EASE OF SCOOTER STORAGE AND AVAILABILITY	Less than 50% available = 10 Score	Between 50% - 80% available = 5 Score	Over 80% available = 0	10	No specific storage or changing	10	No specific storage or changing	10	No specific storage or changing			
c	Security	KMS COMMUNAL ACCESS CONTROL, CAMERAS, LIGHTING	Security Low - No Security Equipment etc.	Security Medium - KMS installed	KMS installed. Camera and Excellent Lighting	10	No security equipment	10	No security equipment	10	No security equipment			
d	Communal Garden/ Outdoor Space	GARDENS OR OUTDOOR SPACE TO SOCIALISE	No Availability	Limited Availability	High Availability/ Access with varied options	0	Good communal garden areas maintained by Council. Tenants have own benches, flower pots etc. without the responsibility of a full garden.	0	Good communal garden areas maintained by Council. Tenants have own benches, flower pots etc. without the responsibility of a full garden.	0	Good communal garden areas maintained by Council. Tenants have own benches, flower pots etc. without the responsibility of a full garden.			
3	AVAILABILITY OF SHELTERED STOCK IN AREA													
a	Alternative Stock	ALTERNATIVE SHELTERED STOCK WITH CLOSE PROXIMITY	High Availability/ Access with varied options	Limited Availability	No Availability	5	More Flats across the road, but has worse access issues as built into top of steep hill. More Flats just off High Street and half of these are ground floor but poor parking and reputation, plus half are first floor.	5	Across road from More Flats which has slightly better access as the hill is less pronounced. More Flats just off high street but poor parking and reputation, plus half are first floor.	5	No other accommodation nearby			
4	TURNOVER													
a	Average term of tenancy	HOW LONG ON AVERAGE TENANTS REMAIN	Less than 2 years = 10 Score	Over 2 years but under 5 years = 5 Score	Over 5 years = 0 Score	0		0		0				
b	Number of terminations	HOW LONG ON AVERAGE TENANTS REMAIN	More than 30% = 10 Score	Less than 30% but more than 5% = 5 Score	Less than 5% = 0 Score	0	5	0	0	0	0			
c	Waiting list/demand	WAITING LIST VOLUME	Less than 10% = 10 Score	Less than 30% but more than 5% = 5 Score	More than 30% = 0 Score	10	Currently 7 people on list who all need ground floor, we room and level access approach. Few flats meet this criteria.	10	Currently 7 people on list who all need ground floor, we room and level access approach. Few flats meet this criteria.	0	15 on waiting list, highly sought after			
d	Number of refusals	HOW MANY TENANTS DO NOT WISH TO SECURE A TENANCY	More than 30% = 10 Score	Less than 30% but more than 5% = 5 Score	Less than 5% = 0 Score	5	Quite a few are refused, but also some people are overridden as the flats will not meet their needs e.g. everyone on the list will currently be overridden for first and second floor flats as they can't do stairs.	5	Quite a few are refused, but also some people are overridden as the flats will not meet their needs e.g. everyone on the list will currently be overridden for first and 3 second floor flats as they can't do stairs.	0	0	No refusals		
e	Number of long term voids	POTENTIAL ISSUES WITH STOCK ASSET OR LETTING	More than 30% = 10 Score	Less than 30% but more than 5% = 5 Score	Less than 5% = 0 Score	0	Currently no long term voids but 2 first floor flats and one basement flat have the potential to be as 0 there is none on one on the list who can do stairs.	0	Currently on long term voids but 3 out of 3 are on upper 0 floors and there is no list for them.	0	0	No long term voids		
5	RENT LOSS													
a	Rent received loss	RENTAL INCOME LOSS	More than 10% = 10 Score	Less than 30% but more than 5% = 5 Score	Less than 5% = 0 Score	5	8%	0	3%	0	1%			
						SCORES	72	76	88					

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Address/Scheme	Ward	Number of Properties	AVERAGE SAP SCORE	DECARB Investment Req	Cost per Unit to reach SAP A	WNGS Future Investment 2021-2025	WNGS Investment per Unit	Rent Income	30 years	Void Rent Loss	30 years	Void Rent Loss per Unit	Void Spend	30 years	Void Spend per Unit	Repairs Spend	30 years	Repair Spend per Unit	Total Expenditure	Total Expenditure per Unit	Total Income (After Rent Loss)	Surplus/ Deficit	Financial Assessment Score	Asset Condition/ Compliance Score	Housing Management Matrix Score	Overall Status	ACTION
Block 1	Flintshire	41	D/E	£ 1,640,000.00	£ 40,000.00	£ 2,008,000.00	£ 48,975.61	£ 788,159.98	£ 4,728,959.88	£ 27,446.39	£ 164,678.34	£ 669.42	£ 79,684.08	£ 478,104.48	£ 1,943.51	£ 107,534.01	£ 645,204.06	£ 2,622.78	£ 4,771,308.54	£ 116,373.38	£ 4,564,281.54	£ (207,027.00)					Progress to Options Appraisal Stage
Block 2	Flintshire	33	D/E	£ 1,320,000.00	£ 40,000.00	£ 2,216,000.00	£ 67,151.52	£ 653,162.16	£ 3,918,972.96	£ 26,049.48	£ 156,296.88	£ 789.38	£ 71,118.70	£ 426,712.20	£ 2,155.11	£ 68,202.04	£ 409,212.24	£ 2,066.73	£ 4,371,924.44	£ 132,492.56	£ 3,762,676.08	£ (609,248.36)					Progress to Options Appraisal Stage
Block 3	Flintshire	62	D	£ 1,860,000.00	£ 30,000.00	£ 1,968,000.00	£ 31,741.94	£ 1,268,339.83	£ 7,610,038.98	£ 26,950.59	£ 161,703.54	£ 434.69	£ 112,452.35	£ 674,714.10	£ 1,813.75	£ 204,730.28	£ 1,228,381.68	£ 3,302.10	£ 5,731,095.78	£ 92,437.03	£ 7,448,335.44	£ 1,717,239.66					

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Sheltered Housing Review

Communications & Engagement Plan

Where a sheltered scheme is identified for review via the agreed matrix and methodology, it will be recommended for either:

- Refurbishment / regeneration – Scheme has some issues requiring intervention – for example, additional works required to make the scheme more attractive to existing and future tenants.
- Redesignation - Scheme has some issues requiring intervention – for example, may benefit from re-designation to a more sustainable client group.
- Demolition / re-development – Scheme potentially requires significant intervention to address more fundamental demand / sustainability issues and not be able to achieve compliance and therefore considered for demolition / re-development. A full options appraisal will be undertaken to explore all options and associated costs.

It is vital to communicate across all stakeholders effectively.

Contract Holders in particular must be fully engaged through the process as we recognise the potential sensitivities and strong emotions that may be provoked when looking to address changes to homes and indeed those communities.

If involvement and consultation is effective, Contract Holders will need to be kept fully informed, feel they have participated, contributed, and been listened to. As we know it is not always possible to provide exactly the solution Contract Holders want but we should listen to and consider their views. It is then vital that Contract Holders know and understand how the final decision was reached.

We are fully committed to the following:

- Identify stakeholders for each scheme – this will always include Contract Holders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration and local members associated with the scheme.
- Honesty and openness – where changes are necessary set this out from the start and be clear about what Contract Holders and stakeholders can, and cannot, influence.
- Share new information with stakeholders as soon as possible.
- Adopt and tailor a range of methods of communication, engagement and consultation as appropriate to each project and scheme.
- Engage Contract Holders where possible on finding innovative or creative solutions.
- Ensure Contract Holders are central to the review of their scheme from the start and not ignore their fears.
- Work with Contract Holders to build confidence and trust.
- Identify a key single point of contact throughout the process to ensure continuity.

- Review processes and effectiveness of methodology on a regular basis to ensure it is effective and meeting the needs of the relevant stakeholders.

DRAFT

Scheme Identified

- Type of project identified as either refurbishment, demolition or redesignation.
- Identify our stakeholders for the project - Contract Holders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration, Local Members, staff and any others e.g. family members, other building users as appropriate
- Single point of contact member of staff identified
- Type of communication identified for information and consultation depending on scheme outcome to be implemented along with required timescales
- All information will be provided via written communication in letters, newsletters, surveys etc.
- Face to face meetings, drop-in session and consultation sessions will be held on site where appropriate or in the vicinity of the scheme so all Contract Holders may attend if they so wish. Prior notice will be provided

Review of Consultation Response

- Upon completion of any consultation activity a review of the findings will be undertaken
- Proposals will be updated/amended as necessary (and where required will be sent for formal approval)
- Final plans presented to stakeholders. This will be done by written communication to all Contract Holders in the first instance giving details of next steps, timeframes and reasons behind any final decisions along with impact of their consultation responses

Implementation of Project Plan

- Once project is due to commence stakeholders will be given sufficient notice and information by written communication.
- Depending on the type of scheme identified, this may include details of the contractor, timeframes for any work, where they can access further support and any other key contacts they may require
- Information sessions may be held either on the scheme or in the vicinity for tenants to ask any questions they may have or to view any plans
- If refurbishment - regular newsletters will be produced with updates on the work being undertaken
- For all types of project (depending on complexity of refurb) it may be necessary to refer to the decant policy and work with contract holders to ensure smooth transition

Project Review

- Upon project completion, all Contract Holders will be asked to provide feedback via a survey on their experiences of the project overall and communications they will have received
- Final communications will be sent with confirmation, feedback on the survey and information on final outcomes
- All feedback will be reviewed and lessons learnt identified and communicated to relevant stakeholders

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CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th December 2023
Report Subject	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2022-23 and complaints made against Flintshire County Council during the first half of 2023-24
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to share the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2022-23 for Flintshire County Council.

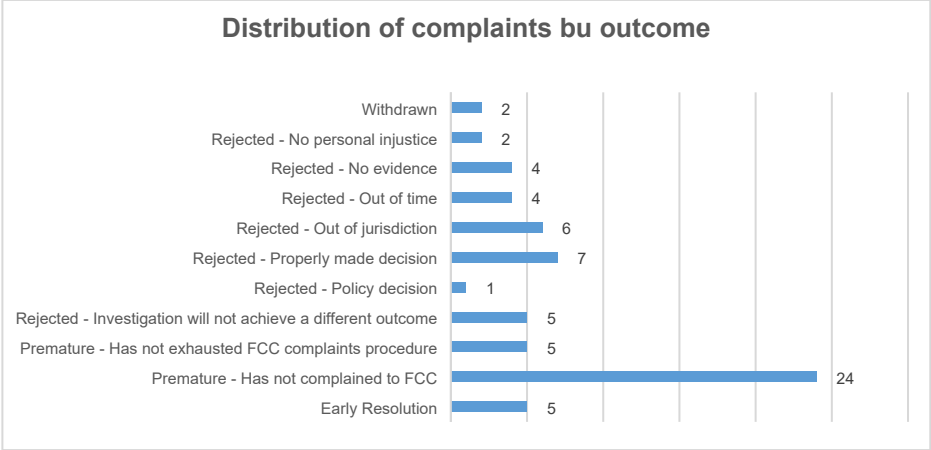
The Ombudsman's Annual Letter provides an overview of the annual performance of the Council in relation to complaints received between 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

This report also provides an overview of complaints received by each portfolio of the Council between 1 April 2023 – 30 September 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet notes the annual performance of the Council in respect of complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales during 2022-23.
2	That Cabinet notes the half year performance of the Council (2023-24) in respect of complaints made against services in line with the concerns and complaints procedure.
3	That Cabinet supports the priorities outlined in paragraph 1.24.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL LETTER 2022-23																								
1.01	Michelle Morris, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (“Ombudsman”) published her Annual Letter 2022-23 in August 2023. The Annual Letter deals with complaints relating to maladministration and service failure, complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members and the actions being taken to improve public services across Wales.																								
1.02	The Annual Letter coincides with the Ombudsman’s Annual Report which highlights the number of people asking her office for help increased by 3% compared to the previous year. The Ombudsman reports that her office now receives double the number of cases than a decade ago and she acknowledges the current climate continues to provide challenges for public services.																								
1.03	The number of complaints against local authorities across Wales reduced by 11% in 2022-23 compared to the previous year and the Ombudsman intervened (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) with 13% of complaints, a reduction from 18% the year before.																								
1.04	Appended to this report is a link to the Annual Letter detailing Flintshire’s performance and comparative data. The following paragraphs provide a summary of performance and additional context in response to the findings.																								
1.05	<p>Section A - 65 complaints were made against Flintshire in 2022-23 which is a reduction of 65.65% compared to the previous year (99). Whilst the number of complaints recorded against Flintshire remains higher than the Welsh average (46), it is important to put this in perspective. 92.31% (60) of all complaints against Flintshire were premature, rejected or withdrawn resulting in no action against the Council. Chart 1 illustrates the distribution of complaints by outcome:</p> <p>Chart 1</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="375 1585 1310 2033"> <caption>Distribution of complaints by outcome</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Outcome</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Withdrawn</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rejected - No personal injustice</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rejected - No evidence</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rejected - Out of time</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rejected - Out of jurisdiction</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rejected - Properly made decision</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rejected - Policy decision</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rejected - Investigation will not achieve a different outcome</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Premature - Has not exhausted FCC complaints procedure</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Premature - Has not complained to FCC</td> <td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Early Resolution</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Outcome	Count	Withdrawn	2	Rejected - No personal injustice	2	Rejected - No evidence	4	Rejected - Out of time	4	Rejected - Out of jurisdiction	6	Rejected - Properly made decision	7	Rejected - Policy decision	1	Rejected - Investigation will not achieve a different outcome	5	Premature - Has not exhausted FCC complaints procedure	5	Premature - Has not complained to FCC	24	Early Resolution	5
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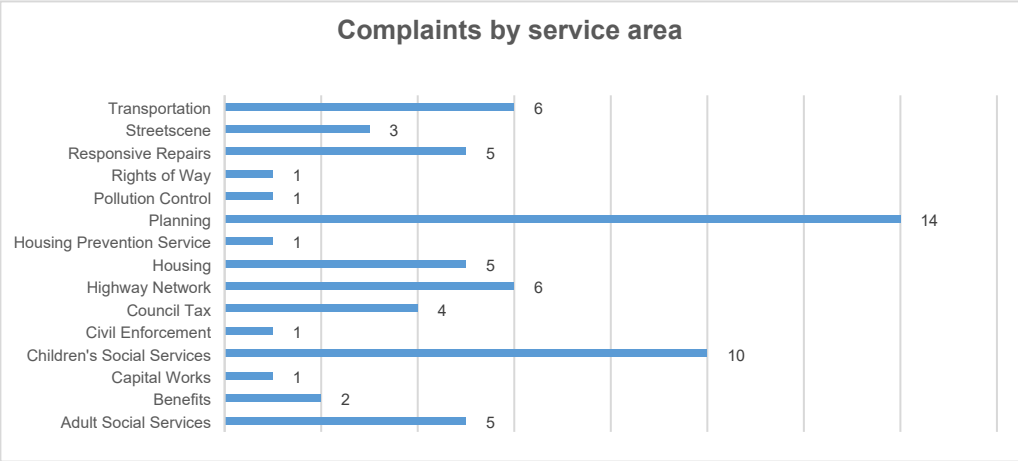
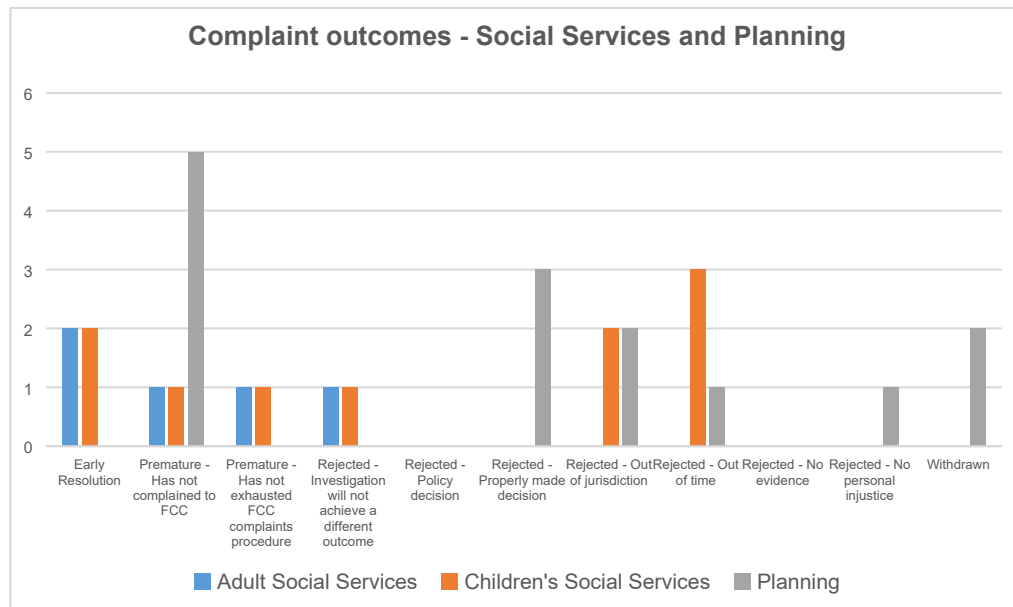
1.06	Chart 1 shows that 36.92% (24) of all complaints were premature because the complainant had not contacted the Council in the first place. This means complainants had not attempted to access the Council's concerns and complaints procedure in the first instance and opted to approach the Ombudsman instead, a decision outside of the Council's control.																																
1.07	44.62% (29) of all complaints were rejected, of those rejected, 10.77% (7) were rejected due to properly made decisions, indicating an improvement in the quality of Step 1 and Step 2 responses issued by the Council. 3.08% (2) of complaints were withdrawn because the complainant failed to provide evidence to the Ombudsman and nine complaints were from the same three people.																																
1.08	Only five complaints (7.69%) against the Council required intervention and, in every case, an "early resolution" was reached. This figure is lower than the Wales average (13%), an indication on the positive steps taken to improve complaints handling across the Council.																																
1.09	In terms of intervention, four of the complaints related to Social Services who agreed to apologise, review information, or clarify points and in Capital Works the service agreed to apologise for a lack of clarity and time and trouble pursuing a complaint.																																
1.10	Section B - the Ombudsman provides a breakdown of complaints by subject. However, these subjects are universal complaint categories for Councils across Wales and do not accurately reflect local records and organisational structures e.g. a complaint about school transport is categorised as "Education" by the Ombudsman but locally it is "Transportation" who manage school transport applications.																																
1.11	<p>An analysis of the Annual Letter against local data illustrates a more accurate record of complaints by subject:</p> <p>Chart 2</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="331 1413 1353 1872"> <caption>Complaints by service area</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Service Area</th> <th>Number of Complaints</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Transportation</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Streetscene</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>Responsive Repairs</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>Rights of Way</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Pollution Control</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Planning</td><td>14</td></tr> <tr><td>Housing Prevention Service</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Housing</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>Highway Network</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>Council Tax</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>Civil Enforcement</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Children's Social Services</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>Capital Works</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>Benefits</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Adult Social Services</td><td>5</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Service Area	Number of Complaints	Transportation	6	Streetscene	3	Responsive Repairs	5	Rights of Way	1	Pollution Control	1	Planning	14	Housing Prevention Service	1	Housing	5	Highway Network	6	Council Tax	4	Civil Enforcement	1	Children's Social Services	10	Capital Works	1	Benefits	2	Adult Social Services	5
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1.12	The data above illustrates that Social Services and Planning received the highest proportion of complaints; the outcome of these cases is illustrated in Chart 3 below:																																

Chart 3



1.13 **Section C** – the preceding paragraphs explain the context and outcomes of complaints more precisely in local context.

1.14 **Section D** - five complaints (7%) required intervention by the Ombudsman as described in paragraph 1.09. This is an improvement on the previous year where 13% of complaints required intervention and is also better than the all Wales average intervention rate (13%).

1.15 **Sections E** - this section of the Annual Letter is the remit of the Standards Committee.

1.16 Reflecting on the Annual Letter 2022-23, Flintshire’s achievements include:

- A reduction in the number complaints made to the Ombudsman – down from 99 to 65 (65.65%);
- A lower intervention rate – down from 13% to 7%;
- A lower-than-average intervention rate compared to the rest of Wales (13%);
- 100% improvement on the number of investigations – from 3 to 0.

1.17 Much of the achievements may be attributed to work over the last 12 months including:

- Positive and productive engagement with the Complaints Standards Authority;
- Collective work with Councils across Wales and the Ombudsman to record complaints performance data to help drive improvement in public services for citizens in Wales;
- Continuing programme of mandatory complaints training for Team Leader+ roles in collaboration with the Ombudsman and Learning & Development;
- Accelerating the programme of mandatory complaints training by “train the trainer” approach;
- Internal Audit to identify opportunities to improve complaints handling.

1.18	<p>Own Initiative Investigation</p> <p>Moving forward into 2023-24 the Council has been selected to be part of the Ombudsman’s second wider Own Initiative investigation looking into the administration of carer needs assessments (Part 3 of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014). Under section 4 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019 the Ombudsman can undertake Own Initiative investigations which do not need to be prompted by a complaint or an individual complainant. The investigation will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Whether the Council is meeting its statutory duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and its Code of Practice and The Care and Support (Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2015; b) Whether those entitled to a carer’s needs assessment are made aware of and understand their right to request a carer’s needs assessment; c) Where carers’ needs assessments are commissioned, whether those assessment services are being delivered appropriately and whether local authorities appropriately monitor the contracting arrangements; d) Whether carers’ needs assessments, including those completed by commissioned service providers, are undertaken in accordance with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. <p>The own initiative investigation has commenced and the findings are expected in early 2024.</p>
1.19	<p>Flintshire County Council Complaints 1 April – 30 September 2023</p>
1.20	<p>The Council received 448 complaints between 1 April – 30 September 2023 which is slightly higher than the same time last year (421) and 76% were considered within target which is an improvement of 11% compared to 2022. Encouragingly 91% of all complaints were considered within 20 working days which is a further improvement of 5% on the previous year.</p>
1.21	<p>Chart 4 – Summary of complaints performance</p> <p>Frontline services in Housing & Communities and Streetscene & Transportation received the highest proportion of complaints in the first half of 2023-24 which is a normal trend. It should also be noted that the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 and Social Services Complaints Procedure Regulations 2014, requires Local Authorities to maintain a separate representations and complaints procedure for social services functions. Social Services’ complaints report for 2022-23 is reported to the Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p><i>*Complainants informed that their complaint will take longer than 10 working days to investigate.</i></p>

Summary: 1 April – 30 September 2023	Overall	E&Y	Gov	H&C	PE&E	SS	S&T
Total number of complaints received	448	11	33	128	40	14	222
Number of complaints closed within target	339 75.67%	8 72.73%	32 96.97%	94 73.44%	28 70.00%	13 92.86%	164 73.87%
Number of complaints open and pending*	9 2.01%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	5 3.91%	2 5.00%	0 0.00%	2 0.90%
Number of complaints closed after 10 working days	91 20.31%	3 27.27%	1 3.03%	29 22.66%	8 20.00%	1 7.14%	49 22.07%
Number of complaints open and overdue	9 2.01%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	2 5.00%	0 0.00%	7 3.15%

1.22 The following charts provide an overview of complaint themes and outcomes so far in 2023 compared to the previous year. A further breakdown by portfolio is provided in Appendix 1.

Chart 5

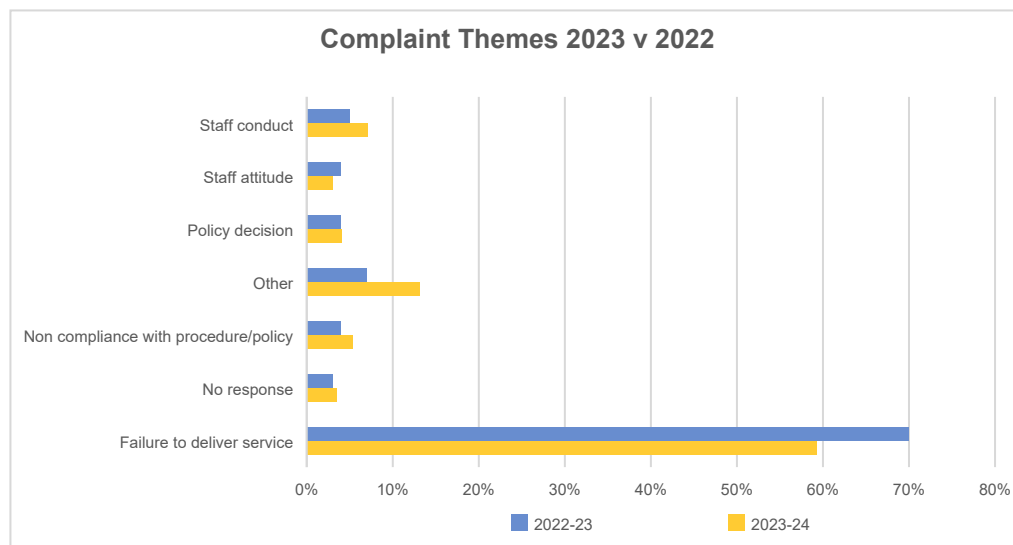


Chart 6

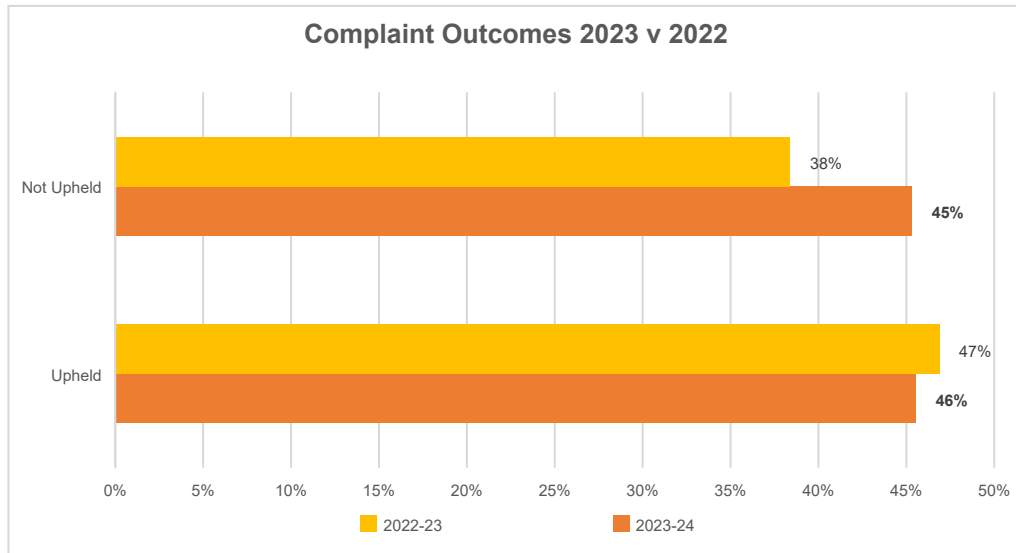
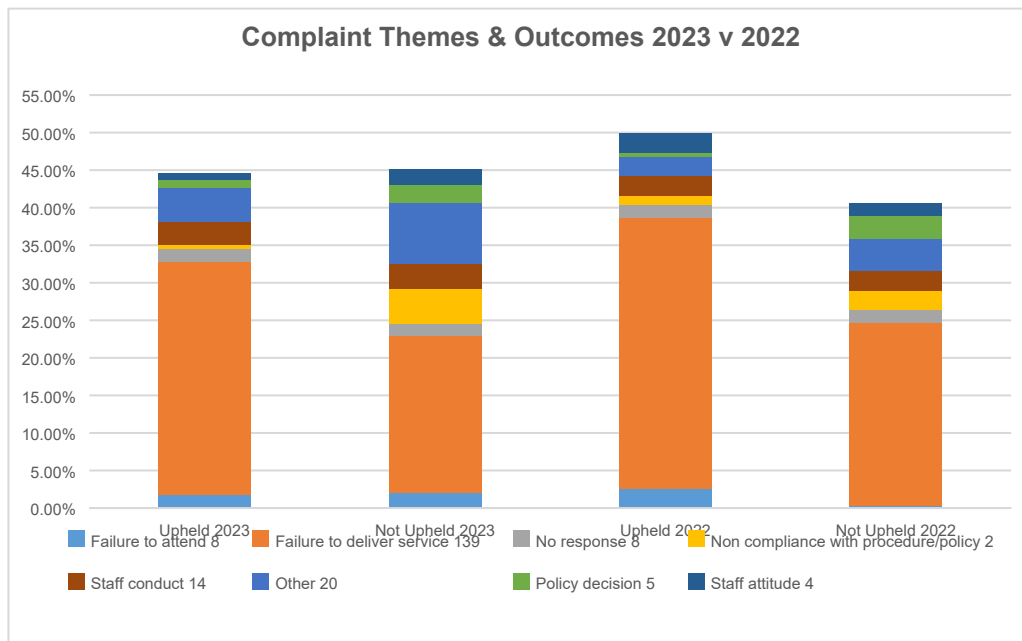
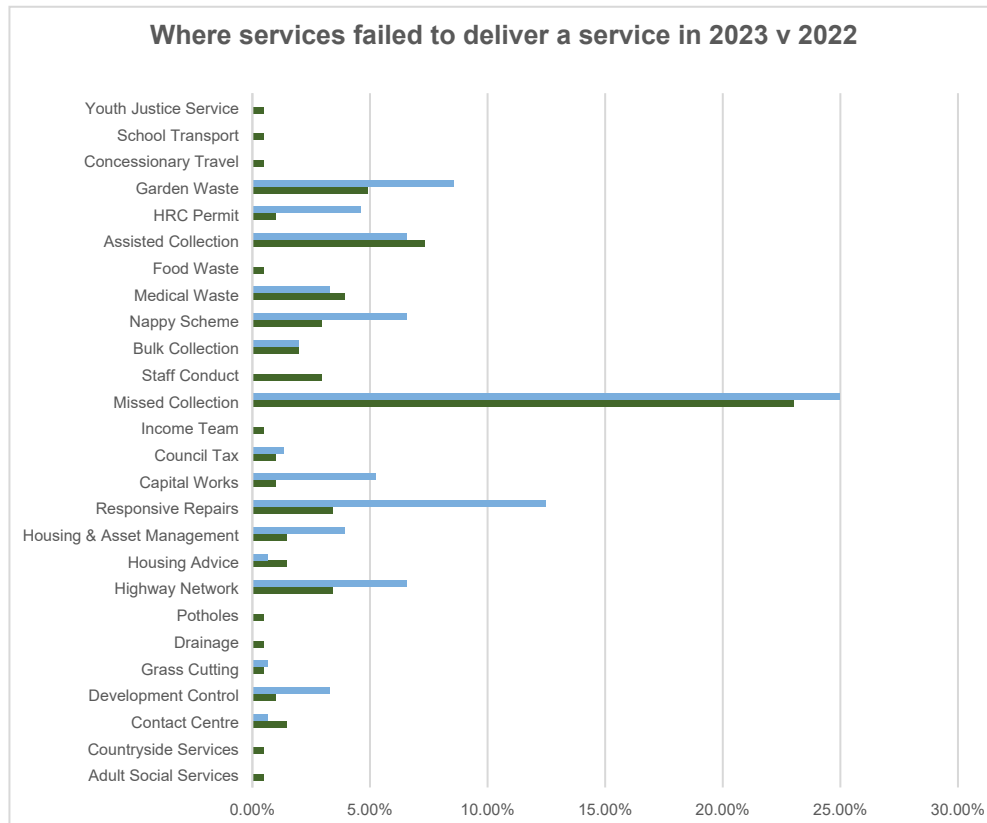


Chart 7



1.23 The data in the above charts illustrates that “failing to deliver a service” accounts for most upheld complaints against Council services. This year performance is improving with fewer upheld complaints in areas such as Streetscene where 37.25% of upheld complaints relate to missed waste and recycling collections including assisted collections, bulk collections and garden waste compared to 42% in 2022. Similarly, Responsive Repairs improved with only 3.43% of complaints upheld compared to 12.50% in 2022.

Chart 8



**Data based on upheld complaints*

1.24 Conclusion and priorities

Overall, portfolios are making good progress to improve complaints handling as greater awareness is led from the most senior officers of the Council. The following actions will be taken forward to further improve complaints handling across the organisation:

- Maintaining positive and productive engagement with the Complaints Standards Authority;
- Continuing work with Councils across Wales and the Ombudsman to record complaints performance data to help drive improvement in public services for citizens in Wales;
- Continuing programme of mandatory complaints training for Team Leader+ roles:
 - 261 employees trained
 - 68% of target audience trained so far
- Implementation of all recommendations following an internal audit inspection in 2022-23;
- Redesign of the electronic system used to record complaints to ensure it is fit for purpose;
- Develop a toolkit for Schools and elected Members on how to manage unacceptable behaviour on social media;
- Support to all services through regular sharing of performance data to help manage casework and keep complainants informed where targets are not achievable.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	This report provides details of the annual performance of the Council in relation to complaints. At this point there are no proposed change or actions and as such no impact or risks have been identified.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Flintshire County Council complaint themes, outcomes and actions by portfolios 2023-24.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	A copy of the Annual Letter is published on the Ombudsman’s website – https://tinyurl.com/35c6znh9

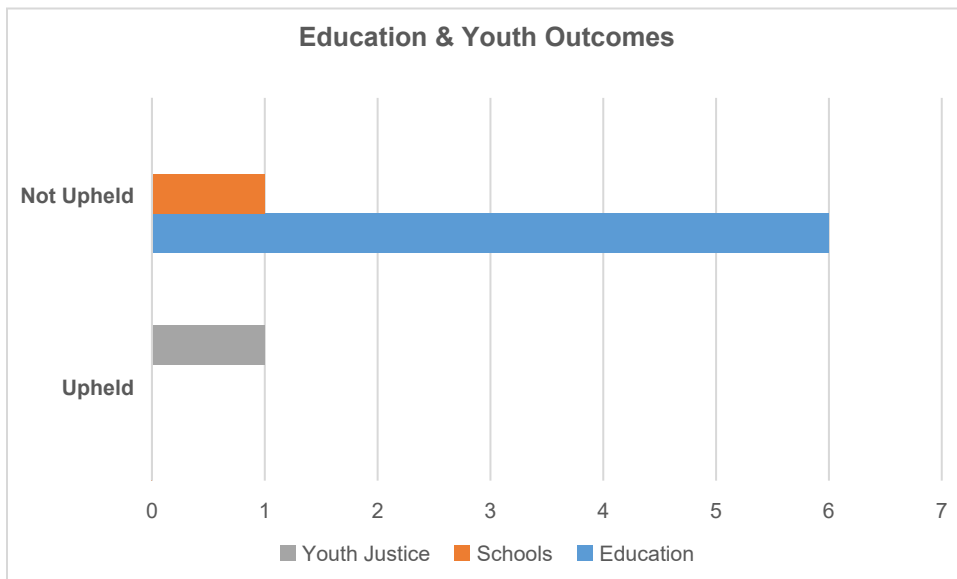
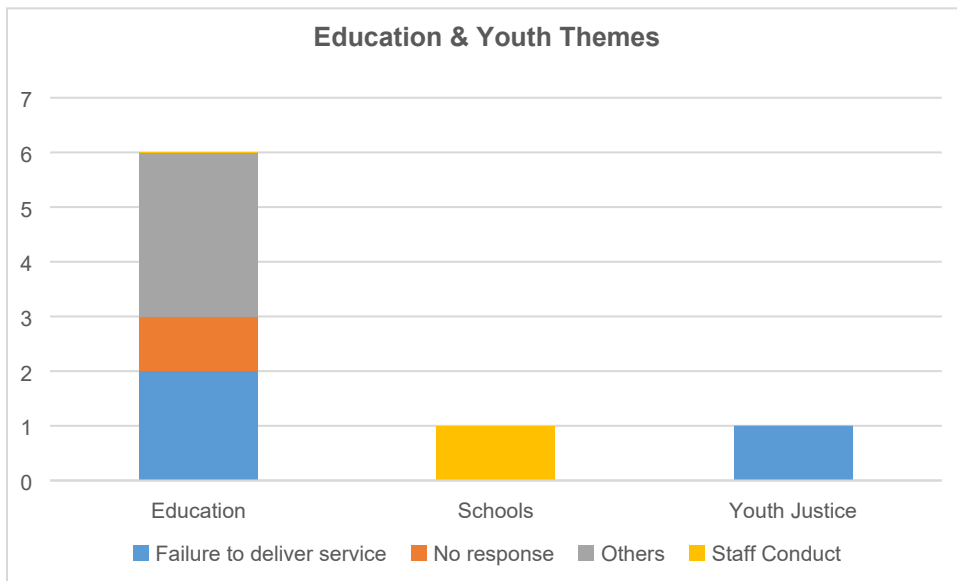
7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Rebecca Jones, Customer Contact Service Manager Telephone: 01352 702413 E-mail: rebecca.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – investigates complaints against public service providers in Wales where people believe they have suffered an injustice through maladministration on the part of the public service provider e.g. a local authority. Complaints Standards Authority – a team within the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales’ office focused on ensuring the procedures to complain to public service providers in Wales are complainant focused,

	simple, fair and objective, timely and effective, accountable and committed to continuous improvement.
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Complaint Themes, Outcomes and Actions by Portfolio 2023-24

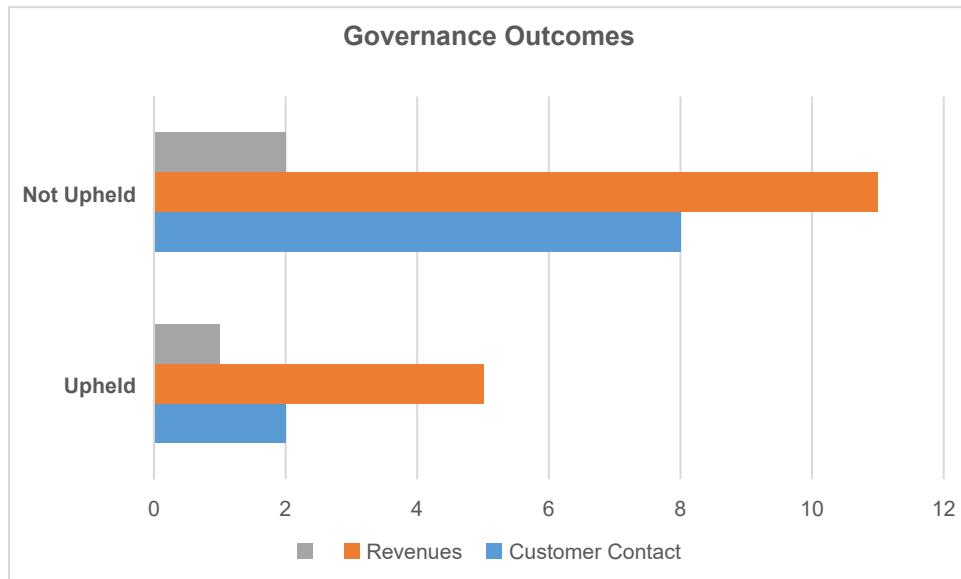
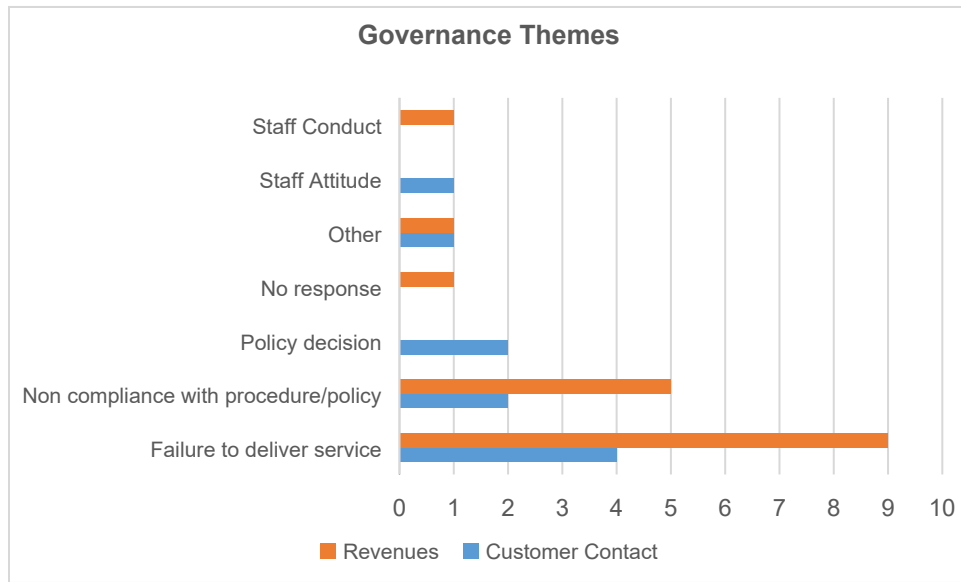
Education & Youth



Actions and lessons learned:

- Review of processes to improve communications.

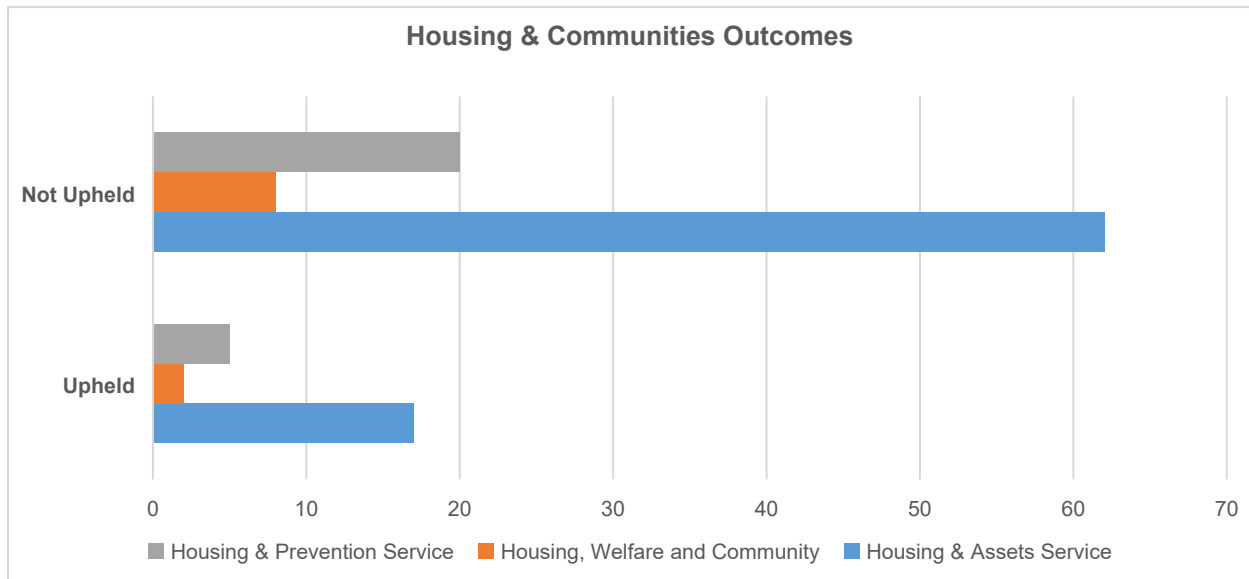
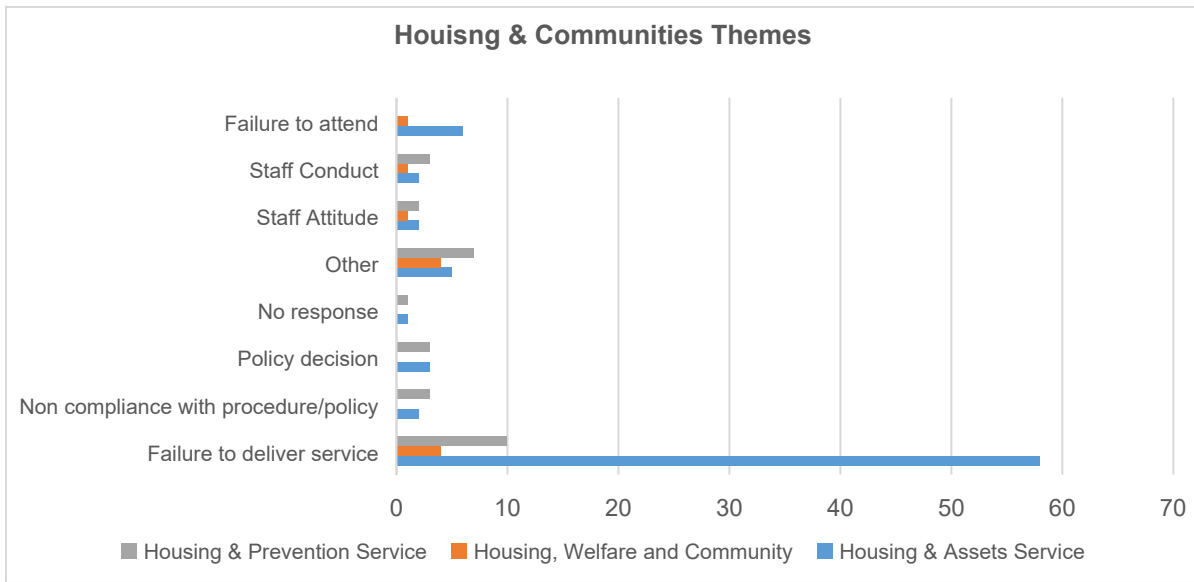
Governance



Actions and lessons learned:

- Apology and explanation.
- Review of Council Tax account and corrections.
- Advice issued to employee.

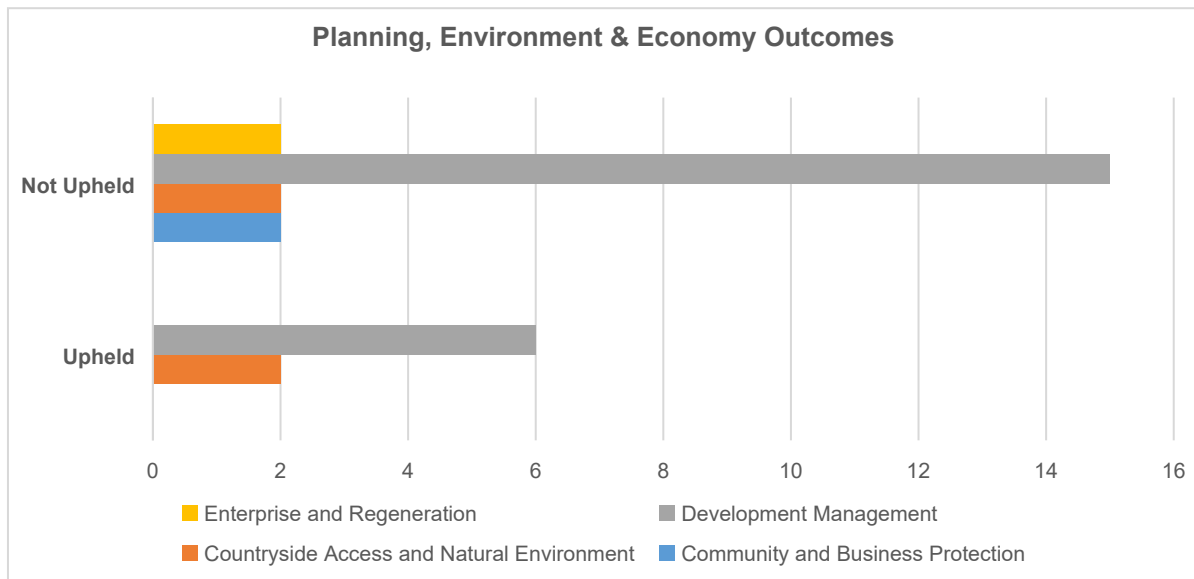
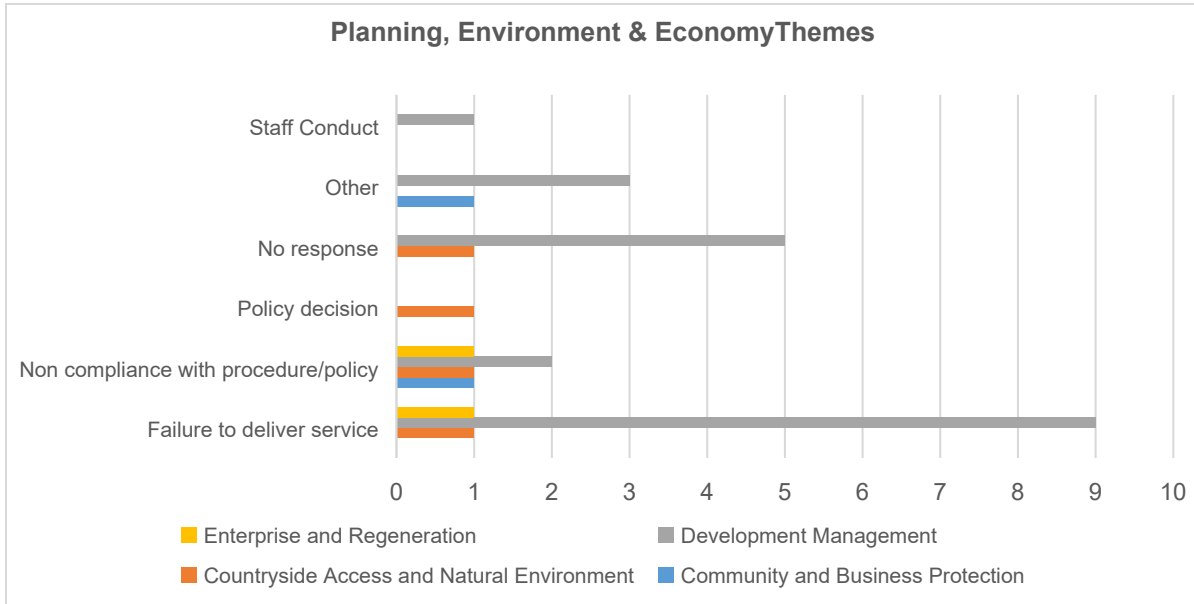
Housing & Communities



Actions and lessons learned:

- Apology and explanation.
- Advice issued to employee.

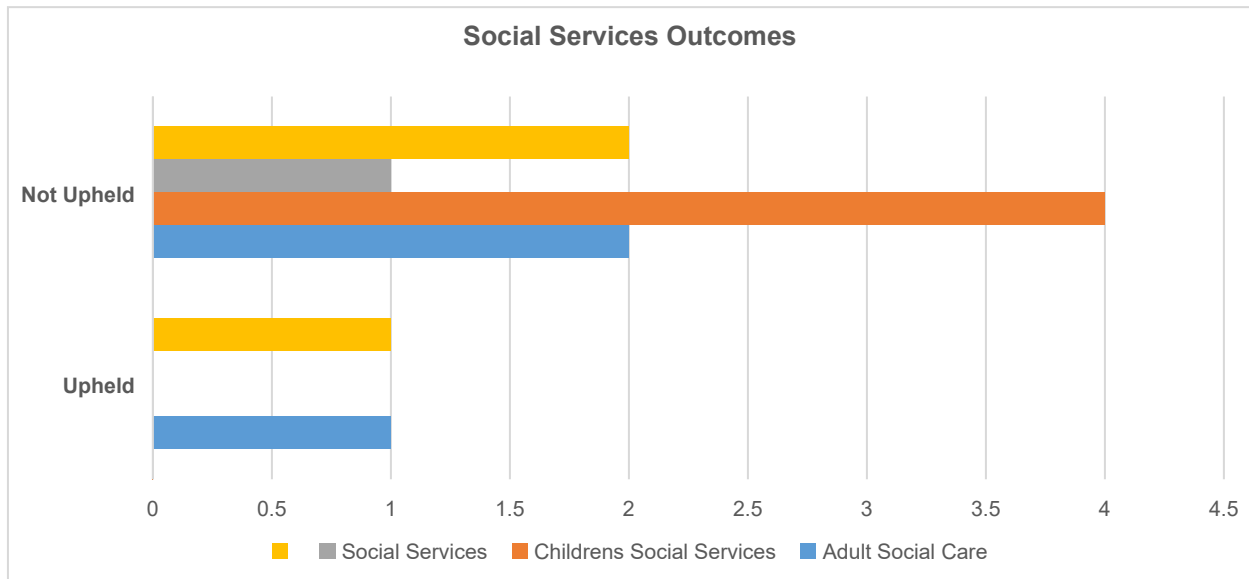
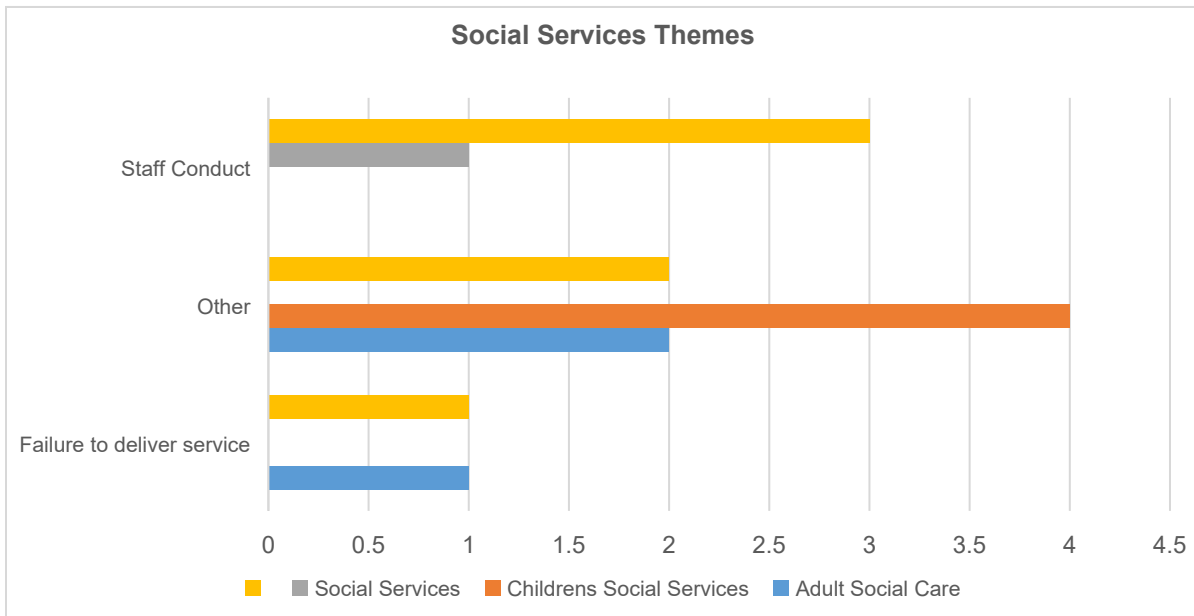
Planning, Environment & Economy



Actions and lessons learned:

- Apology and explanation.

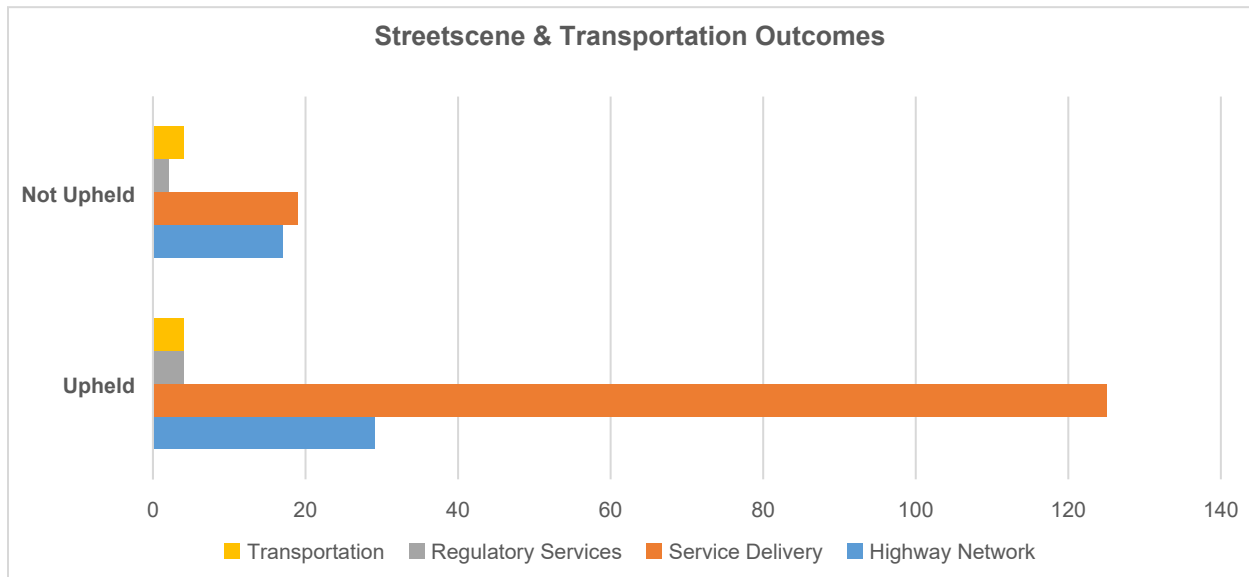
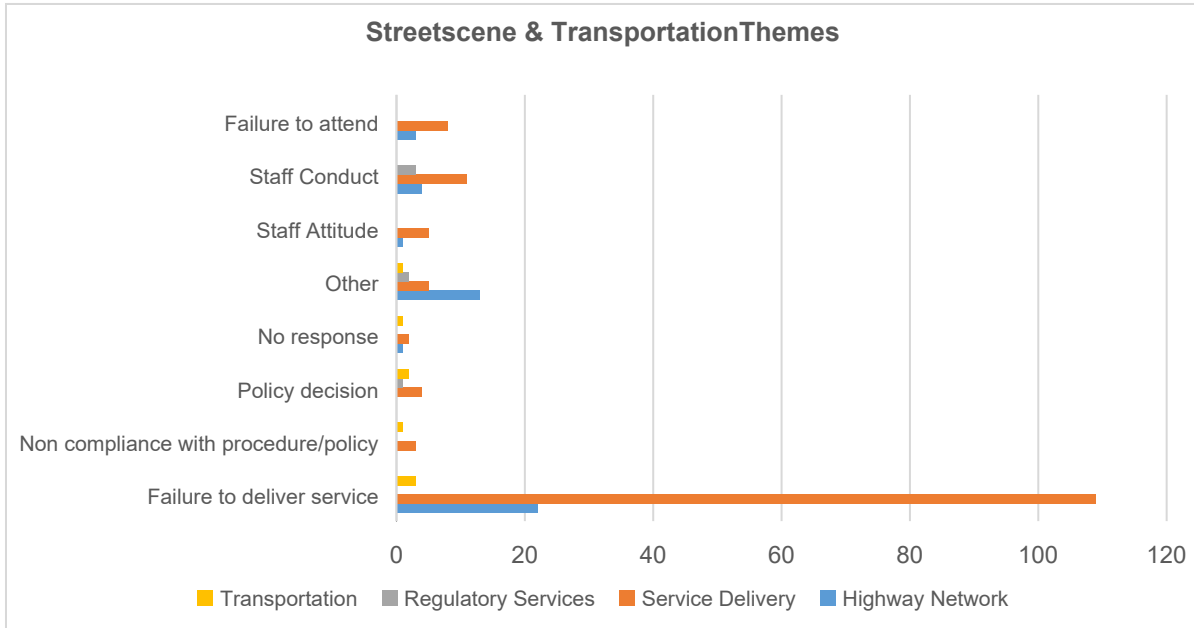
Social Services



Actions and lessons learned:

- Apology.
- Referred to statutory complaints process.
- Subject to legal process.

Streetscene & Transportation



Actions and lessons learned:

- Internal investigation.
- Apology.
- Site inspection / work completed.
- Advice to crew / monitoring.



CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 19 th December 2023
Report Subject	Introducing a Corporate Facebook Account
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Having a social media presence via a corporate Facebook account will support Flintshire's ambitious Digital Strategy and the achievement of other key strategic plans by way of communicating and engaging with customers across Flintshire.

The Customer Service & Communications Team will launch and manage separate English and Welsh corporate Facebook accounts, posting simultaneously, to use for emergency communications, sharing key messages, good news stories, as well as consultation and engagement activities from across the organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet supports the introduction of a corporate Facebook account to help achieve priorities outlined in the Council Plan and Digital Strategy.
2	That Cabinet champion the introduction of a corporate Facebook account and use the platform to share messages with customers.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE INTRODUCTION OF A CORPORATE FACEBOOK PAGE
1.01	Communication is key to everything that we do. Facebook is a free of charge, well-established and reputable platform for communication that will support Flintshire County Council (FCC) to share news, engage with its customers and enhance its reputation. Although predominantly supporting the Digital Strategy, it will assist other priorities within the council too as a tool to communicate and engage effectively, efficiently and provide a better service all round.
1.02	Digital Workforce is one of the priorities for FCC, as an organisation we are committed to supporting our workforce to change and adapt to new, better ways of working by giving them the right knowledge, skills and digital tools. As part of the Facebook set up, Customer Service & Communications will share hints and tips to colleagues on how to make the most of social media campaigns, along with social media guidelines and etiquette to keep them safe and protect FCC's reputation.
1.03	Digital Partnership, Inclusion and Learning & Culture can be supported through a corporate Facebook account too. It will aid the sharing of information across organisations, and support business and professional relationships to enhance FCC's networks. It will promote and enable access to support training and other online services, as well as opening up new opportunities. It will help our customers to access digital services they need to improve their health and wellbeing, education, and employment opportunities too.
1.04	Facebook can provide data that is protected and secure on the back of campaigns that we use the platform for. This can then help to inform other initiatives to shape what future services should look like, supporting the Digital Information & Management priority.
1.05	Digital Delivery not only includes our internal systems, but the external systems we choose to use to enable us to improve and support the delivery of all our services too. Facebook is a tool that will make a significant difference to the way in which we promote digital upgrades and getting engagement from customers to uptake digital initiatives and make 'Digital Flintshire' happen.
1.06	Using a general calculation, we estimate that around 75% of Flintshire's population use social media. So, by using social media platforms such as Facebook, will give FCC the opportunity to reach a large proportion of its customers, 'instantly' and will support emergency planning, communications and engagement.
1.07	Following advice and best practice from other councils the following will be implemented to ensure a successful account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate English and Welsh corporate Facebook accounts with contemporaneous posting to both.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce 'community guidelines' so followers are aware of expectations (taking into consideration the Council's Managing Customer Contact policy). • Customer Service & Communications will own the corporate Facebook account for use to disseminate communication campaigns, engage with customers and share corporate information. • Customer Services and Digital Officers will provide support to administer the account. This includes monitoring analytics, comments, and direct messages.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no perceived resource implications to launching a corporate Facebook account. The service is free of charge and will be managed by the Customer Service & Communications team.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>Although an operational report, an integrated impact assessment (IIA) has been completed to consider equality and Welsh language issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media is most popular with ages 18-55 years, those outside of this bracket could be at a disadvantage if not factored into campaign planning i.e. use of other channels to reach them. • Similarly, the need to use social media alongside other communication channels is required to meet accessibility requirements and people who may be facing socio-economic disadvantages. • Mental health could be impacted both positively and negatively through social media. Planned campaigns around health will support it positively and things such as community guidelines will help to reduce the potential negative impact. • Treating Welsh language no less favourably by having a separate Welsh only account and posting simultaneously with the English account. • Encouraging Welsh language use by having a dedicated Welsh account. • Using current processes such as our translation service and pre translated responses / templates to support the management of the Welsh account. <p>The overall outcome of the IIA was positive.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	The idea to introduce a corporate account has been widely welcomed by colleagues across services with positive feedback received.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	N/A.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Hayley Mallon, Customer Service & Communications Manager Telephone: 01352 702122 / 07939249313 E-mail: Hayley.mallon@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	N/A.

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME ITEMS
COUNCIL, CABINET, AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE & SCRUTINY
1 December 2023 TO 31 May 2024**

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
December					
Flintshire County Council	6/12/23	Governance	Committee Sizes and Political Balance To consider setting Committee sizes to an odd number of seats and recalculating Political Balance to reflect the new sizes.		
Flintshire County Council	6/12/23	Chief Executive's	Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27 To present the Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2026/27 for approval		
Flintshire County Council	6/12/23	Finance	Capital Strategy Including Prudential Indicators 2024/25 – 2026/27 To present the Capital Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27 for approval		

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Flintshire County Council	6/12/23	Governance	<p>Change of meeting time – Planning Committee To consider the proposed change to the start time of Planning Committee Meetings from the December 2023 meeting.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Flintshire County Council	6/12/23	Internal Audit	<p>Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report To approve the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report.</p>		
Flintshire County Council	6/12/23	Governance	<p>Appointment of a Lay Person to the Governance and Audit Committee To update Members on the re appointment of a lay person to the Governance and Audit Committee</p>		

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7/12/23	Overview and Scrutiny	<p>Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (S&HC OSC)</p> <p>To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee Page 195	7/12/23	Social Services	<p>Placement Strategy: Looked After Children</p> <p>To inform Scrutiny of progress in developing placements for looked after children and seek agreement for the next phase to developing in House residential care.</p>	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing
Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7/12/23	Social Services	<p>Council Plan 2023-24 Mid-Year Performance Reporting (S&HC OSC)</p> <p>To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.</p>	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7/12/23	Social Services	<p>Social Care Commissioning To receive an update on Audit Wales Report into OP Care Home Commissioning in North Wales.</p> <p>Oversight by Member of the Dom Care Framework refresh for North Wales.</p>	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; margin-right: 5px;">966</div> <div> <p>Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee</p> </div> </div>	12/12/23	Overview and Scrutiny	<p>Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (E&E OSC) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	12/12/23	Planning, Environment and Economy	<p>Access Barrier Review update To agree the implementation of access improvements to the Wales Coast Path.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	12/12/23	Streetscene and Transportation	<p>Council Plan 2023-24 Mid-Year Performance Reporting (EE OSC) To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	12/12/23	Planning, Environment and Economy	<p>Contaminated Land Strategy That Members endorse the updated Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy</p>	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	12/12/23	Streetscene and Transportation	<p>Unsafe memorials at Cemeteries To receive an update.</p>	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	12/12/23	Streetscene and Transportation	<p>Workforce Recycling Regulations</p> <p>To receive the latest update on the Workforce Recycling Regulations</p>	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee Page 198	12/12/23	Planning, Environment and Economy	<p>Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence</p> <p>To provide Members with an outline of the services available with respect to Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) on a local and regional level, and also provide an insight into current demands across the region. At the request of Members, to provide an overview of trends, services and support available with respect to VAWDASV.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	13/12/23	Overview and Scrutiny	<p>Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (C&H OSC)</p> <p>To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee Page 19 of 199	13/12/23	Housing and Communities	<p>Progress report on the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme 2 (SHARP2) and the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP)</p> <p>To provide updates on the Council's SHARP2 programme, changes to the Social Housing Grant (SHG) programme, details the Welsh Government Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) allocation of £1.6 million in October 2023 and progress on the acquisition of additional homes.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	13/12/23	Housing and Communities	Void Management To provide a detailed update to the Committee on Void properties and the work undertaken to bring the properties back into use.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	13/12/23	Overview and Scrutiny	Recommendations from the Sheltered Housing Review Task & Finish Group To consider the recommendations of the Sheltered Housing Review Task & Finish Group.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	13/12/23	Housing and Communities	Council Plan 2023 -24 Mid-Year Performance Reporting (CHA OSC) To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	14/12/23	Chief Executive's	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget 2024/25</p> <p>To update on the latest position for the MTFS and Budget 2024/25 in advance of receipt of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement.</p>	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	14/12/23	Overview and Scrutiny	<p>Action Tracking</p> <p>To inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.</p>	Operational	
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	14/12/23	Overview and Scrutiny	<p>Forward Work Programme</p> <p>To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p>	Operational	
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	14/12/23	Chief Executive's	<p>Council Plan 2023-24 Mid-Year Performance Reporting</p> <p>To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	14/12/23	Chief Executive's	Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 To share with the Committee the draft Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives for consideration and comments.	Strategic	
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	14/12/23	Finance	Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 7) To provide Members with the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 7) Report and Significant Variances.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Cabinet	19/12/23	Chief Executive's	Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget 2024/25 To update on the latest position for the MTFS and Budget 2024/25 in advance of receipt of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement.	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Cabinet	19/12/23	Chief Executive's	Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 To present the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28 for approval prior to formal consultation.	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Cabinet	19/12/23	Governance	Business Rates - Write Offs To approve the write off of individual bad debts for Business Rates in excess of £25,000.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Cabinet	19/12/23	Governance	Introducing a Corporate Facebook Page To agree the need for a Corporate Facebook page that will support digital communications, including good news stories and important information for our communities.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Cabinet	19/12/23	Chief Executive's	<p>Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 7) This regular monthly report provides the latest revenue budget monitoring position for 2023/24 for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The position is based on actual income and expenditure as at Month 7, and projects forward to year-end.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Cabinet	19/12/23	Housing and Communities	<p>Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan The purpose of this report is to present for consideration the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-year Financial Business Plan and the proposed HRA Budget for 2024/25.</p>	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Cabinet	19/12/23	Chief Executive's	Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2023/24 To present the draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Review for 2023/24 for recommendation to Council.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Cabinet	19/12/23	Housing and Communities	Sheltered Housing Review To approve to undertake a Sheltered Housing Review.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Cabinet	19/12/23	Governance	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2022-23 and complaints made against Flintshire County Council during the first half of 2023-24 To share the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Letter 2022-23 for Flintshire County Council and an overview of the complaints received against Council services in the first half of 2023-24.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	19/12/23	Planning, Environment and Economy	Access Barrier Review update To agree the implementation of access improvements to the Wales Coast Path.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	19/12/23	Streetscene and Transportation	Unsafe memorials at Cemeteries To receive an update.	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	19/12/23	Streetscene and Transportation	Workforce Recycling Regulations To receive the latest update on the Workforce Recycling Regulations.	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	19/12/23	Planning, Environment and Economy	Contaminated Land Strategy That Members endorse the updated Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy.	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection
January					

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	9/01/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (Env) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Environment	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	9/01/24	Planning, Environment and Economy	Bailey Hill Mold To provide an update on the development of the facilities at Bailey Hill in Mold.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	10/01/24	Housing and Communities	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (CH & E) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Community	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	10/01/24	Housing and Communities	Housing Management Policy To present the final Housing Management Policy for consideration.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

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Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	10/01/24	Housing and Communities	Alarm Service Charges Review To outline the proposal to achieve full cost recovery for the Housing Revenue Account alarms service.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	10/01/24	Housing and Communities	Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) 2023 To provide an update on the new Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) 2023 and the Council's obligations relating to delivery of the new standards.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	10/01/24	Housing and Communities	Car Parking Provision – Council owned properties To provide an overview of Council's Environmental Programme which includes the provision of car parking at Council owned properties.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

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Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	10/01/24	Housing and Communities	Housing Management and Anti-Social Behaviour Policy To provide an overview of the changes that have been made to the Housing Management Policy and the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy in response to the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016.	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	10/01/24	Housing and Communities	Welfare Reform To update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate the impacts.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	11/01/24	Governance	Action Tracking To inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.	Operational	
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	11/01/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee.	Operational	

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	11/01/24	Chief Executive's	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2024/25 - Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement</p> <p>To update on the budget estimate for 2024/25 and the implications of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement which was received on 20 December.</p>	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	11/01/24	Finance	<p>Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 8)</p> <p>To provide Members with the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 8) Report and Significant Variances.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Cabinet	16/01/24	Planning, Environment and Economy	<p>Bailey Hill Mold</p> <p>To provide an update on the development of the facilities at Bailey Hill in Mold.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy

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Cabinet	16/01/24	Chief Executive's	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2024/25 – Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement</p> <p>To update on the budget estimate for 2024/25 and the implications of the Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement which was received on 20 December.</p>	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Cabinet	16/01/24	Streetscene and Transportation	<p>Streetlighting Policy 2023-2028</p> <p>To seek Cabinet approval of the Council's revised Street Lighting Policy</p>	Strategic	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy
Cabinet	16/01/24	Chief Executive's	<p>Council Plan 2023/24 Mid-Year Performance Report</p> <p>To review progress against the priorities identified within the Council Plan 2023/28.</p>	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

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Cabinet	16/01/24	Chief Executive's	<p>Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 8) This regular monthly report provides the latest revenue budget monitoring position for 2023/24 for the Council Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The position is based on actual income and expenditure as at Month 8, and projects forward to year-end.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement

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Cabinet	16/01/24	Education and Youth	<p>Progress on the North East Wales Archive (NEWA) Project</p> <p>To update Cabinet on the developments of the NEWA Archive project. FCC and DCC have come together to deliver a more resilient service – North East Wales Archive (NEWA). Report outlines the key stages to date in submitting a further joint funding bid with Denbighshire County Council to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Wales, seeking a capital grant value of £7m to fund a new purpose-build net carbon zero building on the Theatr Clwyd campus.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

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Cabinet	16/01/24	Streetscene and Transportation	<p>Unsafe Memorials in Flintshire Cemeteries To seek approval for an alternative and permanent method of making memorials safe if the memorial is not repaired by the Registered Grave Owner as well as the removal / making safe of any broken kerb sets that have fallen into disrepair.</p>	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy
Cabinet	16/01/24	Planning, Environment and Economy	<p>Access Barrier Review update To agree the implementation of access improvements to the Wales Coast Path.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy
Cabinet	16/01/24	Planning, Environment and Economy	<p>Contaminated Land Strategy To approve the updated Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy.</p>	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Planning, Public Health and Public Protection

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Cabinet	16/01/24	Governance	Council Tax Reform – Welsh Government Phase 2 Consultation To provide Cabinet with information and a recommended response to the Welsh Government phase 2 consultation on Council Tax Reform	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Cabinet	16/01/24	Social Services	Age-friendly Flintshire To provide an update on the progress being made to develop age-friendly communities in Flintshire.	Operational	Cllr Christine Jones
Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee	18/01/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (S & H) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Social	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Flintshire County Council	23/01/24	Chief Executive's	Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2023/24 To present to Members the draft Treasury Management Mid-Year Review for 2023/24		

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Governance and Audit Committee	24/01/24	Governance	Audit Wales Assurance and Risk Assessment Review Report 2021-22 To summarise the findings to Governance and Audit Committee of the detailed assurance and risk assessment work undertaken.	All Report Types	
Governance and Audit Committee Page 216	24/01/24	Planning, Environment and Economy	Audit Wales Report - Social Enterprise To provide an update on actions following receipt of the Audit Wales report on Social Enterprise.	Operational	
Governance and Audit Committee	24/01/24	Chief Executive's	Treasury Management 2024/25 Strategy and Q3 Update 2023/24 (1) To present to Members the draft Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 for comments and recommendations for approval to Cabinet (2) To provide an update on matters relating to the Council's Treasury Management Policy, Strategy and Practices to the end December 2023.	Strategic	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement

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Governance and Audit Committee	24/01/24	Governance	Code of Corporate Governance To endorse the review of the Code of Corporate Governance.	All Report Types	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Governance and Audit Committee	24/01/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Internal Audit Department.	All Report Types	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Governance and Audit Committee	24/01/24	Governance	Governance and Audit Committee Action Tracking To inform the Committee of the actions resulting from points raised at previous Governance and Audit Committee meetings.	All Report Types	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

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Governance and Audit Committee	24/01/24	Governance	Internal Audit Progress Report To present to the Committee an update on the progress of the Internal Audit Department.	All Report Types	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Governance and Audit Committee	24/01/24	Governance	Risk Management Update To be assured that the updated risk management framework is comprehensive and functional.	All Report Types	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
February					
Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1/02/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (EY& C) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Education Youth	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

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Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1/02/24	Education and Youth	<p>Council Plan 2023-24 Mid-Year Performance Reporting (EYC OSC) To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1/02/24	Education and Youth	<p>Feedback from Youth Justice Service Peer review To Provide Members with an overview of the outcomes from the recent peer review.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1/02/24	Education and Youth	<p>Revision of Post 16 Strategy To outline how the new national commission was developing.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1/02/24	Education and Youth	<p>GCSE and A-Level Results To provide the Committee with the GCSE and A-Level results across Flintshire from the summer 2023.</p>	Operational	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	6/02/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (Env) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Environment	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7/02/24	Housing and Communities	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (CH & E) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Community	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	8/02/24	Governance	Action Tracking (CROSC) To inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	8/02/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme (CROSC) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Corporate Resources O	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	8/02/24	Governance	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2022-23 and complaints made against Flintshire County Council during the first half of 2023-24 To share the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Letter 2022-23 for Flintshire County Council and an overview of the complaints received against Council services in the first half of 2023-24.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	8/02/24	Finance	Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 9) and Capital Programme Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 9) To provide the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 9) report and the Capital Programme 2023/24 (Month 9) report.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Page 222 Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee	29/02/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (S & H) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Social	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
March					
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	5/03/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (Env) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Environment	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee	5/03/24	Streetscene and Transportation	Outcome of Adoption of Local Toilet Strategy To update members on the outcome.	Operational	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy
Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee	6/03/24	Housing and Communities	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (CH & E) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7/03/24	Governance	Action Tracking (CROSC) To inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

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Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7/03/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme (CROSC) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Corporate Resources O & S Committee	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7/03/24	Social Services	Social Value Update To present an update report on social value.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement
Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee	7/03/24	Finance	Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 10) To provide Members with the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (Month 10) Report and Significant Variances.	Operational	Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement

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COMMITTEE	MEETING DATE	CHIEF OFFICER PORTFOLIO	AGENDA ITEM & PURPOSE OF REPORT	REPORT TYPE (Strategic or Operational) (Cabinet only)	PORTFOLIO (Cabinet only)
Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee	21/03/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (EY& C) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Education Youth	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
April					
May					
Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee	30/05/24	Governance	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking (EY& C) To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Education Youth	Operational	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources

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