

Public Document Pack

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Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



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To: Cllr Marion Bateman (Chair)

Councillors: Gillian Brockley, Helen Brown, Tina Claydon, Geoff Collett, Rosetta Dolphin, David Evans, Chrissy Gee, Debbie Owen, Ted Palmer, Kevin Rush and Dale Selvester

5 September 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2024 at 10.00 AM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Delyn Committee Room, Flintshire County Council, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire or on a virtual basis.

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 (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 **MINUTES** (Pages 5 - 12)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 12th June and 17th July, 2024.

4 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING** (Pages 13 - 22)

Report of Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

Purpose: 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.

5 **HOUSING RENT INCOME** (Pages 23 - 28)

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

Purpose: To provide the latest operational update on the collection of housing rent and to set out proposed changes to the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy to strengthen the rent enforcement process.

6 **COST OF LIVING AND WELFARE REFORM** (Pages 29 - 40)

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

Purpose: To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.

7 **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24 TO INCORPORATE THE COUNCIL PLAN END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24** (Pages 41 - 120)

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

Purpose: To consider the Annual Performance Report 2023-24, noting the Council Plan (2023-28) end of year performance for 2023-24.

8 **VOID MANAGEMENT** (Pages 121 - 122)

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

Purpose: To provide an update to the Committee on the number of Void properties and the work being undertaken to bring the properties back into use.

FOR INFORMATION

GARAGE SITE REVIEW MATRIX

Purpose: The Service Manager Housing Assets will share and explain the Garage Site Review Matrix with the Committee following the meeting.

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

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JUNE 2024

Minutes of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Wednesday, 12 June 2024

PRESENT: **Councillor Marion Bateman (Chair)**

Councillors: Pam Banks, Gillian Brockley, Helen Brown, Tina Claydon, Rosetta Dolphin, David Evans, Chrissy Gee, Ted Palmer, Kevin Rush and Dale Selvester

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Rob Davies, Dave Hughes and Paul Johnson attended as observers

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Sean Bibby (Cabinet Member for Housing); Chief Officer (Housing and Communities); Service Manager Housing Assets; Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager and Strategic Finance Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Councillor Marion Bateman as Chair of the Committee for the 2024/25 municipal year be noted.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Tina Claydon be appointed Vice-Chair for the 2024/25 municipal year.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

RESOLVED:

Councillor Ted Palmer declared a personal interest as a Council Tenant.

4. **MINUTES** ([Link to Recording](#))

The minutes from the meeting held on 7 February, 6 March and 22 April were approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 7 February [minutes](#), 6 March [minutes](#) and 22 April, 2024 [minutes](#) be approved as a correct record.

5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME ([Link to Recording](#))

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current [Forward Work Programme](#) for consideration, which included an update on outstanding actions.

The recommendations in the report were supported.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;

(b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and

(c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

6. COMMUNAL HEATING CHARGES 2024/25 ([Link to Recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) presented a [report](#) which proposed recharges for 2024/25.

It was explained that the comments of the Committee would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 18 June, 2024.

The recommendations in the report were supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the proposed changes to the current heating charges at Council properties with communal heating schemes, as outlined in the report.

7. 'TOGETHER WE CAN' COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE ([Link to Recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) presented a [report](#) which provided an overview of the Audit Wales report "Together we can' Community resilience and self-reliance", which highlighted how building community resilience and self-reliance may help reduce reliance on local authority services in future, if local authorities shifted from being a 'direct provider' to 'enabler'.

It was explained that the comments of the Committee would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 18 June, 2024.

The recommendations in the report were supported together with an additional motion.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Committee note the findings and recommendations of the Audit Wales 'Together we can Community resilience and self-reliance' report;

(b) That the Committee note the recommended response in relation to Audit Wales recommendations; and

(c) That the Committee recognises the work of numerous voluntary organisations and individuals across the County and feedback this to Cabinet when considering the report at its meeting on 18th June.

8. HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN PERFORMANCE UPDATE ([Link to Recording](#))

The Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) and Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager introduced a [report](#) to provide an update on delivery of the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-2024 with a particular focus on the financial year 2023/24.

As requested by Councillor Helen Brown, a briefing note on the risks going forward would be circulated to Members of the Committee ahead of the Housing Strategy workshops.

The recommendations in the report were supported.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Committee note the progress on delivery of the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2019-2024; and

(b) That the Committee note the changes as outlined in the report to the following:

- The alignment of standards and intervention rate for acquisition under the Social Housing Grant (SHG) with those under the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP).
- The updated timeframe for renewal of the current Housing Strategy.

9. VOID MANAGEMENT ([Link to Recording](#))

The Service Manager Housing Assets presented the key figures and key activities against the void action plan, as outlined in the [briefing note](#)..

Following comments made by Councillor Helen Brown around the positive actions of a housing operative, it was agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to the operative from the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

10. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 11.06am)

Chair

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Meetings of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee are webcast and can be viewed by visiting the webcast library at <http://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 JULY 2024

Minutes of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Wednesday, 17 July 2024

PRESENT: **Councillor Marion Bateman (Chair)**
Councillors: Gillian Brockley, Tina Claydon, Geoff Collett, Rosetta Dolphin, David Evans, Chrissy Gee, Kevin Rush and Dale Selvester

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillors: Glyn Banks (for Pam Banks), Rob Davies (for Helen Brown and Ron Davies (for Ted Palmer)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Ian Hodge attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Sean Bibby (Cabinet Member for Housing);
Service Manager (Housing Welfare & Communities) and
Service Manager Housing Assets

IN ATTENDANCE: Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

12. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME ([Link to Recording](#))

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current [Forward Work Programme](#) for consideration, which included an update on outstanding actions.

Following questions around the garage site review, it was agreed that an update report on the garage site review together with an update on the car parking matrix be added to the Forward Work Programme.

It was also agreed that a copy of the outcome of the garage site review by ward be circulated to all Members of the Council

The recommendations in the report were supported.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;

(b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and

(c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

13. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW UPDATE ([Link to Recording](#))

The Service Manager (Housing Welfare & Communities) presented a [report](#) which provided an update on the progress of the Sheltered Housing Review.

The [Communication and Engagement Plan](#) was also presented to the Committee.

It was suggested that periodic update reports on the Sheltered Housing Review be added to the FWP.

The recommendation in the report was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee note the progress of the Sheltered Housing Review.

14. TENANT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY ([Link to Recording](#))

The Service Manager (Housing Welfare & Communities) presented the [Tenant Involvement Strategy](#) and [Tenant Involvement Action Plan](#) which provided a commitment to tenant engagement and highlighted what work was needed to improve the current position.

The recommendation in the report was supported.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support and approve the Tenant Involvement Strategy.

15. VOID MANAGEMENT ([Link to Recording](#))

The Service Manager Housing Assets presented the key figures and key activities against the void action plan, as outlined in the [briefing note](#).

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

16. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 11.02am)

Chair

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 11 ^h September, 2024
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
Report Author	Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Community Housing & Assets Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report also shows actions arising from previous meetings of the Community Housing & Assets Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the progress made in completing them. Any outstanding actions will be continued to be reported to the Committee as shown in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.
3	That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?2. Is it an area of major change or risk?3. Are there issues of concern in performance?4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?6. Is the issue of public or Member concern?
1.03	In previous meetings, requests for information, reports or actions have been made. These have been summarised as action points. Following a meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2018, it was recognised that there was a need to formalise such reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny Committees, as 'Matters Arising' was not an item which can feature on an agenda.
1.04	It was suggested that the 'Action tracking' approach be trialled for the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Following a successful trial, it was agreed to extend the approach to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
1.05	The Action Tracking details including an update on progress is attached at Appendix 2.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None as a result of this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	In some cases, action owners have been contacted to provide an update on their actions.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None as a result of this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme Appendix 2 – Action Tracking for the Community & Housing OSC

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Minutes of previous meetings of the Committee as identified in Appendix 2. Contact Officer: Ceri Shotton Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator Telephone: 01352 702305 E-mail: ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Improvement Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
CURRENT FWP

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Report Author
Wednesday 9th October, 2024 10am	Independent Review of Homelessness Void Management	To provide an update on the findings and recommendations following an independent review of the Council's homelessness services. To provide an update on the number of Void properties and the work undertaken to bring the properties back into use.	Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Housing & Prevention Service Manager Service Manager Housing Assets
Wednesday 13th November, 2024 10am	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan Food Poverty Update Void Management	To consider the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2024/25 and the HRA Business Plan. To provide an update in relation to the work that has been ongoing and is planned in relation to the food poverty priority area. To provide an update on the number of Void properties and the work undertaken to bring the properties back into use.	Consultation Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities) Service Manager Housing Assets

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

<p>Wednesday 11th December, 2024</p> <p>10am</p>	<p>De-carbonisation Strategy Update</p>	<p>To provide the Committee with an update on the De-carbonisation Strategy.</p>	<p>Information Sharing</p>	<p>Service Manager Housing Assets</p>
<p>Wednesday 15th January, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>	<p>Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Annual Update</p>			<p>Service Manager Housing Assets</p>
<p>Wednesday 12th February, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				
<p>Wednesday 12th March, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>	<p>Housing Rent Income</p> <p> </p> <p>Welfare Reform Update</p>	<p>To provide the latest operational update on the collection of housing rent and to set out proposed changes to the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy to strengthen the rent enforcement process.</p> <p>To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement</p> <p>Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)</p>

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

<p>Wednesday 9th April, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>	<p>Variation of Contracts</p>			
<p>Wednesday 7th May, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				
<p>Wednesday 11th June, 2025</p> <p>10am</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 19</p>	<p>Communal Heating Charges 2025/26</p> <p>Sheltered Housing Review Update</p>	<p>To provide an update on the new Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) 2024 and the Council's obligations relating to delivery of the new standards.</p> <p>To provide an update on the Sheltered Housing Review</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)</p> <p>Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)</p>
<p>Wednesday 9th July, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				

Items to be scheduled

- **Rent Income Pilot Scheme** – As suggested at 12.07.23 meeting
- **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment** - To present the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

REGULAR ITEMS

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
Quarterly / Annual	Performance Reporting	To consider performance outturns for improvement targets against directorate indicators.	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Six monthly	Welfare Reform Update /Housing Rent Income	To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.	Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement / Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)
Six monthly	Update on NEW Homes & Property Management	To update Members on the work of the NEW Homes & Property Management	Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager
Annually – Pre 20	WHQS Capital Programme – Delivery review update	To provide an update on progress of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), that the Council is delivering through its Capital Investment Programme. Report to include information around the use of local labour and number of apprentices and school leavers.	Service Manager – Housing Assets
Monthly	Void Management	To provide a detailed update to the Committee on Void properties and the work undertaken to bring the properties back into use.	Service Manager – Housing Assets

ACTION TRACKING FOR THE COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
10.01.2024	Minutes <u>15.11.2023</u>	Following a query from Cllr Rosetta Dolphin, it was agreed that a copy of the outcome of the garage site review by ward be circulated to Members of the Committee within the next month.	Sean O'Donnell / Ceri Shotton	Item added for information to the 11.09.2024 Agenda. The Matrix will be circulated to the Committee ahead of the meeting.	Completed
10.01.2024	6. Car Parking Provision – Council Owned Properties	Following questions around future schemes, it was agreed that information on the priority of schemes be shared with Members of the Committee.	Sean O'Donnell / Ceri Shotton	Item added for information to the 11.09.2024 Agenda. The Matrix will be circulated to the Committee ahead of the meeting.	Completed
10.01.2024	8. Cost of Living and Welfare Reform	Following a request that the information contained within the report be circulated to all Members for information, it was suggested that an information flyer be produced and circulated to all Members of the Council.	Jen Griffiths / Ceri Shotton	This will be sent with the next report which is scheduled for September	September 2024
06.03.2024	6. Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) – Update	The Chair suggested that a demonstration of the DRS be given to the Committee once the system has gone fully live.	Sean O'Donnell / Denise Price	Still currently in the pilot phase. All Areas have only just been opened. Further testing still required.	Possibly November 2024

ACTION TRACKING

APPENDIX 2

17.07.2024	3. Forward Work Programme	Cllr Rosetta Dolphin asked that an update report on the garage site review be added to the FWP for a future meeting. Sean O'Donnell agreed to provide an update report together with an update on the car parking matrix.	Sean O'Donnell / Ceri Shotton	Added to FWP for November 2024	Completed
17.07.2024	3. Forward Work Programme	It was agreed that a copy of the outcome of the garage site review by ward be circulated to all Members of the Council.	Sean O'Donnell / Ceri Shotton	A copy of the Matrix will be shared with all Members of the Committee following presentation of the information to the Committee at the 11.09.2024 meeting.	Completed
17.07.2024	4. Sheltered Housing Review Update	It was suggested that periodic update reports on the Sheltered Housing Review be added to the FWP.	Jen Griffiths / Ceri Shotton	Added to FWP for June 2025	Completed



COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 11 th September 2024
Report Subject	Housing Rent Income
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an operational update for housing rent collection rates, including the 2023/24 year-end outturn rent and the 2024/25 current position.

Cumulative rent arrears for 2023/24, as of 28th March 2024, were £2.06m compared to £2.03m in the previous year. However, with the early Easter bank holidays, £116k of rent income was received in 2023/24 but was not receipted until the 1st week in April 2024. In other words, rent arrears were £1.94m for at the end of 2023/24, an improvement of £90k.

The rent arrears for 2024/25 in week 14 are now £1.96m, compared to £2.43m in the previous year, a reduction of £463k.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Note the year end outturn for 2023/24 and the latest financial position for rent collections in 2024/25.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE YEAR END OUTTURN AND LATEST POSITION OF RENT ARREARS																											
1.01	<p>The rent arrears outturn for 2023/24 at the end of March 2024, was £2.06m, compared to £2.03m in the previous year, a technical increase of £31k.</p> <p>However, with the early Easter bank holidays, £116k of rent income was received in 2023/24 but was not receipted until the 1st week in April 2024. In other words, rent arrears were £1.94m at the end of 2023/24, an improvement of £90k.</p>																											
1.02	<p>The service continues to make steady improvements on collections with a reduction of rent arrears at year end and in-year.</p> <p>The table below illustrates the latest position for 2024-25, up to week 14, along with full year comparisons for previous years. Rent arrears in week 14 are around £464k lower than at the same point in the previous year.</p> <div data-bbox="320 913 1385 1368"> <p style="text-align: center;">Arrears Comparisons (2021/22 - 2024/25)</p> </div>																											
1.03	<p>The table below also shows the latest analysis of banded rent arrears up to week 14 for those contract holders who owe more than £250 in unpaid rent as contract holders who owe less than this are generally considered to be up to date with their payments:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="549 1592 1161 2047" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3" style="background-color: #c6e0b4;">July-24</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="background-color: #c6e0b4;">Banded Arrears (£)</th> <th style="background-color: #c6e0b4;">No. Contract Holders</th> <th style="background-color: #c6e0b4;">Arrears (£)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>250 - 500</td> <td>523</td> <td>188,343</td> </tr> <tr> <td>500 - 750</td> <td>271</td> <td>165,723</td> </tr> <tr> <td>750 - 1,000</td> <td>167</td> <td>145,398</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1,000 – 2,500</td> <td>373</td> <td>580,603</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2,500 – 5,000</td> <td>149</td> <td>502,742</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5000+</td> <td>36</td> <td>228,744</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>1,519</td> <td>1,811,552</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	July-24			Banded Arrears (£)	No. Contract Holders	Arrears (£)	250 - 500	523	188,343	500 - 750	271	165,723	750 - 1,000	167	145,398	1,000 – 2,500	373	580,603	2,500 – 5,000	149	502,742	5000+	36	228,744	Total	1,519	1,811,552
July-24																												
Banded Arrears (£)	No. Contract Holders	Arrears (£)																										
250 - 500	523	188,343																										
500 - 750	271	165,723																										
750 - 1,000	167	145,398																										
1,000 – 2,500	373	580,603																										
2,500 – 5,000	149	502,742																										
5000+	36	228,744																										
Total	1,519	1,811,552																										

1.06	<p>For those contract holders who find it difficult to pay and who want to engage, we continue to signpost and make referrals to specialist teams across the Council.</p> <p>The housing service also continue to work collaboratively to discuss, support and resolve the more complex cases through the use fortnightly panel meetings to discuss these cases and to encourage engagement and support from contract holders.</p>																						
1.08	<p>The need to work within the spirit of WG policy intentions of “no evictions into homelessness” as well as maximising collections of rent to comply with the Councils Corporate Debt Recovery Policy can be a challenge and there is a balance to be struck between the two often conflicting policy intentions.</p> <p>The Revenues Rent Income service does not work in a vacuum and is acutely aware of the need to avoid evictions where possible, as a greater number of evictions will only lead to increased homelessness and greater budget pressures falling on the Council General Fund, as well as increased numbers of void properties and potential repairs.</p> <p>In appropriate cases, when all attempts have been made to support contract holders and there is a continued cycle of non-payment and non-engagement, in line with the updated Corporate Debt Recovery Policy, legal action is taken to repossess the property.</p> <p>A summary of the number of evictions carried out in each year since 2015/16 is shown below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="695 1167 1018 1682"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of Evictions</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2024/25</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023/24</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022/23</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021/22</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020/21</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20</td> <td>26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018/19</td> <td>30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017/18</td> <td>22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016/17</td> <td>19</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015/16</td> <td>22</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of Evictions	2024/25	1	2023/24	4	2022/23	2	2021/22	7	2020/21	0	2019/20	26	2018/19	30	2017/18	22	2016/17	19	2015/16	22
Year	Number of Evictions																						
2024/25	1																						
2023/24	4																						
2022/23	2																						
2021/22	7																						
2020/21	0																						
2019/20	26																						
2018/19	30																						
2017/18	22																						
2016/17	19																						
2015/16	22																						
1.09	<p>Aside from the collection of rent from current contract holders, whenever a contract holder vacates, passes away or is evicted from a Council property then the rent they owe become former tenant arrears. The team continue to pursue these debts wherever possible from former tenants or the estate of a deceased tenant and some tenants have arrangements to pay in place to clear these arrears over an extended period.</p> <p>There is currently £158k outstanding in unpaid rent for former tenant arrears.</p>																						

1.10	<p>Each year, the HRA sets aside sufficient bad debt provision to meet the cost of irrecoverable rent debts and there is currently adequate provision set aside for 2024-25 and within the 30-year business plan to fund write offs.</p> <p>The recent improvements in rent collections have played a significant part in reducing the number and value of write offs. Consequently, there is now a much lower budget provision set aside to fund the cost of write offs.</p> <p>The table below also lists the levels of arrears that have been written off for various reasons including, bankruptcy, debt relief orders, contract holders leaving the property without a forwarding addresses and contract holders who have passed away leaving no estate or funds.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="639 636 1027 994"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Write off Values (£)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2024-25</td> <td>99,536</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023-24</td> <td>192,338</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>283,821</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>288,898</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>195,333</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>624,478</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>482,910</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Write off Values (£)	2024-25	99,536	2023-24	192,338	2022-23	283,821	2021-22	288,898	2020-21	195,333	2019-20	624,478	2018-19	482,910
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2018-19	482,910																
2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS																
2.01	The deployment of the Mobyssoft ‘Rent Sense’ software, funded by the HRA, continues to be necessary to control rent arrears and to ensure resources are targeted effectively.																
2.02	Rent Sense enhances income collection operations. It eliminates the guesswork for housing and rent income officers, clearly indicating cases that require interventions to keep payment of rent on track.																

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	To ensure financial risks to the HRA are minimised as far as possible, rent arrears continue to be tracked on a weekly basis and cases are identified as quickly as possible to ensure targeted intervention is provided to those contract holders at highest risk of non-payment.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing (Wales) Act 2014 • Welfare Reform Act 2012 • Renting Home Wales Act 2016 • Corporate Debt Recovery Policy <p>https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Sundry-Debtors/Corporate-Debt-Policy.pdf</p>

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

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Housing Revenue Account: The Council is required to keep a HRA to record all income and expenditure relating to the provision of local authority housing. All rental income, including arrears, must be held with a ring fenced HRA account. This means that income can only be used for council housing purposes and not general expenditure. This also allows rental income to be invested locally to help improve and maintain council owned homes and build new council homes.</p> <p>Bad Debt Provision (BDP): is a reserve to cover financial losses for rents that may be uncollectable in the future. BDP is sometimes also referred to as ‘impairment allowances’ for doubtful debts.</p>

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 11 th September, 2024
Report Subject	Cost of Living and Welfare Reform
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Residents in Flintshire, some of whom are amongst our most vulnerable, are still being impacted by the Welfare Reform changes and the cost-of-living crisis.

The report provides information around the impacts on residents and the range of measures being implemented to help those affected to try, where possible, to mitigate the negative impacts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Support the ongoing work to manage the impacts that welfare reform and the cost-of-living crisis has, and will continue to have, on some of the most vulnerable residents.
2	Note the support measures implemented via Welsh Government and the Council to mitigate impacts.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE LATEST POSITION FOR WELFARE REFORM AND COST OF LIVING CRISIS MITIGATION
1.01	<p>Residents in Flintshire, some of whom are amongst our most vulnerable, continue to be impacted by the Welfare Reform changes and the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>The report provides information around the impacts on residents and the range of measures being implemented to help those affected to try where possible to mitigate the negative impacts.</p>
	Spare Room Subsidy
1.02	<p>More commonly referred to as the Bedroom Tax, this reform relates to restrictions of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit where the claimant is under occupying the property. The restrictions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14% reduction to the eligible rent where a person living in a social landlord property, has one or more 'spare bedroom'. • 25% reduction to the eligible rent where a person living in a social landlord property, has two or more 'spare bedrooms'.
	Impact in Flintshire
1.03	<p>During 2023-24 , a total of 345 households in Flintshire were subject to a reduction in their housing benefit payments because of the spare room subsidy.</p> <p>76 households affected by a 25% reduction resulting in a combined reduction in their weekly housing benefit payments of £2,375.14.</p> <p>These household comprise of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 62 LA properties with a total weekly reduction of £1,948.74 • 14 Registered Social Landlords with a total weekly reduction of £426.40 <p>269 households are affected by a 14% reduction resulting in a combined reduction in their weekly housing benefit payments of £4,514.87</p> <p>These households comprise of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 199 LA properties with a total weekly reduction of £3,304.28 • 70 Registered Social Landlords with a total weekly reduction of £1,210.59

The table below shows the current number of households when comparing Q1 in 2023-24 and the current year 2024/25, Q1. The table indicates that currently there is a reduction in the number of households subject to the Bedroom Tax.

Underoccupancy 23/24					
Underoccupancy (Data extracted is for total of 301 households)	LA	Total Reduction £	RSL/ HA	Total Reduction £	Total overall reduction
14%	234	3661.27	67	1085.86	4747.13
(Data extracted is for total of 87 households)					
25%	72	2126.51	15	445.08	2571.59

Underoccupancy 24/25					
Underoccupancy (Data extracted is for total of 263 households)	LA	Total Reduction £	RSL/ HA	Total Reduction £	
14%	195	3240.85	68	1175.72	4416.57
(Data extracted is for total of 73 households)					
25%	59	1852.38	14	428.24	2280.62

1.04 There is also a restriction that is applied to Universal Credit (UC).

 Statistics in February 2024 confirm that a total 832 Flintshire residents are subject to a reduction in their UC because of the Bedroom Tax, however, the reduction costs are not made available from DWP to report.

 The combined reduction in benefit payments to residents of Flintshire each year is around £350k, if you add to that the number of residents also affected via their UC claim, this amount would be much higher.

 These are the latest statistics available from DWP.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

In Quarter 1, 2023-24 the number of households subject to a reduction in their housing benefit due to Local Housing Allowance was 560.

	Comparing to Q1 in 2024-25 which is a reduction but remains high at 506 households.
	Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) and Eligibility Free School Meals (eFSM)
1.05	Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) provides funding from Welsh Government to deliver free meals to all primary school pupils.
1.06	Following a phased introduction, from April 2024 all Primary School children can now receive a Free School Meal under the UPFSM scheme.
1.07	<p>Eligibility Free School Meals (eFSM) is a free school meal which is provided for pupils whose parents receive certain qualifying benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Support. • Income Based Jobseekers Allowance. • Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. • Income-related Employment and Support Allowance. • Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and their annual income does not exceed £16,190. • Guarantee element of State Pension Credit. • Working Tax Credit 'run-on' - the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit. • Universal Credit (if earned income is included in the assessment of UC it must be less than £616.66). <p>eFSM must be claimed by completing an application form.</p>
1.08	<p>eFSM not only provides a meal for the child, it also creates a financial benefit for the school. The school receives funding of £1,150 per eligible child via the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG)</p> <p>In context, for the Academic Year 24/25, the PDG for the whole of Flintshire is £4.5million which goes directly to schools.</p>
1.09	<p>There is a risk that as the UPFSM is now providing a meal for all primary children, parents and families who may be entitled to eFSM may not see the need to make a claim.</p> <p>It is therefore vital to keep promoting and raising awareness of eFSM via schools and within communities to ensure our schools don't lose PDG funding as a result.</p>
1.10	In June 2023, Welsh Government confirmed the FSM School Holiday payments would not be extended past May 2023 half term.

	<p>No school holiday payments were made for summer 2023, however Cabinet approved payments over the Christmas holidays in 2023.</p> <p>In May 2024 approval was given by Cabinet to provide financial assistance so that parents of FSM eligible and transitionally protected (TP) children would receive £50.00 as a one-off payment, to assist families during the summer holidays. Around 5,000 pupils will benefit from the payment which will be paid to parents/carers in two instalments.</p> <p>The first payment of £25 was paid during the beginning 22nd July and the second £25 during the week beginning 12th August.</p>
1.11	An awareness campaign is also planned for the Autumn Term.
School Essentials Grant (Uniform Grants)	
1.12	<p>Children whose families are on lower incomes and qualify for certain benefits can apply for School Essentials Grant.</p> <p>To be eligible to apply, parents must already be in receipt of, or applying for free school meals (eFSM) based on the following income:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Support. • Income Based Jobseekers Allowance. • Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. • Income-related Employment and Support Allowance. • Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and their annual income does not exceed £16,190. • Guarantee element of State Pension Credit. • Working Tax Credit 'run-on' - the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit. • Universal Credit (if earned income is included in the assessment of UC it must be less than £616.66) • All looked after children qualify for the grant, whether they receive free school meals or not.
1.13	<p>If eligible they will receive a grant of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £125.00 per learner. • £200.00 for learners entering year 7 (to help with increased costs associated with starting secondary school). <p>All compulsory school years from reception to year 11 are now eligible.</p> <p>Families are only entitled to claim once per child, per school year.</p>
1.14	The School Essential Grant for the 2023/2024 academic year claiming period was from 01/07/23 to 31/05/2024.

	<p>4,401 School Essential Grants were paid with a total value of £580,750. This is an increase on the previous year (2022/23) which was a total of 3,973.</p>						
<p>1.15</p>	<p>Last year we changed the process for claiming a School Essentials Grant.</p> <p>The change was introduced to reduce the need for form filling, and speed up the process of issuing the payments, therefore enabling the majority of parents and guardians to receive the payment before the end of July.</p> <p>Following the success of the new process this has been continued for this year.</p>						
<p>1.16</p>	<p>The new period of funding for School Essential Grants opened on 01/07/24 and 3,626 grants totalling £480,325 were issued on that date.</p> <p>We are currently in the process of processing applications for newly eligible children for which a further 461 grants totalling £59,500 have been issued.</p> <p>As of 12th August 2024, 4,087 claims have been successfully processed and paid.</p>						
<p>Welfare Support</p>							
<p>1.17</p>	<p>The number of residents seeking support and advice to help manage finances via the Welfare Reform Team is shown below and continues to remain high, however, there has been a reduction in people accessing the support when comparing to the previous year.</p> <p>Figures are shown in the chart below:</p> <div data-bbox="328 1368 1362 1973" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Welfare Support Provided 2022-2023 & 2023-2024</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of Residents</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2022-2023</td> <td>1414</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023-2024</td> <td>1003</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Year	Number of Residents	2022-2023	1414	2023-2024	1003
Year	Number of Residents						
2022-2023	1414						
2023-2024	1003						

	<p>The table below shows the current number of households that the Welfare Team have supported in Q1 for 2024-25.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="320 304 855 342"> <tr> <td data-bbox="320 304 683 342">No. of households</td> <td data-bbox="683 304 855 342">260</td> </tr> </table> <p>Most of these households accessed support through discretionary housing payment applications, others are referred when support is identified via other channels.</p>	No. of households	260
No. of households	260		
1.18	<p>However, with the Move to Universal Credit during 2024 and with the ending of Welsh Government Energy Support Schemes in 2023, it is anticipated that this will further impact more households during the coming year and we are expecting demand for the service to increase.</p>		
1.19	<p>The Benefits and Welfare teams will continue to target support to households to help access benefits and welfare support with the cost of living; additionally, will aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify households who may be affected by LHA changes in 2024-25. • Support households who may be affected by the 'Move to Universal Credit'. • Promote and support residents to access Council Tax Reduction (CTR) where there may be a potential entitlement, this will also help to reduce council tax arrears. 		
Promotional Activity			
	<p>During Q1, promotional activity was undertaken including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • households subject to shared room rate of LHA were identified and offered DHP support, these households did not see an increase in the level of Local Housing Allowance in early 2024, which has resulted in additional applications for DHP being received. Overall, a 12% success rate. • Promotional activity will also be undertaken to identify and contact households where the income is below the minimum living level to encourage benefit take up to increase household income levels. • Various community events in Flintshire to provide awareness and support to residents in relation to helping with rental costs, Discretionary Housing Payments, foodbank vouchers and signposting for specialist support. • Further events are planned during the year to promote support. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the Welfare Team's presence in attending foodbank locations to provide easier access and support . Continue to support the Early Help Hub with appropriate budgeting advice and DHP support. 				
Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's)					
1.20	<p>Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are payments that may be made by the Council to people that are receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (housing element), but who may still need further financial help with their housing costs.</p> <p>The chart below shows how much Discretionary Housing Payment was spent supporting households.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="320 824 1139 972"> <tr> <td>Total DWP Contribution 23-24</td> <td>£205,365</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total expenditure 2024*</td> <td>£280,976</td> </tr> </table> <p>*Additional expenditure was met from the Homeless Prevention Grant funding which enabled further households to be supported.</p> <p>For the current year, Q1 expenditure for Discretionary Housing Payments is £50,270.52.</p> <p>With higher rental costs across properties in Flintshire and especially in supporting Supported Accommodation properties, DHP expenditure remains high.</p>	Total DWP Contribution 23-24	£205,365	Total expenditure 2024*	£280,976
Total DWP Contribution 23-24	£205,365				
Total expenditure 2024*	£280,976				
1.21	<p>It is important to note that the DHP expenditure provided by UK Government to the Council has not always increased.</p> <p>For 2024-25 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have not increased Flintshire's annual funding. It remains at 2023-24 level (£205,365).</p>				
1.22	<p>Our records show that the main reason for DHP applications is due to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates applied to their Housing Benefit or housing costs within Universal Credit. This aligns with more people now in receipt of Universal Credit.</p> <p>Overall, the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have increased apart from the shared room rate which remains unchanged and potentially could impact more households as household rents increase but the housing element within their UC does not.</p>				

HRA Discretionary Fund	
1.23	<p>Within the Housing Revenue Account, funding for council tenants has been allocated for a discretionary scheme to support residents who live in council properties.</p> <p>Cases for support are identified within the Housing Service and decisions around funding applications are made by a panel of senior officers.</p> <p>This is very much in the early stages of development, however, applications have been approved to support residents in areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent arrears • Garden or house clearance • Floor coverings <p>This scheme is designed to tailor support to the applicant based on their individual circumstances.</p> <p>As at the end of Q1, around £68,000 of support has been provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional activity will also be undertaken to identify and contact households where their income is below the minimum living level to encourage benefit take up to increase household income levels.
Migration to Universal Credit	
1.24	<p>Universal Credit – ‘Move to UC’</p> <p>Managed migration is where people receiving legacy benefits have their claims transferred to Universal Credit.</p> <p>During 2024 and 2025 there will be an increase in the number of Migration Notices being issued to households who will be required to move to Universal Credit commencing with households receiving tax credits. Tax credit claimants who also claim any of the other legacy benefits will be selected for the managed migration during 2024-25.</p>
1.25	<p>At the point of moving over to Universal Credit, all legacy benefit claimants will be assessed for transitional protection and paid (where appropriate).</p> <p>Migration notices have already commenced in Flintshire, and work is underway to streamline processes and support arrangements which support residents where appropriate.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Resource levels continue to be reviewed to ensure sufficient capacity is directed to areas with the greatest level of demand.
2.02	As mentioned earlier in the report, demand for DHP is generally increasing whilst the DWP contribution remains static. To mitigate this in part, Flintshire provide a reserve of £58k to enable claims for DHP to be paid after the DWP contribution has been exhausted.
2.03	In 2023/2024 the DHP fund was supplemented by the homeless prevention grant, however, there are no guarantees that this will be made available for 2024/2025.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	To monitor DHP expenditure as demand is expected to exceed the DWP funding allocation.
3.02	To mitigate where possible demand on DHP funding by fully utilising additional homeless prevention grant for DHP applications.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Welfare Reform Act 2012 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/5/contents https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/5/notes (explanatory notes)

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Jen Griffiths, Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and Communities Telephone: 01352 702929 E-mail: Jen.griffiths@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Discretionary Housing Payment: (DHP's) is a discretionary payment which can help towards housing costs and a person is entitled to Housing Benefit or the Housing Costs element of Universal Credit.</p> <p>Housing Benefit: helps contract holders pay all, or part of their rent if they have a low income. Housing Benefit is administered by Local Authorities.</p> <p>Registered Social Landlord: (RSL) are not-for-profit organisations that aim to provide good, low-cost accommodation.</p> <p>Spare Bedroom: in the context of the spare room subsidy (or bedroom tax) this is where there are more bedrooms in the property than the household need. For example, a single person living in a two-bedroom house would be deemed as having one "spare" bedroom.</p> <p>Universal Credit: (UC) is an integrated means-tested benefit for people of working age whose income is below a specified minimum amount. UC can be claimed by working aged people in and out of employment.</p> <p>UC Managed Migration: Managed migration describes the transfer of existing legacy benefit claims to Universal Credit, where there has not been a change of circumstances that has resulted in a 'natural' transfer to Universal Credit.</p> <p>Welfare Reforms: changes introduced to a range of social security benefits and tax credits, which aim to ensure that the United Kingdom has an affordable benefit system.</p> <p>Job Seekers Allowance (JSA): is a benefit for people who are not in full-time employment (work less than 16 hours per week), are capable of working and are looking for work. There are two types of Jobseeker's Allowance, income-based (IR) and contribution-based (C).</p> <p>Local Housing Allowance: (LHA) are rates are used to calculate housing benefit or Housing Element for tenants renting from private landlord. The eligible rent is fixed for a household of a given size in a given region.</p> <p>Pupil Deprivation Grant: (PDG) The purpose of the PDG is to improve outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and Looked After Children (LAC). It is intended to overcome the additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential.</p>

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COMMUNITY AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 11 th September 2024
Report Subject	Annual Performance Report 2023/24 (combined with the Council Plan End of Year Performance Report 2023/4)
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Performance Report sets out an analysis and summary of how well the Council has performed against our Well-being Objectives, Priorities and Sub-priorities at the end of the financial year 2023/24 of our Council Plan (2023-28). The Annual Performance Report also provides a summary of performance regarding other key areas of focus within the Council, i.e., Partnership and Collaboration Activity, Strategic Equality Plan.

The Council Plan (2023-28) sets out our deliverable organisational priorities and outcomes to align with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, seven well-being goals and five ways of working to create a sustainable Wales.

Performance against the Council Plan (2023-28) Well-being Objectives and Priorities was positive overall for 2023/24 with 74% of the actions and 64% of the performance measures meeting or exceeding target for the year.

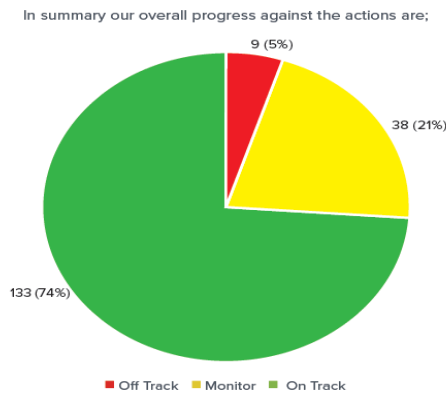
RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Committee to approve the 2023/24 Annual Performance Report, combined with the Council Plan End of Year 2023/24 Performance Report, noting the performance achieved.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24
1.01	<p>The Annual Performance Report (the Report) is produced in accordance with two key legislations;</p> <p><u>Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015</u></p> <p>The performance and governance provisions in the Act are framed within the context of the well-being duty in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which sets out a legally binding common purpose for the public bodies subject to that Act to improve the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. It sets out seven well-being goals which these public bodies must work towards and five ways of working to guide how public bodies should deliver.</p> <p><u>Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021</u></p> <p>Councils are democratically accountable for the performance of their services, including their governance arrangements. They are supported through external audit, inspection and regulatory bodies who have a key role in assuring the quality of our public services in Wales.</p>
1.02	<p>The Annual Performance Report must be approved by the full Council prior to publication.</p>
1.03	<p>Last year, feedback was received from Members and Chief Officers that the Annual Performance Report 2022/23 and the Council Plan 2022/23, End of Year Performance Report provided similar information and therefore, would it be possible to merge the two reports to reduce duplication and provide more consistency.</p> <p>The Annual Performance Report 2023/24 now provides a high level summary of the Council Plan (2023-28) end of year performance, with the full analysis available as an appendix on progress against our Well-being Objectives and Priorities (Appendix B).</p> <p>The Annual Performance 2023/24 also takes into consideration assessment of our performance regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulatory, audit and inspection activity• Annual Governance Statement• Corporate Self-assessment• Welsh Language• Budget Monitoring• Risk Management• Climate Change
1.04	<u>Council Plan 2023/24 Performance</u>

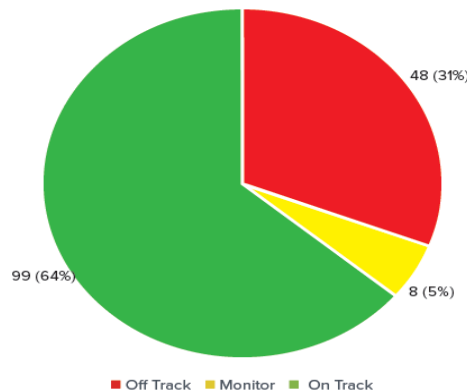
Performance for 2023/24 against our Council Plan Actions is summarised in the chart below.



In summary:

- 133 (74%) actions achieved the target (Green RAG Status - on track)
- 38 (21%) actions are being monitored (Amber RAG status - monitor)
- 9 (5%) actions missed target (Red RAG status - off track)

Performance for 2023/24 against our Council Plan Measures is summarised in the chart below.



In summary:

- 99 (64%) actions achieved the target (Green RAG Status - on track)
- 8 (5%) actions are being monitored (Amber RAG status - monitor)
- 48 (31%) actions missed target (Red RAG status - off track)

For detailed analysis regarding the:

- Priority – Poverty (specifically Sub-priority – Income Poverty and Food Poverty)
- Priority – Affordable and Accessible Housing

of the Council Plan (2023-28) end of year performance report, please see Appendix B.

1.05

The Annual Performance Report 2023/24 will be made available via the Council’s website once published.

1.06	As part of performance monitoring both Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered performance areas which under-perform (downward trend and/or low quartile benchmark position) throughout 2023/24 (and will continue to do so in the next financial year) in regard to the Council Plan (2023-28) but also other key areas of performance i.e., Corporate Self-assessment.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no specific resource implications as part of this report.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles</p> <p>In regard to the impact on the Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles, the Council Plan (2023-28) continues to be aligned to these Principles;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement <p>By completing a high-level IIA for the Council Plan (2023-28), it enabled the Council to have an overview of the various additional IIA's that will be carried out to support the Council Plan (2023-28) priorities.</p> <p>Well-being Goals Impact</p> <p>The Council Plan (2023-28) continues to provide evidence of alignment with the seven Well-being Goals (part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Five Ways of Working (Sustainable Development Principle). To do this effectively the Council ensures that specific strategic and policy reports include impact and risk assessments and considers the Well-being Goals.</p> <p>The Well-being Goals are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperous Wales • Resilient Wales • Healthier Wales • More Equal Wales • Cohesive Wales • Vibrant Wales • Globally Responsible Wales <p>Council's Well-being Objectives</p>

	<p>The information detailed within the Annual Performance Report 2023/24 and Council Plan End of Year Performance Report 2023/24 demonstrates the progress made against the Well-being Objectives.</p> <p>Risks are identified as part of the annual review of the Council Plan and are detailed within Council Plan (Part 2 Document). In accordance with the Risk Management Framework, risks are reviewed monthly and reported upon.</p>
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4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
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4.01	<p>Consultation with Senior Managers and Chief Officers was undertaken on setting the actions and measures to support performance for 2023/24 of the Council Plan (2023-28).</p> <p>Consultation is undertaken throughout the year by Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees to review the Council Plan (2023-28) performance reports.</p>
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	<p>Appendix A - Draft Annual Performance Report 2023/24.</p> <p>Appendix B - Council Plan (2023-28) End of Year Performance Report for 2023/24.</p>
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	<p>Previous Annual Performance Reports Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 Annual Audit Wales Summary 2023 Council Plan (2023-28) Corporate Self-assessment Climate Change information Public Services Board Risk Management Framework Strategic Equality Plan Statement of Accounts Welsh Language</p>
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7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
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7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Emma Heath, Strategic Performance Advisor Telephone: 01352 702744 E-mail: emma.heath@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
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8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Council Plan (2023-28): the document which sets out the priorities for Flintshire County Council and the big things that the Council aims to achieve over the duration of the Plan.



Annual Performance Report

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2023/24

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Welcome to Flintshire’s Annual Performance Report (APR). This document gives an overview of the performance of the Council during 2023/24 against the priorities set within our Council Plan (2023-28) and progress against our Well-being Objectives;

- Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs
- Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities
- Limiting the impact of the Council’s services on the natural environment and supporting the wider communities of Flintshire to reduce their own carbon footprint
- Enabling a sustainable economic recovery and growth
- Supporting people in need to live as well as they can
- Enabling and Supporting Learning Communities

The Annual Performance Report also provides an overview of performance of the Council in relation to other key areas, including climate change and monitoring budget.

Flintshire County Council continues to pride itself on being a Council which performs highly for its local communities and one which is guided and motivated by a set of strong social values.

The past year has been another challenging year for many, especially in light of the current economic situation and the continued cost of living pressures. However, as a Council we have continued to deliver good quality services; development of sustainable housing, supporting residents of Flintshire, delivering high quality education and learning opportunities, and a continued commitment to being a green Council.

Next year we will be mid-way through of five-year Council Plan and as a Council this provides us with the perfect opportunity to review progress achieved so far against our existing priorities and Well-being Objectives and also inform planning for the Council’s future direction to support with making a positive and lasting difference.



Neal Cockerton
Chief Executive



Ian Roberts
Leader of the Council

2

Priority Setting

The report has amended slightly from last year’s Annual Performance Report and now includes analysis of our end of year performance in relation to the Council Plan (2023-28), whereas previously this report used to focus on performance within each Portfolio.

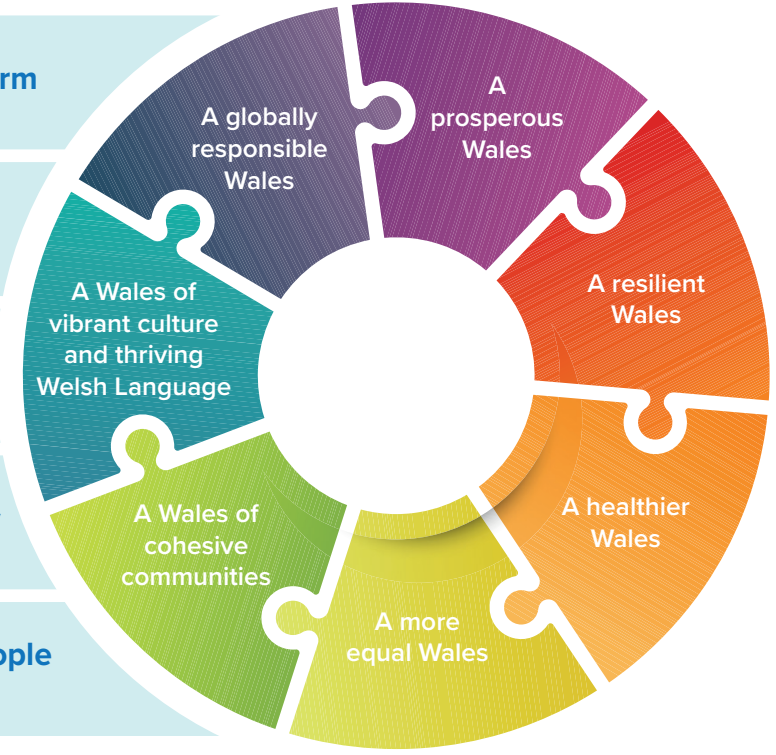
The Council Plan (2023-28) sets out the Council’s seven priorities and Well-being Objectives and what we aim to achieve. These priorities and Well-being Objectives have been chosen as the areas where the Council can add the most value and also help us to identify how we are working towards the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

Designated public bodies are required to work individually and collectively to improve well-being in Wales. The seven well-being goals and the five ways of working (Sustainable Development Principle) set a general purpose for public bodies.

Sustainable Development (Five Ways of Working)



Seven Well-being Goals




Section 5 of the report will provide a high level overview of our performance against the Council Plan (2023-28) under the following headings.

- Priority
- Key Achievements and More
- What We Said We Will Do
- Future Improvements

Full details of the Council Plan (2023-28) End of Year Performance for 2023-24 can be found [here](#)

Alignment of Council Plan 2023-28 Priorities and Well-Being Objectives

The Annual Performance Report as advised in Section 2, aligns closely with the Council Plan (2023-28) priorities and the Well-being Objectives, as detailed below:

PRIORITY	WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES
 POVERTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs and be resilient.
 AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities.
 GREEN SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limiting the impact of the Council’s services on the natural environment and supporting the wider communities of Flintshire to reduce their own carbon footprint.
 ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting communities and enabling sustainable economic recovery and growth.
 PERSONAL & COMMUNITY WELL-BEING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting people in need to live as well as they can.
 EDUCATION AND SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling and Supporting Learning Communities.
 A WELL-MANAGED COUNCIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A responsible, resourceful and trusted Council operating as efficiently as possible.

4

Council Plan (2023-28) Summary of Performance

Overall, 2023/24 performance has been a positive start to the Council Plan (2023-28) with 74% of actions that have either met or exceeded their targets for the year, achieving a green RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status and 65% of measures also have either met or exceeded their targets, achieving green RAG status.

The Council recognises that not all outcomes (actions and measures) have been achieved, but there is a need to be mindful of the number of competing priorities as a Council we have responsibility for, and the

increased economic and financial constraints; however, performance and improvement remain a high priority for the Council with many positive outcomes achieved this financial year.


With the Council Plan being a five-year plan and the aim of thinking longer term (Sustainable Development Principle) there are outcomes which are continuing next year and others that will continue through the duration of the Plan. Thus, allowing performance to be analysed over a period of time.

4.1 Assessment of Our Performance


The table below provides an overview of how progress against the Council Plan (2023-28) is measured. Please see attached Appendix 1 for full analysis of the 2023/24 End of Year Performance Monitoring Report.

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Performance Indicators for Actions



Limited Progress -
delay in
scheduled activity;
not on track.




Satisfactory Progress -
some delay in
scheduled activity,
but broadly
on track.

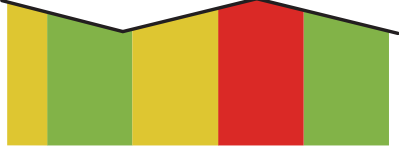


Good Progress -
activities
completed
on schedule,
on track.

Performance Indicators for Measures



Speed dial will provide an analysis of how a measures has performed in that year, using a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status to highlight the achievement.



Will provide further analysis of the trend of a measure and how it has performed over a period of time.

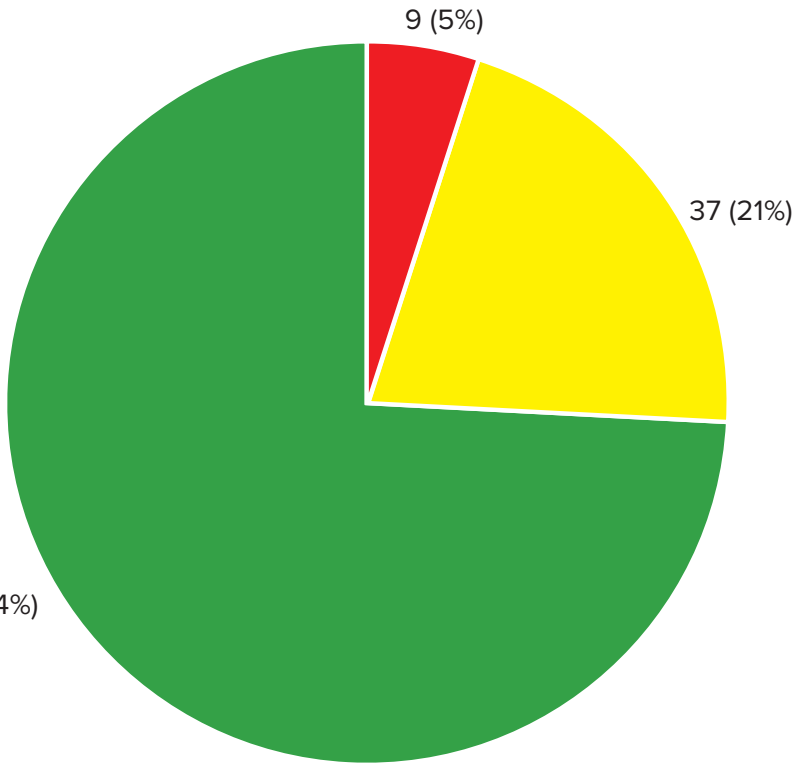
Council Plan (2023-28) Summary of Performance

4.2 Summary of Performance for Actions

Performance for 2023/24 against our Council Plan (2023-28) actions is summarised in the chart below.

Chart 1a: Council Plan Performance - Actions 2023/24

In summary our overall progress against the actions are;



In summary our overall progress against the actions are;

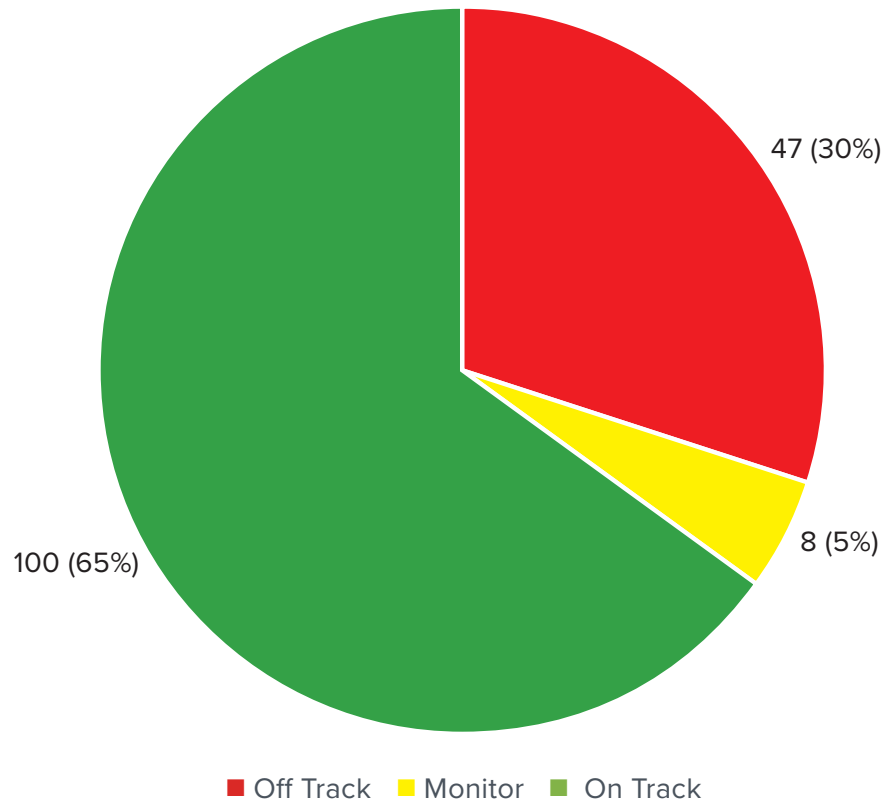
- 134 (74%) actions met or exceeded the target (green RAG)
- 37 (21%) actions are being monitored (amber RAG)
- 9 (5%) actions missed target (red RAG)

Off Track Monitor On Track

4.2 Summary of Performance for Measures

Performance for 2023/24 against our Council Plan (2023-28) measures is summarised in the chart below.

Chart 2a: Council Plan Performance - Measures 2023/24



Analysis of the end of year performance against the targets set for 2023-24 shows:

- 100 (65%) measures have a green RAG status
- 8 (5%) measures have an amber RAG status
- 47 (30%) measures have a red RAG status

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives



Priority:

Well-being Objective:
Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs and be resilient.



Poverty

What We Said We Will Do:

- Deliver Welsh Government support schemes linked to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Maximise the number of people signposted for support to facilitate longer term change.
- Explore development of support schemes to mitigate in work poverty.
- Ensure children and young people have access to transitional play/youth activity to support succession from play opportunities into youth clubs to further support young people’s development.
- Provide free physical activity and well-being sessions within the summer School Holiday Enrichment Programme.
- Provide free access to Fit, Fed and Read sessions during summer holidays providing activities, sport, reading, crafts and meals.



- Introduce and develop a “Well Fed at Home Service”.
- Engage, support and refer vulnerable households to reduce fuel poverty and improve health and Well-being.
- Continue to provide free of charge public access to the internet at Flintshire Connects Centres.
- Support people to use digital technology through Digital Workforce Volunteers.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More for 2023/24

- A hardship scheme has been implemented to support Local Authority households to mitigate effects of in-work poverty by promoting Discretionary Housing Payments and budgeting advice.
- The cost-of-living crisis continues to increase, impacting residents, and referrals to the Council continue to be received. Ongoing advice and support still form part of the Discretionary Housing Payments application process and advice is also provided around options for support, even if an application is unsuccessful.
- Automatic payments for School Essential Grants resulted in 3085 children receiving payments, reducing the pressure on families and allowing them to order and purchase school uniforms. Automatic payments also enabled the team to prioritise new applications.
- The 2023 Fit, Fed and Read community programme took place across the county during a five-week period in July and August 2023, with a wide range of public sector partners tackling issues such as health inequalities, food poverty, literacy levels, and physical and mental well-being. 5,040 families and young people attended the 39 sessions. The scheme made a significant contribution in supporting 3,000 children to sign up to the annual Summer Reading Challenge. 110 volunteering hours were recorded by our young ambassadors.
- The Youth Service continues to deliver a range of open access and targeted provision in a range of settings, including open access youth clubs, schools, forest school, community centres and street-based work. Flintshire Youth Service delivered 1928 sessions between April 23 - March 24 with 14,743 registered attendees.
- 150 Christmas dinner boxes were provided to vulnerable residents.
- The 'Well Fed at Home' service launched in April 2023 and the service is proving popular. In Quarter Four, Well Fed had over 200 customers ordering meals from the Well Fed food hubs within the community led hubs and mobile shop. Well Fed mobile shop visits 45 locations across Flintshire including schools, churches, community groups and sheltered accommodation schemes with residents purchasing 16,533 subsidised meals.



Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

- Provided advice and sign posting support to 508 households against a target of 200.
- 1,203 households received energy efficiency improvements against a target of 1,200.
- Supported by workforce volunteers, Digital Surgeries launched in March 2024. A schedule of surgeries are planned throughout 2024 in different towns across the county.
- Free of charge access to the internet is available at all Flintshire Connects Centres.
- National Data Bank - free SIM cards and data vouchers are available from our Connects Centres to eligible residents. The free data has been provided by Virgin Media O2, Vodafone and Three. Connects work with the Good Things Foundation, a charity helping people improve their lives through digital.



Future Improvements

- Increase campaigns to raise awareness and take-up of Free School Meals, School Essential Grants, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.
- Support community led hubs to open their own food pantries, reducing food waste from local supermarkets and increasing access to seasonal food. This will include to hold a 'Good Food Flintshire' event in Autumn, working corroboratively with other key agencies.
- Low subscribers to My Account by Contract Holders (tenants). Promotion will help increase awareness and Housing Officers should aim to offer digital by default whenever a new contract is issued.



Priority:

Well-being Objective:
Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities.



Affordable and Accessible Housing

What We Said We Will Do:

- Commission a wide range of housing related support that meets the needs of the people of Flintshire.
- Ensure a multi-agency partnership approach to homeless prevention and develop a culture where homelessness is “everyone’s business”.
- Develop self-service approaches that enable people to identify their own housing options through on line support.
- Create a Single Point of Access service for housing help and advice.
- Work with housing association partners to build new social housing properties and additional affordable properties.
- Ensure the Council’s housing stock maintains the current Welsh Housing Quality Standards.
- Support our tenants to access technology and create sustainable digital communities.
- Finalise the plan for the decarbonisation of Council homes in line with Welsh Government guidance to ensure their thermal efficiency is optimised and the cost of heating homes are minimised.
- Ensure increase in stock capacity meets the identified needs and demands.
- Implement the initial recommendations of the sheltered housing review to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of current and prospective tenants.
- Work with residents to ensure our communities are well managed, safe, and sustainable places to live.
- Engage with private sector tenants, giving them a voice, and responding to their needs.
- Work in partnership with landlords and private sector agents to better understand their needs.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More for 2023/24

- Housing Support and Homelessness services continue to explore every opportunity to prevent homelessness and reduce escalations in housing hardships that may lead to risk of homelessness. There has been an increase in homeless households rehoused by the Council and Housing Partners through the 50% homeless nominations process.
- Work continues to promote Housing Support and Homelessness services through the development of website content and active engagement with residents electronically, which for many is a preferred method of sourcing information. Additionally, officers regularly attend local activities to promote services and support offers through groups such as local Community Hubs, Children’s Services Forum and Citizen Advice Bureau frontline worker events and the Flintshire Support Network (FSN).
- Community Based Accommodation Support Services Team (CBASS) received over 500 out of hours calls with 156 residents requiring attendance. The CBASS teams support residents have a range of needs including substance misuse and mental health problems. The team work closely with Social Services and other services to support residents to stay safe and well and maintain their tenancy.
- Housing Supply Map and availability data has been included as part of the Housing Hub webpages on the Council’s website.

This allows residents to be better informed about local social housing supply.

- There has been an increase in homeless households rehoused by the Council and Housing Partners through the 50% homeless nominations process.
- The Council continues to target properties that do not meet the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) 65 rating through various improvement works. This includes, installation of efficient central heating systems, renewable technology (Solar Panels and Air Source Heating) and extensive external refurbishment contracts comprising of new windows, doors, loft insulation and roof coverings, the energy performance and thermal efficiency of our properties is addressed and improved. Our current average SAP rating for our entire stock is 73.5. The Council are currently moving towards incorporating our decarbonisation measures into our investment programmes of refurbishment works to our tenanted homes.



Key Achievements and More for 2023/24

- Staff service improvement groups are working through priorities as identified through the last Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) to see where improvements can be made.
- Work continues with regards to housing support and advice for landlords when they have issues with residents. This is positive prevention activity to avoid housing problems and risks of homelessness. Where landlords are selling properties we now have a purchase offer and an established process in partnership with Housing Strategy and Empty Homes Teams. This is in direct response to landlords telling us they are selling up and leaving the market.
- Positive joint work with the Empty Homes Team to identify properties that are long term empty and can be secured for long term leasing to ease the pressures on homeless accommodation. Ongoing work with Regional Partners and TPAS Cymru to engage with Private Sector Contract Holders.
- Utilised 96% of the allocated £13.3m Social Housing Grant (SHG) in 2023/24.



Future Improvements

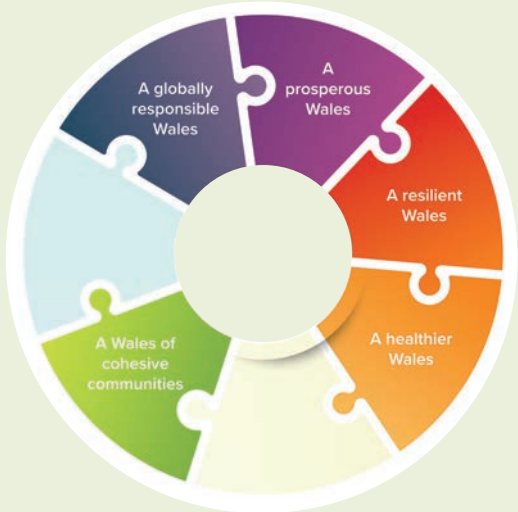
- Scope the potential merger of the Telecare (Social Services) and Carelink teams to create a more efficient service for both the Council and the customer.
- Undertake the STAR survey again in 2024/25 and assess response to areas identified previously for improvement, including tenants views and these are taken into account to inform service provision and delivering of services.
- Ensure the sheltered housing review continues to assess and identifies the needs of current and prospective tenants and the council implements solutions to achieve them.
- Deliver the agreed restructure of the Housing and Prevention Service increasing resources to engage with Private Sector Landlords.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives



Priority:

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.



Green Society and Environment

What We Said We Will Do:

- Produce guidance on viable and deliverable options to mitigate the impact of phosphates from new development on Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) protected rivers.
- Work with Flintshire's leisure and culture trust partners to reduce carbon emissions.
- Develop plans towards net zero carbon for our assets in line with Welsh Government guidance.
- Review the procurement policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from suppliers.
- Ensure climate change and biodiversity are considered a priority in key decision making across all Council services.
- Assess the feasibility of schemes within land assets for resisting flood and drought while enhancing biodiversity and increasing carbon storage.
- Identify projects to further support climate adaptation ambitions following Welsh Government guidance.
- Reduce the environmental impact of our fleet by transitioning to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV).
- Deliver an increase in canopy cover as part of the Urban Tree and Woodland Plan.
- Enhance the natural environment through the delivery of the Section 6 Environment (Wales) Act 2016 biodiversity duty.
- Explore opportunities to develop the Flintshire Coast Park through the production of a scoping study.
- Support the development of public electric vehicle charging network.
- Promote active travel and further develop the County's walking and cycleway network.
- Implement formalised crossing facilities at existing school crossing patrol sites.
- Work in partnership, actively support and engage with community led groups by developing recycling initiatives.

Key Achievements and More

- The adoption of the Local Development Plan (LDP) was premised on the basis of certain allocated housing sites having to demonstrate nutrient neutrality in terms of not harming the Bala Lake and River Dee (Special Area of Conservation) through the release of phosphates from waste water treatment works into the River Alyn. Work commenced on the feasibility of developing wetlands alongside the waste water treatment works at Mold, Buckley and Hope, which would have required developer financial contributions as part of a process to have been set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). However, the release of updated and unchanged permits for the three waste water treatment works by Natural Resources Wales and the availability of 'headroom' (difference between the level of phosphate permitted by the permit and the actual level of phosphate being released by the treatment works) evidenced by Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water has provided a window within which to deliver LDP allocations.
- The revised Procurement Strategy for 2024/2027, has a key theme centred around 'Climate Emergency' - ensuring procurement exercises have a reduced impact on CO2 emissions, and that our suppliers embrace our Net Zero Carbon ambitions too.
- The Council's investment in the RE:fit Framework for 2024/25 and 2025/26 will see energy efficiency and renewable energy works worth £1.5 million invested in our building assets. The framework has been awarded and project work will commence post - April 2024.
- The programme of activities to decarbonise the Council's assets and services continues to work to plan by meeting interim targets. This is a long term target regarding the Council's carbon footprint taking us to 2030, and we are currently on target at 10%, giving us a green RAG status.
- The following strategies and plans have been reviewed and now incorporate the Council's Net Zero Carbon ambitions: Asset Management Plan, Procurement Strategy, Biodiversity Plan, Waste Strategy, and Housing Strategy and action plan.
- A working draft of the Flood Risk Management Strategy has been drafted with consultants and the next stage is to complete the draft action plan in order to carry out stakeholder consultation with Members and key stakeholders. This will then lead to a public consultation exercise on the strategy before review of comments made, sign off by the Council, and submission to Welsh Government.
- Bee friendly status: Bee friendly status obtained in recognition of our work for pollinators, we are the fourth Local Authority in Wales to receive the status.
- Small Grants for Nature: The Council have delivered our first small community nature grant which allocated over £13,000 to

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More

small community groups and schools to support local features for nature.

- Ponds for Schools project successfully obtained funding from the Airbus Community Impact Fund to restore ponds in two schools, the projects included preparatory educational visits, pond works, and volunteering sessions with Airbus corporate staff.
- Significant natural environment enhancement through changes in estate management, tree planting and green infrastructure projects.
- Assessment of over 180 Flintshire owned sites for suitability for tree planting is to become part of the Flintshire Forest.
- Successful Countryside and Greenfield Valley events programme with 7537 event participants.
- Shared Prosperity Funding secured to further progress establishing the Flintshire Coast Park.
- Social media promotional and awareness content reached 54,000, which is a 10% increase of social followers.
- Active Travelschemes including; Holywell Urban Area and Flint Six Schools have been delivered

as part of Safer Routes in Communities initiatives enabling pupils to walk and cycle to school safely, as well as benefitting the wider local communities.

- All civil engineering works associated with the formalised crossing facilities has been completed and will be operational in May 2024.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) charging feasibility study and associated Delivery Plan completed in February 2024. The aim of the study is to identify the next phase of EV charge-points within public car parks in Flintshire.

- The Waste Strategy Team have been actively engaging with communities in Flintshire to promote our recycling and reuse services. This has taken place with housing associations, at community group meetings and on the doorstep. A six week consultation took place with Flintshire residents and stakeholders to gain their input into developing a future Resource and Waste Strategy. Five engagement events took place in January 2024, where team members met and discussed recycling with Flintshire residents. Work has also begun with Repair Café Wales to introduce more repair centres.



Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More

- A new Resource and Waste Strategy was adopted in March 2024 which identifies measures to maximise the amount of waste reused, recycled and composted.
- Service Delivery waste and recycling crews continue to visit approximately 11,624 per day and this year have maintained a successful collection rate of 99.72%.



Future Improvements

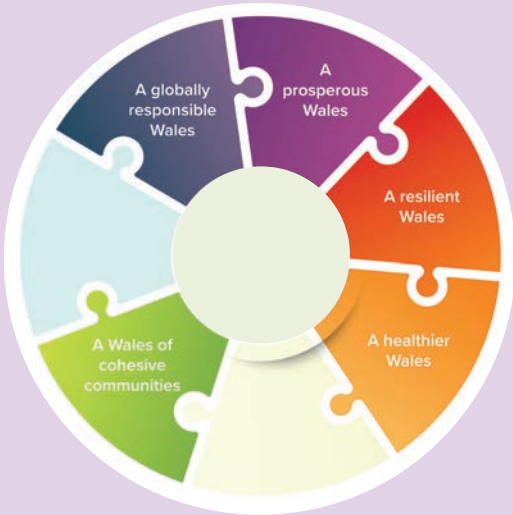
- The roll out of the Climate Essentials e-learn to the wider workforce was delayed to coincide with the roll out of the new Learning portal. Once this module is available it will vastly increase the number of employees and Members receiving carbon related training.
- To improve on recycling targets. In 2023/24 the Council missed the statutory recycling target for the fourth year in succession, resulting in potential infraction charges.
- Work has been underway this year to identify Flintshire Council land assets with the potential for planting schemes in order to provide natural flood mitigation, and improved biodiversity and carbon sequestration of our land. This work is nearing completion and will help to inform sites that can be considered for planting in the coming years.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives



Priority:

Well-being Objective:
Connecting communities and enabling a sustainable economic recovery and growth.



Economy

What We Said We Will Do:

- Ensure that Economy interventions consider and meet the needs of rural businesses and individuals.
- Commission a data review for rural Flintshire and hold community consultation to better understand rural community needs.
- Monitor the health and vitality of town centres to support effective management and business investment decisions.
- Encourage and supporting investment in town centre properties specially to facilitate more sustainable uses and including improvements to the environment.
- Understand the needs of and supporting community enterprises in town centre locations.
- Libraries and leisure centres are community well-being hubs with social objectives underpinning their operation.
- Engage town centre small businesses and promote support packages available to them.
- Support small and/or local businesses to engage with public sector procurement opportunities.
- Support recovery of the County’s Street and indoor markets.
- Support growth of the local and regional food and drink business sector through marketing and collaborative projects.
- Support recovery of the tourism and hospitality sectors and rebuild confidence in the industry.
- Increase the scale and impact of the social business sector.
- Support local businesses in their efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and become more resource efficient.
- Improve digital connectivity across the County for businesses and residents.
- Make decisions at Planning Committee in line with the adopted Local Development Plan.
- Co-ordinate a multi-agency approach to support businesses to recruit people from disadvantaged groups.
- Deliver mentoring and wider support programmes to assist disadvantaged people to re-engage with the labour market.

Key Achievements and More

- All current interventions (outside of specific town centre projects) supporting individuals and businesses are targeting all of the County.
- Discussions are underway with Wrexham University about how the needs of rural Flintshire residents can be most effectively assessed and supported.
- The Council processed over £30m of Shared Prosperity Fund project proposals in conjunction with similar processes across the other North Wales Councils. £11m of funding was awarded to projects in Flintshire supporting businesses, supporting places and communities and improving skills and employability. The majority of projects cover all of the County including rural areas, especially those focused on the visitor economy, which will bring a disproportionate benefit to rural businesses.
- Work has continued during Quarter Four (January - March 2024) to monitor and respond to the health, vibrancy and needs of town centres across Flintshire. This has included planning and delivering an online consultation for four towns across Flintshire, which 3,356 local people responded to, and also reviewing data related to the town centres to develop up-to-date profiles of the current strengths and focus for future improvement / investment. The focus during quarter four has been on initiating work in four of the seven towns (Connah's Quay, Flint, Mold and Queensferry). The place making plan for Shotton has been developed and identifies 10 key themes and priorities responding to local needs. The place making plans for both Holywell and Buckley have also been commissioned and work has progressed on these also.
- 'Save The High Street' has been engaged by the Council's Regeneration Team to deliver tailored business support for town centre businesses across the seven town centres of Flintshire, to support their growth, development and diversification through the delivery of an intensive eight week support programme. Flintshire was the first local authority in Wales to partner with 'Save The High Street' using funding secured from the Shared Prosperity Fund. Fourteen town centre businesses participated in the 'Save The High Street' eight week intensive programme. Due to the success of the pilot project, a further 30 businesses will benefit from this provision between April and November 2024. Excellent feedback has been received from local businesses who participated and has been featured in the local press. Work has continued to roll-out grant schemes and encourage take-up amongst local businesses as take-up has been excellent.
- The Regeneration Team secured £1.178million from UK Government to deliver Town Centre Investment Programme across seven towns in Flintshire (Buckley, Connah's Quay, Flint, Holywell, Mold, Shotton, Queensferry) in 2023/24 and 2024/25. The programme comprises of nine projects in total - a mix of capital and revenue initiatives aimed at supporting our Flintshire's high streets.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More

- During January - March 2024, 42 support sessions have been delivered by the Council’s Social Enterprise Officer to social enterprises in the towns of Buckley, Connah’s Quay, Mold and Shotton. These sessions have involved understanding their needs and tailoring support provided to these in addition to encouraging the social enterprises to utilise the Flintshire Social Impact toolkit to calculate their overall social value. Of the organisations supported during January - March 2024, this has involved a total of £807,269 social value being recorded.
- £466,458 secured from Welsh Government’s ‘Transforming Towns’ and UK Government’s Shared Prosperity Funding £180,000 of this total being contributed to businesses towards improving their premises.
- £63,130 has been awarded to local communities to deliver activities and events in towns across Flintshire to improve footfall and the vibrancy of towns.
- The development of the Flintshire Social Impact toolkit and increase of numbers of social enterprises using it, continues to demonstrate the impact of social enterprise activity in Flintshire. During this reporting period (2023/24) the

- fourteen participating social enterprises reported the generation of a combined social value of £2,119,680.98 through the 18 activities being measured.
- The Business Development Team have delivered two Net Zero Carbon Workshops and in partnership with Deeside Decarbonisation Forum have delivered four network events, engaging with 271 business delegates throughout the year.
- Mold Street Market continues to thrive with an average of 66 traders attending each market day and 24 new traders have been accommodated since April 2023, (including the replacement of retired stallholders). Mold Indoor Market is currently 87% occupied with interest shown in the two remaining vacant units.
- 143 business support sessions were delivered to 43 social enterprises.
- Engagement with over 90 commercial investors to support new businesses moving into Flintshire or expanding current operations.
- Fibre connectivity has improved significantly in Flintshire recently. A number of regional projects to improve connectivity are approaching delivery phase. Locally, work is underway to encourage network operators to fill gaps in mobile phone coverage and capacity.
- A successful joint partnership between Communities For Work Plus, Jobcentre Plus and Careers Wales through the Jobs, Skills and Training Events group has delivered a number of successful

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Key Achievements and More

projects throughout the year highlighting opportunities available locally in Flintshire.

- £160,000 Brilliant Basics Fund Grant was secured to develop and improve regionally recognised trails across Flintshire and associated infrastructure.
- The Flintshire Tourism Association supported with securing and the delivery of £64,000 funding from Cadwyn Clwyd to support wider business and marketing activities over the summer.
- The Flintshire Tourism Ambassador Course was delivered in July 2023. Seventy ambassadors have completed and achieved the Bronze and Silver Award during 2023/24.

<https://www.ambassador.wales>

Future Improvements

- The Council will be working closely with Welsh Government and communities in order to increase patronage on public transport through the delivery of education and infrastructure improvements.



Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives



Priority:

Well-being Objective:
Supporting people in need to live as well as they can.



Personal and Community Well-being

What We Said We Will Do:

- Continue to grow the Microcare market, including access to commissioned care packages.
- Develop a national, regional, and local approach to Early Years Transformation so that all our children ages 0-7 have the best possible start in life and are able to reach their full potential.
- Support people to achieve their mental well-being outcomes by promoting personal and community well-being through open access courses delivered by the Learning Partnership.
- Work in partnership with the Community Mental Health Team and Social Services Mental Health Support Service to develop clear pathways for individuals needing access to Mental Health services, and a sustainable model for the future.
- Utilise the progression model as a way of promoting people's independence skills.
- Provide additional placements for step down care within our in-house provision (Croes Atti 2).
- Work with Housing to fund a small team of people to support individuals with low level Mental health problems to improve their housing.
- Plan for the relocation of Tri Ffordd supported employment project to Maes Gwern in Mold.
- Prepare for the implementation of the new Liberty Protect Safeguard procedures.
- Deliver a programme of registered Children's Homes to help avoid the need for residential placements outside Flintshire.
- Explore the recommissioning of advocacy services on a regional basis.
- Develop childcare expansion and seamless childcare provision across programmes.
- Continue to grow our in-house fostering service to support more looked after children.
- Continue to grow our in-house homecare service to support more people to live at home, utilising a rolling scheme of recruitment.
- Establish a Dementia Strategy Implementation Group, to include representation from people with lived experience.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More

- 46 Microcare businesses were operational at the end of March 2024. The intention is to increase this by another 10 providers over the next 12 months.
- The Wellbeing and Recovery Team is now fully operational and delivering excellent outcomes. The service focusses on those residents who have housing problems, or are homeless, or at risk of homelessness and require additional support due to their mental health. The service is part funded through Social Care and Housing Support Grant and consideration will be given to increasing capacity during 2024-2025.
- In order to provide additional capacity for step down care within our in-house provision, twelve step down Discharge to Recover and Assess beds have been agreed for Croes Atti Newydd Net Zero Carbon operation (planned for completion in May 2025). This will increase the step down provision from its current level of 16 to a total of 28 across Flintshire.
- The design concept for the Maes Gwern hub has evolved to incorporate areas to enable health services and therapies to be



delivered at the site. This is in addition to the learning disability, mental health, and autism support services to create an integrated social services and health hub. The construction start date to commence April 2024.

- Continue to support individuals to achieve their mental well-being outcomes by promoting personal and community well-being through open access courses delivered by the Learning Partnership, with 66 courses available. Courses have been well attended throughout the financial year.
- The North East Wales Community Equipment service continue to deliver a level of service exceeding Welsh Government standards for equipment requests. 93% of equipment has been reused this year; this equates to £2,185,980 cost avoidance (average £42,076 a week). Without this level of re-use of equipment, the North East Wales Community Equipment Service budget would only cover 12.5 weeks of operation.
- The Children's Safeguarding Unit continue to maintain consistency in holding case conferences within statutory timescales, working with increasing numbers on the child protection register.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More



- Between April 2023 and March 2024, 1109 safeguarding reports for adults were received, representing a 23% increase on last year. 667 of these reports met the threshold for an enquiry under Section 126, representing a significant increase in demand, however, the Safeguarding Unit continue to prioritise safeguarding reports on an individual basis.

- The children’s residential homes are now fully operational. Ty Nyth is a tri-party partnership collaboration between Flintshire County Council (FCC), Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), offering up to four places

for children and young people aged 8-18 years. Park Avenue provides care and support including accommodation, for up to four children and young people between the ages of 8-18 years old who are supported by Flintshire County Council. Bromfield Park and Chevrons Road offers care and support including accommodation for one young person aged 8-18 years as a solo placement or two siblings aged 8-18 years. Mesen Fach is an emergency crisis flat on the site of Ty Nyth.

- Foster carer recruitment has been active this year, with four new general foster carers approved and a further eight connected person carers.
- Flying Start two year olds part time childcare expansion Phase 2 is currently being rolled out across Flintshire with an additional 23 children for 2024/25.
- The Adults Advocacy Contract has been successfully commissioned in collaboration with Wrexham County Borough Council. This has been awarded to ASNEW or Independent Professional Advocacy and Community Advocacy, and Advance Brighter Futures have been awarded Self Advocacy.

- The Flintshire Dementia Strategy supports around 850 people living with dementia, and carers, receiving care and support or engaging in community activities in Flintshire.

- Throughout 2023 over thirty community events were attended to engage with Flintshire residents to drive environment initiatives and behavioural change.



5

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives



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- Fourteen sessions offering a range of activities and sport for young people around Flintshire are available. The Youth Services work with Community Councils and sit on the contextual safeguarding meetings to ensure they are in the right areas.



Future Improvements

- Recruitment for in-house home carers continues to be challenging, however the service has developed a recruitment plan to help increase the workforce and grow the share of the market.
- Increase the number of community champions to deliver environmental initiatives.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives



Priority:

**Well-being Objective:
Enabling and supporting
learning communities.**



Education and Skills

What We Said We Will Do:

- Support the implementation of the revised curriculum for secondary pupils in years 7 and 8.
- Continue to deliver Alternative Provision (Education) and to increase the number of young people on the programme gaining qualifications and achieving their full potential (subject to external grant funding).
- Provide bespoke support for schools through training and development to improve the level of speech language and communication skills for pupils.
- Explore and develop options for in house provision in response to the increasing number of pupils struggling to engage with education due to mental health difficulties.
- Embed the delivery plan for Integrated Youth Services by maintaining focus on digital, school and community engagement.
- Provide Duke of Edinburgh Award training opportunities for young people in Alternative Provision, schools, and community groups (subject to external grant funding).
- Schedule Council approval to progress Wales Government’s Band B Sustainable Communities projects within the Learning Investment Programme.
- Continue construction of the 3-16 campus at Mynydd Isa.
- Deliver the Adult Community Learning (ACL) programme.
- Complete the annual strategic actions within the Welsh Education Strategic Plan 5-year action plan.
- Run a referral programme for children and young people with ACEs or a disability and their families to provide low cost / no cost physical activity opportunities to improve overall health and well-being.
- Embed a Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing in all Flintshire schools.

Key Achievements and More

- Informal Qualifications delivered by Flintshire Youth Service and eight young people were recruited for the Youth Work Young Leaders Award.
- Anti-Racism: 'Leaders of Now' is a pilot project that has seen young people from four secondary schools in Flintshire lead the way in challenging racism in their own settings.
- The model of intervention for the Community Focused Schools Team has been established and further developed to focus on transition.
- All secondary schools in Flintshire have implemented the revised curriculum for secondary pupils in Years 7 and 8 from September 2023. Each school continues to work with their supporting improvement adviser to embed this work.
- Over the past six months, from October 2023 to March 2024, the PlayPals project has been successfully implemented across eight schools in different areas of Flintshire.
- Substance Education by Flintshire Sorted: This was undertaken in twelve schools and PPRUs through assemblies, lunchtime walkaround sessions and input into lessons, engaging a total of 2,152 children and young people. 75 sessions also took place in the community.
- Over 70 Young People enrolled on the Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh.
- £6.23m of capital investment was injected across the school network to improve facilities for learners.
- Construction of new 3-16 campus continues and is progressing well, following the site start in November 2022 on the Argoed High School site Net Zero Carbon in operation.
- Sixty young people successfully completed the John Muir Award through the Forest School programme.
- The Council's contribution to the Adult Community Learning Partnership continues to grow, with over 1,036 learners and 246 sessions being delivered during this reporting year. Examples of the courses that we provided include - First Aid for Parents, Pre and Post-natal Fitness, Employability Skills, Autism Awareness, Safeguarding, Social Media workshops, Food Safety qualifications.
- Secured funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund to improve responses and support to children and young people at risk of exploitation by enabling Action for Children to deliver their SideStep Programme until December 2025.
- Welsh Language Music Club - 35 young people took part in a 4 week programme across two schools.
- 56 young people from secondary schools competed in the Eisteddfod in a variety of different competitions, including Cogurdd, Dance, Singing and Reciting.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More

- A review has been undertaken to consider the current provision and engage with Welsh medium settings to determine need. The findings are being collated and will be presented to the Welsh Education Strategic Plan Forum.
- Flintshire schools are positively engaged with developing their work around the whole school approach to emotional health and well-being. This work will be ongoing as schools continue to embed effective practice.
- 24 candidates from schools and Education and Youth successfully completed the local Trauma Informed Schools UK diploma training.
- The Council has successfully achieved the Integrated Youth Services delivery plan by maintaining a strong digital presence, ensuring school and community immersion workers and play team are active in schools, and sustaining ongoing community engagement.
- All schools have now formally adopted their own digital strategy. This gives all schools a standard to work from to develop their digital progression in a structured manner.



Future Improvements

- The level of exclusion remains high across secondary schools, and this remains a targeted priority. The focus on Trauma Informed practice will continue with the aim of supporting a reduction in the need for exclusion by encouraging schools to adopt a different approach to managing serious behaviour incidents.
- There has been a 12 month gap in the position of the Welsh Language Youth Worker. The new post holder was successfully recruited at the end of 2023 and starts their position in May 2024. The sustaining of the current projects has been a success and focus will be placed on growth for 2024/25, including the Welsh language skills across the play and youth team.



Priority:

Well-being Objective:
Responsible, resourceful, and trusted Council operating efficiently as possible.



A Well Managed Council

What We Said We Will Do:

- Maintain competitive pay and reward, and terms and conditions of employment.
- Recruit sufficient permanent high quality staff with suitable qualifications and experience.
- Retain existing employees by supporting them to carry out their roles effectively, and by ensuring that our total offer for new and existing employees is competitive within the market place.
- Increase the level of Welsh Language across the organisation.
- Develop and implement an Action Plan to meet Welsh Government’s Anti-racist Wales Action Plan.
- Complete an annual self-assessment against the Welsh Language Standards and implement an action plan for improvement across all Portfolios.
- Publish the Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report to meet our statutory public sector equality duties.
- Ensure the funding needs of the Council cover the medium term are met through financial planning.
- Ensure robust processes exist for the management and recovery of debt including Council Tax and rent.
- Monitor Council Progress against the Corporate Asset Management Plan.
- Continue to provide a corporate Contact Centre for handling telephone calls to the Council.
- Provide access to Council services on the internet in a responsive way (information can be accessed using different devices).
- Work with public sector partners, develop and publish a local Well-being Plan for 2023-28 setting out the local well-being objectives and how the Public Services Board, including the Council, aims to achieve them.
- Deliver three engagement events to encourage other organisations to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant, which contribute to Flintshire County Council being re-accredited with the Defence Employers Recognition Scheme Gold Award in 2024.

Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More

- During the year 754 positions were filled, which is positive and indicates that we are able to recruit to a large number of positions, all of which will have been assessed as meeting the essential criteria for the post (including qualifications and experience), (percentage determined after deducting those who commenced employment but left during the first 12 months).
- A range of Welsh language courses have been accessed by a number of learners and by offering different levels/methods of learning makes it more accessible.
- There have been 2,403 portal accesses to Vivup from September 2023 up until the end of February 2024. 500 self-help downloads have been recorded and 63 employees have accessed counselling.
- The annual self-assessment for all Portfolios regarding Welsh Language Standards has been completed, with actions being identified and implemented. Regular reviews and reminders of Welsh Language Standards continue to be shared across the Portfolios.
- The Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report was approved and published in March 2024. The action plan is now included within the Strategic Equality Plan 2024/28 which has now been published.
- The Council was able to set a legal and balanced budget for 2024/25 in February 2024. Work is underway to update the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26 onwards and an update report is scheduled for June/July 2024.
- The Council continues to apply robust, but fair, debt recovery processes to maximise collection levels across all areas. At the same time, the Revenues service engages constructively with residents who struggle to meet their payment obligations by entering into affordable payment plans. The approach to debt recovery is set out in the Councils Corporate Debt Recovery Policy.
- The Corporate Asset Management Plan informs the Capital Programme, which is reviewed annually, and progress is monitored throughout the year. The Corporate Asset Management Plan will be refreshed 2024/25.
- Work has commenced on the Office Strategy; draft principles have been prepared and further work is required to firm up principles.
- The corporate Contact Centre is open Monday-Friday between 08:30 - 17:00. The team continues to handle a wide range of telephone calls for services in Housing, Streetscene, Planning, Elections and Blue Badges. In addition, the team answer calls to the Council’s main telephone number.
- The Digital Flintshire Hub continues to promotes a range of initiatives to help people to use digital technology now and in the future. The Hub includes resources to keep people safe

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Assessment of our Seven Priorities and Well-being Objectives

Key Achievements and More

online, training, health and wellbeing resources, digital events and activities. The Hub also provides information about the Council's ambitious plans contained in the Digital Strategy.

- The joint Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board (PSB) have been working on the first year of the Well-being Plan 2023-28. Three Outcome Boards and an Integration Team have been established and partnership project working is ongoing.
- Engagement events have been delivered by the Business Team. The Engagement Officer for the Armed Forces Employers Recognition Scheme is also invited to attend the Flintshire Armed Forces Forum. A significant number of employees have attended the Armed Forces Covenant training.



Future Improvements

- Although the use of agency workers has increased in 2023/24, reducing the use of agency workers still remains a key priority for the Council.
- Low subscribers to My Account by Contract Holders (tenants). Promotion will help increase awareness and Housing Officers should aim to offer digital by default whenever a new contract is issued.
- We need to encourage more organisations to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant. Two organisations signed up to the Covenant during 2023/24.

Strategic Equality Plan



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During the past 12 months, the new Strategic Equality Plan, (SEP) 2024-28 has been developed and published. The new Plan includes actions from Welsh Government’s Anti-racist Wales action plan and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Plus (LGBTQ+) Action Plan for Wales. The Council’s Housing Team is working with Tai Pawb to develop specific actions and training to embed an anti-racist approach within the Service. A new LGBTQ+ e-learning module has been developed to support the implementation of the new SEP and meet the commitments of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales.

Vision Support reviewed the Council website to ensure it is fully accessible for people who are blind or have visual impairments. The results of their review were positive and no issues with accessibility were identified.

We have continued to work with the University of Manchester on developing a new approach for Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA). The new IIA Tool has been piloted by several officers across the Council, this takes into account recommendations made by Audit Wales in their report “Equality Impact Assessments: more than a tick box exercise”. An evaluation of the new Tool will be completed by the University during 2024/25 which will involve interviews with both IIA authors and decision makers. This will help understand how the outcomes of IIAs influence decisions made by the Council.

Welsh Language

There has been an increased number of initiatives to increase the use of Welsh by employees. In addition to providing Welsh language skills training and offering informal chat sessions. Several teams are participating in Bangor University's ARFer project which aims to increase the use of incidental Welsh amongst employees, whatever their level of skill. We have developed video recordings with phonics to support employees use more Cymraeg in meetings and on the telephone. This means that employees can hear and see words and phrases to support pronunciation.

laith, the Welsh Centre for language planning, delivered a series of courses- "Welsh Matters for Everyone" and "Welsh Matters for Managers".

The aim of these courses was to look at:

- **Influences on language use** - reflect upon personal experience and knowledge, understand changes to the status of the Welsh Language and what influences language attitudes and behaviours.
- **Why Use Welsh** - understand National Policy and legislation and the Language Standards in Flintshire
- **Facts and figures about the Welsh Language** - linguistic demography of Wales and Flintshire
- **Working Bilingually** - importance of bilingual services

We have experienced difficulties recruiting Welsh speaking job applicants, as have other public bodies. To tackle this we worked with Wrexham County Borough Council and partners, including Menter Iaith Fflint a Wrecsam, Mudiad Meithrin and Coleg Cambria, to look at solutions to attracting and recruiting more Welsh speakers to our organisations. This has involved two employees being involved in promotional videos to show how we support employees to use Welsh at work. The North Wales Regional Public Services Board also commissioned Iaith to look at issues and solutions to recruiting and retaining Welsh speaking employees. This work will be completed during 2024/25.

During 2023/24, we asked employees to complete a Welsh language attitude survey the results will be used to develop more initiatives to promote the Welsh language during 2024/25.



Partnership and Collaboration Activity

Flintshire has a longstanding and proud track record of partnership working. The communities it serves rightly expect the statutory and third sector partners to work together to manage shared priorities through collaboration. The Flintshire Public Services Board is at the heart of promoting a positive culture of working together, setting shared priorities, and combining resources for the benefit of Flintshire, with an overall aim of improving local well-being.

The Flintshire Public Services Board was formally established in April 2016 following the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 coming into effect. The Flintshire Public Services Board and Wrexham Public Services Board formally merged in January 2023.

Membership of the Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board includes Natural Resources Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council, Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham, Flintshire Local Voluntary Council, Coleg Cambria, DWP, North Wales Police, Wrexham Glyndwr University and Welsh Government.

The Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board is working with its communities to change how we do things, to make sure we will be able to face the challenges ahead such as the climate and nature emergency, and how we ensure good mental health and wellbeing for all.

A key focus for the Flintshire and Wrexham Public Service Board has been the development of a new five-year Well-being Plan, drawing

on the findings of the Well-being Assessments produced in 2022. The Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board Well-Being Plan 2023-2028 contains two well-being objectives for the Public Services Board over the coming five years:

- 1. **Building flourishing communities by reducing inequalities across environment, education, employment, income, and housing.**
- 2. **Improve community well-being by enabling people of all ages to live safe, healthy, and independent lives.**

Under these objectives are several outcomes, which fall under three themes: Children and Young People, Our Communities, and Where We Work.

The Well-being Plan 2023 - 2028 will shape the work of the Public Services Board over coming years and there will be close working with other Public Services Boards across North Wales, along with local communities.



Risk Management

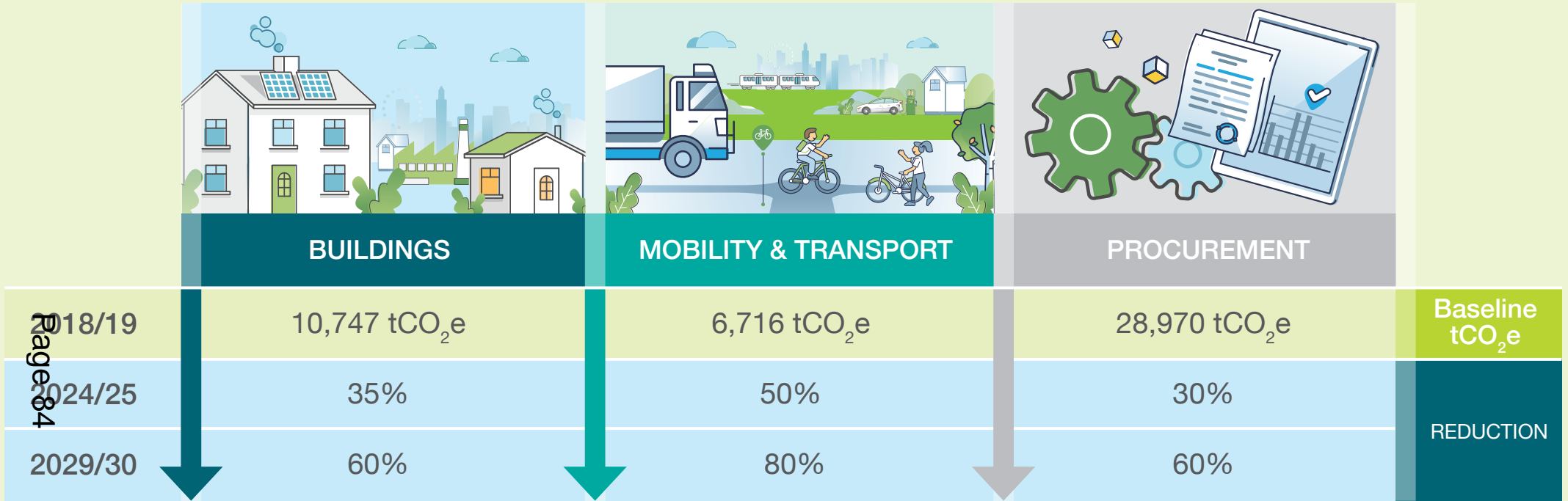
All Council Plans, business as usual and emerging risks are identified, assessed, treated, and monitored using the Council's Risk Management Framework.

Risks are identified using qualitative (milestones & actions) and quantitative (performance indicators, financial) data. Risk identification remains a key priority for the Council.

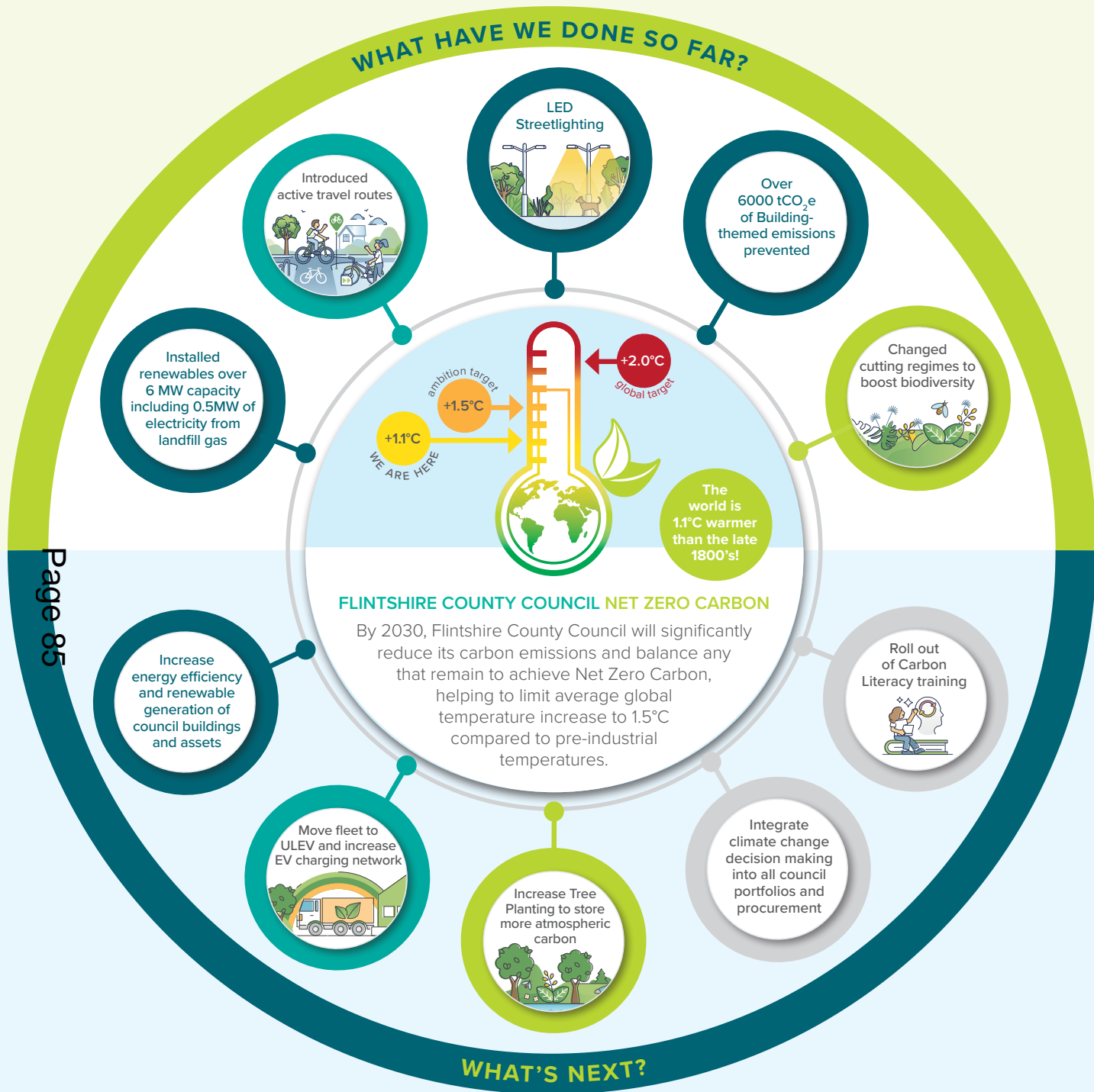
It is a continuous process which is embedded in not only in our day to day (business as usual) but embedded within our Council Planning, Portfolio Business Planning, Project Management, and Partnerships (short term, medium term and long term).



TAKING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE



WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?



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WHAT'S NEXT?

LEARN MORE



CONTACT US

climatechange@flintshire.gov.uk



Flintshire County Council
Climate Change Strategy



What's your
carbon footprint?



Take our questionnaire

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. Gweler y dudalen Gymraeg ar ein gwefan. This document is also available in Welsh. See Welsh page on our website.



Our Flintshire, Our Future 2023 - 2024

The budget, your Council Tax and local services

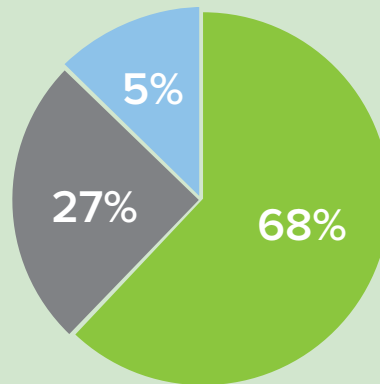
Every year councils have to set a budget which balances their resources with their spending needs. Between 2008 and 2020 all councils received reduced funding from government. As a low funded council - ranked 20 out of 22 councils in Wales - Flintshire was particularly exposed to the effects of this period of austerity.

Over the last 14 years, Flintshire County Council has reduced its spending by **£100M**. Every year it's been harder and harder to make more savings and protect services. At times hard budget choices have been needed.



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Where the Council's money comes from



- Comes from the Welsh Government
- Comes from Council Tax
- Comes from the fees we charge for some services e.g. planning fees, garden waste charges, Register Office fees

Budget Monitoring 2023/24

What your Council Tax pays for

The Council Tax you pay goes up every year, but not all the money collected goes to pay for council services. It also supports 34 Town and Community Councils, the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner and contributes to increases in funding for other regional services.

How Council Tax is shared between the Council and other public services

£125.5M is the total the Council expects to collect in Council Tax in 2023/24, of which:

86% is retained by the Council as a contribution to run local services

17% is collected on behalf of North Wales Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner

3% is collected on behalf of our Town and Community Councils

Flintshire County Council is committed to keeping its annual increase at 5% or less and has applied a 3.99% increase to pay for council services.

All six North Wales councils also contribute to the costs of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, The North Wales Coroners Service and GWE - the Regional Education Improvement Service. Flintshire has added an extra 0.96% to cover annual increases in these contributions.

This brings the total increase of Flintshire County Council's portion of Council Tax to 4.95%.



What this means in monetary terms for Council Tax for 2023/24

Using an average Band D property example:

	2023/24	2022/23	Increased Cost	Percentage increase
Flintshire County Council	£1,521.33	£1,449.58	£71.75	4.95%
North Wales Police & Crime Commissioner	£333.09	£316.80	£16.29	5.14%
Town and Community Councils*	£51.98*	£49.02*	£2.96*	6.04%*
TOTAL COST	£1,906.40	£1,815.40	£91.00	5.01%

* average cost across all 34 Town and Community Councils, the cost on individual bills will differ from Council to Council



The Council was successful in balancing the budget for 2023/2024

What is the Annual Governance Statement?

The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2018 require us to prepare a statement on internal control.

Like many authorities in Wales, this is referred to as the 'Annual Governance Statement'. This is a public document that reports on the extent to which we as the Council comply with our own code of governance.



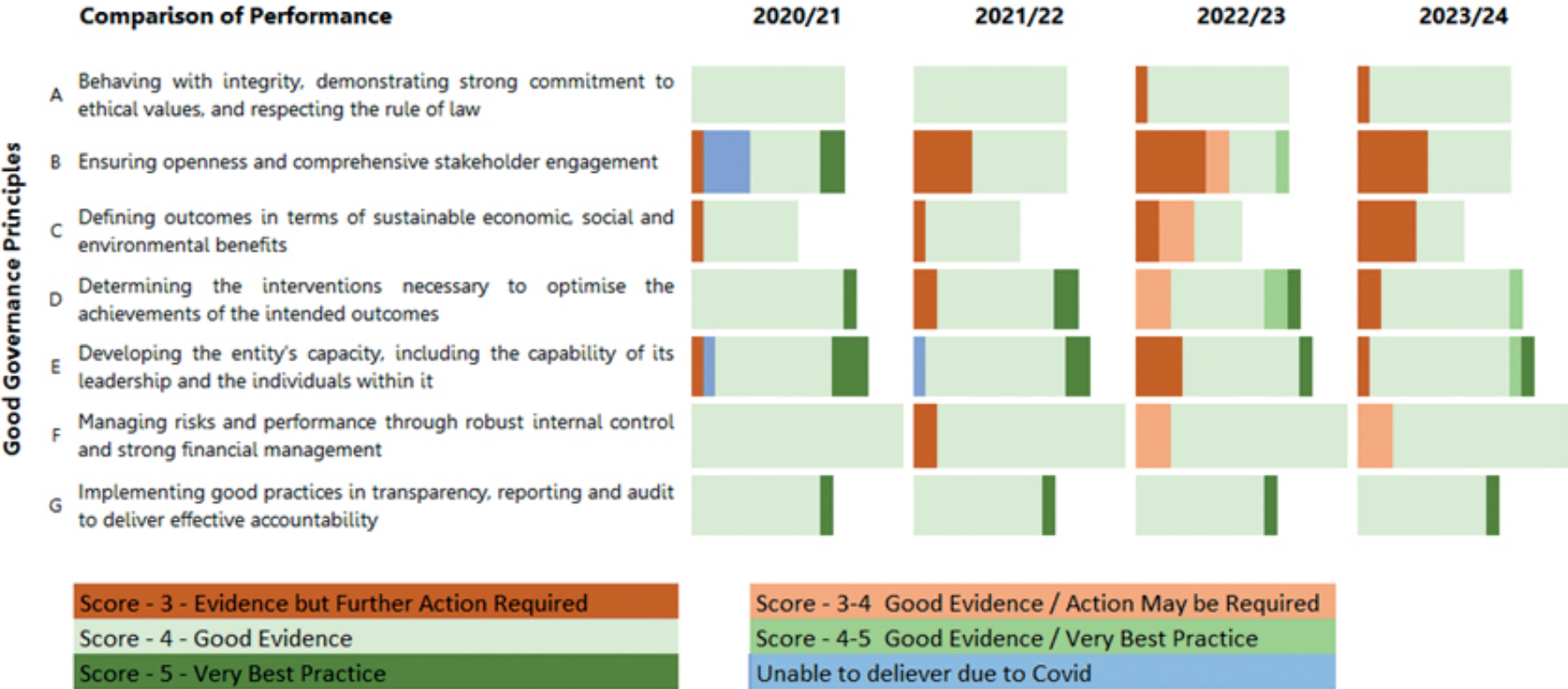
In the Annual Governance Statement, we, the Council:

- Acknowledge our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance;
- Summarise the key elements of that governance framework and the roles of those responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment;
- Describe how we have monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of our governance arrangements in year, and any planned changes in the coming period;
- Provide details of how we have responded to any issue(s) identified in last year's governance statement;
- Report on any governance issues identified from this review and provide a commitment to addressing them; and
- In referring to the Council, this includes its group relationship with other entities such as New Homes and Newydd

The Annual Governance Statement reports on the governance arrangements that has been in place at Flintshire County Council during the financial year 2023/24 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

Annual Governance Statement

Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Council's Governance Arrangement



There will not be a separate action for those scored 3-4 if the issue has already been covered by actions to address those scored a 3

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Corporate Self-assessment

The Corporate Self-Assessment is a comprehensive assessment of the corporate organisation and not a detailed assessment of the performance of each service portfolio, the assessment themes are designed in this way. The Corporate Self-assessment is meant to provide a platform for assurance and self-improvement and would lead to an improvement plan for the organisation.

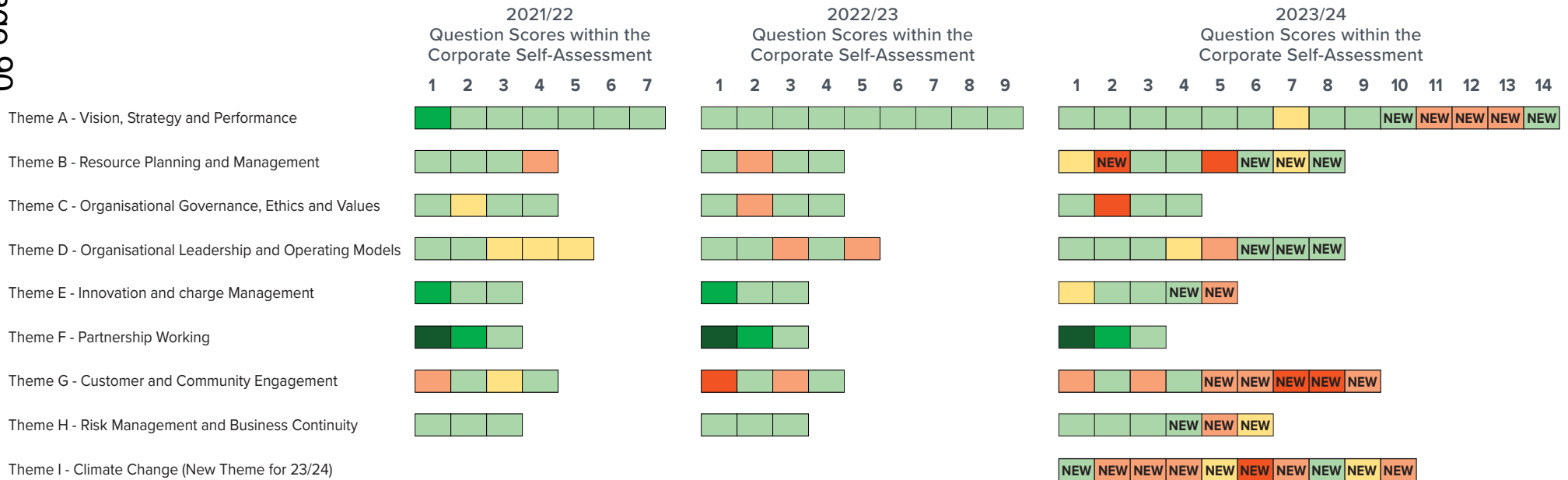
The Corporate Self-Assessment model focuses on a number of themes and considers a number of core questions within each of these themes. As with all models there will inevitably be overlaps across themes, however, the themes are sufficiently defined and demarked

to avoid too much overlapping or duplication. This year, the Corporate Self-Assessment also incorporates a number of additional questions and a new theme to cover areas that will be considered within the Panel Performance Assessment.

Building on the approach in 2021 the Corporate Self-assessment has a stronger focus on i) a more proportionate and targeted collection of evidence and ii) the analysis of evidence, focusing on the strengths, areas for development and the impact that is being achieved. This approach will help the formulation of the action plan.

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Comparison between 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 Corporate Self Assessments



■ Score 5 - Very Best Practice (1% ■ Score 4/5 (1% ■ Score 4 - Good Evidence (58%) ■ Score 3/4 (16%) ■ Score 3 - Evidence but Further Action Required (19%)
 ■ Score 2/3 - Some Evidence but Lacking in Key Areas (4%) ■ Score 2 - Some Evidence but Lacking in Key Areas (1%)

Note: Two additional questions were added to the 22/23 Corporate Self-assessment within Theme A

Note: A total of 32 new questions and a new theme (Theme I) were added to the 23/24 Corporate Self-assessment

Additional Background Information

There are a number of related documents which support the Annual Performance Report and are available on Flintshire County Council’s website.

- Council Plan 2023-28
- Social Services Annual Performance Report
- Welsh Language Standards
- Strategic Equality Plan
- Risk Management Framework
- Corporate Self-assessment
- Previous Annual Performance Reports



Thank you for reading our Annual Performance Report for 2023/24.

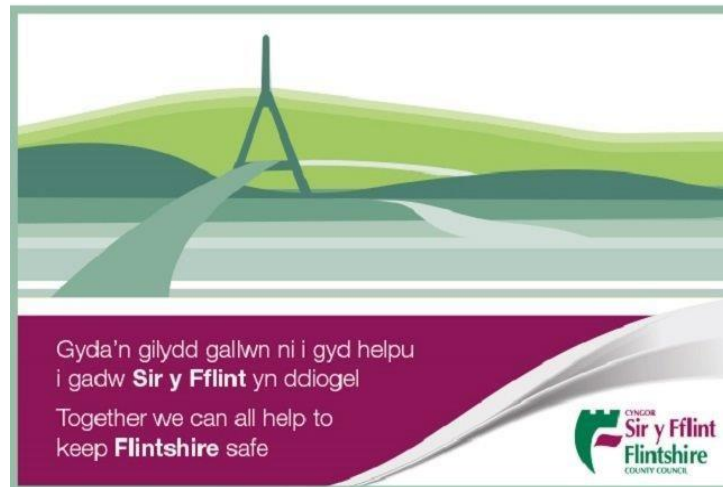
Your views and suggestions about how we might improve the content and layout of the Annual Performance Report for future years are welcome.

Please contact the Performance and Risk Management Team:
Email: PRM@flintshire.gov.uk

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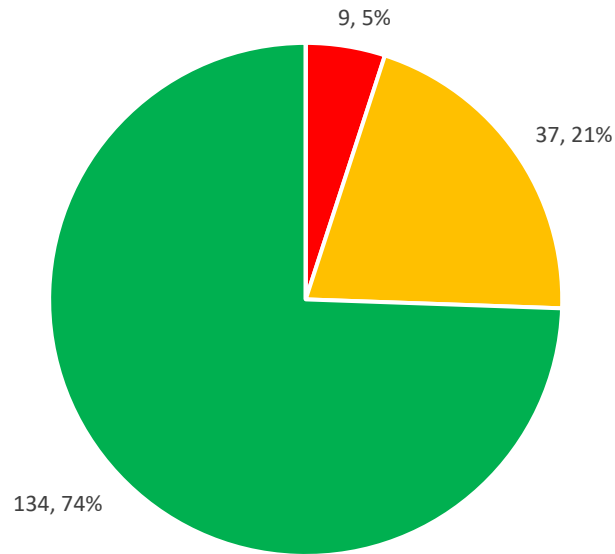


Council Plan End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2023/24



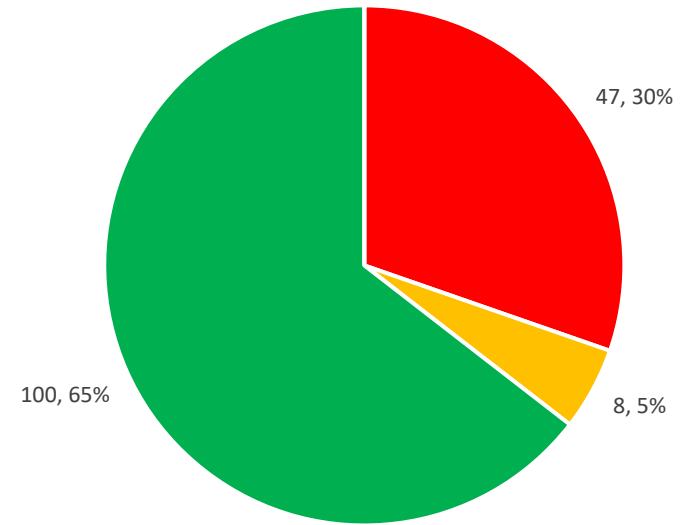
Analysis

Council Plan - Action RAG Status



■ Off Track ■ Monitor ■ On Track

Council Plan - Measure RAG Status



■ Off Track ■ Monitor ■ On Track

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- Key**
- ▲ Red: Limited Progress – delay in scheduled activity and, not on track.
 - Amber: Satisfactory Progress – some delay in scheduled activity, but broadly on track.
 - ★ Green: Good Progress – activities completed on schedule and on track.

Actions Off Track

Priority	Sub-Priority	Action	RAG
Affordable and Accessible Housing	Social Housing	Increase the Council's housing portfolio by building social housing properties and affordable properties for North East Wales (NEW) Homes	▲
		Support our tenants to access technology and create sustainable digital communities	▲
Green Society and Environment	Active and Sustainable Travel Options	Declassification of hazardous routes across the county where appropriate through the implementation of engineering initiatives	▲
	Circular Economy	Achieve Welsh Government recycling targets	▲
		Promote the option to reuse and repair unwanted items at Household Recycling Centres by partnering with local Charities or social enterprises	▲
Economy	Rural Regeneration	Recruit a Digital Connectivity Officer to support rural communities to access better quality connectivity options	▲
	Reducing Worklessness	Deliver mentoring and wider support programmes to assist disadvantaged people to re-engage with the labour market	▲
A Well Managed Council	People	Reduce the use of agency workers	▲
	Flintshire Assets	Review of Industrial Estate Strategy (Area by Area)	▲

Measures Off Track

Priority	Sub-Priority	Measure	RAG
Poverty	Food Poverty	Number of residents supported by the “Hospital to Home” meals service	▲
Affordable and Accessible Housing	Housing Support and Homeless Prevention	Number of presentations to the homeless service	▲
		Percentage of successful prevention outcomes for homelessness under Housing (Wales) Act 2014	▲
		Percentage of successful relief outcomes for homelessness under Housing (Wales) Act 2014	▲
		Number of households accommodated by the Council under Housing (Wales) Act 2014 homeless duties	▲
		Average length of stay (days) for those households in interim homeless accommodation under Housing (Wales) Act 2014	▲
		Housing Needs and Housing Options	Number of applicants rehoused via SARTH by All Housing Partners
	Number of households rehoused with significant adaptations requirements		▲
	Social Housing	Number of Council Homes under construction	▲
		Number of Affordable Homes completed via NEW Homes	▲

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Measure	RAG
		Increase in stock capacity correlates with demand profile	▲
		Total number of Medium Disabled Adaptations completed	▲
		Average number of days to complete a Medium Disabled adaptation	▲
		Average number of days to complete a Large Disabled adaptation	▲
	Private Rented Sector	Landlords engaged through Flintshire Landlord Forum	▲
Green Society and Environment	Net Zero Carbon Council	Percentage of Councillors received carbon related training	▲
		Percentage of employees received carbon related training	▲
		Number of contracts with carbon impact assessed	▲
	Climate Change and Adaptation	Increase in carbon sequestered (Kg/tCO2e)	▲
	Flood Risk Management Strategy	Completion of the Flood Risk Management Strategy by the revised Welsh Government due date (March 2024)	▲
	Fleet Strategy	Number of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles on Fleet	▲
	Active and Sustainable Travel Options	Number of hazardous routes declassified through the Implementation of Active Travel infrastructure to provide safe routes to schools	▲

Priority	Sub-Priority	Measure	RAG
	Circular Economy	Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted	▲
		Reduce the tonnage of residual waste collected from residential properties	▲
		Increase the tonnage of food waste collected from residential properties	▲
		Obtain Welsh Government funding to implement a reuse initiative at the household recycling centres	▲
		Implement a trial for the delivery of local benefits/local recycling targets initiative	▲
Economy	Rural Regeneration	Digital Connectivity Officer appointed - June 2023	▲
		Rural needs report completed by March 2024	▲
	Town Centre Regeneration	Completion of initial 3 (of 7) Place Making Plans in partnership with a range of stakeholders	▲
	Local Development Plan (LDP) Targets	Completion of first LDP Annual Monitoring Report and submission to Welsh Government (January 2024)	▲
		Completion of annual review of LDP housing trajectory	▲
		Contribution to the scoping of the form and content of the North Wales Strategic Development Plan	▲

Priority	Sub-Priority	Measure	RAG
	Reducing Worklessness	Number of individuals receiving support	▲
Personal and Community Well-being	Safeguarding	Percentage of Pre-birth assessments completed within timescales	▲
	A Well Connected, Safe and Clean Local Environment	Number of targeted environmental educational campaigns undertaken promote improved Local Environmental Quality	▲
Education and Skills	Educational Engagement and Achievement	Reduction in the number of permanent exclusions	▲
		Reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions	▲
	Digital Learning Opportunities	Number of Youth Work Sessions Delivered - Digital	▲
	Welsh Education Strategic Plan (WESP)	Number of Year 11 pupils studying Welsh	▲
A Well Managed Council	People	The number of working days lost per full time equivalent (FTE) local authority employees lost due to sickness absence	▲
		Percentage of permanent employees who leave within first year of employment	▲
		Percentage of employees who have completed all of mandatory modules	▲

Priority	Sub-Priority	Measure	RAG
	Flintshire Assets	Commercial rent review completed: To increase rental income in line with prevailing market rents to make sure that rental income is optimised. To ensure rental consistency within estates	▲
		County Hall Master Plan options appraisal/strategy: To develop a plan which will provide the blueprint for the redevelopment of County Hall site.	▲
	Digital	80% of telephone calls to the corporate Contact Centre answered	▲
	Partnerships	Number of organisations who sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant	▲

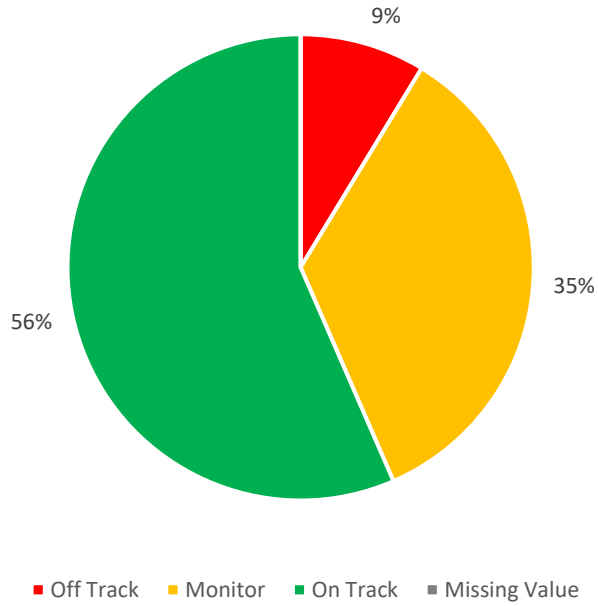
Affordable and Accessible Housing

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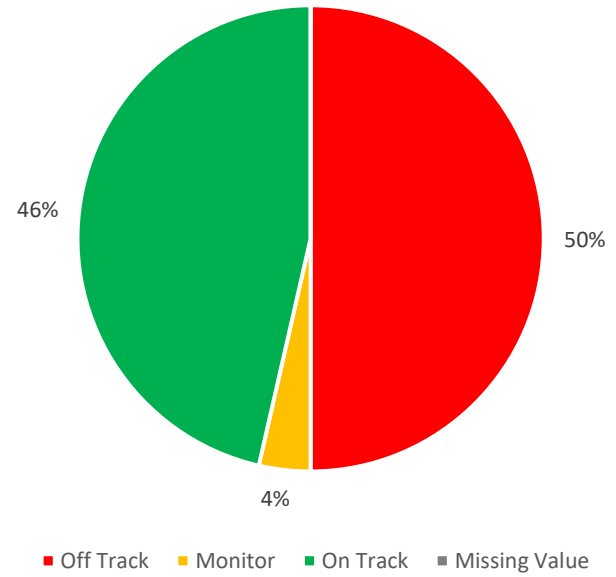
Well-being Objective: Housing in Flintshire meeting the needs of our residents and supporting safer communities

Affordable and Accessible Housing Overall Performance

Affordable and Accessible Housing - Action RAG Status







Affordable and Accessible Housing - Measure RAG Status



Housing Support and Homeless Prevention

	Action	Percentage Complete	RAG	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC008T	Promote housing support and homeless prevention services with our residents and partners	100%	★	<p>Work continues to promote services through the development of website content and active engagement with residents electronically, which for many is a preferred method of sourcing information. Additionally, officers regularly attend local activities to promote services and support offers through groups such as local Community Hubs, Children's Services Forum and Citizen Advice Bureau frontline worker events and the Flintshire Support Network (FSN). Due to increased service demand progress against this action has been slower than intended within the last quarter.</p> <p>The Ending Homelessness Board has established a Communication and Workforce delivery group, now meeting on a regular basis. Critical friend activities have been undertaken by delivery group members to review website content available on the Council's website. Resident involvement activities are also scheduled with residents from the homeless hub to provide further feedback. Officers continue to engage with local partners to promote services and network to raise the profile of Housing Support and Homelessness and ensure Homelessness is everyone's business.</p> <p>Work continues to review and enhance the current suite of leaflets and letters linked to housing support and homelessness and the Council will seek to engage residents again for insight and ensure these resources meet their needs.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC009T	Commission a wide range of housing related support that meets the needs of the people of Flintshire	60%	●	<p>A tender was published for a Complex Needs Supported Housing Project Age 25+ but all bids received were unsuccessful. The Council are revisiting the specification, costings etc., so the tender can be re-published. The Council have recently finalised the Families Floating Support tender and in the next few weeks this tender will be published. The Housing Support Gateway allocation has recently received a 7.8% increase, with the Welsh Government Minister providing clear expectation that this should be used to address pay pressures in the first instance and assist commissioners in supporting providers to deliver on our broader commitment to Fair Work and the Real Living Wage.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC010T	Ensure a multi-agency partnership approach to homeless prevention and develop a culture where homelessness is "everyone's business"	100%	★	<p>The Ending Homelessness Board has been established with full terms of reference and officer membership confirmed. The first meeting was held in December 2023. There is representation from across the Council with each portfolio nominating a representative to sit on the Board. The following delivery groups have now met 1) Communications and Workforce Development 2) Homeless Pressures Accommodation Supply 3) Partnerships, Processes and Protocols and adopted clear terms of reference and workplans which link to the action plan for rapid rehousing. Engagement with internal partners has been positive, however, more work on rapid rehousing is required with external partners as part of the rapid rehousing transition plan. A recent review of the Council's homelessness services by Audit Wales identified particular strengths in regard to partnership working with significant praise from partners and also in regard to the Council's collaborative nature of housing support and homelessness services, as reported to Cabinet in March 2024.</p>

	Action	Percentage Complete	RAG	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC011T	Ensure when homelessness does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurring	100%		Housing Support and Homelessness services continue to explore every opportunity to prevent homelessness and reduce escalations in housing hardships that may lead to risk of homelessness. As reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in March 2024, it is clear that a high percentage (42%) of all homeless presentations resulting in access to emergency housing were 'homeless on the day' cases. This means prevention activity within the statutory framework of 56 day prevention duties are a limited tool available to the Homeless Team. Further work is required through the partnership's protocols and problem case delivery group and the soon to be established data insight delivery group, to understand whether those households presenting on the day are known to wider partner services who could assist in identifying risk factors and assist people to access services earlier. This would support the aspiration for homelessness to rare. Barriers to achieving shorter periods of homelessness (brief) are significantly hindered through a lack of 1 bed general needs housing, however, the rapid rehousing transition plan seeks to address the issue of supply and access to suitable housing for those who experience homelessness. We continue to offer follow on support for those people who exit homelessness to ensure tenancy sustainability and reduce the likelihood of repeat occurrences of homelessness. Recent announcement by Welsh Government of a 7.8% uplift in Housing Support Grant is welcomed and will help sustain and respond to increased demand for housing support and prevention services.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC036T	Identify a site for a young person's homeless hub offering accommodation and support services	25%		We are currently revisiting and refining the details of the brief and developing a revised specification with colleagues from Youth Justice, Homelessness, Youth Services and Social Services for a 'Hub' approach. In addition, visits to existing hubs in other authorities are being arranged to understand the best designs and service configurations.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC037T	Progress build project for the new homeless hub accommodation.	50%		After revisiting and refining the detail of the brief a feasible design has now been received from the architects. We have informally consulted with Planning Service and a positive response to the proposals has been received. Discussions have also taken place with the Welsh Government in relation to pre-application technical advice and funding.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC038T	Deliver our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan	100%		The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan has now been submitted to Welsh Government and will be made available on the Council's website for public access and visibility in Quarter 1, 2024/5. The Ending Homelessness Board has been established and will oversee delivery of the Transition Plan. Delivery Groups have been established to take forward specific actions within the Transition Plan and report progress to the Board. The move to Rapid Rehousing is a long-term change programme. To support this, we will be recruiting a Rapid Rehousing Strategic Co-Ordinator as part of the Housing and Prevention Service restructure to support delivery and co-ordination of the Plan.

Housing Support and Homeless Prevention

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC007M	Number of presentations to the homeless service	2,006.00	1,400.00	1,598.00		
<p>Presentations to the homeless service continue to be significant. Over the year a total of 2,006 presentations were made in 2023/24. Of those households who were identified as at risk of homelessness or homeless and approached the Council for support a total of 1,276 have progressed to a Homeless Assessment (Section 62 Housing (Wales) Act 2014) in the year. Those who did not progress were either offered advice and assistance, as they were not at risk of homelessness, ineligible, or further contact was not made when officers were seeking to undertake the Homeless Assessment. In the previous year, a total of 911 Section 62 Homeless Assessments were completed. This shows a 40% increase in demand for service.</p>						
CHC008M	Percentage of successful prevention outcomes for homelessness under Housing (Wales) Act 2014	61.00%	70.00%	59.25%		
<p>A total of 403 prevention outcomes have been recorded during the year. 234 of these were positive prevention outcomes where these households were supported to avoid homelessness. Those who did become homeless progressed onto other duties and were assisted accordingly by the Homeless Team under statutory duties. It is noted that fewer prevention duties have been accepted in the final quarter of the year. This highlights the challenge of operating a homeless prevention service, within current legislative framework, when high numbers of people present as homeless on the day and often fulfilling a priority need category triggering additional duties for the Council around homeless accommodation.</p>						
CHC009M	Percentage of successful relief outcomes for homelessness under Housing (Wales) Act 2014	40.00%	45.00%	44.26%		
<p>A total of 686 relief outcomes were recorded during the year. 264 of these were positive relief outcomes and these households were supported to exit homelessness. When breaking down the successful outcomes across reporting periods there were 60 positive outcomes in Quarter 1, 72 in Quarter 2, 83 in Quarter 3 and 48 in Quarter 4. This demonstrates significant challenges relating to homelessness and housing market conditions with fewer opportunities to move people on and help them exit homelessness.</p>						

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC010M	Number of households accommodated by the Council under Housing (Wales) Act 2014 homeless duties	282.00	150.00	184.00	<p>150</p> <p>282.00</p>	

At the end of the reporting period, there were 282 households (363 people) in interim housing. This is a significant increase over the course of the year and reflects the ongoing pressures within the homelessness system. Annual target was to sustain a similar level of households in homeless accommodation. Whilst the number of homeless households accommodated by the Council is a concern this is not unique to Flintshire. The breakdown of household types is as follows; Single Male 199, Single Female 40, Families 124, Rough sleeping figures remain low (1).

CHC011M	Average length of stay (days) for those households in interim homeless accommodation under Housing (Wales) Act 2014	202.00	130.00	95.28	<p>130</p> <p>202.00</p>	
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Pressures on homeless accommodation continue to be significant with high numbers of households assisted with accommodation due to homelessness. There are significant barriers to move on from homeless accommodation, due to lack of available social housing (of the right types in the right places) and a difficult private rented sector. This means that people are remaining in homeless accommodation longer. The homeless cohort average stay was 151.33 days in Quarter 4. When broken down further by household type, singles and couples without children are reported as 206 day average with families reported as 177 days average. The total average days for the full year is 202 days.

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC012M	Number of referrals received through the Housing Support Gateway	2,007.00	1,400.00	1,447.00		

The Housing Support Grant Gateway (HSG) serves as our central referral system, facilitating access to essential support services. A total of 559 referrals were recorded during Quarter 4. For the full financial year, the HSG Gateway received 2,007 referrals. Referrals have increased by 7% compared to Quarter 4 of the previous financial year. Referrals increased by 12% from the preceding quarter (Quarter 3), indicating a notable increase in demand for support services. This is in line with trends from previous years.

Significant efforts have been made to promote our support services, resulting in heightened awareness and increased referral rates. Continuous engagement in promotional and outreach activities has contributed to the continued growth in referral numbers.

A recent review of the Housing & Prevention Service website hub has recently taken place to understand user experience and accessibility. A service user feedback session was conducted to gain insights into the preferences and needs of our target audience. Emphasis was placed on understanding how users navigate the website to identify areas for improvement. Valuable feedback obtained from the session will inform strategic enhancements to the website, ensuring it remains user-centric and responsive to the needs of our stakeholders.

The HSG Gateway continues to play an important role in connecting individuals with essential support services. The significant increase in referrals is evidence of the effectiveness of our promotional efforts and ongoing initiatives. Moving forward, we remain committed to optimizing service accessibility and encouraging feedback to drive continuous improvement to better serve our community.

Housing Needs and Housing Options

	Action	Percentage Complete	RAG	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC016T	Develop self-service approaches that enable people to identify their own housing options through online support	60%	●	<p>The website is currently under development to include additional self-service housing options advice. Developments will include a waiting time calculator for being rehoused into Social Housing and an eligibility tool.</p> <p>Applicants were recently invited to take part in a customer satisfaction survey. Respondents were asked to identify what services or functions they would like to access digitally. The responses included having the ability to notify the Council of changes in circumstances, complete reviews etc. This data will help inform future enhancements to our current online services.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC039T	Create a Single Point of Access service for housing help and advice	60%	●	<p>The dedicated Homeless Duty Officer pilot findings are still being analysed and will help inform future plans for service delivery. Any changes to the delivery of the Homeless Prevention Service will be embedded as part of the pending restructure.</p>

Housing Needs and Housing Options

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC013M	Number of applicants on the Common Housing Register	2,067.00	2,400.00	2,424.00	<p>2,067.00</p>	
<p>At the end of Quarter 4 there were 2,067 live applications for Social Housing. The decrease in live applications can be linked to the Housing Register Team now only being responsible for Flintshire's register providing capacity to undertake data cleansing, dealing with cancellations and suspensions in a more timely manner. However, the demand for Social Housing remains high compared to the properties that become available each year.</p>						
CHC014M	Customer satisfaction data for the Housing Register Service (%)	40.00%	40.00%	52.27%	<p>40.00%</p>	
<p>In January all applicants were approached and invited to take part in the survey. 210 responses were received. When first approaching the Housing Register Service, 50% of applicants stated the service received was Excellent or Good. It is however noted in the following table that satisfaction drops when later asked to rate the 'Overall satisfaction with the Housing Register Service' where the response of Excellent or Good drops to 32%. This likely accounts for the fact that: 1) Residents are experiencing increased waiting times for social housing which creates general dissatisfaction with the services and assistance offered. 2) Changes being implemented to enable more digital access are yet to be fully rolled out.</p>						
CHC015M	Number of applicants rehoused via SARTH by All Housing Partners	539.00	610.00	534.00	<p>539.00</p>	
<p>There has been a total of 539 applicants rehoused via the Housing Register this year as follows; 62 were rehoused into Clwyd Alyn properties, Flintshire County Council 422, Grwp Cynefin 11, Wales and West 44. In Quarter 4 of this year the breakdown was as follows; Clwyd Alyn 16, Flintshire County Council 105, Grwp Cynefin 3, Wales and West 13 which totals 137 moves.</p>						

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC016M	Number of applicants rehoused via SARTH by Flintshire County Council	422.00	440.00	366.00		
<p>This year 422 applicants moved into Flintshire County Council properties of which 105 applicants moved in Quarter 4.</p>						
CHC017M	Number of households rehoused with significant adaptations requirements	9.00	10.00	15.00		
<p>This measure seeks to highlight the work of the specialist housing panel and the rehousing of households with significant property adaptation requirements. Due to the complexity of some applicant's property need, the traditional route of the Common Housing Register and existing stock would not routinely meet the needs of this cohort of residents. The specialist housing panel therefore seeks to focus on those residents who without creative and innovative housing solutions, would fail to have their housing needs met. At the end of the reporting year there are 53 live applicants being reviewed by the specialist housing panel and 9 households have been successfully rehoused in the last 12 months. A further 6 households are under offer and awaiting works to be completed.</p>						

Social Housing

	Action	Percentage Complete	RAG	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC019T <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); position: absolute; left: -40px; top: 50%; font-weight: bold;">Page 111</div>	Work with housing association partners to build new social housing properties and additional affordable properties	90%	●	<p>There have been delays to the Programme, however, the Council continue to work closely with our Registered Social Landlords (RSL) partners to mitigate the various challenges and delays. These include the increase in the cost of living, which led to Contractors entering administration and withdrawing from contracts. Contractor insolvency and repricing/funding pressures impacted on start on site for Northern Gateway (100 units), Mynydd Isa (56 units) and completion of Station Road (8 units) and Buckley (9 units).</p> <p>Alternative contractors have been procured for Northern Gateway (100 units). Mynydd Isa (56 units) and are now on site and in contract. Expected contract full completion date for Mynydd Isa is set for November 2025, with a phased handover approach, with Phase 1 being available January / February 2025.</p> <p>In relation to Buckley (9 homes), the RSL obtained Board approval on the February 2024, for the revised contract and completion is now expected June 2024.</p> <p>Build started on Station Road (8 units) in August 2023, however as the original contractor went into administration an alternative contractor had to be sourced to complete this development and expected completion is October 2024.</p> <p>Additional Social Housing Grant funding was required to complete both Land at Buckley (9 units) and Station Road (8 units).</p> <p>An outline planning application for another scheme (62 homes) has faced delays and the RSL resubmitted the outline planning application, which was agreed in March 2024.</p> <p>Regular meetings continue to be held with the RSL's to try and identify any potential risks and delays to schemes in order to try and ensure that, where possible, mitigation and remedial action/s may be taken.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC020T	Increase the Council's housing portfolio by building social housing properties and affordable properties for North East Wales (NEW) Homes	0%	▲	<p>There has been slippage in Quarter 4 due to legal issues around Section 106 relating to six properties and completion delays affecting seven properties via Redrow. The Council had expected to have completed these within this financial year, however, it is anticipated these 13 properties will complete next financial year (2024/25).</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC021T	Ensure the Council's housing stock maintains the current Welsh Housing Quality Standards	50%	★	<p>The Council continues to target properties that do not meet the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) 65 rating through various improvement works. This includes, installation of efficient central heating systems, renewable technology (Solar Panels and Air Source Heating) and extensive external refurbishment contracts comprising of new windows, doors, loft insulation and roof coverings, the energy performance and thermal efficiency of our properties is addressed and improved. Our current average SAP rating for our entire stock is 73.5%.</p> <p>The Council are currently moving towards incorporating our decarbonisation measures into our investment programmes of refurbishment works to our tenanted homes.</p> <p>The Council are also currently working towards drafting a new compliance policy in relation to the new Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2023, which will be incorporated into our investment programmes, along with our standards and specifications of works.</p>

	Action	Percentage Complete	RAG	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC022T	Finalise the plan for the de-carbonisation of Council homes in line with Welsh Government guidance to ensure their thermal efficiency is optimised and the cost of heating homes are minimised	50%	★	The Decarbonisation Strategy is currently in draft form and the service is currently reviewing the associated work programmes and plans. The Strategy will be finalised, alongside the programme of works, over the next three years in line with Welsh Government deadlines. The delayed launch of Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2023 has impacted upon timescales. Contract holder and Member workshops will be scheduled, and updates conveyed through Programme Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and management team meetings.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC023T	Work with residents to ensure our communities are well managed, safe, and sustainable places to live	80%	★	Staff service improvement groups are working through priorities as identified through the last Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) to see where improvements can be made.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC024T	Support our tenants to access technology and create sustainable digital communities	10%	▲	The original business plan requesting Wi-Fi to be installed in the HRA community centres was declined by the Digital Strategy Programme Board, therefore an updated business case is being developed and will be presented to the board in the future.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC026T	In partnership with Denbighshire Council, create a new Dynamic Procurement System in order to ensure CPR's are met and provide a wider opportunity for tendering Disabled Adaptation projects	50%	●	This project has had numerous delays due to workforce absences and recruitment. In addition, due to a number of other framework agreements expiring at the end of March 2024, resources have been reallocated to focusing on these.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC040T	Ensure that any new social housing stock meets Development Quality Requirements (DQR) standard energy efficiency A rating	100%	★	Welsh Government published the refreshed Welsh Housing Quality (WHQS) standards on the 24th October 2023. All properties will be designed to meet the updated standards and Development Quality Requirements (DQR).

Social Housing

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC018M	Number of Council Homes under construction	0.00	85.00	38.00		
<p>Schemes have slipped in the programme and are currently at Welsh Government Technical Approval stage before the planning applications can be submitted with a view to being on site in the last quarter of 2024/25. Mostyn (30) and homeless provision at Duke Street and Park Lane (6) were technically on site at the start of April 2023 i.e. this financial year and are now included in the number of Council Homes completed figure. The Council anticipate that by Quarter 4 next financial year, we should be on site with 55 homes. These include Wirral View (4), Ffordd Llanarth (20), Station Road (4), Alyn Road (4), Borough Grove (4), School Lane (3) and Altami Road (16).</p>						
CHC019M	Number of Council Homes completed	50.00	22.00	0.00		
<p>Whilst the figures show that we are ahead of programme this year with the number of homes completed, this is a result of slippage from the schemes included in the last financial year's figures. This figure includes Mostyn (30) and homeless provision at Duke Street and Park Lane (6) which were technically on site at the start of April 2023 i.e., this financial year and are now included in the number of Council Homes completed figure. This figure also includes acquisitions where Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) funding has been utilised.</p>						
CHC020M	Number of Affordable Homes under construction via NEW Homes	13.00	0.00	6.00		
<p>There has been slippage in Quarter 4 due to some legal issues around Section 106, relating to six properties and completion delays relating to seven properties, which was expected to have been completed this financial year. However, we anticipate that these 13 properties will complete in the next financial year (2024/25).</p>						

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Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC021M	Number of Affordable Homes completed via NEW Homes.	0.00	30.00	0.00		
<p>There has been slippage in Quarter 4 due to some legal issues around Section 106 details relating to six properties and completion delays relating to seven properties via Redrow which we expected to have been completed this financial year. However, we anticipate that these 13 properties will complete early next financial year.</p>						
CHC022M	Number of Residential Social Landlords (RSL's) homes under construction	173.00	96.00	22.00		
<p>This figure includes schemes, which have been delayed and also those where additional funding has been provided by the Welsh Government. This includes Buckley (9) and Station Road (8), 100 units at Northern Gateway and 56 units at Mynydd Isa.</p>						
CHC023M	Number of Residential Social Landlord (RSL's) homes completed	30.00	33.00	43.00		
<p>We were anticipating that a three bed additional needs scheme would have completed by the end of March 2024. However, due to delays in acquiring the property, completion is due end of April 2024.</p>						
CHC026M	Total number of Small Disabled Adaptations completed	964.00	320.00	987.00		
<p>The referrals received have been higher than expected for a second year and therefore, there are plans to review this and gain understanding of the reasons why and the target to be reviewed in the process.</p>						

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC027M	Average number of days to complete a Small Disabled adaptation	14.00	28.00	7.00		
<p>The Care and Repair team undertake all minor works and are currently meeting Welsh Government targets. These are small adaptations, which are classed as priority. They are to prevent risk, hospital admissions, and include fitting grab rails and handrails within properties.</p>						
CHC034M	Total number of Disabled Adaptations completed	1,050.00	428.00	1,097.00		
<p>We have far surpassed the original target for this year and this has been the result of an increase in the number of minor adaptations referrals received and completed.</p>						
CHC036M	100% spend of Welsh Government funding for the PDP	96.00%	100.00%			
<p>There were 26 schemes that were originally prioritised for inclusion within the main programme. Although not all of these schemes were able to be progressed for various reasons circa 96% of the allocated Social Housing Grant of £13.3m has been drawn down this financial year. In addition, the Council also submitted an expression of interest form in relation to Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) funding in 2023/24. The Council were initially awarded circa £1.6m. Subsequently, at the end of 2023, the Council applied for additional TACP funding of around £1.1m, which was agreed by the Welsh Government and we anticipate that our total allocation of TACP in 2023/24 will be at least £3m.</p>						

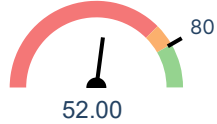

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC037M	Increase in stock capacity correlates with demand profile	48.00	56.00			
<p>Over 70% of the programme for development consists of one or two bedroom units. The housing prospectus has identified a higher percentage of housing is required for single person households under retirement age and for smaller households. There is an historic imbalance in the proportion of housing available to this group, with most social housing consisting of two or three bedroom houses for families and also sheltered housing for people over the age of 55. Of the 80 additional units provided 60% consist of 1 and 2 bed units.</p>						
CHC038M	Maintain the Welsh Housing Quality Standard to all Flintshire County Council stock (%)	100.00%	100.00%			
<p>The Council continue to maintain the existing Welsh Housing Quality Standards whilst implementing the new standards accordingly. The new standards will be measured from April 2024 onwards.</p>						
CHC039M	Total number of Medium Disabled Adaptations completed	77.00	100.00			
<p>Unfortunately, due to staff absences within the team, jobs were not progressed as quickly as usual within Quarter 4. This target was set using an average of last years completed cases, however it is noted that is it difficult to compare data as the number of completed cases varies every year. The number of adaptations is dependent upon the number of referrals received from Social Services. The number of referrals the Council will receive yearly from the public is unknown.</p>						

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC042M	Average number of days to complete a Medium Disabled adaptation	136.00	122.00			
<p>Unfortunately, the target timescales for medium jobs has not been met, there have been delays on some cases which have been caused by unforeseen events. The Christmas period and recent spells of bad weather has also created delays and impacted on the number of jobs completed in Quarter 4. Medium sized adaptations can be wide in scope and therefore, can take a range of days to complete.</p>						
CHC043M	Total number of Large Disabled Adaptations completed	9.00	8.00			
<p>Having had staffing shortages in 2021/22, meant that only four large adaptations in 2022/23 were completed. All vacancies were filled successfully and we have exceeded our target for 2023/24.</p>						
CHC044M	Average number of days to complete a Large Disabled adaptation	508.00	456.00			
<p>All outstanding legacy cases have now been completed, however they have still had an adverse effect on the current target, although there has been improvement in Quarter 4. Although meeting this target can be difficult when cases are complex, the aspiration for next year is to meet the target, especially as all outstanding legacy cases have been completed.</p>						

Private Rented Sector

	Action	Percentage Complete	RAG	Comment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC028T	Engage with private sector tenants, giving them a voice, and responding to their needs	100%	★	The Council continue to work with The Pension Advisory Cymru and North Wales Local Authority partners to increase resident engagement in the private rented sector. This is proving challenging but efforts continue and communication and awareness activities are ongoing. With the recent changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rates and uplifts due 1st April 2024 the group have focused on responding to questions about the new LHA Rates. A further factsheet has been produced and released in March 2024 about this issue.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC029T	Work in partnership with landlords and private sector agents to better understand their needs	90%	●	Work continues with regards to housing support and advice for landlords when they have issues with residents. This is positive prevention activity to avoid housing problems and risks of homelessness. Where landlords are selling properties we now have a purchase offer and an established process in partnership with Housing Strategy and Empty Homes Teams. This is in direct response to landlords telling us they are selling up and leaving the market. The action is not 100% complete as the Council had intended to have more Landlord Forums in partnership with the National Residents Landlords Association but have not been able to complete these Forum Meetings as initially intended.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CHC044T	Create a Private Sector Housing Support Team	100%	✔	In terms of the actions that the service can take to deliver this task, we are 100% complete. The Private Sector function for Housing & Prevention Service will sit within the Homefinder Team (remit housing advice, housing register, homeless accommodation, landlord support). All jobs have been costed into the restructure and currently undergoing job evaluation. Confirmation has been received that Housing and Prevention Service is a priority for job evaluation and restructure.

Private Rented Sector

Measure	Measure Description	Actual	Target	Last Year	Performance	Performance Trend
CHC040M	Landlords engaged through Flintshire Landlord Forum	52.00	80.00			

The Landlord Forum has not met as frequently as we had hoped this year. Another online forum was held in January 2024 and 27 landlords and agents registered. The Forum agenda included sector specific updates from the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA); an overview of landlord support services offered by the Council and promotion of the Housing Support Gateway; and support available for contract holders. Council staff have also supported colleagues in the NRLA at regional events and coffee and catch-up sessions hosted by the NRLA.



**Communities and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Voids Management Update
Reporting period: Aug 2024**

Key figures			J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A
Number of new void properties in reporting period			39	25	17	38	39	37	39	36
Number of properties identified as difficult to let or subject to major capital investment			-	-	-	25	25	26	21	19
Number of properties completed ready for allocation			33	35	23	44	48	46	44	43
Number of allocation offers accepted			33	31	27	39	41	46	41	40
Number of lettings			34	30	25	31	28	40	37	42
Breakdown of total void figures	Housing Assets	Major voids	90	101	108	125	138	140	150	138
		Minor voids	63	51	54	49	48	35	26	17
		TBC	84	75	59	41	20	22	16	33
	Housing Management	High Demand	134	143	169	180	191	174	171	169
		In Progress	73	57	32	9	1	1	0	0
		Low Demand	30	27	20	26	14	22	21	19
Property Type	General Needs		105	103	114	104	96	97	98	97
	Sheltered		132	124	107	111	110	100	94	91
Property Type	1 bed		77	73	79	82	80	63	61	55
	2 bed		95	83	71	67	65	68	69	75
	3 bed		65	65	66	62	57	60	57	57
	4 bed		5	5	4	3	2	4	4	4
	4 bed plus		1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Capital District Areas	Buckley		29	27	29	22	21	17	18	19
	C'Quay & Shotton		37	34	31	32	29	31	29	27
	Deeside & Saltney		33	31	29	32	30	27	25	23
	Flint		61	62	61	59	59	54	55	54
	Holywell		56	53	50	44	43	40	36	37
	Mold		21	20	21	26	24	28	29	28
Total voids			237	227	221	215	206	197	192	188

Additional information

Provision of other information to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Top reasons for terminations:

- *Aug*
 - *Deceased (13)*
 - *Residential Care (8)*
 - *Moved to alternative accommodation (5)*

Work Allocation

Total number of voids being worked upon - 143

Low Demand assets

- **Bolingbroke Heights 2-Bed**
- **Castle Heights 2-Bed**
- **Richard Heights 2-Bed**

Reasons – Due to desirability concerns relating to the communal areas and open spaces, along with the existing service offer. Also relating to the bedroom tax applied to those persons under the age of 66.

- **Llwyn Aled**
- **Llwyn Beuno**

Reasons – Due to access and egress issues. Existing tenants (contract holders) along with any applicants who have refused an allocation offer, have expressed difficulties and or concerns with regards to the number of steps/ internal staircases.

- **Knights Green**

Reasons – Due to access and egress issues. Existing tenants (contract holders) along with any applicants who have refused an allocation offer, have expressed difficulties and or concerns with regards to the number of steps/ internal staircases.