

FRONT PAGE

As last year but change date to read 2014/15 instead of 2013/14

Also change the colour of the words Improvement Plan to a dark purple colour

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Welcome to Flintshire County Council's Improvement Plan for 2014/15

This Improvement Plan sets out our priorities for the 2014/15 Council year and what we aim to achieve.

Flintshire is a well-governed and progressive Council. We are performing well as a direct provider and commissioner of public services, and as a partner to others. Our recent track record in key services such as education, social care, housing, planning and street scene show that we do deliver on what we say we will do.

Everything we do is important to someone, so selecting a set of priorities for the year is never an easy task.

We have set four shared priorities with our partners at a County level, and eight priorities for the Council itself. The Council's current 8 priorities have been in place for a year and so will be familiar. These priorities still focus on being challenging with the emphasis being on making a real and noticeable impact.

Similarly to last year the plan sets out the full list of the Council's eight priorities and all the detailed sub-priorities for action, and then concentrates on highlighting the specific ones where we will make a bigger impact this year, page by page. All of our priorities remain important but in any one year a number of them will stand out for special attention. An explanation for the choice of each one is given.

For 2014/15 the priorities and sub-priorities have been reviewed to set:

- the priorities that will continue into 2014/15 for sustained attention;
- priorities that can now be removed as completion of a time-limited piece of work e.g. Single Status;
- priorities which could be merged e.g. School Improvement and School Modernisation; and
- emerging priorities for 2014/15 e.g. People Change and Development.

Over the five year life of the Council, 2014/15 being the third year, the full set of priorities will adapt, and the annual set of priorities selected for special attention will change according to need and circumstance.

We hope that you find the Plan both informative and uplifting. Your feedback on the Plan itself, and on what we aim to achieve, would be very welcome.

Insert pictures of Chief Exec and Leader

Contents Page

XX Welcome to Flintshire County Council's new style Improvement Plan

XX Setting our Priorities and Judging our Performance

XX Following the Plan – An Easy Guide

XX Priorities for the 2014/15 Improvement Plan

XX Priority: Housing

XX Priority: Living Well

XX Priority: Economy and Enterprise

XX Priority: Skills and Learning

XX Priority: Safe Communities

XX Priority: Poverty

XX Priority: Environment

XX Priority: Modern and Efficient Council

XX Statement of Responsibility

XX Contacts for Feedback and Review

Page numbers to be confirmed once document has been through Design

Setting Our Priorities and Judging our Performance

The priorities for Flintshire as a County have been set by the Council and its local public sector partners. We work together as a Local Service Board (LSB) combining our resources for the benefit of Flintshire.

The priorities for the County, shared by us all, have been selected for special attention where we believe that concentrated effort by the partners working together will make a big difference to the communities of Flintshire. The Priorities are:

- **Priority 1:** Leading by example as employers and Community Leaders
- **Priority 2:** People are safe
- **Priority 3:** Vulnerable people have their support needs met, and their wellbeing is promoted and enhanced
- **Priority 4:** Organisational environmental practices

The Council has also set a number of priorities for itself as an individual partner organisation. Setting priorities helps us focus our attention and resources on the things that matter most; these priorities are echoed in the Council's business plans. We are legally required to set priorities known as Improvement Objectives (under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009). We call these our Improvement Priorities.

In setting our Improvement Priorities we have to take a number of things into account from Welsh Government policy, to the expectations of our key partners, to our legal responsibilities, to the views of local people.

We then set our targets, and judge our performance against them by using a wide range of information both quantitative (performance judged by numbers) and qualitative (performance judged by feedback, the results of consultation etc.).

To ensure that we know how well we are doing in meeting the expectations for our priorities we have a series of 'measures' which we keep under regular review. These performance measures are set out for each of our priorities page by page. They are detailed more fully in a linked document.

Each of our sub-priorities is described individually on the following pages. We provide information about:

- The impact - what difference will be made
- Why the priority is important in 2014/15
- What we will do
- How we will measure achievement
- What risks we need to manage
- What some of our language means

We will let you know how well we have performed against our outcomes in two ways:

- 1) regular reports to the Council's Cabinet and Scrutiny committees, and
- 2) next years published Annual Performance Report for 2014/15.

Following the Plan – An Easy Guide

The following two pages set out the Council's eight standing priorities for the period for which it is elected - 2012-2017. The priorities are shown graphically in two sets of four. The purpose of these pages is to show both the standing priorities and the sub-priorities which support them, and the selected sub-priorities where we aim to make a big impact in 2014/15.

Each standing priority is illustrated with a different colour. For example, **Poverty** is orange and **Housing** is green. This colour coding should make the priorities easier to follow as the reader works through the document.

On the graphic illustration we have set out against each priority the impacts we aim to make. Under each impact we list the sub-priorities where action and achievement will help achieve the impact. A sub-priority is simply a specific programme of work on a given theme. Taken together, success in achieving the aims of a set of sub-priorities will deliver the ambition for the bigger, standing priority of the same theme.

Every organisation has to prioritise its attention and its resources to make an impact. The Council has selected a number of the sub-priorities for special attention in the 2014/15 Council year. The ones selected are highlighted in the graphic illustration with block colouring. Each of these selected sub-priorities then has a dedicated page to itself later in the document.

For example on page XX, you will see the priority for **Living Well**. This has two impacts:-

- Improving people's quality of life
- Helping more people to live independently and well at home

Both these impacts have at least one sub-priority selected for attention in 2014/15. The reason for selection is explained on their dedicated pages (pages XX and XX):-

- Independent Living
- Integrated Community Social and Health Services

All other sub-priorities not selected for special attention in 2014/15 continue to be important and are 'business as usual'.

The sub-priorities shown with a (insert shaking hands symbol) symbol are also County priorities which we share with our partners.

Partners: Coleg Cambria, Natural Resources Wales, Public Health Wales North Wales Police, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Wales Probation, Flintshire Local Voluntary Council, North Wales Fire & Rescue Service and Welsh Government

MAPS - 2 pages facing each other showing the priorities

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Regulation, Audit and Inspection

As a public organisation the Council is regularly inspected to examine and challenge its performance and effectiveness. This work is mainly undertaken by a number of appointed bodies including Wales Audit Office (WAO), Estyn and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate (CSSIW).

The latest report from the Wales Audit Office was the Annual Improvement Report June 2013 (link to Annual Improvement Report). There were no statutory recommendations made within this report and the findings about the Council were generally positive. The main findings being:

- *“In 2012-13, the Council made good progress against the improvement priorities we looked at and improved its overall performance against the national indicators.*
- *The Council has taken action to strengthen its approach to performance evaluation, but further work is required to harmonise its improvement planning and performance reporting arrangements.*
- *The Council has enhanced its arrangements for planning and supporting improvement, but further action is required to provide the rigour necessary to cope with the challenges ahead.*
- *The Council is likely to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement for 2014-15.”*

Our Annual Performance Report 2013/14 will contain more detailed findings of the work of our Auditors/Regulators along with our responses.

How Consultation Informs our Plan

The priorities set for the Improvement Plan were, from the outset, based on a wide range of previous consultations in service areas with both partners and representative groups (e.g. community safety, anti-poverty, education, economic development) and, in some cases, service users directly (e.g. housing).

There has been no one intensive consultation exercise on the Plan itself, by local choice, given this background. A local decision has been made by elected members to use their representative role to test the relevance of the priorities of Plan against local public opinion as explained in the Plan.

The Council remains open to feedback on the plan and amending it following new service based consultations at any time.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Housing	Extra Care Housing	Helping more people to live independently and well at home

This is a priority this year because we need to: -

- Meet local housing and support needs.
- Prioritise extra care to meet demand for semi-independent living building on our experience of our previous schemes
- Meet the housing and support needs of people with dementia.
- Reduce the demands for unscheduled health care by providing care support.
- Provide options to support independent living for persons with a disability.

What we will do in 2014/15

1. Develop and agree plans to extend our extra care provision to provide units in Flint and Holywell, providing 60 units in each location.

Achievement will be measured through: -

- Agreed Business Model and funding for the developments
- Firm plans agreed with Social Housing partners for both schemes
- The new schemes and business model developed and supported by sound consultation

Risks to manage: -

- How we can switch revenue resources from more traditional to new housing and care services models.
- Keeping up with demand and aspirations for alternative housing models for independent living.
- Keeping up with specialist demand such as meeting the specific needs of those with dementia and physical and learning disabilities.

What we mean by: -

Extra Care – providing self-contained homes for people with varying levels of care and support needs on site.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Housing	Modern, Efficient and Adapted Homes	Improving the choice and quality of local housing

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Provide a range of affordable and flexible rented housing to meet local housing need.
- Reduce the number of empty private sector properties in Flintshire and bring them back to use and increase housing supply.
- Give applicants wider access to social housing through working together as landlords with other sectors.
- Make available more sites for housing development through the Local Development Plan.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Implement a wider range of models of private finance to deliver increased numbers of affordable homes through the newly formed North East Wales Homes.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Business plan measures:
 - Provision of a management service for 26 private rented sector properties
 - Entering into a lease agreement for 10 over 55's properties
 - Receive the freehold for and manage 19 units of gifted accommodation
- Approval for the Flint Town Centre regeneration plan which includes new housing provision

2. Implement the strategy to grow and sustain the private rented sector through the North East Wales Homes business plan.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Business plan measures:
 - Provision of a management service for 26 private rented sector properties
 - Entering into a lease agreement for 10 over 55's properties
 - Receive the freehold for and manage 19 units of gifted accommodation
- Bringing of 30 empty homes back into use for residential living

3. Develop a county wide housing register and implement a single allocations policy for Flintshire with partners.

Achievement will be measured through:

- A county wide housing register and single allocations policy in place by Autumn 2014.

4. Agree the Local Development Plan's vision, objectives and options to accommodate growth.

Achievement will be measured through:

- In accordance with the timetable of the Delivery Agreement; by November 2014.

Risks to manage:

- Maximising our joint resources with our partners.
- Maximising the availability of private finance.
- Encouraging developers to build a range of affordable housing in the current economic climate.
- Unclear about the implications of the changes proposed through the Planning Bill on timing of the progress of the Local Development Plan.

What we mean by:

Affordable and Flexible Housing - covers a range of tenure options for renting and purchase.

Local Development Plan - the Council's land use planning document that will guide development until 2030.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Housing	Achieve the Wales Housing Quality Standard	Improving quality of life for our tenants through improved housing

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Provide good quality housing for our tenants.
- Meet the target of Welsh Government for all social housing being brought up to the Wales Housing Quality Standard.
- Meet commitments given to tenants to improve their homes.
- Maximise resources available to improve homes owned by the Council.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Deliver the housing revenue account business plan to achieve the Wales Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Investing in improving the housing stock
- Tenant satisfaction of work completed
- Performance measured against commitments made to tenants at the housing ballot
- Managing expenditure within or below budget to maximise available financial resources.

2. Reach a voluntary settlement with Welsh Government to exit the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy system by 31st March 2015.

Achievement will be measured through:

- The implementation of a voluntary agreement by the deadline which gives the Council certainty about future funding

3. Develop a revised stock investment plan to meet the objectives in the Assets Management Strategy in conjunction with Tenants and Members.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Agreement of a 6 year investment programme by March 2015
- Delivery of capital improvement programmes

Risks to manage:

- Ensure Contractors perform effectively and that costs are contained within budget.
- Gaining agreement with all 11 stock retaining Councils and Welsh Government on approach to dismantling the HRA subsidy system.
- Ensuring that the Council identifies and plans for the resources required to meet the WHQS by 2020.

What we mean by:

Wales Housing Quality Standard - Welsh Government's physical quality standard for modern social housing.

Housing Revenue Account subsidy system – the system used by UK Government to determine the amounts needed by local authorities for their housing and to identify whether they require subsidy support.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Living Well	Independent Living	Improving people's quality of life

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Support more people to live in an ageing population.
- Meet the growing demand for specialist care for people with dementia.
- Support whole families to live independently.
- Develop a model of support for persons with a disability which encourages independent living.
- Prevent homelessness.

What we will do in 2014/15

1. Maintain the success of the reablement / recovery approach, engaging in regional working for the further roll out of telecare / telehealth and improve the timeliness of adaptations.

Achievements will be measured through

- Extended local use of telecare / telehealth technologies consistent with regional plans
- Exceed the all Wales average for adaptations
- Meet local improvement targets for reablement

2. Implement a series of actions to support greater independence for individuals with a frailty and/or disability including completion of rightsizing exercises for all supported living projects provided and commissioned. Implement a night support service.

Achievements will be measured through:

- Improved quality of life for service users with a disability
- Reduction in care hours in supported living
- Reduction in one to one care needed in supported living

3. Use a whole family approach through the Integrated Family Support Service.

Achievements will be measured through:

- Number of families receiving a service
- Average "distance travelled" score at 12 month review
- Maintain level of repeat referrals to Children's Social Services

4. Examine the Children's Services structure with a view to remodelling the teams to create capacity to do more preventative work.

Achievements will be measured through:

- Implementation of the new model by March 2015
- Maintain level of repeat referrals to Children's Social Services

5. Prevent homelessness for people who are:

- alcohol and drug dependent; and /or
- victims of domestic violence; and/or
- ex-offenders; and/or
- young people including care leavers.

Achievements will be measured through:

- Homeless prevention for at least 6 months for people who are: -

- alcohol and drug dependent; and /or
- victims of domestic violence; and/or
- ex-offenders; and/or
- young people including care leavers
- Monitoring the success of the 6 month pilot being introduced to trial measures proposed in the Housing Bill to strengthen homeless prevention.

6. Carry out a major review of the Transition Service and implement findings.

Achievements will be measured through:

- Effective transition pathway

Risks to manage

- Keeping up with specialist demand such as the specific residential needs of those with dementia.
- Ensuring we have enough capital funding for disabled facilities grants alongside other competing demands for capital resources.
- How we encourage service users and carers to embrace greater independence.
- Service user/ family resistance to using new technologies e.g. telecare.
- Managing demand and expectations with limited resources.

What we mean by:

Telecare / Telehealth – providing support through telecommunication devices in the home.

Commissioning plans – ensure purchased and commissioned care meets demand and service user need.

Transition Service – dedicated service for children and young people with disabilities who are supported to become young adults.

Integrated Family Support Service – specific time limited and well researched support for families with parents who abuse substances.

Reablement – an intense, short term approach to social care for individuals to gain or regain the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible.

Adaptations – changes to a person's home to enable her/him to live as independently as possible.

Disabled Facility Grant – a grant available for larger adaptations to a person's home.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Living Well	Integrated Community Social and Health Services	Enabling more people to live independently and well at home

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital and support early and successful hospital discharges.
- Work with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) to develop the Enhanced Care Model in all localities in Flintshire as a result of the Health Review “Health Care in North Wales is changing”.
- Co-ordinate the provision of support for Service Users more effectively with BCUHB and others.
- Make effective use of Intermediate Care Funds to support unscheduled care pressures, transformation of services and improvements in people’s wellbeing.

What we will do in 2014/15

1. Continue the integration of community based health and social care teams within three localities.

Achievements will be measured through

- Development of our second co-located team in 2014/15
- Plans for our third and final co-located team in 2015/16

2. Support the introduction of Enhanced Care Service (ECS) in North East and South Localities by March 2015.

Achievements will be measured through

- Agree and implement the business case for ECS in the North East & South Localities
- Improved experiences of patients

3. Ensure that effective services to support carers are in place as part of the integrated social and health services.

Achievements will be measured through

- Plans to support carers are agreed and implemented

4. Ensure Single Integrated Plan (SIP) priorities are progressed through localities.

Achievements will be measured through

- Improved communication and governance arrangements to ensure that localities deliver the priorities of the SIP.

5. Effective and efficient use of Intermediate Care Funds to support individuals to remain in their own homes.

Achievements will be measured through

- Agree and implement action plan for use of Intermediate Care Funds
- Independent evaluation of outcomes achieved

Risks to manage:

- Ensuring effective joint working with BCUHB to achieve common goals.

- Ensuring that the new model does not result in unexpected increased costs to the Council.
- Spending the Intermediate Care Fund on mainstream services that we can continue with once the funding stream has finished.

What we mean by:

Enhanced Care Service - short term intensive community based care as an alternative to hospital.

Crisis Intervention Team – team to provide short term intensive care to prevent people's health deteriorating or enable swift discharge from hospital into the community.

Reablement – an intense, short term approach to social care where individuals are supported to gain or regain the skills and confidence to live as independently as possible.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Economy and Enterprise	Business Sector Growth	Creating jobs and growing the local economy

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Continue to meet the employment needs of local people.
- Continue to attract businesses to the area to support economic growth.
- Develop the energy and advanced manufacturing sectors in line with regional and national priorities.
- Grow the local economy creating opportunities for all sectors of our community.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Promote and support the growth of the Flintshire economy including Deeside Enterprise Zone (DEZ) as a recognised centre for energy and advanced manufacturing.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Percentage of enquiries converted to investment in Flintshire
- Number of jobs created and sustained in Flintshire
- Percentage of enquiries converted to investment in the DEZ
- Number of jobs created and sustained in the DEZ

2. Implementation of the “masterplan” for the Northern Gateway site to facilitate development of a key part of the Enterprise Zone.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Approval of the Northern Gateway site “masterplan” by April 2014
- Scale of development on the site beginning with the commencement of infrastructure works in July 2014

3. Explore with Welsh Government the opportunities to improve local infrastructure (transport, utilities, environment etc.)

Achievement will be measured through: -

- The approval by Welsh Government and implementation of the Infrastructure Business Plan for the DEZ

Risks to manage:

- Ensure the DEZ can be continued with pace as part of the Welsh Government group of Enterprise Zones.
- Ensure the DEZ has proportionate financial support from Welsh Government.
- Work with local employers and learning providers to meet the skills based needs of the future.

What we mean by:

Enterprise Zone – a Welsh Government initiative to stimulate growth and support business in designated areas.

Masterplan – the plan that sets out the intentions and actions for the Northern Gateway site.

Learning providers – Schools, Further and Higher Education establishments.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Economy and Enterprise	Town and Rural Regeneration	Making local communities viable

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Protect the commercial and business viability of our town centres and rural areas.
- Protect the vitality of town centres as centres for economic activity and social contact.
- Support the local and regional economy through the provision of sustainable infrastructure.
- Develop the tourism economy to maximise expenditure within the County.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Progress and invest in the eight Town Centre Masterplans to meet local priorities and need.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Scale and take up of the Business Grant Scheme in Town Centres
- Delivery and completion of actions set out in the Masterplans

2. Deliver an integrated programme of regeneration in Flint to realise the vision set out in the Flint Masterplan

Achievement will be measured through:

- Completion of heritage trail and St. Mary's Square renovation
- Delivery of the Townscape Heritage Initiative including the renovation of the Old Courthouse
- Phased demolition of the maisonette blocks
- Purchase of former Police station and court building
- Completion of Flint House over 55s development

3. Complete the rural development schemes in Mold, Holywell and villages; extending accessibility and improving the local environment.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Delivery and completion of in-year rural development schemes with final outputs including:
 - 40 jobs created
 - 40 micro enterprises created
 - 35 village renewal projects supported
 - 21 community facilities sustained
 - improved visitor facilities created in Talacre / Gronant

Risks to manage:

- Maximisation of funding opportunities through external programmes to invest in our urban and rural areas.
- Ensuring sufficient project management capacity to successfully complete the programmes.

What we mean by:

Town Centre Masterplans – Plans that set out the regeneration priorities for each Town Centre.

Business Grant Scheme – Grant available to Town Centre property owners and tenants to refurbish properties and improve their frontages.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Economy and Enterprise	Social Enterprise	Supporting and creating new forms of local business

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Develop alternative economic models to strengthen and expand the local economy.
- Develop a stronger Social Enterprise community in Flintshire which can provide opportunities including employment.
- Maximise social benefits in the community e.g. increasing training opportunities for young people; keeping local money in the community.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Raise awareness of the Flintshire Social Enterprise Fund.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Establish or assist 10 social enterprises

2. Develop effective support for social enterprises.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Establishing a wider range of community benefit clauses to be used when procuring services
- The number of Social Enterprises which survive and prosper
- Strengthening and consolidating the Social Enterprise Network

3. Develop new Social Enterprise projects to meet the Council's priorities.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Establishment of further social enterprises from within the Council

Risks to manage:

- How we maintain the necessary capacity and investment to support the development of social enterprises.
- Building the skills in the community to develop social enterprises.
- Local social enterprises need to compete effectively in the market.

What we mean by:

Social Enterprises – businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are mainly reinvested for that purpose in the business or community.

Flintshire Social Enterprise Fund – financial assistance for start-up or development of social enterprises.

Community benefit clauses - benefits to local communities from major procurements e.g. training and employment opportunities, community facilities. This incorporates social value by taking wider impacts and benefits into account other than price.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Skills and Learning	Modernised and High Performing Education	Improving learning provision to get better learner outcomes

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Continue to achieve better learning opportunities, outcomes and wellbeing for all children and young people.
- Support the national Welsh Government priorities to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment.
- Make better use of education resources through reducing surplus places and improving learning environments.
- Maintain effective and challenging governance arrangements in schools for the benefit of local learners and communities.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Make a difference through our Education Improvement and Modernisation Strategy by raising standards through: -

- Improving skills in literacy and numeracy
- Improving educational achievements of children in a position of disadvantage including our Looked after Children
- Sharing best teaching practice and resources across schools and the region
- Improving the preparation of young people for the work place
- Continuing the implementation of 21st Century Schools programme
- Implementing the outcomes of the asset review including primary school organisation
- Strengthening collaborative work between schools to improve curriculum continuity and facilitate additional delegation of responsibility and resources
- Raising standards through effective use of new technologies
- Ensuring best quality educational support during implementation of the national model for regional working

Achievement will be measured through:

- Outcomes in Mathematics, English/Welsh 1st Language and Core Subject Indicator at all Key Stages
- Percentage of learners achieving 5 or more A* to C passes at GCSE or the vocational equivalent
- Raising standards achieved by learners who are entitled to free school meals, "Looked After" or are otherwise identified as vulnerable
- Improving governance and financial resilience in schools
- Reduction of surplus places
- Completion of 21st Century school milestones in line with target dates

Risks to manage:

- Ensuring that schools receive the support they need from the Council and those organisations commissioned to provide school improvement services.
- Ensuring schools work together effectively to share and develop best practice.
- Changing demographics and impact on supply of school places.

- Limited funding to address the backlog of known repair and maintenance works in educational and community assets.
- Programme delivery capacity for the 21st Century Schools Programme.

What we mean by: -

Core Subject Indicator – learners achieve the expected level in Mathematics, English or Welsh 1st language and Science.

21st Century Schools – a national programme of funding to improve school buildings and environments.

Surplus places – the difference between the number of learners a school can accommodate and the number on roll.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Skills and Learning	Apprenticeships and Training	Meeting the skills and employment needs of local employers

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Extend and improve the education, employment and training opportunities available for people.
- Improve the employment prospects of local people.
- Meet the needs of local employers.
- Help young people take the step from education to employment.
- Place and retain people in work.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Work with the public, private and voluntary sectors to increase the number of apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience opportunities.
2. Make an impact with the Employers' Promise in key areas e.g. developing further apprenticeship opportunities and employees' skills.
3. Market and communicate broadly the range of apprenticeship and training programmes available.
4. Identify sectors with skills gaps in order to develop apprenticeships and alternative programmes and investment in training.
5. Support the Young Entrepreneur Programme with the Flintshire Business Entrepreneurship Network.
6. Continue to develop and increase the number and range of Communities First job clubs.
7. Commission and deliver skills development programmes in partnership with local employers.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Reducing the number of 18 – 24 year olds claiming Jobseekers Allowance
- Securing high levels of 16 years olds in education, employment and training
- Improving the local skills base to improve employability and earning prospects through improved qualifications
- Increase the number of apprenticeships in the public and voluntary sector

Risks to manage:

- Ensuring that employer places match current and future aspirations and needs.
- Ensuring capacity to support paid work placements and other programmes.
- Ensuring that education providers participate fully.
- Strengthening the links between schools, colleges and employers.
- Work with local employers and learning providers to meet the skills based needs of the future.

What we mean by:

Employers' Promise – employers committed to working together to create additional training, apprenticeships and work opportunities.

Communities First job club programmes – work to support adults into employment.

Young Entrepreneur Programme – an opportunity for young people to work with mentors on their business ideas.

Flintshire Business Entrepreneurship Network – employers working together to support Entrepreneurship Programmes.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Safe Communities	Community Safety	Keep people and communities safe

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Support the victims of domestic abuse.
- Address the impact of substance misuse on individuals and their families in the County.
- Reduce people's actual and perceived fear of crime in their communities.
- Continue to manage anti-social behaviour and increase public confidence in how we do that.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Contribute to the delivery of the North Wales Community Safety Plan priorities:

- Reduce the impact of domestic abuse on high risk repeat victims
- Raise awareness of sexual violence amongst young people
- Manage the impacts of anti-social behaviour
- Manage the impacts of substance misuse

Achievement will be measured through:

- Delivery of the work programme for the North Wales Safer Communities Board
- Fewer high risk repeat victims of domestic abuse
- Percentage of young people reporting increased awareness of sexual violence following interventions at school
- Determine the feasibility of producing and implementing a Flintshire wide anti-social behaviour strategy
- 'Completed treatments' and waiting times for substance misuse services

2. Reduce fear of crime by:

- Making best use of the latest technologies including closed circuit television (CCTV)
- Ensuring the street-lighting system is working effectively
- Removing graffiti within the Streetscene timescales

Achievement will be measured through:

- Sustaining a workable network of CCTV provision
- The time taken to repair streetlight failures
- Remove graffiti from Council buildings and property within the agreed Streetscene timescales
- Improve the environment through the use of environmental visual audits (EVAs) in partnership with North Wales Police

3. Develop further awareness and profile of the Council's approach to Safeguarding which includes the wider issues of prevention of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Achievement will be measured through:

- The impact of introducing a single Safeguarding Unit beginning with the co-location of the Adult and Children's Safeguarding teams
- Roll out of Human Trafficking training via the Flintshire Wrexham Local Safeguarding Children Board
- Capturing data on children who are reported missing

Risks to Manage:

- How we can improve the public's perception of safety in the community.
- How we can fund the provision of CCTV with local partners.
- Ensuring that new Community Safety Partnership arrangements work effectively.

What we mean by:

Substance Misuse – the continued use of drugs or alcohol despite negative consequence to the individual using, their friends, family and the community.

Human Trafficking – 'trade' in people, most commonly for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labour or for the extraction of organs or tissues.

Sexual Exploitation – the use of another person in non-consensual sex for profit.

Anti-social Behaviour – behaviour that lacks consideration for others and that may cause damage to society, whether intentionally or through negligence.

CCTV – to prevent and respond to crime and disorder.

Environmental Visual Audits – detailed "community intelligence" to support both crime reduction and deliver other improvements to quality of life issues via partnership working.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Safe Communities	Traffic and road management	Improving road safety

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Make roads safer in our communities by:
 - Having high quality street lighting
 - Having roads in good condition
 - Minimising reportable accidents

What we will do in 2014/15

1. Complete implementation of the first phase of our 20mph zones outside schools.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Implementation of 65 schemes of 20mph advisory zones
2. Prioritise the Council's road infrastructure repairs and maintenance to improve road safety.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Numbers of collisions in 'collision cluster sites' following safety improvements schemes completions
 - Time taken to repair street lamp failures
 - Time taken to respond to service requests for highway defects
3. Implement Regional Transport Plan road safety schemes.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Completion of road safety schemes

Risks to Manage:

- Gaining public and local support for our road safety schemes.
- Making best use of our resources to meet our priorities for road safety.
- Being able to obtain timely decisions of statutory approval for schemes from Welsh Government.

What we mean by:

'Collision Cluster Site – a site where there have been 5 or more collisions, resulting in personal injury, recorded in the past 3 years within a 50 metre radius

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Poverty	Welfare Reform	Protecting people from poverty

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Support people to manage the impact of Welfare Reform.
- Prevent homelessness.
- Help people claim the benefit they are entitled to.
- Help people manage their debts.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Place a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness.

Achievements will be measured through

- The percentage of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months
- Number of tenants helped to move to more affordable accommodation (because of the spare room subsidy)

2. Provide advice and support services to help people protect their income

Achievement will be measured through:

- Number of Flintshire residents assisted by Flintshire County Council to maximise their income
- Number of residents supported to successfully challenge adverse benefit decisions
- Amount of additional Social Security and Tax Credits paid to Flintshire residents as a result of the work undertaken by Flintshire County Council
- Amount of monthly debt managed as a result of advice provided by the Money Advice Service
- Amount of monthly discretionary housing payment (DHP) paid to support peoples housing needs including changes due to Welfare Reform

3. Support the implementation of Universal Credit (UC) within the Shotton Jobcentre Plus area

Achievement will be measured through

- Number of Universal Credit claimants referred to Citizens Advice Bureau for Personal Budgeting support
- Number of Universal Credit claimants assisted with on-line access
- Number of claims referred from Jobcentre Plus to Flintshire County Council Housing Benefit service

Risks to manage

- Meeting the growing costs of homeless prevention.
- Advice and support services sufficient to be able to meet demand.
- Eviction levels rising if tenants are unable to afford to pay their rent.
- Local economy may suffer as residents have less income to spend.
- Resources to meet the requirements of the Universal Credit roll-out.

What we mean by

- **Welfare reform** - a range of measures being introduced by Central Government to reform the Welfare Benefits system

- **Universal Credit** – new benefit which replaces the current means tested benefit for working age claimants
- **Homeless prevention** - take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for anyone at risk of homelessness within 56 days

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Poverty	Fuel Poverty	Protecting people from poverty

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Support people on low incomes and those impacted by Welfare Reform.
- To support people to reduce the impact of rising fuel costs.
- Install energy efficiency measures into homes as part of the Council meeting the Wales Housing Quality Standard for its housing stock.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Improvement in the energy efficiency of housing on Deeside through the Vibrant and Viable Places regeneration framework.

Achievements will be measured through:

- The installation of additional energy efficiency measures including solid wall insulation and solar PV

2. Help residents in the private sector to access funding support to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Achievements will be measured through:

- Number of households accessing Eco and other energy efficiency funding
- Number of households accessing the opportunity to convert from oil to gas heating systems in the Aston and Mostyn areas

3. Deliver energy efficiency measures to Council homes.

Achievements will be measured through:

- Number of Council homes receiving energy efficiency measures
- Number of Council homes in the Aston and Mostyn areas being converted from oil to gas

Risks to manage:

- Residents may not take up the energy efficiency measures available as we hope.
- Available funding might fall short of public demand.

What we mean by:

Vibrant and Viable Places – Welsh Government’s regeneration framework launched in March 2013 with the vision that everyone in Wales should live in well-connected, vibrant, viable and sustainable communities with a strong local economy and good quality of life.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Environment	Transport Infrastructure and Services	People being able to access employment, local services and facilities

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Improve accessibility to and between employment, homes, leisure, health and social activity.
- Provide convenient and affordable travel services.
- Help to reduce congestion on our highway network.
- Facilitate economic growth.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Use available funding to support Council priorities for accessing employment, health, leisure and education.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Completion of funded projects within the Regional Transport Fund
2. Prioritise the Council's road infrastructure for repairs and maintenance and implement network improvement programmes.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Condition of the highway's infrastructure
 - Road works being completed within agreed timescales
 - Minimising the disruption to our road network through reduction in the number of revisits to defective road-works
3. Improve facilities and routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Undertake mapping for the Active Travel Bill by March 2015
 - Increased usage of the County's cycleways
4. Seek approval from Welsh Government for the Deeside Infrastructure Business Plan and implement its proposals.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Approval of the Northern Gateway site "masterplan" by April 2014
 - Scale of development in the site beginning with the commencement of infrastructure works by July 2014
5. Develop proposals for coordinated transport across the region.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Development of the Regional Transport Plan/Local Transport Plan by March 2015
 - Developing proposals to enable the implementation of the Regional Bus Strategy by March 2015
6. Continuously review the Council's subsidised bus services to improve access to employment, health, leisure and education.
Achievement will be measured through:
 - Scale and take-up of bus passenger numbers

Risks to manage:

- Ensuring that the County's infrastructure is adequate to support economic growth.
- Securing funding to ensure our highways infrastructure remains safe and capable of supporting economic growth.
- Ensuring sustainable transport options remain attractive to users.
- Transition of TAITH to new model for regional transport including contingency planning and resourcing.
- Reductions in Welsh Government grants for subsidising services.

What we mean by:

Deeside Infrastructure Business Plan – A plan that has been developed to improve the highways, transport and utility services capacity around the Deeside Enterprise Zone.

Deeside Enterprise Zone – Deeside Enterprise Zone is one of the first to be created in Wales and covers over 2000 hectares that will provide space for new and existing businesses to grow.

Infrastructure – Facilities, systems sites and networks that are necessary for the County to function.

Sustainable transport – Changing behaviour in the promotion of more resource efficient and healthier ways to travel including car sharing, public transport, cycling and walking.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Environment	Carbon Control and Reduction	Reducing our carbon impact on the natural environment

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Reduce our carbon 'footprint'.
- Continue to reduce our carbon emissions to meet Welsh Government targets.
- Play our part in helping to address the consequences of climate change.
- Reduce the Council's energy costs.
- Sustain our natural resources for future generations.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Market and promote carbon reduction measures within the Council, with our partners and with the public to help manage and reduce emission levels.
2. Challenge the Council's carbon emissions, through our assets, vehicles and behaviour:-
 - investing in renewable energy schemes;
 - investing in a more efficient fleet (vehicles);
 - improving the efficiency of our street lighting; and
 - increasing recycling of the Council's own waste.

Achievement will be measured through:

- carbon reduction commitment
- renewable energy and energy retrofit schemes
- monitoring the fuel consumption of our fleet
- carbon emissions from Council street lighting
- recycling performance

3. Encourage public utilisation of recycling facilities and services.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Improved recycling performance

4. Encourage residents and employees to use more sustainable forms of transport.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Increased bus passenger numbers and use of cycleways

5. Complete the review and rationalise the Council's assets.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Reduction in the Council's assets portfolio

Risks to manage:

- Ensuring that buildings are used effectively to match our priorities.
- Securing sufficient funding for renewable energy schemes, further street lighting improvement programmes and to maintain the Council's recycling service.
- Ensuring that recycling and energy efficiency programmes are supported up by the public and employees.

What we mean by:

Carbon footprint – The amount of Carbon Dioxide that enters the atmosphere through electricity and fuel used.

Renewable energy schemes – Schemes designed to use energy from a source that is naturally replenished e.g. sunlight

Carbon reduction commitment – A mandatory scheme aimed at improving energy efficiency and reducing emissions in large public sector and private organisations.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Modern & Efficient Council	Organisational Change	Managing services well to achieve our priorities.

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Become more lean and modern.
- Have a clear vision of what the Council will need to look like by 2017 with less money, and have a plan to reform and change the organisation to fit.
- Achieve our priorities.
- Deliver quality services with reduced financial resources.

What we will do in 2014/15:

Agree an organisational change programme that will:

1. Implement the newly agreed operating model for the Council.

Achievement will be measured through:

- successful transition into the new operating model
- streamline the organisation

2. Integrate business units and consider alternative models.

Achievement will be measured through:

- agreement of internal service functional mergers and re-alignments as a follow through of the operating model and senior management review implementation
- agreed proposals for sustainable models for each of the services/functions listed for transformation
- Overall annual efficiency savings from a combination of the above

Risks to manage:

- Gaining workforce and Trade Union agreement and acceptance of the transition into the new operating model.
- Transitional risks of the operating model.

What we mean by:

Operating Model - how an organisation is structured, functions and performs according to its objectives and values.

Working practices – the Council's internal processes and procedures.

Social business model – the way in which we run the Council as an accountable and ethical organisation operating in a business world. This incorporates social value; the importance of the overall quality of the outcomes.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Modern & Efficient Council	Financial Strategy	Protecting local front-line public services and delivering Council priorities through the best use of our resources

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Protect local services as a first priority.
- Have in place a longer term financial plan which models anticipated funding and costs over the medium term and which identifies the annual and cumulative efficiency targets which will need to be achieved to deliver services within available resources.
- Ensure we have the necessary revenue and capital funding in place to deliver front line services and Council priorities and be able to invest for future years.
- Achieve the 2014/15 targets for the organisational change and efficiency programme.
- Integrate the development of the next stages of the change and efficiency programme with the revenue and capital elements of the financial strategy.
- Maximise our income to invest in public services.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Develop a longer term financial plan.

Achievement will be measured through:

- A medium term financial plan which is fully reflective of anticipated funding, costs and efficiencies
 - The effectiveness of the plan as an aid to strategic decision making
 - Producing a sustainable four year plan which meets the funding gap and supports investment needs
2. Agreement of the capital and revenue resources to deliver the priorities within the Improvement Plan.

Achievement will be measured through:

- resources being available to fund each priority and reflected in the medium term financial plan
3. Deliver on the four programmes of the organisational change and efficiency programme:
 - Corporate Efficiency: assets, customer, finance and procurement.
 - Organisational Design: operating model, functional and structural design, alternative delivery models.
 - Workforce Scaling: workforce planning, workforce reduction, vacancy management, costs of employment.
 - Functional Efficiency: value for money in all service and support functions.

Achievement will be measured through:

- achieving the financial target efficiencies for each of the four programmes set for 2014/15
- identifying further efficiency measures for 2015/16 and beyond to meet the projected funding gaps in each year
- agreement of a corporate approach to the setting of fees and charges

Risks to manage:

- Ensuring that capital and revenue resources are sufficient to operate effectively.
- Uncertainty in the level of Welsh Government funding which represents 80% of the funding of Council services.
- Gaining agreement to the financial strategy.
- Delivery of the 2014/15 efficiency savings in full.
- Gaining agreement to further efficiency measures from 2015/16 onwards.
- Gaining agreement to a new corporate approach for fees and charges.

What we mean by:

Revenue funding – spending on day to day running costs for the Council e.g. salaries and wages, supplies and services, energy.

Capital funding – spending on assets (e.g. buildings, equipment and land).

Fees and Charges – the amount service users pay for services which are not provided for free.

Efficiency Targets – financial savings we aim to achieve within a given period of time through specific actions.

Values for Money – being efficient and effective in using our resources to achieve our service objectives and standards.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Modern & Efficient Council	People Change & Development	The Council has sufficient capability and capacity to operate effectively as a reduced sized organisation

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Enable the effective implementation of the new Council Structure and provide a foundation for on-going sustainable organisational change.
- Implement the new agreed pay model.
- Optimise the benefits of having modern terms and conditions to enable the Council to be more flexible in service delivery.
- Provide capability and capacity to manage a reduced sized organisation.
- Modernise working practices.

What we will do in 2014/15:

Implement the People Strategy focusing on:

1. Employee performance and productivity – including organisational and job design, effective workforce planning, flexible working and working patterns, terms and conditions and robust performance management.
2. Employee Development and Talent Management – including employee engagement, talent management, behaviour and competencies development, learning and skills development.
3. Health and Wellbeing – including development of ‘Flintshire Healthy Workplace’, information channels for employees to manage health and welfare, initiatives that support the reduction of sickness absence as part of the Council’s Attendance Management Strategy.
4. Implement the new pay model as part of Single Status and address any ongoing Equal Pay liabilities.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Minimising cost and increasing flexibility of services e.g. by extending service hours, there is no increase in the service operating costs
- Implementation of competency based appraisals by June 2014 and tracking of outcomes – ratings on performance and development requirements
- Reduced sickness absence figures
- Targeted employee engagement initiatives and surveys and improvement actions
- Reduced use and expenditure for agency / interim workers and consultants
- Numbers of employees progressing through skills development and Management Development programmes

Risks to manage:

- Ensuring organisational capability to make the changes happen and sustain the new operating model.

- Keeping up workforce motivation and morale to prevent resistance to organisational change and minimise service disruption such as industrial action.
- Controlling the terms of the new pay model and terms and conditions of employment post implementation to prevent new Equal Pay risks from emerging.

What we mean by:

Equal pay – equality legislation prohibits less favourable treatment between men and women in terms of pay and conditions of employment. Where there has been a potential historical pay gap between men and women, Equal Pay claims may be brought.

Medium-term Financial Plan - the Council's plan forecasts funding levels and resource requirements over the medium term, identifies the gap between the two with specific actions identified to balance the budget and manage resources.

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Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Modern & Efficient Council	Asset Strategy	Having the right buildings in the right places for the right uses

This is a priority this year because we need to:

- Become an even more modern organisation.
- Reduce Council overhead costs to protect and invest in front-line services.
- Reduce carbon emissions.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Refresh the Asset Strategy along-side capital planning.
2. Reduce the number and review the usage of Council property assets.
3. Further extend the use of agile working and so free up the amount of office and other space needed to deliver services.
4. Increase the rate and take up of Community Asset Transfers.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Reducing maintenance and asset costs
- Increased joint use of assets with partners
- Carbon reduction
- Increased agile working
- Fewer Council owned and maintained property assets

Risks to manage:

- Gaining public acceptance.
- How we can invest and ensure we have the capacity to implement the strategy.
- Gaining workforce agreement and acceptance of agile working practices.

What we mean by:

Asset Strategy – long term plan to make best use of our buildings.

Council Property Assets – buildings owned and maintained by the Council.

Agile Working – working across locations in a flexible way with the use of technology.

Capital – money spent on assets (e.g. buildings, equipment and land).

Community Asset Transfers – transfers of land or buildings into the ownership or management of a Voluntary / Community Sector organisation or statutory body.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Modern & Efficient Council	Procurement Strategy	Making our money go further through smart procurement

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Minimise procurement costs.
- Ensure that goods and services purchased represent value for money.
- Ensure that community benefits are optimised through our procurement arrangements.
- Achieve efficiency targets to protect and invest in local front-line public services.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Optimise procurement efficiencies through the use of regional and national procurement collaborations.

Achievement will be measured through:

- the scale of the use of the National Procurement Service and the resulting efficiencies
- the scale of the use of regional procurement collaboration and the resulting efficiencies

2. Implement proposals for a joint Flintshire and Denbighshire corporate procurement unit.

Achievement will be measured through:

- the merger of Flintshire and Denbighshire procurement teams to a single corporate procurement unit serving the two organisations.

3. Develop an improved corporate approach to community benefits and supply chain management to benefit the organisation, local communities and the local economy.

Achievement will be measured through:

- increasing inclusion of community benefit clauses in contracts.

Risks to manage:

- Keep up the pace of collaboration to maximise procurement efficiencies through the use of the National Procurement Service and Welsh Procurement Consortium frameworks.
- Ensure the internal adoption of revised procurement practice and process.
- Having the creativity to apply community benefit clauses within contracts.

What we mean by:

Community benefit clauses - benefits to local communities from major procurements e.g. training and employment opportunities, community facilities. This incorporates social value by taking wider issues into account other than price.

Procurement collaborations – ways of procuring goods and services within agreed terms and conditions.

Priority	Sub-Priority	Impact
Modern & Efficient Council	Access to Council Services	Achieving customer focused, modern and efficient access to council services

This is a priority in year because we need to:

- Improve access to our services for our customers through use of a multi channel approach.
- Improve customer care, service and satisfaction levels.

What we will do in 2014/15:

1. Implement Phase 2 of our Flintshire Connects programme with extended range of services and locations.

Achievement will be measured through:

- the opening and scale of use of the Flintshire Connects centres
- customer feedback on Flintshire Connects
- range of services provided
- percentage of customers having their needs met at first point of contact

2. Review and improve our Customer Service Standards.

Achievement will be measured through:

- customer satisfaction ratings

3. Extend and improve (i) customer access to Council information and services using technology and (ii) opportunities for participation in consultation exchanges etc.

Achievement will be measured through:

- number of customers using technology to access Council information and services
- number of customers using technology to participate in consultation exchanges etc.
- customer feedback
- percentage of customers having their needs met at first point of contact

Risks to manage:

- How we can ensure the investment to further improve access to our services.
- Ensuring our customers can access our digital services.
- Ensuring a positive public response to the changing ways our services can be accessed.
- How the Council adjusts its processes and practices to support Flintshire Connects and the increased use of self service.

What we mean by:

Flintshire Connects Centres - simpler and more “joined up” access to Council and other public sector services in County towns in a modern and welcoming environment.

Customer Service Standards – what customers can expect when they make contact with the council e.g. how quickly we answer the phone, respond to email etc.

Statement of Responsibility

This publication fulfils in part the statutory requirements to publish an annual Improvement Plan as part of the Local Government (Wales) Measure (2009). This is our 'forward-looking' document for the year. The second part of the statutory requirement is the Annual Performance Report which is our 'backward-looking' document and reviews performance against our objectives set for the previous year. This second report is published in October.

Contacts for Feedback and Review

On-going review about the Council's priorities and this plan is available through our website where feedback forms are available for the public, our partners, our workforce and businesses. We would like to know what you think about our priorities and those for the future. We would value your feedback and hope that you can spend a few minutes to tell us what you think.

In the meantime our contacts for any initial observations are:

Policy and Performance Team:

Tel: 01352 702744

Email: Policy and Performance Team@flintshire.gov.uk

This document is available in alternative formats or your own language on request.