

Flintshire County Council Social Enterprise Action Plan 2023-2025

Background

Flintshire County Council is a unitary authority located in North-East Wales with a population of approximately 150,000. The authority employs approximately 5,000 people and delivers or facilitates the delivery of a broad and complex range of services, especially to the most vulnerable in society. Flintshire County Council delivers its services directly through its own workforce and through private and third sector organisations. The authority spends over £160 million each year procuring goods and services from over 4,500 suppliers, service providers and contractors.

Flintshire County Council has long been firmly committed to the need for a strong, vibrant local social enterprise economy and recognises within the Council Plan the contribution social enterprises make within the community.

In 2013 Flintshire County Council, in response to the lack of accessible, practical support for social enterprises, created a new post to support the development of a sustainable social enterprise sector within the County. This resource, a fully qualified Business Advisor, provides free at the point of delivery business support, advice, and guidance to residents of Flintshire wanting to explore the development of social enterprise. Over the past 10 years the Council has supported the development of approximately 100 new social enterprises as well as provided business support to grow and sustain existing social enterprises.

Following the release of the Welsh Audit Office report, “Social Enterprise - A Wasted Opportunity”, the Council undertook a self-assessment process to review its approach to supporting social enterprises and refreshed its action plan to include, wherever possible, the areas for improvement identified through the self-assessment process. The Council consulted with the members of the Flintshire Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group, consisting of social enterprise leaders from across the county, to develop the plan.

What We Do Well

Supporting enterprises

The business support, advice and guidance provided to the sector by Flintshire County Council has resulted the raising of the profile of social enterprise in Flintshire as well as the registration of of14 new social enterprises within the county every year. (Covid 19 lockdown years aside). The resulting social enterprise sector growth in Flintshire is demonstrated by social enterprises accounting for 5.1% of social businesses within Wales where Flintshire accounts for 3% of businesses in Wales. (“Mapping the Social Business Sector in Wales / Census 2022”. Social Business Wales)

Flintshire’s, free impartial social enterprise support is accessible regardless of whether the business is already established or a new start-up venture. The support provided includes, but is not restricted to, pre-start development, business, and financial planning; identification of appropriate legal structures and business registrations; preparing for investment and cash flow forecasting in addition to support with bid/tender writing; introduction to crowd funding; revenue modelling; marketing and governance and the development and delivery of bespoke training to meet the needs of social enterprises in Flintshire.

Within Flintshire we delivered a successful Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme. The programme enabled 15 buildings owned by the Council, which were faced with closure, to be transferred to community ownership through the social enterprise model. Through the CAT, 30 community organisations are being supported to develop a business case for the activities to be delivered from within the buildings, providing amenities and services for the residents of Flintshire. All of these buildings have been transferred to community ownership on a ‘peppercorn rent’ allowing them the greatest opportunity of sustaining their activities and delivering necessary services identified by members of the communities in which they are based.

All Local Authorities have faced major budget pressures and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. In Flintshire we see alternative delivery models as a flexible way to control costs, build sustainable income growth for social enterprises, thus protecting and even improving local services by involving local people in new and engaging ways. Flintshire County Council’s successful ADM programme safeguarded the future of libraries and leisure centres by converting them to employee-owned cooperative organisation, whereas the FCC catering and cleaning departments were converted into community led community Interest Company. Flintshire County Councils reprographics and printing

services were also converted into a Community Interest Company and now combines the provision of professional design and print services to any business whilst supporting mental health in the community. To achieve this, they create employment, work experience, training, and volunteering opportunities within a supportive and inclusive environment for those who face significant barriers to employment.

A number of social enterprises deliver services on behalf of FCC. For example, Double Click Design and Print Community Interest Company (CIC) deliver support to individual affected by mental health issues to help them develop the confidence and skills to secure meaningful employment. Dangerpoint in Talacre provide safety education through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which provides the opportunity for schools to visit the centre and take a structured guided tour around the life-like scenarios. The centre has been designed to link in with the current curriculum, PSE curriculum, Healthy Schools Programme and fits in with the Estyn Common Inspection Framework.

Flintshire Council has worked collaboratively with social enterprise leaders from across the county to develop a support network. The now well-established Flintshire Social Enterprise Partnership meets regularly to give members the opportunity to share experiences, celebrate successes, develop collaborations, network with like-minded organisations, and share models of best practice with other members. A key outcome from the network has been the development of the Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group who work with collaboratively with the Local Authority on projects such as securing 'Social Enterprise Places' and the development of the 'Flintshire Social Impact Toolkit.'

All social enterprises who hold a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Flintshire Council have an appointed Sponsoring Officer. This enhanced level of communication benefits both parties through regular SLA progress monitoring which in turn maximises the success of prescribed aims and outcomes within the SLA as well as create further opportunities for the social enterprises.

Recognition

In 2020 Social Enterprise UK officially recognised Flintshire as a registered 'Social Enterprise Place.' This registration acknowledges the range, quality, and level of social enterprise activity within the county and serves to raise the profile of Flintshire and the sector at a national level.

Working in partnership with the Flintshire Social Enterprise Network Stakeholder Group, an innovative "Flintshire Social Impact Toolkit" was designed, developed, and piloted by Flintshire County Council and the sector. The on-line toolkit identifies the social value of work being carried out and the financial impact that Flintshire based social enterprises are

generating as a result of their daily activities. This toolkit demonstrates the financial value of the social impact generated by social enterprises within Flintshire. During the 18 months pilot project, using 7 social enterprises, the toolkit identified almost £3m of social benefit within Flintshire. By 2024/25 we intend to increase the number of toolkit users to 30. Now fully audited by Flintshire County Council, participating businesses can accurately quantify their value of social benefit when applying for contracts, investment, finance, and sector awards. To date the financial year 2023/2024 the Impact Toolkit has identified £595,015 of social value achieved in Flintshire.

As part of Flintshire County Council's commitment to social enterprise, we introduced 'Social Enterprise of the Year' and 'Most Socially Responsible Business' categories to our annual Flintshire Business Awards. Sponsored and judged by independent organisations, these awards recognised the contribution social enterprises and socially responsible businesses made to Flintshire's economy and community.

As Flintshire is one of the few Local Authorities which has invested in a dedicated support for social enterprises, the Social Enterprise officer has provided, on an informal basis, support, advice, and guidance to other organisations across the region, including Wrexham Borough Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council and University of Chester. This support has included mentoring, providing models of best practice, and promoting social enterprise to degree students.

Flintshire Social Enterprise Action Plan 2023 - 2025

Aims of the action plan are:

- Aim 1: Social enterprises will be better able to support each other
- Aim 2: Social enterprises will be better able to evidence their impact
- Aim 3: Social enterprises will have a higher profile
- Aim 4: Social enterprises will deliver more services on behalf of the public sector

	Actions	Lead	Timescale	Measured	Action source
1. Social enterprises will be better able to support each other					
1.1	Create a Terms of Reference for the network group and develop increased membership	FCC SE Officer & Social Ent Network	Annual Review	Numbers of social enterprises within the Network	Stakeholder Group
1.2	Develop a strong media focus to raise the profile of the sector and to promote social enterprise as a business model that significantly contributes to the local economy: e.g. Promote social enterprise events, regular press releases and the development of appropriate social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook business page, Instagram.)	FCC SE Officer & Social Ent Network	2023 and ongoing	Development of Business Facebook Page Number of press releases Number of events delivered	Stakeholder Group Response to WAO Report Updated from previous SE Plan
1.3	Maintain mentoring and business support to strengthen the social enterprise sector and to help existing social enterprises to grow and sustain their organisations.	FCC Officer & Social Enterprises	Continual	Annual Reporting - Number of mentoring relationships and support sessions delivered	Stakeholder Group Updated from previous SE Plan
1.4	Develop opportunities for social enterprises to provide mentoring for other social enterprises to share best practice and promote business growth.	FCC Officer	On an as and when Basis	Number of mentoring relationships developed	Stakeholder Group

2. Social enterprises will be better able to evidence their impact					
2.1	<p>Continue to develop Social Impact Reporting toolkit in order to increase the number of 'activities' measured as well as secure a more accurate snapshot of the social impact value of social enterprise in Flintshire</p> <p>Increase the number of social enterprises accessing the social Enterprise Impact Toolkit</p> <p>Increase the number of activities measured by the toolkit</p>	FCC Officer & Social Ent Stakeholder Group	To be reviewed annually	<p>Value of social benefit captured</p> <p>Number of SEs using the toolkit</p> <p>Number of activities reported within the toolkit</p>	Stakeholder Group
2.2	<p>Deliver training workshops for the sector specific to their needs. Develop and advertise a suite of training sessions including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Planning • Preparing for Investment • Cash Flow Forecasting • Bid Writing • Introduction to Crowd Funding • Revenue Modelling • Marketing • Governance <p>This training is tailored to the specific needs of social enterprises, developing new business skills within the social entrepreneurs leading to increased business confidence and enhanced sustainability</p>	FCC Social Enterprise Officer	To be reviewed annually	<p>Number of entrepreneurs accessing training sessions</p> <p>Improved business confidence of social enterprises</p> <p>Continued social enterprise growth</p>	<p>Stakeholder Group</p> <p>Update from previous Action Plan</p>

2.3	Identify opportunities to work with private sector contractors to achieve the community benefits elements of their contracts by providing support to the social enterprise sector in Flintshire. Work with Flintshire colleagues to increase the number of social enterprises attending 'Meet the Buyer' events to encourage working with the private sector as part of their supply chain.	SE Officer FCC/ Community Benefits Officer FCC Private Sector contractors	To be reviewed annually	Level of support and number of interventions received by social enterprises from Private Sector contractors	Stakeholder Group Update from previous Action Plan
3. Social enterprises will have a higher profile					
3.1	Explore opportunities for social enterprises to present at Strategic Boards e.g. Regional Boards, Welsh Government Groups etc in order to raise both the profile and awareness of social enterprise as potential service delivery partners	Flintshire Social Enterprise Partnership	To be reviewed annually	Number of Regional/strategic boards attended	Stakeholder Group Update from previous Action Plan
3.2	Develop increased understanding of the opportunity that social enterprise presents as service delivery partners through development and delivery of awareness raising events delivered by social enterprises for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authority Officers Elected Members Jobcentre + Other potential partner organisations 	SE Officer FCC / Flintshire Social Enterprise Network	To be reviewed annually	Number of events delivered Number of Officers attending Number of Elected Members attending	Stakeholder Group Response to WAO Report
4. Social enterprises will deliver more services on behalf of the public sector					
4.1	Review procurement strategy to enable social	Flintshire	2023	Number of	Stakeholder

	enterprises to compete for contracts with the Local Authority. In line with new guidelines as they are developed and released	County Council	onwards	contracts tendered for by Social Enterprises	Group Response to WAO Report
4.2	Mapping of the social enterprise sector in Flintshire including areas of work by developing an interactive social enterprise directory on FCC Website in order to enable social enterprises to advertise their goods/services. explore partnership working and collaborative working opportunities	Social Enterprise Officer	2023 and ongoing		Stakeholder Group
4.3	Support Social Enterprises to increase procurement opportunities by developing awareness raising events for collaborations between social enterprises to be formed ahead of a contracting opportunities.	Flintshire County Council	To be reviewed annually	Number of events delivered/attended by SEs Number of contracts tendered for by Social Enterprises Number and value of contracts secured by Social Enterprises	Stakeholder Group Response to WAO Report
4.4	Nominate 'Sponsoring Officers' from relevant departments to signpost colleagues and or service users to social enterprises with the potential to become service providers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make social enterprises aware of 	Flintshire County Council	To be reviewed annually	Number of 'Sponsoring Officers' nominated Number of	Stakeholder Group Response to WAO

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> upcoming contracting opportunities Raise awareness of social enterprise service providers and their offer among colleagues to increase their potential to secure contracts with the LA Promote social enterprise activity to current clients/beneficiaries in order to increase uptake of the social enterprise offer 			contracts secured by social enterprises	Report
4.5	<p>Flintshire County Council to deliver awareness Sessions around subjects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dynamic Purchasing System Social Prescribing Section Social Welfare Act 2016 Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act (SPPP) Changes to procurement guidelines Health and Social Care Regional Integration Fund 	Flintshire County Council	To be reviewed annually	<p>Number of awareness sessions delivered</p> <p>Number of social enterprises attending awareness sessions</p>	<p>Stakeholder Group</p> <p>Response to WAO Report</p>
4.6	Publish, and share the FCC Social Services Report on 'Improvement Journey in providing services to people in its area' allowing Social Enterprises to contribute to the outcomes	Flintshire County Council	2023 and annually	<p>Production of the report</p> <p>Number of social enterprises contributing to the outcomes</p>	<p>Stakeholder Group</p> <p>Response to WAO Report</p>

Delivering the Action Plan

Day to day responsibility for co-ordinating the delivery of the Action Plan will rest with the Council Business Development team. Progress will be reported on a regular basis to:

- FCC Cabinet and Scrutiny through the Council Plan reporting process
- Flintshire Economic Recovery Group
- Flintshire Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group

The Action Plan will be reviewed at least annually and updated as required based on performance, responding to external drivers and feedback from stakeholders.