

Appendix 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024 to 2025

This document presents our Annual Governance Statement for the period 2024 to 2025, highlighting our commitment to transparency, accountability, and effective governance.

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh. We are also happy to provide this document in large print, audio, and braille, please contact the Corporate Improvement and Development Team.



Conwy - Sir flaengar sy'n creu cyfleoedd

Conwy - a progressive County creating opportunity

We want to hear your views!

We value the rich diversity of Conwy and believe it's essential for all voices to be heard and acknowledged. We want to hear from you about the things that affect you. Are our long-term goals right for your community, and are we doing the right things? For more information or to share your thoughts on anything in our Corporate Plan, please contact us.

By email: countyconversation@conwy.gov.uk

By telephone: 01492 57 4000

Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. We welcome telephone calls in English and Welsh.

BT Relay Service Customers with hearing or speech impairments can contact any Council service by dialling **18001** before the number they require.

By Sign: British Sign Language users can contact us using a Sign Language interpreter through the InterpretersLive! service, provided by Sign Solutions – visit www.conwy.gov.uk/signing

By post: People and Performance Service
Performance and Improvement Team
Conwy County Borough Council
PO Box 1
Colwyn Bay
LL29 0GG

We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh. There will be no delay in responding to correspondence received in either language.

Young People

Young people are the future and we want to hear your views. Services working with young people want to listen and give you the chance to speak up. Conwy Youth Council is all about giving you a voice and a choice in decisions that affect you.

If you want to get involved, visit the [Youth Council Facebook page](#), or go to our [Youth Service website](#), or contact us:

By email: youthservice@conwy.gov.uk

By telephone: 01492 575100

Rydym yn croesawu galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. We welcome telephone calls in English and Welsh. BT Relay Service Customers with hearing or speech impairments can contact any Council service by dialling **18001** before the number they require.

Through Facebook and Instagram: @GIConwyYS

To keep up-to-date:

Like us on [Facebook](#)

Visit [our website](#) for information on the Corporate Plan

Visit our [‘Have your Say’](#) webpage

Set up an account on [My Conwy](#) to tailor updates from us, as well as make and manage your service requests online.

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1. Introduction

As a council, we are responsible for ensuring that our business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. There is an expectation under the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021 that we exercise our functions economically, efficiency and effectively. In discharging this overall responsibility, we are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of our affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of our functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The new performance and governance regime set out under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (repealing the earlier Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009) requires councils to undertake an annual Self-Assessment of Performance, and answer the questions:

- 1) Is the Council exercising its functions effectively?
- 2) Is the Council using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively?
- 3) Does the Council have effective governance in place for securing the above?

Our third Self-Assessment covering 2023 to 2024 has been approved and published on the council website and is available [here](#). Our Self-Assessment for 2024 to 2025 has also been drafted alongside this Annual Governance Statement, bringing forward our democratic reporting timescales to the summer rather than the autumn for more timely monitoring of performance.

The third question, 'Does the Council have effective governance in place?' is answered by our assessment in this Annual Governance Statement.

The Council has a **Local Code of Corporate Governance** that is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government; and a **Governance Framework** that comprises of the policies, procedures, behaviours, and values by which the council is controlled and governed. This statement is an evaluation of compliance with the Local Code and whether our governance arrangements effectively support the delivery of our objectives. The Statement also meets the requirements of Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

2. What is Governance?

Corporate governance is the system by which an organisation is directed and controlled. A good governance structure will include as a minimum:

- Clear governance standards by which an organisation will be governed.
- Governance roles and responsibilities.
- A mechanism for measuring an organisation's performance against its governance standards.

To be successful, an organisation must have a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management.

3. Corporate Governance Arrangements

As a council, we are committed to ensuring that good governance principles and management practices are adopted in all business activities to ensure public trust.

3.1. The Local Code of Governance

The Local Code of Governance provides a public statement that sets out the way in which the Council meets and demonstrates compliance with the CIPFA Governance principles.

3.2. The Governance Framework

The Local Code is underpinned by a Governance Framework that comprises of the policies, procedures, behaviours, and values by which the council is controlled and governed.

3.3. The Annual Governance Statement

The Annual Governance Statement provides assurances over our Governance arrangements, together with identifying areas of future focus and improvement. The purpose of the Annual Governance Statement is to report publicly on the extent to which we comply with our local code of governance. It identifies those areas that have been identified as needing improvement following self-assessment.

3.4. Annual Governance Statement Action Plan

We continue to review areas for improvement and they are monitored through the Annual Governance Statement Action plan.

4. Sources of Assurance

Assurance Area	Assurance Mechanism	Assurance Output
Delivery of strategic goals and objectives.	There are a number of strategic document and service plans, e.g. Corporate Plan; Inclusive Conwy (Strategic Equality Plan); Ein Llais Cymraeg, etc.	Self-Assessment Performance Reports (six-monthly). Inclusive Conwy (Strategic Equality Plan) Annual Report. Welsh Language Strategy Annual Report.
Services are delivered economically, efficiently, and effectively.	Self-Assessment Process. Service Performance Reviews. Engagement forward work programme. Complaints Policy and procedures. Challenge from External Regulators. Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee Panel Performance Assessment (once every administration).	Self-Assessment Performance Reports (six-monthly). Service Performance Review documents and outputs. Survey outputs. Complaints / compliments reporting. External regulatory reports Committee recommendations. Panel Performance Assessment Report (once every administration).
Management of risks and issues.	Risk and Issue Management Framework. Service Performance Reviews. Challenge from External Regulators. Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.	Corporate and service risk and issue registers. Service Performance Review documents and outputs. External regulatory reports. Committee recommendations.

Financial planning and performance.	<p>Business Planning Framework.</p> <p>Medium term financial strategy.</p> <p>Financial regulations and procedures.</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Budget setting reports.</p> <p>Financial performance monitoring reports.</p> <p>Annual Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p>
Effectiveness of internal controls.	<p>Constitution (including statutory officers, scheme of delegation, financial management and procurement rules).</p> <p>Council, Cabinet, committees, boards, and panels.</p> <p>Strategic Leadership Team and Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Internal Audit.</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p> <p>Staff engagement and Conwy Conversation.</p>	<p>Regular reviews of the Constitution.</p> <p>Meeting documentation (published on moder.gov)</p> <p>Internal audit reports.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p> <p>Staff engagement and Conwy Conversation records.</p>
Community engagement and public accountability.	<p>Public Participation Strategy.</p> <p>Engagement forward work programme.</p> <p>Complaints Policy and procedures.</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Feedback received through consultation and engagement.</p> <p>Lessons learned.</p> <p>Complaints / compliments reporting.</p> <p>Ombudsman reports.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p>

Project management and project delivery.	<p>Programme and Project Management Framework.</p> <p>Monitoring structures, e.g. Senior Leadership Team, Senior Management Team, Cabinet, boards, project teams etc.</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Self-Assessment Performance Reports (six-monthly).</p> <p>Benefits realisation plan outputs.</p> <p>Lessons learned report.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p>
Procurement processes	<p>Contract Procedure Rules.</p> <p>Financial Regulations.</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Business Cases.</p> <p>Contracts Register.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Annual Procurement and Commissioning Report</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p>
Roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers.	<p>Constitution (covering roles and responsibilities, scheme of delegation, etc.).</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Regular reviews of the Constitution.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p>
Standards of conduct and behaviour.	<p>HR Policies and Procedures.</p> <p>Code of Conduct and Member/Officer Protocol.</p> <p>Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>Standards Committee.</p> <p>Group Leaders.</p> <p>Conwy Conversation.</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Complaints / compliments reporting.</p> <p>Standards Committee Annual Report.</p> <p>Conwy Conversation records.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p>

Training and development of Members and Officers.	<p>Learning Academy Plan (Learning and Development Strategy).</p> <p>Member Development Plan.</p> <p>Staff engagement and Conwy Conversation.</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Learning Academy monitoring / training records.</p> <p>Member Development monitoring / training records.</p> <p>Annual reports by councillors.</p> <p>Staff engagement and Conwy Conversation records.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p>
Compliance with laws and regulations, internal policies, and procedures.	<p>Policy Framework.</p> <p>Information Management Strategy.</p> <p>Digital Strategy.</p> <p>Cyber Resilience Strategy.</p> <p>Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>Ein Llais Cymraeg (Welsh Language Strategy).</p> <p>Health and Safety Policy.</p> <p>Internal Audit.</p> <p>Whistleblowing and other countering fraud arrangements.</p> <p>Challenge from External Regulators.</p> <p>Challenge by Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Senior Information Risk Owner Annual Report.</p> <p>Welsh Language Annual Report.</p> <p>Health and Safety Annual Report.</p> <p>Internal Audit.</p> <p>Records of investigations.</p> <p>External regulatory reports.</p> <p>Committee recommendations.</p>

4.1. Assurance Provided by Internal and External Audit

The Head of Internal Audit stated in the 2024 to 2025 annual Audit Opinion that our internal control environment and systems of internal control provided satisfactory assurance over key business process and financial systems to manage the achievement of the organisation's objectives. Risk based audit planning through our assurance map has been used to ensure sufficient assurance is available to support the annual opinion.

Working practices have continued to evolve to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of internal audits, with increased focus on areas of risk identified within the assurance map, and a shift away from cyclical auditing processes. The Internal Audit Plan continues to provide the required flexibility, and alongside direct internal audit work, the Head of Internal Audit has also drawn on additional sources of assurance, which are summarised as follows:

- Results of all audits undertaken during the year ended 31 March 2025.
- Results of follow-up action taken in respect of audits performed during the previous year.
- Whether any major or critical category of recommendations have not been accepted by management and the consequent risks.
- The effects of any material changes in the organisation's objectives or activities.
- The service has in place a comprehensive assurance map to ensure that those areas of greatest priority are focused upon, assurance gaps are filled, and that there is no 'over assurance' in any activity.
- The work performed by Audit Wales and other external regulators.
- Matters arising from previous reports to the Governance and Audit Committee.
- The work of the Improvement and Audit Group to monitor corporate risks and issues to ensure all critical and major risks and corporate issues have been identified throughout the authority.
- Gaining assurance that external funding flows have been well managed and that appropriate governance and accountability for the use of public money was in place.
- Meetings with Strategic Directors and Heads of Service to identify new or emerging areas of risk, developments within their areas of responsibility, or the impact of new legislation.

The Annual Internal Audit Report for 2024 to 2025 was presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in May 2025. The report concludes that we have satisfactory internal control, risk management, and corporate governance processes in place to manage the achievement of our objectives for the 12 months ended 31 March 2025. 86% of the planned audits completed during the year were assessed as providing positive levels of assurance. 4 of the planned audits completed were assessed as providing a limited level of assurance and related to: Fleet Services (Stock Control & Fuel Management); Cartrefi

Conwy – Temporary Accommodation; Houses in Multiple Occupation; and Disabled Facilities Grant. The Fleet Services (Stock Control & Fuel Management) follow-up was undertaken in April 2025, with the audit opinion revised as Satisfactory Assurance. The other 3 follow-up audits are scheduled to be performed during 2025 to 2026 to ensure implementation of the recommendations.

The findings in respect of follow-up audits conducted during 2024 to 2025 were reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. There were 11 follow-ups performed during the year to ensure the implementation of 120 recommendations. 624 of the recommendations have been fully implemented; 9 recommendations remain outstanding; and 49 are considered to be work in progress. The respective audits contained 6 Major or Critical recommendations, 5 of which had been implemented (83%). All 5 recommendations in the Fleet Services (Stock Control & Fuel Management) audit had been implemented or were no longer applicable (computerised stock records). A Major recommendation made in the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) and Rygbi Gogledd Cymru (RGC) audit was considered to be work in progress.

The draft 2023 to 2024 financial statements were prepared and provided to the auditor in June 2024. The audit of the financial statements was delayed as a result of resource issues in Audit Wales, and an unqualified audit opinion was issued on 29 November 2024. The Annual Audit Summary for 2024 is available [here](#).

5. Review of Effectiveness – How do we know our arrangements are working?

This statement builds upon the CIPFA 'Good Governance in Local Government 2020 Practitioner Update'. Conwy County Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Senior Management Team within the council, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment; the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report; and by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The effectiveness of the governance framework has been evaluated through review by key officers with responsibility for governance functions as well as the Improvement and Audit Group, prior to receiving input from the Governance and Audit Committee.

5.1. Definition of Assurance Ratings

We have recently reviewed and aligned our assurance ratings with the common definitions set by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) for Internal Audit Engagement Opinions. The following assurance rating matrix will be used to self-assess our governance controls:

1. **Substantial Assurance:** A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
2. **Reasonable Assurance:** There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
3. **Limited Assurance:** Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
4. **No Assurance:** Immediate action is required to address fundamental gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance identified. The system of governance, risk management and control is inadequate to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

5.2. Three Lines of Defence Evaluation

The Three Lines of Defence Assurance Model is central to the evaluation of effectiveness.

The Authority has in place well established processes to ensure it exercises its functions effectively. The Service Performance Review and Self-Assessment processes are effective in monitoring and evaluating the delivery of our strategic and regulatory commitments; how well we manage issues and risks; and whether financial and non-financial resources are being used economically, effectively, and efficiently.

These evaluation mechanisms are underpinned by a sound performance management framework embedded at every level of the organisation, to drive improvement and ensure compliance. The process for strategic and service planning ensures priorities at a service level are directly aligned to corporate goals, and resources are identified and allocated appropriately. The process for risk and issue management ensures that risks and issues both at a service and corporate level are controlled. The process for performance measurement ensures progress is closely tracked and timely interventions applied where appropriate. The effectiveness of these processes is tested through robust external and internal audit, scrutiny, and challenge.

5.2.1. First Line of Defence

Under the first line of defence, operational managers have ownership, responsibility, and accountability for directly assessing, controlling, and mitigating risks. Heads of Service are required to assist the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement for the council by providing an assurance statement for the internal control framework within their service. Each Head of Service is responsible for delivering the outcomes set out in their Service Plan. They are responsible for identifying and managing the risks and issues that may affect service delivery. This work includes monitoring the effectiveness of controls put in place to mitigate the risks and issues, and carrying out remedial action where controls are weak or not in place.

Service Performance Reviews (SPRs) provide assurance that services have sound governance arrangements. The reviews held during 2024 provided assurance that services were making progress in delivering Corporate and service objectives; that risks and issues were being managed; and that regulatory compliance was being achieved. However, the significant financial and resource challenges faced by every service continued to be the main focus of discussions. Budget reductions, cost increases, recruitment and retention challenges and staff absence, compounded by increasing service demand, continue to place considerable pressure on our ability to sustain performance. There is agreement generally between officers and members that the current levels of service provision cannot be sustained with such resource difficulties and without negatively impacting staff wellbeing. These conclusions have been echoed in our Performance Self-Assessment Report – www.conwy.gov.uk/performance.

Conwy has a sound track record of controlling and managing its revenue budget but this is becoming increasingly difficult because of both increasing service demands, particularly in social care, education and housing, and continued pay and price inflation. Given the significant financial challenges being faced, we further strengthened our spending controls to ensure that any spend was absolutely essential and value for money was obtained. During the year, Welsh Government distributed additional funding and we also benefited from some additional one-off income from the re-financing of a regional waste solution. In addition, we gained from reduced treasury management and energy costs. The final outturn position resulted in spend being contained within our total income, which was better than had been anticipated in our third quarter budget monitoring report. The vast majority of the planned savings were successfully delivered by services.

Given the continued financial pressure, we continue to take active steps to plan and manage our financial position for future years, including the use of benchmarking to provide budget challenge, assessing service levels in the context of statutory duties, and member-led budget working groups to consider the future shape of service delivery.

Assurance Rating: Reasonable Assurance

We have given this rating because we believe that our arrangements could be strengthened further, which we have recognised in our improvement actions below.

5.2.2. Second Line of Defence

The second line of defence consists of an oversight and monitoring of activities covered by several components of internal governance (audit compliance, risk and issue management, performance, financial control etc.). This line of defence monitors and facilitates the implementation of effective governance practices by operational management, and assists in reporting information up and down the organisation. A series of reports are written throughout the year – including our six-monthly Performance Self-Assessment Report, financial reports, equality reports, information governance, scrutiny reports, Welsh language reports – all of which are listed in the Governance Framework.

The CIPFA Financial Management Code sets financial management standards that are designed to support good practice and assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. Local government bodies face continued challenge to their financial resilience as a result of the significant pressure and demand on services. The economic

instability has only served to exacerbate these pressures resulting in new and significant financial challenges over the coming years. In December 2024, we refreshed our Medium-Term Financial Plan, which sets out our anticipated budget requirement for the next 2 financial years and how we will manage the resource requirement within the funds available. The plan covers a two-year period, rather than three to five years, due to the very significant financial and economic uncertainty that we face. Despite the comparatively short period of the plan, its aim is to help put our finances on a sustainable footing for the longer-term. At our request, our Treasury Advisors have also assessed the treasury management implications of the council's current capital programme. They reported that the revenue impact is manageable, provided rising costs are included in the budget and interest rate risks are managed carefully.

All reports requiring political approval have been presented to either Cabinet or Council for approval, and where appropriate to one of the four Scrutiny and Overview Committees for review and challenge. The reports in the main identify that we are making good progress to meet corporate objectives and other supporting strategies, but there are significant challenges relating to resources and capacity. The reports are balanced and identify areas for improvement where needed. A forward work programme is in place to ensure reports are presented in a timely manner and are regularly reviewed by the chairs of scrutiny with governance officers.

Assurance Rating: Reasonable Assurance

We have given this rating because we believe that our arrangements could be strengthened further, which we have recognised in our improvement actions below.

5.2.3. Third Line of Defence

Internal audit forms the organisation's third line of defence. An independent internal audit function with a risk-based approach to its work, provides assurance to senior management. This assurance covers how effectively the organisation assesses and manages governance and includes assurance on the effectiveness of the first and second lines of defence. In total, in 2024 to 2025 Internal Audit gave 29 audit opinions, of which 18 were high assurance, 7 were satisfactory assurance and 4 were limited assurance. There were no audit conclusions of no assurance.

Audit Wales provides an opinion on the statement of the accounts and the governance of the authority. Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales provide an opinion on the governance and management of Social Care and Education. The audit reports from the 3 regulators overall conclude that there are generally good governance arrangements in place within the authority.

Corrective actions arising from internal and external audit recommendations are closely monitored to ensure they are implemented and effective in addressing the area(s) of risk identified, further enhancing the authority's governance arrangements.

To view the publications of our external regulators, please follow the links below:

- [Audit Wales](#)
- [Estyn](#)
- [Care Inspectorate Wales](#)
- [Healthcare Inspectorate Wales](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [Public Services Ombudsman for Wales](#)
- [HM Inspectorate of Prisons](#)
- Commissioner Reports (including [Welsh Language](#), [Older People](#), [Children's](#), [Well-being of Future Generations](#), etc.).

Internal Audit External Quality Assessments are undertaken every 5 years. Our latest assessment may be viewed [here](#). Our next assessment is due in 2027.

Assurance Rating: Substantial Assurance

6. Key Governance Questions

6.1. Are Governance Arrangements effective in supporting delivery?

This year's Annual Governance Statement covers a period of time when we were continuing to deal with the impact of ongoing inflationary pressures and cost increases, resulting in significant financial pressures and challenges.

6.1.1. Stakeholder Engagement

We are required under engagement provisions within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to seek the views of a prescribed list of statutory consultees on how it is performing against its functions, including with local businesses, community councils, trade unions, partners, as well as residents and staff. Seeking the views and input of those who use our services, and those who help to deliver our services, remains an integral part of our governance processes and in helping us to assess whether we are delivering our functions economically, efficiently, and effectively.

We fully recognise the importance of community and stakeholder feedback in helping us to shape and improve services for future generations, delivering what people need in their communities. We have a lot of good examples of ongoing community engagement taking place through our services, and during 2024 to 2025 we have begun work to develop a new annual process to collate user perspectives as to how we are performing against our functions (i.e. our Well-being Objectives and key governance areas). We hope to have this new process up and running by the summer, providing us with valuable user data by the autumn. This information will support our Self-Assessment process.

Our revised Corporate Plan emphasises the importance of [working with communities](#) as a fundamental principle that underpins all of our work as a council. Making sure that people feel informed, included, and listened to remains important to us, as does providing a variety of ways for people to communicate, collaborate and engage with our services.

During 2024 to 2025 we ran a further public consultation on our budget, explaining the very challenging financial situation that we are in, and asking people for their views on how we should prioritise and allocate our very limited financial resources. The survey asked respondents for their views on which services are important to them and their local community. As part of our engagement and feedback to respondents, we also developed some [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to help address misunderstandings about what in our budget we can and can't control as a council. There was a good response to the survey overall, and the feedback was and continues to be used to inform our decision-making and help design and build financial and service resilience. The results of our budget survey was included within our [draft budget proposals](#), which were approved by Cabinet in February 2025.

We must, however, acknowledge where our engagement has not gone as well as we would have liked and where lessons have been learned. In July 2024, we updated the public on the planned closure of some public toilets, which prompted a Notice of Motion to be raised at Council. In respect of communication and dialogue, some members expressed disappointment at the failure to consult with local members and stakeholders appropriately. The Chief Executive presented a response this at the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September](#), outlining the process that had been followed in respect of the proposed closure of public toilets, which included consultation on the Local Toilet Strategy. Though it was acknowledged that members should have been given more time to consider proposals and that important lessons would be learned from that, the time that was available to us was significantly curtailed by the two elections that were held during 2024. This gave officers only three weeks where there was no pre-election period to inform people that needed to know and to enable us to move swiftly on with the financial savings that we needed to secure as an authority. The Chief Executive also emphasised that there had been extensive discussions, consultations, and engagements since September 2023 with all members, town and community councils and local business, and that officers were always available to discuss concerns and answer questions at any time. Elected members had also been copied into all correspondence relating to the Community Toilet Scheme and the consultation informing of closure.

We feel that good officer and elected member relationships have been maintained during 2024 to 2025, and continue to support the gathering of community views through informal feedback. We also have a Community Development and Engagement Manager to help support our relationship with town and community councils. These mechanisms strengthen the relationships between the council and communities, providing us with vital feedback in order to continue to shape and deliver services people need. During 2025 to 2026 we will be looking to undertake a review of our community engagement mechanisms and activity across the authority, to help us understand what work routinely takes place, what intelligence we can gather from it, and look as far as is possible to bring some consistency and oversight to our approaches.

We have arrangements to regularly engage with the recognised trade unions. There are joint meetings between officers, members and the three unions, Unison, GMB and Unite, in the form of the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee and union consultation meetings, where there are opportunities to discuss the challenges facing us as an employer, discuss corporate decisions that may impact on the organisation's employees,

and share information about our performance in accordance with the Social Partnerships and Procurement Act. In addition, there are regular meetings with recognised Trade Unions who represent Education colleagues – National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) Cymru, the National Education Union (NEU) Cymru, Voice, and Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (UCAC). Understanding the importance of effective internal communications and of supporting staff well-being, during 2024 to 2025 we also convened a small working group to review how we engage with staff within the council. A number of key areas for improvement have been identified, and the group will be putting forward their recommendations to SMT in early 2025 to 2026.

6.1.2. Strategic Planning

During 2024 to 2025 we have undertaken an in-depth review and revision of our Corporate Plan objectives. We have rationalised the number of goals set within our plan to five, recognising that the nine that were set previously were very ambitious and spread our focus too thinly. Crucially we have tried to strengthen the plan as a high-level strategic document, taking a step-back from overly operational detail, and giving a particular focus to the need to secure the council's financial resilience to sustain service delivery in the future. We have also taken particular care to review the wording of our commitments to make them more current, and being especially wary of potential future change owing to budgetary pressures. It is a difficult balance to achieve whilst still keeping an eye on what's really important. Our revised plan is available at www.conwy.gov.uk/corporateplan.

Having in place strategic plans aligned to our wellbeing objectives is critical in ensuring national and local priorities are delivered effectively and statutory obligations are met. These plans underpin everything that we do and provide effective roadmaps to improve performance and operational efficiency, and ensure that we respond effectively to macro-environmental risks and opportunities. Our strategic plans are underpinned by sound research and data to inform decision-making.

Corporate strategies, finances, and service plans are aligned to our Corporate Plan's well-being objectives. The culture of outcome-based planning is embedded in our corporate and service planning processes. All key strategic plans and corporate risks and issues are aligned to the relevant well-being objective and all reports submitted for democratic approval must evidence how they support the Well-being of Future Generations Act, Corporate Plan, and / or risk and issue that they effect.

All strategic plans are produced after implementing community engagement processes and are supported with resource management. There are positive links between strategic and financial planning that continue to be built upon.

6.1.3. Key Decisions

As a council, we are publicly accountable to our communities and are required to demonstrate openness and transparency in all decisions made. Providing opportunities for communities to access, scrutinise and challenge our decisions and having a clear audit trail of how decisions are made builds community trust and provides assurance that public resources are being used economically, effectively, efficiently, and ethically.

Key decisions are made with reflection on the impact on a number of factors, including equity and sustainability. We also continue to embed the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by ensuring that the Act has been considered in all key plans and all key decisions presented to democracy.

We continue to review our democratic and business processes to ensure that they are fit for purpose and lead to timely, informed decision-making. For example, a member / officer working group has during 2024 to 2025 been reviewing our scrutiny arrangements and will present its findings and recommendations for improvement to Council in early 2025 to 2026. Key routine reports that support performance and risk management have also been reviewed in this last year. During 2025 to 2026 we will be looking to review our approach to impact assessment, which will better help support informed decision-making.

6.1.4. Performance Management

Effective performance management is crucial to ensuring that we deliver our statutory, national, and local priorities; use our resources in the most efficient and effective way; manage risks and challenges; and drive continuous improvement. Where there is evidence of performance in need of improvement, action plans are put in place and monitored. We have robust mechanisms in place to continually monitor performance, risk, and audit compliance information, with routine reports scheduled through democracy.

Our procurement policies include community benefits as an important part of our awarding criteria, as is value for money in itself. Contract procurement rules require that managers demonstrate value for money, which therefore may not always be the cheapest option, and have robust monitoring arrangements in place to monitor the success of any contract.

The Conwy Opportunities Board, our Service Performance Review process, programme, and project boards all provide opportunities for review, challenge, and discussions for improvement. The staff suggestion scheme also invites staff to put forward ideas for improvement. We have reviewed this scheme during 2024 to 2025 and will be looking at ways to promote this better to staff. The Chief Executive and Strategic Directors have also hosted staff engagement sessions twice during the year, which have been a particularly successful mechanism of gaining feedback. Staff can also raise ideas and performance issues through their regular Conwy Conversation check-ins. A small working group of officers has recently been reviewing other mechanisms to promote staff engagement, and will be putting their recommendations forward to the Senior Management Team.

Our six-monthly Performance Self-Assessment Reports have been reviewed during 2024 to 2025 to better meet accessible standards, and now include clear data tables with trend information, as well as qualitative narrative around key deliverables, news items and democratic activity. These reports are a single vehicle through which we can streamline what previously were separate reports, capturing all key performance information in one place. These reports, together with highlight reports from programme and projects, are evidence that in the main, our objectives are being delivered despite the current significant financial challenges.

Over recent years we have had to adjust targets and, in some areas, made the decision for managed decline in alignment with reduced budgets. This unfortunately is likely to continue to be the case for the foreseeable. Crucially, in February 2025, the Council approved its [revised Corporate Plan](#), responding to recommendations from the WLGA Peer Review in 2023 to rationalise our ambition and place a clearer focus on financial resilience. This has been a good opportunity for us to refocus the Performance Management Framework that supports the Corporate Plan, and will form the basis of our Self-Assessment reports going forward.

Relevant staff responsible for the implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 have developed and implemented action plans. During 2024 to 2025 we have moved significantly forward with making arrangements for the Panel Performance Assessment, which has included drafting our Scope for the assessment. The assessment is anticipated to take place in December 2025.

Also during 2024 to 2025, we have done considerable work to review our approach to Corporate Risk and Issues. Our revised register will hopefully present a more streamlined

strategic set of corporate risks, meeting accessibility standards. It includes a summary dashboard that presents trend information to help evaluate the effectiveness of management controls and mitigating actions.

We have reviewed our Service Performance Review (SPRs) programme to ensure that it remains relevant and valuable during the current period of challenge. The terms of reference for the programme have been reviewed by the Senior Management and Cabinet, introducing a structured agenda to the meetings going forward, and more streamlined documentation to better support strategic discussions. Also recognising the considerable amount of work that goes into preparing for SPRs, it has now been agreed to move to an annual rolling programme, which is felt to be more proportionate, particularly in the context of other mechanisms that exist to regularly review service performance. Improvement actions arising from the SPRs will be fed into our six-monthly Performance Self-Assessment reports, supporting our approach to ongoing assessment as encouraged by the statutory performance guidance for the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

We have begun work to implement an annual process to survey stakeholder opinion as to how we are performing against our functions, which again is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. This is, however, still in the early stages, and a proposal will be put forward to Senior Managers and Cabinet during the early summer, 2025. The results of the survey will again feed into our Performance Self-Assessment reports, helping us to better triangulate information as to how we are performing.

Considerable work has therefore taken place during the year to review and improve various aspects of both our performance and risk frameworks. Once these strands of work are complete, we will update our policies and guidance accordingly and provide training where needed.

6.2. Are there challenges to achievement?

The most significant challenges to achievement in 2024 to 2025 included:

1. Budget availability.
2. Staff capacity and increasing workloads.
3. The sustainability of the social care sector.
4. Increasing demand for services.

5. Difficulties in recruiting to some key vacant posts in service areas.

Our latest Corporate Risk Register was presented to the [Governance and Audit Committee in June 2025](#).

Despite these challenges, our Performance Self-Assessment reports evidence that, despite the additional pressures, there has been really good work delivered by us in support of our Corporate Plan objectives.

Financial austerity and the reduced capacity of staff who are taking on more roles as staff are not replaced remains a significant barrier in some service areas. However, we are exploring digital solutions that may assist with capacity. We continue to deliver budget cuts to ensure we can balance the budget but this becomes more challenging every year, and as a result extremely difficult decisions have had to be taken to increase charges or reduce or stop some service provision.

We continue to explore and take advantage of other funding opportunities which have become available, including the UK Shared Prosperity Funding, which has been extended into 2025 to 2026, funding from the Welsh Government Energy Service for work to transition to net zero as well as a range of other grants. In addition, we continue look how we can transform services in order to streamline business process, and the use of technology to increase capacity.

6.3 Is governance supporting the delivery of objectives?

We continue to review internal controls and make changes as required by legislation. Internal Audit regularly review their assurance map, which is used to inform the Internal Audit plan. The Governance and Audit Committee also completes an annual self-assessment of its performance to demonstrate it is discharging its responsibilities and its arrangements are effective. A corrective action plan is produced where areas for improvement are identified.

The Head of Audit and Procurement Service and the Audit Manager meet regularly with service management teams to discuss their latest risks, concerns, and requirements. This ensures that Internal Audit are up-to-date and aware of emerging issues and risks and will be able to focus resources in the greatest areas of priority and risk at the time.

There are twice yearly performance reports to democracy and senior management, and all managers can access performance data through our CAMMS system at any time, which stores our performance, risk, and regulatory information.

The corporate risk and issue registers are reviewed regularly with strong engagement by managers and members. During 2024 to 2025 we have undertaken a more in-depth review of our Risk and Issues registers and process and will be making recommendations to democracy for improvements to our framework.

There are routes for both the public and staff to feedback their views through community engagement exercises, e-petitions, staff appraisals and the staff suggestions portal. During 2025 to 2026 we will be looking at a new mechanism to capture stakeholder perspectives about performance against our functions. There are also feedback mechanisms in place through the social media, staff brief, staff engagement events, social media, and managers' forum.

All projects and programmes have benefits realisation plans in place and keep lessons learned logs, which are shared through the Programme and Project Management Forum.

There has been an ongoing programme of modernisation across the council to ensure that we meet the highly ambitious budget reductions and ensure that we are as efficient as possible. During 2024 to 2025 we have developed our draft Resilience Strategy and reviewed our Corporate Plan, which emphasise the importance of transformation to support our financial sustainability in the future.

Whilst we have an oversight of and attend all regional strategic partnerships, it is a complex landscape and careful management is needed to ensure that boards do not duplicate or conflict.

6.4. What do we do well?

There are clearly defined functions and roles to facilitate members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose, and to determine the interventions necessary to meet the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and our corporate goals. A comprehensive induction plan is in place to ensure that all newly elected members are supported to understand their roles and responsibilities and how the council works – particularly in relation to governance. A comprehensive induction plan is also in place for

new senior managers to ensure they have the knowledge and support they need to perform their role effectively, contributing to the effective governance of the organisation.

As well as Corporate Inductions, the 'onboarding' page helps to induct all new members of staff and provides a source of reference for them to refer to as they develop in their new role. We also now have a digitised approach to exit interviews, enabling us to draw anonymised data to help us improve.

All corporate priorities and corporate risks and issues are assigned to senior managers and cabinet members in order that they can be held to account for the effectiveness of implementation.

There are robust arrangements for effective financial control through our accounting procedures and financial regulations. These include established budget planning procedures, which are subject to risk assessment, and regular reports to members comparing forecasts of revenue and capital expenditure to annual budgets and a business planning framework process that supports our resource allocation process.

Despite many years of austerity, we have a good track record of managing our spending plans within the approved budget, but this is becoming increasingly difficult as the funding available to us as a council is insufficient to keep pace with the growing demand for services, particularly in social care. In their National Report on the [Financial Sustainability of Local Government](#), Audit Wales conclude that 'the financial position of local government is unsustainable over the medium-term unless action is taken by those who support and interact with the sector as well as councils themselves'. Working to ensure our financial sustainability underpins everything that we do, but as recognised by Audit Wales, the success of local government relies on national, as well as local government.

Despite the barriers and challenges identified, we have delivered a number of achievements against our well-being objectives. These have been captured in detail within our twice-yearly Performance Self-Assessment Reports, which may be viewed on www.conwy.gov.uk/performance.

6.5. What do we need to keep a focus on?

Our key areas of risks, as captured through our Corporate Risk Register, are as follows:

1. Insufficient funding will prevent us from balancing our budget, achieving our objectives, and delivering services.
2. We do not achieve the target to become net carbon zero.
3. A serious safeguarding incident where the council has responsibility.
4. We do not respond effectively to an unexpected serious event.
5. A health and safety incident results in serious injury or the loss of life.
6. We do not have sufficient staff resilience to fulfil our commitments.
7. Recruitment and retention challenges worsen in critical areas.
8. We are not an inclusive organisation.
9. Our infrastructure is not used effectively, prioritised, or upgraded appropriately.
10. Partners do not have aligned priorities, commitments, or available resources to make effective decisions and support the successful implementation of shared outcomes.
11. There is an information security incident.
12. There is legal action, fines or a judicial review ruling against the council.
13. Contracts will not deliver the expected outcomes.
14. The sustainability of the social care sector locally worsens.
15. We do not appropriately and responsibly utilise technology (including Artificial Intelligence).
16. Homelessness levels increase significantly.
17. We do not sufficiently consider demographic information in the design and delivery of our services.

The executive summary for our [Performance Self-Assessment](#) also summarises the key areas where there are challenges to our performance.

6.6. Have there been any governance issues?

The review of the effectiveness of the governance framework has concluded that our arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. Below are our actions in support of improved governance.

6.6.1. Improvement Actions 2024 to 2025

Our previous review identified 4 key improvement actions, for which an update is provided below:

A1 Review Outcome 9 of the Corporate Plan to build short, medium, and longer-term resilience.

Update: Council approved its revised Corporate Plan at its [meeting in February 2025](#). The new Plan places a clear focus on the need of the organisation as a whole to work towards improved financial resilience. This action is now complete, however, there is still work to do to finalise our supporting Resilience Strategy (see A1 below).

A2 Further develop medium term financial planning, seeking to maximise on the benefit of extending our Medium-Term Financial Plan beyond two years, and identifying actions to build financial resilience.

Update: The Medium-Term Financial Plan has been updated and now covers the period to 2027 to 2028. The focus of our work during 2024 to 2025 has been to implement a range of actions following on from a WLGA Peer Review in 2023 and working with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy during 2024. These actions were set out in a Resilience Action Plan approved by Cabinet in September 2024. A key action was the development of a draft Resilience Strategy, which is supported by the Medium-Term Financial Plan. This will continue to be developed in 2025 to 2026.

A3 Review the approach to procurement to increase capacity and improve coordination of procurement activities.

Update: Corporate Procurement have completed a mini-restructure within the team, increasing capacity from 2.4 FTE to 4.4 FTE staff. As part of phase 2 implementation of the new Corporate Financial System, the team are developing a new Corporate Contracts Register that will provide improved oversight of existing contracts and will assist with the future planning of procurement activity. This will support the requirement to publish a pipeline of procurement activity under the Procurement Act 2023. The team are also reviewing the Contract Procedure Rules to bring them in line with the new Act and the transparency requirements. A Procurement Board has been established to pre-approve any new procurement activity over £50,000 before any activity is commenced.

A4 Streamline decision-making processes to remove bureaucratic barriers and improve the timeliness of decisions, maximising their effectiveness.

Update: We have undertaken considerable work in this last year to review our corporate performance, risk, and regulatory management processes, integrating reports where possible to avoid duplication and maximise capacity. We have also brought forward our six-monthly Performance Self-assessment reports so that they are more timely. There is also an ongoing review of scrutiny currently. We will continue with this action into 2025 to 2026 (see A3 below).

6.6.2. Improvement Actions 2025 to 2026

The areas identified within this review to be specifically addressed with new actions planned are outlined below:

- A1 Support the long-term financial sustainability of the council by implementing our Resilience Action Plan and Resilience Strategy.
- A2 Renew our Asset Management Strategy.
- A3 Continue our efforts to streamline decision-making.
- A4 Improve our approach to engagement and data intelligence.
- A5 Implement revised civil contingencies governance structures.
- A6 Actively support each service to develop and implement their workforce plan.
- A7 Work with all services to progress the aims of the Inclusive Conwy Strategy.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. These actions will be included within our Performance Self-Assessment Reports and monitored there.

7. Conclusion

Our decision-making process is transparent, supported by well-documented public meetings. Through officer and member induction everyone has been made aware of their roles and responsibilities. Decisions are subject to effective external and internal scrutiny, and where improvements are needed, action plans are put in place and monitored.

Governance arrangements have effectively supported us through a period of continuing challenge, whilst allowing us to adapt and deliver services without any continuity issues. Based on this assessment, therefore, the overall conclusion is that our governance arrangements for the period 2024 to 2025 were fit for purpose and effectively supported the delivery of our objectives.

We cannot yet say what the long-term consequences will be for public finance and public services, but elected members are working hard to lobby for changes for a fair national funding formula. Whatever the future brings, however, we will ensure that our Governance Framework continues to be relevant and fit for purpose.

Signed: 

Rhun ap Gareth, Chief Executive

Date: August 12, 2025

Signed: 

Cllr Charlie McCoubrey, Leader

Date: August 12, 2025