

# Performance Self-Assessment: April to September 2024

This document presents our performance against our Corporate Plan themes and governance areas between April and September 2024.

**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.

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**By telephone:** 01492 57 4000

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

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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](mailto: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.

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# Performance Measurement

We use a three colour – red, amber, green (RAG) – approach to our performance measures and activities. For the purposes of this report, our approach to measuring projects has been applied to all activity, this also being consistent with reporting in our performance management system (CAMMS). Where a measure is identified as a ‘count only,’ RAG status and trend descriptors do not apply.

## For measures

- A **green** status means that a target has been met.
- An **amber** status means that performance is within tolerance to meet target.
- A **red** status means that performance has not met its target and is below tolerance.

## For activity (using project methodology)

- A **green** status means that this element is on track.
- An **amber** status means that a potential problem has been identified.
- A **red** status means a definite problem has been identified and needs addressing.

## Trend descriptors

The report also compares the data point (outturn) with the previous available period. In the case of cumulative six-monthly measures, we compare with the same period (i.e. latest mid-year with previous mid-year, latest year-end with previous year-end). This is not describing any movement or change in RAG status.

- **‘Better’** is used to describe where the change in outturn is an improvement. Where higher percentages or numbers are desirable, the figure will be higher than previously. Where lower percentages or numbers are desirable, the figure will be lower than previously.
- **‘Same’** is used when there has been no change to the outturn, with performance matching the previous available period.
- **‘Worse’** is used to describe where the change in outturn shows a declined. Where lower percentages or numbers are undesirable, the figure will be lower than previously. Where higher percentages or numbers are undesirable, the figure will be higher than previously.

## Summary position

The chapters below provide a summary of activity that has taken place during April to September 2024 in support of our Corporate Plan priorities, and includes an evaluation of performance against key governance functions. Each chapter is supported by a round-up of news stories relevant to our performance, a summary of items scrutinised or approved by our principal committees, and updates on our performance against key identified measures and projects.

### Corporate Plan theme summary

The measures evaluation for each theme below has been determined through the performance management framework that we have in place. The actions evaluation has been determined by the status of our activities, using our project methodology.

#### 1. An environment that is valued and looked after

Measures: Green: Target met

Actions: Green: On track

#### 2. A prosperous economy with culture at its heart

Measures: Green: Target met

Actions: Green: On track

#### 3. Education and Skills

Measures: Amber: Within tolerance

Actions: Green: On track

#### 4. Affordable, appropriate, good quality accommodation

Measures: Amber: Within tolerance

Actions: Green: On track

#### 5. Safe and feeling safe

Measures: Amber: Within tolerance

Actions: Green: On track

## **6. Healthy**

Measures: Green: Target met

Actions: Green: On track

## **7. Thriving Welsh Language**

Measures: No status

Actions: Green: On track

## **8. Informed, included, listened to, and involved in the community**

Measures: No status

Actions: Green: On track

## **9. Resilient council**

Measures: No status

Actions: Green: On track

# 1. People in Conwy value and look after the environment

Measures: **Green: Target met**

Actions: **Green: On track**

## 1.1. Measures Update

There is one new item of data to present with this report, concerning the percentage change in carbon emissions from our activities compared to our base-year (2019 to 2020). Data for 2023 to 2024 shows a further reduction in emissions of 19%. However, this is below our target. A separate report on our programme's progress will be tabled with members shortly.

We were delighted to announce in April that the fortnightly ["Podback"](#) kerbside recycling collection has celebrated recycling more than 1 million coffee pods from the county. We have been working with the local charity Crest, and pod recycling specialists Podback to deliver this service. More than 2900 households have signed up to the service, making a saving of 16.4 tonnes from waste incineration.

### Annual Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of waste reused, recycled, or composted – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b> <b>Target 70%</b>	69% Amber Same	70% Green Better
The percentage of local authority-maintained streets that are clean – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b> <b>Target 95%</b>	97% Green Better	99% Green Better
The percentage change in carbon emissions from our activities compared to base-year (2019 to 2020) – <b>Benchmarked Nationally</b> <b>Target 0 by 2030</b>	-24% Amber Better	-19% Red Worse
Number of properties where risk of flooding has been reduced following implementation of flood defence measures – <b>Count Only</b>	282	604
Length of route in kilometres (KM) added to active travel – <b>Count Only</b>	113	135

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The number of awards achieved for our parks and green spaces – <b>Count Only</b>	26	21

## 1.2. Actions Update

There are nine actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan. Seven are on track; one is Amber; and one is new with an update pending in the next report period.

### Actions

Title	Status	Update
Through our Climate Challenge Programme, we will work to be a Carbon net zero organisation by 2030.	Green On track	<p>An additional 2 electric charging sites added for the 17 electric vehicles in our fleet.</p> <p>Phase 1 of the decarbonisation project has started at Ysgol Bro Aled, and solar PV installations have been completed at 7 schools.</p> <p>Decarbonisation feasibility studies have been commissioned for the 4 swimming pools, including roof surveys to assess their suitability for solar PV.</p> <p>Solar PV has also been installed at Theatr Colwyn.</p>
Budgeting for Net Zero	New: Update pending	Our annual Assurance and Risk Assessment report from Audit Wales in 2023 noted that, although we have a clear vision and strategic support for our approach to decarbonisation and to achieve net zero by 2030, we need to fully cost our action plan and ensure it is aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Progress made on this recommendation will be reported to Governance and Audit Committee in November.

Title	Status	Update
Using capital investment in infrastructure in a way that supports climate resilience as well as leaving a social and economic legacy.	Green On track	<p>Active travel route development projects continue in eight areas.</p> <p>Coastal and flood defence schemes are ongoing at Llanfairfechan, Llandudno, Kinmel Bay, Llanrwst, Penmaenmawr, Dolwyddelan and Betws y Coed.</p> <p>Conwy's first <a href="#">Climate Challenge Newsletter</a> has been published.</p> <p>Introduced a bulky waste collection for commercial waste to support businesses.</p>
Delivering our Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Plan.	Green On track	<p>A number of grant funded projects have been successfully delivered to ensure that the management of our land maintains and enhances the extent, condition and connectivity of the semi natural habitats and species.</p> <p>In addition, ecological condition assessments have been undertaken across a number of our Local Nature Reserves, which will inform new habitat management plans.</p> <p>A member Information and Development session was recently delivered by the Biodiversity Champion.</p>
Developing and implementing active travel infrastructure to encourage walking and cycling and reduce car use.	Green On track	<p>Eight active travel routes are in progress: Glan Conwy; Conwy Bridge; Conwy Valley; Dolgarrog; Towyn and Kinmel Bay; Penrhyn Bay; Colwyn Bay; and Craig y Don.</p> <p>We continue to promote information and raise public awareness, and are now monitoring and evaluating existing active travel routes.</p>
Increasing opportunities for residents, visitors, and businesses to reuse and recycle more.	Green On track	<p>Conwy has now introduced a bulky waste option that offers businesses the option of the collection and recycling of commercial bulky waste.</p>

Title	Status	Update
Supporting healthy living by providing a clean and attractive environment.	Green On track	<p>We continue to work with volunteer groups to provide extensive litter picking event work across the county, including beach cleaning and street scene works i.e. painting lamp posts, benches etc.</p> <p>Volunteer groups provide around 38,400 volunteer hours in Conwy per year from 400 volunteers.</p>
Supporting the development of a tidal lagoon in North Wales and develop green projects to help grow the economy and help protect the environment for future generations.	Amber Within tolerance	<p>The North Wales coastal Tidal Lagoon is a privately led project requiring local, regional, and national policy and financial support. Welsh Government (WG) have previously requested expressions of interest from public and private developers back in 2020. Whilst Marine Plan have been progressed by WG, no decision has been made regarding the submitted schemes to the expression of interest.</p> <p>The project requires significant resource and financial investment to prepare the evidence base plan i.e. the supporting baseline evidence to demonstrate impact, mitigation, and deliverability. Such investment would come from various public and private sources, but these are not confirmed.</p> <p>The other risk with the tidal lagoon project relates to the distinction between the energy strike price and subsidy required. Tidal lagoon projects have higher strike prices vs subsidy required compared to wind and solar. It is for Welsh Government to consider the strike price to subsidy gap in determining support for a tidal lagoon project. Furthermore, the smaller and more advanced projects in South Wales are more likely to be chosen over less advanced project in North Wales</p> <p>From a Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) and Corporate Plan position, the tidal lagoon is supported. However, there is currently no firm support regionally or nationally for the scheme, hence an amber being applied.</p>

Title	Status	Update
Developing a strong programme approach, including the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), to deliver the national target of net zero by 2050.	Green On track	<p>The LAEP includes 7 interventions supporting net-zero goals up to 2030 and 2050. Significant grounds have been made in putting in place evidence, policies and land allocations to support net-zero.</p> <p>However, there remain resource and financial risks in delivering retro fit, Electric Vehicle and heat pump developments for the wider community (this excludes CCBC assets as progressed via the Carbon Management Plan). Welsh Government (WG) and all regional partners met on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to understand these delivery risks and consider collaborative solutions. It is clear that all local authorities are in a similar position when delivering 2 key interventions (wider community EV, retrofit and heat pump deployment). WG are considering these delivery risks in preparing the North Wales Decarbonisation Strategy, including financial assistance and support.</p>

### 1.3. A round up of news and committee items

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this priority.

#### 1.3.1. Encouraging Positive Recycling Behaviours

In July we urged residents to [refrain from putting batteries into their bins](#), and reminded them to dispose of their batteries using the battery recycling collection service offered weekly to all residents. This followed from two bin lorry fires that took place in Deganwy and Llandudno. The lorries were found to contain lithium-ion batteries, commonly found in objects such as vapes, toys and electric toothbrushes. We continue to educate our residents on the benefits of recycling, and how to do so safely. In April we also encouraged residents and visitors to keep a clean and attractive environment and to take responsibility for properly disposing of their rubbish during the [bank holiday weekend](#).

#### 1.3.2. Flood Alleviation Work

Work has continued with improvement works to our sea defences. In April we announced the reopening of the [Old Colwyn promenade road and path](#) and that Old Colwyn coastal defence improvement work was nearing completion. Further improvements commenced in [Llandudno's West Shore](#) in July and [North Shore](#) in September. In April, the [Economy and](#)

[Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) reviewed the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The report sought approval of our objectives and actions to reduce the risk of flooding and coastal erosion for the people and communities of Conwy, in line with the National requirements, and to facilitate the draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The report was subsequently approved by [Cabinet](#) in May. Also during the summer, work began to improve flood drainage inland on the B5106 as part of the [Trefriw flood alleviation scheme](#). This is a phased scheme that is taking place following the success of a Levelling-Up Fund bid to reduce the risk of Trefriw becoming isolated during the floods. Work continues and updates will be provided in future reports.

### **1.3.3. Green Dragon Environmental Standard**

We were proud to announce in April that we had retained the [Level 5 Green Dragon Environmental Standard](#) certification for the tenth consecutive year. We were commended for many examples of good practice such as the commitment to continually improve environmental management, and the level of awareness of how our activities impact on the environment. The standard is the highest certification in a Welsh environmental management system and demonstrates that we have been recognised nationally for our commitment to good environmental management, promoting environmental improvement, taking responsibility for the environment, and our objective to become Net Zero by 2030.

### **1.3.4. Biodiversity**

During the spring and summer months we reminded residents that grassy areas would remain uncut to encourage [biodiversity](#). The grassland areas are managed as meadows and the grass is allowed to grow long during spring and summer months to protect and attract pollinators to the area.

### **1.3.5. Active Travel National Walking Week**

To encourage active travel, we reminded our residents and visitors that [National Walking Month](#) was taking place throughout the month of May. We provided information on the various historical and panoramic trails, views, and walking guides available to them in our beautiful county.

### **1.3.6. Reinstated Bus Routes**

Following the 20mph restrictions that were put in place in September 2023, bus routes were reviewed to ensure overall punctuality continued. It was at that time agreed that [Bus](#)

[Route 14](#), which serviced along Penrhynside, would no longer be provided. However, following concerns expressed by users, we have negotiated with Arriva and are pleased that the route has been reinstated, to operate through Bryn y Bia Road from July 2024.

### **1.3.7. Local Area Energy Plan: Land review and policy approach for onshore renewables.**

The Local Area Energy Plan set out a vision and pathway to decarbonise the Energy system in Conwy by 2050. One of the actions was to develop an approach to support the onshore wind and solar energy. We have undertaken an assessment of land to identify areas that could support onshore wind and solar energy by working with Scottish Power Energy Network, and undertaken specialist viability and technical work to provide recommendations as to how additional renewable energy installations for wind and solar could be located in Conwy. This will support the Local Area Energy Plan delivery and Replacement LDP policy approach. The key findings, policy approach and policy recommendations were supported by the [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in August, and agreed by [Cabinet](#) in September. They will now be included within the Deposit Replacement Local Development Plan consultation planned for late 2024.

### **1.3.8. Conwy Food Partnerships**

The [Conwy Food Partnership](#) has been developed to bring together community members, organisations and businesses to help build a stronger local food system. The partnership's goals include reducing the distance food travels, making healthy and affordable food more accessible, and providing people with the skills and confidence to grow, buy, and cook their own food. Funded by the Welsh Government, the partnership has already supported various projects, such as community gardening projects in schools, cook and eat sessions and community gardens. In July we invited applications for the [latest round of funding](#) to support activities that bring communities together through nutritious food.

### **1.3.9. Car Park Improvements at Llanfairfechan Promenade**

Work commenced to refurbish the [promenade car park in Llanfairfechan](#) in September. This will include improving drainage, resurfacing, line painting, and installing electric vehicle charging points. The car park will be closed during weekdays and part of Station Road car park will also be closed to provide the contractors with space to work. Access to

local businesses will be along the promenade in both directions. It is anticipated the work will be completed by the end of November subject to weather conditions.

### **1.3.10. Urban Tree Planting**

A notice of motion was put forward by [Council](#) in December 2023 in relation to urban tree planting in Conwy, it was agreed to refer the motion to the [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in May 2024. The committee acknowledged that we are committed to biodiversity however the costs associated with tree planting would not enable us to proceed with these schemes in the current financial climate. It was noted that should funding opportunities present themselves we would be proactive. The proposal to support the motion was lost, however the committee made a recommendation that was supported by [Council](#) in July 2024 to consider the notice of motion in relation to urban tree planting when redeveloping the new 3 year Biodiversity plan.

## 2. People in Conwy live in a county which has a prosperous economy with culture at its heart

Measures: **Green: Target met**

Actions: **Green: On track**

### 2.1. Measures Update

The number of businesses supported through advice and support at mid-year (1,244) is a significant increase compared with the same period in 2023 to 2024. During the period we held further surgeries and a webinar for the Shared Prosperity Fund. We also met with a number of businesses in the Kinmel Bay area to discuss funding and other areas of support. In addition, we hosted a number of partner events.

We have also seen a positive increase in the number of visitors to Conwy in the Winter months (October to February), rising from 1,033,580 to 1,070,000.

#### Biannual Measures

Title	Year-end 2022 to 2023	Mid-year 2023 to 2024	Year-end 2023 to 2024	Mid-year 2024 to 2025
The number of businesses supported through advice and support – <b>Count Only</b>	1,978	658	1,939	1,244

#### Annual Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Number of businesses supported through grants – <b>Count Only</b>	59	57
The percentage of units in our industrial unit portfolio that are occupied – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 85%</b>	91% Red Worse	96% Green Better
The number of visitors to Conwy in Winter months (October to February) – <b>Count Only</b>	1,033,580	1,070,000

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The number of enquiries to library and information team – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 100,000</b>	96,820 Does not apply Baseline year	110,280 Green Better
The number of actions in the Creu Conwy Strategy delivery plan completed during the year – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 15</b>	9 Does not apply Baseline year	16 Green Better
Amount of external funding attracted and managed by our teams to support regeneration and recovery – <b>Count Only</b>	£44 million	£41.3 million
The level of external funding for the arts and heritage secured by us – <b>Count Only</b>	£1.33 million	£1.38 million
The number of people attending or participating in: Creative arts, heritage, museums, libraries, Venue Cymru, and Theatr Colwyn activities each year – <b>Count Only</b>	36,974	251,985

## 2.2. Actions Update

There are seven actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan. One is complete, and the remaining six are on track.

### Actions

Title	Status	Update
Develop the nighttime economy and winter tourism offer making Conwy a year-round visitor destination and support community regeneration across the county.	Green On track	All engagement with relevant Stakeholders has now been completed for the Feasibility Study to improve the night-time economy. The draft report is under review to identify key actions that can be moved forward.  Phase 1 of producing our winter tourism marketing campaign was completed at the end of February 2024. Phase 2 is underway, with activity running through September to December 2024.

Title	Status	Update
Create the right environment to support growth and attract new businesses.	Green On track	<p>Final applications for the Shared Prosperity Fund are under review for approval, which will result in funds being fully committed. Approximately 85 businesses are being supported with a total of around £3million pounds.</p> <p>There also remains still significant interest in the Conwy Business Support grant.</p> <p>Business Forum work continues in key towns. The Business Forum in Colwyn Bay now has 81 businesses registered.</p> <p>We have continued to work with key partners to highlight a range of support available, including engagement with partner organisations, distribution of information through newsletters, supporting and partnering on events.</p> <p>Work on a County Investment Strategy is underway but work pressures are causing delays.</p>
Work with our public sector partners to regenerate our town centres across the county in order to stimulate growth and create vibrant 'green' towns.	Green On track	<p>Despite the small resources available, we have supported several town centre projects across the county through the Transforming Towns Place Making grants, Commercial Property Development Grants, Shared Prosperity Funding, and also Visit Wales Brilliant Basics.</p> <p>We are also working to maximise any opportunities for funding that comes with the Coastal Risk Management Programme's flood alleviation funding.</p>
Maximise funding opportunities to enable a longer-term view of our capital commitments.	Green On track	<p>Through funding opportunities we have been able to deliver some key projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund projects undertaken include - play area improvements, paddling pool improvements and the athletics track resurfacing.</li> <li>• Welsh Government Transforming Towns grant has enabled the Colwyn Bay Library works.</li> </ul>

Title	Status	Update
Implement our Creu Conwy Culture Strategy and Library and Information Strategy, making the best use of our cultural assets to enhance economic regeneration and community well-being	<div>Green</div> <div>On track</div>	<p>UK Shared Prosperity Funding and additional match funding from Welsh Government (Brilliant Basics) and Arts Council of Wales has supported the delivery of the Strategy. This has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Llenwi: Destination Signage Project. Artist-led workshops in community settings and at 5 schools and opportunity to contribute ideas online.</li> <li>• Creu Conwy Ifanc. Ongoing delivery of artist-led sessions for children and young people. In total 577 attendances between April and September.</li> <li>• Taith: Creative journeys to well-being. A partnership project with Conwy Mind and our Mental Wellness team has strengthened our Arts in Health and Social Prescribing offer. 261 attendances recorded. Resource pack being finalised to support future sustainable outcomes.</li> <li>• Creu Conwy Cymunedol: Offering blocks of artist-led sessions in a range of community settings to reach target beneficiaries. Delivery included dance and cultural exchange for a Ukrainian refugee group; visual art sessions for a learning disability group; and intergenerational sessions between a school and care home.</li> <li>• Oriel Colwyn continues to deliver a programme of photography exhibitions, and fortnightly Talk Photo events with over 1200 participations between April and September.</li> </ul>
Explore opportunities to diversify our economy as a result of our experiences from the pandemic.	<div>Green</div> <div>On track</div>	<p>Work on a County Investment Strategy is underway, but work pressures are causing delays.</p> <p>The Local Area Forums and Regeneration Boards have been merged and we will continue to support those.</p>

### 2.3. A round up of news and committee items

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this priority.

### **2.3.1. Economic Growth Strategy**

The [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in April received an update on delivery against the Conwy Economic Growth Strategy. The strategy had been approved in 2017 and gave a clear 10-year vision for growth and prosperity. However, there have of course since been a number of significant events that have affected international economies. Nonetheless, it was reported that 76% of our programme has been completed. The report provides a more detailed breakdown of progress against each of the 13 ambitions in the strategy.

### **2.3.2. North Wales Growth Deal**

The [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) received a routine update on the North Wales Growth Deal at its meeting in April. The report noted that the outline Business Cases for the Tourism Talent Network, the Deeside Anaerobic Digestion Plant, and the Egni projects has been approved by the Economic Ambition Board. The Board has also approved the Full Business Case for the Enterprise Engineering and Optic Centre project. Three projects were reported as red due to either risks to the project scope or significant delays to project timescales:

- Connecting the last few %.
- Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub.
- Western Gateway, Wrexham

### **2.3.3. Regeneration**

Work has been completed on a £330,000 refurbishment of the athletics track at Stadiwm CSM in Parc Eirias thanks to the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Key Fund Grant. The running track has been completely resurfaced, including a new sub-structure and top coat. The track's jumping areas, including the steeple chase pit, have also been refurbished. The running track at Eirias is a key community asset, well-used by schools and athletics clubs, and had been long overdue for investment to safeguard this historic facility for the years ahead. It is hoped that the refurbished facility will be the catalyst for further growth in physical activity and physical literacy opportunities for young people across the region, as well as seeing the return of licensed athletics competitions. The refurbishment work was carried out by Hunts Contractors Ltd., and the sports pitch consultant was Surfacing Standards Ltd. The track is available to all Ffit Conwy members

and can be booked alongside the extensive range of equipment and facilities available. More information about Shared Prosperity Fund projects can be found on our website at: [Community Regeneration Key Fund](#).

Following consideration by the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in April, [Cabinet](#) in May confirmed the closure of Town Regeneration Programmes and their merger into appropriate Local Area Forums. This will help avoid duplication of work for officers, and it was agreed that the structure and framework surrounding the Local Area Forums would be reviewed.

At its meeting in July, [Cabinet](#) supported changes to the concept design of the Colwyn Bay Town Centre Traffic Management, Parking and Streetscape Consultation Report to enable the project to move forward to the detailed design stage. Further consultation will take place with the Local Area Forum on these designs before any final decision is made by Cabinet. The report had been considered by the [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) earlier in April.

#### **2.3.4. UK Government Funding**

As previously reported, we were successful in securing £10 million in UK Government funding to deliver enhanced facilities at Venue Cymru. In July, [Cabinet](#) was asked to support proposals for the site, and the submission of a detailed business case to access the funds. The Venue Cymru Future Project will provide significant upgrades to the theatre facility and fast-track our ambition to position the venue as a cultural hub, whilst also potentially safeguarding and enhancing our area library and Tourist Information service. Venue Cymru welcomes visitors from around the UK and internationally every year, delivering over £30m in economic benefit to local businesses, as well as offering visitors and our local community an exciting, diverse range of cultural events and activities.

Cabinet gave their approval to consult with the public on the possibility of moving the area library into the building. The consultation was [launched in August](#) for six weeks, closing September 23.

However, following the 2024 Autumn Budget, it was confirmed that Ministers had reviewed the funding for culture projects announced in the 2024 Spring Budget and were minded to withdraw the funding, including the £10m allocated for Venue Cymru. The UK Government has subsequently carried out a consultation exercise, with which we have been fully engaged, to establish if any exceptions should be made. We continue to liaise closely with

both the UK and Welsh Governments to explore potential funding avenues, whilst we await the outcome of the consultation process.

An update on the outcomes and outputs of projects funded through the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund was provided at the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in May. There are 31 projects delivering in Conwy and over £23 million allocated to make a visible difference in communities and businesses in all parts of the county. Although the report provided the latest position on outcomes and outputs, many have yet to be realised as we are still at the very early delivery phase. The report also noted that we led on three Conwy Key Funds with over £6.6 million being allocated to the benefit of 99 projects. The excellent work undertaken by officers in respect of funding applications was acknowledged by the committee.

### **2.3.5. Community Led Development**

Our Economic Development team has been successful in securing the UK Government Shared Prosperity funding for our Community Led Local Development project. The project aims to give local groups the opportunity to apply for revenue funding for activities, events, resources, projects, feasibility studies, and access to training that will be of benefit. Applicants can apply for a maximum of £10,000 revenue funding that must seek to address one or more of the following objectives:

- Enable other bodies to provide non-statutory services.
- Combat the cost of living.
- Climate change crisis.
- Digital access (both physical and through community skills).
- Access to transport.

For more information, please see the [Community Led Local Development webpage](#).

### **2.3.6. Local Culture Events**

The Great Orme Tramway held its fifth annual community weekend event in September, offering half-price tickets for Conwy County residents. Every year, the award-winning attraction carries around 200,000 visitors from all around the world to the Great Orme Summit. Celebrating its 122<sup>nd</sup> birthday, the tramway is the UK's only cable-hauled tramway running on a public road, and one of just three left in the world.

During June, the County played host to the opening stage of the 2024 Tour of Britain Women from Welshpool to Llandudno, with a spectacular finish on the promenade. The event saw the world's top riders tackle some of Wales's most iconic roads and climbs, with thousands lining streets to welcome the race. Activities were available on the promenade all afternoon, and for the safety of the cyclists there were a small number of manned road closures and parking restrictions in place along the route, with access being maintained for as long as possible for residents and businesses. Major events like this support our local economy and showcase Conwy as a destination to the wider world.

### **2.3.7. Employment Support**

In April, the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service visited the Youth Club in Llandudno. It was a good opportunity for young people to ask questions and find out about a career in the fire service, as well as deliver important prevention and fire-safety information. Thirty-eight young people took part and were very engaged.

In June, we hosted a Jobs Showcase at the Conwy Culture Centre, which focussed on social care vacancies in local care facilities. A drop-in session was also held on the high-street in Llandudno during July for anyone interested in pursuing a rewarding career in social care. Our Social Care Employment mentor was on hand at both events to answer any questions and provide help and advice with application forms and the recruitment process.

At its meeting in September, the [Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) received the annual report for 2023 to 2024 on Employability and Skills, which recognised the excellent variety of services on offer through our Employment Service. During the year, 444 people received support from the service, with 189 of those entering into sustainable employment. Our third Jobs Expo in was held in Colwyn Bay, which was attended by over 1000 people seeking information and advice on training, apprenticeships, employment support or work. We successfully drew down UK Government Shared Prosperity Funding to deliver our Pathways to Employment project. Courses delivered to date include modular construction, construction, security, CCTV, and Start Up for Self-Employment. 269 people had successfully completed courses, with 99 people gaining a qualification, 68 people entering employment, and 104 reporting reduced barriers to work. Being reliant on grant funding, work is ongoing to secure new sources of revenue for the continuation of the excellent work carried out by the team.

### **2.3.8. Guaranteed Interview Scheme**

Following a successful pilot, in April we launched our new Guaranteed Interview Scheme, which is being delivered by our Employment Hub. The scheme aims to benefit employers by guaranteeing that candidates will be suitable for the jobs they are advertising. The scheme is designed to build confidence among jobseekers and streamline the application process for companies looking to hire staff. We have had very positive feedback so far with some great local companies joining from a variety of industries. We are encouraging as many employers as possible to get in touch and take advantage of this fantastic free initiative, no matter how big or small the business or organisation is. For more information email [employers@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:employers@conwy.gov.uk), or visit the [Conwy Employment Hub's website](#).

### **2.3.9. Creu Conwy Llenwi Project**

Our Llenwi Project (funded by UK Shared Prosperity funding), is a new Creu Conwy project that will be creating and installing destination signage that features large-scale artwork across Conwy County. The project is led by local augmented reality artist, Livi Wilmore and traditional signwriter, Tomos Jones. They will be collaborating and holding creative workshops so communities can inspire the artwork and final installations. The areas that are the focus of the project are: Abergel, Colwyn Bay, Llandudno, Conwy, and Llanrwst. As part of the research phase, the artists are hoping to get to know each area and gather stories, sayings, phrases, memories, pictures, and anything else about these areas. There is no restriction on what could be gathered or how it is presented. Visit the [Conwy Culture Website](#) to get involved.

### **2.3.10. Audit Wales: Sustainable Development**

Earlier in the year, Audit Wales undertook a national review of brownfield land and empty buildings, which concluded that, despite notable amounts of brownfield developments being delivered by councils, regeneration could be increased significantly with a more systematic, interventionist, and collaborative approach by councils. Audit Wales targeted their fieldwork on eight councils, and although we were not one of the chosen authorities, we did provide documentary evidence in support of this review. The final report was shared with the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) at its meeting in July, and we have identified actions to respond to the three recommendations made to councils. These will be monitored through our regulatory process.

### **2.3.11. Welsh Church Act Fund**

We administer the Welsh Church Act Fund, which is a fund that can offer financial assistance for various charitable purposes, including relief of poverty; advancement of religion; aesthetic, architectural, historical, and scientific matters; social and recreational causes; or emergencies and disasters. In the past, applications have been submitted by community groups, choirs, museums, Eisteddfodau, and church groups. Grants normally range from £50 to £1,000. More information can be found on the Welsh Church Act Fund page on our website. For further enquiries and application forms, contact [welshchurchactsfund@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:welshchurchactsfund@conwy.gov.uk).

### **2.3.12. Conwy Harbour**

Following a recommendation by the Conwy Harbour Advisory Committee, [Cabinet](#) in May agreed to investigate funding options to install Wi-Fi on the Quay, together with live camera footage for users. However, although appreciating the value that this investment would add, it was stressed that this should not be an immediate priority as officers were already committed to working on other projects. It will be taken forward as workloads allow.

### **2.3.13. Winter Sounds and Volunteering Opportunities**

In September we announced the start of [Winter Sounds](#), a series of live music events around the county (starting in October) with opportunities for people to get involved through volunteering. A range of opportunities will be available, from event stewarding to supporting backstage.

### 3. People in Conwy are educated and skilled

Measures: **Amber: Within tolerance**

Actions: **Green: On track**

#### 3.1. Measures Update

The total number of hits to 'HwB' (the all Wales Learning Platform used by schools) has increased by 20% to 1.128.813 hits during 2023 to 2024. We are using HwB more for different services and this will increase further over the next 12 months as it expands further.

The percentage of young people who feel that as a result of being involved in youth service activities they have been encouraged to have a healthier lifestyle remains at 89%.

There has been a slight improvement to the percentage of primary school pupils attending school, up from 91.5% to 91.7%. We will continue to work closely with schools to ensure robust attendance procedures are being applied.

#### Annual Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of Year 11 leavers not in education, training, or employment – <b>Count Only</b>	1.3%	2.0%
The total number of hits to 'HwB' – the all Wales Learning Platform – <b>Count Only</b>	940,334	1,128,813
The percentage of educational settings participating in Well-being Surveys – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 100%</b>	47% Does not apply New	100% Green Better
The percentage of young people who feel that as a result of being involved in youth service activities they have been encouraged to have a healthier lifestyle – <b>Count Only</b>	89%	89%
The percentage of pupil attendance in primary school – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 95%</b>	91.5% Does not apply Covid-19	91.7% Red Better

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of pupil attendance in secondary school – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 94.5%</b>	87.3% Does not apply Covid-19	86.6% Red Worse
The percentage of pupils accessing Welsh medium education (based on school census) – <b>Count Only</b>	23%	22%
The percentage of nursery and reception pupils accessing Welsh medium education (as at Pupil Level Annual School Census) – <b>Count Only</b>	29%	29%
The percentage of primary school age pupils accessing Welsh medium education (as at Pupil Level Annual School Census) – <b>Count Only</b>	25%	25%
The percentage of secondary school age pupils accessing Welsh medium education (as at Pupil Level Annual School Census) – <b>Count Only</b>	20%	20%
The percentage of teachers in Conwy schools whose Welsh ability is Advanced level or above (as collected as part of the school workforce collection) – <b>Count Only</b>	50%	50%

### 3.2. Actions Update

There are eight actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan, 1 is complete and 7 are on track.

#### Actions

Title	Status	Update
Supporting schools in the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.	Complete	In line with Welsh Government timelines, all schools have now implemented Curriculum for Wales.  Specific support continues to be in place for schools to support curriculum design, planning and evaluation.

Title	Status	Update
Supporting children and young people to improve or manage their Mental Health and Well-being.	Green On track	<p>Conwy is supporting schools in implementing the Welsh Government's statutory guidance for a Whole School Approach (WSA) to Mental Well-being.</p> <p>All Conwy schools have appointed well-being leads; however, increased pressures on schools have made it challenging for staff to attend network meetings and training sessions.</p> <p>To address this, we have recruited a new Health and Well-being Development Officer, who will work with schools to establish more local and sustainable structures in each cluster. This role will also support the implementation and analysis of well-being surveys conducted with learners, enabling schools and the local authority to identify the changing needs of our learners, implement more effective interventions, and monitor their impact.</p>
Supporting children, young people, and their families to access education and community-based activities.	Green On track	No further update
Working with schools to deliver a programme which improves learners' digital skills.	Green On track	<p>The Conwy digital strategy has been revised for 2024/25 will now be shared with schools. The latest allocation of the HwB grant was successfully implemented. We have not had to use the revenue business case, and this will ensure long-term funding security from schools.</p> <p>We continue to hold stakeholder meetings with Welsh Government.</p> <p>We continue to await plans to see how future work alongside regional consortia with regards to the IT Education Strategic Plan will ensure that schools improve their teacher skill set to ensure standards of IT competency amongst staff and pupils</p>

Title	Status	Update
<p>Implementing the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Act to ensure that all learners with ALN are supported to overcome barriers to learning and achieve their full potential.</p>	<p>Green On track</p>	<p>The Local Authority continues to be on track to transfer all learners within the transfer period (August 31, 2025). Following confirmation and checking of September Stats data, an audit will be carried out of school progress and actions taken to support final stages where necessary. The proposed Monitoring Framework has been further developed and is due to be shared in November 2024.</p>
<p>Ensuring that young people have a good awareness of employment opportunities and the appropriate skills to access the world of work.</p>	<p>Green On track</p>	<p>Communities for Work Plus Project: Our team of employer engagement officers ensure that any training is tailored to meet employer needs, as well as promoting growth industries and opportunities to our young people. We have supported 38 young people (aged 20-24 years) into sustainable employment (16 hours a week plus) since April.</p> <p>Pathways to Employment Project, which is funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund has supported 119 young people aged 16+ who have enrolled on courses, of which 67 gained a qualification. Many of these gained multiple qualifications with 189 qualifications achieved in total.</p> <p>The young people engagement project (funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund) has engaged with 128 young people aged 16+. This is through one-to-one support and group work to improve confidence, resilience, well-being, independent living, employability skills, and preparing them for the world of work.</p> <p>Conwy Employment Hub continue to run smaller monthly jobs fairs across the County to people of any age, and these have continued to receive good engagement and attendance. There continues to be awareness raised through the weekly employability feature on sound FM radio which has a wide reach to all, and includes business and training providers highlighting job vacancies and opportunities locally and regionally.</p>

Title	Status	Update
<p>Promoting and further developing Welsh medium education whilst encouraging children and young people to be proud of the Welsh language, its heritage and culture.</p>	<p>Green On track</p>	<p>We continue to work on our 10-year strategic plan and work with our clusters of schools. Current areas for development during this academic year are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progressing Playgroup Welsh provision through Plethu Croesi'r Bont in a few settings to support Welsh language category T2 schools on their journey.</li> <li>• Support all Welsh language category T2 schools further to ensure their Welsh provision is on target for 50% of the curriculum. Ensure marketing and communication with stakeholders is transparent. Using external stakeholders (Urdd/Menter Iaith) to enhance incidental provision.</li> <li>• Support a few schools along the Language Continuum e.g. some moving from Welsh language category T2 to T3 in infants.</li> <li>• Supporting English medium secondary schools on improving their Welsh ethos and culture.</li> <li>• Improving access for staff cross sector to access learning Welsh.</li> <li>• Planning strategically to enhance Welsh provision for learners at secondary level.</li> </ul>
<p>Implementing the 21st Century Schools programme so learning environments are fit for purpose, including a focus on carbon reduction and renewable energy.</p>	<p>Green On track</p>	<p>The New strategic outline plan has now been approved in principle by Welsh Government and our Cabinet. This provides a clear guide on the infrastructure and our asset development for the next 9 years. New schools in the programme will provide long-term educational centres for children and provide community hubs where appropriate. Refurbishment and remodelling projects will extend the life of existing buildings in the Education Estate Portfolio and reduce the carbon footprint of any school involved, giving a long-term benefit. The programme envisages increased community uses of school buildings outside of school hours, creating valuable community facilities.</p>

### **3.3. A round up of news and committee items**

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this priority.

#### **3.3.1. Estyn: Local Authority Inspection**

As previously reported, following inspection in November 2023, we were delighted to receive a positive report from Estyn Inspectors. The report's findings were: that we provide strong support to improve the quality of teaching and leadership in our schools and settings; that we work well with the regional school improvement service to deliver an appropriate range of universal and targeted support for leaders and staff; that school leaders have a good understanding of how to access local authority specialist support and welcome the timely advice and guidance officers provide; there is a well-established and effective culture of cross-service working, exemplified clearly by the services offered in Conwy Family Centres; and that the Youth Service provides a broad range of beneficial activities for young people. Two recommendations arose from the inspection:

1. To sharpen processes to improve attendance in the authority's schools and Pupil Referral Units.
2. To refine approaches to improvement planning and ensure that ongoing monitoring and evaluation focuses on the impact of the local authority's work on learners' outcomes and progress.

The final report and action plan was considered by the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) at its meeting in May. The final report may be read on [Estyn's website](#).

#### **3.3.2. Teaching Awards**

Two Conwy teachers were recognised at the Welsh Government's Professional Teaching Awards Cymru held in July. We were pleased that Dr Gareth Evans from Ysgol y Creuddyn, Llandudno, was named Teacher of the Year in a Secondary School; and Amy Grimwald from Ysgol Aberconwy, Conwy, was awarded the Betty Campbell (MBE) Award for promoting the contributions and perspectives of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

### **3.3.3. Summer Reading Challenge**

Once again Conwy Libraries took part in the Summer Reading Challenge. This year's 'Marvellous Makers' Summer Reading Challenge began on 6 July 2024 and was delivered in partnership with Create, a leading arts charity. Children were asked to read 6 books (or more!) before the end of the summer, and were given a special collector poster when they joined, stickers when they visit the library for more books, and a certificate and prize when they complete the challenge. They were also encouraged to explore new books and stories, as well as take part in free activities, from arts and crafts to music, dance, and more. The Summer Reading Challenge aims to prevent the "summer dip" learning loss many children experience over the holidays when they are not in school. With libraries' support, it provides a free, fun way to keep young minds active. Visit [www.conwylibraries.com](http://www.conwylibraries.com) to discover all the family activities on offer.

### **3.3.4. School Essentials Grant**

In May we urged eligible parents and carers not to miss out on the Welsh Government School Essentials Grant. 88% of those eligible had already claimed their free School Essentials grant to help with costs like school uniform, shoes, bags, sports kit, and equipment. Children of families on lower incomes who receive certain benefits, those seeking asylum, and children in care can claim £125 per year to help with school costs. Because of the extra cost families might face when their children start secondary school, £200 is available for eligible pupils going into year 7. It could also mean extra funding for schools. To find out more about the Schools Essentials Grant and to check eligibility, visit: [www.gov.wales/get-help-school-costs](http://www.gov.wales/get-help-school-costs).

### **3.3.5. School Transport**

£6.8 million is spent annually on school transport, half of which relates to discretionary provision. As one of our fastest growing costs it had become necessary to launch a review of services, with a public consultation being held earlier in the year. We had an excellent response to the consultation with detailed and well-considered comments being provided, and we are thankful to everyone who took the time to get involved. Feedback from the consultation was shared with the [Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in July, with the following amendments to discretionary provision being recommended to the Home to School Transport policy:

- To remove the provision of transport for learners who change address during the exam years of their education so that they can remain at the same school.
- To request evidence of faith to provide transport to denominational schools over the statutory distance.
- To restrict the provision of transport to two residences where parents live separately to only within Conwy County Borough.
- To amend the provision of post 16 transport to the nearest educational establishment over the statutory distance.

It was also recommended that the provision of transport for pupils with medical conditions, additional learning needs, or for other specific reasons, be reviewed in line with existing policy. [Cabinet](#) approved these changes at its meeting in July. These changes do not affect statutory school transport, but learners who apply for free home to school transport are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the updated policy on [our website](#), where there are also some answers to frequently asked questions, which will hopefully help.

Following a tender process, [Cabinet](#) awarded contracts for the provision of school transport services at its meeting in August.

Also in August we reminded pupils and parents that bus passes will need to be shown for all journeys on school buses. The '[no pass, no travel policy](#)' will be enforced on all Conwy school buses from the first day back to school in September to make sure pupils entitled to travel have a seat and that there is sufficient capacity on every bus. This policy has been in place for many years and seeks to avoid unacceptable overcrowding, jeopardising pupil safety.

### **3.3.6. School Bridging Loans**

In July, [Cabinet](#) reviewed the recommendations of the School Loans Panel to approve bridging loan applications of £200,000 for Ysgol Aberconwy, and £351,000 for Ysgol Eirias. The School Loans Panel were assured that the loan applications were supported by realistic and achievable recovery plans. Members agreed that it was important to support the two schools during this difficult financial period and approved the loans and repayment plans.

### 3.3.7. Sustainable Communities for Learning and School Organisation

At its meeting in April, [Cabinet](#) supported the formation of a School Planning Working Group to ensure that school organisation in Conwy is appropriately planned, responding to demographic changes and the requirements of the Welsh Government's School Organisation Code (2018). The group will be involved in reviewing and updating our strategy for modernising schools, which has been in place since 2015.

In July, following consideration by the [Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#), [Cabinet](#) approved our nine year Strategic Outline Programme under the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning. The programme is a long-term strategy to enhance educational infrastructure by creating modern, sustainable schools that support the educational needs of the community. Two schools, Ysgol y Gogarth and Ysgol Eirias, are proposed to be the focus of years 1 to 3 of the programme, with a further two school areas, Ysgol Deganwy and the Llanfairfechan Area, in years 4 to 6. There will then be an area review of Llandudno schools in years 7 to 9. In considering the report it was noted that, due to economic factors, it was no longer possible to deliver school improvements that had originally been planned, and that full details on costs and how projects would be financed would be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet at the appropriate time.

Following consideration by the [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#), in August [Cabinet](#) approved a paper outlining the potential impact of population change on education, considering housing growth levels. Over the term of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) the population is expected to grow by 4950 residents. There is predicted to be an increase of 400 secondary school age children, but a decrease of 850 primary school age children. The proposed mitigation over the RLDP period is to allocate land at Llanfairfechan for a new school, and safeguard land for an extension adjacent to Ysgol Swn-y-Don. Members also discussed the obligations on developers, the use of section 106 monies, and the impacts on home to school transport.

In September, the [Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) reviewed proposals to go out to consultation on the federalisation and amalgamation of six schools: Ysgol Llanddoged and Ysgol Ysbyty Ifan; Ysgol Glan Gele and Ysgol Sant Elfod; and Ysgol Y Foryd and Ysgol Maes Owen.

### **3.3.8. Estyn: Nant y Bryniau Education Centre**

Following an inspection of Nant-y-Bryniau Education Centre in 2023, [Estyn published a report](#) praising the work of the centre, highlighted the outstanding educational provision for pupils who have significant mental health needs. The highly skilled and dedicated staff provide a safe, caring, and inclusive learning environment, identifying their needs and delivering a highly effective curriculum that supports pupils and understands their needs. Partnership working was seen as a significant strength, and leadership was praised for being extremely strong. One recommendation was made in the report to further strengthen the role of the management committee. The report and action plan was considered by the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) at its meeting in May.

## **4. People in Conwy have access to affordable, appropriate, good quality accommodation that enhances the quality of their lives**

Measures: **Amber: Within tolerance**

Actions: **Green: On track**

### **4.1. Measures Update**

The number of applicants on the social common housing register is currently 1,673, down from 1,951 previously. This is not related to a reduction in demand, but the outcomes of a case review exercise carried out by the Housing Register Team.

The average number of days spent in bed and breakfast accommodation has increased to 172.2, up from 145.6 at the end of 2023 to 2024. This will be related to the changing demographic and the reduced number of families housed in bed and breakfast accommodation. Single households make up 90% of bed and breakfast use and these are the most challenging to achieve timely move on due to a severe mismatch in supply and demand. This year we can see a considerable variance in length of stay dependant on the size property required.

There has been a decrease in the average number of days that homeless households spent in alternative accommodation, down from 616.5 to 531.2. Move on support has been a focus through grant funded posts working in leased accommodation, bed and breakfast accommodation, and the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme's properties coming into use also provide additional options. The average will have been impacted by increased move-on through social housing direct lets for two bed homes, with a number of cases being under a 6-month stay.

The percentage of cases where homelessness was prevented is consistent with the same point last year at 82.9%. Prevention will remain the focus of the Housing Solutions Team, but this remains challenging due to the often complex circumstances of those presenting.

## Biannual Measures

Title	Year-end 2022 to 2023	Mid-year 2023 to 2024	Year-end 2023 to 2024	Mid-year 2024 to 2025
Number of applicants for social housing on the common housing register – <b>Count Only</b>	1,964	1,922	1,951	1,673
The average number of days that all homeless households spent in bed and breakfast – <b>Count Only</b>	141.9	152.6	145.6	172.25
The average number of days that all homeless households spent in other forms of accommodation – <b>Count Only</b>	703.4	669.4	616.5	531.24
The percentage of cases where homelessness has been prevented – <b>Count Only</b>	68%	82.43	77%	82.9

## Annual Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The number of new affordable housing units provided during the year as a percentage of all new housing units during the year – <b>Count Only</b>	38%	33%
The number of new affordable housing units (funded through Conwy's Affordable Housing Development Programme and Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP)) provided by size and tenure – Social (including supported housing for vulnerable people) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 75</b>	57 Red Worse	37 Red Worse
The number of new affordable housing units (funded through Conwy's Affordable Housing Development Programme and Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP)) provided by size and tenure – Intermediate (low-cost home ownership or rent) – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 40</b>	35 Red Worse	10 Red Worse

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of affordable housing units (secured through Local Development Plan policies) – Intermediate and Social – <b>Count Only</b>	43%	38%
The number of private sector empty properties that had been vacant for more than 6 months that were returned to occupation during the year through direct action by the local authority – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 20</b>	37 Green Worse	78 Green Better
Number of affordable housing units created by bringing empty dwellings and empty non-residential property back into use – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 10</b>	10 Green Better	15 Green Better

## 4.2. Actions Update

There are five actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan. All are on track.

### Actions

Title	Status	Update
Working to increase the supply of affordable and accessible accommodation.	Green On track	The work of the Affordable Housing and Housing Quality, Acquisition and Adaptation projects continue to focus on bringing forward council owned land and assets back into use. The Welsh Government have agreed plans for us to work with Registered Social Landlords to utilise £5.2m of Transitional Accommodation Capital Funding Programme to increase supply at pace by bringing assets back into use and acquisitions.
Working with property owners and private landlords to return empty properties back into use.	Green On track	The Empty Homes Team continue to target homes to bring back into use. The team have been consulting partners and stakeholders on the development of a new Empty Homes Strategy, which will explore how we continue to build on the improved outcomes during the previous year.

Title	Status	Update
<p>Working in partnership we will review our services to further strengthen our homelessness prevention approach, whilst planning for a shift towards rapid rehousing for those experiencing homelessness so that is rare, brief, and unrepeatable.</p>	<p>Green On track</p>	<p>Under the Housing and Homelessness Board (set up to support and monitor the implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan), an action plan was agreed. Lead officers have been identified for projects shared across partners, including alternative accommodation for single households and creating supply within existing social housing stock through aligned asset management plans. Actions are being progressed to streamline and review the Housing Solutions Service and develop alternative options to bed and breakfast accommodation.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee</a> in July was asked to note progress of objectives within the Housing and Homelessness Programme Report.</p>
<p>Working in partnership to support the stability and quality of the care home sector.</p>	<p>Green On track</p>	<p>We started a consultation with care homes in September to review the current fee rates. This is part of a transparent fee setting process in line with legislation and Welsh Government guidance. This consultation has involved a survey, as well as face-to-face meetings. The information collected will be used to put forward a recommendation for a balanced fee to take account of both the market pressures upon care homes and the funding pressures on the Local Authority.</p> <p>There is a current shortage of provision in care homes to support people with dementia, which has resulted in a number of people being supported out of county (mostly at care homes in Denbighshire and Gwynedd). We are working with a small number of care homes to expand the local provision, which is looking to have extra beds created for April 2025.</p> <p>We have unfortunately needed to take two homes through the Escalating Concerns process to support improvement to quality.</p>

Title	Status	Update
Working to encourage and support respectful tourism that protects our most popular locations and promotes all areas of our beautiful county in order to broaden the positive impacts of visitors to the area.	Green On track	There is no further update to provide for this action at present. An update will be provided at year-end.

### 4.3. A round up of news and committee items

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this priority.

#### 4.3.1. Direction for Second Homes and/or Short-Term Holiday Lets

Recognising that high concentrations of second homes and short-term holiday lets can have negative impacts on our communities and the Welsh language, the Welsh Government introduced new planning powers for local authorities offering a range of options. Local Authorities can apply an Article 4 Direction to specific areas (subject to evidence) where planning permission would be required to change use from a permanent residence to a second home or holiday let. In April, [Cabinet](#) considered the options available and agreed the best way forward for Conwy. They resolved to include a new policy approach in the Replacement Local Development Plan with a potential Article 4 Direction in future, with a regular annual review of indicators.

#### 4.3.2. Local Development Plan: Affordable Housing Planning Framework

In July, the [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) scrutinised a report detailing the Replacement Local Development Plan's Affordable Housing Planning Framework and Evidence Base Papers. The framework proposes a suite of land and policy mechanisms to promote a shift towards increasing affordable housing supply, and supporting affordable housing and local need developments. The committee supported the setting of an affordable housing target of 1,500 as a minimum. The report was subsequently approved by [Cabinet](#).

### **4.3.3. Local Housing Market Assessment 2022-27**

The [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) considered the Local Housing Market Assessment (LMHA) for 2022 to 2037 at its meeting in July. The LMHA is important to us as it assesses current and future housing need within the county, and sets out the need for additional affordable housing over the next fifteen years. It was produced in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders and follows public consultation that took place between January and March 2024. In scrutinising the report, members highlighted the need for developers and applicants to be sympathetic and consider the surrounding area and neighbouring properties when designing developments, whilst also acknowledging the challenges and difficulties people and communities faced in terms of homelessness. [Cabinet](#) approved the report at its meeting in July.

### **4.3.4. Second Homes Council Tax**

In July we launched a consultation on [council tax premiums](#) to be levied on second homes and long-term empty properties for 2025 to 2026. Members had previously approved in October 2023 an indicative increase from 100% to 200% from April 2025, subject to a review. Any properties that have been empty for more than 5 years or more would be subject to 300%. The results of the survey and other research will be considered by councillors later in the year.

### **4.3.5. Empty Homes**

We issued a [press release](#) in July promoting the National Empty Homes Grant. This grant (of between £1,000 and £25,000) is available for properties that have been empty for 12 months or longer. It is also only available to owners intending to live in the property themselves for at least 5 years on completion of renovation work. The grants will be used for repair work identified by us as being necessary to make the property safe and secure, and for energy efficiency improvement works. Further information about the grant scheme can be found [on our website](#).

## 5. People in Conwy are safe and feel safe

Measures: **Amber: Within tolerance**

Actions: **Green: On track**

### 5.1. Measures Update

The percentage of staff who have completed mandatory safeguarding has continued to improve when comparing this last period with the same period last year, up from 56% to 59%. Whilst the data shows a pattern forming of a mid-year downturn, reassurance can be given that this is not a cause for concern. Schools and other education teams have limited opportunity to undertake the required training, which is often completed during teacher training days. The completion data from schools is collected termly, which is then uploaded into our own system. This happens outside of the mid-year reporting period and is the reason for the mid-year dip in completions. By year end, the majority of that data has been shared with us, which is when we will see a rise in completions.

The percentage of staff commencing in post with two references fell slightly from 100% to 98% in this period. This represents 317 staff out of 322 new starters. Checks are underway to ensure references are in place where required.

### Biannual Measures

Title	Year-end 2022 to 2023	Mid-year 2023 to 2024	Year-end 2023 to 2024	Mid-year 2024 to 2025
The percentage of new staff who have completed mandatory safeguarding training – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 100%</b>	56% Red New	56% Amber Same	70% Amber Better	59% Amber Better
The percentage of staff commencing in post with 2 references – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 100%</b>	100% Green Good	100% Amber Good	100% Green Good	98.40 Red Worse

## Annual Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Number of people who, by having telecare services, have avoided the adverse consequences of unattended falls – <b>Count Only</b>	391	424
Number of publicly accessible buildings that are designated 'safe spaces' – <b>Count Only</b>	10	10
The percentage of eligible staff who have completed Cyber essentials training who are required to complete it – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 100%</b>	65% Amber Better	76% Amber Better

## 5.2. Actions Update

There are four actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan. Three are on track, and one is within tolerance.

### Actions

Title	Status	Update
Continuing to train staff and raise awareness that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.	Amber Within tolerance	Safeguarding remains a priority for us. We require all employees, volunteers, elected members to receive the mandated safeguarding training, supporting the concept that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding training can be delivered in differing ways from eLearning, face-to face, to toolbox talks. As we do every year, we supported National Safeguarding Week, providing information to Staff each day. Both the project team and Board also receive regular educational updates from guest speakers.
Working towards making all of our public buildings 'Safe Places.'	Green On track	Conwy has held the national Safe Places scheme registration since July 2024, with libraries and leisure centres listed on the national app and online map. We are progressing work to add our Family Centres and Coed Pella for the next reporting period.

Title	Status	Update
Working to ensure the safety and quality of care provision and work with providers to remove the need for unregulated care.	<div data-bbox="619 197 804 286">Green On track</div>	<p>The service continues to prioritise working with regulated providers; however, there remains emergency situations when it is still necessary to use unregulated providers. There is now a robust quality assurance and reporting system in place to ensure that young people are placed with such providers for the least amount of time and that they are safeguarded.</p> <p>The service continues with its development of Glan Yr Afon, which is due to open in February 2025, offering a further 4 beds. We continue to work in partnership with Denbighshire and the Health Board in the development of Bwthyn Y Dol. The service also continues to develop incentives to foster carers with the aim of increasing capacity within the in house foster care service.</p> <p>A ten-year plan has been developed to enable the service to meet the future care requirements of Conwy's children who are looked after.</p>
Ensuring measures are in place to protect personal and sensitive data on our systems. Raise awareness of and promote cyber security with IT users across the council.	<div data-bbox="619 1115 804 1205">Green On track</div>	We continue to make improvements to IT security measures to counter emerging cyber threats, which are continuously monitored. Security awareness and updates have been provided at various forums, and additional training has been undertaken and scheduled for specific groups. Key staff have attended a cyber-exercise, with the feedback being used to make further improvements to our preparedness arrangements.

### 5.3. A round up of news and committee items

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this priority.

#### 5.3.1. White Ribbon Accreditation

A Notice of Motion was made at [Council](#) in May seeking approval for us to gain White Ribbon UK Status as a council. The White Ribbon UK is a globally recognised symbol and is a charity that works to end male violence and abuse against women and girls by

changing the cultures that lead to such abuse. The motion included a consideration to develop a three-year action plan to support the movement. Council resolved that the motion be supported in principle, subject to further information regarding resource implications for officers. The additional information was presented to [Council](#) in December advising that whilst the Council supports White Ribbon and their awareness campaign, there is insufficient funds and capacity to apply for accreditation. The additional information provided assurance that despite not pursuing accreditation, there is a regional action plan that is focussed on addressing violence against women and girls. In summary, the action plan details:

- That all of our domestic abuse funding and officers have been part of a regional delivery team since 2016, and that progress is monitored by the Regional Vulnerabilities and Exploitation Board.
- We play an active role in the delivery of regional projects and initiatives through a commissioning group.
- We are also working to deliver obligations under the Serious Violence Duty, which aims to reduce violence and is specifically aimed at youth prevention and safe relationships.

All local authorities continue to support the White Ribbon week (November 25 each year). This year there was a stand in Coed Pella's Foyer and Bodlondeb, with information materials and supporting communication messages to the public issued on November 25.

Cabinet approved an updated Anti-harassment Policy in November 2024, which included our obligation as an employer to prevent sexual harassment. Service risk assessments and training are taking place.

### **5.3.2. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 Policy**

In July, [Cabinet](#) approved amendments to our Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 Policy. The purpose of RIPA is to ensure that any need to use covert investigation techniques are legitimate and that appropriate controls are put in place to ensure that activities are properly controlled and monitored. The policy has been reviewed and additional sections added in respect of storage and destruction of documents and to include a RIPA Social Media Policy. The report noted that RIPA authorisations are very rare in Conwy and that we have not authorised surveillance since 2013.

### **5.3.3. CCTV**

Working in partnership with the West Conwy Neighbourhood Policing Team and the Bay of Colwyn Town Council, we have been able to install a series of new cameras across Colwyn Bay. A [press release](#) was issued in May to inform people about the development, which was funded through UK Safer Streets.

### **5.3.4. Vigilance Against Scams**

The Trading Standards Team regularly issues advice and guidance to the public, and in May we encouraged residents to fully [check companies](#) offering to install free or low cost energy efficiency equipment or other improvement. We provided some top tips and signs to look out for, which included directing people to the Buy with Confidence website: [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk).

### **5.3.5. Teenage Employment – Advice to Businesses**

In June we issued a [press release](#) to remind businesses about legal responsibilities when employing young people aged between 13 and 16. Businesses need a work permit for each child that they employ, with potential insurance and financial consequences if these are not in place. More information can be found on our website: [Child Employment Permit](#).

### **5.3.6. Parking Scams**

During August and September we issued warnings about two types of parking related scams. In August we warned residents and visitors to be careful when paying for parking to avoid becoming the victim of a [fake QR code scam](#). Fraudulent codes, designed to trick users into providing their payment details on bogus websites, had been found in a number of locations in the county. Instead, we advise people to pay through cash, card, or telephone through the PayByPhone app.

In September we issued a warning about a parking penalty charges [text message scam](#). This scam uses a convincing looking website that refers to the council; however, we do not send parking fines through text messages. Our press release gave advice about what to do if money is lost through a scam and how to report it.

### **5.3.7. Seizing Illicit Goods**

In September we highlighted the valuable work of [Trading Standards](#), working with partners, to seize illicit goods, including unsafe cigarettes, tobacco and illegal vapes from three businesses and one dwelling in the county. The illegal trade in tobacco products and vapes has a direct impact on local businesses, but is also linked to wider safeguarding issues, as well as organised crime.

### **5.3.8 Corporate Safeguarding Board Annual Report, 2023 to 2024**

In September, the [Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) welcomed the Corporate Safeguarding Board Annual Report for 2023 to 2024. The report provided a comprehensive overview of safeguarding activities that had taken place around the Action Plan's 4 key themes, covering Learning and Development; Safeguarding Priorities; Safe Recruitment; and the Safeguarding Performance Framework. The report emphasised safeguarding as the responsibility of everyone. Over the next 12 months the following areas of practice have been identified as key priorities for the Board:

- Learning and Development
- To ensure we have a robust, consistent approach to emerging safeguarding themes.
- To continue our work to have appropriate Conwy public buildings as 'Safe Places.'

The committee noted the work undertaken and thanks were extended to the Service Manager and her team for their invaluable work and commitment to safeguarding. A briefing on the work of the Safeguarding Team had been scheduled for the Member Development and Information Forum in October.

## 6. People in Conwy are healthy

Measures: **Green: Target met**

Actions: **Green: On track**

### 6.1. Measures Update

The number of Ffit Junior members has risen significantly from 550 at the end of September 2023 to 819 in 2024. Additionally, there has been a continued increase in visits to our sports and leisure centres (up from 3,815 to 4,247 for the six-month period)

The number of new young carers' needs assessments undertaken during the between April and September has risen from 7 to 21 when compared to the same period last year.

We are still awaiting data pertaining to our National Exercise Referral Service measures below from an external source. There has been a change in the software system and the data is now long-overdue. There is unfortunately no clarity yet as to when it will become available.

#### Biannual Measures

Title	Year-end 2022 to 2023	Mid-year 2023 to 2024	Year-end 2023 to 2024	Mid-year 2024 to 2025
The number of young people (11 to 16) who have a Ffit Junior Membership – Benchmarked <b>Locally</b> <b>Target 750</b>	488 Green Better	550 Amber Better	732 Amber Better	819 Amber Better
The percentage of National Exercise Referral Service clients who complete the programme – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 60%</b>	64% Green Better	Data awaited	Data awaited	Data awaited
The percentage of National Exercise Referral Service clients whose health had improved on completion of the programme – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 75%</b>	68% Green Better	Data awaited	Data awaited	Data awaited

Title	Year-end 2022 to 2023	Mid-year 2023 to 2024	Year-end 2023 to 2024	Mid-year 2024 to 2025
The total number of new young carers needs assessments undertaken during the year – <b>Count Only</b>	121	7	38	21
The number of visits to local authority sports and leisure centres during the year (cumulative) where the visitor will be participating in physical activity, per 1,000 population – <b>Benchmarked Locally Target 7,343.74</b>	6,475 Green Better	3,815 Green Better	8,525 Green Better	4,237 Green Better

## Annual Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The number of people who have Ffit Memberships – <b>Benchmarked Locally Target 6,600</b>	6,047 Green Better	7,708 Green Better
The total number of services for adults provided during the year – Adult Care Home – <b>Count Only</b>	No data New to 2023 to 2024	983
The total number of services for adults provided during the year – Domiciliary Care – <b>Count Only</b>	No data New to 2023 to 2024	1,674
The total number of services for adults provided during the year – Respite care – <b>Count Only</b>	No data New to 2023 to 2024	219
The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year that reduced the need for support – <b>Count Only</b>	57	75
The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year that maintained the need for the same level of support – <b>Count Only</b>	136	164
The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year that mitigated the need for support – <b>Count Only</b>	213	311

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The total number of packages of reablement completed during the year that neither reduced, maintained nor mitigated the need for support – <b>Count Only</b>	203	198

## 6.2. Actions Update

There are eight actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan. Seven are on track, and one is complete.

### Actions

Title	Status	Update
Working together through our universal and community-based services to alleviate poverty and support people in poverty.	Green On track	<p>Engagement is continuing on the draft poverty-reduction strategy.</p> <p>Conwy is participating in the National Data Bank scheme to assist individuals who cannot afford access to digital data to do so.</p> <p>The Conwy Food Partnership (CFP) has been born out of the Sustainable Food Partnership work. Its aims are to increase access to nutritious, locally grown food for everyone (particularly those experiencing food insecurity), to empower the community with the knowledge and skills to cook healthy meals, to raise awareness of the availability and benefits of locally produced food, and to minimise food miles and food and packaging waste. CFP has supported various projects that meet these objectives with funding.</p> <p>The Community Well-being Team delivered the Eat Smart, Save Better session in Conwy. The aim of the session was to help attendees explore how to eat healthily whilst shopping on a budget. Everyone who attended also received a free recipe book and a pictorial guide to take home, along with a bag of ingredients to make one of the recipes.</p>

Title	Status	Update
Ensuring that all public facing services identify a champion for poverty and social inclusion.	Complete	This action has been completed.
Becoming an Autism Spectrum Condition Aware organisation and maintain our Dementia friendly status.	Green On track	<p>The autism e-learning modules are now mandatory for social care staff. This is available for all Conwy staff and is helping to improve awareness and understanding.</p> <p>Staff from Conwy and Denbighshire have worked together to organise and deliver a neuro-divergence and employment awareness raising event, and have produced a neuro-divergence guide for employers. Funding has been secured to raise awareness of the experiences of neuro-divergence learners in mainstreams schools (through a series of co-produced films). In addition, research is being undertaken on understanding the reasons behind long-term school absence amongst neuro-divergence learners.</p>
Supporting the mental well-being of unpaid carers so that they are able to carry out their important role, and can access help in times of crisis and avoid breakdowns in care.	Green On track	We are currently out to tender to renew the contract for the Mental Health carers support. If the procurement exercise is successful, a new contract will be in place from April 2025.
Developing training for staff and members about poverty and social inclusion.	Green On track	An action plan has been developed that brings together existing work and future work to meet gaps and deliver the vision. Work is also now being undertaken to map out the current work that all departments are doing, and this will help acknowledge the work we are already doing, as well as identifying gaps where we need to focus our work. Once the Strategy and Action Plan have been formally agreed and adopted, we will run awareness raising and training for both staff and members.

Title	Status	Update
<p>Developing a strategy to support the sustainability of the children and adults care sector. This will focus on working with Welsh Government to address funding, parity of esteem with health, and putting in place early interventions that focus on prevention and re-enablement.</p>	<p><b>Green</b> <b>On track</b></p>	<p><b>Children's Residential</b></p> <p>We are currently updating our strategy.</p> <p>Bwthyn y Ddol is nearing completion and the rebuilding of Glan yr Afon is continuing and due for completion in 2025.</p> <p>We continue to work with local external providers such as Kickstart in Abergele and Poseidon House in Colwyn Bay and continue to explore options with other not-for-profit providers in line with the Welsh Government agenda.</p> <p>We are maximising the use of grant funding to support our Foster Care services and enhance the offer to our in-house foster carers to provide stability and make the position more attractive.</p> <p><b>Disability Services</b></p> <p>Bron y Nant respite service has been opened, along with the Bron y Nant and Bryn Euryn work opportunities services.</p> <p>Work on Sylva Gardens (Registered Children's Home for 3 children up to the age of 18) is progressing.</p> <p>We are working in partnership internally and externally to establish a range of pathways to support people with learning disabilities to access paid employment. We are progressing with both the commissioning of new supported living contracts and a review of the current supported living contracts.</p> <p><b>Older People Services</b></p> <p>The move over to outcome focussed locality working for Domiciliary Care has been very successful in bringing stability to the market and improving the experience for individuals. The fee reviews for care homes have brought stability this year and significantly reduced the number charging top-ups. We are currently reviewing our commissioning for respite services and support for carers.</p>

Title	Status	Update
Asking all public facing services to review their offer and check against feedback from complaints or consultation regarding inclusion (pricing, access, and offer).	Green On track	No further update for the period.
Working to make our leisure and cultural teams financially sustained and address barriers to exercise and well-being, so that we can retain affordable community provision for all and provide communities with a wide variety of well-being and exercise choices.	Green On track	<p>Our current membership level is over 8,000 and is on track to achieve the year- end target of 8,500. Swimming lessons are over 3,000.</p> <p>Leisure Development and play continue to deliver excellent opportunities within our communities. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer role has proven Conwy's commitment to ensuring a commitment to all people in Conwy are healthy. A new inclusion model is being developed that will help identify partially and fully inclusive activities for residents. This model is already seen as good practice by partners such as Active North Wales and Sport Wales.</p>

### 6.3. A round up of news and committee items

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this priority.

#### 6.3.1. Corporate Parenting Annual Reports

The Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee received two Corporate Parenting annual reports in this period, covering 2022 to 2023, and 2023 to 2024. The first was considered in [April](#), and the second in [September](#). The reports highlighted areas of success achieved by the Corporate Parenting Team and the key priorities going forward. In scrutinising the reports, the committee acknowledged the challenges and risks of having to meet demand and commission independent foster and residential placements. The Committee also praised work done around foster placements, including the appointment of two new recruitment officers, recent marketing campaigns, and the review of allowances and benefits for Foster Carers.

### **6.3.2. Strategic Multi-agency Panel Annual Report 2022 to 2023**

In April, the [Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) considered the Strategic Multi-agency Panel Annual Report for 2022 to 2023. The aim of panel meetings is to co-ordinate a multi-agency commitment to meet the Health, Social and Educational needs of those children in external and Independent Residential Placements. The Head of Children, Family and Safeguarding Services provided detail in relation to the membership of the Panel, its core functions, details of spend and financial pressures, and statistical information about the number of children in residential settings outside of Conwy County. In attendance was the Assistant Area Director for Central (Children) from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, to support the need to improve the multi-agency approach going forward. The committee expressed concern regarding delays in young people receiving timely assessments and noted the increase in complex needs, behavioural challenges, and the demand for residential placements and lack of supply locally. [Cabinet](#) supported the report at its meeting in May and thanked the teams involved and partners for their hard work supporting the valuable provision required for children looked after.

### **6.3.3. Domiciliary Care Inspection**

At the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in May, the Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager presented an overview of the regulatory report recently issued by our external regulator. The Care Inspectorate for Wales undertook an inspection of Domiciliary Care in November 2023, and the report concluded that we provide consistent care by staff who know their patients well; that care staff feel supported and encouraged by management; that the management team are consistent and thorough and are effective in recruiting and sustaining staffing levels; and that management is established and has robust mechanisms in place for monitoring to ensure a good quality service is provided. There were no non-compliance areas identified.

### **6.3.4. Foster Carers**

In May, as part of Foster Care Fortnight™, we encouraged people to think about fostering by promoting the release of a new cookbook, Bring Something to the Table, which is full of recipes and life-changing moments from carers and care experienced people. One of Conwy's own carers has contributed a recipe to the book. More information about fostering can be found at [Fostering in Conwy / Foster Wales Conwy](#).

In July the [Finance and Resources Overview Committee](#) received a report proposing a range of new incentives for foster carers. The report highlighted the need to reduce our dependency on commissioning independent fostering and residential placements and therefore increase the number of foster carers. Members were informed that attracting just one additional foster carer could realise savings (residential placement fees) of £520,000 per annum, and would result in better outcomes for the child. The incentives included:

- 100% discretionary relief in Council Tax (where the Foster Carer is on the Conwy County Borough Council Tax Register); and
- A choice of 6 different Conwy County Borough Council parking permits for free.
- Free Ffit Conwy sports and leisure memberships

Members considered the report and noted that whilst the Council Tax reduction initiative would initially result in a reduction in income for us, long-term savings would be realised in respect of residential placement for children. These incentives were approved by [Cabinet](#) and [Council](#) in July, and more information can be found at [Foster Care Wales / Support and Rewards](#).

At the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in July, members were also asked to scrutinise a Foster Friendly Policy. The policy is part of our drive to recruit more foster carers and is a positive strategy to attract Conwy employees to become foster carers. It recognises the additional commitments and demands of caring for children looked after by providing special paid leave to employees who are prospective and existing foster carers and connected persons foster carers of Foster Wales Conwy. [Cabinet](#) welcomed the report, acknowledging that the recommendations supported vulnerable children by placing them within their own communities.

### **6.3.5. Population Change: Housing, Health, and Primary Care Impact**

In July, the [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a report detailing the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) growth options and their potential impact and mitigation for Health and Primary Care Services. This is one of a number of background papers to inform the RLDP. Members of the Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny were also in attendance. Following the debate, the committee agreed on a number of questions for consideration by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) in relation to health matters. They made the recommendation to Cabinet that the decision be

deferred, pending a satisfactory response from BCUHB in relation to the concerns raised and mitigations to address the implications of RLDP policies on the provision of health service land use in the county.

### **6.3.6. Children and Communities Grant**

At the July [Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#), members received an overview of the Welsh Government's Children and Communities Grant (COG) in terms of delivery for 2023 to 2024 and an outline plan for 2024 to 2025. The report provided a brief overview of the programme of work and provision at family centres across the county, highlighting the importance of early intervention, prevention, and support. Members were also updated about the grant underspend, due to a lack of available childcare spaces in identified communities. It was noted that staff were working hard with local providers to increase capacity for Flying Start Childcare.

### **6.3.7. Local Toilet Strategy**

Our Public Toilet Strategy had previously been approved by [Cabinet](#) in November 2023. In [July](#) we informed the public that the proposed closure of a number of public toilets was under review and that those public toilets scheduled for closure would remain open in the interim period, which prompted a Notice of Motion to be raised at [Council](#) in August. The [Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) also received an update in August on the delivery of the Local Toilet Strategy, where members discussed the financial implications for both the Local Authority and Town and Community Councils of keeping toilets open. In respect of communication and dialogue, some members expressed disappointment at the failure to consult with local members and stakeholders appropriately. Some Town and Community Councils had, however, actively taken part in discussions and shown an appetite to collaborate with us further. The committee noted the report and that the Local Toilet Strategy was being delivered in accordance with the actions stated in the strategy document.

In September, the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) considered the Notice of Motion raised at Council, and recommended that toilet closures be suspended until statistics are provided on the use of toilets and that a meaningful consultation has been carried out with County Councillors and Town and Community Councils. However, mindful of the recommendation, [Cabinet](#) could not support this

approach as savings had to be made. It was, therefore, agreed that the policies outlined within the Local Toilet Strategy, as previously approved, would continue.

### **6.3.8. Glan yr Afon Staffing Restructure**

In August, [Cabinet](#) considered a report about staffing for the Glan yr Afon. This is a purpose built 4 bed children's residential home currently under construction, and is due to be completed in February 2025. It will enable young people to remain in their local area, and create 13 full-time jobs in the county. Glan Yr Afon will be a sister home to Bwthyn Y Ddol assessment centre, and therefore the new recruits will form part of a cohesive recruitment and training strategy to ensure the team can work from setting to setting. Cabinet approved the staffing structure to enable the service to proceed to recruit to the facility.

### **6.3.9. Supporting Recreation**

We issued updates in [April](#), [June](#) and [July](#) advising on progress of ongoing works to our paddling pools. Following major investment (the majority funded by UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund), the paddling pools in Llanfairfechan, Penmaenmawr and Rhos-on-Sea re-opened in May, and Craig-y-Don in July in time for the school holidays.

In July we announced a programme of [summer activities](#) for children over the summer holidays, including crafts, play, swimming, days out and more. Since 2016, our Leisure Development Team has organised a free sporting event on the beach at Colwyn Bay - our [Beach Sport Extravaganza](#)! The success of this year's event, held in May, saw over 250 children and their families partake in a diverse range of sports, and highlighted the many opportunities available in the county. More information about sport in Conwy can be found at [www.sportconwy.org.uk/sports](http://www.sportconwy.org.uk/sports).

Following renovations managed by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and ourselves, we were able to announce in July that [Bodlondeb Tennis Courts](#) were officially reopened. There are a number of courts across Conwy (including at Rhos on Sea, Min y Don and Pentre Mawr) that provide free opportunities for people to pick up a racket and play. They can be booked through [LTA Play Tennis](#). This new booking technology, together with new gate access technology means it is now easier to get on court by booking in advance to guarantee availability. The courts are free to use between 7am and 9 am, and 1pm and 2 pm every day, with a £4 charge applicable at other times.

### **6.3.10. Conwy Excellence Fund and Sports Award**

We announced two rounds of grant opportunities for talented people in sport, education and the arts through in [May](#) and [July](#). The Conwy Excellence Fund provides grant aid to those aged under 30 years old who are either competing at a national level in sport, or are talented in the arts, dance, music, drama, and education. Grants are offered up to the value of £800. The fund was awarded to 35 people in 2023 to 2024.

Our Sports Awards are also an opportunity to recognise local talented sports people, clubs, coaches and volunteers in the county, and in September we reminded the public to put forward their [nominations](#) before the deadline.

### **6.3.11. Llanrwst Family Centre**

In May we hosted a visit from The Welsh Government Minister for Social Partnership, Sarah Murphy, to the [Llanrwst Family Centre](#). This is the longest established of Conwy's four family centres and is funded through Welsh Governments Children and Communities Grant. The centre provides a hub from which services and support for families are provided, and provides a space for other agencies to deliver support to the local community, such as welfare rights, universal health visit services, and school nursing. The ministerial visit was a great opportunity to showcase the work of the centre.

### **6.8.12. Music Events and Volunteering**

Continuing the theme of getting active, in July, Conwy joined a nationwide Age UK led series of events in offering an [over 50's daytime disco](#). The event was hosted at Sheldon's Café in Colwyn Bay in July. Our Well-being Team has also been working with Goldies Cymru to bring singing and music sessions to older and younger people in the county. Goldies Cymru is a charity that organises daytime singing and activity sessions with the aim of improving well-being for anyone who might be feeling lonely or isolated. They have so far run events in Rhos on Sea, Llanrwst and Colwyn Bay. For more information contact [stayingwell@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:stayingwell@conwy.gov.uk).

In September we launched [Winter Sounds](#), a series of free and low cost live music events at venues throughout the county. We encouraged people to get involved and volunteer in supporting these community events, with a range of opportunities from stewarding to supporting backstage.

### **6.8.13. Libraries Supporting Well-being**

We were delighted to announce in June that one of our library-based projects was chosen to feature as part of Libraries Change Lives Week. The [Croeso Cynnes / Warm Welcome](#) session at Llanfairfechan Library is still running successfully after having been set up (along with similar sessions across all Conwy libraries) during the early stages of the cost of living crisis. For more information about Conwy libraries, groups, and activities, either visit your local library or [www.conwylibraries.com](http://www.conwylibraries.com).

At its meeting in April, [Cabinet](#) received our annual return and Welsh Government Assessment of Welsh Public Library Standards for 2022 to 2023. Conwy met all of the 12 core entitlements in full, and of the 10 quality indicators, nine were achieved in full, and one in part. The partially met indicator was concerned with meeting requirements for staffing and professional qualifications. It was acknowledged that budget cuts have led to a reduction in full-time equivalent staff numbers within the service. The varied work undertaken by library staff was praised by both Cabinet and the Welsh Government, it being clear that there was a strong commitment to health and well-being, in particular mental health, delivered through many beneficial external partnerships. It was also noted that digital engagement was increasing within the service.

### **6.3.14. Pension Credit**

In September we encouraged older residents to register a claim for [Pension Credit](#) from the Government. People may be eligible if they are over State Pension age and on a low income. Pension Credit can be worth up to £3,900 per year and can provide access to a range of other benefits. More information can be found at [www.gov.uk/pension-credit](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit).

### **6.3.15. Bryn Euryn Nursery and Café**

In August, our Disability Service opened the new look [Bryn Euryn Nurseries](#) following a re-development. The garden centre, shop and café is a fantastic venture offering employment mentoring to people with disabilities wanting to get into paid employment. They are proud to be leading positive change for those with disabilities wanting to begin their careers, whilst making sure our customers have the best quality shopping experience. The café is run by partner agency HF Trust, and showcases the best of the home-grown and locally made produce, as well as selling items from selected local providers and businesses.

## 7. People in Conwy live in a county where the use of Welsh is thriving and people can participate in all aspects of community life through the medium of Welsh

Measures: No status

Actions: **Green: On track**

### 7.1. Measures Update

The number of Cymraeg (Welsh) public promotional activities undertaken between April and September has reduced. This has been partly due to library refurbishments and extended closures. Library and information activity has included weekly bilingual Storytime, one-off events to promote services to the community e.g. with local school visits, historical societies, and activities in conjunction with the Creu Conwy programme and bilingual Shared Reading activities. Our internal staff Welsh promotion and Welsh language lesson offer continues to grow.

#### Biannual Measures

Title	Year-end 2022 to 2023	Mid-year 2023 to 2024	Year-end 2023 to 2024	Mid-year 2024 to 2025
The number of Welsh promotion activities – <b>Count Only</b>	612	601	1,167	502

#### Annual Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of posts designated as 'Welsh Essential' which were filled by a Welsh speaker – <b>Benchmarked Locally</b> <b>Target 100%</b>	100% Green Better	93% Red Worse
The percentage of staff who are able to speak Welsh fluently (excluding school-based staff) (levels 4 and 5) – <b>Count Only</b>	26%	26%
The percentage of staff who are able to speak some Welsh (1, 2, 3) – <b>Count Only</b>	50%	51%

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The number of staff who take up the Welsh in the Workplace offer – <b>Count Only</b>	75%	78%

## 7.2. Actions Update

There are two actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan. Both are on track.

### Actions

Title	Status	Update
Continuing to promote Welsh language learning opportunities and Welsh language promotion to support Cymraeg 2050, the million Welsh speakers Welsh Government target.	Green On track	There are a range of options for staff to learn Cymraeg through a variety of different courses, and buddy schemes, which continue to go from strength to strength.

Title	Status	Update
Improving the planning and development of Welsh-medium education provision in the County by implementing the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).	<div>Green</div> <div>On track</div>	<p>We continue to work on our 10-year strategic plan and work with our clusters of schools. The current areas for development for academic year 2024 to 2025 are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progressing Playgroup Welsh provision through Plethu Croesi'r Bont in a few settings to support Welsh language category T2 (transitional Welsh English) schools on their Welsh language journey.</li> <li>• Support all Welsh language category T2 schools further to ensure their Welsh provision is on target for 50% of the curriculum. Ensure marketing and communication with stakeholders is transparent. Using external stakeholders (Urdd/Menter Iaith) to enhance incidental provision.</li> <li>• Support a few schools along the Language Continuum, e.g. some moving from Welsh language category T2 to T3 (Welsh medium) in infants. Ensure marketing and communication with stakeholders is transparent.</li> <li>• Supporting English medium secondary schools on improving their Welsh ethos and culture.</li> <li>• Improving Welsh learning access for staff across the sector.</li> <li>• Planning strategically to enhance Welsh provision for learners at secondary level.</li> <li>• Progress against the WESP will be reported to the Welsh Government.</li> </ul>

### 7.3. A round up of news and committee items

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this priority.

### **7.3.1 Welsh Promotion Strategy**

At its meeting in July, [Cabinet](#) approved the New Welsh Language Promotion Strategy following consideration by Scrutiny. Ein Llais Cymraeg (our Welsh voice), 2024 to 2029. builds on our previous good practice and is an important part of helping to grow the use of Cymraeg throughout Conwy. The Strategy is based around promoting Cymraeg in the Teulu (family), Gweithle (Workplace) and Cymuned (Community), and will assist us in promoting and facilitating Cymraeg throughout the county. This strategy will be reviewed and monitored throughout the next five years and will support us with our Welsh learning through all walks of life.

### **7.3.2 Siarter Iaith Cymraeg – Ysgol Aberconwy**

We were delighted to report in July that Ysgol Aberconwy became the first secondary school in North Wales to achieve the silver Siarter Iaith Cymraeg Campus Uwchradd award. This is a testament to all of the hard work and enthusiasm of pupils increasing their use of Welsh day-to-day. Ysgol Aberconwy has some great initiatives, including Gwobrau Iaith Adrannol (Departmental Language Awards), a bespoke scheme that provides a clear framework for teachers to promote and increase the use of the Welsh language day-to-day with learners. The school also holds an annual School Eisteddfod in March every year and learners of all ages can meet at lunchtimes in ‘Y Caban,’ a unique colourful and modern room, to participate in Welsh activities beyond the classroom.

### **7.3.3 Welsh Language Immersion Unit**

In April. Cabinet appointed a contractor for the development of a Welsh Language Immersion Unit at Ysgol y Creuddyn. The unit will increase provision for the immersion of pupils transitioning from primary to secondary in the local catchment area. The project is funded through Welsh Government grant funding.

## 8. People in Conwy are informed, included, and listened to and can actively contribute to a community where their background and identity are valued and respected

Measures: No status

Actions: **Green: On track**

### 8.1. Measures Update

There is no new data to present in support of this outcome within this report.

#### Annual Measures

Title	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
The percentage of actions completed within the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan – <b>Count Only</b>	Does not apply New to 2024 to 2025	Does not apply New to 2024 to 2025
The percentage of actions completed within the LGBTQ+ Plan – <b>Count Only</b>	Does not apply New to 2023 to 2024	Does not apply New to 2024 to 2025
The percentage of Inclusive Conwy actions delivered that should be delivered by year – <b>Count Only</b>	Does not apply New to 2023 to 2024	Does not apply New to 2024 to 2025

### 8.2. Actions Update

There are four actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan. Two are on track and two are complete.

## Actions

Title	Status	Update
Continuing to make our communications accessible. We will use plain English and Cymraeg Clir (plain Welsh) and provide translation and interpretation support to ensure people understand what their Council is doing and how they can contribute.	Green On track	We have introduced the “Communications Strategy 2024-26”, which includes specific reference to making our Communications accessible to all. It also references how we are committed to promoting the use of Cymraeg (Welsh) in our communities and in our workplace. This strategy is supported by an action plan that includes specific tasks, such as ensuring the Brand Style Guide and the “Writing Guide: How we sound” are updated and circulated to the wider authority to help shape our message to the wider community.
Continuing to build our relationship and collaborative initiatives with Town and Community Councils.	Green On track	We met with a number of Town and Community Councils in June (in person and online) to discuss ideas and issues. As a result of this we are working closer with both officers and Town and Community Councils to address communication.  One Voice Wales training modules for Town and Community Councils and Clerks (and individuals in the community if appropriate) have been running since July 2024. All in attendance have appreciated the opportunity, but take-up has been disappointing, possibly due to the time of year.
Developing plans to support the Diversity in Democracy commitment, public participation strategy, and accessibility and transparency of decisions.	Complete	This activity is now embedded as business-as-usual practice.

Title	Status	Update
Ensuring we embrace and support diversity by implementing our Strategic Equality Plan and other equality action plans such as the Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales and LGBTQ+ action plans.	Complete	Our Inclusive Conwy Plan has now been adopted, including our action plan for delivery. Progress will be monitored through regular updates to democracy. Monitoring and strategic drive will take place through the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Steering Group. As an organisation we continue to learn and review our working practices to ensure we are inclusive. Staff have recently been offered anti-racism awareness sessions and anti-sexual harassment sessions. All staff can now access 6 DEI modules on our Coaching Culture platform and this training, and 3-year refreshers, are now part of our suite of essential learning. We are now members of Inclusive Employers, opening up a huge resource of factsheets and webinars for all members of staff. A forward work programme of awareness days has also been organised, starting with National Inclusion Week.

### 8.3. A round up of news and committee items

The following additional news and committee items took place in this last period in support of this priority.

#### 8.3.1. Supporting Democracy

We worked hard in this period to support both the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner election in May, and the General Election that was held in July. The notice of the UK Parliamentary Election was published by us in May, with the county falling into the constituencies of Bangor Aberconwy (administered by us) and Clwyd North (administered by Denbighshire County Council). Nominees were invited to submit their papers by 4pm on June 7, with the Statement of Nominated Persons and Notice of Poll being published the same day, including details around the situation of polling stations. Members of the public were encouraged to register to vote by June 18, and again reminded about the need to present identification for the election and encouraged to apply for free voter IDs if needed by June 26. At meetings of Cabinet and Council, the Leader and Chief Executive gave thanks to all staff and for their help in supporting the elections. In particular, personal thanks were extended to the Elections and Democratic Services

teams for their hard work in processing 4,000 additional registration requests, thousands of postal vote applications and answering over a thousand calls in advance of the General Election.

In September we carried out our annual canvass to check voter registration details. The annual canvass allows us to keep the electoral register up-to-date, to identify who risks losing their voice at elections, and to encourage them to register before it is too late. Recent home movers in particular were urged to check their details. If you're not currently registered and want to be, the easiest way is online at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote).

We recently helped promote a call for co-opted members to join the North Wales Police and Crime Panel from November 2024 to October 2028. This demanding role will be to scrutinise and support the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales. Applications were invited by September 27 from interested persons who understand the importance of public services, how they are delivered, and have an interest in community safety, policing, and criminal justice issues. The panel is eager to reflect the breadth of communities in North Wales and welcomed applications from all eligible people and from all sections of the community.

Also in September we invited volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences to join our Independent Appeal Panel that considers school placements. If a child is refused a place at a school due to the year group being full or oversubscribed, a parent or carer can appeal that decision. The panel meets regularly to consider information from the school and parent or carer to decide whether or not to award a place at that school in accordance with the Welsh Government School Admission Appeals Code. Panel members are supported by a trained clerk at all hearings to ensure that the correct procedures are followed. More information can be found on [our website](#).

### **8.3.2. Armed Forces Covenant**

We have reaffirmed our commitment to support the Armed Forces community by re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant. The aim of the Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their area; promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the armed service community; and recognise and remember the sacrifices made. We first signed up to the covenant in 2013, and were awarded the Gold Level Defence Employer Recognition Scheme in 2019.

### **8.3.3. Youth Voice**

In June we invited young people to get involved in issues affecting them and their community. The Conwy Youth Council is growing and welcomes young people aged 13-25. The Youth Service is also eager to hear from young people who have experience of living in temporary housing, being homeless, or who want to be part of improving housing, to join a new group. To find out more, visit our [Youth Service website](#) or find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CyngorleuenctidConwyYouthCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/CyngorleuenctidConwyYouthCouncil).

In June we lent our support to Youth Work Week 2024, which sought to highlight the incredible impact and diversity of youth work across Wales. A range of activities and celebrations were hosted online, in addition to hundreds of activities and initiatives that normally take place week in and week out. The event also provided an opportunity for youth workers across the country to share good practice and encourage more people to get involved. Conwy's Youth Service marked the event with a range of activities to suit all tastes, including arts and crafts projects, e-bike sessions, and sports activities.

### **8.3.4. Welsh Youth Parliament**

We were proud that our Youth Service was [announced as a named partner](#) for the third Welsh Youth Parliament. The final list of 20 partner organisations will run elections to choose a 11 to 17 year old to represent the views of young over the next two-year term. Our involvement ensures that the voices of many young people from across Conwy are heard and are represented in the work of the Welsh Youth Parliament on a national platform.

### **8.3.5. Community Cohesion Fund**

The North West Wales Community Cohesion Fund, administered by the Community Cohesion Team for North West Wales, is a small grant scheme that can provide opportunities for third sector community groups, to deliver work, promote cohesion and address community tensions. In August we invited organisations to apply for funding of between £500 and £5,000 for events, activities or supportive literature that promote and foster cohesion within communities. Applications closed on September 9.

### **8.3.6. Communications Strategy**

Following consideration by the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in May, [Cabinet](#) in July approved our new Communications Strategy, which sets out our

plan for internal and external marketing and communications. It is hoped that the strategy will support communications that are easy to engage with by our residents, staff, partners, and the wider community. The objectives of the strategy are to:

1. Strengthen, develop, and maintain opportunities for local people and groups to influence policy, service delivery, and what happens in their communities.
2. Build upon the reputation of Conwy County Borough Council by putting our corporate values at the heart of all we do and delivering within a consistent brand framework.
3. Develop a planned structure for all engagement and communications with a clear hierarchy of strategic messages that link directly to our Corporate Plan's vision and outcomes.
4. Deliver co-ordinated, proactive, positive communications around the priority strategic messages.
5. Build organisational confidence and competence in managing engagement and communication proactively and effectively.
6. Work with communities to help them understand how Conwy County Borough Council is funded and what services are provided.
7. To help us achieve our objectives in the Corporate Plan (2022-27).

It was confirmed that a supporting communication strategy group was in place to help deliver the strategy. The final strategy may be viewed on [our website](#).

### **8.3.7. Local Voice: Gritting**

At its meeting in April, [Cabinet](#) considered a recommendation made by the Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee following a Councillor Call for Action. They were asked to consider the provision of gritting on Ty Gwyn Road on the Great Orme. Members were advised this would incur an additional cost of between £100k and £200k, the purchase of a suitable vehicle to access the route, and the employment of additional staff. For this reason, Cabinet agreed they would not support the recommendation. Assurance was given that the current gritting regime of a tractor gritting the route during severe conditions would continue.

## 9. Conwy County Borough Council is resilient

Measures: No status

Actions: **Green: On track**

### 9.1. Measures Update

There are presently no measures identified as part of our Corporate Plan framework in support of this outcome. Further consideration will be given to key measures as we take forward discussions during 2024 to 2025 on Corporate Plan priorities and our resilience as a council, more closely aligning this priority now to our Conwy Resilience Plan.

Consideration will also be given to some key financial measures around budget variance, savings achieved and our reserve balances.

#### 9.2.1. Actions Update

There are four actions listed within this outcome in the Corporate Plan. All are on track.

#### Actions

Title	Status	Update
Recognising that our employees are our most important resource, we will inspire great performance as well as support their health, well-being, and personal and professional development through a new employee performance management framework (The Conwy Conversation).	<b>Green On track</b>	We monitored the use of, and listen to feedback following the implementation of the Conwy Conversation. As a result, we have introduced a new iTrent module to support managers and employees to manage their performance, raise any challenges early so they can be managed appropriately, and maintain up to date notes and reflections on conversations. Guidance on using the module has been added to the manager iTrent training, and guidance documents have been amended to reflect the changes.

Title	Status	Update
Continuing to develop ways to talk with and listen to our staff.	<div>Green</div> <div>On track</div>	<p>The Chief Executive, and Strategic Directors hold a series of staff meetings twice a year to listen and talk with staff.</p> <p>A Menopause Café was also held in this period, which had good attendance and received positive feedback.</p> <p>Service Managers within the People and Performance Service have begun a review of our engagement activity to identify any gaps or improvements to be made.</p>
Implement the corporate recruitment project in order to improve our approach to recruitment and retention	<div>Green</div> <div>On track</div>	<p>Phase 2 of the project is progressing well.</p> <p>The Marketing Team have developed a 12-month marketing campaign that is currently being implemented. In addition, the team has been reviewing and creating new web pages, including the soon-to-be-launched Careers in Social Care page. They are also utilising more traditional marketing methods, such as distributing advertisements on the back of toilet doors in various locations.</p> <p>The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Stream has been focused on implementing an easy-read and plain English AI tool. Additionally, they are reviewing policies, procedures, and training approaches to ensure that our recruitment process remains free from discrimination. The Work Stream is currently awaiting the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager to start in post.</p> <p>The HR Process Workstream is currently reviewing the overall Recruitment and Selection Policy. Alongside this, the team is looking at what support is available for applicants.</p> <p>The Welsh Language Work Stream is due to close in January 2025 once the Welsh language assessment tool for applicants has been launched.</p>

Title	Status	Update
Implementing our Workwise Framework and hybrid working model, which aims to build and maximise upon the beneficial ways of working realised during lockdowns and to do things differently to the benefit of carbon reduction, staff welfare, service delivery to the public and efficiency across the organisation.	Complete	This activity has now been embedded. It is clear to all staff that they have an office base, with permission to work from home. The focus on in person interaction is made clear to all staff. All services have team agreements stating how the team will work to ensure there is no impact on business. Preparations are being made to adjust the hybrid working zone layouts in Coed Pella to accommodate staff from Bodlondob.

## 9.2.2. Transformation Work: Actions Update

The following eight actions have been identified in support of our transformation programme. All are on track. We are now looking to develop a programme in order to have a more structured approach and corporate oversight. We are also identifying what resources are needed as short-term investment to realise savings. Colleagues in the People and Performance Service are part of the LGA transformation network and will be attending the online free LGA transformation conference in 2025. Colleagues from all service areas are working collaboratively across the region to identify opportunities to opportunities and sharing good practice.

### 9.2.2.1. Resilience Plan

Status: **Green: On track**

A progress report on the Resilience Plan was presented to the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in September 2024 and subsequently approved by [Cabinet](#). Following a challenging budget round to set the 2024 to 2025 budget, and following on from learning across the UK, we arranged to receive a presentation from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Following this and with the endorsement of Cabinet, the Finance Service has been working directly with CIPFA to reflect on and benefit from their expertise and guidance, as well as reviewing benchmarking information. CIPFA have actively supported both Government appointed Commissioners at Local Authorities in England who have issued a Section 114 notice, as well as other Local Authorities in England who have sought Emergency Financial Assistance from UK Government.

The Peer Review Action Plan has been updated and subsumed into a new Resilience Action Plan, which reflects the range of work that is underway.

For completeness, as well as general support and guidance from CIPFA, they have also been assisting with specific work in relation to Social Care, Asset Management, and aspects of our administration. The Resilience Plan will be updated where this work results in specific additional actions that are relevant.

Despite the settlement from Welsh Government, and in light of our reserve position, there is no doubt that our financial standing remains precarious. The Resilience Plan sets out critical actions that we need to take to secure a path to resilience. However, it provides no guarantees, and will, in any case, require all the members of the Council to make difficult decisions in setting what will be very challenging budget positions in the coming years.

#### **9.2.2.2. Technology One (T1)**

Status: **Green: On track**

The project has delivered a new core financial system for Conwy, which went 'Live' in October 2023. New modules delivered included Purchasing, General Ledger, Accounts Payable, Stores and Billing and Debtors. Phase 1 of the project is now complete and the system has been operating successfully.

Phase 2 involves the delivery of further modules, including Budget and Forecasting, Contracts Management, and Purchase Cards. Work commenced on these in August, and will be complete by April 2025. Phase 2 has already delivered the implementation of a new Cash Management and Bank Reconciliation system provided by Civica, and this went live in October 2024.

The initiation of the Budget and Forecasting module marks a significant step in financial management, ensuring a standardised approach across various services. Service Accountants have worked with T1 to design the module and have commenced with the build. Following testing in December, the 'Go Live' date is planned for April 2025. The design and build of the Purchase Card module has been completed. End Users who need to be trained to input to the module have been identified and training has been organised for January, with a 'Go Live' date at the end of January 2025. The design of the Contracts and Procurement module has also commenced with a 'Go Live' date planned at the beginning of February 2025.

### **9.2.2.3. Spend Controls**

Status: **Green: On track**

A corporate spend management process to ensure that spend is contained within budget commenced in October 2024. No Purchase Order or Contract above a defined threshold should be placed without it being approved by the Spending Control Panel or Procurement Board. Regular Spend Panels review and sign off spend over £1k to £25k, and £25k to £50k. The Procurement Board reviews proposed spend over £50k, alongside the proposed procurement route.

In November, members received a presentation from CIPFA regarding the financial challenges. In December and January 2025 all budget holders will receive budget holder training from CIPFA.

Vacancy Control meet weekly to review all vacancies, contract extensions, honoraria, and mini-restructures. The recommendations from Vacancy Control are reviewed by the Chief Executive and Strategic Director for Finance and Resources.

### **9.2.2.4. Housing Programme**

Status: **Green: On track**

The Housing and Homelessness Programme Board was established and approved by Democracy in February 2023. This was as a direct result of having a specific focus in the Corporate Plan on affordable, appropriate, and good quality accommodation, and the 'housing crisis' across the County. It was also evident that 'Housing' is not just a Housing Services concern but rather a corporate-wide issue. Support is required from many different services to deliver specific objectives in the Local Housing Strategy and Corporate Plan in relation to housing supply, housing policy, housing grants and housing quality. The Housing and Homelessness Programme was therefore established to deliver these objectives and ensure there is buy-in from across the authority and from external partners.

The projects that will sit underneath the programme and therefore contribute to the successful delivery of the vision are as follows:

## **1. Affordable Housing: Council Owned Sites Project**

This project provides oversight of the delivery of a number of local authority land assets for affordable housing across the county borough in partnership with Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners. The focus is on delivering those sites that have already been approved by members for disposal, for which credible funding streams exist or can be identified.

An Affordable Housing Working Group has been established in order to drive forward sites to the planning application stage more efficiently and swiftly. Two sites are currently going through this process – Dwygyfylchi and the Ty Hapus site in Llandudno. The Nant y Coed site has also been agreed for disposal to Cartrefi Conwy by Cabinet. A Planning Specialist has been procured to get a Planning Application in place for Ty Mawr by December 2025.

## **2. Housing Quality, Acquisition and Adaptation Project**

This project identifies and delivers a range of accommodation as part of the overall Housing and Homelessness Programme, with a focus on:

- Open market property acquisitions of strategic importance, including empty properties.
- Temporary accommodation (in terms of the site or property) – existing and new (including modular).
- Adaptation and refurbishment of our owned properties
- Operating model (this will be a common thread running through all the above themes).

## **3. Service Improvements Project**

This project focuses on making improvements within the overall Housing Service by reviewing and implementing changes around IT, policies and procedures, referral pathways, external partnership arrangements, and internal partnership arrangements. The project has a specific focus on early intervention and prevention by the Housing Service. Significant progress has been made to date in regard to prevention and provision, including:

- A contact centre being established for the housing solutions team, which has increased access options through webchat and online contact forms, meaning the team can communicate in different ways.
- A programme of work to strengthen the contract monitoring and landlord lease arrangements to improve the delivery of the leased temporary accommodation scheme. There have been improved move on outcomes with, on average, five households moving on a month, and significantly improved void turnaround times down to an average of 41 days, and over 90% rent collected over the 6-month period.
- A focus on reducing the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation, and a new procurement approach being implemented to ensure we establish the best value when we do use bed and breakfast accommodation.

All the above projects have developed robust project plans and options papers, which will support the Programme Board and democracy to make informed decisions on strategic direction for the provision of housing in the County. At the Programme Board in November, updates on all sites that sit under both the Affordable Housing and Housing Quality, Acquisitions and Adaptations (HQAA) project were provided and a number of in-roads have been made in relation to particular sites.

A capital business case for housing was agreed for 2023 to 24 at £2.4 million and spend has commenced against this funding. Welsh Government Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) funding was made available in 2023 to 2024 for Local Authorities to access and was considered by the HQAA project, which made an application and was successful in gaining funding for 4 properties. Refurbishment works were completed at one of our owned properties in July 2024, and this was occupied from August 2024. We are working to refurbish the remaining 3 acquired properties, with the tender circulated in July 2024, work starting onsite in October 2024, and completion by mid-February, 2025. TACP in 2023 to 2024 delivered an extra 67 properties for permanent social housing, either through the council or an RSL.

An announcement was made by the Welsh Government at the end of June 2024 stating that Conwy County as a whole had been awarded £5.1 million in TACP for 2024 to 2025. An expression of interest in regard to fulfilling the TACP amount was submitted to the Welsh Government in early August 2024, and this included what we and RSLs across

Conwy were putting forward. We are planning to use TACP to commence refurbishment on 4 already owned properties in 2024 to 2025.

#### **9.2.2.5. Office Accommodation Strategy 2 (OAS2) and Asset Management**

Status: **Green: On track**

Our original Office Accommodation Strategy focussed building Coed Pella and reducing our aging and dispersed office estate, most of which was not purpose-built office space. It resulted in the closure of large office bases at Dinerth Road offices, the Civic offices, Glan y Don building, annexe, and caretaker lodge. In addition, 12 other aging and inefficient smaller offices in Colwyn Bay and Llandudno were also closed.

Office Accommodation Strategy phase 2 is therefore a natural progression, now that hybrid working is well established, to reduce the office estate to one purpose built, modern and efficient office building.

Following our invitation in March for expressions of interest over the future use of our Bodlondeb office, the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July considered options for disposal by way of a 250-year full repairing and insuring lease to a preferred bidder. As part of this, the committee considered whether the costs of relocating functions from Bodlondeb meant that our one-office strategy was viable. At its meeting in August, Cabinet then awarded the lease to Cardiff based Ideas Forums Ltd, who will refurbish the offices as a Business and Innovation Centre. The proposal was favoured as it offered a sustainable future for the building, and provided economic development opportunities for the town of Conwy and wider area. Free space and support will be available to those who want become entrepreneurs. By transforming Bodlondeb into a world-class centre for entrepreneurship, Ideas Forums aims to generate hundreds of new jobs and tens of millions of pounds for the local economy over the next five years.

Following agreement of the long-term lease, Cabinet in September approved the procedural notices required to make the public aware of the extent of the land that will be transferred. The open space included in the lease excludes the cenotaph, lawn area, woodland, cricket pitch, tennis courts, and children's play area, and the public will still be able to access the footpaths and roadway. The leaseholder would be responsible for maintaining all leased areas, and it is not the intention of the preferred bidder to develop publicly accessible areas. Additionally of course, any development would also be subject to the planning process.

Further reports will be presented to democracy confirming the full business case, with tendered costs, for the relocation of functions from Bodlondeb.

All democratic approvals are now to hand to progress with the transfer of Bodlondeb and the works at Coed Pella to deliver on the strategy. The transfer of Bodlondeb is subject to four separate legal documents which are close to a final version, following which CCBC can enter into contract with Quidos Investments Limited (QIL); upon these being signed, CCBC can then issue a letter of intent so that SWG Construction Ltd can progress with enabling the building works at Coed Pella. A formal programme for the phasing of the works can then be agreed and issued, which will then shape the transfer of function to Coed Pella, so that CCBC can deliver vacant possession of Bodlondeb by 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025 (which is the date of transfer of the asset to QIL). As part of delivering vacant possession the process of decluttering is progressing and in early 2025 the process of emptying Bodlondeb of its contents will progress. Communication with staff continues and the zones at Coed Pella will be shared in early 2025, along with a programme of when various moves will take place.

An updated Asset Management Strategy is currently being drafted. The Strategic Leadership Team were provided with a high-level overview of how developing a new Asset Management Plan would take place. A steer regarding focusing in on capital receipts and revenue reduction was made and how the process could be streamlined. The intention is to table a proposal with Informal Cabinet in the New Year, and developing a new Disposal Strategy as a priority, with the Asset Management Plan to follow at a later date. A report will be presented to Informal Cabinet in late February with options regarding the Disposal Strategy.

#### **9.2.2.6. Digital Transformation**

Status: **Amber Within tolerance**

The digital transformation of services continues with our core digital transactions increasing year-on-year since 2020. Services covering recycling centre bookings, subsistence claims, school transport applications, school uniform grants, council tax e-billing, and school music lesson bookings have contributed to an increase to 250,000 requests in 2024, up from 222,000 in 2023. This does not include the expansion of further significant digital online service options by services, including Ffit Conwy, Jobs Board, and Report It. We will continue to review areas of greatest demand for digital service and prioritise developments based on that feedback.

In addition to web based, front-facing developments, work with external consultants (Triple Value Impact) has helped us to identify a range of technology solutions that can help us maximise the efficiencies and savings already achieved through digital services over the next two to three years. Not all of the solutions will work for us, but we are currently evaluating the cost and benefit of a number of the options.

Solutions being considered include Artificial Intelligence (AI) based systems to pre-empt demand, streamline administration, in home technology, recruiting foster carers, debt management, preventing fraud, detecting fraud, planning applications, council tax automation, co-pilot, Easy read, EV charging points, further adoption of robotic technologies, and the sharing of information to better inform citizens of their eligibility for support. Services are currently receiving demonstrations of solutions that were identified as high priority.

We continue to expand and test new technologies, including the exploitation of the area's openly available LoraWAN network, to utilise sensors in hard-to-reach places for purposes such as flood monitoring, refrigerator checks, and as tools to help vulnerable citizens live independently for longer.

#### **9.2.2.7. Social Care and Education Transformation**

Status: **Green: On track**

Our Social Care Transformation Programme is governed and supported by a Programme Sponsor Group that meets every 2 months, and a Programme Board that meets quarterly. There are project leads and teams, with some projects having separate Boards. Progress reports on the programme are presented to the Social Care and Health, and Education and Skills scrutiny committees on an annual basis. The programme continues to deliver its objectives through progressing various service developments, from business support to front-line service areas, aligned to our vision for a "Sustainable and Integrated Social Care and Education Service". The current developments under the programme include:

##### **1. Development of an Integrated Business Support Service**

The purpose of this workstream is to develop an integrated and resilient business service for Social Care and Education, delivered through the existing operational budget. The main restructure, including appointments to service, section, and team manager roles (Tiers 1 to 3), and the realignment of teams and line management, has

been completed. Whilst the majority of service functions have been transferred (such as the oversight of freedom of information, service intranet and website, service complaints, subject access requests and joint systems team), there is one team still requiring transfer (following HR processes). Two tier three managers have been provided with an opportunity to undertake further development of their service areas.

## **2. Transforming Residential and Foster Care Placements for Children and Young People**

This programme of work is contributing to the delivery of our placement strategy, the Welsh Government's eliminate profit agenda, and responds to the significant pressures on children's services placement budget.

- **Local Residential Placements:** With all three current projects due to be complete within eight months of each other, between October 2024 and May 2025 (creating 13 local placements), we are undertaking a period of reflection and looking at lessons learned. This exercise will reaffirm existing and any new priority actions that need to be progressed within the next 6 to 12 months for both fostering and residential placements.

Staff recruitment has been a key part of the programme over the last 9 months and will continue into 2025, with the new staff progression pathway developed for the Children's Residential Service. Overall, approximately 60 staff are to be recruited, trained and supported (including registered managers, deputy managers, and residential children's workers).

- **In-house foster care placements:** To retain and increase foster care placements, the team, supported through Welsh Government's eliminate profit grant and council funding, has focussed on the following activities:
  - Introduced an enhanced foster carer fee for all general in-house foster carers.
  - Increased staffing resource dedicated to developing foster placements for children with disabilities.
  - Introduced a new Foster Friendly policy. Cabinet agreed council tax relief of 100% for Foster Carers (first Local Authority in North Wales to offer this),

additional annual leave for Conwy employees who are or becoming foster carers, and parking permits.

- Increased marketing activities in the community, social media, and events for foster carers, etc.
- Increased staff to support with the discharge of care orders and enhancing the offer provided for Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). This has included a Social Worker for reunification and discharge work, an additional connected person co-ordinator, and a contact family time worker.

A dedicated transformation lead has been appointed to support this work, funded through the Welsh Government's eliminate profit grant funding.

### **3. Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act (RISCA) Responsible Individual Project**

This is introducing a permanent organisational change model to implement our RISCA "Responsible Individual" (RI) duties for both in-house service provision of domiciliary care, and residential placements across Social Care. The purpose is to increase our capability to deliver the regulated duties of the enhanced RI role to promote, monitor and improve service quality. The model and funding arrangements have been agreed, involving the creation of a new dedicated RI post.

The appointment of the RI (May 2024) was the first milestone of this project. The current stage involves the transition of the RI functions from the existing RIs to the new dedicated RI. This includes 6 registered residential placements and various domiciliary care provision under one registration. The priorities to take over the RI lead for the Care Inspectorate Wales registration process for Bwthyn y Ddol, Llys Elian, Bron Y Nant, and our domiciliary care services, has been completed as planned.

### **4. Changing the way we commission domiciliary care in Older People Services.**

This project is improving the way we commission domiciliary care. Moving from 'Time and Task,' to working in a 'Well-being Outcome Focused and Person Centred' approach. The rollout of the new model as per the 5 Community Resource Teams has been completed. The teams' current priority is to transfer those in receipt of a care package to the new outcome focused care plans. The final stage, introducing planned payments and annually billing, will require the transfer of all service users to the new care plans before it can be progressed.

## **5. Consultation on the “discretionary element” of our home to school transport policy.**

This task involved undertaking stakeholder consultation on the policy, which has been completed. The consultation feedback was considered in proposing policy changes, supported by Cabinet over the summer. Communication to inform stakeholders of the policy changes (taking effect from September 1, 2025) started in September 2024.

## **6. Additional Learning Needs Transformation**

We are looking at creating a unified system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 with Additional Learning Needs. The project will be delivered in line with the 8 regional strategic objectives (Collaboration, Awareness and Engagement, workforce development, Early Years, Post Compulsory Education, Health, ICT and Bilingualism).

In accordance with new legislation and the principles of the new ALN Code, this seeks to:

- Ensure that all learners with ALN are supported to overcome barriers to learning and achieve their full potential.
- Improve the planning and delivery of support for learners from 0 to 25 with ALN, placing learners' needs, views, wishes and feelings at the heart of the process.
- Focus on the importance of identifying needs early and putting in place timely and effective interventions that are monitored and adapted to ensure that they deliver the desired outcomes.

The project was initiated in April 2019 with “go live” from September 2021. We are working in line with the Welsh Government Implementation Timetable to August 2025. The responsibility for post 16 ALN duties and Additional Learning Provision (ALP) transfers to local authorities in its entirety (including the responsibility for funding) from September 1, 2025.

## **7. Bron y Nant Disability Respite Centre**

Following the vacation of the Bron y Nant upper site as part of the Office Accommodation Strategy, the Bron y Nant Disability Respite and Bryn Euryn Nurseries and Café project was established to:

- Develop the top site into a new respite accommodation, providing a jointly commissioned (Social Care Disabilities and Health) respite service, supporting people with disabilities and those with complex health needs.
- Refurbish and develop the lower site for Bryn Euryn Nurseries and Gardens, along with a new cafe and shop for access by the general public, service users and staff.

A number of benefits were identified as part of the development of the project, including:

1. Increased Disability Service Respite available for all adult service users known to the Disability Service.
2. Reduced rates of adults known to the Disability Service having to be placed in out of area residential or treatment facilities.
3. Increased respite care available for adult service users known to the Disability Service with complex care needs.
4. Increased skills of Corporate Nursery Staff at Tan Lan through working and training with the Work Opportunity Teams.
5. Increased Work Opportunities for adult service users known to the Disability Service.
6. Increased number of respite nights for Disability service users available within the County.

The respite facility became operational, along with the Integrated day Support. It has availability for 5 individuals to stay per night in comparison to the previous respite facility that only had 3 beds. Since becoming operational 1,029 nights of respite have been allocated to individuals open to the Disability Service. The number of people who access Bron Y Nant is 59, a number of whom have complex care needs and require input of DN during their stays. The Café and Shop formally opened in July 2024.

Due to the introduction of new projects, the timeframe for completing the Social Care Transformation programme is evolving. With the new programme of work to transform residential and foster care placements (supporting the delivery of our placement strategy for 2022 to 2027) and delivery plan for residential placements taking us to 2030 to 2031. The programme and its projects are a significant undertaking, reliant on support from

existing staff from across a wide range of council service and disciplines. The capacity status is noted as 'amber – within tolerance' and continues to be a challenge, managing day-to-day service delivery alongside a significant change programme of work. The programme has a Programme Manager, who also provides light-touch project management support on a needs basis when project management support is not available. The appointments to the Transformation Lead (funded through the Welsh Government eliminate profit grant) and Project Manager posts are welcomed.

The main risk for the programme relates to the availability of the Welsh Government eliminate profit funding after March 2025, with no formal announcements made to date. Should funding cease there will be consequences for the continuation of staffing needed to support the delivery of our 10-year plan.

#### **9.2.2.8. Improvement Activity: Corporate Plan Review**

Status: **Green: On track**

The Performance Self-Assessment for 2023 to 2024, picking up on recommendations from other peer-led assessments, identified the need to undertake a more comprehensive review of the Corporate Plan, recognising that the financial landscape had changed dramatically since the ambition of the original plan was agreed. The Performance and Improvement Team are taking this work forward, working towards a workshop with the Senior Management Team and Cabinet in November, and presenting a revised plan to democracy in the New Year. The revised plan will have a firm focus on our financial resilience as an authority.

## **10. Governance Functions**

In support of Conwy County Borough Council being resilient, the chapters that follow considers improvement actions and developments (including news and committee items) that have been undertaken during 2023 to 2024 in support of the seven governance areas, namely Corporate Planning, Financial Planning, Performance Management, Risk Management, Workforce Planning, Asset Management and Procurement.

### **10.1. Corporate Planning**

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Corporate Planning is about how we set out and make arrangements to deliver on our strategic objectives.

#### **10.1.1. Audit Wales: Setting Well-being Objectives**

The Audit Wales report on how we had set our Well-being Objectives in 2022 recommended that we more explicitly consider how we support and work with partners to deliver objectives. This will be considered as we take forward upcoming revisions to the Corporate Plan in the autumn, and an update on progress will be reported to Governance and Audit Committee in November.

#### **10.1.2. Annual Governance Statement**

The Annual Governance Statement was presented for approval to the Governance and Audit Committee in [July](#). Accompanying the document were the Local Code of Governance and the Governance Framework. The document seeks to provide assurance of sound governance processes and presents the highest priority issues being managed by us as a council. Although the report presented no significant governance issues, concerns were raised around resource difficulties and the well-being of staff. The statement identified the following self-assessed improvement actions:

1. Review Outcome 9 of the Corporate Plan to build short, medium, and longer-term resilience.
2. Further develop medium term financial planning, in particular to identify actions to build financial resilience.
3. Review the approach to procurement to increase capacity and improve coordination of procurement activities.

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

These actions will be taken forward in the upcoming review of the Corporate Plan.

### **10.1.3. Democratic Arrangements**

The elected Council began its year in [May](#) with the election of its Chair and Vice-Chair, with councillors Susan Shotter and Sharon Doleman being respectively elected to the roles. Appointments were made to key committees; and agreement reached on the remuneration to be paid to committee chairs and co-opted members, following the advice of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales. Two parent governors covering secondary and special school sectors were appointed for a three-year term to the Education and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with further expressions of interest to be sought from the primary school sector to fill vacant positions. Council also agreed the timetable of committee meetings for the year, subject to meetings being re-arranged during the pre-election period in June and early July. Following consultation with members, [Council](#) in July adopted new role descriptions for the Chair and members of the Standards Committee, and for Group Leaders. Further appointments were made in [August](#) to the Standards Committee; and finally in September the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) appointed members to the Corporate Joint Committee's Governance and Audit Committee.

Changes made to the Scheme of Delegation for Officers were shared also with Council in July. Changes made were minor, and included typographical errors, inconsistencies, and consequential changes as a result of the implementation of decisions, such as those made by the Senior Employment Committee when appointing to senior posts.

At a meeting of [Cabinet](#) in April, the Leader welcomed Cllr Emily Owen, Cabinet Member for Housing and Regulatory and Deputy Leader, back from maternity and provided clarity on portfolio responsibilities within the Cabinet. Cllr Owen will retain the brief for Housing and Homelessness, whilst taking on responsibility for new ways of working across the council. The Cabinet Member for Audit, Policy and Performance will retain interim responsibility for the Replacement Local Development Plan; the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and the Environment will retain interim responsibility for Regulatory Services; and the Cabinet Member for Culture, Governance and IT will take responsibility for Legal and Democratic Services.

## 10.2. Financial Planning

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Financial planning relates to the management of our income and expenditure.

### 10.2.1 Statement of Accounts 2023 to 2024

Every council has a statutory duty to produce a statement of accounts that complies with approved accounting standards. The annual Statement of Accounts reports on our position at the end of the financial year and the transactions during that year. The final Statement of Accounts for 2022 to 2023 was approved by [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in May. The draft Statement of Accounts for 2023 to 24 was reported to the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in September, subject to external audit challenge. The latest report notes that our usable reserves increased by £8.4m to £57.7m, mainly due to increases in capital related reserves that offset the decrease in earmarked revenue reserves. Our fund balance decreased by £1.396m to £2.772m as it absorbed the year end overspend. Steps are being taken during the current financial year to centralise a number of the service reserves and increase our fund balance to provide greater resilience. School balances reduced by £3.2m to just over £7m during the year. Council Tax collection remained strong with in-year collection of 97.14%, the fourth highest collection rate in Wales. Any changes required to the report by the auditors will be reported to members before formal approval takes place.

### 10.2.2. Financial Update

The [Governance and Audit Committee](#) were presented with a financial update in July to inform them of the challenges faced and the work being undertaken to respond to these. [Cabinet](#) also received in August reports on our financial outturn for 2023 to 2024 (as reported previously), and a revenue budget monitoring report for quarter 1. These were also shared with the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#). The monitoring report indicates that we are already facing significant in-year budgetary pressures with uncertainty about future funding, increasing service demand, future pay awards, and ongoing inflationary pressures remaining significant risks for us. Our services are aware of the need to manage the budget position and robust spending controls have been put in place during this period. We still project a budget shortfall of around £32m over the period 2025 to 2026 and 2026 to 2027.

### 10.2.3 Treasury Management Outturn and Actual Prudential Indicators

At its meeting in July 2024, the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) were presented with the Treasury Management Outturn and Actual Prudential Indicators for 2023 to 2024. The report noted that borrowing had decreased by £2.6 million (from £205.9 million to £203.3 million) during 2023 to 2024; and for investments, there was also a decrease of £4.6 million (from £32.2 million to £27.6 million).

At a later meeting in September 2024, the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) were presented with a report including our activities of treasury management during the first three months of 2024 to 2025. It was reported that external borrowing had decreased by £24.2 million (from £203.3 million to £179.1 million) during the period April to June 2024, and there was a decrease in investments of £16.0 million (from £27.6 million to £11.6 million) during the same period. Reports will continue to be monitored by our members quarterly.

### 10.2.4 Capital Programme

In August, the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) and [Cabinet](#) received reports providing the outturn position for the 2023 to 2024 Capital Programme (£43.176m, which includes advance spending of £193k relating to 2024 to 2025 budgeted capital schemes), and revisions to the 2024 to 2025 programme. It was agreed to carry forward the outstanding capital budget of £81.958m into the 2024 to 2025 programme, and adjustments were made as appropriate, largely to accommodate additional grant funding. Approval was granted for a net addition of £4.085million to the overall capital programme, increasing the total to £101.643m. Additionally it was agreed to review the carried-forward schemes from 2023 to 2024, with an emphasis on those involving borrowing.

## 10.3. Performance Management

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Performance management means the structures and processes we have in place to ensure that we deliver what we said we would, whilst encouraging active involvement and challenge from across the organisation and from our residents.

### **10.3.1. Corporate Plan Monitoring**

We have presented a number of reports throughout the year on Corporate Plan progress. Proposals for Corporate Plan performance measures and targets was presented to the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#), [Cabinet](#) and [Council](#) in July, and the annual Performance Self-Assessment report was presented to the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in September. The Self-Assessment identified six improvement actions, updates on which have been included within the appropriate headings within this report.

This present performance report, covering April to September, is the first of three documents that will make-up our annual self-assessment of performance against our functions for 2024 to 2025. The second document will cover October to March, and the third will provide an executive summary against our performance objectives and governance areas. This supports our approach to an 'ongoing' self-assessment, as encouraged under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. We have within this report started to capture in-year regulatory activity and progress to provide assurance around management and monitoring of audit recommendations. We have also started to bring our reporting timetable forward so that these reports are more timely.

### **10.3.2. Improvement Activity: User Perspectives**

Our Self-Assessment for 2023 to 2024 identified an improvement activity to strengthen our processes to gain and consider user perspectives about our performance against our functions. The Performance and Improvement Team are considering options to progress this, which include the possibility of adopting the National Residents' Survey hosted by Data Cymru or to create our own bespoke survey, focussed on our specific needs and legislative requirements. We are in the process of weighing options against the capacity we have available.

### **10.3.3. Improvement Activity: Corporate Plan Benchmarking**

This activity is interdependent with our activity to refocus the 2022 to 2027 Corporate Plan. Having secured a broad consensus from the Senior Management Team and Cabinet on the direction of the revised Corporate Plan for 2025 to 2027, the Performance and Improvement Team will look to revise the Performance Management Framework that sits beneath the plan, utilising any suitable benchmark data from nationally published sources, including Data Cymru's new Local Authority Performance Profile tool.

#### **10.3.4. Improvement Activity: Service Performance Reviews**

Service Performance Reviews play a vital role within our Performance Management Framework and are a well-established process for reviewing service level performance. It is, however, timely that we consider the format of the reviews and seek to tighten their focus on performance issues and challenges. A paper will be taken to the Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet in the Spring with proposals for the revised Service Performance Reviews.

#### **10.3.5. Improvement Activity: Performance Management Framework**

This activity is interdependent on a number of the activity described above, namely revisions to the Corporate Plan and its performance framework, our work on benchmarking and user perspectives information, and our proposals for the Service Performance Review process. The hope is that we will be in a position to update our overarching Performance Management Framework by early summer 2025.

#### **10.3.6. Director of Social Services Annual Report, 2022 to 2023**

The Director of Social Services presented her Annual Report for 2023 to 2024 to the [Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) and [Cabinet](#) in July. The report demonstrated how Social Care had promoted well-being and accounted for the delivery of well-being standards, and provided information on areas of new development, together with an evaluation how well we are achieving Social Care duties. The report warns of challenging times ahead in terms of finance. Having the largest services and number of employees, Social Care has a significant contribution to make help secure our overall financial stability. There is significant oversight of our large spend areas and plans are in place to help manage increasing costs in some areas. The final report may be read on [our website](#).

#### **10.3.7. Regulatory Activity Updates**

Updates on our progress against external regulatory recommendations were presented to the [Governance and Audit Committee](#) in May, giving assurance that agreed actions were being monitored, progressed and reported adequately. In September, [the Governance and Audit Committee](#) reviewed Audit Wales's outline audit plan for 2024 to 2025.

### **10.3.8. Internal Audit**

In May, the Head of Internal Audit presented the team's Annual Report to [the Governance and Audit Committee](#). Internal Audit gave 28 audit opinions during the year, with 16 being of High Assurance, eight Satisfactory, and four of limited Assurance. No reports returned with a No Assurance rating. A further progress reports was presented to the committee in [July](#), where it was noted there has been an increase in limited assurance reports as high-risk areas has been targeted through the assurance map. Internal Audit also presented their Charter and Annual Plan for 2024 to 2025 at the same meeting.

### **10.3.9. HM Inspectorate of Probation: Youth Justice Service**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation conducted a joint inspection of the Conwy and Denbighshire Youth Justice Service in January 2024 and published its report in May. This was considered by the [Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) at its meeting in July. The report highlighted three areas of good performance, seven areas in need of improvement, and two areas as inadequate (governance and leadership; and partnerships and services). Seven recommendations were made in all, four of which related to the local authorities. It was noted that the inspection had come at the most difficult time for the service, when there had been significant changes and challenges. Despite this, the inspectors found a strong and knowledgeable leadership team in place who had been instrumental in working with staff to provide a service to children and young people whilst experiencing considerable staff shortages and significant strategic challenges. The inspectors also highlighted positive examples of work being delivered with children. An improvement plan has been agreed that particularly focusses on strengthening the Youth Justice Management Board Governance, Leadership, and partnership working arrangements. The improvement plan was approved by [Cabinet](#) in July, where it was also agreed that we as a council should play a greater role in holding Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board accountable for the services it provides to children accessing the Youth Justice Service.

### **10.3.10. Committee Annual Reports**

The Annual Report of the Governance and Audit Committee was considered by committee members in [May](#) and presented to Council in [July](#). The committee is now well established and there have undoubtedly been improvements to the reporting of risks and issues, treasury matters, and the presentation of the annual accounts. However, the Committee

still lacks oversight of areas such as the Corporate Plan, financial strategy, and budgets. Plans are now established to remedy this in the coming year. There is also still a way to go in enhancing professional working relationships and introducing more regular engagements with officers and Cabinet members. There is now more clarity around the respective roles of Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee, but engagement needs to be further improved to ensure the committees complement one another in their work programmes and to further enhance overall governance.

Also in July, [Council](#) received the second annual report of the Standards Committee, which provided some background to the work of the committee during 2023 to 2024. It was noted that the committee has continued with its programme for independent member visits to town and community council meetings; dealt with several applications for dispensation and reviewed updated members' registers of interests and declarations of gifts and hospitality; considered complaints lodged with the Ombudsman; and met with Group Leaders to discuss their compliance with their duties.

### **10.3.11. Complaints and Compliments**

At its meeting in July, [the Governance and Audit Committee](#) reviewed the combined annual report on Corporate and Social Services Complaints. This was the second report that brought together Corporate Complaints and Compliments and the Social Services Representations, Complaints and Compliments reports. The report also presented a summary of work undertaken by the Information Governance Unit during 2023 to 2024.

321 compliments were received during the year (down from 346). 189 compliments were received within Social Services (up from 151).

363 corporate complaints were received during 2022 to 2023 (up from 346). 135 were upheld (up from 98), 204 not upheld (down from 223), 17 were discontinued (up from 15), and six determined investigations were not merited (down from 7). 68% of Stage 1 complaints were dealt with in 10 working days (up from 64%), and 41% of Stage 2 complaints were dealt with in 20 working days (down from 47%).

In terms of Social Services there were 15 formal complaints (down from 22), with 14 of these being resolved at Stage 1, and 1 at Stage 2. 79% of Stage 1 complaints were resolved. There was only 1 Stage 2 Independent Investigation undertaken within the reporting year, which was not completed within the 25-working day timescale. 14

complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman (up from 5), but all but one were either not investigated further, were deemed premature, or fell out of the remit of the Ombudsman.

During 2023 to 2024 we had 108 data incidents, one of which was considered reportable to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), but no further action was taken against us. We received 1,097 requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations. 49% were responded to within timescale, it being highlighted that resource capacity within the Information Governance Unit is a significant issue. The ICO intervened and responded to 5 cases, upholding one complaint as we had failed to respond within timescale.

The most significant lessons resulting from complaints during 2023 to 2024 include the importance of recognising any dissatisfaction; that all communications and procedures are clear and understood by officers; and the need to ensure that all complaint information is captured, and any agreed actions are followed up. Additionally, following a maladministration complaint investigated by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, a reminder and instruction sheet outlining the process in responding to a complaint has been sent out to all managers. The combined complaints and information governance report was approved by [Cabinet](#) at its meeting in August.

In September, [the Governance and Audit Committee](#) considered the Annual Letter of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. The letter notes that the Ombudsman had received 36 complaints about Conwy County Borough Council during 2023 to 2024, and closed 37 (some complaints being carried over from the previous year). One recommendation is noted as outstanding.

### **10.3.12. Panel Performance Assessment**

Papers outlining arrangements for the Panel Performance Assessment will come before the Governance and Audit Committee for consideration in November, followed by the Democratic Services Committee and Council in January. Work will then begin on our scoping document for the assessment, receiving both officer and member input. The scope and appointment of panellists will be agreed in July, with the assessment itself taking place in September.

### 10.3.13. Audit Wales: Use of Performance Information

Audit Wales undertook local review of how we make use of service user perspective information within our reports. The review took place during 2023, and the conclusion was that senior leaders are provided with information that helps them understand how well most services and policies are meeting the needs of service users, but information on the outcomes of its activities is limited, restricting their ability to manage performance effectively. Three recommendations arose from the review:

1. **Information on the perspective of the service user:** We should ensure that the information provided to our senior leaders enable them to understand the service user perspective on a broader range of services and policies. This should include strengthening our arrangements to assure ourselves that this information is drawn from the diversity of service users.
2. **Outcomes information:** We should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether we are delivering our objectives and intended outcomes.
3. **Data accuracy:** We should ensure that our data quality assurance arrangements cover service user perspective and outcomes information so that we can assure ourselves that this information is accurate.

An action plan was developed to respond to the recommendations and was reported to [the Governance Audit Committee](#) in July. The action plan is currently being implemented.

## 10.4. Risk Management

Risk management refers to our planned approach to identify, assess, control and monitor risks and opportunities facing us as a council. Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance.

### 10.4.1. Corporate Risk and Issues Registers

The Corporate Risk and Issues Registers are currently being updated and will be reported to Cabinet in November 2024. The last review took place between November 2023 and January 2024, and was reported to the Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee in [April 2024](#). A summary of amendments to the register will be provided within our next report.

#### **10.4.2. Improvement Activity: Risk Management Framework**

We have a mature and robust risk management approach as a council, but recognise that it is important to take a step back and review the usefulness of the information we capture. The Strategy, Performance and Engagement Manager will observe the autumn review of risk to gain a better understanding of how our present process works, and will in the New Year take forward discussions with officers and members on our approach to Corporate Risks and Issues.

#### **10.4.3. Committee Roles and Responsibilities**

The introduction of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 resulted in the requirement of our Governance and Audit Committee to take on additional responsibilities. A review took place to ensure there was no duplication of roles and to clarify responsibilities. A report was presented to the Democratic Services Committee, and subsequently approved by [Council](#) in May 2024. The report confirmed that risk management would be reported exclusively to the Governance and Audit Committee before being presented to Cabinet. Additionally, external regulatory reports would be reviewed by the relevant scrutiny committee, with Governance and Audit Committee monitoring the progress of actions made on the recommendations included within the reports. These changes reassured members that report duplication would be minimised.

### **10.5. Workforce Planning**

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Workforce planning means the process by which we analyse, forecast and plan workforce supply and demand, and assess gaps to ensure that we have the people and skills, now and in the future, to deliver our services and fulfil our strategic objectives.

#### **10.5.1. Social Work Recruitment**

As well as direct recruitment to social work posts we have in a place a successful 'grow our own' pathway for our employees. In September 2024, we launched our Graduate Trainee Social Work positions. These are two full time posts on 2 year fixed-term contracts, and the two individuals appointed to the positions will complete the Master of Arts (MA) in Social Work at Bangor University. Throughout the two years the individuals will be supported by the workforce service to be based within social work teams, and supervised by a social work Team Manager.

### **10.5.2. Occupational Therapist (OT) Recruitment**

We have been working jointly with BCUHB, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), and Wrexham University to address long standing recruitment of OT's into social care. As a result of this joint work, HEIW have recognised the need to increase funding for degree places at Wrexham University and for the additional places to be ringed fenced for local authority traineeships. We are currently recruiting to our Conwy OT Traineeship position.

### **10.5.3. Children Residential Pathway**

Recognising our expansion of our children residential provision requires a flexible workforce that is suitability trained. We have developed a progression pathway for children's residential workers. The pathway offers an entry level point (level 1) for those with limited experience of working in social care. Working jointly with Coleg Llandrillo, we have developed a programme for level 1 workers where they will attend college for six months to gain the core component of the required qualification and undertake workforce registration. Completion of this part of the pathway will lead to automatic progression to level 2 of the pathway.

### **10.5.4. Workforce Planning Template and Guide**

A workforce template and guidance document has been drafted and all Heads of Service have been issued with a report from iTrent to enable each service to understand their staff roles, ages, and critical posts.

### **10.5.5. People and Performance Programme**

The [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in May received an end of programme report for the People and Performance Programme. The programme began in April 2023 and saw the merger of modernisation projects and tasks relating to Human Resources and Health and Safety processes. The programme has successfully delivered its objective and [Cabinet](#) supported the end of programme report at its meeting that same month. Progress on the People Strategy will be presented to Democracy in the New Year.

### **10.5.6. Corporate Grievance Policy Revision**

In May, the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) considered a revision of our Corporate Grievance Policy. The policy (last updated in 2017) was

reviewed in consultation with Trade Unions and the Senior Management Team to ensure it is still fit for purpose and in line with ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) guidance. In scrutinising the report, the committee raised a number of points and voted to support an amended recommendation that elected members and Trade Union representatives be reinstated as part of stage 2 grievance appeal panels. We are an outlier in terms of stage 2 grievance appeals having elected member and Trade Union panel representation in comparison to other Local Authorities. However, [Cabinet](#) approved the recommendation and this will be reviewed when the Corporate Grievance Policy is revised again.

#### **10.5.7. Managed service provision for agency and temporary workers**

In August, the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) received an update on progress with the implementation and embedding of the Managed Service Provision (MSP) for Agency and Temporary Workers. The MSP launched in December 2023 and the report highlighted a wide variety of roles, services delivered and fluctuating needs. Members were informed that approximately 90% of services were now registered to use the provision and that work was also underway with some services to accommodate more specialist, niche, or exempt vacancies. The report also stated that the introduction of the MSP has provided greater control, consistency, compliance, and oversight of agency workers, including value for money and a reduction in administration and resource requirements.

#### **10.5.8. Social Work and its Sustainability**

In September, the [Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) and [Cabinet](#) received a report setting out an overview of the workforce profile within Social Work in Conwy, specifically including recommendations to ensure future resilience. The report acknowledged that recruitment and retention was a national challenge within social care and provided a snapshot of sickness absence, vacancy rates and turnover. It also gave an overview of workload and performance / demand information as related factors to recruitment, retention, and resilience. Cabinet supported the exploration of wider partnering arrangements with other Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) settings, and the development of sufficient data to inform a 5-year plan. The evaluation of the success of the 'grow our own' programme was also supported, along with permission to explore additional resources recruit above our establishment to ensure resilience.

### **10.5.9. Social Partnership**

A new Social Partnership Duty came into force in April, required under the Social Partnership and Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. Local authorities must ensure that Trade Unions or other representatives of the staff of public bodies are fully and properly involved when a public body sets its Well-being Objectives, or when making strategic decisions about the reasonable steps the body is taking to meet those objectives. This new legislation has provided us with an opportunity to formalise the already good work and practice that we have in this area. Within Conwy there is already a strong working relationship between officers and recognised Trade Unions through:

- Quarterly meetings of the Corporate Joint Consultative Committees
- 6 weekly HR meetings with Trade Unions
- 6 weekly Education meetings with Trade Unions
- 6 weekly Environment, Roads and Facilities meetings with Trade Unions
- Attendance at twice yearly Joint Council for Wales meetings
- Joint working on Job Evaluation Panels
- Liaison and informal negotiation regarding conduct matters
- Formal discussions and support for staff regarding formal conduct matters

It is our intention in the autumn to share with the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee our latest annual Performance Self-Assessment report, covering 2023 to 2024; and this present report will be shared with the group in February prior to Cabinet approval. We will also be sharing with the committee for their input our proposed revisions to the Corporate Plan.

### **10.5.10. Audit Wales Report – Springing Forward**

The Audit Wales report entitled 'Springing Forward' acknowledged that we had a clear Asset Management Plan in place and a vision for our future workforce. It made the following recommendations for improvement:

1. That we develop a long-term approach to our assets and workforce, which is integrated with other key plans and supported by costed delivery plans; and
2. Further develops the use of benchmarking to inform planning, budget setting and to measure the longer-term success of its asset and workforce initiatives.

The management response to these and action plan have previously been shared with the Governance and Audit Committee, and work to address both recommendations remain ongoing. Progress made on these recommendations will be reported to Governance and Audit Committee in November 2025 and subsequently shared within this performance report in future.

## **10.6. Asset Management**

Below are updates on the governance of our assets. The term assets refers to the management of our estate portfolio (including office buildings and highway infrastructure owned or controlled by us) and digital assets.

### **10.6.1. Property Portfolio**

During this period, we have continued to proactively manage key assets in our portfolio, making difficult decisions to dispose, lease, or even purchase property. In July, [Cabinet](#) approved the freehold disposal of Llanfairfechan Community Hall to the Llanfairfechan Community Hall Committee for an agreed amount. In [August](#) the freehold disposal of The Heath, also at Llanfairfechan, was agreed; as was the disposal on the open market of Plas Newydd farm, Llanfairtalhaiarn. Plot 5, South Branwen, Tir Llwyd, Kinmel Bay was granted a long lease by Cabinet in [April](#); and in [September](#) the purchase of and (subject to acquisition) subsequent granting of a 10 year lease was agreed for Llanrwst Police Station.

Following the relocation of the Abergele Youth Club to the Canolfan Dinorben Family Centre, the former Abergele Youth Centre was closed at the end of September 2023 and we have since been working to secure a future for this Grade II listed building. In April, following consideration by the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#), [Cabinet](#) agreed that a medium-term lease be granted to the Abergele Conservation Trust at nil rent, on the condition that grant money be secured by the trust within 18 months.

In September, [Cabinet](#) considered options for the disposal of the Ysgol Llannefydd site and approved its transfer to a community group, subject to a funding agreement and appropriate business case being submitted within the next six months. In the event that the group is unable to take on the asset, the site will be offered on the open market.

### 10.6.2. Mochdre Commerce Park

An update on Mochdre Commerce Park was provided to councillors at a meeting of the [Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) in September. Our lease of the property is the subject of ongoing litigation and we are receiving professional advice. Further updates will be provided to the committee in May, 2025.

### 10.6.3. Audit Wales: Digital Strategy Review

Audit Wales undertook a local review of our Digital Strategy during 2023 and concluded that we have set out our ambition for the use of digital technology, but it is not fully costed and there are weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Two recommendations arose from the review:

1. **Engagement with residents:** To help ensure that our strategic approach to digital takes into account the needs of all its communities, we should assure ourselves that our engagement activity involves the full diversity of those affected in helping to shape our strategic approach to digital.
2. **Review funding arrangements:** To help ensure that our strategic approach to digital is aligned to available resources and to help enable us to take a long-term view of its costs and benefits, we should identify the full resources required to deliver our digital strategy.

An action plan was developed to respond to the recommendations and was reported to the [Governance Audit Committee](#) in July, and is currently being implemented.

## 10.7. Procurement

Below are improvement actions that have been identified in support of this area of governance. Procurement is the process by which councils meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money and good outcomes for society, culture, and the economy, whilst contributing to decarbonisation and nature's recovery.

### **10.7.1. Procurement Legislation**

The procurement landscape in Wales has changed following the introduction of [three areas of legislation](#) that will affect the way public procurement is undertaken in Wales. These are:

- The Procurement Act 2023
- The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023
- The Health Service Procurement (Wales) Act 2024

These pieces of legislation require those involved in public sector procurement to do things quite differently. A great deal of work has gone into preparing for implementation and upcoming changes will drive behavioural and cultural transformation across all our services to improve the way contracts for works, goods and services are procured. This change will be a challenge, owing to insufficient capacity, and has been identified as a corporate risk. We are working on ways to reduce the risk, and the progress we have made will be reported to Cabinet in November.

### **10.7.2. HR / Payroll System Contract Renewal**

[Cabinet](#) in May approved the contract renewal for the HR / Payroll system. It was agreed that the contract be directly awarded to the preferred supplier for a contract period of five years.

### **10.7.3 Connecting Care**

At its meeting in August, [Council](#) received an update on the Connecting Care Programme, and were asked to approve a budget of £1.2m (through a mixture of revenue and capital funding) to allow us to participate in a national procurement exercise for a connecting care system. This sum may not be necessary in part or in full should the Welsh Government provide funding, and subject to the successful contractor.

## **11. Improvement Actions**

Throughout the above chapters in this report we have provided a narrative on improvement actions that we are working on. We will continue to work on these over the months and years ahead to address the complex challenges that we are facing. Where work is ongoing, we will continue to report on our progress in those areas through future

editions of this report; as well as through our Corporate Risk and Issues reporting, which captures the most significant areas of pressure for us and records the actions we are taking.

There have been no additional improvement actions identified though the production of this report. Updates on previously identified improvement actions have been included within this report above, and we will also continue to include any in-year identified actions from Service Performance Reviews and external regulatory work.

## **12. Close**

Having completed a thorough self-assessment of our performance and democratic decisions, we can conclude that the Council continues to exercise its functions effectively; is using resources economically, efficiently, and effectively; and has good effective for securing good performance. We hope that this report demonstrates that, during this six-month period, we have continued to deliver on our objectives and key functions during what remains difficult financial circumstances. In closing this report, we must gratefully acknowledge and thank staff for their continuing commitment and hard work in striving to deliver excellent quality services for our communities.