

Annual Governance Statement **Enclosure 2**



2024 - 2025

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



What is the purpose of this document?

This document details our assessment against the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements and identifies the areas of best practise and areas for further improvement. The document explains:

- What is the Annual Governance Statement (AGS)?
- Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Council's Governance arrangements
- Key principles of the Corporate Governance arrangements and our statement:
 - **Principle A** - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law
 - **Principle B** - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
 - **Principle C** - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
 - **Principle D** - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
 - **Principle E** - Developing our organisations capacity, including the capability of our leadership and the individuals within it
 - **Principle F** - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
 - **Principle G** - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability
- How have we addressed the governance and strategic issues from 2023/24 AGS
- What are the governance issues identified during 2024/25
- What are the strategic issues identified during 2024/25
- Certification of the Annual Governance Statement

What is the Annual Governance Statement?

The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2018 require us to prepare a statement on internal control. Like many authorities in Wales, this is referred to as the 'Annual Governance Statement'. This is a public document that reports on the extent to which we as the Council comply with our own code of governance.

In this document, we, the Council:

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

The Annual Governance Statement reports on the governance arrangements that has been in place at Flintshire County Council during the financial year 2024/25 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

Independent Assurance

Audit Wales Annual Audit Summary

The Annual Audit Summary sets out the audit and regulatory work completed by Audit Wales of Flintshire County Council since the last annual report which will be published in June 2025. Overall, the Auditor General for Wales has reached a positive conclusion. Auditor General give an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council's financial statements on 28th November 2024 before the deadline agreed with Welsh Governance of 30th November 2024. The report confirms:

- The Council's Annual Governance Statement and Narrative Report were prepared in line with the CIPFA Code and relevant guidance. They were also consistent with the financial statements and our knowledge of the Council
- The Auditor General issued the certificate confirming that the audit of accounts for 2023-24 has been completed

Internal Audit Annual Opinion

"For the year ending 31 March 2025, based on the work of the Internal Audit Service and its External Regulators it is my opinion that Flintshire County Council has, overall, an adequate and effective framework of governance, risk management and internal control."

Governance and Audit Committee

The Governance and Audit Committees is a key component of an authority's governance arrangements. They provide independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of Council's governance, risk, and control arrangements. In accordance with CIPFA's best practice, there is a requirement for the Governance and Audit Committee to be held to account by the Council for the work they undertake. To support this the Governance and Audit Committee presented its Annual Report to Council in January 2025 where it confirmed the Committee had fulfilled its duties in accordance with their Terms of Reference, separately assessed their effectiveness as a Committee and established an action plan to support the Committee, its new members and continuous improvement.

Chief Finance Officer Statement on Compliance with the Financial Management Code

The CIPFA Financial Management Code (CIPFA FM Code) sets out the principles by which authorities should be guided in managing their finances. It has been developed to support good practice in financial management and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. The CIPFA FM Code sets out the specific standards that authorities should, as a minimum seek to achieve.

The Code is based on a series of principles including the CIPFA Statement of Principles of Good Financial Management. These principles are the benchmarks for authorities to measure the effectiveness of their financial management and sustainability to enable authorities to:

- financially manage the short, medium- and long-term finances of a local authority;
- manage financial resilience to meet foreseen demands on services; and
- financially manage unexpected shocks in their financial circumstances.

The specific principles within the code include the elements of Organisational Leadership, Accountability, Transparency, Professional Standards, Assurance, and Sustainability.

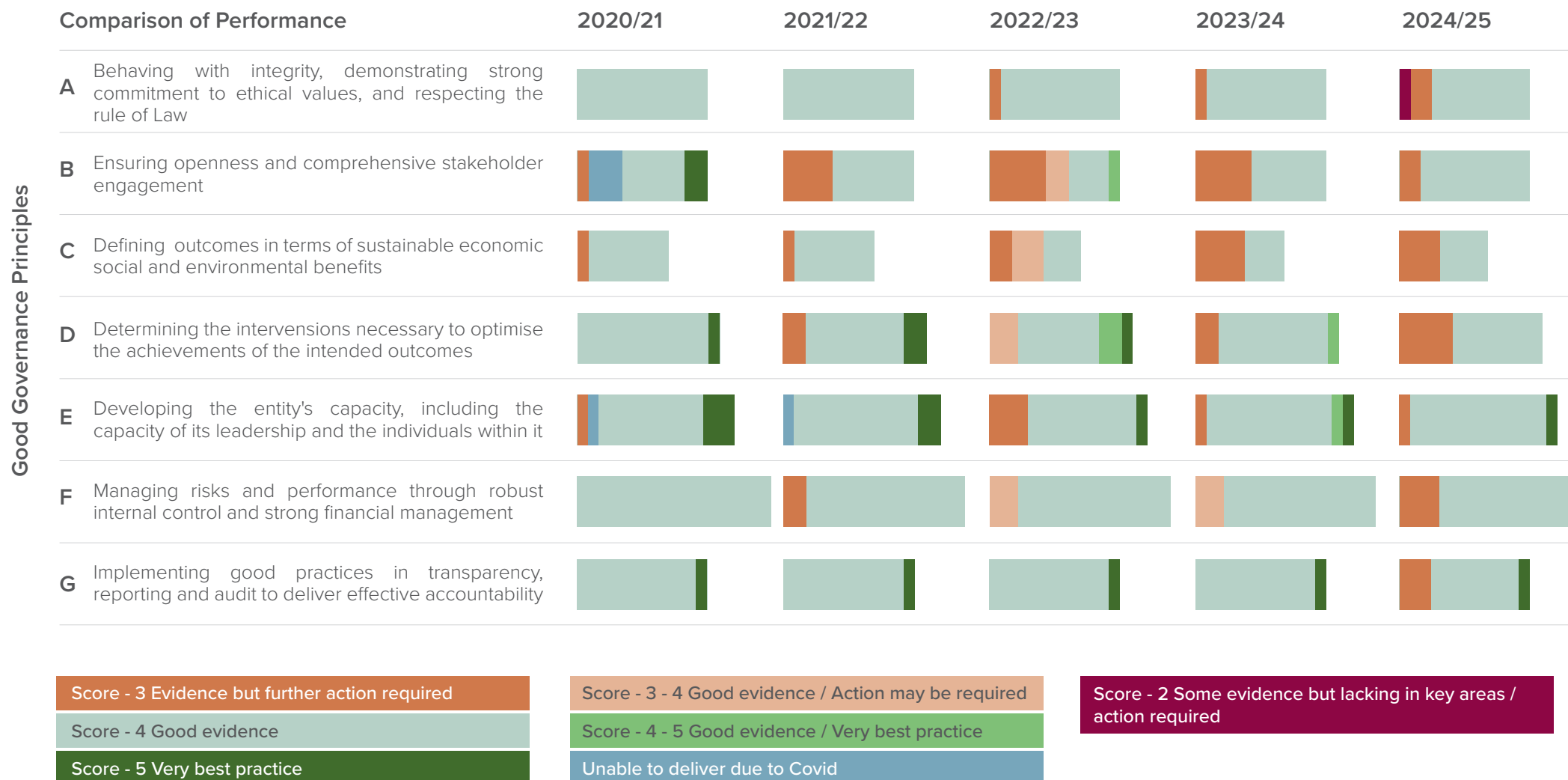
Each local authority must demonstrate that the requirements of the Code are being satisfied. As Section 151 Officer I have the Statutory Responsibility (supported by the Chief Officer Team and Elected Members) for ensuring compliance with the CIPFA FM Code.

As part of the annual review of the Annual Governance Statement I have reviewed our previous assessment of Flintshire's compliance with the CIPFA FM Code and I can confirm that in my opinion Flintshire is still compliant with the code in the majority of areas.

However, the assessment recognises that, due to the continuing financial challenges for all local authorities, the following areas will require continual review and improvement:

- The absence of any indicative Welsh Government funding settlement for 2026/27 and beyond presents significant challenges and uncertainty and requires a prudent approach whilst urgently prioritising our budget planning requirements.
- As part of the above update the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and begin considerations earlier on options for ensuring a sustainable budget including developing the opportunities identified within the Strategic Transformation Programme.
- Ensure compliance with the process for increased engagement for services in contributing to and signing off method statements for both pressures and cost reductions.
- To review and develop a future approach to budget consultation as part of Stakeholder Engagement.

Comparison of the effectiveness of the Council's Governance Arrangements



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

Areas of Very Best Practice (Score of 5):

- **(E52)** Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved
- **(G92)** Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations

Further Action Required (Score of 2 and 3):

- **(A1, A2, A10)** Ensure members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the Organisation. Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific values for the organisation and its staff and able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements
- **(B23, B26)** Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of citizens, service users and organisations and taking account of the interest of future generations of taxpayers and service users
- **(C28, C31, C32, C33)** Delivering defined outcomes on a **sustainable** basis within the resources that will be available and considering and balancing the combined economic, social, and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision. Principle C further actions required have linkage with actions identified within Principle B
- **(D40, D43, D44, D45, D46, D47)** Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks. Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly. Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term
- **(E61)** Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options to determine how the authority's resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently
- **(F69, F70, F80, F81)** Implementing robust and integrated performance management, data management and risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively. Aligning the Information and Data Management Strategy, Risk Management Framework on internal control with achieving the Council's objectives
- **(G83, G84, G89)** Implementing good practices in transparency and good practices in reporting

The Main Themes identified for Improvement for 2024/25

The Council is facing ever more challenges as an organisation due to the continued low level of funding received and the increasing challenges it faces with workforce resilience. The recruitment market is competitive, and the Council is no longer able to compete resulting in many vacancies and the loss of key staff. This combined with increasing aging population and the demand for services is proving challenging not only whether the same level of services can be delivered but how improvements to service delivery can be made.

Taking this into context the Corporate Governance Working Group during 2024/25 reviewed the Council's position against the 7 Good Governance Principles and the 94 Sub Principle. In March 2025 a workshop was undertaken with members from the Governance and Audit Committee, Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny, and Cabinet to review the Annual Governance Statement scoring in relation to the Good Governance Principles. Furthermore, an Annual Governance Questionnaire was provided to Cabinet, Chairs and Vice Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Standard Committee, with the aim of the questionnaire being to determine if Members agreed with the themes that had been identified as areas for improvement.

The seven themes identified for improvement are:

- **Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, respecting the rule of law and improve training opportunities**
 - Lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated. Understanding of roles and responsibilities
 - Values are delivered in accordance with the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)
 - Enhanced decision making and challenge process through focused training, facilitated sessions available to Members and Senior Officers
- **Embedding the use of Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) and engaging with citizens**
 - The Council assessing the impact of their decisions and policies on equality groups, the environment, the economy, and other areas of interest prior to policy / strategy changes
 - Further encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including future needs
 - Managing expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available
- **Sustainability of Resources and Resilience of Workforce**
 - Effectively managing service expectations with the resources available with all stakeholders especially
 - Developing and retaining the workforce capacity, recruitment and retention following a pay modelling review
 - Increase the use of the Welsh language within the workforce and members
 - Embedding the ethics and values within the organisational and working culture
- **Embedding of Risk Management across Partnership**
 - Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks

- **Developing a data and performance culture across the Council**

- Using data and performance information to manage and review (and improve) service quality and provide quality assurance
- Encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the authority's performance

- **Review of the Committee reports**

- Ensuring they are in an understandable style, easy to access and interrogate for members of the public and other stakeholders
- Providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny whilst not being too onerous and easy for users to understand
- Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks

- **Undertake medium and long term financial planning**

- Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently whether there are potential conflicts between the authority's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints
- Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan
- Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances off service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints
- Ensuring the authority's financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance

Outcome of the questionnaires completed by Members:

Members agreed with the five themes identified for improvement, stating that;

- Making improvements within these themes will lead to enhanced decision making and shape service improvements
- Develop and retain the workforce capacity is at the crux of service delivery
- Increasing the use of Integrated Impact Assessments being completed and engagement with citizens will ensure that Flintshire County Council assesses the impact of any decision made
- All Members agreed that the Welsh language is of great importance and that there needs to be an increase in the use of the language within the workforce
- Embedding of Risk Management across Partnership will enable the Council to identify future risks and also opportunities
- Developing a data and performance culture across the Council will enable review (and improvements) of service quality
- Amending the Committee reports will ensure that the context remains captured but it is easy for all to understand
- Undertaking medium and long term financial planning was identified as a key aspect for service improvement and risk assessing

Key Principles of the Corporate Governance Arrangements

We aim to achieve a good standard of governance by adhering to the seven key principles of the CIPFA/Solace 2016 – Guidance Notes for Welsh Authorities, which form the basis of the Local Code of Corporate Governance. In the following section we have defined how we achieve the standard against the seven key principles which are:

- Principle A** Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
- Principle B** Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Principle C** Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
- Principle D** Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- Principle E** Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
- Principle F** Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- Principle G** Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Principle A Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
Behaving with Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour and expectations of Members and Officers are set out in our Codes of Conduct, Constitution, and a suite of policies and procedures • Codes of Conduct for Members and Officers specify the requirements around declarations of interests formally and at the beginning of meetings, gifts and hospitality etc • We take fraud seriously. Key policies are in place to prevent, minimise and manage such occurrences • Compliance with policies and protocols e.g., Contract Procedure Rules • Enhanced profile of Internal Audit
Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A set of leadership competencies are deployed in each Portfolio and led by each Chief Officer • Our recruitment policy, training and competencies based appraisal processes underpin personal behaviours with ethical values • Robust policies and procedures are in place, subject to formal approval prior to adoption by formal committees • All contracts and external service providers, including partnerships are engaged through the robust procurement process and follow the Contract Procedure rules regulations • Application of the corporate operating model; working internally to promote high standards of professional performance and ethical behaviour to achieve organisational priorities and objectives
Respecting the rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We ensure that our Members and Officers fulfil legislative and regulatory • We ensure that the full use of the Council powers are optimised by regular challenge and keeping abreast of new legislation to achieve corporate priorities have an Effective Anti-Fraud and Corruption framework • Our Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring the Council complies with the law and avoids maladministration. Our Constitution and Democratic Services Committee promotes high standards of conduct which are monitored by the Standards Committee

Areas of Good Evidence 2024/25 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2024/25 (Score of 2 and 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open decision making on the basis of evidence and the sub principles within Principle A is at the heart of the standard form of reporting that is made to the Council, Cabinet and committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (A1) Ensure members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the Organisation• (A2) Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)• (A10) Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements

Principle B Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committed to having an open culture, demonstrated through accessible website, policies and procedures and open environment meetings The most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action are determined using formal and informal consultation and engagement Consultation principles Formal and informal engagement models with employees and communities e.g. alternative delivery models Member workshops County Forum (Town and Community Councils) Positive engagement with Trade Unions both formally and informally
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We engage effectively with stakeholders to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective application and delivery of communication strategies to support delivery Targeting communications and effective use of Social Media (limited currently) Effective stakeholder engagement on strategic issues Service led feedback questionnaires and events Effective use of resources and achievement of outcomes is undertaken by the Council both through informal and formal partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive range of partnerships to support the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities, including the Public Services Board Open and productive partnership arrangements supported by an effective governance arrangements Trust and good relations lead to delivery of intended outcomes e.g. community asset transfers
Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The achievement of intended outcomes by services is supported by a range of meaningful guidance on consultation engagement and feedback techniques with individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders We have structures in place to encourage public participation governed through the Communication and Social Media Policies. These include the following: E-newsletters, the Council's website, Tenants Forums, Service user groups, Quality circles, Use of infographics, Surveys (for example, Survey of Tenants and Residents)

Areas of Good Evidence 2024/25 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2024/25 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal and informal partnerships from strategic levels (PSB) to operational partnerships (Community Endowment Fund / Regional Armed Forces Partnership)• The joint Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board / North Wales Research and Insight Partnership continue to work well• Good management relationship with external partners• Opportunities for discussions and debates ensures the Council has a range of views and perspectives, which are considered when making decisions and provides real value	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (B23) Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs• (B26) Taking account of the interests of future generations of taxpayers and services users

Principle C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
Defining outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a clear vision describing the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes which is achieved through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linking of vision and intent to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) - Service Planning consideration including sustainability of service delivery Risk Management is applied consistently at all levels ensuring consistent application of risk process and terminology The development of the County's Well-being Plan and delivery of the Public Services Board's priorities ensure that public services work effectively together to add value Annual Performance Report contains recommendations of improvements or area of priority working for the following year
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When deciding future service provision we take a longer-term view, balancing the economic, social, environmental impact along with the wider public interest. This is supported by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Longer term business planning and budgeting using effective forecasting models - Multi-disciplinary approach to policy development delivering defined outcomes and ensuring fair access to services - Procurement strategy defines expectations around economic, social and environment benefits which inform service specifications, tenders and contracts - Communication plans for public and community engagement

Areas of Good Evidence 2024/25 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2024/25 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member workshops/briefing sessions In addition to the normal budget management process significant monitoring took place to manage the additional expenses / funding received / reallocation of resources to support the budget pressures – corporate events/meetings with portfolios regarding budget pressures The Public Services Board, Well-being Plan 2023 to 2028 focuses on improving local well-being in the area, supporting the achievement of the seven well-being goals for Wales as part of The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (C28) Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including individual citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer (C31) Managing expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available (C32) Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision (C33) Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently whether there are potential conflicts between the authority's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints

Principle D Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
Determining interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full engagement with Members on a longer-term basis e.g. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Council Plan, Business Planning and other key workforce strategies e.g. digital and procurement • The MTFS and budget setting process provides opportunities for all public, stakeholders to be engaged in considering options • Active engagement of key decision making in the development of initial ideas, options and potential outcomes and risks e.g. ADM Programme, Gateways • Clear option appraisals, including the use of forecasting models, to ensure best value is achieved • Regular budget monitoring for each Portfolio • Application of Integrated Impact Assessments
Planning interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We established and implemented robust planning and control cycles covering response and recovery through Emergency Management Response Team • Regular monitoring of business planning, efficiency and reliability including feedback • Service performance is measured by establishing a range of local indicators, which are regularly monitored, reported and used for recovery monitoring
Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource requirements are identified through the business planning process, including any projected shortfall in those requirements • Regular engagement and ownership of the budget process is undertaken through the Chief Officer Team and in consultation with Members through workshops and the scrutiny process • Social values are achieved through the effective commissioning of services and compliance with Council procedures • Consultation and engagement events, particularly relating to ongoing decisions on significant service delivery issues or to changes in the external environment set the context for the MTFS for both residents and employees

Areas of Good Evidence 2024/25 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2024/25 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (D48) Use of historical data to inform the MTFS and looking forward in terms of what the future landscape for services may be and applying a risk based approach to decision making around the budget setting process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (D40) Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks• (D43) Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly• (D44) Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan• (D45) Informing medium and long term resources planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy• (D46) Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances off service priorities, affordability and other resource constraint• (D47) Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term

Principle E Developing our organisations capacity, including the capability of our leadership and the individuals within it

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
Developing our organisation's capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We review our operations, performance, and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness through service delivery reviews, performance and risk management and Programme Boards' development and monitoring • We review the sufficiency and appropriateness of resource allocation through techniques such as benchmarking internally against previous performances and to support internal challenge, and normally externally to identify improvement opportunities • Benefits of collaborative and partnership working both regionally and nationally to ensure added value is achieved by linking services and organisation priorities to partnership working • Develop and maintain the workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources and future workforce and succession planning
Developing the capability of our organisation's leadership and other individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective shared leadership which enables us to respond successfully to changing external demands and risks is supported by a range of management and leadership development programme, run in partnership with Coleg Cambria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have clearly defined and distinct leadership roles • Individual and organisational requirements are supported through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate induction for new employees to the Council and service specific inductions for employees in new jobs - Opportunities for continued learning and development for employees - A comprehensive range of learning and development opportunities available - Feedback and shared learning to the organisations both through reports and interactive sessions such as the Senior leaders 'Academi' • Support and maintain physical and mental wellbeing of the workforce, via our in-house Occupational Health Service, Care First (Employee Assistance Programme) and a range of internal training and awareness sessions to support mental, financial and physical health related issues

Areas of Very Best Practice 2024/25 (Score of 5)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2024/25 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (E52) Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (E61) Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation
Areas of Good Evidence 2024/25 (Score of 4)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership and collaborative working – locally, regionally and nationally • Service specific inductions continue to take place • Employee Engagement Survey undertaken, which included health and wellbeing questions, responses indicate interventions are welcomed and positive. A Well-being Strategy currently in draft • Dedicated mental health and employee wellbeing page on the Infonet which provides links to MIND Wellness Action Plans, our Employee Assistance Programme (available 24/7 365 days per year) 	

Principle F Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
Managing risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has clear and concise risk management framework. There are a number of risk registers which are reported regularly which outline the risks faced by the Council and its service areas. These all include, current risk ratings and target risk ratings supported by mitigation comments
Managing performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members and senior management are provided with regular reports on service performance against key performance indicators and milestones against recovery objectives Members are clearly and regularly informed of the financial position and implications including environmental and resource impacts
Robust internal control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit provides the Council, through the Governance and Audit Committee, with an annual independent and objective opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control, risk management, governance arrangements and associated policies We are dedicated to tackling fraud as detailed within the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Fraud Response Plan, and Whistleblowing Policy
Managing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have effective strategic direction, advice and monitoring of information management with clear policies and procedures on personal data and provide regular training to ensure compliance with these We have appropriate Information Sharing Protocols in place in respect of all information shared with other bodies The quality and accuracy of data used for decision making and performance monitoring is supported by guidance from a range of professional bodies Internal Audit review and audit regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring
Strong public financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Financial management arrangements support both the long-term achievement of outcome and short-term financial performance through the delivery of the MTFS Setting a prudent Minimum Revenue Provision for the repayment of debt The integration of all financial management and control was reviewed as part of the finance modernisation project

Areas of Good Evidence 2024/25 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2024/25 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintained and frequent reporting and monitoring of performance and risk • Risk Management Framework reviewed and updated • Effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (F69) Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook • (F70) Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the authority's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible • (F80) Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring • (F81) Ensuring the authority's financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance

Principle G Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
Implementing good practice in transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recently improved the layout and presentation of our reports in order to improve the presentation of key information to decision-makers and monitor this regularly • We are mindful of providing the right amount of information to ensure transparency • A review of information sharing protocols has been undertaken and new principles adopted
Implementing good practices in reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We report at least annual on the achievement and progress of our intended outcome and financial position. This is delivered through the Annual Performance report assessing performance against the Council Plan • Progress against the Well-being Plan • Annual Statement of Accounts • Our Annual Governance Statement is published following robust and rigorous challenge to assess and demonstrate good governance
Assurance and effective accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through robust assurance mechanism, we can demonstrate effective accountability. These mechanisms include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal Audit undertakes independent reviews to provide an annual assurance opinion of the Council's control, risk management, and governance arrangements. To allow this Internal Audit has direct access to Chief Officer and Members of the Council - All agreed actions from Internal Audit reviews are monitored regularly through monthly reports to Chief Officers and each Governance and Audit Committee - Any 'limited/red' assurance opinions are reported to Governance and Audit Committee in full and progress monitored closely - Peer challenge and inspection from regulatory bodies and external compliance reviews. The outcomes from these inspections are used to inform and improve service delivery - Through effective commissioning and monitoring arrangements and compliance with Council's procedures, we gain assurance on risk associated with delivering services through third parties and any transitional risks - Reports are presented to Cabinet and an annual report to Governance and Audit Committee of external feedback from regulatory work and peer reviews along with the Council's responses

Areas of Very Best Practice 2024/25 (Score of 5)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2024/25 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (G92) Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (G83) Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate • (G84) Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny whilst not being too onerous for the authority to provide and for users to understand • (G89) Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations

How Have We Addressed the Governance and Strategic Issues From 2023/24 AGS?

The 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement contained 15 governance and 29 strategic issues. Of these areas:

- Three Internal Governance issues were closed and detailed within the table below
- Twelve Internal Governance issues remain open and these are included below and within the 2023/24 actions
- Fifteen risks remain a red strategic risk and shown within the 2023/24 Strategic Issues
- Eight risks have since improved
- Six risks have closed

Progress updates for Significant Governance Issues Reported in the 2023/24 AGS

The review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements identified 15 governance issues during 2023/24. Progress updates of how the risk has been addressed and if it remains open is provided below:

Internal Council Governance issues	Mitigation Actions	Current Status	Progress Update	Progress RAG
(A1) Ensure members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the Organisation	Action plan for to enhance Members understanding of their role. Workshop for Members and to provide relevant training and learning opportunities.	Open	The council has voluntarily adopted a register of interests for senior officers to further demonstrate openness. The Council continues to provide relevant training and learning opportunities for Members to ensure Members are fully aware and have an understanding of their role.	Amber
(B17, B18, B21, B23, B24, B25) Circumstances previously curtailed the Council's ability to consult and engage, but not the willingness to do so.	An action plan was developed to make improvements in the regards to Consultation and Engagement with residents of Flintshire.	Closed (excluding B23)	Following a service review in late 2022, a new Customer Service and Communications Manager was appointed in 2023. A priority is to develop a Consultation and Engagement Strategy for the Council. The intention of the strategy is to have a clear and consistent approach to consultation and engagement across all services which will enable better sharing of customer insight. The strategy will act as a toolkit to assist services to consult and engage with communities successfully. work has begun to improve how the Council consults and engages more effectively e.g., through better use of social media and a new consultation and engagement hub.	Amber

Internal Council Governance issues	Mitigation Actions	Current Status	Progress Update	Progress RAG
(C29, C32) Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available and considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of the pay model Integrated Impact Assessments are utilised and happen consistently across all portfolio's Review the challenges with vacancy management 	Closed (excluding C32)	<p>Due to existing budget pressures and vacancy management, which impacts sustainability (Five Ways of Working, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) work remains ongoing regarding review of pay model. Workshops have been undertaken with Members to review pay model options and costing associated.</p> <p>Integrated Impacts Assessments need to be embedded further within the Council.</p> <p>Development of Portfolio business plans within the Performance Management System is progressing and will assist with linking policies, risks, and plans.</p>	Amber
(E51, E53, E57, E61) Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority's resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the use of APSE Career conversation to form part of the appraisal A review of the Member Development 	Closed (excluding E61)	<p>Recent training provided by APSE to highlight range of benchmarking available and ongoing support provided to key services area. New benchmarking now available to support Climate Change with APSE with the Council exchanging in this opportunity.</p> <p>Career conversations form part of annual appraisals.</p> <p>A review of Member Development and training needs has been completed, with the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee having oversight of this process. A report covering training and development is taken to the Committee at least quarterly. A final programme will identify sessions / topics that will be 'mandatory', and the Committee will monitor delivery and attendance of these (and all sessions included within the programme).</p> <p>Specific training for members of the Scrutiny Committees has been delivered, as well as sessions on Chairing skills which have been offered to all Members as well as targeting the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees.</p> <p>(E51, E53, E57 closed and E61 – remains open)</p>	Green
(F66, F73,) An Internal Audit review of the risk management framework and risk register was undertaken during 22/23 and has highlighted some areas for improvement to build upon the risk management framework and processes going forward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to embed the Risk Management Framework The development and implementation of InPhase continues Roll out of the E-learning risk management training module 	Closed	<p>Risk Management Framework was revised and approved by Governance and Audit Committee in January 2024, shared with Officers and available on the Council's website and Infonet. Officers are reviewing their risks monthly with all risks now transferred and managed within the performance and risk management system.</p> <p>Risk Management e-learning module is in its final stages.</p>	Green

Progress Updates For Significant Strategic Issues Reported in the 2023/24 AGS

The review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements identified 29 strategic issues (red risks) during 2023/24. 15 risks remain a red strategic risk, eight risks have since improved and six risks have closed. Reasons as to why six risks have closed and why eight risks have improved is provided below:

Strategic issues in 2023/24 which have since closed	Progress Update	Current Score
CC01 – Non-compliance of the Welsh Language Standards	Closed as of April 2024 as Contact Centre is fully staffed with 30% Welsh speakers.	CLOSED
CF14 - Impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of a sustained loss of housing rent due to the financial position of tenants	Closed as of April 2024 as this risk emanates from the covid response and is no longer a significant risk to the HRA as rent arrears have stabilised, and are consistently falling, over a period of 12 months.	CLOSED
HA06 - Impacts on income stream based on delayed/non recovery of housing benefit overpayment	Risk was merged with CF14 during financial year 2023/24 and closed in April 2024.	CLOSED
SS29 - Insufficient capacity in the social care workforce (social work and occupational therapy) is a risk to the reputation of the Council and its ability to fulfil its statutory and essential functions with respect and care	Risk closed September 2023 for the whole service, however an open risk remains for Children's Services workforce of qualified and experienced staff.	CLOSED
HR24 - Changes to holiday pay calculations and practices in light of the Supreme Court Judgement in Harper Trust and Brazel	Risk closed May 2024 as changes to calculations and increases in the Council's annual leave provision means that the Council is legally compliant.	CLOSED
CPA17 - Impact of workload demand and HR issues on remaining employees	Closed December 2023 following a risk register review by the Capital Programme and Assets portfolio and this risk has merged with RCPA01 to become one risk.	CLOSED
CPA12 - Failure to secure mutually agreeable new agreement with Aura / Newydd could lead to financial, reputation, legal and service implications New code as of 2023/24 – RCPA12 New description as of 2023/24 - Contractual arrangements requiring review and agreement of Alternative Delivery Models (ADM's)	Risk is closing in June 2024 as it considers all Alternative Delivery Models (ADM). Each ADM will be an individual risk within the risk register.	CLOSED

Red Strategic issues in 2023/24 which have since closed	Progress Update	Current Score	
EY06 - Insufficient funding to deliver new archive premises New code as of 2023/24 – REY06	This risk is reducing as a grant funding offer has been received from National Lottery Heritage Fund to assist with the costs of building a new archive for the North East Wales Archive on the Theatr Clwyd site, supported by matched capital funding from Flintshire and Denbighshire Councils. Acceptance of the grant funding now needs to be formally approved by both Cabinets.	4	
PE12 - The implications of Ash Dieback on finances and reputation of the Council due to the scale of the problem and the ability to make safe trees on or adjacent to Highways and Council amenity land which pose a risk to life or property	Winter works have been completed now waiting for summer survey period.	6	
PE33 - Prevent delays in development proceeding by mitigating the impact of Phosphates New code as of 2023/24 – RPE33	There are no delays being incurred as National Resource Wales and Welsh Water have now published their joint review of permits for Waste Water Treatment Works, where all three affected Waste Water Treatment Works in Flintshire have a valid permit and headroom within the permit limit to treat more phosphates.	2	
PE34 - Failure to update the Council's Flood Risk Management Strategy to mitigate the flood risk to vulnerable communities New code as of 2023/24 – RPE34	A framework strategy has been produced working with the Council's consultants. Meeting consultants at the end of April took place to review draft, identify gaps and information required, and plan engagement both internally within the Council and with key stakeholders.	3	
PE42 - Slow progress with the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) fails to set context for Local Development Plan 2 New code as of 2023/24 – RPE42	The Council does not control the progress with the SDP as this is with the CJC, who have recently appointed a project co-ordinator. Planning Strategy Manager is leading on producing a background context report for the SDP, highlighting respective positions with LDPs in North Wales, cumulative housing and employment growth targets, and assessing strategic objectives and policies to develop a common set of themes for the SDP. Will also produce an outline framework for the structure of what the SDP could look like.	4	
SS09 - Insufficient numbers of residential and nursing beds to meet demand because of the long-term fragility and instability of the care home sector and challenges in the recruitment of staff New code as of 2023/24 – RSS09	We are still finding it difficult to source enough capacity externally to be able to meet the residential need. However, we have stabilised the market. The Croes Atti 2 development will increase our internal capacity, and an independent sector home that was previously closed reopened in January, providing capacity for EMI nursing and possibly some residential care.	9	

Red Strategic issues in 2023/24 which have since closed	Progress Update	Current Score
<p>SS10 - Insufficient capacity to provide the quantities and levels of care to clients at home and in the community because of challenges in recruitment of direct care workers and instability in the care market</p> <p>New code as of 2023/24 – RSS10</p>	<p>The domiciliary inbox remains high with individuals having to wait for care in some cases. We have been successful in purchasing a block hours contract in Holywell, and are looking at other areas where care is difficult to source; expressions of interest for block hours contracts are going out to the Framework. The ongoing development of Microcare is helping to alleviate the situation; there have been an additional 7 Micro-Carers setup during this financial year, increasing the number of active Micro-Carers to 38. We have directly commissioned with 3 Micro-Care providers this year for personal care services, and 4 for well-being services, and we are actively seeking to develop more direct commissioning.</p>	<p>9</p>
<p>HR09 - The Pay model and associated costing may increase/decrease depending on when a) agreement is reached and b) when the new pay model is implemented due to changes in structure and/or headcount.</p> <p>New code as of 2023/24 – RHR09</p>	<p>A number of pay models have been developed and costed (excluding vacancies). Work is underway to validate genuine vacancies (with budget) between HR and Finance. Cabinet/Council advised that no budget has been identified for this workstream.</p>	<p>9</p>

What are the Governance issues identified during 2024/25?

The review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements identified 23 internal governance issues during 2024/25. Details of how the issue has been addressed and if it remains open is provided below. New areas for improvement identified during 2024/25 are highlighted in **red**:

Internal Council Governance issues for 2024/25	Mitigation Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (A1) Ensure members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the Organisation • (A2) Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) • (A10) Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to highlight the role and responsibility of Members • Workshop for Members (as and when required) • To continue to provide relevant training and learning opportunities <p>The sessions being facilitated by the WLGA in early June are designed to help enhance the understanding of roles of officers and councillors. The sessions are intended to explore and improve the relationships between officers and councillors</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (B23) Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs • (B26) Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and services users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a consultation and engagement hub • Creating a Customer and Engagement and Public Participation Strategy • Development of social media platforms (Facebook has already been developed) • Use of Council's complaints and feedback for continued service improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (C28) Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including individual citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer • (C31) Managing expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available • (C32) Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision • (C33) Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently whether there are potential conflicts between the authority's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the pay model • Integrated Impact Assessments to be utilised and happen consistently across all portfolio's • Review the challenges with vacancy management • Development of Guidance Note for Motions – more information required from Officers and the impact this has on Officers • Training to members

Internal Council Governance issues for 2024/25	Mitigation Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (D40) Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks • (D43) Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly • (D44) Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan • (D45) Informing medium and long term resources planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy • (D46) Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances off service priorities, affordability and other resource constraint • (D47) Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (D37) Implementing the recommendations identified from within the Audit Wales regarding Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes. Mid-plan review of Council Plan (2023-28) to ensure consideration of service user perspective • (D40) When working with partners and collaboratively risks (and also opportunities) are being explored consistently. • (D43) As part of the Information and Data Management Strategy review to explore how data can be used / presented as part of the decision making process and performance monitoring. • (D44, D45, D46, D47) the revised Council Plan will support the identification of resources required within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy with the aim to further project funding requirements and how performance information can support this.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (E61) Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This internal governance issue mitigation actions for E51 are the same for B17, B18, B21, B23, B24, B25, B26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (F69) Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook • (F70) Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the authority's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible • (F80) Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring • (F81) Ensuring the authority's financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to embed the Risk Management Framework • Undertake annual review of Risk Management Framework • The further develop the reporting of risks within the performance and risk management system • Reports presented to Committees as of Autumn 2024 • Roll out of the E-learning risk management training module August 2024 and to member July 2025 • Implementation of the Performance Management Framework • Review the format of reporting to members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (G83) Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate • (G84) Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny whilst not being too onerous for the authority to provide and for users to understand • (G89) Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (G83, G84) Review the format of reporting to members • (G89) Corporate Finance are exploring how improvement could be made on performance indicators, particularly around benchmarking.

Internal Council Governance issues for 2024/25	Mitigation Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red / Limited Assurance Audit – Management of Community and Recreation Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Action Plan has been developed and will be shared with Governance and Audit Committee in January 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red / Limited Assurance Audit – Pest Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Action Plan has been developed and will be shared with Governance and Audit Committee in June 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red / Limited Assurance Audit – Off Matrix Agency Spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Action Plan has been developed and will be shared with Governance and Audit Committee in June 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red / Limited Assurance Audit – Budget Cost Reductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full Action Plan has been developed and will be shared with Governance and Audit Committee in June 2025

What are the Strategic issues identified during 2024/25?

The review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements identified 14 strategic issues (Corporate Risks) for 2024/25. Details of how the issues have been addressed is provided below:

Strategic Issues for 2024/25	Mitigating Actions	Current Score ¹	Target Score
RCF01 – Reserves Insufficient Reserves will impact on the financial resilience of the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monitoring and reporting of the financial position of the organisation Ongoing engagement with Society of Welsh Treasurers (SWT) and WLGA and the escalation of key issues Ensuring adequate levels of reserves are maintained across the Council Ongoing review of ear marked reserves 	16	4
RCF08 – Fraud and Prevention The Council may be subject to fraud from both internal and external factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Whistleblowing Policy and Fraud Response Plan Key controls exist within the key financial systems Participate in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) 	6	6
RCF09 – Housing Revenue Account Capital Investment There is insufficient funding capacity to meet Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) 2.0 targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance and service area are working to assess financial impact and mitigation options, findings reported through to Senior Management Team, Programme Board and Chief Officer Team Target Energy Pathways for all stock to be completed 	15	10
RCF18 – Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Increased service demand, high inflation and reduced future Welsh Government, Local Government Settlements could impact the stability of the Medium-Term Financial Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monitoring of the financial impact across the organisation Ensuring robust and timely financial planning arrangements over the medium term Ongoing contribution to national debate on a fairer funding formula Ongoing engagement with Society of Welsh Treasurers (SWT) and WLGA and the escalation of key issues Ensuring adequate levels of reserves are maintained across the Council 	20	9
REY01 – Financial Viability of Schools Schools are not financially viable due to insufficient base funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the reduction in school budget deficits more effectively Challenge and support meetings with Headteacher/School Business Manager and regular budget monitoring sessions with schools to confirm adherence to licensed deficit protocol, with non-compliance triggering formal procedures under Schools Licensed Deficit protocol Financial Performance Monitoring Group meetings to review performance and agree action plan with specific actions and timescales to address issues identified Schools pupil funding Formula review to be scheduled/approved through Schools Budget Forum to ensure base budgets are best allocated Local Authority approval mechanisms for recruitment in schools with budget deficits 	20	15

¹Target score for some strategic risks are a red RAYG status and this is due to the nature of the risk itself

Strategic Issues for 2024/25	Mitigating Actions	Current Score ¹	Target Score	
RGV01 – Loss of IT/Cyber Security Significant Loss of Corporate data and systems due to security / environmental / Technical incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular review and testing of IT Disaster Recovery Plan Complete full review on IT Security Policies Enrolment in CymruSOC 	20	12	
RHC09 - Resource to meet Homeless Obligations The Council is unable to meet its homelessness statutory obligations due to shortages in staff, budgetary pressures and lack of available accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully deliver the restructure of the Housing & Prevention Service (as supported by Cabinet in October 2024) to increase capacity within the service Implement the range of alternatives for hotel and B&B for homeless accommodation (as supported by Cabinet in October 2024) Monthly financial review of budgets to monitor current expenditure and project in-year an future pressures Monthly monitor levels of emergency accommodation with a view to informing workforce, move-on activities and homeless accommodation planning Budget Forecasting and Planning: Implement more robust forecasting methods to anticipate accommodation demand and allocate necessary resources in advance Partnerships with Housing Providers: Explore strategic partnerships with private sector housing providers to expand available bed spaces for temporary accommodation Review and Adjust Contracts: Negotiate more flexible accommodation contracts with service providers to manage fluctuating demand, ensuring cost control 	20	12	
RHR29 - Recruitment and Retention Inability to attract and retain valued employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a workforce planning template for use across the organisation Implement a compliant and sustainable new pay model Maintain competitive pay and reward, and terms and conditions of employment Promote the Council's Employee Assistance Programme to increase usage 	9	2	
RHR30 - Employment Related Costs Increased costs associated with temporary / additional resources to the workforce as a result of vacancies, sickness absence etc. (for example, overtime, additional hours, agency costs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a compliant and sustainable new pay model Maintain competitive pay and reward, and terms and conditions of employment 	12	6	
RPE11 - Net Zero Carbon Goal Affordability of the Council being able to achieve its net zero carbon goal. Inability to commit or attract sufficient resource to coordinate the programme and deliver on projects, leading to opportunities not being maximised, actions not delivered and benefits not realised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively seek external finance using the climate change strategy and action plan as the narrative Submit strong and coordinated external funding bids, working collaboratively across the region as well as interdepartmentally within the Council Aim to submit early input into the Budgets for revenue and capital for the following financial year and maintain an ongoing dialogue in terms of medium to long term financial plans to ensure commitment is made towards financing carbon aims. In terms of Council-wide decision making and prioritisation, carbon literacy training roll out to key decision makers across the Council will enable officers to factor in carbon impacts at early stages of project developments to allow for sufficient provision in internal and external funding bids Implementation of whole life cost into business cases will capture the long term costs and benefits of schemes 	6	2	

Strategic Issues for 2024/25	Mitigating Actions	Current Score ¹	Target Score
RPE46 - Impact of Climate Change Inability of the Council to identify the risks associated with the impacts of climate change, causing risk to the resilience of Council services and its communities and the ability to adapt to a changing climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has made strides in climate mitigation, however the impacts of a changing climate are being realised today, and will increase over time. A climate risk and adaptation assessment and action plan will be completed, involving various stakeholders, to ensure that the Council is resilient to this change 	3	3
RSS54 - Care Provision Sustainability Market stability / placement sufficiency leading to insufficient and unaffordable care provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued lobbying of Welsh Government to improve the financial settlement for Flintshire, to support market stability and placement sufficiency for adult social care Use of CareCubed care fee benchmarking tool to work with care providers to understand their costs and risks to ongoing sustainability Open 12 new reablement beds at Ty^ Croes Atti Residential Care Home The Multiagency Support Team is working with families of young people on the edge of care to prevent family/carer breakdown and reduce the need for emergency unregistered placements Explore the possibility of placing mobile classrooms on the sites of specialist schools to increase capacity for educational placements, reducing the need for OOC placements Exit from Care work to begin through a multiagency panel Maximise local housing options Combat exploitation through the Strategic and Operational MET (Missing, Exploitation, Trafficking) group Develop policies and models to attract new foster carers and expand the type of placements offered Work with local providers to reshape the residential market 	12	4
RST07 - Increase in Residual Waste Inability to achieve national recycling targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the frequency of kerbside residual waste collections from two weeks (90 litres per week), to three weekly (60 litres per week) Introduce a visible waste policy at the household recycling centres to minimise recyclable items being placed in the residual waste stream 	12	2
RST78 - Condition of Highway Network Despite regular inspections and defect identification, the condition of the network has deteriorated, and the time taken to repair defects often exceeds the current policy or any acceptable timeframe. This delay results in a high number of third-party claims following incidents on the network, and significant financial payouts. Adequate asset management processes are in place to identify and manage risks associated with public safety. However, the rate of rectification and time taken to repair identified defects is often beyond acceptable timeframes, increasing the risk of accidents and injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive Maintenance Implement a proactive strategy to identify and repair defects before they become significant hazards Enhanced Claims Management Improve the claims management process to defend against unjust claims and reduce financial liabilities Highlight the shortfalls in claims defence and identify trends Resource Allocation - Allocate resources effectively to ensure timely and efficient repairs, prioritising high-risk areas Public Communication - Improve communication with the public regarding ongoing maintenance efforts and safety measures 	12	4

Certification

The review provides good overall assurance that Flintshire County Council's arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework requirements for Local Authorities within Wales.

Opportunities to maintain and develop the Council's governance arrangements have been identified through this review. We pledge our commitment to addressing these issues over the coming year and we will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed on behalf of Flintshire County Council:



Neal Cockerton
Chief Executive



Cllr. Dave Hughes
Leader of the Council