

# Annual Governance Statement Enclosure 2



2023 - 2024

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



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# 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 2022/23 AGS
- What are the governance issues identified during 2023/24
- What are the strategic issues identified during 2023/24
- 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 and Newydd.

The Annual Governance Statement reports on the governance arrangements that has been in place at Flintshire County Council during the financial year 2023/24 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 was published in March 2023. Overall, the Auditor General for Wales has reached a positive conclusion. No formal recommendations have been made during the year and proposals for improvement have arisen from the national and local reviews undertaken. The Auditor General gave an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council's financial statements on 12 April 2024, after the deadline agreed with the Welsh Government of 30 November 2023. The audit was delivered later than in previous years mainly due to the impact of new auditing standard requirements.

Our Annual General Meeting of Council was held on 4th May 2023, at which point the five committee Overview and Scrutiny structure was agreed.

## Internal Audit Annual Opinion

*"For the year ending 31 March 2024, based on the work the Internal Audit Service has undertaken my opinion is that Flintshire County Council has, overall, an adequate and effective framework of governance, risk management and internal control".*

Internal Audit, Performance and Risk Manager, Flintshire County Council.

## 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 December 2023 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 2025/26 and beyond presents significant challenges and uncertainty and requires a prudent approach whilst urgently prioritising our budget planning requirements.
- As part of the above develop the latest Medium Term Financial Strategy and begin considerations early on options for ensuring a sustainable budget including exploring any opportunities for transformation of services over the medium term.
- 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

Comparison of Performance		2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Good Governance Principles	A Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of Law				
	B Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement				
	C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic social and environmental benefits				
	D Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievements of the intended outcomes				
	E Developing the entity's capacity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it				
	F Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong financial management				
	G Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability				

Score - 3 Evidence but further action required

Score - 4 Good evidence

Score - 5 Very best practice

Score - 3 - 4 Good evidence / Action may be required

Score - 4 - 5 Good evidence / Very best practice

Unable to deliver due to Covid

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 4/5 and 5):

- **(D48)** Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' or 'community benefits' through service planning and commissioning. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states that this is "the additional benefit to the community over and above the direct purchase.
- **(E52, E64)** Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved. Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.
- **(G92)** Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations.

### Further Action Required (Score of 3 and 3/4):

- **(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.
- **(B17, B18, B21, B23, B24, B25, B26)** Circumstances have curtailed our ability to consult and engage, but not the willingness to do so. However, a Customer Service and Communication Manager is now in post and work has begun to improve how the Council consults and engages more effectively.
- **(C28, C29, 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.
- **(D37, D40)** Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to priorities competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land, and assets and bearing in mind future impacts. Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks.
- **(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.
- **(F66, F69, F73)** Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively. Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving the Council's objectives.

# The Main Themes Identified for Improvement for 2023/24

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 2023/24 reviewed the Council's position against the 7 Good Governance Principles and the 94 Sub Principle. In May 2024 a workshop was undertaken with members from the Governance and Audit Committee 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 and Chairs and Vice Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, with the aim of the questionnaire being to determine if Members agreed with the themes that had been identified as areas for improvement.

The five themes identified for improvement are:

## 1. Improvement in internal and external stakeholder engagement, consultation and participation

- Enhanced decision making to ensure the most appropriate course of action is taken.
- The ability to receive and use feedback to shape service improvement, including improved complaints handling.
- Ensuring inclusivity with stakeholder groups and encouragement of public participation.
- Improved social media presence.

## 2. Development of the Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs)

- This will ensure the Council assesses the impact of their decisions and policies on equality groups, the environment, the economy, and other areas of interest prior to policy / strategy changes.

## 3. 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.

## 4. Training Opportunities

- Enhanced decision making and challenge process through focused training, facilitated sessions available to Members and Senior Officers.

## 5. Embedding of Risk Management

- Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements, within the Council's financial, social and environmental position.
- Increase level of awareness and understanding of risk management across the Council through the development and roll out of risk management e-learning module.



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.
- It is of paramount importance that all new Members and also employees are provided with relevant training on their roles and responsibilities.
- Increasing the use of Integrated Impact Assessments being completed 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 will enable the Council to identify future risks and also opportunities.

## 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
<p><b>Behaving with Integrity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behaviour and expectations of Members and Officers are set out in our Codes of Conduct, Constitution, and a suite of policies and procedures</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• We take fraud seriously. Key policies are in place to prevent, minimise and manage such occurrences</li> <li>• Compliance with policies and protocols e.g., Contract Procedure Rules</li> <li>• Enhanced profile of Internal Audit</li> </ul>
<p><b>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A set of leadership competencies are deployed in each Portfolio and led by each Chief Officer</li> <li>• Our recruitment policy, training and competencies based appraisal processes underpin personal behaviours with ethical values</li> <li>• Robust policies and procedures are in place, subject to formal approval prior to adoption by formal committees</li> <li>• All contracts and external service providers, including partnerships are engaged through the robust procurement process and follow the Contract Procedure rules regulations</li> <li>• Application of the corporate operating model; working internally to promote high standards of professional performance and ethical behaviour to achieve organisational priorities and objectives</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respecting the rule of law</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We ensure that our Members and Officers fulfil legislative and regulatory</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>

Areas of Good Evidence 2023/24 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2023/24 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(A1)</b> 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</li> </ul>

# Principle B

## Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
<p><b>Openness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed to having an open culture, demonstrated through accessible website, policies and procedures and open environment meetings.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action are determined using formal and informal consultation and engagement. Consultation principles</li> <li>- Formal and informal engagement models with employees and communities e.g. alternative delivery models Member workshops</li> <li>- County Forum (Town and Community Councils)</li> <li>- Positive engagement with Trade Unions both formally and informally</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We engage effectively with stakeholders to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes by:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective application and delivery of communication strategies to support delivery</li> <li>- Targeting communications and effective use of Social Media (limited currently)</li> <li>- Effective stakeholder engagement on strategic issues</li> <li>- Service led feedback questionnaires and events</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 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"> <li>- Extensive range of partnerships to support the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities, including the Public Services Board</li> <li>- Open and productive partnership arrangements supported by an effective governance arrangements</li> <li>- Trust and good relations lead to delivery of intended outcomes e.g. community asset transfers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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)</li> </ul>

Areas of Good Evidence 2023/24 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2023/24 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal and informal partnerships from strategic levels (PSB) to operational partnerships (Community Endowment Fund / Regional Armed Forces Partnership)</li> <li>• The joint Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board / North Wales Research and Insight Partnership continue to work well</li> <li>• Good management relationship with external partners</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(B17, B18, B21, B23, B24, B25, B26)</b> Customer Service and Communication Manager is now in post and 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 which is due to be launched on the Council’s website imminently. Research is currently underway to identify areas of good practice to help inform and develop a local strategy for consultation and engagement</li> <li>• A mid-plan review of Council Plan 2023-28 is planned for late 2024, early 2025, which will also include consultation to ensure the views and experience of citizens, service users are considered</li> <li>• A recent Audit Wales report has identified that improvement in Service User perspective / views needed to inform decisions and proposals to the recommendations will be implemented over the next year</li> </ul>

# Principle C

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

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
<p><b>Defining outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a clear vision describing the organisation’s purpose and intended outcomes which is achieved through:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linking of vision and intent to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)</li> <li>- Service Planning consideration including sustainability of service delivery</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Risk Management is applied consistently at all levels ensuring consistent application of risk process and terminology</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Annual Performance Report contains recommendations of improvements or area of priority working for the following year</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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"> <li>- Longer term business planning and budgeting using effective forecasting models</li> <li>- Multi-disciplinary approach to policy development delivering defined outcomes and ensuring fair access to services</li> <li>- Procurement strategy defines expectations around economic, social and environment benefits which inform service specifications, tenders and contracts</li> <li>- Communication plans for public and community engagement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Areas of Good Evidence 2023/24 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2023/24 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member workshops/briefing sessions</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(C28, C29, C31)</b> Increasing priorities with limited additional resources available (vacancy management and financial challenges) continues to provide pressures on the Council and is in some instances impacting negatively on service delivery. However, by continuing to embed the use of Integrated Impact Assessments it supports and inform decision making and determining priorities, making best use of resources available</li> <li>• <b>(C32, C33)</b> Development of business planning within performance management system will support longer term business planning, whilst evidencing any associated risks / opportunities. This includes consider and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impacts of policies and strategies</li> </ul>

# Principle D

## Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
<p><b>Determining interventions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• The MTFS and budget setting process provides opportunities for all public, stakeholders to be engaged in considering options.</li> <li>• Active engagement of key decision making in the development of initial ideas, options and potential outcomes and risks e.g. ADM Programme, Gateways</li> <li>• Clear option appraisals, including the use of forecasting models, to ensure best value is achieved</li> <li>• Regular budget monitoring for each Portfolio</li> <li>• Application of Integrated Impact Assessments</li> </ul>
<p><b>Planning interventions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We established and implemented robust planning and control cycles covering response and recovery through Emergency Management Response Team</li> <li>• Regular monitoring of business planning, efficiency and reliability including feedback</li> <li>• Service performance is measured by establishing a range of local indicators, which are regularly monitored, reported and used for recovery monitoring</li> </ul>
<p><b>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource requirements are identified through the business planning process, including any projected shortfall in those requirements.</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Social values are achieved through the effective commissioning of services and compliance with Council procedures</li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>

Areas of Very Best Practice 2023/24 (Score of 4/5)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2023/24 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(D48)</b> 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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(D37)</b> Implementing the recommendations identified from within the Audit Wales regarding Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes</li> <li>• <b>(D40)</b> When working with partners and collaboratively risks (and also opportunities) are being explored consistently</li> </ul>

# 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
<p><b>Developing our organisation's capacity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Develop and maintain the workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources and future workforce and succession planning</li> </ul>
<p><b>Developing the capability of our organisation's leadership and other individuals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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"> <li>- The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive have clearly defined and distinct leadership roles</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Individual and organisational requirements are supported through:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporate induction for new employees to the Council and service specific inductions for employees in new jobs</li> <li>- Opportunities for continued learning and development for employees</li> <li>- A comprehensive range of learning and development opportunities available</li> <li>- Feedback and shared learning to the organisations both through reports and interactive sessions such as the Senior leaders 'Academi'</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 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</li> </ul>

<p><b>Areas of Very Best Practice 2023/24 (Score of 5)</b></p>	<p><b>Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2023/24 (Score of 3)</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (E52) Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (E51) 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.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Areas of Good Evidence 2023/24 (Score of 4 and 4/5)</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership and collaborative working – locally, regionally and nationally</li> <li>• Service specific inductions continue to take place</li> <li>• Employee Engagement Survey undertaken, which included health and wellbeing questions, responses indicate interventions are welcomed and positive. A Well-being Strategy currently in draft</li> <li>• 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)</li> </ul>



# 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"> <li>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</li> </ul>
Managing performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members and senior management are provided with regular reports on service performance against key performance indicators and milestones against recovery objectives</li> <li>Members are clearly and regularly informed of the financial position and implications including environmental and resource impacts</li> </ul>
Robust internal control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>We are dedicated to tackling fraud as detailed within the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Fraud Response Plan, and Whistleblowing Policy</li> </ul>
Managing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>We have appropriate Information Sharing Protocols in place in respect of all information shared with other bodies</li> <li>The quality and accuracy of data used for decision making and performance monitoring is supported by guidance from a range of professional bodies</li> <li>Internal Audit review and audit regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring</li> </ul>
Strong public financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our Financial management arrangements support both the long-term achievement of outcome and short-term financial performance through the delivery of the MTFs</li> <li>Setting a prudent Minimum Revenue Provision for the repayment of debt</li> <li>The integration of all financial management and control was reviewed as part of the finance modernisation project</li> </ul>

Areas of Good Evidence 2023/24 (Score of 4)	Areas Identified for Further Improvement 2023/24 (Score of 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintained and frequent reporting and monitoring of performance and risk</li> <li>Risk Management Framework reviewed and updated</li> <li>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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>(F66)</b> Embedding the risk management framework</li> <li><b>(F69)</b> Risks identified and reported upon in more detail within Committee reports</li> <li><b>(F73)</b> Continuing to align the risk management framework and policies on internal control with achieving the Council’s objectives</li> </ul>

# Principle G

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

Sub Principles	How we do this / How we achieve this
<b>Implementing good practice in transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• We are mindful of providing the right amount of information to ensure transparency</li> <li>• A review of information sharing protocols has been undertaken and new principles adopted</li> </ul>
<b>Implementing good practices in reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Progress against the Well-being Plan</li> <li>• Annual Statement of Accounts</li> <li>• Our Annual Governance Statement is published following robust and rigorous challenge to assess and demonstrate good governance</li> </ul>
<b>Assurance and effective accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through robust assurance mechanism, we can demonstrate effective accountability. These mechanisms include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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</li> <li>- All agreed actions from Internal Audit reviews are monitored regularly through monthly reports to Chief Officers and each Governance and Audit Committee</li> <li>- Any 'limited/red' assurance opinions are reported to Governance and Audit Committee in full and progress monitored closely</li> <li>- Peer challenge and inspection from regulatory bodies and external compliance reviews. The outcomes from these inspections are used to inform and improve service delivery</li> <li>- 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</li> <li>- 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</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Areas of Very Best Practice 2023/24 (Score of 5)	Areas of Good Evidence 2023/24 (Score of 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(G92)</b> Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open and embracing attitude. Effectives processes are in place to monitor outstanding Internal Audit actions, reporting to Chief Officers monthly</li> <li>• All external regulatory reports and the corresponding response to recommendations are considered by Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee's with an overview going to Governance and Audit Committee annually</li> </ul>

## How have we addressed the governance and strategic issues from 2022/23 AGS?

The 2022/23 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 2022/23 AGS

The review of the effectiveness of the Council’s governance arrangements identified 15 governance issues during 2022/23. 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
<b>(A1)</b> 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.	<b>Amber</b>
<b>(B17, B18, B21, B23, B24, B25)</b> 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.	Open	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.	<b>Amber</b>

Internal Council Governance issues	Mitigation Actions	Current Status	Progress Update	Progress RAG
<p><b>(C29, C32)</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of the pay model</li> <li>• Integrated Impact Assessments are utilised and happen consistently across all portfolio's</li> <li>• Review the challenges with vacancy management</li> </ul>	<p>Open</p>	<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>	<p><b>Amber</b></p>
<p><b>(E51, E53, E57, E61)</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the use of APSE</li> <li>• Career conversation to form part of the appraisal</li> <li>• A review of the Member Development</li> </ul>	<p>Closed (excluding E61)</p>	<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><b>(E51, E53, E57 closed and E61 – remains open in 2023/24)</b></p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>
<p><b>(F66, F73,)</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to embed the Risk Management Framework</li> <li>• The development and implementation of InPhase continues</li> <li>• Roll out of the E-learning risk management training module</li> </ul>	<p>Open</p>	<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 and will be rolled out August 2024.</p>	<p><b>Amber</b></p>

## Progress Updates For Significant Strategic Issues Reported in the 2022/23 AGS

The review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements identified 29 strategic issues (red risks) during 2022/23. 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 2022/23 which have since closed	Current Status	Progress Update	Progress RAYG
<b>CC01</b> – Non-compliance of the Welsh Language Standards	CLOSED	Closed as of April 2024 as Contact Centre is fully staffed with 30% Welsh speakers.	Green
<b>CF14</b> - Impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of a sustained loss of housing rent due to the financial position of tenants	CLOSED	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.	Green
<b>HA06</b> - Impacts on income stream based on delayed/non recovery of housing benefit overpayment	CLOSED	Risk was merged with <b>CF14</b> during financial year 2023/24 and closed in April 2024.	Green
<b>SS29</b> - 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	CLOSED	Risk closed September 2023 for the whole service, however an open risk remains for Children's Services workforce of qualified and experienced staff.	Green
<b>HR24</b> - Changes to holiday pay calculations and practices in light of the Supreme Court Judgement in Harper Trust and Brazel	CLOSED	Risk closed May 2024 as changes to calculations and increases in the Council's annual leave provision means that the Council is legally compliant.	Green
<b>CPA17</b> - Impact of workload demand and HR issues on remaining employees	CLOSED	Closed December 2023 following a risk register review by the Capital Programme and Assets portfolio and this risk has merged with <b>RCPA01</b> to become one risk.	Green
<b>CPA12</b> - Failure to secure mutually agreeable new agreement with Aura / Newydd could lead to financial, reputation, legal and service implications  <b>New code as of 2023/24 – RCPA12</b>  New description as of 2023/24 - Contractual arrangements requiring review and agreement of Alternative Delivery Models (ADM's)	CLOSED	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.	<b>A RAG is not applicable</b>

Red Strategic issues in 2022/23 which have since improved	Current Score	Progress Update	Progress RAYG
<p><b>EY06</b> - Insufficient funding to deliver new archive premises</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – REY06</b></p>	4	<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Yellow</b></p>
<p><b>PE12</b> - 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</p>	6	<p>Winter works have been completed now waiting for summer survey period.</p>	<p><b>Amber</b></p>
<p><b>PE33</b> - Prevent delays in development proceeding by mitigating the impact of Phosphates</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RPE33</b></p>	2	<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Green</b></p>
<p><b>PE34</b> - Failure to update the Council's Flood Risk Management Strategy to mitigate the flood risk to vulnerable communities</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RPE34</b></p>	3	<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Yellow</b></p>
<p><b>PE42</b> - Slow progress with the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) fails to set context for Local Development Plan 2</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RPE42</b></p>	4	<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Yellow</b></p>

Red Strategic issues in 2022/23 which have since improved	Current Score	Progress Update	Progress RAYG
<p><b>SS09</b> - 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</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RSS09</b></p>	9	<p>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.</p>	Amber
<p><b>SS10</b> - 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><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RSS10</b></p>	9	<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>	Amber
<p><b>HR09</b> - 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><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RHR09</b></p>	9	<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>	Amber

## What are the Governance issues identified during 2023/24?

The review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements identified thirteen internal governance issues during 2023/24. Details of how the issue has been addressed and if it remains open is provided below. New issues identified during 2023/24 are highlighted in **red**:

Internal Council Governance issues for 2023/24	Mitigation Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(A1)</b> 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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to highlight the role and responsibility of Members</li> <li>• Workshop for Members (as and when required)</li> <li>• To continue to provide relevant training and learning opportunities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(B17, B18, B21, B23, B24, B25, B26)</b> Circumstances previously curtailed the Council's ability to consult and engage, but not the willingness to do so. Ongoing planning to ensure implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a consultation and engagement hub</li> <li>• Creating a Customer and Engagement and Public Participation Strategy</li> <li>• Development of social media platforms (Facebook has already been developed)</li> <li>• Use of Council's complaints and feedback for continued service improvement</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(C28, C29, C31, C32, C33)</b> Delivering defined outcomes on a <b>sustainable</b> 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</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of the pay model</li> <li>• Integrated Impact Assessments to be utilised and happen consistently across all portfolio's</li> <li>• Review the challenges with vacancy management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(D37)</b> Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to priorities competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts</li> <li>• <b>(D40)</b> Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(D37)</b> 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</li> <li>• <b>(D40)</b> When working with partners and collaboratively risks (and also opportunities) are being explored consistently</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(E51)</b> Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This internal governance issue mitigation actions for <b>E51</b> are the same for <b>B17, B18, B21, B23, B24, B25, B26</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(F66, F69, F73,)</b> An Internal Audit review of the risk management framework and risk register was undertaken during 23/24 and has highlighted some areas for improvement to build upon the risk management framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to embed the Risk Management Framework</li> <li>• Undertake annual review of Risk Management Framework</li> <li>• The further develop the reporting of risks within the performance and risk management system</li> <li>• Reports presented to Committees as of Autumn 2024</li> <li>• Roll out of the E-learning risk management training module August 2024</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red / Limited Assurance Audit – Deferred Charges and Management of Residential Care Liabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full Action Plan has been developed and shared with Governance and Audit Committee in April 2024</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red / Limited Assurance Audit – Recycling Targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full Action Plan has been developed and will be shared with Governance and Audit Committee in July 2024</li> </ul>



## What are the Strategic issues identified during 2023/24?

The review of the effectiveness of the Council’s governance arrangements identified 19 Strategic Red Risks during 2023/24. Details of how the issues have been addressed is provided below:

Strategic Issues for 2023/24	Mitigating Actions	Target Score <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>EY01</b> - Secondary schools are not financially viable due to insufficient base funding and falling pupil numbers</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 - REY01</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge and support meetings with Headteacher/School Business Manager and regular budget monitoring sessions with schools to confirm adherence to licensed deficit protocol</li> <li>• Financial Performance Monitoring Group meetings</li> <li>• Schools’ pupil funding Formula review</li> <li>• Local Authority approval mechanisms for recruitment in schools with budget deficits</li> </ul>	<p><b>15</b></p>
<p><b>EY13</b> - Inability to fully deliver on Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme due to financial, workforce and contractor implications</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 - REY13</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective project plans, project risk register and Project Officers in place ensure projects are progressing within budget and timescales with regular reports to Education programme and Capital and Assets Programme Boards to track progress</li> <li>• Regular reporting and dialogue with Welsh Government</li> <li>• Regular dialogue with North Wales Construction Partnership contractors and supply chain</li> </ul>	<p><b>15</b></p>
<p><b>EY36</b> - External Grants for Revenue Expenditure</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – REY36</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring through monthly Portfolio Finance Meetings; Education programme Board</li> </ul>	<p><b>15</b></p>
<p><b>REY37</b> - Lack of resources/capacity to meet increasing demand for specialist provision, means children and young people with complex educational needs are not accessing appropriate education provision</p> <p><b>New risk for 2023/24</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Options for an increase in specialist school provision by use of WG grant funding; using grant funding to increase number of places within resource provision in secondary sector</li> </ul>	<p><b>8</b></p>

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

Strategic Issues for 2023/24	Mitigating Actions	Target Score <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>CG02</b> - Significant Loss of Corporate data and systems due to security / environmental / Technical incident</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 - RGV01</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a valid PSN and prepare for Cyber Essentials Accreditation</li> <li>• Participation in National Security Groups, such as Warp, and constant review of National Cyber Security Centre guidance</li> <li>• Use of Citrix technologies provides a secure environment which delivers the majority of our business systems</li> <li>• Maintain a second active datacentre allows for the continual provision of critical systems</li> <li>• Utilise strong security controls, vulnerability management and delivery mechanism to reduce this risk</li> <li>• Development of Cyber incident response and recovery plan</li> <li>• Regular review and testing of IT Disaster Recovery Plan</li> <li>• Identify list of critical business applications</li> <li>• Complete full review on IT Security Policies Risk is being taken into account in the review of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including a review of the adequacy of levels of bad debt provision across the Council</li> <li>• Additional funding (circa £1.05m) from Welsh Government to compensate for losses of 2020/21 council tax collections is helping to provide financial resilience as we enter the recovery phase</li> </ul>	<p><b>12</b></p>
<p><b>GO10</b> - Failure to meet agreed deadlines within the Digital Strategy</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 - RGV03</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the potential for automation to free up resource within the IT Service</li> <li>• Continue with the DSB prioritisation process to reduce burden at any one time</li> </ul>	<p><b>6</b></p>
<p><b>NR03</b> - The Council is unable to meet its homelessness statutory obligations due to shortages in staff, budgetary pressures, and lack of available accommodation</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RHC09</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor demand for homeless services with a view to informing workforce, prevention activities and homeless accommodation planning</li> <li>• Monitor levels of emergency accommodation with a view to informing workforce, move-on activities and homeless accommodation planning</li> <li>• Monthly financial review of budgets to monitor current expenditure and project in-year and future pressures</li> </ul>	<p><b>12</b></p>

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

Strategic Issues for 2023/24	Mitigating Actions	Target Score <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>NR04</b> - The Council does not have access to sufficient/ adequate/ right type of housing supply to meet the demands of those individuals on the common housing register and due to the increase in the levels of homelessness.</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RHC10</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring Common Housing Register data to ensure the Local Authority has strategic oversight for housing needs to include future build plans and redevelopment of housing stock and/or future policy changes</li> <li>• Ensure Common Allocations Policy adhered to when assessing housing needs and eligibility for Common Housing Register</li> <li>• Use Common Housing Register data to inform Housing Strategy and redevelopment and new build plans for affordable housing as annually through the Housing Prospectus</li> <li>• Monitor notices from within the private sector resulting in homeless presentations to inform future engagement strategies for landlords and agents and scope for purchase options on the back of recent changes from Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) on the Social Housing Grant (SHG) programme</li> <li>• Monitor expenditure on homeless emergency accommodation with a view to informing financial risk and MTFS / budget planning</li> </ul>	<p><b>15</b></p>
<p><b>NR05</b> – Delays in pre-construction process due to planning and Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SABS) applications</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RHC11</b></p> <p><b>Updated description - Delays in pre-construction process due to planning and sustainable drainage approval body (SABS) applications may lead to late delivery of schemes, and loss of Social Housing Grant (SHG) within the annual PDP allocation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor programme deliverables in line with agreed timescales and budget</li> <li>• Delivery risks to be highlighted at regular intervals to Housing Programme Board, Assets Board and Chief Officer of Housing and Communities and any mitigating actions identified and implemented</li> <li>• Key milestones in pre-construction to be monitored on a scheme-by-scheme basis with the development teams for Flintshire County Council (FCC) projects and Registered Social Landlords (RSL) partners for the PDP (Planned Development Programme). These will be WLGA technical approval, planning approval, SABS approval, contractor appointment and scheme approval</li> <li>• Mitigations will be realistic time assumptions for SABS, WLGA technical approval and planning processes, resource, redeployment to address “pinch points” and adjustment to PDP to bring forward alternative schemes to maximise SHG allocations to Flintshire County Council</li> </ul>	<p><b>8</b></p>

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

Strategic Issues for 2023/24	Mitigating Actions	Target Score <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>RPE03</b> - Unable to regenerate Town Centres through implementation of the Town Centre Strategy due to insufficient resources and wider economic trends</p> <p><b>New risk for 2023/24</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop new place making plans to set out future actions in each town. Each plan to be based upon refreshed data analysis, commercial assessment and community consultation</li> <li>• Manage expectations from stakeholders by differentiating between aspirations and agreed actions with resources</li> <li>• Monitor the progress of the place making plans and availability of resources for their delivery</li> </ul>	<p><b>4</b></p>
<p><b>RPE55</b> - Inability of the Council to cost its carbon reduction strategy causing issues with identification and commitment of funds to realise the actions needed to become a net zero carbon Council.</p> <p><b>New risk for 2023/24</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and other Welsh local authorities to understand and utilise best practice methods for costing carbon actions. Keep abreast of emerging technological solutions and cost implications of same. Where possible, utilise baseline data to forecast costs of associated decarbonisation works</li> </ul>	<p><b>4</b></p>
<p><b>SS01</b> –Expenditure on out of county placements increases as placement costs increase in a demand led market.</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RSS01</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with local providers to reshape the residential market</li> <li>• Maximising local housing options</li> </ul>	<p><b>9</b></p>
<p><b>SS22</b> - An insufficient supply of placements leads to young people being placed in unregistered settings</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RSS22</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement Multiagency Support Team to work with families of young people on the edge of care and prevent placement breakdown</li> <li>• Combat exploitation through the Strategic and Operational MET (Missing, Exploitation, Trafficking) group</li> <li>• Develop policies and models to attract new foster carers and expand the type of placements offered</li> <li>• Working with local providers to reshape the residential market</li> <li>• Maximising local housing options</li> </ul>	<p><b>9</b></p>

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

Strategic Issues for 2023/24	Mitigating Actions	Target Score <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>ST-S07</b> - Inability to achieve national recycling targets due to increased residual waste tonnages collected</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RST07</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a review of the Council Waste Strategy to identify improve service delivery methods to minimise residual waste disposal and increase recycling</li> </ul>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p><b>CF18</b> - Impact on the stability of the Medium-Term Financial Plan of increases in service demand, high inflation and reduced future Welsh Government Local Government Settlements</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RCF18</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular monitoring of the financial impact across the organisation</li> <li>Analysis of funding support announcements by WG in line with above</li> <li>Reporting impact to Financial TCG on a weekly basis</li> <li>Weekly engagement with Society of Welsh Treasurers (SWT) to gain all Wales position</li> <li>Regular liaison with WLGA contacts re escalation with Welsh Government</li> </ul>	<p><b>9</b></p>
<p><b>RCF09</b> - Sufficient funding capacity to meet Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2.0 targets</p> <p><b>New risk for 2023/24</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ul>	<p><b>10</b></p>
<p><b>CPA01</b> - Impact of restructuring and efficiency savings over time. Resulting in reduction in HR to point where fulfilling current and increasing service demand is untenable</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RCPA01</b></p> <p><b>New description as of 2023/24 – Difficulties in fulfilling workload, recruiting and retaining the right/qualified staff and the impact on the existing workforce. This is a result of multiple factors such as: reduced human resource as a result of historic restructuring and efficiencies; workforce demographics; loss of professional qualified employees.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission service delivery, with supporting budget</li> <li>Explore different ways of working</li> <li>Review workload/demand and resource</li> </ul>	<p><b>12</b></p>

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

Strategic Issues for 2023/24	Mitigating Actions	Target Score <sup>1</sup>
<p><b>RCPA09</b> - Compliance with carbon targets for corporate assets/ property</p> <p><b>New risk for 2023/24</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All corporate offices have a Building Management System (BMS) . Ty Dewi Sant BMS is being upgraded and will be completed in 24/25 financial year</li> <li>• Building Management systems are being installed in schools, as of May 2024 this project is 80% complete</li> <li>• All new Schools and care homes being constructed will be achieving the Net Zero Carbon requirement, examples being; Mynydd Isa Campus, Ysgol Croes Atti, Flint and the new Croes Atti residential care home</li> <li>• The annual Capital Repair and Management programme routinely undertake projects, such as reroofing (and in doing so insulation is brought up to the required standard), single glazed windows to be replaced by thermally efficient units</li> <li>• The phase out of oil boilers within the school's portfolio has been completed and other boilers within the school's portfolio to be replaced with the most efficient product available</li> <li>• The Council has agreed and will be undertaking a Refit Programme, this is contained within the Capital programme. The Aim is to achieve an annual CO2 savings of 481 tonnes</li> <li>• To implement the proposed office rationalisation project in order to further reduce the Council's CO2</li> </ul>	<p><b>4</b></p>
<p><b>CPA13</b> - Lack of resource to respond swiftly to increasing demand of capital projects with grant funding requiring swift/ in-year spend. May result in loss of grant funding and/or high profile project failure</p> <p><b>New code as of 2023/24 – RCPA13</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioning services need to challenge via established routes</li> </ul>	<p><b>12</b></p>

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

\*The strategic risks identified for 2023/24 are kept under frequent review\*

## Certification

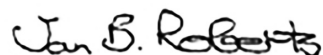
The review provides good overall assurance that Flintshire County Council's arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework requirements for Local Authorities within Wales.

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. Ian B Roberts  
Leader of the Council