

# **Denbighshire County Council Panel Performance Assessment (PPA), response statement and action plan**

# Denbighshire County Council Panel Performance Assessment (PPA): action plan

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# **Denbighshire County Council Panel Performance Assessment (PPA): action plan**

## **Introduction**

In response to the issued PPA Report, the council is required under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) to state in its response any actions it proposes to take to increase the extent to which it meets the performance requirements. The action plan that follows is provided to discharge that statutory requirement and responds to the Panel's 9 recommendations for improvement and 8 identified strengths and areas of innovation.

The Chief Executive Team is accountable for the delivery of actions identified with a Senior Leadership Team lead identified to be responsible for the delivery. Quarterly updates on progress will be provided to the Council's Well-Run, High Performing Council Board. Status updates will be provided to Committees every 6 months as part of the Council's performance self-assessment reporting.

## **Statutory response statements**

### **The extent to which we accept the conclusions in the report**

"The Council welcomes and accepts the report and its conclusions. It notes that the Assessment was a useful process and appreciates the thoughtfulness and the thoroughness of the Assessment team. For future Assessments, we would welcome greater content in the final report on the evidence seen which has led to each recommendation. A general observation, which reflects across a number of our responses in the Action Plan, is that we would like to have seen more emphasis in the process and report on how we are building community and council well-being and resilience for anticipated future challenges, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations goals and ways of working."

### **The extent to which the council intends to follow any recommendations contained in the report**

"The Council accepts all recommendations made in the PPA report and has put in place an Action Plan setting out how it will take each recommendation forward. It should be

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noted that this Assessment has been done at a particular point in time and progress has already happened quickly around some areas, such as prioritisation of the transformation work.”

### 9 areas for improvement

#### **Recommendation 1: continue to develop the narrative and vision the Council has set out for Denbighshire to ensure it can serve the county in the medium and long term**

This should reflect the many advantages of the area, such as its fantastic cultural, natural and geographic assets. The Council should build on its approach to inclusive policy making to ensure that this vision is shared across the Council, its partners, and its residents.

#### **Response to recommendation**

We will build on our work engaging residents and partners in our Closer to Communities and Placemaking Plans to develop our narrative and vision alongside developing our transformation priorities and financial plan.

This vision should be aligned with its long-term transformation priorities and medium-term financial plan.

While we recognise and value the area’s assets as identified in the report, we propose our narrative and vision is more strongly based in building community and council well-being and resilience for anticipated future challenges, than solely in the marketing of these assets as implied in the report. We will take this work forward through the following actions

#### **Action 1**

Develop the narrative and long-term vision for the Council and Denbighshire; consider the value of creating aspirational marketing material to support our inward investment goals.

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<b>Report reference:</b>	8.11 (Rec.1)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service - Performance, Digital and Assets
<b>By when:</b>	December 2026

## Action 2

Work through the Public Services Board to ensure the up-coming Well-being Plan is developed inclusively and reflects a financially-viable narrative and vision, in line with the corporate plan and transformation priorities.

We also acknowledge the need to communicate better within the council, with residents and partners to build ownership and understanding of the council vision and progress in delivery.

<b>Report reference:</b>	8.11 (Rec.1)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service - Performance, Digital and Assets
<b>By when:</b>	December 2026

## Action 3

We will review how we communicate our performance (captured as key performance indicators)

3a) in delivering the Corporate Plan

3b) across key projects

3c) to those less able to access digital communications (see action 13 below)

This will include briefing individuals (political members and officers) who represent

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the Council on external bodies or at events so that they may better advocate for the Council and its mission.

<b>Report reference:</b>	8.11 (Rec.1)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service - Performance, Digital and Assets
<b>By when:</b>	Action 3a) September 2025 Action 3b) March 2026 Action 3c) On-going for officers; annually for members through appropriate means

### **Recommendation 2: consider well-being and professional development support available to the Council's Senior Leadership Team.**

The Corporate Executive Team and wider senior management team need to remain resilient and focussed in the face of ongoing and future challenges.

#### **Response to recommendation**

We will continue to provide a safe, stable and sustainable working environment for all staff. To enhance existing provision, we are developing an organisational Wellbeing Strategy for implementation during 2025/26.

Our Wellbeing Strategy will prioritise the health, safety, and wellbeing of our workforce, further supporting conditions for them to be safe and well. While we accept that particular support to the Council's Senior Leadership Team is essential for business continuity, we propose this resilience and focus must also be extended to wider middle management and building on well-being and professional development needs as identified through on-going 1:1s

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### Action 4

We will ensure the corporate Wellbeing Strategy specifically sets out how the Council can better support the wellbeing and resilience of our Leadership Team (CET/SLT/Middle Managers).

We will work with the Leadership Team (CET/SLT/Middle Managers) to understand their professional development needs to include training, coaching, and mentoring.

**Report reference:** 8.11 (Rec. 2)

**Responsible officer:** Head of Corporate Support Service - People

**By when:** May 2025

### Action 5

From this we will produce a Corporate Professional Development Plan for implementation during 2025/26.

**Report reference:** 8.11 (Rec.2)

**Responsible officer:** Head of Corporate Support Service - People

**By when:** June 2025

### **Recommendation 3: develop a clear prioritisation of the Council's transformation agenda.**

The Council should continue to pursue its transformation agenda. The Council will need to carefully consider which of its projects and initiatives will be prioritised and carried forward, and crucially which projects will not.

These should reflect the longer-term vision and ambition of the Council and align to its medium-term financial strategy, workforce strategy and risk appetite.



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## Response to recommendation

A clear prioritisation of our Transformation Programme has now been completed. Consultation across senior managers has shown strong support for the transformation agenda, which we will continue to roll-out through the tranche approach to prioritisation of projects.

As per [action 2](#) and [action 3](#), above, we will continue to develop and communicate the narrative around that transformation, and ensure it is embedded in our Well-being Plan.

<b>Report reference:</b>	9.9 (Rec. 3)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	see <a href="#">action 2</a> and <a href="#">action 3</a> above
<b>By when:</b>	see <a href="#">action 2</a> and <a href="#">action 3</a> above

## Recommendation 4: align the Council's operating model and workforce strategy to its vision and transformation agenda

The Council will need to carefully consider how its vision translates into the operating model for the Council. This should include how the Council can support staff to meet the demands of a future vision for how the Council operates, and be aligned to its key strategies that enable transformational change

## Response to recommendation

Service planning, design, policy and standards development will be taken on a case-by-case basis to make commissioning decisions (make/buy/borrow) and this activity will be prompted by annual service planning and contract management processes. It is expected a mixed economy model will continue in DCC as its operating model.

## Action 6a

We will complete the latest iteration of a workforce planning exercise with services to identify their workforce needs and ensure they meet current and future demands of our

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transformation agenda, vision and financial pressures. This will include consideration of professional development for senior and middle management as per [action 5](#) above, and of good practice in succession planning.

<b>Report reference:</b>	9.9 (Rec.4)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service - People
<b>By when:</b>	October 2025

### Action 6b

We will use key actions collated from the workforce planning exercise to review the Council Workforce Strategy and ensure it aligns with the council's transformational programme.

<b>Report reference:</b>	9.9 (Rec.4)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service - People
<b>By when:</b>	April 2026

### **Recommendation 5: carefully consider the opportunities for further partnership working presented by the new Corporate Joint Committee as a new statutory regional body**

The Council recognises the important role partners will have to play in 'managing down' demand on key Council services. The Council has an opportunity to build on and strengthen its approach to partnership working through proactive engagement with new statutory Corporate Joint Committees.

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## Response to recommendation

The Council is looking to build on its existing regional partnership work to explore and deliver continued efficiency gains and to reduce duplication of effort through greater collaborative working.

### Action 7

Through best practice in partnership management we will build a more collegial relationship with city, town and community councils:

- 7a) for example, by restoring regular meetings with a dedicated liaison officer and annual meetings with the Chief Executive and Leader  
(to be taken forward in line with Internal Audit report D232441 - Internal Audit of Partnership Arrangements for Denbighshire County Council (currently in draft))
- 7b) and opportunities communicated clearly to employees, members and residents

<b>Report reference:</b>	10.4 (Rec.5)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Action 7a) Chief Executive Action 7b) Head of Corporate Support Service - People
<b>By when:</b>	Action 7a) December 2027 Action 7b) December 2027

## **Recommendation 6: use the Council’s convening power to strengthen partnership working with City, Town and Community Councils, and amplify collaboration for collective outcomes**

The Panel established that the Council is working with its City, Town and Community Councils in some areas and recognises the key roles and support this relationship can bring. The Panel suggests that this work could be further strengthened through earlier and constructive conversations around the capacity and resource capability of those Councils

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to support the wider aspirations of the Council in delivering its transformational change priorities and being an integral part of the operating model for the Council in the future.

### Response to recommendation

We accept we need to develop the relationship with City, Town and Community Councils, and see this as a gateway to extending our working with communities, businesses and the Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC). Developing best practice around partnership working will support our work with all our partners- existing and those we will newly develop.

### Action 8

Through best practice in partnership management we will build a more collegial relationship with city, town and community councils:

8a) for example, by restoring regular meetings with a dedicated liaison officer and annual meetings with the Chief Executive and Leader

(to be taken forward in line with Internal Audit report D232441 - Internal Audit of Partnership Arrangements for Denbighshire County Council (currently in draft))

8b) and opportunities communicated clearly to employees, members and residents

Through the meetings above, we will engage City, Town and Community Councils in decision-making around shared areas of interest.

### Action 9

As part of developing placemaking plans, we will work with local town councils to identify and engage community groups and businesses in shared areas of interest relevant to that group(s).

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<b>Report reference:</b>	10.4 (Rec.7)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Action 8a) Head of Housing and Communities Action 8b) Head of Housing and Communities Action 9 - Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside
<b>By when:</b>	Action 8a) August 2027 Action 8b) August 2027 Action 9 – December 2028

## **Recommendation 7: review and strengthen relationship with Trade Unions**

In light of new Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, the Council's senior leadership should consider whether they can do more to meet the aims and principles of consensus-building and collaborative working set out in the act with Trade Unions.

### **Response to recommendation**

We would value a closer relationship and deeper partnership with trade unions and will seek to build on the existing, regular engagement led predominantly by the Human Resources team.

### **Action 10a**

We will conduct an analysis of potential value to the council's priorities from the new Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act and explore opportunities to build engagement.

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<b>Report reference:</b>	10.4 (Rec.7)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service - People
<b>By when:</b>	December 2025

## Action 10b

We will work with the Unions to increase awareness and understanding of the role of unions and the existing processes we have in place around trade union engagement.

<b>Report reference:</b>	10.4 (Rec.7)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service - People
<b>By when:</b>	December 2026

## Action 11

As part of developing placemaking plans, we will work with local town councils to identify and engage community groups and businesses in shared areas of interest relevant to that group(s).

<b>Report reference:</b>	10.4 (Rec.7)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service - People
<b>By when:</b>	December 2026

## **Recommendation 8: review the Council's approach to how it communicates and engages with its residents, staff and partners**

The Council reviews its approach to ensure that it has the right tools and resources in place to engage with its staff, citizens and stakeholders in a meaningful two-way process.

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## Response to recommendation

The Council is clear it wants to improve communication and engagement with residents, employees, businesses and partners, and has plans already underway to do so (e.g. see [Action 2](#) above in particular). In addition, we will:

### Action 12

We will develop and upgrade a news blog website for DCC to share our news to the press and the public. We will continue to ensure communication with residents, businesses and community groups is clear and in a format that is understandable and accessible.

**Report reference:** 10.4 (Rec.8)

**Responsible officer:** Head of Corporate Support Service - People

**By when:** December 2025

### Action 13

We will explore options for improving staff communications especially for those staff who do not have access to council's emails and intranet. This includes exploring the use of a dedicated app for Denbighshire staff.

**Report reference:** 10.4 (Rec.8)

**Responsible officer:** Head of Corporate Support Service - People

**By when:** December 2026

### Action 14

We will deliver on the actions from the Internal Audit of Partnership Arrangements (report D232441) to further develop our approach for partnership as we move forward with the Council's transformation programme.

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<b>Report reference:</b>	10.4 (Rec.8)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service- Performance, Digital and Assets
<b>By when:</b>	As per actions in the Internal Audit report (currently in draft)

## Recommendation 9: equalities

In reviewing its Corporate Plan the Council needs to reflect on where the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 Wales Specific Duties (for example the Strategic Equality Plan) are best placed to ensure it has a robust and effective approach in place.

### Response to recommendation

We have integrated our Strategic Equalities Plan (SEP) into our Corporate Plan. This was done to ensure equality considerations were mainstreamed to become everyone's responsibility to improve (equalities also being a central consideration of the wellbeing impact assessment required for each project).

We also have a dedicated Strategic Equalities and Delivery Board which oversees delivery of the equalities aspects of the integrated plan. Standalone equalities performance reports are being produced quarterly from October 2024, tracking progress in delivery.

### Action 15

We will connect with the two other local authorities in Wales who have integrated their Strategic Equalities Plan to their Corporate Plan as we have so we can share practice and exchange experience of any challenges.



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<b>Report reference:</b>	10.4 (Rec.9)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Head of Corporate Support Service- Performance, Digital and Assets
<b>By when:</b>	End of 2025

## 8 identified strengths and areas of innovation

### Areas 1 and 2

#### Area 1

A politically mature and stable coalition, capable of working collectively and collaboratively in the interests of the county and its residents

#### Area 2

Positive working relationships between officers and members who both understand their unique and complementary roles.

### Organisational response

These two strengths have been central to maintaining robust corporate governance health over the past ten or more years, and will be critical for ongoing corporate governance health going forward.

The four values and five principles championed by the Council are key to continuing and developing the coalition and good working relationships at the heart of these observations. The leadership team has spent a lot of time engaging with and training Councillors and will seek to build on these relationships moving forward, particularly through the work of the “Well Run, High performing Council” board.

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<b>Report reference:</b>	Area 1 - 6.1 (bullet point 1) Area 2 - 6.1 (bullet point 2)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	Area 1 - Chief Executive Area 2 - Chief Executive
<b>By when:</b>	Area 1 - ongoing Area 2 - ongoing

## Area 3

An engaged and energetic Chief Executive, who has sought to bring additional clarity and accountability to the Council's directorship structure, establishing a strong foundation for further change and continually promoting and living the 'One Council and Denbighshire Way'.

### Organisational response

[Action 4](#) (Corporate Wellbeing strategy), [action 5](#) (Corporate Professional Development Plan) and [action 6](#) (Workforce Planning Exercise) all contribute to sustaining this strength, and will be critical for ensuring on-going wellbeing and resilience within the organisation.

<b>Report reference:</b>	6.1 (bullet point 3)
<b>Responsible officer:</b>	See <a href="#">action 1</a> ; <a href="#">action 2</a> ; <a href="#">action 3</a> ; <a href="#">action 4</a> ; <a href="#">action 5</a> and <a href="#">action 6</a>
<b>By when:</b>	See <a href="#">action 1</a> ; <a href="#">action 2</a> ; <a href="#">action 3</a> ; <a href="#">action 4</a> ; <a href="#">action 5</a> and <a href="#">action 6</a>

## Area 4

Strong recognition amongst staff of the 'Denbighshire Way' and the 'One Council' approach.

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## Organisational response

We will continue to build on engagement and communication with employees around these priorities, particularly noting [action 13](#) above.

**Report reference:** 6.1 (bullet point 4)

**Responsible officer:** See [action 13](#)

**By when:** See [action 13](#)

## Area 5

A strong sense of pride and commitment from staff to making a difference to communities and a willingness to support Council staff from other service areas who require short term capacity e.g. responding to the customer facing issues around waste.

## Organisational response

As set out in [action 4](#) with regard to [recommendation 8.11 \(Rec.2\)](#) above, we will continue to support all staff with well-being, particularly following particularly intense or difficult experiences.

**Report reference:** 6.1 (bullet point 5)

**Responsible officer:** See [action 4](#)

**By when:** See [action 4](#)

## Area 6

The Council has engaged well with its staff and members on its immediate budget pressures to date.

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### Organisational response

As set out above, we will further develop our approach to communication and engagement to support the Council's transformation and budget agenda.

**Report reference:** 6.2 (bullet point 1)

**Responsible officer:** See [action 2](#); [action 3](#); [action 13](#)

**By when:** See [action 2](#); [action 3](#); [action 13](#)

### Area 7

A high degree of integration across social services and education, evident in the management structure of the organisation, but also triangulated through the feedback of interviewees.

### Organisational response

We will continue to build on this integration.

**Report reference:** 6.2 (bullet point 2)

**Responsible officer:** Corporate Director for Social Care and Education

**By when:** Ongoing

### Area 8

The Member Area Groups (MAGs) whereby members and officers meet in designated wards across the County to discuss residents' local priorities and local impact issues e.g. road resurfacing. In this example choice to which road is resurfaced was discussed and proposed in terms of the local priority (excluding statutory requirements) within existing resources. This approach appeared innovative to the Panel and a real source of engagement with members and the community as a whole.

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## Organisational response

We will consider how to build on the lessons learned from the MAGs function to further strengthen our engagement with and responsiveness to residents.

**Report reference:** 6.2 (bullet point 3)

**Responsible officer:** Corporate Director for Governance and Business

**By when:** Ongoing