

# COUNCIL PLAN

## ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

**2023-24**



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## OUR VALUES:

EMPOWERMENT

TRUST AND HONESTY

ASPIRATION

COLLABORATION

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

FAIRNESS

These are underpinned by the Seven Principles of Public Life (the 'The Nolan Principles') that apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder, including those who are elected or appointed to public office.



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## FOREWORD

At the start of 2024 we launched our new Council Plan (2023-28) which set out our vision for Wrexham County Borough Council that all the people that live here are supported to fulfil their potential, prosper and achieve a high standard of well-being. We will be a strong and inclusive community leader to help make this happen, with a focus on strong values and behaviours.

The Council Plan details our six Well-being Objectives, which we call our council priorities, and the outcomes we want to achieve within these to improve the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of Wrexham and our contribution to Wales' Well-being Goals.

This Annual Performance Report aims to present a summary of our evaluation of success at the end of the first year of our new Council Plan (2023-28). We produce this report every year to review the progress we have made in our improvement journey towards fulfilling our vision for the future for Wrexham County Borough. This report provides an overview for the 2023/24 financial year, the first year of our new Council Plan.

The report is an assessment of progress against our six council priorities and there is so much in our County Borough to be proud of whilst acknowledging, understanding and committing to tackling the emerging issues. Throughout this report we are pleased to share Wrexham County Borough Council's achievements during the first year of the plan, whilst recognising where progress made was not as expected and acknowledging the ongoing impact of reducing council budgets.

Undeniably, the budget challenges for the council affected the progress on some planned areas of work. Coupled with the cost-of-living crisis this created hardships and challenges for our council and communities, we have needed to consider

where we can make savings and find better ways of doing things, whilst committing to the services that the communities of Wrexham need. The proposed future budget has added additional financial pressures on the council as we are required to find savings and efficiencies due to reduced funding.

The economic outlook for all local councils looks particularly challenging over the coming three years. Rising costs, pay and demand pressures have outstripped funding in the current financial year and will continue to do so based on the latest assessments within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). (To read our MTFP please visit our [Council Finance internet page](#). Further information is also included on the '[Managing your money](#)' page within this report).

Despite the ongoing challenges, we remain committed to delivering our vision and we are resolved to not let this dampen our excitement about the future for Wrexham County Borough, the regeneration projects and investment coming to the area.

We also remain committed to reducing inequalities within Wrexham County Borough. Our equality outcomes are woven throughout our Council Plan (2023-28) to ensure we prioritise delivery on our commitment to achieving better and fairer outcomes for all, promoting equality and diversity and reducing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage. You can read more about the progress we have made towards achieving each of the six council priorities and work completed towards our equality outcomes in the individual priority pages of this report and [Appendix 1](#).

Overall we are making good progress and highlights from 2023/24 include:

- The implementation of our Carbon Impact Assessment Tool. The tool ensures that we

consider the carbon impact of our decision making, embedding decarbonisation into everything we do.

- Exceeded the target of returning 2 empty or underutilised buildings back into use within three years of council involvement by 9 buildings. Ensuring our local area continues to improve, thrive and offer resilience for the future.
- A proactive approach delivered 541 interventions to resolve hazards in private sector housing, considerably above the baseline and target figure of 300 interventions.
- At the end of the academic year 2022/23, 93.3% of Additional Learning Needs learners leaving Year 11 made a successful transition from statutory schooling to education, employment or training. A significant improvement from 89% in 2021/22.
- Significant reduction in the waiting list for statutory occupational therapy assessments, with 600 referrals outsourced successfully and the development of the new Occupational Therapy Clinic is seeing positive results in reducing waiting lists.
- Workforce absence rates within the council reduced in 2023/24, supported by a strong people management culture, employee well-being programme and improved management of sickness absence.
- The number of job outcomes across the County Borough from 'Communities for Work Plus' was impacted by a reduction in funding from Welsh Government and subsequent redundancy process. However into 2024/25 the team remain committed to deliver despite resourcing challenges, working towards reduced targets set by Welsh Government.
- Work was delayed on the implementation of our Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023-28 as a result of resourcing, work will continue into 2024/25 to progress and adopt the strategy.
- The number of learners with attendance below 85%, dipped below our 2022/23 baseline. In 2024/25 we will continue to offer bespoke support to schools where there remains a high level of learners not attending school on a regular basis to re-engage and improve attendance
- Foster carer recruitment remains a challenge. In 2024/25 we will continue to work with Foster Wales and hold recruitment and marketing events to promote opportunities within fostering.
- Unpredictable financial challenges will require careful people management focus across the council, ensuring people are supported and health and well-being focus is maintained through a period of change.

However we recognise where we have faced challenges and where we need to improve including:

- Our waste reusing, recycling and composting performance in 2023/24 was below the Welsh Government statutory target. We will continue to explore initiatives in order to improve recycling rates across the County Borough.

To underpin our work towards our vision and achieve change we need to ensure that we are an effective council by reviewing how we work and how efficiently we use our resources. In 2023, we completed our second self-assessment under the new Local Government and Election (Wales) Act, which requires the council to publish a self-assessment report of the findings from the review. You can read our self-assessment report by visiting our [self-assessment internet page](#). We will continue to review our work, publish our self-



assessment on an annual basis and respond to findings to support the delivery of our vision.

We are only at the start of our new Council Plan and despite future challenges we remain excited and ambitious for Wrexham County Borough. We recognise the need to make future efficiencies and are planning to respond to future budgets against a background of increasing demand for local services. During these challenging times, as we have seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, we continue to see the team spirit of our Wrexham community prevail. We recognise that we are unable to achieve the vision of our Council Plan without the work of our councillors, workforce, communities and partners and their commitment, collaboration and determination in providing and improving services for the people and communities of Wrexham under challenging circumstances. We are proud of what

has been achieved and this report provides an opportunity to celebrate the many successes as well as an opportunity for reflection; to review our targets, our expectations and agree new more efficient ways of operation in light of the current climate. Whilst ensuring we continue to work towards our vision for the people and communities of Wrexham County Borough.

**CLLR MARK PRITCHARD**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**CLLR. PAUL ROBERTS**  
**LEAD MEMBER FOR PARTNERSHIPS**  
**AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**IAN BANCROFT**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

In January 2024, we published our new Council Plan (2023-28) where we set out our vision for the future of Wrexham County Borough. The Council Plan is where we set out our priorities for the council for the next five years; it provides a vision and direction for what we will be working towards in the medium term by focusing on the long term future of Wrexham County Borough.

The Council Plan also ensures that we are maximising our contribution to the seven [national well-being goals for Wales](#) established by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, and the Wrexham Public Services Board (PSB) well-being objectives. The plan details our six council priorities and the outcomes, including our strategic equality outcomes, that we want to work towards in the next five years.

This annual performance report sets out an analysis of how well we performed against our council priorities and the outcomes within these, at the end of the first year of our Council Plan. The [performance summary](#) on page 9 offers a snapshot summary of our position at the end of year 1, determined by our performance management framework. [Pages 16](#) to 64 provide a more detailed assessment of each council priority, including an account of the activities we have undertaken in support of them.

Throughout our planning and decision making in regards to the Council Plan we have been committed to the 'sustainable development principle,' which is about making sure that we act in a way that seeks to ensure that meeting our present needs does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It means that in taking decisions we:

- Look to the long term so we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs;
- Take an integrated approach so we look at how our priorities impact on our other wellbeing goals and objectives and those of other public bodies;
- Involve people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves;
- Work with others (including others within the council) in a collaborative way to find shared solutions to the well-being objectives; and
- Understand the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring or getting worse.

## HOW WE ASSESS OUR PROGRESS

To check the progress we have made in achieving our council priorities, we have measured how well we are doing against key outcome measures that were agreed as part of our performance management framework. You can read more about how we manage performance by visiting our [Council Plan Performance Management Framework](#) page.

Our agreed outcome measures were categorised as an area where by year-end we would either 'sustain' our current performance or 'improve' upon it from our previous year performance. It should be noted that targets to sustain our current performance can still represent challenging and ambitious targets when considered within the context of available resources and budget challenges.

Our progress is checked quarterly by the Council Plan Priority Boards, and at these check points, areas that are not meeting expectations are re-examined, and interventions implemented. Alongside this, performance is reported on twice a year to the council's Executive Board, Customer, Performance, Resources and Governance Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Coordinating Group.

For each outcome measure and the overall council priority, performance at the end of each year of the Council Plan has been judged against the following RAYG ratings.

### Individual Measure RAYG

- **Green:** Year-end target achieved and on track for outcome.
- **Yellow:** Year-end target slightly off track but we do not believe this will impair achievement of the outcome.
- **Amber:** Year-end target off track and there is a risk that this may impair achieving the outcome.
- **Red:** Year-end target off track and there is a risk that the outcome will not be achieved.

### OVERALL COUNCIL PRIORITY RAYG

- **Green:** Very good progress has been made towards delivering outcomes with strong evidence of improvement observed across the majority of measures.
- **Yellow:** Good progress has been made towards delivering outcomes with evidence of improvement observed across several measures.
- **Amber:** Progress has been made towards delivering outcomes but limited evidence of improvement across measures.
- **Red:** Little progress has been made towards delivering outcomes and performance is not improving.



## SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE

Many of our council plan outcomes have seen significant improvement at the end of the first year, and we have presented this detail, along with some of the highlights, in our assessment of each council priority, [pages 16 to 64](#).

We have however recognised that not all our outcome measures within our council priorities are on track, and through our performance management arrangements, we will be able to refocus our activities to continue on our journey to achieve our agreed outcomes.

In reviewing our performance, we have also considered whether the council priorities are still well placed to help deliver Wales' well-being goals. We are satisfied that they should remain unchanged for the second year of the plan. However, we have reflected upon the budget and service demand pressures in setting our targets for 2024/25 to reflect resources, national developments and/or changing local priorities due to increasing demands.

Taking into account the achievements and areas where progress was not on track, we have rated the progress towards our six priorities as yellow overall, this means good progress has been made towards delivering our council priorities, with evidence of improvement observed across several outcome measures in Year 1 of the plan. Where performance is off track we do not believe this will impair achievement or have identified as an area that requires review, in light of future budget pressures.

Table 1, gives a high-level summary of the overall progress we have made with each of the six council priorities at the end of the Council Plan.

*Table 1*

COUNCIL PRIORITY	Overall RAYG
Delivering Efficient Streetscene Services and Decarbonising our Environment	Yellow
Developing the Economy	Yellow
Ensuring Wrexham is a Fair and Safe Place	Yellow
Improving Education and Learning	Yellow
Promoting Good Health and Well-being (with a focus on social services and good mental health)	Yellow
Supporting a Highly Skilled and Engaged Workforce, Focussed on Delivering Services	Yellow

Table 2, gives a high-level summary of the overall progress we have made with each of 12 equality outcomes embedded within our council priorities.

**Table 2**

EQUALITY OUTCOMES	Overall RAYG
The council is an 'employer of choice' able to recruit and retain a diverse and sustainable workforce, with a modern approach to work and a framework of employee rewards and benefits.	Green
Any gender based pay gap identified will be reviewed and better understood. Appropriate work will commence to address this gap and other pay gaps where relevant.	Yellow
Our customers are able to contact us easily, through digital systems which are built around their needs. Our services are inclusive and we ensure that we support those customers who would like to use our digital services, as well as continuing to offer more traditional ways of contacting us, for those who need it.	Green
Welsh language and culture is thriving within our workforce and our communities and is actively promoted and supported.	Yellow
Wrexham is a place where everyone knows they can get involved to influence the planning and delivery of services. People are engaged, and consulted with on decisions which affect them, and where we can, we work to design and deliver services, and make things happen together.	Green
People are safeguarded from exploitation, violence and all forms of abuse, through working in partnership to increase awareness of the victims of exploitation and the available reporting pathways.	Yellow
Our communities are welcoming, and we promote and celebrate our communities' diversity and cultures and ensure appropriate access to all services for everyone.	Green
People seeking sanctuary from war or humanitarian crisis are supported to build a sustainable future in the County Borough.	Green
All learners are supported to improve their education outcomes, and inequalities in outcomes between different groups of learners will be reduced.	Yellow
Our learners have a positive learning experience through access to an environment that is accessible and fit for purpose and allows a choice of Welsh and English medium education.	Green
Children and adults are supported to have good mental health and well-being, by public services partnerships and communities working together. There is a focus on mental health support provided through prevention and early help mental health services to reduce demand for services later on.	Yellow
We make certain our social care services meet the needs of those who use them by making sure the voice of children, adults, families and carers is heard and listened to.	Amber

You can find more information on our equality duty, the Strategic Equality Plan element of our Council Plan, our Integrated Impact Assessments and how we developed our equality outcomes on our [Equality, Human Rights and Community Cohesion](#) page.



## MANAGING YOUR MONEY AND COUNCIL BUDGET

Our [Medium Term Financial Plan \(MTFP\)](#) put in place a strategic guide to the council's spending plans covering the period 2023/24 to 2025/26 to support the council's priorities within the context of balanced annual budget. The MTFP forecasts the future financial outlook for the council based on a number of assumptions, setting out indicative revenue and capital budgets including projections of the likely level of Council Tax and council balances. The MTFP supports the overall management of the council's key resources to deliver the council priorities. As part of our MTFP, the budget approved by elected members for the year 2023/24 was cash limited at £ £303,116,857. The following table shows the funding received for the 2023/24 financial year:

FUNDING	2023/24 BUDGET £
Welsh Government Funding	224,836,439
Council Tax	78,280,418
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>303,116,857</b>

### 2023/24 NET REVENUE BUDGET £303.1M

How we spent your money across Council Services in 2023/24 is presented in the chart below:

SERVICE	EXPENDITURE	PERCENTAGE
Schools	102 million	34%
Social Care	85 million	28%
Environmental and technical	39.8 million	13%
Corporate Services	15.7 million	5%
Central/Capital Financing Expenditure	15.6 million	5%
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	12.9 million	4%
Fire Levy	8.6 million	3%
Education and Early Intervention	7.7 million	3%
Housing (GF) and Assets	8 million	3%
Economy and Planning	7.3 million	2%



## FINANCIAL BUDGETING 2024/25

The economic environment within which the council operates has changed drastically over the last 18 months and this has impacted the council's budget planning assumptions, both in respect of funding and costs. Demand pressures have also grown significantly, particularly in respect of specialist care provision for children.

The budget for 2024/25 and updated MTFP recognised significant pressures within Social Care, Homelessness and School Transport and additional funding has been provided as a consequence. A number of economic risks were apparent when members approved the budget along with demand, cost and pay inflation pressures. The impact of this is being kept under review. Regular budget reports to elected members will be made throughout the year.

The budget approved by elected members for the year 2024/25 is cash limited at £319,571,866.

The table below shows the funding that will be received for the 2024/25 financial year:

FUNDING	2024/25 BUDGET £
Welsh Government Funding	232,864,570
Council Tax	86,707,296
<b>Total</b>	<b>319,571,866</b>

## ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Wrexham County Borough Council is committed to listening to the people of Wrexham. Good involvement means that everyone in our community knows they can join the discussion about the services we design and deliver; and can help shape the future of Wrexham County Borough. You can find out more about our commitment to involvement by reading our [Involvement Strategy](#).

Listening to the people of Wrexham County Borough can also help us to understand how we are performing as a council and we use a range of methods to gather service user perspective, and to help inform how we design and deliver the services we provide. The feedback from these indicators are reflected on regularly at service level to develop and improve our local authority offer.

Did you know?

- In 2023/24 we conducted 45 consultations through our Your Voice consultation platform.
- Annually we report on compliments and complaints, you can read our [annual compliments and complaints report](#) here.

As part of our annual self-assessment review process, which reviews how we work and how effectively we use our resources, we will consider service user perspective (where available). Service user perspective supports the council to understand and reflect on how well we are delivering our services as a council. Our Self-Assessment Report 2023/24, which is due to be published in December 2024 will set out the findings of the review and areas of development.

## OUR COUNCIL PRIORITIES

### DELIVERING EFFICIENT STREETSCENE SERVICES AND DECARBONISING OUR ENVIRONMENT

#### OVERALL RAYG - YELLOW

#### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Our new Council Priority 'Delivering Efficient Streetscene Services and Decarbonising our Environment' recognises the importance of a clean, attractive and sustainable environment on the well-being of our communities and future generations, and for all those who live, work and visit the County Borough. Through this priority we have focused on improving our environmental services to ensure they are effective and resilient, developing our Streetscene services to ensure they are efficient and working toward delivery of our Decarbonisation Plan to tackle the climate and ecological emergency we declared in September 2019.

Across all our environmental services we have faced increasing demand and reduced resources. In response we focused on developing the way we deliver our services and manage performance. Ensuring we are able to respond early to challenges identified through a robust performance management framework and efficiently allocate resources. In 2023/24, we developed a range of performance measures that will enable us to further investigate 'how well we are doing'. As many of these measures were new for 2023/24, this year has focused on how we capture robust data and the development of baselines to track improvement. During the first year of this council priority we implemented a new asset management software system. This has come with challenges, with transition issues impacting on some figures, which were below what we would expect to be achieving. These challenges will be considered when agreeing targets for 2024/25 that are both aspirational but achievable.

Recycling performance across the County Borough has declined and in 2023/24 our performance did not meet the Welsh Government statutory target. Progress is required in 2024/25 to review our waste strategy to achieve the 2024/25 70% recycling rate target set by Welsh Government.

Despite this, we have made progress in improving our environment, enhancing our open spaces and we are seeing an improvement to our green infrastructure across our City and County Borough. We adopted our Open Space Strategy, with work to continue into 2024/25 to develop an action plan to support implementation of the strategy. In 2023/24 we have seen our work rewarded through our 'Wales in Bloom' award resulting in entry into Britain in Bloom 2024/25. All our county parks achieved 'Fields in Trust' status and we have increased tree canopy cover following tree planting work. We have continued to progress key projects from our Decarbonisation Plan and our Carbon Impact Assessment Tool was implemented in 2023/24. The tool will ensure that decarbonisation is embedded into everything we do by considering carbon impact as part of our decision making.

The challenge for us in coming years is to prioritise our outcomes in response to the ongoing impact of reducing council budgets, so that we manage our resources appropriately while continuing to make a real impact. Considering both our achievements in 2023/24 and the challenges we have faced, we have rated this council priority overall as yellow.

To view the outcomes that we are working towards in this priority. Please visit our Council Plan priority page [Delivering Efficient Streetscene Services and Decarbonising our Environment](#).

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### STREETSCENE

- Majority of play area inspections were completed, and maintenance was carried out on all play facilities to the correct schedule, despite being significantly impacted by industrial action during the year.
- Supported work to access funding from community councils for play areas and their improvements. We assisted our partners and communities with design and procurement, however we do not fund work ourselves.
- We are confident that we did collect fly tipping within timescales for most cases, however, year-end outturn is showing a reduction, which is the result of implementation of a new system which impacted on the accuracy of data captured. We have responded through system training to capture closure dates accurately.
- Implemented a process to identify 'hotspots' for fly tipping when multiple reports are received within an area. Where there has been 3 or more reports of fly tipping in a given location, appropriate signage will be placed in the area. If further reports are received we will target intervention including communication campaigns and assessment for suitability of camera deployment. However, the challenge is to reduce fly tipping on the whole so that the need for CCTV is reduced and that hotspots don't materialise.

- Despite challenges such as the industrial action, we continued to provide a bin collection service that is reflected in the low percentage of reported missed collections received this year. The average weekly percentage of bins reported as missed in 2023/24 was below the target of 0.21%.

### HIGHWAYS AND OPEN SPACES

- 95.86% of scheduled highways inspections were completed in line with policy. We met our target to establish a baseline ensuring we set aspirational targets to improve.
- We completed training to ensure that reactive highway repair work will be captured accurately on the new asset management system.
- We captured the percentage of the most severe potholes repaired in line with policy during 2023/24 and established a baseline of 57.74% to improve from.
- We inspected 86.5% of country parks / open space in line with policy, and actioned accordingly. This is despite industrial action that impacted on resource to carry out inspections.
- We completed the Blue Sky Survey which has established a baseline of 18.6% of tree canopy cover to improve from in 2024/25.
- In December 2023, our Executive Board approved our Open-Space Strategy, following this we will progress open-space action plans which identify appropriate use and management of all areas of open space.



## DECARBONISATION

Following Welsh Government's declaration of a climate Emergency in Wales, they announced the ambition for all Welsh public sector organisations to be carbon neutral by 2030. In 2019, Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. Since that declaration, we have developed our Decarbonisation Plan, setting out our road map to the decarbonisation of our council operations and the protection and enhancement of our natural environment. Highlights from our Decarbonisation Plan include:

- The council is making progress towards achieving Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2030 through the implementation of the Decarbonisation Plan (2021-2030). We consider carbon emissions and opportunities for carbon sequestration (capturing, removal and storage of carbon from the atmosphere) in all our decisions through our Carbon Impact Assessments.
- When considering our progress in reducing our carbon emissions against the 2019 baseline for our indicative measures, we are achieving a downwards trajectory overall.
- Adoption of the Flood Risk Management Strategy which will help inform our decision making when managing flood risk and maintenance programmes. We are building up data on our drainage network which will help inform the way we deliver our cyclic drainage programme.
- We increased our Low Carbon Communities to 6, above our target of 5 within the initial roll out. In 2024/25 we will liaise with councillors to ensure that all communities have the opportunity to get involved with reducing carbon within their areas.
- We conducted an audit of Wrexham's tree canopy cover for 2023 which has seen a marked increase in canopy cover since the last audit which was carried out pre Covid-19. We have been very successful in increasing the number of trees we are planting, which supports the offsetting of our carbon emissions.
- There is a commitment to map out, review and update all existing policies, protocols and plans in line with the objectives contained within the Open Spaces Strategy. This work has commenced following adoption of the strategy in December, with the reestablishment of the Wrexham Local Access Forum.
- We have recruited to a Shared Prosperity Fund Officer role focussed on community growing – working with the low carbon communities to identify suitable areas, develop plans and implement areas of community growing, along with their maintenance plans for the future.
- All households in Wrexham are supported to be actively engaged in working towards zero waste, through a combination of waste minimisation, re-use and recycling.

## TRANSPORT, MOBILITY AND BUILDINGS

- Agreed our electric vehicle charging contract and working with a new long term partner, plan to deliver vehicle charging sites across the County Borough including 48 small sites and 2 city centre hubs.
- Workforce and Elected member travel policy has been adopted and a fleet transition options report has been taken to members for consideration. Staff travel survey results and a summary paper is currently in development.
- We have Green Champions across the council, sitting in theme specific groups, one of which is looking at staff travel. An 'Eco and Considerate Driving' eLearning module for workforce is being developed to be launched in 2024/25.
- This year we appointed a Senior Transport Lead who will help deliver our Active Travel ambitions to improve our active travel network across Wrexham County Borough. This is a key ambition of our Public Services Board partners across North Wales.
- Appointed a Voids & Decarbonisation Lead and an Energy Efficiency Officer (funded by Welsh Government for 12 months). Both posts will be central to working towards the new requirements of Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023, where Landlords must carry out a Whole Stock Assessment and produce Target Energy Pathways for their homes.
- A review of land assets for Green Infrastructure (GI) interventions was completed this year. A working group has been set up and one action of the group is to begin an audit of GI interventions to include schools with nature support interventions and growing.

## PROCUREMENT

- Procurement colleagues have been working on a number of activities over the last year to achieve more responsible and sustainable procurement. In order to reduce demand, workforce e-learning modules are being developed on guidance for reducing what we buy as well as circular economy (which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible) training. A review has been carried out of requirements to be included in tenders including; Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) and social value.
- This year we conducted a Social Care pilot of the Carbon Reduction Plan tool for suppliers. The plan will be to commence the development and agreement of a consistent methodology for carbon emissions calculation to enable the council to 'own' a percentage of a supplier's carbon equal with the proportion of the company's turnover that we represent.

## CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

We have achieved some good progress during 2023/24, however there are areas where performance was not as expected and challenges have impacted on progress made. These include:

- Performance has been challenging in some areas where we transitioned to a new asset management system, impacting our data accuracy. Training has been provided to all who are required to use the system to ensure that we capture information accurately and timely. The robustness of data will be taken into account and reflected in targeting setting for 2024/25.

- Finances and resources are a challenge when trying to ensure that our Streetscene outcomes are met. We currently work reactively and this is unlikely to change unless we receive more funding to deliver our services. We are improving on the clearance of fly tipping, and repair of severe surface defects within timescale; however, a focus is still required in these areas.
- Recycling in Wrexham will be one of our key areas of focus in 2024/25 as Welsh Government have increased the recycle rate to 70%. A waste strategy will be developed to include a focus on a variety of waste services that will improve and increase our recycle rate.
- There was an increase in the number of instances of dog fouling and littering identified compared to 2022/23. This may have been due to better reporting functionality being available along with an increased awareness of how to report issues.
- Industrial action during the year, impacted upon our ability to collect litter while we ensured the delivery of other statutory functions such as domestic waste collections. Moving into 2024/25 we will be conducting behaviour change communication campaigns to help reduce litter and dog fouling.
- In December 2023, the Open Space Strategy was approved and adopted by the Executive Board. In 2024/25, an action plan will be created to support the objectives within the strategy.
- We have faced challenges in the implementation of new intelligent schedules for drainage system maintenance. Work in this area is still being developed. Challenges with the wet weather (North Wales had the wettest 9-month period ending in the month of March, which was the 2nd wettest of any 9-month period on record in the UK) has meant that the work to build the intelligent schedules has been interrupted. Based on the work we have done so far we have seen a reduction in flooding across the County Borough, however this is largely due to us repairing and making right any issues identified on site.
- To continue to achieve a downward trajectory in our carbon production/emissions, the main challenge moving forward will be around identifying the necessary funding to continue to decarbonise our activities as a council and to offset our carbon through actions such as generating our own energy and planting trees.
- A number of outcome measures that support our Decarbonisation Plan are reported annually in arrears, moving forward we may need to consider whether these figures are best placed in this priority in the current format, or whether we should be capturing different data that may be more beneficial, and easier to measure more frequently, working regionally with partners in the longer term.

## OUR OUTCOME MEASURES

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Percentage of playground inspections completed on schedule, and actioned appropriately.	Sustain	100%	100%	89% YELLOW	No
Reduction in the number of official reports of dog fouling and littering.	Improve (decrease)	Dog-Fouling - 277 Littering - 48	Reduction in reports <325	483 AMBER	No
Percentage of reported fly tipping incidents cleared within 5 working days.	Sustain	97%	97%	79% AMBER	No
Average weekly percentage of bins reported as missed	Sustain	0.21%	0.21%	0.06% (exceeded target) GREEN	Yes
Percentage of scheduled highways inspections completed in line with policy	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Baseline 95.86% GREEN	Yes
Percentage of the most severe potholes repaired in line with policy	Sustain	New Measure	Establish baseline	Baseline 57.74% GREEN	Yes
Percentage country parks / open space inspections completed in line with policy, and actioned accordingly.	Improve (increase)	90%	95%	86.5% YELLOW	No
Percentage of highway drainage systems inspected in line with agreed schedule	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Baseline in progress YELLOW	No



MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Reduction in overall carbon emissions or trajectory of reduction in overall carbon emission	Improve (decrease)	New Measure Establish baseline	10% reduction in tCO <sub>2</sub> e	Baseline -32% (reported in arrears) GREEN	Yes
Percentage of Executive Board and Council reports which contain carbon impact assessment	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Baseline in progress YELLOW	No
Number of Low Carbon Community Carbon Reduction Plans (CRPs)	Improve (increase)	2021/22 0	5	6 GREEN	Yes
Reduction in WCBC-owned transport fleet related carbon emissions	Improve (decrease)	2021/22 2474 (tCO <sub>2</sub> e) Fleet/Grey Fleet combined	10% reduction in tCO <sub>2</sub> e	3214 (25% increase) RED	No
Reduction in WCBC Emissions from Grey Fleet	Improve (decrease)	464 (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)	5% reduction in tCO <sub>2</sub> e	Measure needs development	Not reporting
Percentage of active travel future routes created (from Active Travel Network Map 2022)	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Baseline in progress YELLOW	No
Reduction in energy related carbon from WCBC buildings emissions or trajectory of reduction in energy related carbon emission (including off take from generation)	Improve (decrease)	2021/22 9,263 (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)	10% reduction in tCO <sub>2</sub> e	Baseline -12% (reported in arrears) GREEN	Yes
Percentage of large and SMEs in our supply change with Carbon Reduction Plans	Improve (increase)	New Measure	5%	Measure needs development	Not reporting

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Reduction in carbon emissions attributed to our supply chain	Improve (decrease)	28,894 (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)	10% reduction on baseline	Data available July 24	Not reporting
Tree canopy cover	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Baseline 18.6% GREEN	Yes
Metres-squared of open space managed for the benefit of biodiversity	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Baseline in progress YELLOW	No
Reduction in carbon emission from landfill waste	Improve (decrease)	2021/22 594 tonnes = 265 tCO <sub>2</sub> e	239	231.69 GREEN	Yes
Percentage of municipal waste reused, recycling or composted.	Improve (increase)	66.19%	65% (statutory target)	63.8% Red	No

<sup>1</sup> RAYG based on progress made towards year-end target. See [page 8](#) for definitions.

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

To help understand the current picture for each priority within Wrexham County Borough we have included a set of contextual indicators. These are local and national trends and issues that our outcomes contribute to. These are indicators that require the collaboration and integration of our partners, external organisations and communities to improve, however it is expected that the council priorities and the work underpinning these will impact the indicators in the long term.

CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE?	BASELINE/COMPARATIVE	LATEST UPDATE
Amount of waste generated that is not recycled, per person in Wrexham	Improve (decrease)	2021/22 All Wales figure 191kg per person	Awaiting next update – Data Cymru All Wales figure
Percentage of journeys by walking, cycling or public transport (to work) – All Wales	Improve (increase)	2020 All Wales figure 83% travelled to work by car 9% walked Remainder bus, rail or bicycle	2021 All Wales figure 82% travelled to work by car 9% walked Remainder bus, rail or bicycle
Annual average level of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) air pollution exposure (found in urban areas and near busy roads, reflecting the contribution of traffic to poor air quality)	Improve (decrease)	2020 6ug/m3 Wrexham 7ug/m3 Wales	2021 7ug/m3 Wrexham 7ug/m3 Wales
Number of low carbon energy generation projects	Improve (increase)	2020 5174 Wrexham 84,479 Wales 1 <sup>st</sup> out of 6 North Wales	2021 5381 Wrexham 95,047 Wales 1 <sup>st</sup> out of 6 North Wales
Percentage of road network maintained by Local Authority	-	2021/22 97.4% Wrexham 95.1% Wales	2022/23 97.4% Wrexham 95.1% Wales
Percentage of roads and transport budgeted expenditure assigned to highways and roads	-	2021/22 63.9% Wrexham 61.9% Wales	2022/23 62.3% Wrexham 60.5% Wales
Total number of recorded fly tipping incidents per 1000 population in Wrexham	-	2021/22 Wrexham 0.9 Wales 6.7	2022/23 Wrexham 3.6 Wales 6.4

## DEVELOPING THE ECONOMY

### OVERALL RAYG - YELLOW

#### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Wrexham County Borough is characterised by attractive countryside, varied landscapes and diverse settlements ranging from the large urban areas of Wrexham City Centre and the Wrexham Industrial Estate, the rural areas of Glyn Ceiriog in the south west, the Maelor in the south east and the former mining villages to the south and west of the city of Wrexham. Wrexham dominates the northern part of the County Borough, which over the past decade has been one of the fastest growing centres in the UK.

As the newest city in Wales, Wrexham County Borough has never been better placed to build on our recent successes and develop a strong and prosperous economy: providing wealth, opportunity, safe and healthy neighbourhoods and supporting long term continued inward investment for key infrastructure and services. Comparing statistical data for 2023 to the previous year, the County Borough has seen:

- 7.79% growth in the number of enterprises active in the area, well exceeding the growth rate for the UK as a whole, and Wales, which actually saw a decrease;
- Growth in employment of 2.24%, with this again exceeding the growth rate for the UK as a whole and Wales;
- Growth in turnover of 8.10%, exceeding the growth rate for the UK overall, but slightly behind the growth rate for Wales;
- A 0.1% growth rate in the number of individuals who are self-employed, which matches that of the UK as a whole, and is

ahead of Wales overall, which saw a fall in self-employment numbers. Both the UK and Wales have seen a fall in self-employment over a ten year period, however Wrexham has seen a 0.2% increase; and

- Based on 2017 data (in order to be able to provide a 5 year picture using published data), businesses in the County Borough largely have a better year-on-year survival rate compared to both Wales and the UK overall.

Wrexham's profile has increased substantially in recent years as a result of the takeover of Wrexham AFC; with the media interest that has followed and the documentary series, generating global interest. This coupled with Wrexham also achieving City status, furthers the County Borough's appeal as a business location.

Wrexham's approach has been recognised by Welsh Government, which through invitation provided a platform to communicate with the tech industry for the development of a SMART City. The council is now perceived as a forward thinking and a go-to local authority within Wales to help and support others who wish to adapt similar ideas. Wrexham also hosted the first ever Welsh SMART Towns Conference, in March 2023.

Four SMART Town pilot projects will commence in May supported by Wrexham Council's Chief Officers. These will focus on air quality and energy reduction in an education setting; trials of different types of sensors within the care sector; reduction in energy costs within a council office building; and methods to support colleague safety.

With monitoring footfall to understand the impact events have across the range of businesses within the city, we can paint a picture and help plan future events to have maximum impact. The library screen has had a positive impact of promoting events, and the library has seen a rise in numbers to certain events held. The VZTA APP is a new addition where businesses can promote themselves on a digital platform to a wider audience.

Tŷ Pawb continues to offer a strong and unique experience to visitors and local people alike. The Christmas period was popular with late night openings and a busy event schedule. Tŷ Pawb continues to attract nationally recognised exhibitions, recording its busiest ever attendance for Print International and hosting the first ever Welsh and indeed UK SMART Towns Conference. Comedy nights are now monthly due to high demand and the theatre strand of its program continues to grow. Partnership activity with Wrexham AFC has seen the display of the Rob McElhenney Portrait and 'Welcome to Wrexham' Filming, which further enhances its international profile and significance.

Our heritage sites are currently our prime tourism asset. The World Heritage Site (WHS), including Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, is only one of four such sites in Wales – three of which are in North Wales. It has national and international appeal. Chirk Castle (which also sits in the WHS corridor) and Erddig Hall are key attractors for the area and, as National Trust properties, have a strong brand. These primary assets are supported by a rich industrial heritage including Minera Quarry, Bersham Ironworks, Brymbo Heritage Centre, and the Wrexham County Borough Museum.

We have strong partnerships, particularly the 'This Is Wrexham' Tourism Partnership which is a robust private sector led initiative involving key visitor economy operators. However, we have other strong partnerships – the World Heritage Site Visitor Management Group - and working relationships with neighbouring counties /Destination

Management Officers, Visit Wales, the Chirk and Ceiriog Valley Partnership, and the Civic Leadership Group. Our partnership approach involves joint delivery of promotional activity notably the 'This is Wrexham' campaign (website and supporting social media campaign) and North East Wales campaign (web tourism marketing campaign in partnership with Denbighshire and Flintshire).

As well as working closely with both internal departments and external support providers from a client referral perspective, many departments (such as Communities for Work, Tourism and the City Centre Management Team) and external support partners (such as Business Wales) regularly seek assistance from the Business and Investment Team.

Over the next four years we face the challenge of doing more with less as a result of council budget challenges, alongside all Local Authorities in Wales. However, our progress this year has been very good considering the service and budgetary pressures the department has been working under. Council budget and service pressures have resulted in us not quite achieving some of our targets this year.

To view the outcomes that we are working towards in this priority. Please visit our Council Plan priority page; [Developing our Economy](#).



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### ABILITY TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS NEEDED TO SUPPORT COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOR EXISTING BUSINESSES TO GROW.

The Business & Investment Team are aware of<sup>2</sup> :

- Business investments totalling £104,520,000 over the course of 2023, with 351 jobs being created.
- Proposed investments totalling £670,130,000, with 1,703 jobs being forecast to be created.

### EMPLOYMENT RATES AND JOB SECURITY

- The Office of National Statistics Inter-Departmental Business Register, which includes provisional estimations, identifies 11,485 enterprises active within the County Borough. This represents a 7.79% increase in the number of enterprises in the area compared to revised figures for 2022, with this growth rate exceeding that of the UK as a whole and Wales, which saw a decrease overall.
- Wrexham significantly outperforms both the UK and Wales in terms of the growth of enterprises and employment but it is slightly behind (0.35%) the Wales figure when it comes to growth in turnover. Whilst this still illustrates a strong annual growth (8.10%), the mix of sectors in the Wrexham area and their relative success in the current economic environment, is likely to explain the slight difference in turnover when compared to Wales overall.

### DIVERSE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY CENTRE

- We have managed to increase the number of empty / under-utilised buildings put back into use within 3 years of council intervention
- The SMART Towns vision has been presented to the council's SLT and Lead Members as a consideration for supporting potential service improvements and cost savings. As a direct result of the innovative and high profile work of the SMART City Development Officer and the progress of the project to date, the council has been awarded £72,000 by Welsh Government to expand the sensor network and to deliver additional pilots to understand where this technology can make efficiencies and cost savings within council services.

### DIVERSE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY CENTRE WITH A HIGH PROFILE AS A SIGNIFICANT VISITOR DESTINATION IN NORTH WALES

- We were successful in securing £22.7 million from the UK Government as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
- The VZTA App has increased business engagement significantly as part of the SMART Towns Digital Cities project. Since its launch, the app has been downloaded 3,354 times and now hosts over 60 businesses with a total of over 6000 hits to the local businesses pages.
- Solid progress has been made with projects as part of the new Placemaking Plan.

<sup>2</sup> These two data statements are not and should not be interpreted as a performance indicators and the information is unverified, but is in the public domain.

## CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

### DELIVERY OF THE NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL AND THE ABILITY TO CREATE THE CONDITIONS NEEDED TO SUPPORT COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOR EXISTING BUSINESSES TO GROW.

- Wrexham Gateway project is off track due to progress with Central Government being very slow to move forward, also the Welsh Government decision to halt road developments/improvements is proving an obstacle to moving forward. Progress may well be hampered further as this is an election year, which again may provide a distraction.

### EMPLOYMENT RATES AND JOB SECURITY

- We haven't been able to sustain the number of job outcomes across the County Borough (Communities for Work Plus) as it is accepted that targets were set too high for this year. Additionally, the reduction in our funding this year (£300k) and subsequent in-house redundancy process we have had to implement as a consequence, has impacted on continuity but not the commitment and hard work of the team.

### OUR PROFILE AS A SIGNIFICANT VISITOR DESTINATION IN NORTH WALES

- Due to the regeneration of key assets such as the museum and indoor markets, footfall counts have been impacted by the in-year closure of these sites. Footfall data is therefore presented as partial year figures to inform future target setting, once the assets re-open. In the case of Tŷ Pawb, a failure in the counting technology produced significant under-counting in Q2 and Q3. Following the replacement of the failed equipment, an accurate count for Q4 was recorded, which is very much in line with expected targets and consistent with the figure recorded in Q1.

### DIVERSE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL CITY CENTRE

- We have done well in sustaining the value of interventions by the council to support the re-purposing of empty / under-utilised City Centre buildings this year, however we will have to consider lowering our targets moving forward as there will be less grant funding available from 2024/25. Delivery of the Wrexham Gateway Masterplan has yet to be achieved, all council actions to achieve this target have been completed however further progress is now reliant upon Wrexham AFC. We are confident that the scheme will progress to full delivery.

## OUR OUTCOME MEASURES

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Investment to support the economy, secured by WCBC from the Growth Deal portfolio	Action	Ring-fenced allocation of £13.79m	Submit outline business case	In progress YELLOW	No
Socio-economic Value (jobs / finance) of Qualified Investment Outcomes supported by the Business Support Service across the County Borough.	Action	New Measure	Establish survey questions	In progress GREEN	Yes
Number of businesses across the County Borough, accessing Council Support.	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	503 Baseline established GREEN	Yes
City Centre Vacancy Rate	Improve (decrease)	2021/22 Wrexham: 18.90% UK: 18.9% 2023 UK: 13.9%.	15%	14.64% GREEN	Yes
Number of empty / under-utilised buildings back in use within 3 years of council intervention	Improve (increase)	28 (over 3 years, 2020-2023)	2	11 GREEN	Yes
No. of individuals (employees / volunteers) accredited by the Wrexham Ambassador Scheme to support the tourism and hospitality sector in Wrexham County Borough	Improve (increase)	New Measure	1000	274 AMBER	No

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
No of job outcomes across the County Borough – Communities for Work Plus	Sustain	New Measure	213 (Welsh Government targets set to high due to reduction in funding)	152 AMBER (sustained in relation to funding)	Yes

<sup>1</sup> RAYG based on progress made towards year-end target. See [page 8 for definitions](#).

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

To help understand the current picture for each priority within Wrexham County Borough we have included a set of contextual indicators. These are local and national trends and issues that our outcomes contribute to. These are indicators that require the collaboration and integration of our partners, external organisations and communities to improve, however it is expected that the council priorities and the work underpinning these will impact the indicators in the long term.

CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE?	BASELINE/COMPARATIVE	LATEST UPDATE
Health of the high street' ranking indicator.	Improve (increase)	2022 Ranked as 267 out of 1000 retail centres	No further update
GDP per Capita	Improve (increase)	2022 £27,595 pa Wrexham 4th out of 22 Welsh LAs for GDP- increase	Awaiting future release

CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE?	BASELINE/COMPARATIVE	LATEST UPDATE
Average Salary	Improve (increase)	2022 £30,908 pa Wrexham 7th out of 22 Welsh LAs when ordered by average salary.	2023 £32,921 pa Wrexham 7th out of 22 Welsh LAs when ordered by average salary.
Unemployment Rate	Improve (decrease)	2022 5% Wrexham	2023 2.2% Wrexham 3.6% Wales
Percentage of 16-64 year olds in employment in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2021 70.2% Wrexham 73.4% Wales	2023 80.4% Wrexham 74.1% Wales
Standard Occupation Classifications (SOC)	Improve (increase)	2022 Wales SOC 1-3 45.9% SOC 6-7 16.1%	2023 Wrexham SOC 1-3 46.2% SOC 6-7 17.1% Wales SOC 1-3 47.2% SOC 6-7 16.7%
Value of Visitor Spend in Wrexham County Borough	Improve (increase)	2021 £101.02m	2022 £151.77m Awaiting 2023



## ENSURING WREXHAM IS A SAFE AND FAIR PLACE

### OVERALL RAYG - YELLOW

#### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

In our Council Plan 2023-28 we have committed to ensuring Wrexham County Borough is a fair and safe place. In the first year of the plan, our priorities have helped to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are protected, our communities feel and are safe, and there is improved support for victims of crime. We have achieved this through initiatives such as the Vulnerable at Risk Management Group (VARM) and medical and welfare interventions made available by Hafan y Dref to people using the night time economy. We have worked to ensure that people are safeguarded and to develop both the availability and awareness of reporting pathways and have developed a robust process for reporting concerns about people at risk of Modern Slavery.

To ensure we can deliver the services that the people and communities of Wrexham County Borough need, through this priority we have prioritised enabling all of our communities to access services, including digital services through active promotion and support with digital engagement. In 2023/24, 94.75% of customers accessing online services, felt it was easy to access council services on our website. Alongside this we have worked to enable everyone to have their say on decisions that may affect them and get involved to influence the planning and delivery of our services through our consultation pathways.

In 2023/24 we worked to ensure that council tenants can access high quality housing and sheltered housing supported by efficient and responsive services by increasing council housing stock through new build and acquisitions. We focused on maintaining 100% compliance with current Welsh Housing Quality Standards and

improving the timely completion of repairs, ensuring that housing in both the private and public sector is of good quality and complies with national standards and legislation.

We recognised the importance of a fair, equitable and inclusive community and continued work to ensure that our communities are welcoming. We promoted and celebrated our communities' diversity and cultures through community cohesion events supported by the North East Wales Multi-Cultural Hub.

We also recognise where performance was not as expected including the target to refurbish 2 units of sheltered housing in Year 1 which was met, but rated Yellow due to some delays caused by budgetary constraints. The target to develop an integrated process across all council services for reporting people at risk of Modern Slavery has been met and there is now a robust reporting process in place via Children's and Adults' Single Points of Access to services (SPOAs). However, the measure is rated Amber as work remains to strengthen the performance framework for the collation of data in respect of modern slavery.

Overall, we have given a Yellow RAYG rating to performance measures in Year 1 of the Council Plan 2023-28 for the priority Ensuring Wrexham is Fair and Safe. This is because the majority of measures for this priority have attained their annual targets and been rated as Green, but a small number of measures have not achieved their anticipated targets for the year and / or have been rated as either Yellow or Amber. Budget pressures resulting in reduced resources have impacted upon Year

1 performance in some areas, and this is likely to remain the most significant challenge to attaining targets for this priority in the second year of the plan. Despite this we remain committed to ensuring Wrexham County Borough enables both residents and visitors to feel and be safe. We recognise how important this and how it can have a profound influence on people's quality of life and their ability to engage in a positive and mutually rewarding way with their community.

To view the outcomes that we are working towards in this priority. Please visit our Council Plan priority page; [Ensuring Wrexham is a Fair and Safe Place.](#)

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### HOUSING

- 64% of repairs to council housing stock were carried out within the relevant timescale for each repair category, exceeding the target figure of 60% in Year 1, ensuring that contract holders continue to be provided with good quality housing that meets relevant standards and legislation.
- 100% compliance with Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) 1 for council housing stock has been maintained in Year 1. Following the April 2024 publication of guidance on WHQS 2023 for social landlords, work will begin in Year 2 to build on the current standard towards WHQS 2023. Progress towards WHQS 2023 will to some degree depend upon funds and resources that Welsh Government makes available for this purpose.
- A proactive approach delivered 541 interventions to remedy hazards in private sector housing in Year 1, considerably above the baseline and target figure of 300 interventions. Unfortunately, reduced staffing resources mean that this approach cannot be sustained going forward.

- Over 98% of private rented properties are now compliant with energy efficiency standards (minimum compliance level is energy performance certificate (EPC) band E or above).
- We have implemented Wrexham's Housing Support Programme Strategy, outlining the council's strategic approach to housing support and homelessness prevention and ensuring that people are supported to find and to sustain accommodation that meets their needs, so that fewer people experience homelessness and rough sleeping. The strategy satisfies the statutory requirement for all Local Authorities to have a Homelessness Strategy under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- The annual number of evictions from Wrexham County Borough Council tenancies into homelessness is low. In Year 1 of the 2023-28 Council Plan the figure was reduced to 8, from a baseline of 9 at the end of the preceding Council Plan.

### INVOLVEMENT

- 94.75% of customers accessing council services online in Year 1 felt that it was easy to access services via the council's website.
- 81% of service requests were made through self-service rather than mediated telephony, exceeding the target of 80% of requests.
- The establishment of an Equality, Diversity and Involvement Champions Group has helped to embed the council's approach to involvement across the organisation.

## COMMUNITY COHESION

- Funding was secured for Hafan y Dref to continue providing support and assistance to people using the night-time economy in Wrexham.
- 91.03% of households assisted by the Homes for Ukraine and Super Sponsor Schemes were supported to move on into long term sustainable accommodation either in Wrexham or elsewhere in England and Wales, which exceeded the target of 46.8%.
- 62.3% of adults resettled under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) accessed employment, training, volunteering or education other than ESOL, enabling them to build a sustainable future.
- Work is underway on the development and implementation of the Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023-28 although progress has been impacted by resource and capacity limitations. The strategy aims to prevent poverty, support people out of poverty and mitigate the impacts of poverty, ensuring that people and communities are supported to attain financial wellbeing and good health and living conditions; and can improve quality of life through leisure, social and employment opportunities.

## HOW WE SUPPORTED EQUALITY

This priority includes several outcomes that contribute to the council's strategic equality outcomes and to improving equality and diversity across the council and in the wider community.

- In Q4, 19 of the 21 cases of young people referred to the Missing Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Panel were resolved, ensuring that the young people were safeguarded from Modern Slavery. This

represents 90.48% of cases and is a significant increase on the baseline figure of 30%.

- The council's Modern Slavery, Prevent and Channel Corporate Policies were approved by Executive Board in September 2023. These policies will ensure that people are safeguarded from exploitation, violence and abuse, including the risk of being drawn into terrorism. The policies ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, and governance for the policies is carried out by the Corporate Safeguarding Panel.
- The number of referrals to Vulnerable At-Risk Management Group (VARM) has decreased due to increased multi agency interventions at a preventative level enabled by operational groups in both policing districts.
- Additional ESOL opportunities were introduced to overcome barriers to learning and complement existing provision. These included an informal sanctuary seekers' conversation group supported by play workers to prevent childcare concerns presenting a barrier to participation; online self-study provision complementing existing ESOL teaching for people on the Resettlement Scheme; and the opportunity for people on the Resettlement Scheme to progress existing ESOL skills by attending an English for Business Purposes course at Glyndwr University in the first two quarters of 2023/24.
- A total of 80 events and community sessions were supported by the North East Wales Multi Cultural Hub including Anti-Racist Wales training; multi-cultural and inter-faith events; and events supporting Black History, young carers, LGBTQ+ and mental health.

- Planned Community Cohesion related training and awareness raising was held in Year 1, including sessions on the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (AWRAP), Gypsy and Traveller awareness, and unconscious bias.
- An Equality, Diversity and Involvement Champions Group has been established to embed the council's approach to these principles across the organisation.
- The Council Plan consultation report did not identify significant variance in feedback from any protected characteristic group other than children and young people. Year 1 outturn is below 20% which was the baseline figure to which variance for this group had been reduced from the first 2020-23 Council Plan consultation. However it is recognised there is still work to do to engage young people in planning our services.
- Rather than increase, the number of cases referred to the Vulnerable At Risk Management Group (VARM) has decreased to 23, below both the target figure of 36 cases and the baseline of 30. However, effective multi-agency working at a preventative level has reduced the escalation of cases to the point where a referral is required.
- The percentage of VARM referrals resolved within Year 1 was 60.87% against a baseline and target of 83%, due to the complex nature of referrals and the need for interventions from other services before cases can be discharged. It was also noted that the current percentage calculation is not robust as it measures against new referrals only, not those already in the system. It is therefore proposed that this measure is revised to the number, not percentage, of resolved referrals in Year 2.
- Work on the Tackling Poverty Strategy is progressing, but has been delayed by budgetary and resource considerations impacting upon capacity to take the work forward. A report on the strategy is due to go to Employment, Business and Investment Scrutiny Committee (EBISC) in September 2024.
- A number of these outcome measures have been impacted by budget pressures throughout the year which have reduced resourcing and capacity to meet anticipated targets; this will continue to be a significant challenge in many areas in Year 2.
- For some measures, although the target for Year 1 has been met or exceeded, it is already known that resourcing in Year 2 will be significantly reduced due to budget pressures, and it has been necessary

## CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

Overall we have rated this council priority as Yellow. We have made this judgement because the majority of outcome measure targets for this priority in Year 1 have been attained; however, a small number of measures did not attain their expected first year targets. Measures where progress was not as expected include:

- The number of rough sleepers in Wrexham was 3, which exceeded the target number of 2 but represented an improvement on the baseline figure of 4. In view of the increase in rough sleepers coming into Wrexham from out of area, it is proposed to revise the target figure to 4 for Year 2.
- The length of stay in bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation reduced to 103 days, narrowly missing the target of 100 days. However this represented an improvement on the baseline figure of 122 days.

to review second year targets as a consequence. Progress towards targets for some other measures may depend upon the extent of funding or resources made available by external bodies such as the Welsh Government.

- However, for some measures the introduction of improved efficiencies and technology such as digital systems means that departments remain confident that, despite resourcing and / or budgetary limitations, targets attained in Year 1 can be sustained or even improved upon in Year 2.

Some areas we will focus on in Year 2 include:

- Implementation of WHQS 2023 from 1 April 2024.
- Progress the work plan for the Equality, Diversity and Involvement Champions and support and train EDI Champions to undertake their role in their departments.
- Delivery of projects underpinning the refreshed ICT and Digital Strategy 2024-27.



## OUR OUTCOME MEASURES

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Percentage of children and young people whose risk of Modern Slavery has been reduced	Improve (increase)	Q1 23/24 – 27%	30%	44.55% GREEN	Yes
Number of events / activities organised/ supported across North East Wales to promote integration between groups and help develop and maintain good community relations.	Sustain	20	20	113 (exceeded target) GREEN	Yes
Percentage of customers accessing online services, who feel it is easy to access council services on our website.	Sustain	95%	95%	94.75% GREEN	Yes
Percentage of service requests through self-service rather than mediated telephony.	Improve (increase)	77%	80%	81% GREEN	Yes
Reduced variance between groups who share protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) in comparison with the demography of the County Borough, in the council's involvement activities	Improve (decrease)	Variance in younger age groups:-26.72%	Reduce variance in younger age groups to below 20%	-20% No corporate consultations during 2023/24, score reflects outturn from 2022/23 consultations GREEN	Yes

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Percentage of households on the Homes For Ukraine and Super Sponsor Schemes supported to move on into longer term sustainable accommodation both in Wrexham and other areas within England and Wales.	Sustain	46.8% (Welsh Government average)	Increase (from baseline)	91.03% GREEN	Yes
Percentage of people resettled under the ARAP and VPRS scheme (adults) accessing employment, training, volunteering or education (other than ESOL)	Improve (increase)	60%	Increase (from baseline)	62.3% GREEN	Yes
The increase to our housing stock as a result of new build and acquisitions.	Sustain	4	5	15 (exceeded target) GREEN	Yes
Percentage of council housing stock that complies with WHQS 2023	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Not started	Not Reporting
The number of interventions in private sector rented properties to remedy hazards (hazards as defined in Housing Act 2004 operating guidance)	Improve (increase)	300	300	541 GREEN	Yes
Number of people rough sleeping in Wrexham	Sustain	4	2	3 YELLOW	No
Reduce number of evictions from WCBC properties into homelessness	Improve (decrease)	9	8	8 GREEN	Yes
Reduction in the length of stay in B & B or hotel accommodation	Sustain	122	100	103 GREEN	No

<sup>1</sup> RAYG based on progress made towards year-end target. See [page 8](#) for definitions.

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

To help understand the current picture for each priority within Wrexham County Borough we have included a set of contextual indicators. These are local and national trends and issues that our outcomes contribute to. These are indicators that require the collaboration and integration of our partners, external organisations and communities to improve, however it is expected that the council priorities and the work underpinning these will impact the indicators in the long term.

CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE?	BASELINE/COMPARATIVE	LATEST UPDATE
Levels of anti-social behaviour in Wrexham County Borough	Improve (decrease)	2022/23 3158 incidents	2023/24 3059 incidents
Number of recorded hate crimes.	Improve (decrease)	2022/23 267	2023/24 225
Percentage of households successfully prevented from homelessness in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2021/22 53% Wrexham 66.8% Wales	2022/23 71% Wrexham (3rd out of all LA) 59% Wales
Percentage of LSOAs in Wrexham ranked in the 10% more deprived in Wales	Improve (decrease)	2019 7%	Next release expected 2025/26
Percentage of adults in Wales who are digitally excluded (meaning they have not personally used the internet in the previous three months)	Improve (decrease)	2021/22 7% (32% 75+, 14% social housing residents, 12% with limiting long term illness)	Awaiting next update
Total crime incidents in Wrexham	Improve (decrease)	2022 15,408	2023 13,326

## IMPROVING EDUCATION AND LEARNING

### OVERALL RAYG - YELLOW

#### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

In Wrexham County Borough Council we recognise the impact that education and learning has on all age groups. Over the last few years Wrexham County Borough Council and its partners, have worked towards improving our Local Authority offer of support, challenge and interventions to create a sustainable and self-improving system. In July 2023, we were successfully removed from the Estyn follow up category having been judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the Local Authority inspection recommendations, following the 2019 core inspection. The effectiveness of our education service has significantly improved and offers a systematic approach to evaluating education services, planning for change and focusing support for schools and education settings that are in need of improvement.<sup>3</sup>

Following this, our new council priority 'Improving Education and Learning' has focused our direction and informed our planning to provide all our learners with the opportunities to reach their potential, whatever their age, background or circumstance. In 2023/24 the education service agreed four Priority Improvement Areas (PIAs) that provide a strategic and operational focus for the next five years, and capture the planning of activities and programmes of work that will support delivery of the Improving Education and Learning priority outcomes. The four Priority Improvement Areas (PIAs) include:

- Developing an Effective Self-improving System
- Improving Emotional Health and Wellbeing for all

- Improve Access, Engagement and Participation in Learning
- Improving Learning Environments and Provision

Embedded throughout our PIA's there is recognition that there is still a significant gap in educational outcomes within and across groups of learners. We have continued to focus on learners with additional learning needs (ALN) to deliver an effective ALN offer, provide accessible learning environments, improve transition between stages of learning and focus on early interventions to support learners to overcome challenges and actively contribute to their learning. With increasing demand for support for learner well-being, which has been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic, we have led a multi-agency Well-being Coordination Group to review emerging trends and to respond in a timely manner through the prioritising of resources.

The successful role out of the new Curriculum for Wales supports learners at different stages of education and learning to become ambitious and capable learners, with all schools in Wrexham, up to Year 8 now delivering the new curriculum. The new curriculum supports our learners to have improved emotional health and well-being and tackles inequalities in educational outcomes, including reducing the impact of poverty on learners' progression and attainment. This priority isn't just about our learners at school age but providing skills for life. We have focused on transitions post 16 through a variety of schemes including TRAC+, Job Growth Wales+ and have worked with our partners and the range of education settings across

<sup>3</sup> Estyn Inspection Report July 2023

the County Borough to improve the transition and access to apprenticeships, training opportunities, higher education and retraining.

However, alongside all Local Authorities in Wales, over the next four years we face the challenge of doing more with less as a result of council budget challenges. In response to this we will review our Priority Improvement Plans to ensure they deliver but within current financial constraints. We remain committed to delivering the improvements agreed within the Improving Education and Learning Priority, through responding to challenges early and developing innovative and creative solutions, working with our partners to provide people within our communities with the opportunities to raise and achieve their aspirations.

To view the outcomes that we are working towards in this priority. Please visit our Council Plan priority page; [Improving Education and Learning](#).

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

During 2023/24 the four Priority Improvement Area Plans were agreed and set the direction of activities that support the delivery of our Improving Education and Learning Priority outcomes. Highlights from these include:

### DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE SELF-IMPROVING SYSTEM

- The new Curriculum for Wales was rolled out in schools in Wales from September 2022. All primary and secondary schools (up to Year 8) across Wrexham County Borough are now delivering the new curriculum. During the academic year 2022/23, eight primary, two secondary and a special school in Wrexham have been subject to full Estyn inspections and in all cases, Estyn commented positively on the schools' progress in implementing, or preparing for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.

- All schools across Wrexham have been supported to implement the new School improvement Guidance Framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability. The framework aims to deliver sustainable school improvement and drive behaviours and practices that are required by the Curriculum for Wales and the new assessment arrangements, whilst supporting our commitment to tackle the impact of poverty on attainment.
- To improve our collation of adult learner data we worked with our partners to review a new IT system to share data. This will help us to track progress and identify areas of improvement in the future.
- We have continued to focus on reducing the risk of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) through the use of data to identify learners at risk of becoming NEET and respond to needs. Alongside this, TRAC+, a project supporting young people aged 11 to 24 who are at risk of becoming NEET, helps ensure all young people are given the opportunities to succeed.

### IMPROVING EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING FOR ALL

- The majority of schools in Wrexham County Borough, 86%, now participate in the Pupil Attitudes to Self and School survey which provide a rich source of evidence and information to support tailored interventions that meet the needs of learners who may need support.
- All schools have utilised Welsh Governments Emotional and Mental Well-being Framework to embed a whole school approach to well-being. With 37.9% of schools initiating the implementing of their actions plans, above the national average.



- We have continued to offer a range of interventions and training to schools including; Circle Time, counselling, Friends Resilience Programme, emotional literacy support assistants and the Student Assisted Programme.
  - In response to waiting lists for mental and emotional health services, counselling available to primary schools has increased alongside a programme of supporting groups of children in partnership with CAMHS, through the 'My Happy Mind' programme.
  - To ensure this support is delivered in a co-ordinated way, the Education and Early Intervention Department lead a multi-agency well-being co-ordination group. This group ensures training and interventions are delivered in a co-ordinated way, avoiding duplication, and maximising the available resource
- between Year 6 and 7 teachers to improve provision for transition, early impact is evidenced by improved progress.
  - KS2 transition Youth Workers have provided early intervention to Year 6 students who are struggling emotionally, academically, socially and have a lack of aspiration. A programme of intervention has been delivered through bespoke group sessions or individual personal support, by focussing on raising their confidence and self-esteem. Throughout the summer, over 90 children across 13 primary schools accessed intervention. The Youth Work in Education Team based in some of our secondary schools provided transition support throughout the summer term and engaged with 789 young people across 30 schools, with 30 families also accessing support.
  - At post 16 transition, Wrexham LA and Coleg Cambria have been working in partnership to ensure transitions are properly planned, information is shared and particular attention given to the needs of vulnerable learners, such as those identified as being at risk of disengaging, looked after children, care leavers and learners with additional learning needs. In September 2022, 89% of the cohort transitioned to full time education either at Coleg Cambria or a school 6th form, 1% above the all Wales average.
  - Support was provided to learners with additional learning needs, who left Year 11 in 2023 through bespoke transition in partnership with schools and college. Parents and learners have reported how this process has helped find the right course and a positive transition. In the academic year 2022/23, 93.3% of Additional Learning Needs learners leaving Year 11 made a successful transition from statutory schooling

## IMPROVE ACCESS, ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN LEARNING

Working with schools and education settings we have focused on managing transitions in 2023/24. How well we manage transitions impacts on the learner's engagement and participation in their learning. Examples of work include:

- The implementation of a progression report and transition meeting at the end of statutory nursery education now provides an individualised summary for each child. Feedback has been extremely positive and is supporting a more successful transition.
- The transition process between primary to secondary has been improved through network meetings, enabling colleagues to network, raise questions and explore solutions to the transfer of data and information from primary to secondary schools. Alongside half termly meetings

to education, training or employment, an increase from 89% in 2021/22.

- Continued roll out of Jobs Growth Wales+, a training and development programme for 16-19 year olds that gives young people the skills, qualifications and experience to find a job or further training. 42 Year 11 leavers completed the programme in 2023. All of these learners were engaged for six weeks, and 40 learners progressed to full time further education courses in September.

## ENGAGEMENT

- Within the national context, Wrexham secondary education attendance continues sustained progress, maintaining its position within top 4 in Wales since September 2023.
- Primary school attendance continues to maintain improvements, increasing from 92.10% at the end of 2022/23 academic year to 92.96% at the end of quarter 4 (2023/24).
- We have developed and implemented new Pastoral Support Plan guidance to better support our learners who are struggling to engage with their learning.

## IMPROVING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND PROVISION

- To ensure our buildings are fit for purpose, work has been completed to refurbish buildings including; new toilets, windows, cladding replacements, classroom replacements and replacement of roofs.
- In September 2023, all schools were inspected for the identification of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). Site inspections by a structural engineer identified no confirmed cases of RAAC in Wrexham schools.
- All learners who applied for a Welsh Education were offered a place in 2023/24.

## CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

- Due to the challenging economic outlook for the council over the next three years. The education service will focus on making efficiencies where possible and will continue to work closely with and support schools to manage their budgets.
- Review our Priority Improvement Plans to ensure they deliver but within current financial constraints.
- In primary education; school leaders, teachers and Governors will reflect upon, evaluate and lead improvements in respect of learner progress. Evaluating learner progress will be informed by a wide range of information and evidence. This reflection and evaluation will complement Welsh Government School Improvement Guidance Framework and the national resource 'Evaluation and Improvement'.
- Continue to support secondary schools with bespoke support where there is identified declining attendance rates to ensure attendance improves from baseline figures.
- Continue to develop our tracking data for learners who are supported with Pastoral Support Plans to help direct resources and support.
- Continue with interim KS4 performance measures in the short term whilst developing reformed reporting arrangements of qualification outcome data alongside Welsh Government guidelines which will:
  - Transition away from the previous system of an aggregation of data for accountability purposes.
  - Transition towards new evaluation and improvement arrangements

- Support deeper collaborations between schools and
- Secure the raising of standards for all learners.
- Following the publication of Welsh Government School Improvement Guidance Framework, Welsh Government aim to explore how school improvement can best be supported by local authorities at three different levels; local level, across local authorities and at national level. In parallel to this, we will focus on reviewing the Wrexham School Improvement Model and evaluating potential approaches with a transition to a new model for 2025/2026.
- Continue to improve good progress made with ALN learners in Year 11 successfully progressing to education, employment and training through collaborative work with the NEET Team, Careers Wales, Coleg Cambria and other providers.
- Continued focus on transitions and bespoke support to schools to improve outcomes for all learners and learners impacted by poverty to sustain and where possible improve percentage of KS4 learners who progress into sixth form, college, apprenticeships or employment.

## OUR OUTCOME MEASURES

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Progression outcome measure KS4	New Measure	New Measure	Develop measure in-line with WG guidance	In progress for reporting 2024/25 GREEN	Yes
Percentage of Key Stage Four learners who progress into sixth form, college, apprenticeships or employment	Improve (increase)	Wrexham: 96.5% Wales: 96.7%	Increase (in-line with national average)	96.3% 2022/23 Year 11 Cohort YELLOW	No
Overall attendance for secondary schools	Improve (increase)	01/09/2022 - 31/03/2023 89.3%	Increase (from baseline in-line with national trends)	88.56% AMBER	No
Overall attendance for primary schools	Improve (increase)	01/09/2022 - 31/03/2023 92.10%	Increase (from baseline in-line with national trends)	92.96% GREEN	Yes
Overall attendance for schools	Improve (increase)	01/09/2022 - 31/03/2023 91%	Increase (from baseline in-line with national trends)	91.26% GREEN	Yes
Reduction in number of learners below 85% attendance	Improve (decrease)	01/09/22 - 01/03/23 2936 learners with attendance below 85%.	Decrease (to below 2700)	2904 AMBER	No

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Number of learners on PSP (Pastoral Support Plan)	New Measure	New Measure	Revise PSP guidance	In progress Awaiting first data collection YELLOW	Yes
Number of learners with a PSP who have a positive 16 transition (Pastoral Support Plan)	New Measure	New Measure	Establish baseline and increase from baseline	In progress Awaiting first data collection YELLOW	Yes
The percentage of pupils (using Pupil Attitudes to Self and School, PASS) who respond positively on how positive and successful they feel in their specific capabilities as learners.	Improve (increase)	Primary - 79.2% Secondary - 71.0%	Increase (from baseline)	Survey complete awaiting data release 2024/25	Not reporting
Progression Outcome Measure - FSM (KS4)	New Measure	New Measure	Develop measure in-line with WG guidance	In progress for reporting 2024/25 GREEN	Yes
Percentage of ALN learners leaving Year 11 making a successful transition from statutory schooling to education, employment or training.	Improve (increase)	89% 2021/22 Year 11 Cohort 208 out of 233	Increase (from baseline)	93.3% 2022/23 Year 11 Cohort GREEN	Yes
Percentage of FSM learners leaving Year 11 making a successful transition from statutory schooling to education, employment or training	Improve (increase)	92% 2021/22 Year 11 Cohort 236 out of 257	Increase (from baseline)	91.3% 2022/23 Year 11 Cohort YELLOW	No

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Number of school buildings fit for purpose with a condition category of A or B – Primary	Improve (increase)	Primary: A – 10 B – 42 C – 6	Decrease number of Category C buildings	Primary: A – 10 B – 43 C – 5 GREEN	Yes
Number of school buildings fit for purpose with a condition category of A or B – Secondary	Improve (increase)	Secondary A – 0 B – 9 C – 0	Decrease number of Category C buildings	Secondary A – 0 B – 9 C – 1 One additional Category C building and inclusion of Pupil Referral Unit YELLOW	No

<sup>1</sup> RAYG based on progress made towards year-end target. See [page 8](#) for definitions.



## SETTING THE CONTEXT

To help understand the current picture for each priority within Wrexham County Borough we have included a set of contextual indicators. These are local and national trends and issues that our outcomes contribute to. These are indicators that require the collaboration and integration of our partners, external organisations and communities to improve, however it is expected that the council priorities and the work underpinning these will impact the indicators in the long term.

CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE?	BASELINE/COMPARATIVE	LATEST UPDATE
Percentage of children (0-15) in Wrexham living in absolute low income families	Improve (decrease)	2022 13.9% Wrexham 14.9% Wales	2023 16.1% Wrexham 17.7% Wales
Percentage of learners eligible for free school meals.	-	2022/23 20.9% Wrexham 20.3% Wales	-
Percentage of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Wrexham County Borough in the 10% most deprived in Wales (WIMD).	Improve (decrease)	2019 11.8%	Next release expected 2025/26
Percentage of Wrexham Learners in Wrexham schools who live in the 10% overall most deprived LSOAs in Wales	Improve (decrease)	2019 6 Wrexham LSOAs in 10% most deprived overall in Wales: 11.8%	Next release expected 2025/26
Percentage of children (5 – 15) in Wrexham with a special educational needs statement for additional learning needs. (highest level of support)	-	2021/22 Primary 2.7% Wrexham 2.0% Wales Secondary 2.9% Wrexham 2.5% Wales	2022/23 Primary 1.9% Wrexham 1.6% Wales Secondary 2.8% Wrexham 2.2% Wales

CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE?	BASELINE/COMPARATIVE	LATEST UPDATE
Number of children and young people who received counselling per 1,000 population (10 -18) in Wrexham	-	2021/22 35.9% Wrexham 34.7% Wales	2022/23 38.3% Wrexham 34.7% Wales
Percentage of adults qualified to level 2 or above in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2022 86.6% Wrexham 86.6% Wales	2023 86.6% Wrexham 87.4% Wales
Percentage of usual residents aged 16 and over with no qualifications in Wrexham	Improve (decrease)	2021 20.9% Wrexham 19.9% Wales	No immediate release – census data
Percentage of population aged 25-64 with degree-level qualifications in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2021 34.2% Wrexham 36.7% Wales	No immediate release – census data
Overall completion rate of A-Levels and vocational qualifications by local authority of learner’s home address in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2021/22 <b>A-Levels</b> 80% Wrexham 81% Wales <b>Vocational</b> 85% Wrexham 84% Wales	2022/23 A-Levels 77% Wrexham 75% Wales <b>Vocational</b> 86% Wrexham 84% Wales

## PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING (WITH A FOCUS ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND GOOD MENTAL HEALTH)

### OVERALL RAYG - YELLOW

### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

We recognise that good health and well-being are vital to ensuring people in our communities are able to access the very best of life opportunities available to them. Enabling and supporting individuals, families and communities to be mentally and physically healthy and resilient is pivotal to living independent lives free from inequality.

Our key achievements below detail where there has been good consistent performance in many areas and improvement in some key areas, such as numbers of looked after children, waiting times for occupational therapy and numbers of people waiting for care at home. However, we accept that there are some important areas of work that need focus moving forward to continue our improvement journey. These include; foster carer recruitment, numbers of children seen alone as part of their assessment and child protection conferences held within timescale. We continue to monitor these areas of work closely and have robust plans in place to achieve the improvements needed.

In 2023/24 we have been prioritising our work to integrate and transform prevention and early help, working with partners to ensure our communities are able to access the right support as early as possible. We have been focussing on effective provision at the front door including improved information and guidance at first contact. For those that need statutory services we are working to improve our pathways to the right care and support. We want a County Borough where all children and vulnerable adults are safe, are able to lead a life with opportunities and feel that their voice is heard.

Mental health impacts on how we cope with everyday situations, whether we make healthy choices and how we relate to others. We are developing our services to respond to the growing demand and changing needs for mental health support, as we recognise how vital this is at every stage of life. By prioritising mental health within this council priority we made a commitment to improving our provision. We recognise that we still have work to do to ensure people that need assistance with their mental health are able to access the right support at the right time. We will continue to work towards improvements in this area through working in partnership across our services and community organisations. With our partners we will build on improvements made in 2023/24 in prevention and early help, to reduce challenges people face before they become more complex.

Considering the progress made in 2023/24 and the areas where progress was not as expected, overall we have rated this council priority as yellow, meaning that we have made good progress towards our agreed outcomes with evidence of improvement observed across several key performance measures.

To view the outcomes that we are working towards in this priority. Please visit our Council Plan priority page; [Promoting Good Health and Well-being \(with a focus on social services and good mental health\)](#).

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### FEWER LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN THROUGH EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION

- Numbers of looked after children are being sustained within threshold targets, supported by a number of interventions to support families with effective early help.
- Prevention and early help support for families have been reviewed with the development of alternative ways of working. This has successfully enabled families to get the right support at the right time.
- The level of interventions for looked after children has increased. Which has provided more options to providing permanency, enabling children to exit the care system where safe to do so.
- Strengthening child protection processes within the social services department has been supported by a strength based approach to safeguarding. This has reduced the number of children coming into care, positively impacting numbers of looked after children.

### STABLE FOSTER CARE AND SUPPORTED LODGING PLACEMENTS, CLOSER TO HOME

- The percentage of children with three or more placement moves this year has been consistently low and on target, offering some stability within placements for looked after children.
- The Care Closer to Home Project continues to purchase and adapt properties to meet the needs of children with complex care needs. Many of these children entering the new provisions, are from placements

out of county, supporting repatriation and rebalancing the care agenda. Work continues with plans to complete on another two properties within the next year.

- As part of the Care Closer to Home Project we have engaged in a joint venture with Flintshire County Council in the opening of a combined emergency placement/ therapeutic, educational and therapy home.
- A review of fostering rates for foster carers has been completed to support our recruitment locally, which will hopefully encourage more foster carers moving forward.
- We have introduced our Champion Foster Carer Model, serving as an alternative to residential care for children with complex needs. The new model supports children in a family home, whilst offering foster carers 7 day a week support.

### THE RIGHT CARE AND SUPPORT, HOMECARE, REABLEMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- Through the commission of an external provider we have seen a significant reduction in the waiting list for Statutory Occupational Therapy Assessment, with 600 Referrals outsourced successfully. Development of the new Occupational Therapy Clinic for minor equipment and bathing is seeing positive results in reducing waiting lists.
- We have made huge improvements in our Occupational Therapy offer this year. We have reduced our waiting list by 70%, resulting in improved waiting times and outcomes for citizens.

- A consistent number of unpaid carers are being identified and registered to receive information, guidance and support. We hope to see this figure continue to grow and narrow the gap between our registered numbers and the numbers collated through census data so we are able to ensure all carers can access the support they need.
- Our Reablement Team have continued to help positive numbers of citizens to access the support they need to be as independent as possible.
- The Domiciliary Care Policy has been developed and is successfully in place. The policy will ensure that people in our communities needing care at home will receive the right support.
- Work to decrease waiting times for home care continues to see positive improvements. Numbers did see a small expected rise towards the end of the year due to increased winter demand, but overall waiting times are improved.
- Within social care we have invested in enhanced trauma informed training for staff, supported by a 5 year implementation plan which will take forward a trauma informed approach across the social care department.
- The Wellbeing Hub is a partnership led initiative driven by prevention, tackling health inequalities in the population and the wider social determinants of health and wellbeing. The Wellbeing Hub opened to the public in October 2022 and since then has progressively seen an increase in the number activities taking place each month.
- The Well-being Hub provides a number of available rooms and spaces for use by a variety of organisations delivering prevention and early help activities. Activities are person centred and strengths based to deliver the services that matter to our citizens.
- Adult Social Care are working on new provision in Wrexham County Borough to meet the needs of people with mental health conditions and support more citizens closer to home. This work supports the rebalancing care agenda.

#### **GOOD MENTAL HEALTH FOR ALL, THROUGH EFFECTIVE PREVENTION AND EARLY HELP**

- All secondary schools successfully participated in the young person's mental health survey. Results from the survey will enable schools to plan appropriate early interventions to support young people who are struggling with their mental health.
- The local authority counselling service continues to provide support to children and young people in schools and the community.
- All schools continue to be supported to embed the Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Well-being. Schools are supported on an individual basis with bespoke plans developed with each school.
- Adult Lifestyle Coaching is a 1-2-1 service offered to people of Wrexham who are ready to engage in pursuing recovery-oriented goals and is tailored to individual needs. It is future-focused, rather than diagnosing the past, and aims to sustain recovery from mental health problems and improve overall wellbeing.

## **QUALITY SOCIAL SERVICES, RIGHT CARE AT THE RIGHT TIME, SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

- During October and November 2023 Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) visited Wrexham Social Care Department to review the local authority progress against areas that required improvement. The review acknowledged the challenges experienced and recognised that progress had been made resulting in developments to practice and better outcomes for children and adults. The review reported:
  - Performance information and quality assurance audits continue to drive improvements in children's services.
  - Positive developments implemented to address waiting lists and to ensure a sustainable model of delivery is embedded to assist people to live independently.
  - The social services emergency duty team provides a timely and proportionate response to emergencies that occur outside of normal opening hours.
  - Practitioners developing professional working relationships with people built upon co-operation and shared understanding of what matters.
- The Social Care improvement journey continued to be supported through the new Accelerated Improvement and Transformation Board (previously Social Care Improvement Board). The new scope for the Board will monitor progress of an agreed set of actions for the Adult Social Care Improvement focus and the Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care Transformation focus.

- Wrexham County Borough Council and RITA (Reminiscence Interactive Therapy Activity) Project Team received a highly commended honour at the recent Social Care Wales awards. The team were praised for the work taking place in Wrexham to put the person to the forefront of care delivery in Social Care in Wales by using RITA as a digital enabler to support people with dementia.
- Our Wellbeing Portal, which allows people to easily report health and children social care issues, was named winner of the Digital Achievement category at the Granicus UK Public Sector Awards.

## **SERVICE USER VOICE SHAPING SOCIAL CARE SERVICES**

- The number of citizens taking up a direct payment is consistently good. This is positive for citizens having choice and control of the care they receive.
- We now have a new provider in place for self-advocacy on a North East Wales Area Footprint. We are also commissioning a self-advocacy training offer. Self-advocacy enables people to speak up for themselves rather than relying on others and to have the confidence to say when they don't think something is right.
- We have conducted extensive consultation with unpaid carers across Wrexham County Borough through surveys and a roadshow to feed into the commissioning of a new provider to work with and support our unpaid carers.
- Ageing Well surveys have been conducted over the last 12 months to gather the views of over 50's around future service provision to ensure the voice of the service user is heard as we move forward together.



- The Dementia Listening Campaign has just completed across North Wales, with targeted consultation and events in Wrexham. Led by our Person Centred Planning Officer for Dementia.
- Our children's social care team continue to ensure the voice of children and young people is at the heart of all we do. The use of the mind of my own app allows children to communicate with the department using alternative communication aids.

#### **APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDING FOR ALL BY WORKING TOGETHER**

- The number of adult at risk / adult safeguarding referrals completed within statutory timescales remains consistently high. However, we still have a target to improve in this area to achieve 100%.
- Children's social care have embedded a risk based model of safeguarding throughout the service, which has resulted in a reduction in the number of children on the child protection register.

#### **CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD**

The council is facing a challenging economic outlook over the next three years. In response, we will focus on making efficiencies where possible and will continue to work closely with partners to run cost effective services that support our communities whilst ensuring people can access the right services at the right time. In doing so we recognise where performance has not been as expected and the on-going challenges that we need to focus on as part of this journey, including:

- Recruitment and retention of paid carers continues to be a challenge. At this time provider services is undergoing a restructure to ensure maximized use of existing staff. Further recruitment will still be needed to meet the demands of the service.
- The proportion of older people in the population is projected to continue to increase until 2040. At the same time the proportion of people aged 16 to 64, the available workforce, is expected to continue to decrease. The changes are predicted to begin levelling off by 2040. This change to the population structure provides opportunities and challenges for the delivery of care and support services. There is a significant increase in older people presenting at accident and emergency which is impacting on an increase in demand within social care for statutory assessment and provision. This creates additional challenge in an already stretched service. We are using this information to inform future planning.
- Foster carer recruitment remains a challenging area of work; we are working with Foster Wales as this is a recognised national issue. There are ongoing recruitment and marketing events to promote opportunities within fostering. The Care

Closer to Home project and other capital projects are continuing to improve access to local services for Wrexham Citizens, supporting people to remain in or repatriate to Wrexham County Borough.

- Numbers of children seen alone as part of their assessment are currently not meeting the targets set, teams are working together to address this. There has been concerns that we have been under reporting this data and work is underway to understand and to clearly define how this is effectively and accurately reported.
- Children's social care are due to launch 'effective child protection conferences', which uses a strength based approach to safeguarding to improve our processes.
- The demand on the schools counselling service remains high with the complexity of cases continuing to be elevated. All schools continue to be supported to embed the Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Well-being.
- We are developing a Social Care Involvement Strategy to strengthen service user voice within Social Care Services.

Within the next year of the Council Plan we want to continue on our improvement journey to improve the support offered to the people of Wrexham County Borough, to create the conditions to improve resilience, health and well-being. This means people are receiving the right care and support, in the right place and at the right time. We want to commit to continuously improving our services by listening to and understanding the future needs of the population of Wrexham County Borough and by creating services that are able to respond to challenges. We want services that are focused on a strengths based approach, promote independence and listens to the voice of children, adults, families and carers who use our services. In doing this we recognise the importance of developing our work with our partners and how early access to high quality services can reduce the need for acute interventions in the future. We want our social care, health and well-being services to meet the needs of those who use them.

## OUR OUTCOME MEASURES

Measure	What is good performance in Year 1?	Baseline/ Comparative 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Year 1 Outturn & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	Target Met? 2023/24
Number of looked after children	Sustain	352 (end of March 2023)	Between 300 and 340	308 GREEN	Yes
Percentage of looked after children – in-house residential provision	Improve (increase)	2%	4%	1.34% RED	No
Percentage of looked after children – in house foster placements	Improve (increase)	19%	21%	18.24% RED	No
Percentage of looked after children with three or more placement moves	Sustain	6.15%	6%	3.12% (exceeded target) GREEN	Yes
Numbers waiting for domiciliary care	Improve (decrease)	22 people (end of March 2023)	Less than 25 people	25 YELLOW	No
Numbers waiting for a statutory Occupational Therapy assessment	Improve (decrease)	1002 Feb 2023	Less than 402 people	374 GREEN	Yes
Total number of reablement packages completed in order to reduce, mitigate or maintain the need for support	Improve (increase)	234 citizens were supported	Increase (from baseline)	402 GREEN	Yes
Mental well-being mean score for young people in secondary schools in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2021/2022 Mean score Wrexham - 23 Wales - 23	Increase (from baseline)	Survey complete data available 2024/25	Not reporting

Measure	What is good performance in Year 1?	Baseline/ Comparative 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Year 1 Outturn & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	Target Met? 2023/24
Improved emotional well-being for children and young people receiving counselling	Sustain	Difference: 6.5 (Start:16.50, End:10.00)	Sustain	Difference 6.5 (Start: 18.00, End: 11.50) Reported in arrears GREEN	Yes
Percentage of children that were seen alone as part of their assessment.	Improve (increase)	56%	80%	72.53% RED	No
Percentage of children engaged with Mind of My Own App.	Improve (increase)	2% of LAC (end of March 2023)	3% of children open to CSC	4.31% GREEN	Yes
Number of children placed on the child protection register that have previously been registered during the last 12 months.	Sustain	22 Average per quarter: 6	22	9 (exceeded target) GREEN	Yes
Percentage of adult at risk referrals (adult safeguarding) completed within statutory timescales (7 days)	Sustain	97%	97%	93.61% GREEN	No

<sup>1</sup> RAYG based on progress made towards year-end target. See [page 8](#) for definitions.

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

To help understand the current picture for each priority within Wrexham County Borough we have included a set of contextual indicators. These are local and national trends and issues that our outcomes contribute to. These are indicators that require the collaboration and integration of our partners, external organisations and communities to improve, however it is expected that the council priorities and the work underpinning these will impact the indicators in the long term.

CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE?	BASELINE/COMPARATIVE	LATEST UPDATE
Percentage of Adults in Wrexham who are in good or very good health	Improve (increase)	2021/22 71.6% Wrexham 72.7% Wales	2022/23 Wales 69.1% Wrexham 74.1%
Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth for Wrexham Residents	Improve (increase)	(2018-2020) <b>Wrexham:</b> Males 63.77, Females 63.26 <b>Wales:</b> Males 61.5, Females 62.4	Awaiting release of data following LA review
Mental well-being mean score for adults aged 16+ in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2018/19 50.92 Wrexham 51.37 Wales	2022/23 TBC Wrexham 48.2 Wales
Percentage of people who agree good social care services are available in the area		2021/22 54.1% Wrexham 63.9% Wales	No further update
Children looked after as at 31st March 2022, per 10,000 population under 18	Improve (decrease)	2022 132 Wrexham 114 Wales	2023 126 Wrexham 116 Wales

## SUPPORTING A HIGHLY SKILLED AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE, FOCUSED ON DELIVERING SERVICES

### OVERALL RAYG - YELLOW

#### OVERALL ASSESSMENT

In the new Council Plan 2023-28, we introduced a new council priority to focus on delivering a highly skilled and engaged workforce that can deliver the services that our communities need and want. An engaged and skilled workforce reduces turnover, increases productivity and attracts and retains individuals with the skills and experience that support our ambitions for the County Borough and the communities within these. Therefore in the new council priority we have focused on strong people management culture, well-being of our employees, being an employer of choice and promoting equality and opportunities.

In Year 1 of the Council Plan we have made some good progress towards our outcomes, against an increasingly challenging environment; in particular financial resilience and recruitment challenges within hard to fill job roles. Post pandemic the workforce context nationally has altered significantly, resulting in challenges for many organisations including:

- High numbers that have left work since 2019.
- Changing personal life choices.
- Those seeking hybrid and or flexible working, and capacity to work across a larger geographical area.
- Skills shortages for some roles in the labour market and recruitment and retention difficulties.
- Pay and cost of living rises and industrial disputes.

Therefore by ensuring we continue to promote our modern and flexible approach to work, our employee benefits, our values and adapt our recruitment practices, we will ensure that we are in a position to attract and retain the right candidates to roles within the council.

We recognise that our workforce is our greatest asset and is our most important resource to achieve our priorities and goals set out in our Council Plan. In Year 1 of the Council Plan we have made improvements in people management and in supporting the health and well-being of our employees. We have reduced our sickness absence rate supported through our commitment to well-being and the suite of well-being initiatives we offer our workforce, recognised through re-accreditation in 2023 of the Gold Corporate Health Standard Award. We focused on developing the skills and opportunities for the workforce and 94.7% of candidates who started the numerous training opportunities we offered through our 'Grow Your Own' scheme are still on track to complete or have completed their qualification.

Looking forward to 2024/25, we will continue to be forward thinking, working towards mitigating workforce challenges to ensure a sustainable workforce. This includes a proactive approach to identifying and implementing efficiencies within all our services and understanding the impact on our workforce and services.

To view the outcomes that we are working towards in this priority. Please visit our Council Plan priority page; [Supporting a Highly Skilled and Engaged Workforce, Focussed on Delivering Services.](#)



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

### PEOPLE MANAGEMENT CULTURE

- The council has a strong people management culture and arrangements are in place to support employee well-being and manage sickness absence effectively, resulting in improved attendance and reduced levels of sickness absence. Our absence rate for this year has reduced from the same period last year.
- To support our managers and leaders within the council, new modular management training was launched in September 2023. This provides training and development for aspiring managers, new managers and current managers that need refresher training.
- Our new People Strategy to 2028 was agreed and will be published and shared over the next few months. Our People Strategy underpins the culture that we are striving to attain through embedding our values. Our values have been reviewed involving contributions from our Leaders and their teams and have been redefined to reflect a new way of working in the council.
- The People Strategy will bring together culture and values, structure and process, performance, feedback and development, people centred leadership and good management to deliver our services in support of the council's vision

### EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

- The number of leavers has reduced by 68, compared to the same period last year.
- The council places a high level of importance on employee wellbeing initiatives, and sees this as a priority across all services, supported through a range of corporate health and wellbeing initiatives. Examples for 2023/24 include:
  - Employee Assistance Programme;
  - Annual November health and well-being event in the Wellbeing Hub;
  - Regular webinars throughout the year covering physical, mental and financial health and publicised webinars by external organisations including Care First, Money and Pensions Service, Cambrian Credit and Carer Wales;
  - Regular well-being bulletins issued which cover a full range of financial, mental and physical health and wellbeing items;
  - Virtual Campaigns including gambling awareness, annual time to talk, My Story, annual sun awareness and health eating;
  - Human Resources and Organisational Development Service have developed a range of manager topic scripts to enable managers to support these virtual events through team meetings;
  - Launch of Unpaid Carer Café and Menopause Café;
  - Our Health and Wellbeing/Mental Health Champions continue to grow in strength and confidence as they support employees in the workforce; and
  - A Financial Guidance document is available for employees to be signposted for help and support.

- In 2023 we achieved recognition for the work we provide on Health and Wellbeing and achieved re-accreditation to maintain our Gold Corporate Health Standard Award. Although this award has now ceased this success provides an embedded standard within the council for future years. The Healthy Working Wales report included a number of positive comments of which a few extracts are included below:

*“The ethos and culture of wellbeing at Wrexham Council is progressive and comprehensive, having evolved to now include priorities such as compassionate leadership, preserving the wellbeing of an aging workforce and financial wellbeing”.*

*“It is particularly noteworthy that wellbeing is high on the agenda of the senior leadership team and elected Members, both in terms of support to initiatives and activities such as the Time to Talk event, but also in terms of the time and energy dedicated to creating a sound infrastructure for staff wellbeing”.*

*“Wellbeing is at the core of the way the Council operates which was very clear both from written submission for this assessment, the informative assessment meetings itself, and from the examples of personal stories that were shared with the assessor”.*

*“There is a tangible commitment to mental wellbeing at Wrexham Council, which strongly focuses on prevention”.*

## EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

- The council continues to be an ‘employer of choice’ able to recruit and retain a diverse and sustainable workforce, with a modern approach to work which is embedded across the whole of the council together with a framework of employee rewards and benefits.
- The council continues with growing our own talent within the organisation through continuing to develop the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme, including the creation of a Traineeship Scheme within Environment & Technical and other service related development schemes such as Social Workers and Occupational Therapists. This scheme will continue to grow and be developed over the next few years to retain and develop our current employees and new recruits.

## WELSH LANGUAGE

- Welsh language and culture continues to thrive within our workforce and our communities and is actively promoted and supported to improve our recruitment of Welsh speakers within the council, our compliance with Welsh Language Standards and to address previous actions in Audit Wales reports.
- Our Vacancy Management Form and Revised Skills Assessment documents have been updated to include revised standard wordings to use within job adverts to describe the Welsh skills required for the role. This includes an option to accept applications from non-Welsh applicants provided they learn Welsh to the agreed level.
- The new standard wordings within recruitment documents will ensure recruiting managers are actively reviewing their service’s Welsh language needs, maintain

evidence of assessment of language needs and determine Welsh language skills required prior to their jobs being advertised.

- The new e-learning module Bilingual Services Guidance for Managers and Team Leaders includes a section on Workforce Planning.
- In an effort to attract more applicants for our 'Welsh Essential' and Welsh Desirable' vacancies, the Welsh Language Strategic Officer in partnership with members of the Welsh Language County Forum have filmed a series of promotional videos with Welsh speaking staff. The aim of the project is to demonstrate how our staff use Welsh day to day and to encourage others to apply for posts who perhaps think their 'Welsh is not at the level required'. The completed videos will be used on our social media channels and new blog to support a 'Welsh Essential' or 'Welsh Desirable' vacancy.
- The Welsh Language Officer together with our Press and Marketing Officer have been attending a series of training workshops delivered by Welsh Government – Cymraeg 2050 'Leading in a Bilingual Country'.

## CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

We now find ourselves with unpredictable financial times ahead of us which will also present further challenges as we need to adapt and plan well for this. Areas of focus identified through our performance management framework include:

- There are roles in some services and skilled operational workforce that experience high levels of recruitment and retention challenges (this issue is not unique to Wrexham) e.g. Social Care (Social Workers/Occupational Therapists), Environment and Technical services within specialist areas of work such as HGV drivers and specialist care support staff who carry out critical roles e.g. schools escorts and chaperones. This is compounded by a competitive market place with neighbouring authorities and local contractors who look to build resilience in their staff resources. In 2024/25 we will continue to develop our Grow Your Own talent opportunities as well as develop innovative approaches to recruitment within these areas.
- The council will continue to promote our modern and flexible approach to work, our employee benefits and workforce policy provisions, display our council's values and adapt our recruitment practices. Without these we will not be in a position to compete and attract candidates to apply for roles within the council. Any gender based pay gap identified will be reviewed and better understood. Appropriate work will commence to address this gap and other pay gaps where relevant.



- We will implement our new People Strategy which is designed to continue to build on positive achievements and provide our future vision, purpose and priorities for our workforce linked to the achievements of our goals in the Council Plan and factoring in this further uncertainty ahead.
- In 2024/25 we seek to maintain our health and wellbeing focus whilst balancing and maintaining service delivery requirements as we recognise this preventative work is important for the health and wellbeing of our workforce but also has the potential to prevent absences if employees receive the support they need whilst in work.
- We will ensuring our Welsh language and culture continues to thrive within our workforce and communities actively promoting and supporting the language and improving recruitment of Welsh speakers within the council.



## OUR OUTCOME MEASURES

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Increase percentage of workforce who agree with the statement 'I have the opportunity to develop and improve to my full potential' (employee survey).	Improve (increase)	57%	Increase from baseline	Survey expected May/June 2024	Not reporting
Percentage of employees who report that they are supported by corporate health initiatives (employee survey).	New Measure	New question within survey	Establish baseline	Survey expected May/June 2024	Not reporting
Of the workforce that leave employment with the council during the year; the percentage of these that left voluntarily	Improve (decrease)	69.5% including schools	Decrease from baseline	63.5% GREEN	Yes
Gender pay gap; difference between men and women's hourly earnings as a percentage of men's earnings.	Improve (decrease)	11.2% WCBC	Maintaining local government average levels	4.9% GREEN	Awaiting WG figure
Percentage of people satisfied with Welsh language provision	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Survey complete Awaiting final figure for baseline GREEN	Yes

<sup>1</sup> RAYG based on progress made towards year-end target. See [page 8](#) for definitions.

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

To help understand the current picture for each priority within Wrexham County Borough we have included a set of contextual indicators. These are local and national trends and issues that our outcomes contribute to. These are indicators that require the collaboration and integration of our partners, external organisations and communities to improve, however it is expected that the council priorities and the work underpinning these will impact the indicators in the long term.

CONTEXTUAL INDICATOR	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE?	BASELINE/COMPARATIVE	LATEST UPDATE
Number of Welsh speakers in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2021 12.2% Wrexham 17.8% Wales	No immediate release – census data
Gender pay gap; difference between men and women’s hourly earnings as a percentage of men’s earnings	Improve (decrease)	2022 Wales 14.4% 14.9% Public Sector	2023 Wales 14.3% 14% Public Sector
Of the workforce that leave employment with the council during the year; the percentage of these that that left voluntarily	-	2022/23 83% Wales	Awaiting latest update
Percentage of available days lost (sickness absence rate)	Improve (decrease)	2022 3.6% Wales	Awaiting latest update



## APPENDIX 1 – STRATEGIC EQUALITY OUTCOME PERFORMANCE

### EQUALITY OUTCOME 1:

The council is an 'employer of choice' able to recruit and retain a diverse and sustainable workforce, with a modern approach to work and a framework of employee rewards and benefits.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Of the workforce that leave employment with the council during the year; the percentage of these that left voluntarily	Improve (decrease)	69.5% including schools	Decrease from baseline	63.5% GREEN	Yes

- We have continued to embed new ways of working through Wrexham County Borough Council with revised guidance released at the end of 2023/24.
- 94.7% of our students who started a Grow Your Own scheme are still within the scheme or have successfully completed. The Grow Your Own scheme opportunities include; corporate apprenticeships, traineeships in Environment Service, Social Care Workers, Occupational Therapists, Health and Safety trainees, Legal trainees, housing craft apprenticeships and Human Resource Associates.

**EQUALITY OUTCOME 2:**

Any gender based pay gap identified will be reviewed and better understood. Appropriate work will commence to address this gap and other pay gaps where relevant.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Gender pay gap; difference between men and women's hourly earnings as a percentage of men's earnings.	Improve (decrease)	11.2% WCBC	Maintaining local government average levels	4.9% GREEN	Awaiting WG figure

- Our Workforce Equality Plan has been updated and will be published early 2024/25.
- In 2024/25 we will continue to review any pay gaps in-line with local government average levels and identify any areas of development.

**EQUALITY OUTCOME 3:**

Our customers are able to contact us easily, through digital systems which are built around their needs. Our services are inclusive and we ensure that we support those customers who would like to use our digital services, as well as continuing to offer more traditional ways of contacting us, for those who need it.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Percentage of customers accessing online services, who feel it is easy to access council services on our website.	Sustain	95%	95%	94.75% GREEN	Yes
Percentage of service requests through self-service rather than mediated telephony.	Improve (increase)	77%	80%	81% GREEN	Yes

**EQUALITY OUTCOME 4:**

Welsh language and culture is thriving within our workforce and our communities and is actively promoted and supported.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Percentage of people satisfied with Welsh language provision	Improve (increase)	New Measure	Establish baseline	Survey complete Awaiting final figure GREEN	Awaiting final figures

- In January 2024, Tŷ Pawb hosted a Welsh Language event to promote and celebrate Welsh medium education in Wrexham which included the launch of a promotional film and new website, developed in collaboration between Welsh Latecomers service, Welsh medium cluster of schools and Welsh in Education Strategic Plan forum stakeholders.
- Continued work completed in the run up to hosting the Eisteddfod 2025, working closely with our partners and engaging with local businesses to increase awareness of the Eisteddfod and the economic and cultural benefits it will bring to Wrexham.
- Future focus on encouraging more of Wrexham County Borough Council workforce and Members to access Welsh language learning resources.

**EQUALITY OUTCOME 5:**

Wrexham is a place where everyone knows they can get involved to influence the planning and delivery of services. People are engaged, and consulted with on decisions which affect them, and where we can, we work to design and deliver services, and make things happen together.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Reduced variance between groups who share protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) in comparison with the demography of the County Borough, in the council's involvement activities	Improve (decrease)	Variance in younger age groups:-26.72%	Reduce variance in younger age groups to below 20%	-20% No corporate consultations during 2023/24, score reflects outturn from 2022/23 consultations GREEN	Yes

- To support the embedding of the council's approach to involvement we established an Equality, Diversity and Involvement Champions group. Moving forward the aim is to develop the role of the champions to support our Involvement Strategy, and the promotion of equality and diversity.

**EQUALITY OUTCOME 6:**

People are safeguarded from exploitation, violence and all forms of abuse, through working in partnership to increase awareness of the victims of exploitation and the available reporting pathways.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Percentage of children and young people whose risk of Modern Slavery has been reduced	Improve (increase)	Q1 23/24 – 27%	30%	44.55% GREEN	Yes

- Our Modern Slavery, Prevent and Channel Corporate Policies were approved by Executive Board in September 2023.
- We have seen a decrease in the number of cases referred to Vulnerable at Risk Management Group, however multi agency partner engagement and membership remains high with preventative work continuing to reduce demand and incidents of anti-social behaviour.
- We have developed an integrated process across all council services for reporting people at risk of modern slavery. In 2024/25 we will work to strengthen our performance framework for modern slavery data.



### EQUALITY OUTCOME 7:

Our communities are welcoming, and we promote and celebrate our communities' diversity and cultures and ensure appropriate access to all services for everyone.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Number of events / activities organised/ supported across North East Wales to promote integration between groups and help develop and maintain good community relations.	Sustain	20	20	113 (exceeded target) GREEN	Yes

- We continued delivery of Community Cohesion related training and awareness raising to Local Authority departments and wider organisations supported through the North East Wales Multi-cultural Hub.
- During 2023/24 a range of English as a second language (ESOL) opportunities were delivered to overcome barriers to learning including; informal ESOL/conversation group open to all sanctuary seekers in Wrexham, online blended ESOL provision provided for those on Resettlement Schemes and those with appropriate ESOL level were offered the opportunity to attend an English for Professional Purposes course at Glyndwr University.

**EQUALITY OUTCOME 8:**

People seeking sanctuary from war or humanitarian crisis are supported to build a sustainable future in the County Borough.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Percentage of households on the Homes For Ukraine and Super Sponsor Schemes supported to move on into longer term sustainable accommodation both in Wrexham and other areas within England and Wales.	Sustain	46.8% (Welsh Government average)	Increase (from baseline)	91.03% GREEN	Yes
Percentage of people resettled under the ARAP and VPRS scheme (adults) accessing employment, training, volunteering or education (other than ESOL)	Improve (increase)	60%	Increase (from baseline)	62.3% GREEN	Yes

## EQUALITY OUTCOME 9:

All learners are supported to improve their education outcomes, and inequalities in outcomes between different groups of learners will be reduced.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Progression Outcome Measure – FSM (KS4)	New Measure	New Measure	Develop measure in-line with WG guidance	In progress for reporting 2024/25 GREEN	Yes
Percentage of ALN learners leaving Year 11 making a successful transition from statutory schooling to education, employment or training.	Improve (increase)	2021/22 Year 11 Cohort 89% 208 out of 233	Increase (from baseline)	93.3% 2022/23 Year 11 Cohort GREEN	Yes
Percentage of FSM learners leaving Year 11 making a successful transition from statutory schooling to education, employment or training	Improve (increase)	2021/22 Year 11 Cohort 92% 236 out of 257	Increase (from baseline)	91.3% 2022/23 Year 11 Cohort YELLOW	No

**EQUALITY OUTCOME 10:**

Our learners have a positive learning experience through access to an environment that is accessible and fit for purpose and allows a choice of Welsh and English medium education.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG* 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Number of school buildings fit for purpose with a condition category of A or B – Primary	Improve (increase)	Primary: A – 10 B – 42 C – 6	Decrease number of Category C buildings	Primary: A – 10 B – 43 C – 5 GREEN	Yes
Number of school buildings fit for purpose with a condition category of A or B – Secondary	Improve (increase)	Secondary A – 0 B – 9 C – 0	Decrease number of Category C buildings	Secondary A – 0 B – 9 C – 1 One additional Category C building and inclusion of Pupil Referral Unit YELLOW	No

- At the start of the 2023/24 academic year, 100% of learners who applied for Welsh education were offered a place.

## EQUALITY OUTCOME 11:

Children and adults are supported to have good mental health and well-being, by public services partnerships and communities working together. There is a focus on mental health support provided through prevention and early help mental health services to reduce demand for services later on.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Mental well-being mean score for young people in secondary schools in Wrexham	Improve (increase)	2021/2022 Mean score Wrexham - 23 Wales - 23	Increase (from baseline)	Survey complete data available 2024/25	Not reporting
Improved emotional well-being for children and young people receiving counselling	Improve (decrease)	Difference: 6.5 (Start:16.50, End:10.00)	Decrease (from baseline)	Difference 6.5 (Start: 18.00, End: 11.50) Reported in arrears GREEN	Yes

- Continued to deliver our Prevention and Early Help (PEH) Strategy with priority groups established to focus on the PEH priorities working in collaboration with your partners.
- Due to recruitment challenges we are planning to refocus our goal to be a trauma informed council to focus on a trauma informed children services.
- Moving forward we will support all secondary schools who participated in the Young People Core Emotional Well-being survey to use the results to plan interventions appropriately.
- We have increased the number of activities held within our Well-being Hub in the City Centre with 1532 activities held throughout 2023/24. Focus for 2024/25 is to consider the use of the space previously used for the Groundwork café.
- We have increased the number of schools (out of 70) who have been supported to embed a whole school approach to mental health and well-being with bespoke plans developed for each school.

## EQUALITY OUTCOME 12:

We make certain our social care services meet the needs of those who use them by making sure the voice of children, adults, families and carers is heard and listened to.

MEASURE	WHAT IS GOOD PERFORMANCE IN YEAR 1?	BASELINE/ COMPARATIVE 2022/23	TARGET 2023/24	YEAR 1 OUTTURN & RAYG <sup>1</sup> 2023/24	TARGET MET? 2023/24
Percentage of children that were seen alone as part of their assessment.	Improve (increase)	56%	80%	72.53% RED	No
Percentage of children engaged with Mind of My Own App.	Improve (increase)	2% of LAC (end of March 2023)	3% of children open to CSC	4.31% GREEN	Yes

- The Children and Young People strategy was agreed by Executive Board in 2023, with the aim to implement and launch in 2024.
- Our Social Care Involvement Strategy is in progress with development to continue into 2024/25.
- We need to focus on ensuring all eligible children with Children's Social Care are offered advocacy and this is accurately recorded so we can respond to a decline in performance.