

Denbighshire County Council Social Partnership Annual Duty Report 2024 to 2025

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Executive Summary

The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 (The SPPP) requires the council, as a public body, to produce an annual report to evidence how they have complied with the Social Partnership Duty. This report must be submitted to the Social Partnership Council (SCP) for scrutiny. Section 18 of the Act states:

Social Partnership reports:

- (1) A public body must prepare, in respect of each financial year, a report of what it has done to comply with the duty.
- (2) The report must be agreed with the public body's recognised trade unions or (where there is no recognised trade union) other representatives of its staff, or contain a statement explaining why it was not agreed.
- (3) The public body must publish the report, and submit it to the SPC, as soon reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year.

The SPPP Act does not provide a template for the Annual Report. This report summarises the actions taken with the council's recognised trade unions to implement the duty in Denbighshire County Council.

Background

The SPPP Act provides for a framework to enhance the well-being of the people of Wales by improving public services through social partnership working, promoting fair work and social responsible public procurement. It is intended to complement other legislation, including the Socio-economic Duty and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA 2015).

The SPPP Act 2023 requires the council, in carrying out sustainable development, in so far as is reasonable, to seek consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions, when setting their well-being objectives (in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) and making decisions of a strategic nature about the reasonable steps they intend to take to deliver those objectives set.

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Section 16(2) of the Act sets out a number of specific requirements relating to the Duty, which the council must comply with when 'seeking consensus or compromise'. The requirements are intended to ensure that trade unions are fully and properly involved when a public body sets its well-being objectives, or when making strategic decisions. It states that: in order to seek consensus or compromise, a public body must include its recognised trade unions or other representatives of its staff in the process of setting objectives or making decisions, by (in particular):-

- a) consulting them at a formative stage of the process, and
- b) otherwise involving them throughout the process by:
 - i. providing sufficient information to enable them to properly consider what is proposed, and
 - ii. providing sufficient time to enable them to adequately consider what is proposed and respond.

Our Approach and Current Practices

Prior to implementation of the new act, Denbighshire recognised the importance and value of working collectively with trade unions with the following frameworks already established in the Council which has been operating over the past 12 months:

JCC – Joint Consultative Committee for Health & Safety and Employee Relations

Representation: The committee comprises of sixteen members – eight “Employer’s Representatives”) who are 6 elected councillor members appointed on a politically balanced basis, including at least one Cabinet Member (preferably with responsibility for HR and / or health and safety matters), plus two 2 Officers. These Officers to be the Chief Executive or Corporate Director and the Head of HR.

Eight “Employees’ Representatives” who are employees of the Council and shall be appointed by the trade unions side. Three of their number will be appointed by the Denbighshire Branch of UNISON and two 2 each will be appointed by the Denbighshire

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Branches of the GMB and Unite the Union. One will be appointed to represent school based employees as a voting member of the committee for health and safety matters considered by the committee.

This group is established for regular consultation and where required, make recommendations to the appropriate committee or decision maker, it meets on a quarterly basis and considers HR and Health & Safety matters:

Employee Relations Consultation Group

Representation: Nominated Branch Secretary for Unison, GMB, Unite and the nominated rep for Education Psychologist, HR Manager and Employee Relations Manager. The group meets every 6 weeks and discusses employee relation matters.

Over the past 12 months this group has looked at policy creation and development for example – new Sexual Harassment Policy, new AI Policy, new Foster Carers Leave Policy and amendments to Flexible Working, Managing Carers Leave, Redeployment and other changes. There has been a number of consultations for proposed restructures and changes for example changes to Winter Maintenance, cleaning services, adults' services and individual job changes / deletions. This group has agreed and introduced a new staff survey, received budget updates from the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer and discussed other employment related matters.

The Council also has an established formal consultation group which meets on a regular basis with all teacher trade union representatives to discuss Education and School related matters.

Learning and Development

The Council and Trade Unions work in partnership to develop and provide funded training opportunities with staff through the WULF funding, a number of courses for aspiring leaders, resilience, health and wellbeing and others have benefited our employees.

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Restructuring Consultations Meetings

Prior to any restructuring consultations commencing the Council meets with the trade union colleagues to discuss the proposals, these have been done on an ad hoc basis as and when they occur. When additional meetings or changes occur, the trade unions are updated on a regular basis.

Pay & Rewards – Job Evaluation

To ensure that the council has a fair and transparent grading structure, all jobs subject to the National Joint Council conditions for Local Government are evaluated in accordance with the Greater London Provincial Council job evaluation scheme. The job evaluation scheme is based on 11 factors, a scoring system and weightings that are free from gender bias and discrimination. All new posts are submitted for evaluation and a job may also be submitted for reassessment if the duties or level of responsibility have significantly increased or changed. The panel which considers the job evaluations is made up of trade unions colleagues and officers.

Facilities Time Off Policy

The council supports the trade unions in providing time off for employees to carry out trade union activities.

Reviewing the Council's Performance

All Welsh Local Authorities must complete a Panel Performance Assessment to assess their performance in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 once every five years. Denbighshire was the first Council in Wales to undergo the assessment in September 2024 which was led by a Panel from across the UK including an independent chair, a senior Local Government Officer and an Elected Member from other Welsh Local Authorities alongside two peers from the wider public, private, and voluntary sector. The Council included the trade union in this assessment process.

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Our Aspirations for the Future

Denbighshire County Council Social Partnership operates in equal partnership between Denbighshire County Council and recognised Trade Unions, respecting the sovereignty and decision making structure of each partner and embedding the principles and a set of behaviours which all partners commit to uphold:

- Social partnership principles - Shared commitment
- Cooperation - Success through joint problem solving, compromise and reaching consensus.
- Respect - Mutual recognition of legitimate and potentially conflicting interests.
- Trust - Relationships based on integrity, authenticity, transparency, openness and selflessness.
- Voice and Participation - Proactive and timely information, consultation and engagement.
- Mutual Gains - Achieving improvements in public services, social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being and fair work outcomes.

Moving Forward

Since the Act has been implemented, the Council has set up a focus group with the trade unions to review our current practices and determine our mutual partnership aspirations for the future, all of which are captured in the following action plan.

Social Partnership and Public Procurement Action Plan

Number	Action
1	TU meaningful involvement in settling Wellbeing Objectives

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Number	Action
2	Building on strategic decision making inclusion
3	Looking at existing groups / mechanisms in the Council which could include trade union membership (including LJCC, service meetings, SEDG, Wellbeing board etc.)
4	Performance Management and monitoring of objectives
5	Consultation guidance – information and timescales
6	Facilities time - ensuring that this is allocated to employees for the recognised TU's to enable attendance at meetings
7	Promoting Social Partnership e-learning training for all staff
8	Raising Awareness with SLT
-	Procurement
9	Understanding Welsh Government Guidance
10	What are our shared broad aims for procurement? • How do these impact on pre-award process? • How do these impact on the awarding process? • How do these impact on contract monitoring?

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Number	Action
11	Look at specific details on large construction contracts
12	Look at specific detail on outsourcing

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