

Cotswold District Council

Corporate Strategy - 2017/18 Update

Leader's Introduction

To include re-affirmation of Council's aim and priorities:

Aim - to be recognised as the most efficient Council in the country.

Priorities:

- Provide high quality services at the lowest possible cost to Council Taxpayers
- Protect and enhance the local environment whilst supporting economic growth
- Champion issues which are important to local people

Addressing the Challenges

One of our objectives is to reduce the costs of services and to do this we have been working with Cheltenham Borough, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Councils on a project known as 2020 Vision. This Vision is for each of the four Councils to retain their independence and identity, but working together and sharing resources to maximise mutual benefit. This will lead to more efficient and effective delivery of local services. This approach is expected to save this Council £1.65m by 2020, but we aim to ensure that the public will see no reduction in the services they receive. The next stage of this project is the establishment of a group of companies, known as Publica, which will employ staff, provide services and deliver outcomes in line with the wishes of each individual council. It is expected that staff will transfer to the companies and that services will be delivered by Publica from autumn 2017.

We also completed a project to bring together the Public Protection services of Cotswold, West Oxfordshire and Forest of Dean Councils with the new Environmental and Regulatory Services Group going 'live' in August 2016. This resulted in £845,000 (35.5%) of efficiency savings overall.

It is also our objective to keep Council Tax as low as possible and to freeze charges for car parking, green waste and pest control until 2020. Despite reductions in Government grant over the years, through the steps we have taken to improve efficiency, our share of council tax and other charges will continue to be frozen in 2017/18

A key priority for the Council is to protect and enhance the local environment whilst supporting economic growth. A significant element of meeting this is the development of a Local Plan, which aims to balance the need for economic growth and housing with preserving the character of the Cotswolds. There was a six week public consultation on the Local Plan in the summer of 2016, followed by further consultation on various modifications in January/February 2017. It is expected that the Local Plan will be adopted and submitted to Government for examination in 2017.

Future car parking demands in Cirencester have also been addressed. In the past year, the Council has looked at the demolition of the Old Memorial Hospital to create additional spaces prior to any longer term site development, and the decking of the Waterloo car park to significantly increase parking capacity.

Affordable housing is an issue for many people in the District and we have a target of delivering a minimum of 150 affordable homes each year in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Between April and December 2016, nearly 200 affordable houses had been delivered in different parts of the District and we remain on course to meet our target in 2017/18.

Local people and local businesses have been disadvantaged by high speed broadband not being available everywhere. The Council has been working with Fastershire and BDUK to roll out broadband in hard to reach areas. High speed broadband has already been delivered to over 14,000 premises during Phase 1, and is expected to reach another 6,500 homes and businesses during Phase 2 which is expected to be completed by December 2018. This should provide high speed broadband coverage to 97% of the Cotswolds, one of the best in the country. Funding provided by the Council will ensure that coverage is taken even further.

Progress towards the Council's Aim

Our aim is 'to be recognised as the most efficient council in the country'. Although local government has been widely recognised as the most efficient part of the public sector, the need to increase productivity and be more efficient has become ever greater as budgets continue to be reduced.

We have developed a system of comparing ourselves with other District Councils, and our latest ranking exercise places us in 3rd position out of 201 councils.

How is it calculated?

We have developed a basket of indicators based on cost, outputs and outcomes, against which we can compare ourselves with other shire district councils.

For each indicator, we have ranked ourselves against the performance of all shire district councils; the council with the best performance is ranked 1, and the worst performance is ranked 201. The rankings for the indicators are aggregated to produce an overall ranking for each council. The council with the lowest score is the best performing or 'most efficient council'.

We established baseline rankings for all the indicators and an overall ranking (primarily based on 2011/12 data) for the indicators which we are using to gauge future improvements. Each year, we complete an assessment of how we compare, once all the benchmarking data has become publicly available. Our latest assessment (primarily based on 2015/16 data) placed the Council in 3rd position - five places up on the previous year (8th) and six places better than the baseline year (9th).

Indicator	Baseline Ranking (Outturn)	2015/16 Ranking (Outturn)	Improvement trend for rankings
Overall cost of council services per head of population (Revenue Estimates)	77 (£109.81)	32 (£82.66)	↑
Rate of increase in council tax	36 (0%)	8 (0%)	↑
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit – new claims	14 (13 days)	21 (14 days)	↓
Percentage of council tax collected	4 (99.2%)	18 (98.9%)	↓
Amount of residual household waste per household (kg)	12 (362kg)	26 (386kg)	↓
Percentage of household waste sent for recycling, composting and reuse	11 (58.65%)	18 (58.16%)	↓
Sickness absence rate (average full-time equivalent days per full-time equivalent)	142 (8.5days)	11 (5.3 days)	↑
Unemployment claimant rate (job seekers allowance)	20 (1.4%)	18 (0.6%)	↑
Overall crime rate per 1,000 population	40 (40.4)	25 (36.2)	↑
Overall ranking	9	3	↑

Note: The 2016-2019 Corporate Strategy also shows an indicator relating to the percentage of major planning applications determined in accordance with relevant timescales. This is a new indicator starting in 2016/17 and data for this period is not yet available but it will be used in next year's calculations.

Top Tasks for 2017/18

Every year we set ourselves a number of top tasks. These are the key pieces of work we need to accomplish during the year in order to achieve our Priorities.

The top tasks for 2017/18 are as follows:

Priority: Provide high quality services at the lowest possible cost to Council Taxpayers
Implement the 2020 Vision to deliver savings of £1.84m per annum by 2020
Lead the Implementation of Anti-Fraud arrangements with partner Councils and deliver savings as planned
Improve buildings and asset utilisation to deliver revenue savings by working with key partners in the public and voluntary sector, by the end of March 2018

Priority: Protect and enhance the local environment whilst supporting economic growth
Submit the Local Plan to the Department of Communities and Local Government for examination, by early summer 2017
Work to progress the Brewery Court developer-led scheme for a cinema and retail scheme
Complete further flood alleviation works, including Moreton-in -Marsh
Work to address Cirencester's car parking needs, by pursuing a range of solutions including the provision of a decked car park at the Waterloo site

Priority: Champion issues which are important to local people
Participate in Gloucestershire County Council's Fastershire initiative to improve the roll-out of high speed broadband to all parts of the District , including hard to reach areas, by the end of this Strategy
Roll out the community defibrillator project across the district and support communities in improving health through enabling physically active lifestyles
Review emergency housing accommodation and consider options for direct provision.
Deliver a minimum of 150 affordable homes