

Public Document Pack



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Wednesday, 30 October 2024

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CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX on **Thursday, 7 November 2024 at 6.00 pm.**

Rob Weaver
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Cabinet
(Councillors Joe Harris, Mike Evemy, Claire Bloomer, Tony Dale, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown and Lisa Spivey)

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Committee Administrator know prior to the date of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
To receive any apologies for absence.

The quorum for Cabinet is 3 members.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations of interest from Members and Officers, relating to items to be considered at the meeting.
3. **Minutes (Pages 5 - 14)**
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of Cabinet on 3 October 2024.
4. **Leader's Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council.
5. **Public Questions**
To deal with questions from the public within the open forum question and answer session of fifteen minutes in total. Questions from each member of the public should be no longer than one minute each and relate to issues under the Cabinet's remit. At any one meeting no person may submit more than two questions and no more than two such questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

The Leader will ask whether any members of the public present at the meeting wish to ask a question and will decide on the order of questioners.

The response may take the form of:
 - a) a direct oral answer;
 - b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
 - c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.
6. **Member Questions**
No Member Questions have been submitted prior to the publication of the agenda.

A Member of the Council may ask the Leader or a Cabinet Member a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Cotswold District. A maximum period of fifteen minutes shall be allowed at any such meeting for Member questions.

A Member may only ask a question if:
 - a) the question has been delivered in writing or by electronic mail to the Chief Executive no later than 5.00 p.m. on the working day before the day of the meeting; or
 - b) the question relates to an urgent matter, they have the consent of the Leader to whom the question is to be put and the content of the question is given to the Chief Executive by 9.30 a.m. on the day of the meeting.

An answer may take the form of:

- a) a direct oral answer;
- b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

7. **Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance**

To receive any recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or to consider any matters raised by the Audit and Governance Committee.

8. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/2026 (Pages 15 - 26)**

Purpose

To consider and recommend to Full Council the revised Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2025/2026.

Recommendations

That Cabinet recommends to Full Council:

1. The increase to income bands as detailed within paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and Annex A of this report from 1 April 2025.
2. That any surplus in the Hardship Fund is transferred over to 2025/2026 for reasons detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of this report.

9. **Update on the Council's involvement in and support for Cost of Living related initiatives (Pages 27 - 114)**

Purpose

To update Cabinet on the Council's work to support people affected by the cost of living crisis.

Recommendations

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. Note the Council's work to support communities with the cost of living.
2. Request that the Cost of Living Steering Group continues to consider further opportunities to support communities with the cost of living.

10. **Draft Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (Pages 115 - 158)**

Purpose

This report sets out the Budget Strategy to support the preparation of the 2025/26 revenue and capital budgets and presents an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast.

Recommendations

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. Approves the 2025/26 Budget Strategy as outlined in the report.
2. Approves the revised Capital Programme including the additional expenditure on Disabled Facilities funded by Disabled Facilities Grant, as set out in Annex B.

11. **Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members**

To note the decisions taken by the Leader and/or Individual Cabinet Members.

This will follow as an agenda supplement on 7 November 2024.

(END)

Cabinet
03/October2024



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Thursday, 3 October 2024

Members present:

Joe Harris – Leader
Claire Bloomer
Paul Hodgkinson

Mike Evemy – Deputy Leader
Juliet Layton
Mike McKeown

Officers present:

Robert Weaver, Chief Executive
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and
Chief Finance Officer
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and
Development (Monitoring Officer)
Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services
Officer

Mandy Fathers, Business Manager for
Environmental, Welfare and Revenue Service
Paul James, Economic Development Lead
Joseph Walker, Community Partnership
Officer
Kira Thompson, Election and Democratic
Services Support Assistant

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Lisa Spivey and Tony Dale.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members present.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting on 5 September 2024 were considered as part of the Cabinet pack.

There were no amendments to the minutes proposed.

The minutes were proposed by Councillor Joe Harris and seconded by Councillor Mike Evemy.

Minutes of the 5 September 2024 Cabinet meeting (Resolution)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet meeting held on 5 September 2024 be approved as a correct record.

For	Mike Evemy, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Mike McKeown	5
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Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Claire Bloomer	1
Carried		

4 Leader's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Leader.

5 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

6 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

7 Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance

There were no recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and issues arising from the Audit and Governance Committee, as these Committees had not met since the last meeting of Cabinet.

8 Petition: Retain the Public Toilets in the High Street/Market Square, Stow-on-the-Wold

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to consider a petition submitted under the Local Petition Scheme (Part F of the Constitution) which had been referred to Cabinet by Full Council.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Every, introduced the item to Cabinet as the portfolio holder for public conveniences and made the following points:

- Full Council received the petition at its meeting on 25 September 2024 and resolved that the petition should be referred to Cabinet for consideration.
- The Deputy Leader proposed recommendation I which was to

‘Agree to the petition request to keep open the public conveniences in the High Street / Market Square, Stow-on-the-Wold and instead close the public conveniences in Mangersbury Road’

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Public Conveniences Review Group had been asked to look at the facilities, given the financial pressures on the Council. The cost of running the facilities was around £170,000 which was set to increase.
- The proposals provided to Cabinet at its meeting in February 2024 would keep one facility open in areas where multiple facilities were provided. These towns included Stow, Cirencester and Tetbury.
- The view of the Review Group and officers was that the Market Square toilets might be taken on by Stow-on-the-Wold Town Council, and its Chair Ben Eddolls was thanked for his engagement on this matter. However, this option wasn’t deemed as financially viable for the Town Council.

Cabinet

03/October2024

- The petition was presented to the Deputy Leader and the Deputy Chief Executive during a meeting with the Town Council where this alternative option was discussed.
- Consideration of the future of the Mangersbury Road toilet facilities had been given, and it was stated that the facilities would be opened for the Stow Fair in October and then their future would be evaluated after that.
- The public through the petition had shown their support for the toilets in the Market Square.

The Leader invited Councillor Ben Eddolls, Chair of Stow-on-the-Wold Town Council, to address the Cabinet regarding the petition:

- There was an understanding the Council needed to make savings and the community wished to work closely with the Council in the future.
- The decision to keep the toilets would support those tourists who come to visit the town centre.
- Stow-on-the-Wold Town Council wished to have a dialogue with the Council about the future of the Mangersbury Road toilets to see how they could be preserved or used in future.

Councillor Claire Bloomer seconded and noted how the petition showed residents engaging with the Council and how the Council was able to respond in a positive way towards it.

The Cabinet reaffirmed its desire to engage with communities regarding any changes to local facilities.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Mike Evely and seconded by Councillor Claire Bloomer.

Petition: Retain the Public Toilets in the High Street/Market Square, Stow-on-the-Wold (Resolution)		
RESOLVED: That Cabinet		
I. AGREED to the petition request to keep open the public conveniences in the High Street / Market Square, Stow-on-the-Wold and instead close the public conveniences in Mangersbury Road.		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evely, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Mike McKeown	6
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

Cabinet

03/October2024

The purpose of the report was to agree a refreshed version of the Council's Green Economic Growth Strategy for consultation and to note the adoption by Gloucestershire County Council of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris, introduced the report on behalf of Councillor Tony Dale and made the following points:

- The strategy was part of the Council's efforts to promote a sustainable economy and the creation of high-quality jobs through supporting businesses within the district.
- Councillor Dale and the Economic Development Lead officer were recognised for their work in developing the strategy.
- The vision for the Cotswolds was one of ensuring that it was a hub for investment as well as being an attractive place for tourists.
- The innovation village at the Royal Agricultural University and the sustainable aviation hub at Cotswold Airport were highlighted as some of the important projects for the district.
- The strategy first adopted in 2020 had helped to create 500 new jobs for residents, but it now required updating based on the changing economic landscape to continue to drive forward green economic growth.
- The proposed strategy was aligned to the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Strategy from Gloucestershire County Council which the Council had helped to shape.
- The new strategy document was more concise and was focussed on the needs of the local district in line with the UK Government's requirement to develop economic growth strategies.

Cabinet highlighted the resilience of the Cotswold economy against a difficult national economic picture.

It was highlighted that the rollout of fast broadband and improving mobile phone coverage was important for the Cotswolds.

It was noted that it was important that tradespersons and developing their skills were included as part of the strategy.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Joe Harris and seconded by Councillor Paul Hodgkinson.

Green Economic Growth Strategy Refresh (Resolution)

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

1. APPROVED the draft Green Economic Growth Strategy for a four-week period of consultation as set out in Section 4.
2. AGREED to a further report setting out the results of the consultation and any amendments to the strategy arising from it to enable Cabinet to consider the strategy for adoption.
3. NOTED the adoption of the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy by Gloucestershire County Council's Cabinet.

For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Every, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Mike McKeown	6
Against	None	0

Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

10 Public Health Funeral Policy

The purpose of the report was to consider and approve a new policy in respect of Public Health Funerals.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services, Councillor Juliet Layton, introduced the report and outlined the following points:

- It was essential that the Council provided support for those in difficult circumstances where there was no provision for their funeral, and there was no other relative who could do so.
- It was important that the policy is in place to provide clarity on the Council's responsibilities.
- The Council can will receive referrals from social services, nursing homes or the coroner and will organise an unattended crematorium service. It may organise a burial if that was specified through the deceased's wishes.
- The Council will look to cover the basic costs of the service and recover any costs where possible from assets.

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Evemy, seconded the recommendations and made the following points:

- This was a new policy and gives officers clear guidance representing best practice.
- The circumstances were difficult where there was no one available to help make the arrangements, and the Council provided this as the last option for the dignity of the body.
- Any circumstances like this in a healthcare setting were usually covered by the National Health Service.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Juliet Layton and seconded by Councillor Mike Evemy.

Public Health Funeral Policy (Resolution)		
RESOLVED: That Cabinet I. APPROVED the Public Health Funeral Policy		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evemy, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Mike McKeown	6
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

11 Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy

The purpose of the report was to consider and approve a new policy in respect of the enforcement of Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services, Councillor Juliet Layton, introduced the recommendation to Cabinet and outlined the following points:

- This policy was for non-motorised vehicles like caravans.
- Any structures like this left abandoned on the side of the road were a nuisance and could attract vandalism.
- The policy would issue removal notices if the vehicles weren't removed within 28 days. After 10 days, if there was no proof of ownership brought forward, then the Council may destroy these vehicles.

The Cabinet Member noted that these were for reported abandoned non-motorised vehicles only and not those in use.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Juliet Layton and seconded by Councillor Joe Harris.

Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy (Resolution)		
RESOLVED: That Cabinet		
I. APPROVED the Policy set out in Annex A		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evemy, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Mike McKeown	6
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

12 Long-Term Empty Property Strategy 2024 - 2029

The purpose of the report was to present an updated Long Term Empty Property Strategy to support the management of long-term empty properties within the Cotswold district.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Mike Evemy, introduced the item and outlined the following points:

- The strategy was an updated policy which followed on from the additional Council Tax levies for those properties empty for more than a year.
- The purpose of the policy was to ensure that properties were brought back into use as soon as possible.
- Section 8 of the policy identified the steps that would be taken to ensure properties would come back into use.
- The four key objectives in section 9 were presented as follows:
 - To gather relevant, accurate and current information about empty homes
 - Provide advice, assistance and guidance to landlords and property owner

Cabinet
03/October2024

- To raise awareness of empty homes in the district and promote the strategy
- To reduce the number of empty homes and return empty homes back into use, through all available and appropriate means

A question was raised regarding collaboration with the social rented sector on the policy to bring houses back into use. The Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare and Revenue Service set out to Cabinet how the Council will engage with owners of homes in order to find out why its empty and provide advice on bringing these back into use. It was noted that many of the barriers to changing these empty properties related to cost.

Cabinet noted the figure of 864 homes in the district that were classed as being 'long term-empty'. A question was asked about how many of these were derelict and couldn't be sold on and what would be done. It was noted that the figure of 864 was from the end of the 2023/24 financial year, and the current figure for the end of Q2 was now 545. Some more analysis was needed regarding the premium. For derelict properties, it was noted that all of the Council service areas would be involved in dealing with these properties as these were not easy to deal with.

Cabinet noted that it would be useful to see the breakdown for how long properties had been empty for and the impact of the additional Council Tax levies

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Mike Evely and seconded by Councillor Joe Harris.

Long-Term Empty Property Strategy 2024 - 2029 (Resolution)		
RESOLVED: That Cabinet		
I. APPROVED the implementation of the Long -Term Empty Property Strategy for 2024 – 2025.		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evely, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Mike McKeown	6
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

13 Assets of Community Value - Process Review

The purpose of the report WAS to evaluate the current procedures and practices involved in the determination of Assets of Community Value (ACV). This review aimed to assess the efficacy and transparency of the process by which assets were nominated, reviewed, and ultimately listed or rejected as ACVs. By identifying strengths and weaknesses in the current process, this review sought to provide actionable insights and recommendations to enhance decision-making, and ensure compliance with legal and policy frameworks, to better serve the interests of the community.

The Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Parking, Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, introduced the item on behalf of Councillor Lisa Spivey and made the following points:

Cabinet

03/October2024

- The report set out a clear process for how Assets of Community Value were registered.
- Concerns had been raised from residents regarding the current process.
- Assets of Community Value were generally of social value in villages and towns. These tended to be places like pubs.
- The review highlighted several recommendations for improvement including areas such as increasing communication with Ward Members and implementing a caseload management system.

The Community Partnership Officer was invited to address Cabinet and made the following points:

- A caseload management system implementation was underway.
- Recruitment to a new post to manage these applications had been completed.

Cabinet asked a question regarding how these assets link to assets Neighbourhood Development Plans. The officer clarified that assets written into Neighbourhood Development Plans, or the Local Plan, would trigger planning restrictions. This would be different to those applied to Assets of Community Value which is largely sale restrictions. However, it could be a material consideration in planning.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Paul Hodgkinson and seconded by Councillor Joe Harris.

Assets of Community Value - Process Review (Resolution)		
RESOLVED: That Cabinet		
1. AGREED the recommendations in the annexed review;		
2. AGREED to the proposal to formally notify ward members on validation of Asset of Community Value nominations.		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Every, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Mike McKeown	6
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

14 Menopause Policy

The purpose of the report was to seek members' approval to adopt the updated Menopause Policy & Procedure as shown in Appendix A.

The Cabinet Member for Cost of Living and Inclusion, Councillor Claire Bloomer, introduced the recommendation and made the following points:

- The policy applied to staff members who were the most important asset to the Council.
- It was highlighted that the menopause could affect women of all ages and was a significant factor when it comes to women leaving the workforce.

Cabinet
03/October2024

- The policy was designed to support staff going through the menopause and provide facilities such as sanitary products and menopause champions who could give support.

The Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Parking seconded the recommendation and made the following points:

- Thanks were given to Councillor Bloomer for her work in highlighting this important issue and raising awareness.
- 900,000 leaving the workforce because of this issue was something that needed to be reduced.

It was noted that it was important that men and women were made aware of these symptoms.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Claire Bloomer and seconded by Councillor Paul Hodgkinson.

Menopause Policy (Resolution)		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evely, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Mike McKeown	6
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

15 Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members

The purpose of the report was to note the decisions taken by the Leader and/or Individual Cabinet Members.

The Deputy Leader noted for the record a correction to the call-in date which should have read '11 October' and not '11 September'. The Senior Democratic Services Officer noted this for correction.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet NOTED the decisions taken.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.00 pm

Chair

(END)

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Agenda Item 8



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 7 NOVEMBER 2024
Subject	COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2025/2026
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Evemy – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Email: mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing - Assistant Director for Resident Services Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Mandy Fathers – Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenues Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider and recommend to Full Council the revised Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2025/2026
Annexes	Annex A – Financial Modelling Annex B – Equality Impact Assessment
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet recommends to Full Council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The increase to income bands as detailed within paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and Annex A of this report from 1 April 2025. 2. That any surplus in the Hardship Fund is transferred over to 2025/2026 for reasons detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of this report
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Communities • Delivering Good Services
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Interim Head of Legal Services, Finance Business Partner, Assistant Director, Director of Finance (Publica)



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Council Tax Support is a scheme to reduce Council Tax bills for people on low income and/or who receive benefits. This report brings forward proposals to amend the scheme for 2025 in order to give more support to those on low incomes.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Councils are required to review their Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes each year for those people of working age and decide if they want to make any changes.

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 The Council implemented its own local CTS scheme of support to help those people on low incomes pay their Council Tax in April 2013. Further changes were made in April 2020 introducing the income banded scheme.

3.2 Annual wage growth is expected to be 4% in Q4 of 2024 and remaining at the same level during 2025. Without changes to the CTS scheme, this would result in more households being moved into a high-income band and therefore having to pay a higher share of the full Council Tax for their property.

3.3 To continue to give support to households during the ongoing cost of living crisis, proposals are being made to increase income bands by 4% as follows:

Proposed 4% increase	Single	Couple	Lone+1	Lone +2	Lone+3	Lone +4	Couple+1	Couple +2	Couple+3	Couple+4	Entitlement
Band 1	0 - 148.82	0 - 176.38	0 - 203.94	0 - 225.99	0 - 248.04	0 - 292.14	0 - 270.09	0 - 292.14	0 - 314.18	0 - 358.28	100
Band 2	148.83 - 198.82	176.39 - 216.38	203.95 - 238.94	226.00 - 260.99	248.05 - 283.04	292.15 - 327.14	270.10 - 320.09	292.15 - 342.14	314.19 - 364.18	358.29 - 408.2	80
Band 3	198.83 - 248.82	216.39 - 266.38	238.95 - 288.94	261.00 - 310.99	283.05 - 333.04	327.15 - 377.14	320.10 - 370.09	342.15 - 392.14	364.19 - 414.18	408.29 - 458.2	60
Band 4	248.83 - 298.82	266.39 - 316.38	288.95 - 338.94	311.00 - 360.99	333.05 - 383.04	377.15 - 427.14	370.10 - 420.09	392.15 - 442.14	414.19 - 464.18	458.29 - 508.2	40
Band 5	298.83 - 348.82	316.39 - 366.38	338.95 - 388.94	361.00 - 410.99	383.05 - 433.04	427.15 - 477.14	420.10 - 470.09	442.15 - 492.14	464.19 - 514.18	492.29 - 542.2	20

3.4 Based on the current CTS caseload used for remodelling the scheme, there is no impact, either negative or positive on CTS claimants as all retain their initial modelling bands.

3.5 In 2022/2023 the Council implemented a Hardship Fund to support those residents who were struggling financially and provided the Council with evidence of financial hardship. This fund was created with financial support from Gloucestershire County Council, and Cotswold District Council. The fund was originally set at £40,000. To date there remains in excess of £33,000.



- 3.6** Recommendations are being made to transfer any funding surplus into the financial year 2025/2026 to ensure that the Council continues to support those residents in financial hardship.
- 3.7** The Council's client support officers continue to reach and offer additional support to who apply for this funding to ensure any long-term hardship is minimised. This might be through negotiating better details with utility companies, maximising benefit take-up, addressing expenditure or sign posting to another organisation for support,

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1.** The Council administers a CTS scheme with an annual expenditure of approximately £4.9 million. From 2013/2014, the Government reduced the level of funding for the local scheme effectively creating a grant reduction of 10% a year across all of the precepting authorities.
- 4.2** Any increase in the take-up of CTS will lead to a reduced tax-base and therefore reduced income to precepting bodies.
- 4.3** The proposed changes increase the estimated cost of the CTS scheme by approximately £28,000. This will be reflected in a decrease in the Council Tax base and Council Tax income recognised in the Collection Fund. The decrease in income will be spread proportionately across the major precepting authorities (Gloucestershire County Council, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Cotswold District Council as well as the Town and Parish Councils). Making these proposed changes will decrease the total tax base by the equivalent of 13 band D properties and a loss of income as follows:

Financial Year	GCC	Police	Town/Parish	Cotswold	Total
2025/2026	£20,645.03	£3,975.65	£1,392.92	£1,986.40	£28,000

- 4.4** The reduction in Council Tax income retained by the Council of £1,986.40 will be taken into account as part of the 2025/2026 budget setting process.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.** The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit and instead requires each authority to design a scheme specifying the reductions, are to apply to amounts of Council Tax.



5.2 The CTS scheme is required under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (“the Act”), as amended. The Act states that for each financial year, billing authorities must consider whether to revise their CTS scheme or replace it with another.

5.3 The deadline for making decisions is 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to take effect (under paragraph 5, schedule 1A of the Act). If the Council does not make/revise a CTS scheme by 11 March 2025, a default scheme will be imposed on the Council, which will be effective from April 2025.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 There are two risks to consider:

- That the benefit caseload increases significantly, resulting in expenditure exceeding the levels estimated within this report. To mitigate this risk monthly monitoring is conducted and any significant increase in caseload would be referred to the Chief Financial Officer.
- If the income bands are not increased in line with inflation, CTS for vulnerable households could reduce. This could cause reputational damage to the Council.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1. To ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 an equality impact assessment has been completed and attached to this report under Annex B.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1. None.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1. None.

ANNEX A – Council Tax Support Scheme (Cotswold District Council)

2024/2025 current income bands

No Change	Single	Couple	Lone +1	Lone +2	Lone +3	Lone +4	Couple +1	Couple +2	Couple +3	Couple +4	Entitlement
Band 1	0 - 143.10	0 - 169.60	0 - 196.10	0 - 217.30	0 - 238.50	0 - 280.90	0 - 259.70	0 - 280.90	0 - 302.10	0 - 344.50	100
Band 2	143.11 - 193.10	169.61 - 209.60	196.11 - 231.10	217.31 - 252.30	238.51 - 273.50	280.91 - 315.90	259.71 - 309.70	280.91 - 330.90	302.11 - 352.10	344.51 - 394.50	80
Band 3	193.11 - 243.10	209.61 - 259.60	231.11 - 281.10	252.31 - 302.30	273.51 - 323.50	315.91 - 365.90	309.71 - 359.70	330.91 - 380.90	352.11 - 402.10	394.51 - 444.50	60
Band 4	243.11 - 293.10	259.61 - 309.60	281.11 - 331.10	302.31 - 352.30	323.51 - 373.50	365.91 - 415.90	359.71 - 409.70	380.91 - 430.90	402.11 - 452.10	444.51 - 494.50	40
Band 5	293.11 - 343.10	309.61 - 359.60	331.11 - 381.10	352.31 - 402.30	373.51 - 423.50	415.91 - 465.90	409.71 - 459.70	430.91 - 480.90	452.11 - 502.10	494.51 - 544.50	20

2025/2026 proposed income bands

Proposed 4% increase	Single	Couple	Lone +1	Lone +2	Lone +3	Lone +4	Couple +1	Couple +2	Couple +3	Couple +4	Entitlement
Band 1	0 - 148.82	0 - 176.38	0 - 203.94	0 - 225.99	0 - 248.04	0 - 292.14	0 - 270.09	0 - 292.14	0 - 314.18	0 - 358.28	100
Band 2	148.83 - 198.82	176.39 - 216.38	203.95 - 238.94	226.00 - 260.99	248.05 - 283.04	292.15 - 327.14	270.10 - 320.09	292.15 - 342.14	314.19 - 364.18	358.29 - 408.28	80
Band 3	198.83 - 248.82	216.39 - 266.38	238.95 - 288.94	261.00 - 310.99	283.05 - 333.04	327.15 - 377.14	320.10 - 370.09	342.15 - 392.14	364.19 - 414.18	408.29 - 458.28	60
Band 4	248.83 - 298.82	266.39 - 316.38	288.95 - 338.94	311.00 - 360.99	333.05 - 383.04	377.15 - 427.14	370.10 - 420.09	392.15 - 442.14	414.19 - 464.18	458.29 - 508.28	40
Band 5	298.83 - 348.82	316.39 - 366.38	338.95 - 388.94	361.00 - 410.99	383.05 - 433.04	427.15 - 477.14	420.10 - 470.09	492.15 - 492.14	464.19 - 514.18	508.29 - 558.28	20

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Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the ‘protected characteristics’ may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Mandy Fathers	
Date of assessment: 07/10/2024	Telephone: 01285 623571 Email: mandy.fathers@cotswold.gov.uk

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Existing – Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/2026

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

To make slight amendments to the Banding in the scheme

4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 states a CTS scheme is required and Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 states that the council must consult. Under paragraph 5, schedule 1A of the same Act, the Council is required to have a scheme approved by 11 March 2024.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Demographic data was used when modelling the scheme
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mary Cobbett, a valued third sector support advocate for the district has been consulted with
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comparisons with previous schemes and those of neighbouring LA's has been considered
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Page 22

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

N/A

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

No

If NO please outline any planned activities

N/A

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	✓
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact?	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	
Age – Old People			✓	The scheme is for working age people only – Pensioners have a different CTS scheme which is mandated by Central Government	
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities but is not specific to disability	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races, but it is not specific to race	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions, but it is not specific to religion	

Sexual Orientation			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation, but it is not specific to sexual orientation	
Gender Reassignment			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people who are pregnant and/or on maternity, but it is not specific to this group	
Geographical impacts on one area			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the Cotswold district	
Other Groups			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all other groups that are not mentioned	
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the Cotswold district	

Page 24

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
Change Policy when approved	Mandy Fathers	Craig Fisher	Following full Council approval in early 2025

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?

n/a

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Mandy Fathers	Date:	07.10.24
Line Manager:	Jon Dearing	Date:	07.10.24
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:		Date:	

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Agenda Item 9



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 7 NOVEMBER 2024
Subject	UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL’S INVOLVEMENT IN AND SUPPORT FOR COST OF LIVING RELATED INITIATIVES
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Claire Bloomer, Cabinet Member for Cost of Living and Inclusion Email: claire.bloomer@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Director Communities Email: Democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Jacqueline Wright, Business Manager Leisure & Wellbeing Email: Democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update Cabinet on the Council’s work to support people affected by the cost of living crisis.
Annexes	Annex A – Holiday Activity and Food Programme HAF overview (2023/24) Annex B – Benefits Postcard
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the Council’s work to support communities with the cost of living. 2. Request that the Cost of Living Steering Group continues to consider further opportunities to support communities with the cost of living.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Good Services • Responding to the Climate Emergency • Supporting Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Consultees/ Consultation	Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service, Assistant Director – Communities Leadership and Management Team, and Citizens Advice Bureau.
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report aims to update on the various initiatives the Council delivers or supports since 2022 to alleviate pressures on local households due to the rise in the cost of living.
- 1.2 The Council's work includes the facilitation and development of the Cotswold Food Network and focussed work on financial inclusion, administering allocations of Household Support Fund provided by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), delivery of the Holiday Activity and Food programme, The Cotswold Connected Community & Food Programme (CCCFN) and a focus on the cost-of-living element in other areas of work (Active Cotswold, Community Building).
- 1.3 The report also mentions new initiatives that are launching in due course i.e. Advice First Aid and LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting in July 2022 the Council agreed a Motion relating to the Cost of Living Crisis, agreeing to lobby Government for action and to determine how additional support should be provided to those in need, and where the funds could be found to enable it to be delivered. The Council also agreed to "... set up a cross-party working group in response to the motion which would report back, in advance of the budget setting process, with recommendations that Council could take to help address the cost of living crisis."
- 2.2 In September 2022 the Council agreed a Motion, part of which required a cross-party group be set up urgently to implement 'public warm places' and also to look at other ways to help our Cotswold residents most negatively impacted by unaffordable heating and living costs.
- 2.3 A Member led cross party Cost of Living Crisis steering group has been formed and held its first meeting on 3rd October. The Group is meeting every 2 - 3 weeks to oversee progress on assessing what additional support the Council could offer to residents in relation to coping with the cost of living Crisis.
- 2.4 At its meeting on 16th November 2022 Council agreed to allocate £40,000 from the Council Priorities Fund towards establishing a Food Network.
- 2.5 In November 2022 a one-off 'Cotswold Connected Community and Food Programme' (CCCFP) has been launched which complemented the Council's 'Crowdfund Cotswold' initiative and formed part of our asset-based community development approach. It aimed to flexibly support initiatives that can be realised in the near future to increase community resilience during the current cost of living crisis and beyond. The intention of the programme was that the work and funding builds on the assets that are found in the community and mobilises individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. Existing external funding of £75,000 which the Council received for community-based activity had been identified and the Steering Group has agreed to ringfence the funding for this project.

- 2.6** The Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) was rolled out to all upper tier local authorities in 2021 following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020. The HAF programme is funded by the Department of Education for those in reception to year 11 who receive income-related free school meals. In Gloucestershire, the programme is coordinated by the County Council and delivered at district level by lead organisations. In Cotswold, HAF is delivered jointly by ‘World Jungle’ and CDC’s Community Wellbeing Team. The programme is funded until spring 2025.
- 2.7** The Council has also been bidding successfully for and distributing allocations of the Government’s Household Support Fund (HSF).
- 2.8** This report aims to update Cabinet on the cost-of-living support initiatives listed above.

3. Cost of Living Support

3.1 Cotswold Food Network

3.1.1 Introduction

The Cotswold Food Network’s (CFN) ambition is to improve food equity and affordability: that everyone in Cotswold District has access to a range of food options everyday – affordable, good-quality, nutritious and ideally locally sourced. This needs a healthy ecosystem of food providers and other support and delivery agents, to address the requirements of Cotswold’s different communities.

CFN seeks to enable legacy change not just to react to immediate crisis, the ambition has always been to look at delivery and intervention that can provide longer term change and is systems based.

CFN’s work began effectively in Autumn 2023 and to date, the approach has been to engage with stakeholders (VCSE and statutory organisations, Councillors and communities) across various topic areas and at different scales. A support officer role (30 hours per week, three-year contract) began in December 2023 and an independent contractor are leading the work with management by the Community Wellbeing team. The key work undertaken has included:

- Understanding food related provision, assets, and issues across the district.
- Where feasible, mapping these, using GIS (Geographical Information Systems).
- Collaborating with stakeholders to identify priorities and solutions.
- Supporting the implementation of actions that improve food sustainability.

3.1.2 Engagement and collaboration

CFN has engaged across various scales and topics. In terms of the larger events, it has held five meetings since November 2023, on the following topics:

- Financial Inclusion (3)
- Community Food Growing (1) and

- Food Provision (1).

These larger (half day) stakeholder meetings have been well attended – each having 30 to 40 people and more than 20 organisations. They have all been held centrally in the district (at Northleach), with refreshments, to attract all those we would like to attend.

Throughout these meetings there has been consistent feedback regardless of the theme:

- the benefits of networking.
- ambition for decentralised services.
- complexities of access and servicing more rural/remote areas of the district.
- access to transport and therefore services.
- balance between meetings and discussion and action.

CFN is using a small core group of stakeholders to advise and help co-ordinate the work, comprising colleagues in the Community Wellbeing team, both Cotswold food banks, Citizens Advice and an independent contractor. This group's membership may vary depending on the topic.

The Network has also developed a quite extensive and expanding mailing list, used to engage – to share and seek information and to for example, target invitations to events. It comprises 250 unique contacts and over 100 of these being themed under the Financial Inclusion (cost of living) topic. There are also contact lists for Food Provision and Community Growing.

Collaboration across the different three main work themes, has included;

- Information sharing - including data and mapping, services provided and contact details of stakeholder organisations.
- New information guides - such as on Advice First Aid and Statutory Benefit entitlements.
- Organisational and personal offers to work together - on the priority topics that are emerging through the work.

3.1.3 Mapping data supporting the Food Network

Using a range of public-access and stakeholder organisational data and expertise from Publica's GIS colleagues, Cotswold Food Network is mapping a range of information. Initially Cotswold's main financial inclusion support organisation's locations and services, were mapped on paper and then transposed onto electronic GIS maps using address locations. These points on the map were layered against the Index of Multiple Deprivation for Cotswold showing more and less deprived parts of the district. New data sets were subsequently added. This has been to date, demographic information (such as household types), deprivation/disadvantage information such as the incidence of Free School Meals by

Ward and finally the location of various assets (town/village halls, schools, playgrounds, allotments, playing fields).

The work is at a developmental stage, but the purpose is to provide information enabling organisations and communities, working on food equity in Cotswold, to make better decisions, so benefitting clients and communities – for example potentially the best location for new services like as new food pantries, a mobile food van and advice and support services.

3.1.4 Financial Inclusion

The CFN has identified that to enable greater food equity there must be active support to maximise household incomes. The priority must be to support households to access all the benefits they are entitled to. Alongside this it is vital that communities can access financial advice with the intention of preventing financial crisis and to support sustainable financial planning.

By bringing together the stakeholders both voluntary and statutory to network, discuss and plan a co-produced, collaborative approach it can support the improvement of Financial Inclusion in the Cotswolds.

The main barriers identified through this group that prevent better financial inclusion in our communities are:

- Rurality of the District:
- Access to services – need for greater de centralisation
- Transport links
- Digital exclusion
- Increased costs of living
- The above issues make delivering services more complicated and more expensive and therefore more targeted intervention is required.

The graphic below summarises the key elements of the Cotswold Food Network.

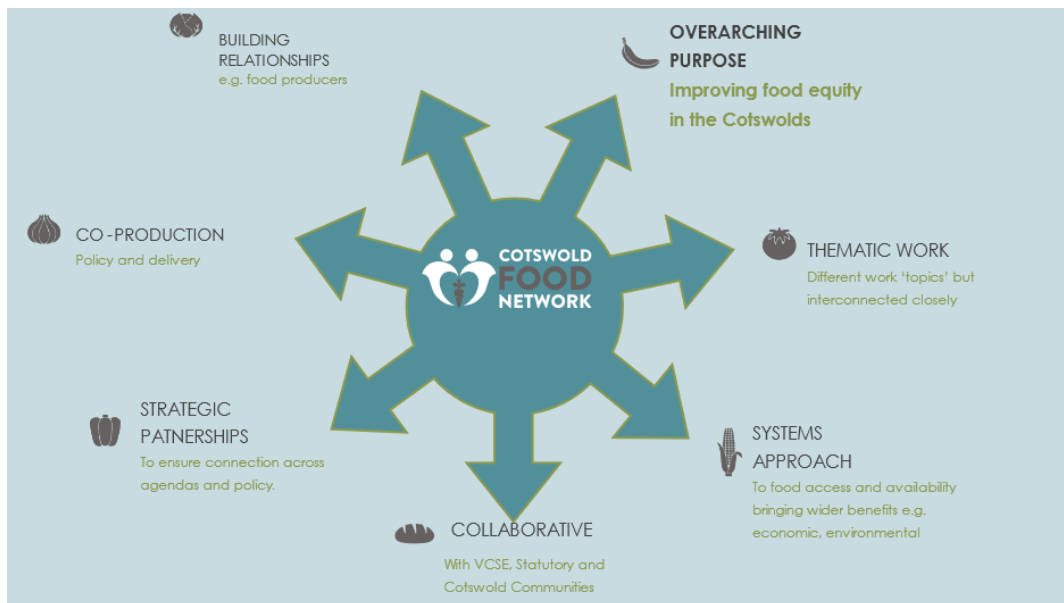


Figure 1: Cotswold Food Network Summary

3.1.5 Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)- planned to launch in December 2024

LIFT is a product developed and provided by the organisation Policy in Practice. It is a platform that provides insight into low-income families by aggregating local authority and some publicly available datasets, including the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE). Policy in Practice provide templates to support the data sharing agreements required to work in this way. The aggregated information can be segmented in lots of diverse ways to be used in targeted campaigns to support prevention and take-up.

The LIFT platform enables councils to use their data to identify and target support to people on low incomes by connecting them with benefits and employment support and access to skills and training programs. It is possible to identify the most vulnerable residents and target the limited support available to them before they reach crisis by analysing our existing administrative data. Other councils across the UK are already leading the way and have achieved significant results.

Using this data to decide on where, how and why to intervene is now the guiding factor for all work of the CFN as well as internal Council Services. Following the decision of CDC to adopt the LIFT platform from Policy in Practice this approach can be embedded across delivery. The last meeting the CFN held with the financial inclusion group started to identify priority areas (geographic), themes, cohorts and match organisations with the links and specialism to support the delivery. The CFN will be central to supporting the implementation of LIFT by working across both statutory and voluntary organisations to maximise its impact on the cost-of-living pressures in the Cotswolds.

3.2 The Cotswold Connected Community & Food Programme (CCCFN)



This externally funded programme has supported a wide range of community-led projects. A brief description of the projects and amount awarded can be found below. This funding programme was a one-off rolling programme, which is now closed. The Council is in the process of evaluating the impact of the funded projects.

3.2.1 The Churn Project:

Cooking on a Budget courses project aimed at people who are not economically active, and/or on low incomes; in and around Cirencester these sessions introduce clients to using slow cookers, the most economic way of producing a hot nutritious meal in bulk. Slow cookers provided to those who don't have them to enable them to continue cooking in this way after the course. Awarded: £3660

3.2.2 Bloodhound Education:

2 applications awarded. Bloodhound Family Engineering -a GCC partner delivering activities from their centre open to all families across the county. Funded programmes of a family days outside of HAF periods (in Cotswolds) for low income families including a hot, freshly cooked 2 course meal. Over a 4 hour programme local families designed, built and tested prototype cars and parachutes and sat together for a lunch provide by a local registered caterer and had fruit snacks and hot drinks during the day with nutritional guidance about healthy eating- families were given recipe cards and took part in a design your own meal activity and children all had a grown your own cress seed pack to take away. Awarded 1. £2850 and 2. £2850

3.2.3 Cirencester Food Pantry:

2 applications awarded: a weekly food pantry based in Watermoor Hall to help reduce food waste and make an impact on the 16% food inflation Building a sense of community around caring for our planet as well as well-being of members. It runs as a membership activity to improve health and well-being around reducing food waste and building community and connections through working together. Awarded: 1. £6350 and 2. £5000

3.2.4 Getting Connected Digital Inclusion Course:

An accessible digital inclusion course for older people in Bourton on the Water and surrounding villages to learn how to get online effectively and safely through a series of tutor led sessions covering Digital learning. This will help those not currently online/those who are not confident to navigate the digital world and 'Get connected' which improves their life. A collaboration between CDC Community Wellbeing Team, Lead Bourton Resident, Glos Adult Education and supporting digital organisations Awarded: £730

3.2.5 The Kitchen Club & World Jungle:

Cooking for fun and friendship- aims to use food as a vehicle for building community, creating new connections, learning new skills and celebrating life! It will help people to learn to cook and eat well for life. Four sets of five-week courses where groups of up to 16 will learn to cook a variety of staple recipes at each session to enjoy over lunch with fellow cooks on the course. The shared experience of cooking a nutritious and delicious



meal offers participants the time and space to connect with each other, share experiences, stories and build new friendships and connections. Each course will also culminate in a food celebration event where participants get to share their skills at a community event. The course will run in four separate towns in the Cotswolds (including Cirencester, Tetbury, Moreton & Bourton). The course will open to a variety of groups including Young Parents, Young Adults, newly bereaved people for example. Awarded: £11,100

3.2.6 Henhouse:

A social group for young professional women in the countryside aiming to bring these women together to build connections, make friends, and try their hands at new crafts and hobbies. It promotes inclusivity, personal growth, and an alternative to alcohol-focused social activities commonly found in the area. The group's focus is on fostering a sense of community, empowerment, and mutual support among its members and to reduce loneliness. Awarded: £2000

3.2.7 Black Cat Community Café at Northleach:

For the benefit of the residents of Northleach and the surrounding areas, by associating together the residents and others to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare with the object of improving the conditions of life of the residents and to establish a community café. The Black Cat Cafe operates with the aim to support the local community as a space to conduct community-based activities, offers friendship to the lonely in the community by providing an accessible and a safe welcoming environment and is a vehicle for community involvement, offering new approaches to community problems. The Black Cat Cafe is a centre that offers support to families who are financially in need with low-cost food options, looks to inspire and empower young people to achieve their potential through community activities and will promote racial and gender equality and social justice within the community. Awarded: £16,000

3.2.8 Cirencester Town Council:

Two free, inclusive community events in summer 2024, 1st Event: 'The Big Lunch' - to bring our community together in one central location to share knowledge and encourage people to live more sustainably. Acknowledging the 80th D-Day anniversary and use wartime, homefront initiatives to help families tackle modern day challenges. By applying the 'Dig for Victory', 'Grow your Own', and 'Make Do and Mend' philosophies to encourage self-sufficiency principles and equip the community in combating challenges like the cost of living crisis, whilst promoting environmental awareness, sustainability and developing health and well-being resilience. Clubs, Charities and groups delivering exhibitions, workshops and activities, promoting what can be accessed and encouraging learning around 'green' initiatives.

2nd event: , Self-Care Body & Mind Event – to bring together, a wide range of local organisations and groups, for a free event at Cirencester Market Place and in the Abbey Grounds. Working with key stakeholders including CDC Community Wellbeing Team,



health & support services, charities, local groups, leisure operators, activities & sports clubs etc. to run an event full of information to help supports all individuals. With a focus on self-care and wellbeing we will promote self- esteem coping strategies, resilience skills, relationship building and impart knowledge of available resources and showcase the array of services, support and activities available from organisations and groups in and around Cirencester. Awarded: £6400

3.2.9 TAYCT (Tetbury Area Youth and Community Trust):

Community Transport remains a significant challenge in the area and Tetbury Youth Club offer activities and experiences to young people that aim to develop wellbeing and increased mental health, improved confidence and aspiration, offer a variety of experiences and skills, as well as access to safe spaces and trusted adults. Currently, the lack of available community transport and drivers is limiting young people's access to some of the provision. TAYCT is partnering with Westonbirt Arboretum to offer 13 young people the opportunity to take part in an 8-week after-school programme of supported outdoor, forest-school style activities and In order for TAYCT to hire the school minibuses for this purpose, volunteer drivers and youth workers must complete MIDAS training. Once completed, TAYCT will be able to hire the SWR minibus as required, improving inclusion and access for all young people, and increasing the range of opportunities that we can offer (e.g. different venues outside of Tetbury). Awarded: £1064

3.2.10 The Phoenix Trust:

Community Based Mindfulness and Compassion initiative - an initial pilot in the Cirencester district supported by the local GP surgeries and the Phoenix Trust. It is anticipated that GPs and other primary care staff will be able to signpost individuals into the programme which is Training communities in mindfulness and compassion, an evidence-based approach to enhancing individual and group resilience and can transform lives. The long-term community sustainability is underpinned by the development of champions and ensuring resources are available as a legacy of the programme. Awarded: £8140

3.2.11 Reconnect Gloucestershire:

Stroke Mentor Programme – funding required to recruit volunteer stroke survivor mentors and match them with new stroke survivors across the district. Experiencing a stroke happens so suddenly, often without warning, and the impacts on those who survive are life altering- physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. The Stroke Mentor Programme aligns with the NHS discharge pathway from the NHS's Integrated Community Stroke Service and form part of the package of services a stroke survivor could access when home. The outcomes for this project would include: i) Increased recovery rates through peer support and encouragement, ii) Reduction in stroke survivors and carers' anxiety and depression related to fear of life after stroke, iii) Reduction in reliance on statutory services due to anxiety and isolation, iv) Stroke survivors and carers being more



informed about stroke, recovery and where to access help/ support and advice, v) Carers feeling supported and being informed around carer support pathways, vi) Stroke survivors and carers reconnecting with their support networks and forming new ones in their communities and vii) stroke survivors becoming ambassadors for other stroke survivors and reduce stigma by feeling confident enough to be seen and heard in their communities.
Awarded: £8,8565

3.3 Welfare & Revenue Service

The Council's statutory Welfare and Revenue Services have supported households with the following since 2022:

- 3.3.1** Council Tax Rebate Scheme (Energy schemes) - the council received a total of £4,066,800 for this which supported 26,052 households with their energy bills
- 3.3.2** Energy Bill support Scheme (EBSS) the council administered on behalf of Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC). £199,000 was spent over 675 applications which supported them with their energy bills
- 3.3.3** Council Tax Support Fund: £102,731 which supported 2,397 households with their council tax liabilities
- 3.3.4** Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP): 2022 £71,99; 2023 £71,475; 2024 £71,475
- 3.3.5** Council Tax Hardship £40,000 (since 2023) - just under £35,000 left
- 3.3.6** Benefits Postcard: A postcard (Annex B) will be sent to households in November highlighting the availability of benefits which households may be eligible to claim.

3.4 Holiday Activity & Food Programme (HAF)

The HAF programme's purpose is to make sure children and young people are entertained, active, educated, safe and fed during school holidays. Since 2021 the Council is leading the delivery of the HAF in partnership with 'World Jungle' and supported by many local partners. The programme offers activities and food during the Eastern, Summer and Christmas holidays. Annex A provides detailed information about the sessions provided, number of children attended and feedback during 2023 and 2024. This year's Christmas HAF is currently being planned.

Funding for HAF has come to an end with Christmas 2024 being the last funded HAF programme.

Over the past months work has been undertaken to plan for the time after HAF as this support for children and families is very important and all the effort that has been put into HAF so far, the local partnerships and everything that has been learned should leave a legacy and continue in some form.

A series of theory of change meetings and workshops have taken place to look at what the impact of HAF has been so far, what went well, what can be done differently and to identify priorities for the Cotswold after the HAF funding has finished and plan future collaborative activities.

The main aim of the future partnership: “We will work together to support children, young people and families to achieve their potential, whatever challenges they may face, helping to create resilient thriving communities within our district”.

One of the main drivers and chosen focus for 2025 is ‘supporting the improved food security, health and wellbeing of children, young people and families’. The figure below gives an overview of the 2025 workstream.

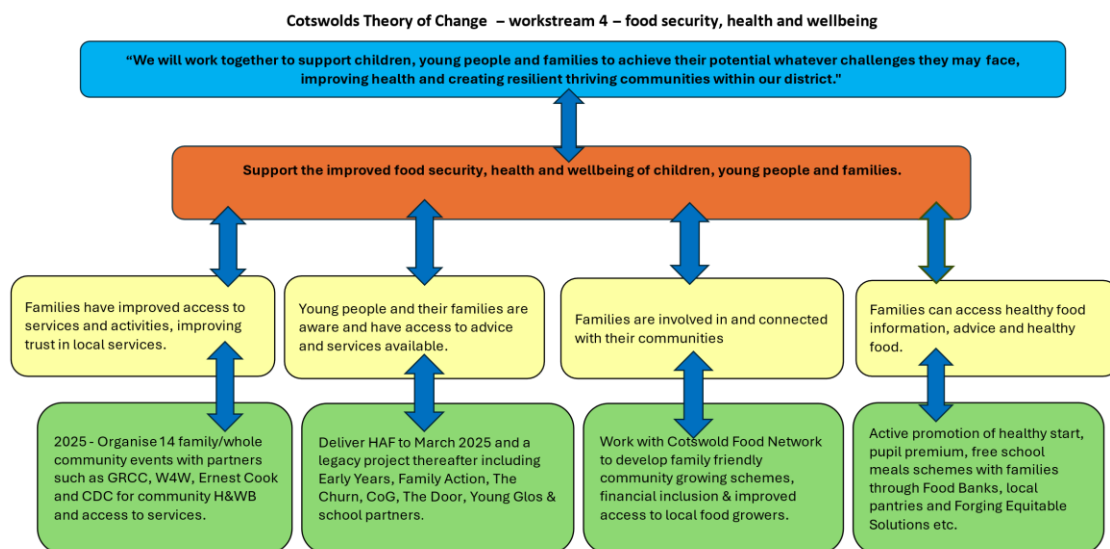


Figure 2: Theory of Change- food security, health and wellbeing

As a result a series of community events are planned for 2025. These will be co-delivered with local partners e.g. Children & Young people's activity providers, statutory & voluntary organisations, CiC's, charities etc. and participants will have free food, activities, advice and support and signposting.

There will be 12/14 events covering each of the holidays to be covered including ½ terms for all age groups:

- February 17th – 21st inclusive 2 events
- April 14th – 25th inclusive (bank holidays 18th & 21st April) 2 events
- May 26th – 30th inclusive (bank holiday 26th May) 2 events
- July 22nd – August 29th inclusive (bank holiday 25th August) 4 events



- October 27th – 31st inclusive 2 events
- December 22nd – 5th January (bank holidays 25th & 26th) 2 events

The work of the CFN as well as LIFT is closely linked with and will support the HAF legacy project.

3.5 Household Support Fund

The Household Support Fund which was launched in October 2021 is intended to alleviate hardship and support those most in need that have been affected by the significant rising in cost of living. It is to meet immediate needs and support those struggling to afford food, energy, water, and utility related essential expenses. Due to significant increases in energy prices, the rising costs of fuel and general cost of living, many households will be adversely affected and placed into financial hardship and therefore there will be a greater emphasis on supporting households with energy bills, food and water bills, and the general cost of living through the Household Support Fund.

The purpose of the Household Support Fund is to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills and other essential items.

The Fund is made available to Upper Tier Local Authorities. Gloucestershire County Council has invited Gloucestershire District Councils to bid for a district allocation.

At CDC, the biggest share of the allocations were distributed to Citizens Advice to administer the fund on the Council's behalf and to support eligible households with support for energy and water, essential linked to energy and water as well as housing costs. Other support included:

- Supermarket vouchers
- Allocations to North Cotswold Foodbank
- Holistic Family Support Project delivered jointly by the 'Churn Project' and 'The Door' (part of Round 4 and the recent HSF Round 5)
- Cotswold Food Network (CFN) to support the development of the CFN and a feasibility study for a mobile provision for the North Cotswolds (part of the last HSF Round -Round 5)-
- Advice First Aid (part of the last HSF Round -Round 5)- has been developed by local Citizens Advice (CA) offices as a service that provides signposting support to people within community settings, in locations away from a local Citizens Advice office. CA's internal research has shown that people with advice needs often reach out to a trusted local leader first, rather than contact Citizens Advice directly. When someone needs help, if the person they first reach out to in the community is an Advice First Aider, it can reduce the time it takes to access trustworthy information



or make contact with an advice provider and help take early action stop problems snowballing into crisis. Locally the project, which is co-funded by GCC and will run across the whole county, will deliver a two tier approach pilot project as follows:

Level 1: an initial overview for frontline workers

Deliver initial first aid training to staff and volunteers in key community organisations – this is tailored to each district’s particular features. They would learn to identify the advice need that people need support with eg with debt, benefits, housing. The Advice First Aider would be trained to identify the best way for that person to access the information or advice eg signposting to our email or telephone service or the national Citizens Advice website. The Advice First Aid volunteer also learns how they can support people that need it, such as sitting with them while they access the Citizens Advice website.

Level 2: higher level training with a direct referral relationship to a dedicated adviser. This would give Advice First Aiders more in depth training. These volunteers would have access to a dedicated adviser who would manage referrals and support the First Aider.

This project is currently in the preparation phase.

The HSF was set to end at the end of September, causing concern amongst anti-poverty campaigners and councils. The Government decided to extend the HSF until March 2025 and invest £421 million in England with a further £79million made available to devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

GCC has not yet announced their plans for HSF6.

3.6 Additional Support

A. Active Cotswold Programme

Many of the ‘Active Cotswold’ Physical Activity options are low cost or no cost to be as inclusive as possible to our communities.

Cost is a barrier to getting active for many people and this has increased due to the Cost of Living crisis so the council is consciously looking at ways to introduce free and low cost options in accessible locations (as well as increasing options at Leisure Centres) and encouraging residents to make use of the green spaces for activities such as walking.

Community Fit Kit

Community Fit Kits contain some basic exercise equipment, a user manual, nutrition advice, health and wellbeing information. 7 Fit Kits have been donated for free to the Bromford Housing community rooms, over 250 people have access to these. They are in



low-income areas where people may not be able to afford gym memberships or fitness equipment.

<https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/community-fit-kit-launched-for-residents-in-the-cotswolds>

Free events for the community

Active Cotswold ran a live event, there were free activities, including an appearance from Mr Motivator and free fruit smoothies, over 100 people attended. A second event is planned for February 2025 in Bourton-on-the-Water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9dXpZ8Ot3I>

Free Walk leader training

The programme offers free Ramblers Wellbeing Walk Leader Training, we have trained 34 walk leaders so far, this will hopefully lead to free accessible walks being put on in the district.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bojtooe5RDY>

Free fitness classes in the community

Active Cotswold has funded 10 weeks 'You Can Move' fitness classes in Lechlade and Fairford. These were aimed at getting inactive people out of their homes and giving them the confidence to start moving more and with removing the barrier of cost people who cannot afford classes could attend. The programme also just started funding Chi Chi Fit in Cirencester and Bourton Leisure Centres and people attending don't need to be members either, so it is completely free.

B. Cotswold Community Network (CCN)

Full utilisation of the CCN to promote and share anything happening in the Cotswold District which supports COL. This is bi-weekly virtual meeting for local groups and organisations. Guest Speakers have attended to share information such as Severn Wye energy advisers, Foodbanks, Food Network etc. this helps to raise awareness widely amongst our partners and the wider community about everything related to COL (and many other topics) and is a highly effective ongoing platform.

C. Community Building Work

- Digital Inclusion – fully supported the launch of the 'Getting Connected course' alongside a resident from Bourton on the Water to help older people navigate their way around their devices with confidence. Please see the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/CotswoldDC/videos/654492996334243>

- Free Getting Connected Community Courses

Bourton on the Water has had 3 successful courses to date since 2022 from which most of the participants and volunteers remain in contact via WhatsApp and a monthly meeting. The whole idea of continued learning and staying in touch has



really made this project sustainable and valuable to all who are involved. 2 courses have run in Tetbury, 1 in Fairford and 2 in Moreton in Marsh. The first course in Stow on the Wold is starting this October. 80 + people have benefitted from this course so far.

Alongside Adult Education, we have worked in partnership with the Police, Digibus, Ability Net, GRCC/DAISI project, Nationwide Banking, Working 4 Wellbeing, P3, Tetbury Town Council, Cotswold Friends and The Good Things Foundation to enable all of the Digital community building work to happen. The use of digital devices contributes to a better and easier way of living and using comparative websites to find cheaper deals such as insurance has really helped with the cost of living along with being able to bank and budget online.

- Cost of living Community Christmas Events

Two free events (Christmas themed) with a free raffle, free food all donated by local businesses and lots of information on the cost of living support with many partner organisations offering information on the day such as the Foodbank and Citizens Advice. Children were entertained for free by World Jungle to encourage families to attend. We had approximately 200 people who benefitted from these events

- Meet Our Community Builder Events

5 engagements to date (CHEQS, Upper Rissington, Chesterton, South Cerney, Lechlade) – 8 partner organisations involved- (Town council, Bromford Housing, Cirencester Foodbank, Salvation Army, Local Schools, Age UK, W4W, PCSO's) 40+ people benefiting – 'Worrying About Money' leaflets were handed out during these sessions and signposting to CAB, P3 and the Foodbanks.

- Bromford housing 55+ accommodation community engagement

7 patches/areas engaged with to date including Cirencester Countess Lillias, Beeches, Moreton in the Marsh - Jameson Court - 35+ residents benefiting - 'Worrying About Money' leaflets were available during these sessions and signposting to CAB, P3 and the Foodbanks

- Community group engagements

Seven groups (Monday Club, Evergreens, Military Base, Mens Shed - Northleach, Tetbury Friendship Café, Barton Club, One Morton, W4W Wellbeing Café, Kingsley House) - 120+ people benefiting - 'Worrying About Money' leaflets were available during these sessions and signposting to CAB, P3 and the Foodbanks

- Free family fun days - Northleach, Bourton on the water, Stow.

Free events organised by the Cotswold Community Connectors for families to engage, connect and find out about all the support that is available to them including COL. Partnership working with all the people who make up the Cotswold



Community Connectors – Community Builder, PCSO's, Parish Warden, Bromford Housing, Bourton and Stow Baptist church, NHS social prescriber link worker and in conjunction with Headspace mental health charity, NHS Bus, Bourton Vale Equestrian, Bourton football, Stow Active youth club, Young Gloucestershire, Cotswold First Aid, Rotary club, Classic Cars, Bourton Primary school, Stow Primary and Northleach primary school. We have hosted 5 events so far, each attracting 100 people so 500 people in all

- 'Grow your own'

Free community courses were designed and set up for 'Grow Your Own' and a new Community Growing Scheme established in collaboration with Cirencester College Adult Education and Roots & Seeds café/restaurant –this was successful and had great feedback and is now an ongoing partnership and community engagement piece of work and is fully connected into the wider Food Network/Growing Network.

Conversations between Community Wellbeing team and a resident about 'growing your own', food pantries and food banks led to lots of ideas, eventually a Facebook page called Free Northleach Gardeners Exchange was formed – sow, grow, share the spare was the motto. It has over 324 members, a passionate group of people who use the church porch to house crops that people in the community can help themselves to.

[FREE NORTHLEACH GARDENERS' EXCHANGE. Sow, grow, share the spare](#) 
[| Facebook](#)

- Black Cat Café – Northleach - warm space and teen café – Sept 22 – May 24

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/511lohs/the-old-woolhouse-northleach-warm-space-flyer.pdf>

The Teen café enabled 50 children each week to come and have free toast and cheap drinks and snacks in a warm environment where they could meet friends and socialise. The Warm space during the day provided a warm, safe, welcoming environment for anyone who wanted some company or advice on any problems they were having. There was a regular group of people who came in, approximately 40 people.

- Chesteron primary school project – Cirencester

We had many engagements with the pastoral lead and the head at the primary school and had several conversations with the parents and carers there, signposting to various organisations such as Foodbank, Cirencester College, Adult Education, CAB and P3. We organised the Big Dig Day so that the children could have access to free food and learn about how to grow your own.

- Cirencester Bingham Library Event



CDC Community Builders were joined by the Foodbank, The Churn, Clean Slate and the Big Yellow Bus where we networked and engaged with residents of Cirencester, gave information about COL support, wellbeing and signposted to the various groups and organisations.

- **NHS Wellbeing Roadshow – September – November 2024**
With a focus on COL support for our communities, Community Builders have organised and run an Autumn Cotswold District ‘Roadshow’ and to date have visited 7 different locations using the NHS bus with different partner organisations including the North and South Foodbank, The Churn, Cotswold Friends, CAB, Working 4 Wellbeing and have spoken to nearly 100 people so far and only half way through. We have had advice to give to everyone and have made people aware that there is help out there for those who need it in many topics relating to health and wellbeing with an emphasis on COL support.
- **Table Churooms/Westwoods Centre/Holiday and Intergenerational Open Sessions – 50 people have benefitted from these free sessions**
Table Tennis is a fun sport and is great for everyone to try. The sessions were free in the Church rooms over the school holidays throughout 2022 and then at the Westwoods Centre in 2023 with a donation towards the hire of the hall and then a free Intergenerational session provided by a group of fundraisers in the town in August 2024.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 Not applicable.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report is mainly updating on retrospective activity which means that all activity has been funded already. Any future cost of living related activities/initiatives are either fully funded already or will be presented to Cabinet/Council separately.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from the report.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 There are no significant risks associated with the report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT



- 8.1** The recommendations of this report are not expected to differentially impact any groups who may have specific characteristics.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** The Council's work to support communities with the cost of living has no negative implications for the environment.
- 9.2** The Cotswold Food Network aims to reduce food waste and to support the local food and farming industry.
- 9.3** The aim of maximising people's income can support the local economy by increasing household income. This in turn may support households to engage in climate change mitigation measures.
- 9.4** The aim of bringing support services closer to people through mobile provision in rural areas and other initiatives such as Advice First Aid can reduce the need for individuals to travel.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

(END)

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Cotswolds District Holiday Activity & Food Programme Summer HAF 2023



Overview

- 19 different HAF providers
- 12 different HAP providers
- Over 800 ticketed places to local attractions, including Gifford Circus, Cotswold Falconry, Cirencester Open Air Pool, Cotswold Driving and More.
- 21 Open Access Park Events
- 15 providers offering over 2000 sessions of Family activities



Tug of War @ St. Michaels Park, Cirencester

2022/2023 Comparison

Summer 2023

Sessions Booked / Attended	Number	%
Total UP* Booked	2780	79%
Total UP* Attended	2439	88%
Total Sessions Booked	3530	
Total Sessions Attended	2764	78%
Total Meals Served	1773	64%
Primary Booked	1791	
Secondary Booked	498	
FSM Participants booked	2010	72%
FSM Target participants	750	81%

Summer 2022

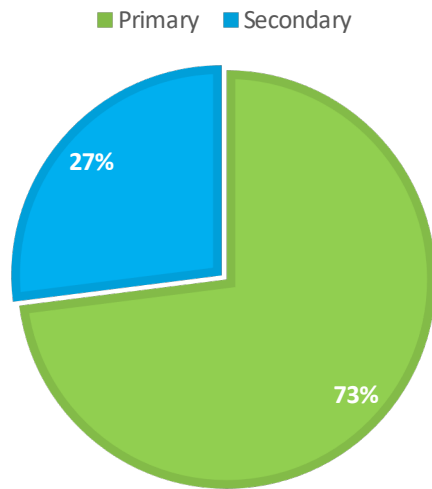
Sessions Booked / Attended	Number
Total UP* Attended	1198
Total Sessions Booked	2770
Total Sessions Attended	1675
Total Meals Served	1500
Primary Booked	677
Secondary Booked	244
FSM Participants	72%

* Unique Participants

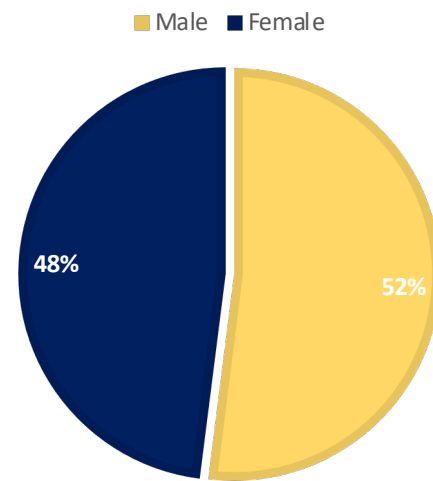


Statistics for Summer HAF 2023

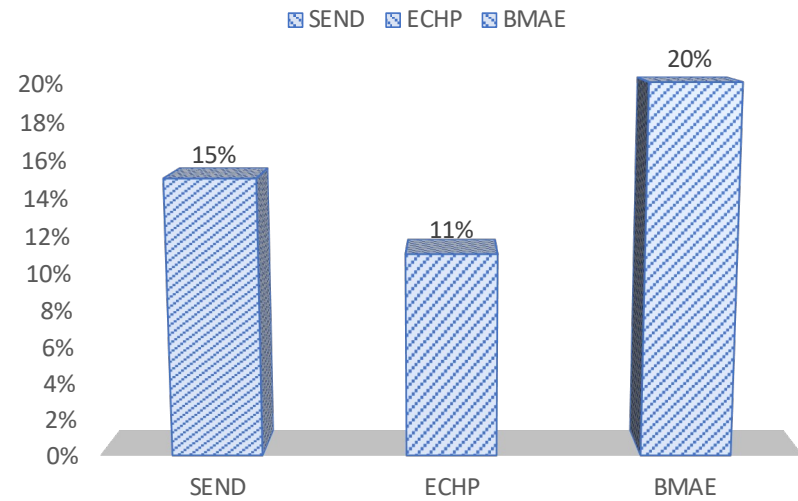
Age Breakdown



Gender Breakdown



SEND / ECHP / BMAE

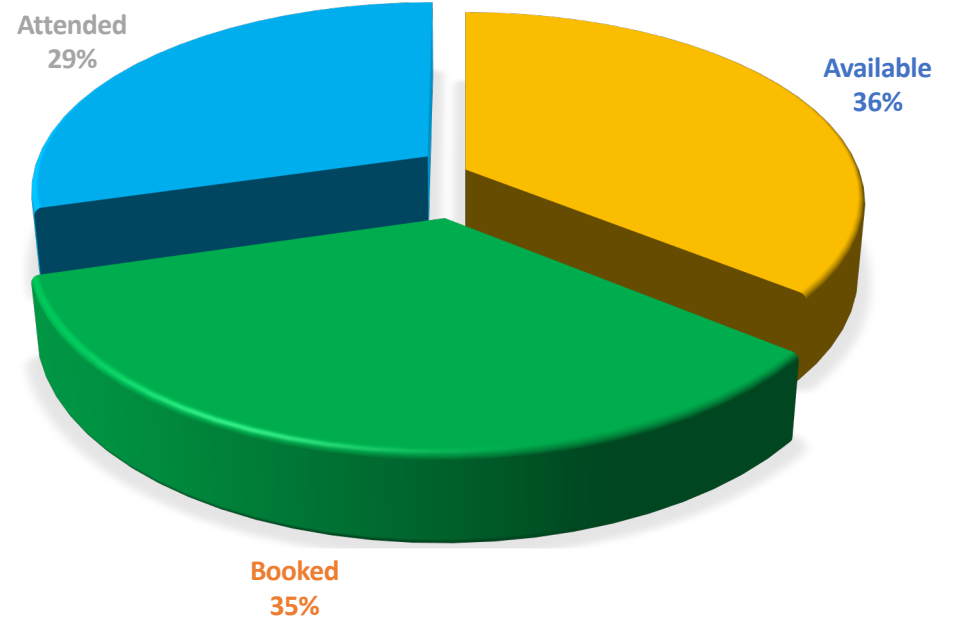


Family Provision Breakdown

Providers

- World Jungle Go Wild Fundays
- TAYCT Westonbirt and Family Events
- Bloodhound Family Events
- Cotswolds Libraries African Drumming
- Read with Me – Tetbury
- Swimming with Everyone Active
- Gifford Circus
- Cotswold Falconry
- The Kitchen Club Family Sessions
- Westonbirt Arboretum
- Cirencester Open Air Pool
- Into Nature Wildwood Family Sessions
- Co-op Family Meals

FAMILY PROVISION





Northleach

Statistical Analysis

- 1615 more unique bookings in Summer 2023 than Summer 2022
- 1470 more unique attendances in Summer 23 than summer 22
- 1198 more sessions were booked in Summer 23 than summer 22
- We more than doubled the number of primary school and secondary school aged children that took part in Summer 23 compared with Summer 22

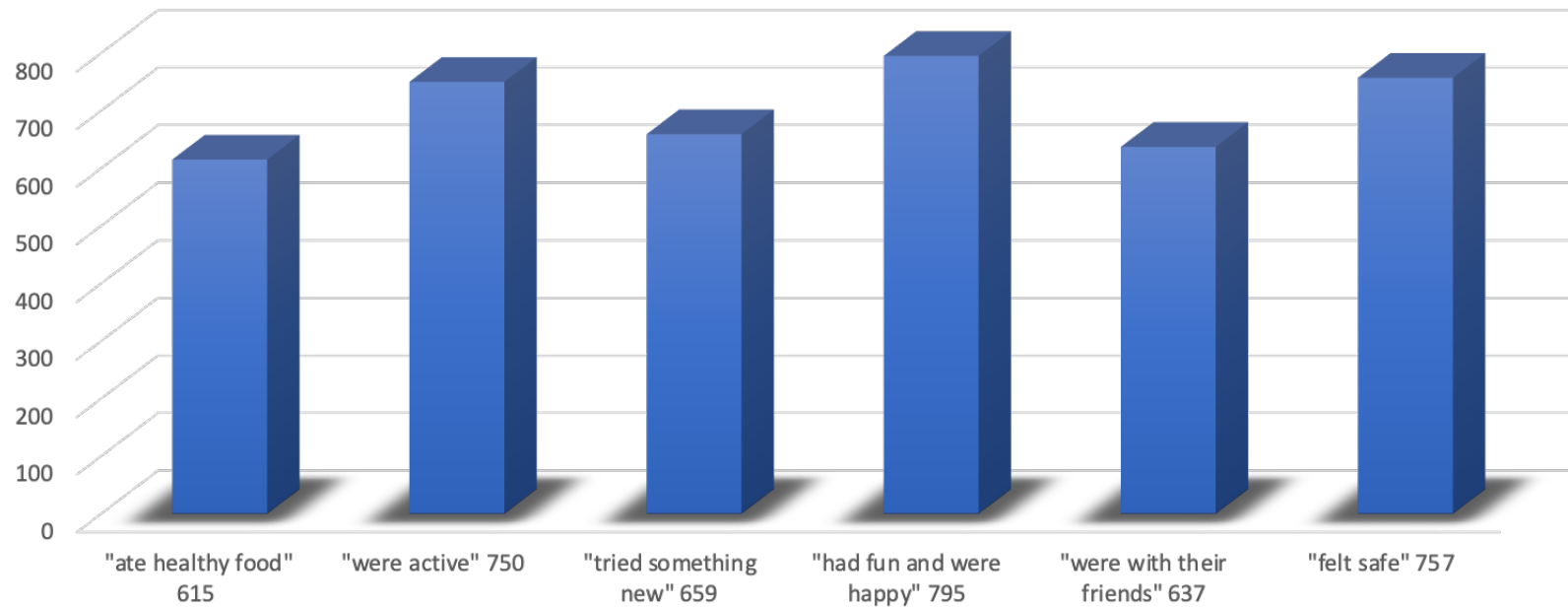


Children's Survey Results

- 826 Total responses
- 628 primary
- 198 secondary



Participants who said:



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

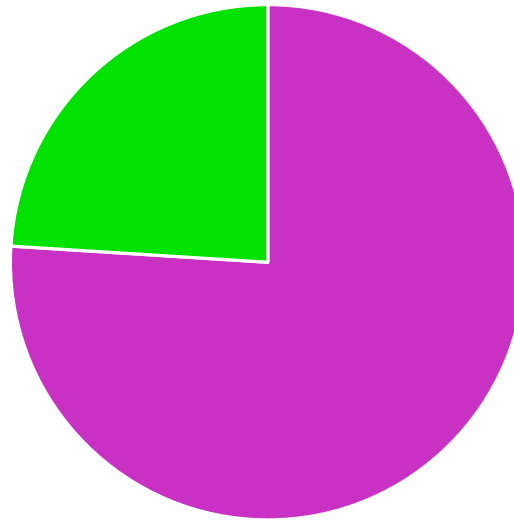


Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL



Department
for Education

Primary / Secondary breakdown

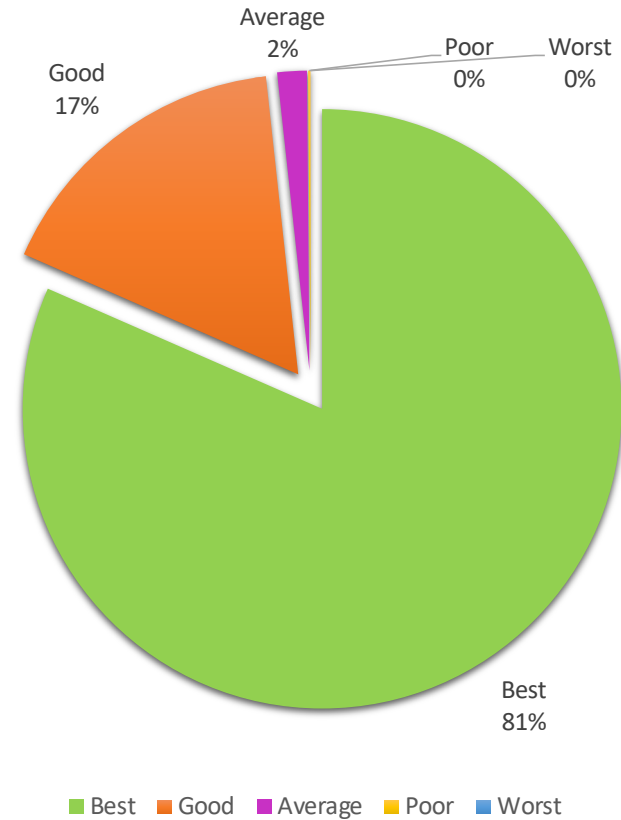


■ Primary ■ Secondary

Star ratings for provision

99% of participants rated the provision they attended as either Best (82%) or Good (17%)

Only 2% rating the provision as Average.



What was the best part of the activity?



TAYCT Tetbury Recreation Ground

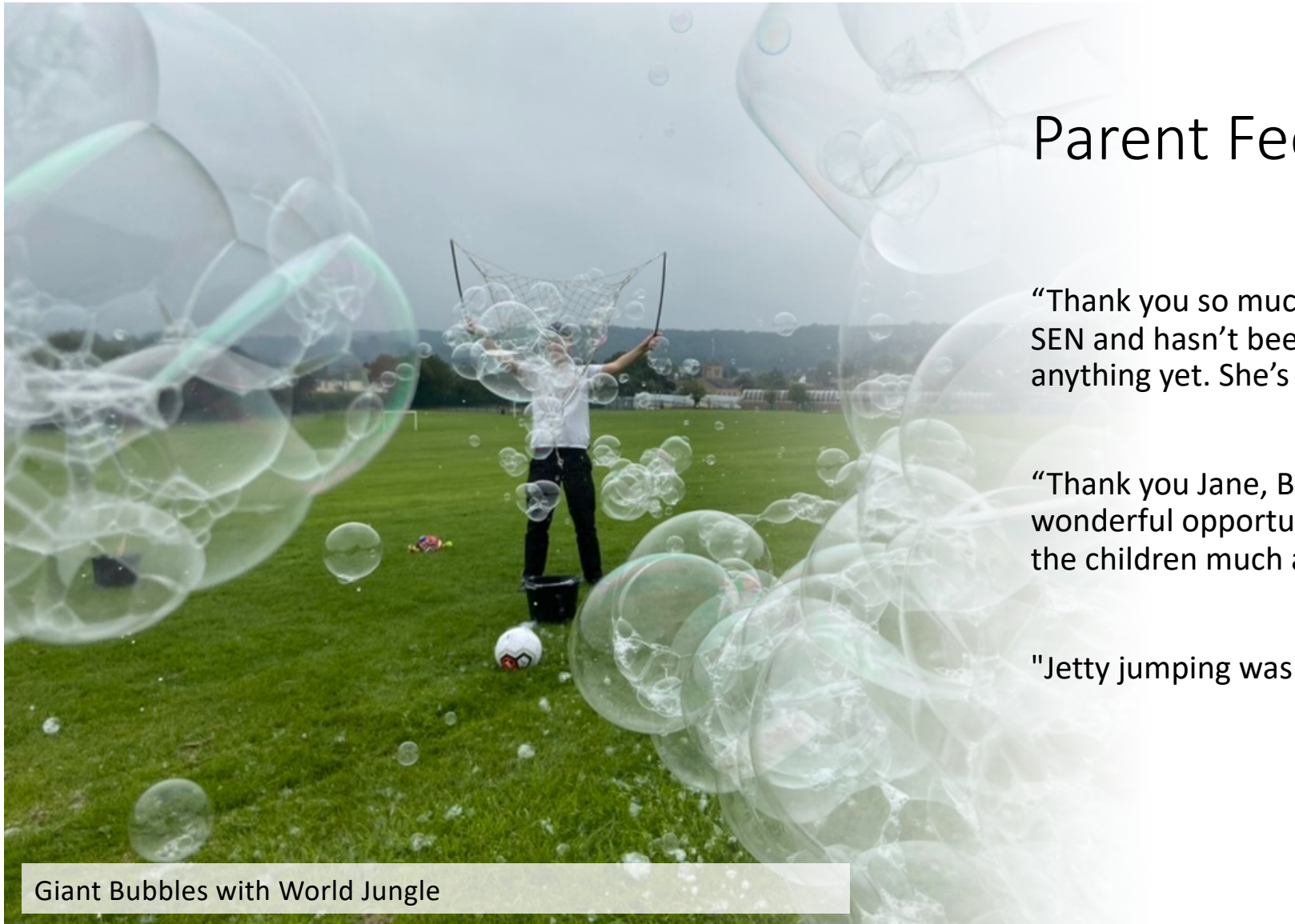
- The Horses, goats and the Chickens
- Tightwire
- The activities, the music, the food
- Making a tart, cooking rainbow food, making kebabs
- Racing the cars
- Go Kart track racing
- The smell of the fire
- Blackberries from the hedge
- Horse riding
- Chopping the food
- Free play
- Family day out
- Building shelters in the woods
- First aid balm
- Jumping off the paddleboard
- SUP Polo
- Rafting
- Getting out of the house and having a safe place to play
- Making lava bottles
- Spending time with family and friends
- Playing football outside
- Wire walking
- Trapeeze, Henna, Grafitti, music, all of it
- Leadership / coaching
- Arts and crafts

Is there anything that would have made it better?



Graffiti Vinyls Tetbury

- Make sessions longer
- More scent choices for the balm
- Nothing it was all great
- More time on the water
- If there was chocolate
- Drinks and ice cream van
- More art and rock painting
- More Hockey
- If my car went further (Bloodhound)
- More riding



Giant Bubbles with World Jungle

Parent Feedback

“Thank you so much! My daughter has SEN and hasn’t been able to attend anything yet. She’s so excited”

“Thank you Jane, Ben and team for these wonderful opportunities and activities for the children much appreciated”

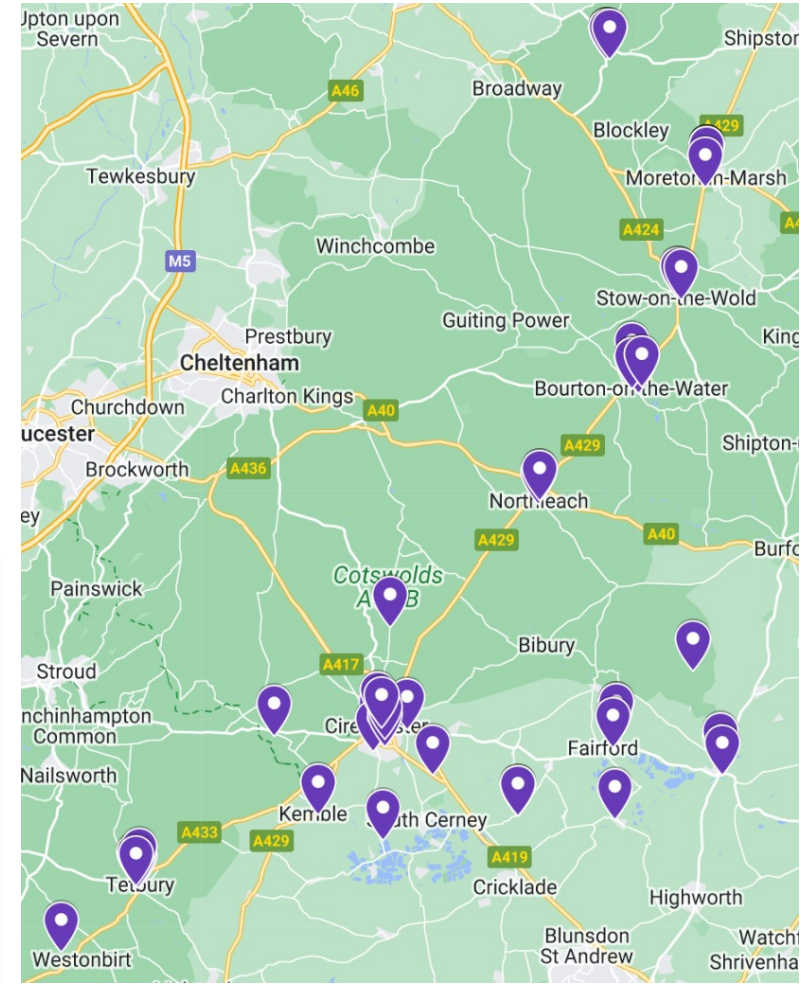
"Jetty jumping was amazing"



Go Wild Abbey Grounds Cirencester

Map of provision in the Cotswolds

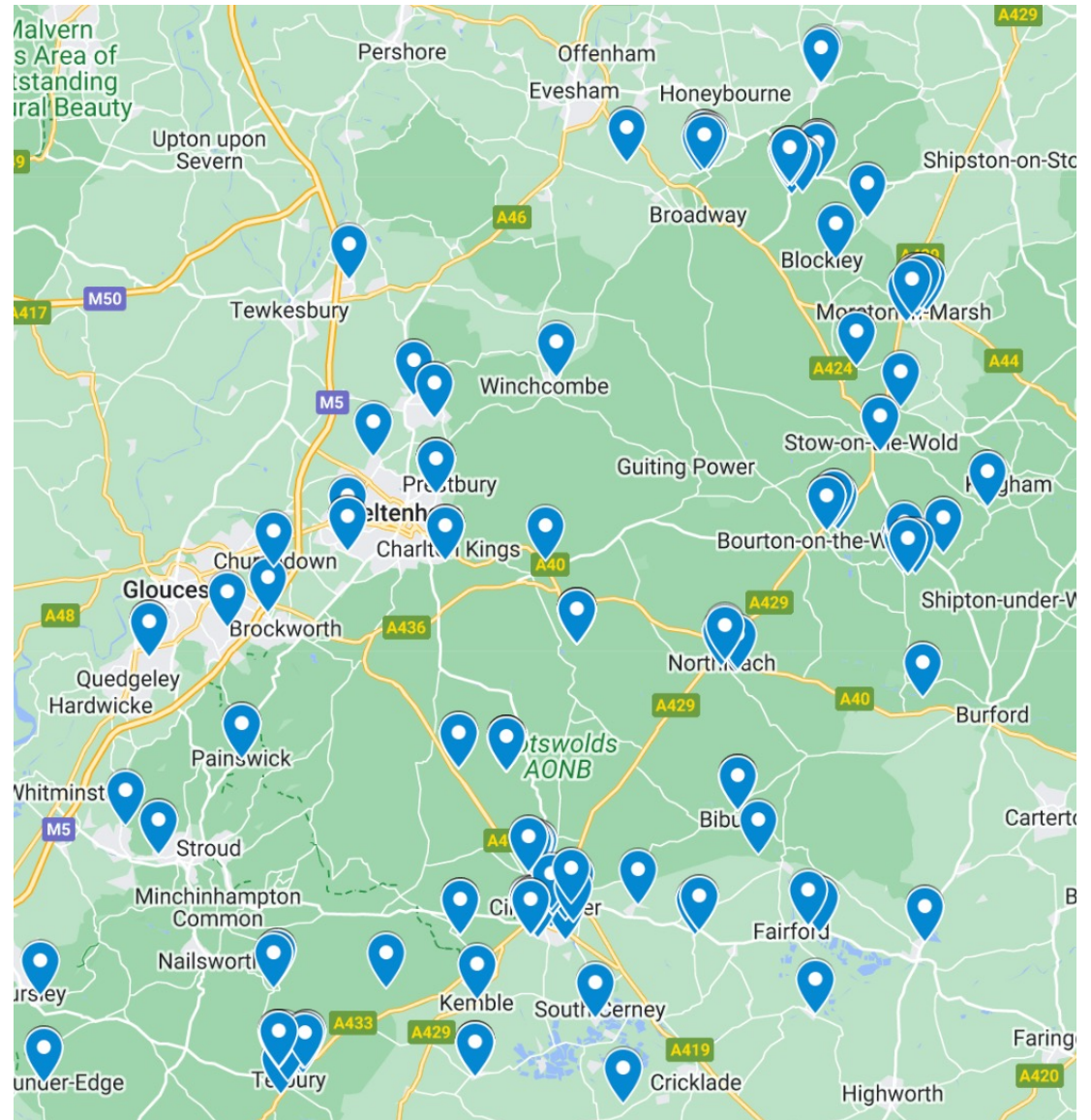
- See [Google Map Link:](#)
- Broken down into HAF / HAP / Open Access and Family Provision



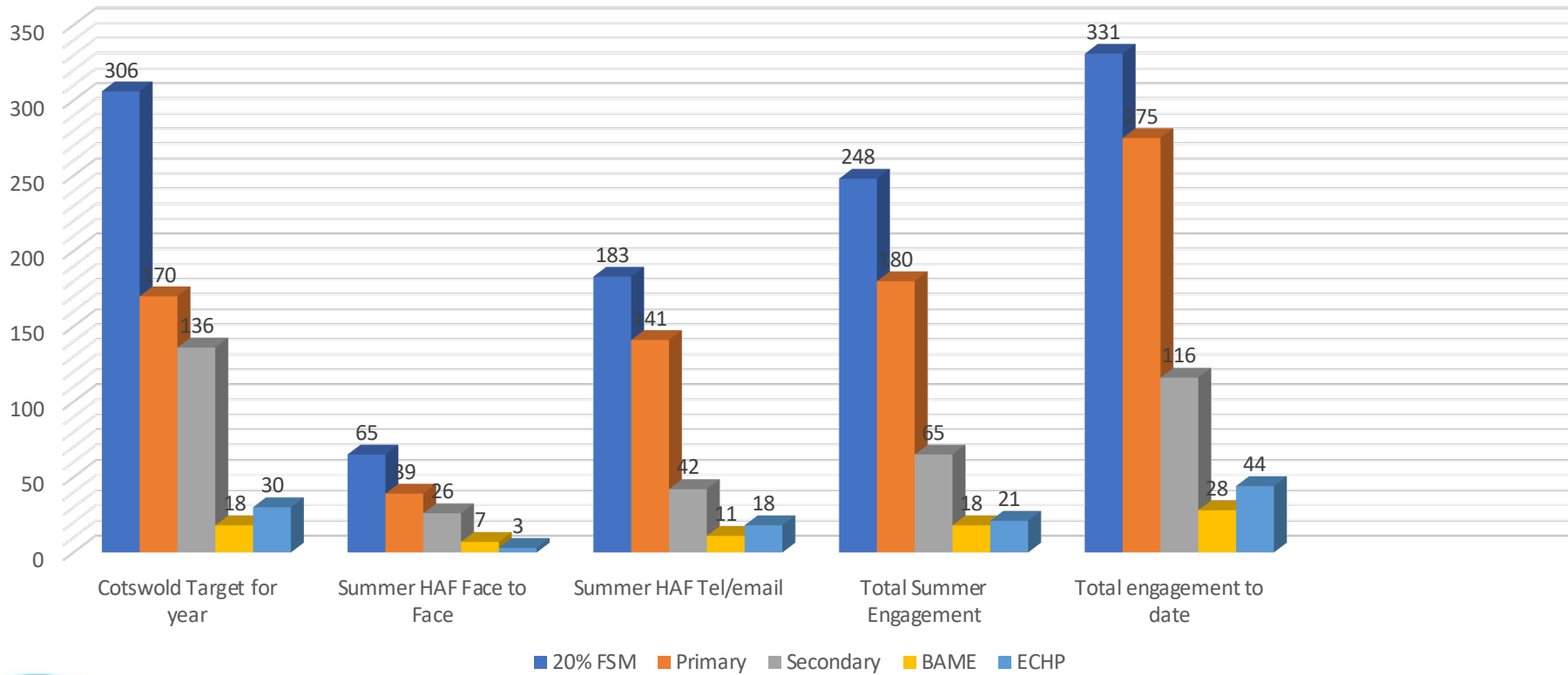
FSM Participants in the Cotswolds



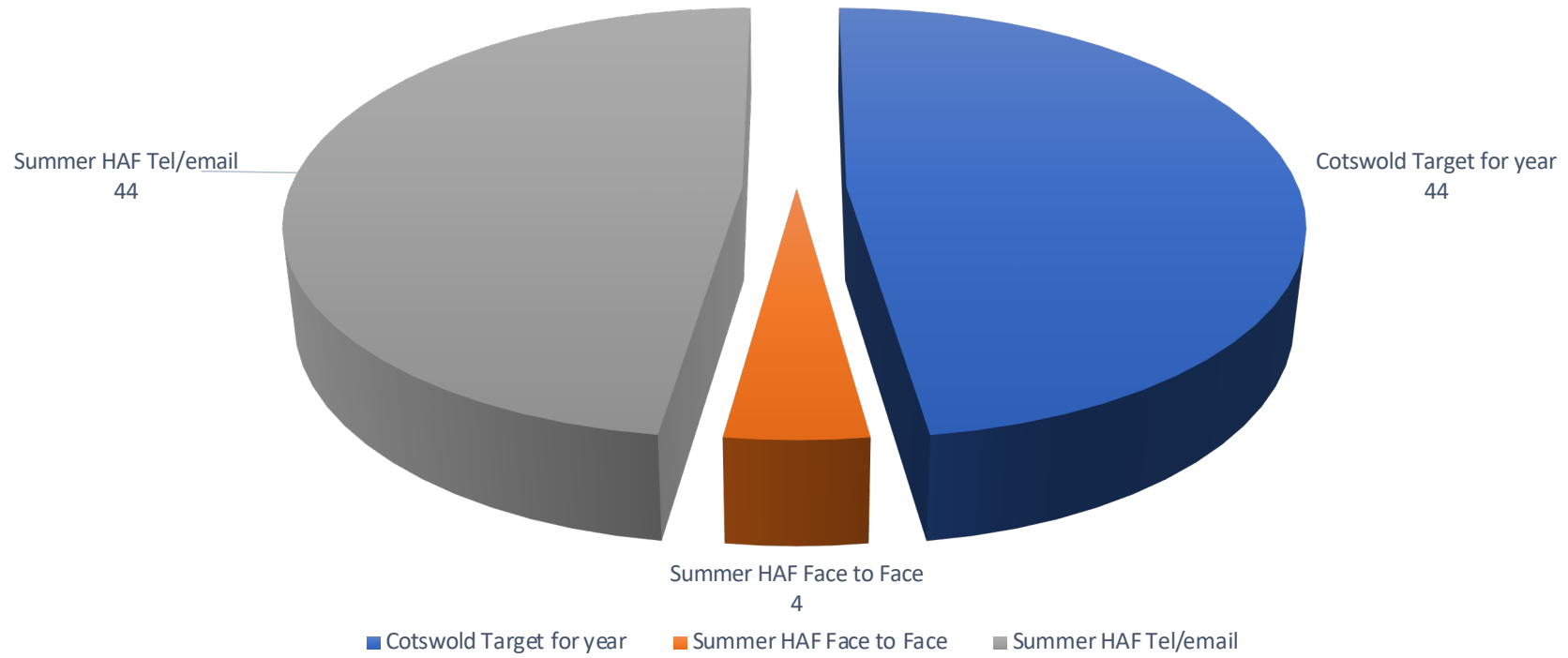
Go Wild African Drums Walnut Tree Field, Fairford



Bloodhound – Community Connectors



Bloodhound Community Connectors Schools and Provider Engagement



Youth Pass Pilot

Young people taking part:

- 42 young people
- SWR Tetbury
- GCC Social Care / Early Help / Families First
- 120 Bus Passes allocated

What our offer included:

- Cinema tickets
- Stroud Bowling
- Stratford Park Leisure Centre
- Cirencester Open Air Pool

Learning Points:

- Getting YP details including their email when they sign up
- Feedback compulsory
- If remote then video / photo and telephone introduction

Cotswold District Team

World Jungle

- Ben Ward – ben@worldjungle.org.uk
- Jane Manning – jane@worldjungle.org.uk
- Asha Ward – info@worldjungle.org.uk

Cotswold District Council

- Sarah Clifton-Gould sarah.clifton-gould@publicagroup.uk
- Jane Morgan jane.morgan@publicagroup.uk
- www.haf.worldjungle.org.uk



Kitchen Club meals being handing out and taking registers

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Cotswolds District
**Holiday Activity &
Food Programme**
Winter HAF 2023



world
jungle



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL



Department
for Education

Overview

- 17 different HAF providers
- Over 500 ticketed places to local attractions, including Pantos at The Barn Theatre, Cidermill Theatre and Tetbury Goods Shed, Enchanted light show at Cotswold Farm Park and Gateway Ice Skating.

10 Providers offering a range of family activities



Gateway Ice Skating, Cirencester

2022/2023 Overview

Winter 2023/24



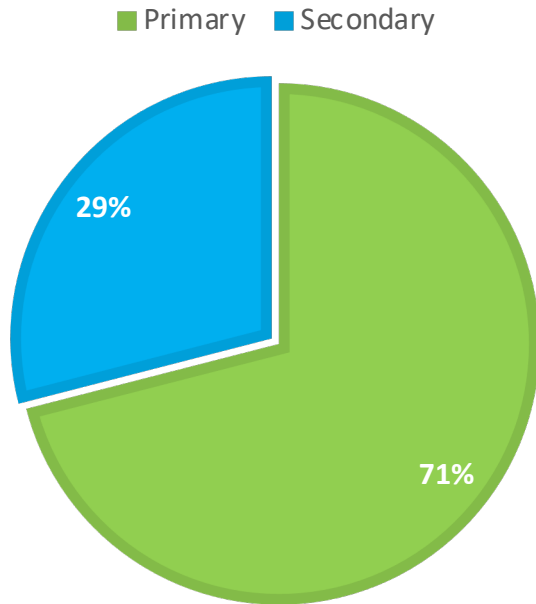
SESSIONS BOOKED / ATTENDED	NUMBER	%
Total UP* Booked	721	
Total UP* Attended	601	
Total Sessions Booked	800	
Total Sessions Attended	652	90%
Total Meals Served	240	
Primary Booked	513	
Secondary Booked	171	
FSM Participants booked	486	81%
FSM Target participants	750	65%

Project Name	Total Unique Participants Booked	Total Sessions Booked	Total Unique Participants Attended	Female	Male	Free School Meals Eligible	EHCP	SEN	Disability	BAME	Primary	Secondary
Treasure Island Panto Barn Theatre 3rd Jan 2.30pm	58	58	55	27	31	70%	7	1	3	16	46	12
NEW BOOKINGS Treasure Island Panto Barn Theatre 3rd Jan 2.30pm	16	16	16	7	9	81%	0	4	4	7	11	5
Ice Skating with Gateway 2	22	22	22	16	6	68%	0	2	0	9	15	7
Cidermill Theatre Cirencester Jack and the Beanstalk Panto 2nd Jan 2.30pm	48	48	48	24	24	91%	3	8	4	13	35	13
Cotswold Veg Box Food Hampers 2023 CHECK DELIVERY AREAS	12	12	12	6	6	91%	4	2	4	4	7	5
Cotswold Farm Park Enchanted Light Trail 29th Dec 4pm	29	29	29	13	16	100%	2	2	1	7	22	7
Frozen film with Christmas activities and hot lunch Redesdale Hall Moreton	13	13	6	6	7	84%	1	2	3	3	13	0
Christmas Activities and Lunch St Lawrence Hall Cirencester 16th Dec	19	19	8	8	11	78%	3	2	2	8	17	2
Jack and the Beanstalk, Panto Tetbury Goods Shed 16th Dec 6pm	45	45	44	14	31	93%	5	3	1	10	37	8
Cinema Tickets 11 - 16 years Winter 2023	94	95	94	45	49	62%	4	9	6	30	33	61
Ice Skating with Gateway	51	51	51	22	29	94%	6	6	5	14	40	11
Fairford and Lechlade Disco Party and Crafts	84	93	69	61	22	20%	4	2	0	18	84	0
Fairford and Lechlade Disco Party and Crafts Walk ins	9	9	9	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Kitchen Club - Great British New Year Bake Off - 3rd and 4th Jan	27	27	18	19	8	88%	3	1	1	9	22	5
Cotswold Forest School Winter HAF 2023	27	42	19	20	20	63%	23	2	1	11	23	4
Circus Extravaganza with School of Larks (Bourton-on-the-Water) - Winter F	24	24	20	20	20	47%	0	2	4	3	20	4
Sports & Art Activity Camp	57	106	32	64	39	85%	8	6	3	12	52	4
Sportily Cotswold Sessions, Primary Age	14	17	10	12	7	86%	0	1	0	4	14	0
Tubing trip to Gloucester Ski Centre	31	31	11	11	11	87%	6	8	4	8	16	15
Holiday Engineering Club (HAF) - Bloodhound Education Ltd	4	4	2	0	4	100%	1	1	2	0	5	0
Holiday Engineering Club (HAF) - Bloodhound Education Ltd	1	1	1	1	0	0	0		0	1	0	1
Youth Pass	8	8	8	5	3	100	0	0	0	0	0	8

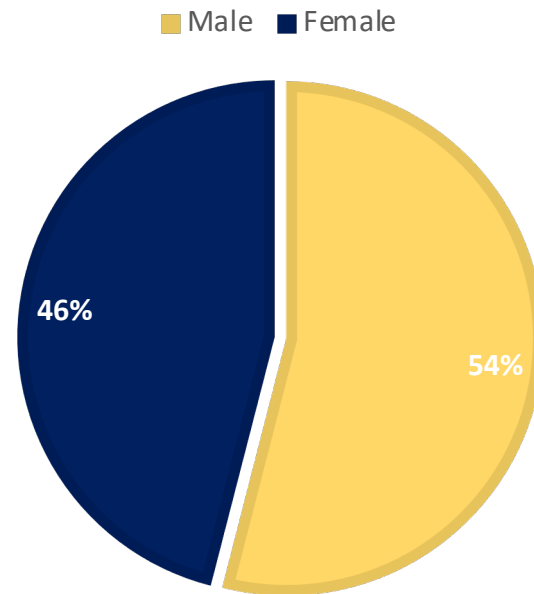
Page 70

Statistics for Winter HAF 2023

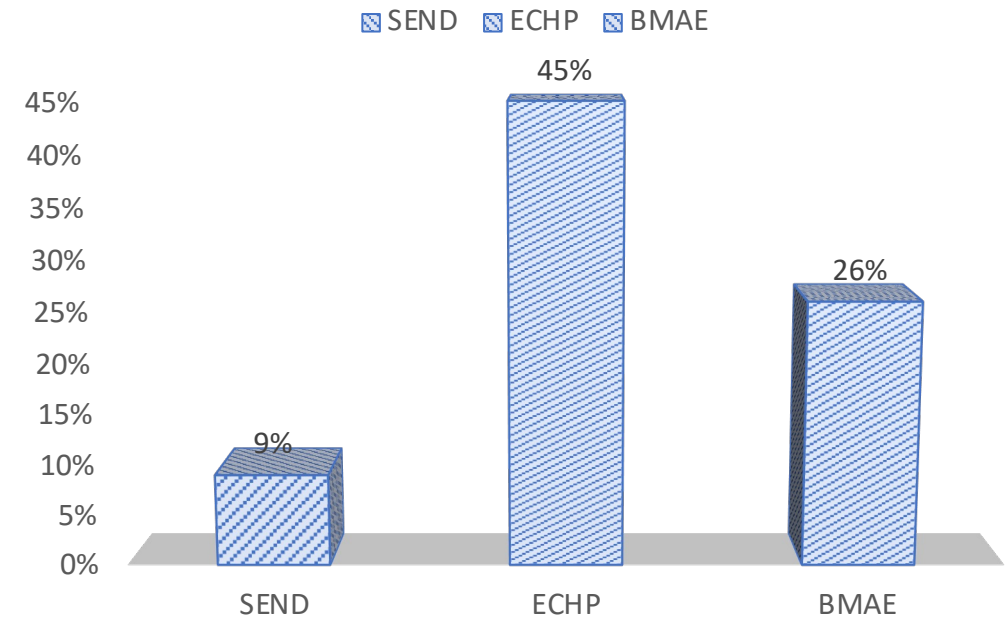
Age Breakdown



Gender Breakdown



SEND / ECHP / BMAE

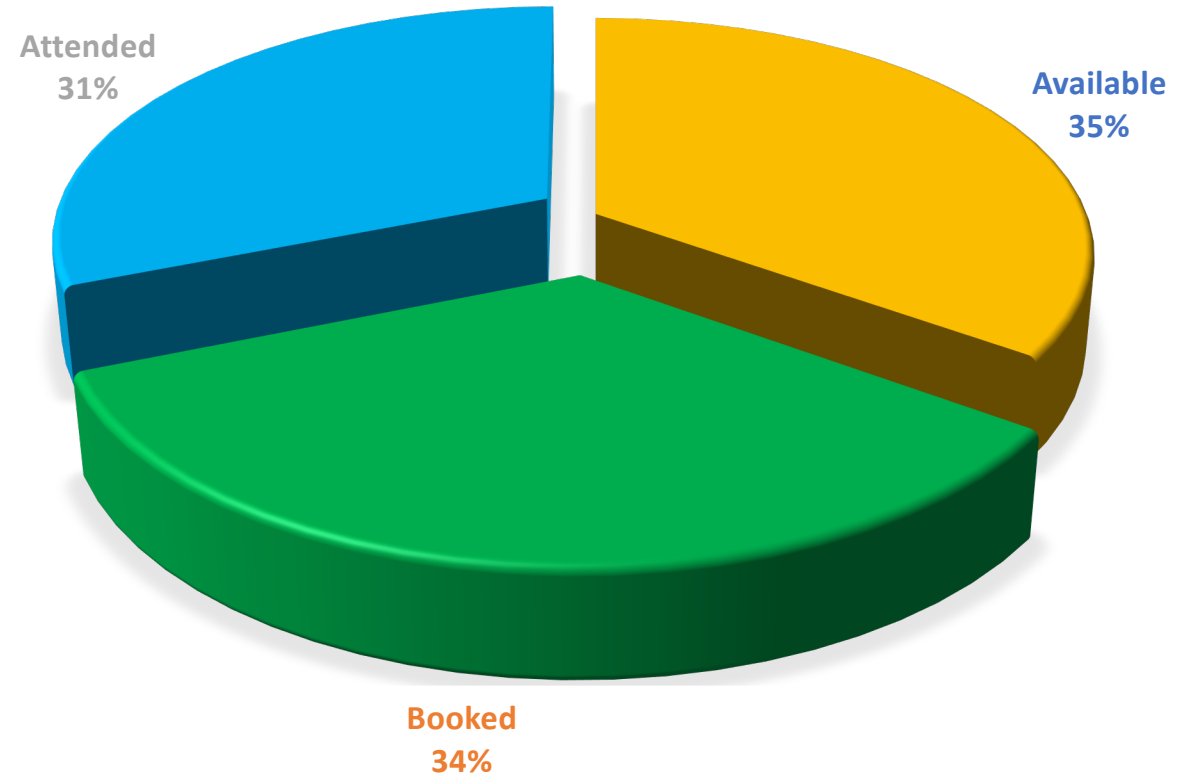


Family Provision Breakdown

Providers

- Bloodhound Education
- Cidermill Panto Jack and the Beanstalk
- The Barn Theatre Treasure Island
- Tetbury Goods Shed Jack and the Beanstalk
- Cotswold Farm Park Enchanted Light Show
- Fairford and Lechlade Disco Party
- TAYCT Family Activities
- The Kitchen Club
- Cirencester Christmas Party
- Moreton Christmas Party
- Gateway Ice Skating

FAMILY PROVISION



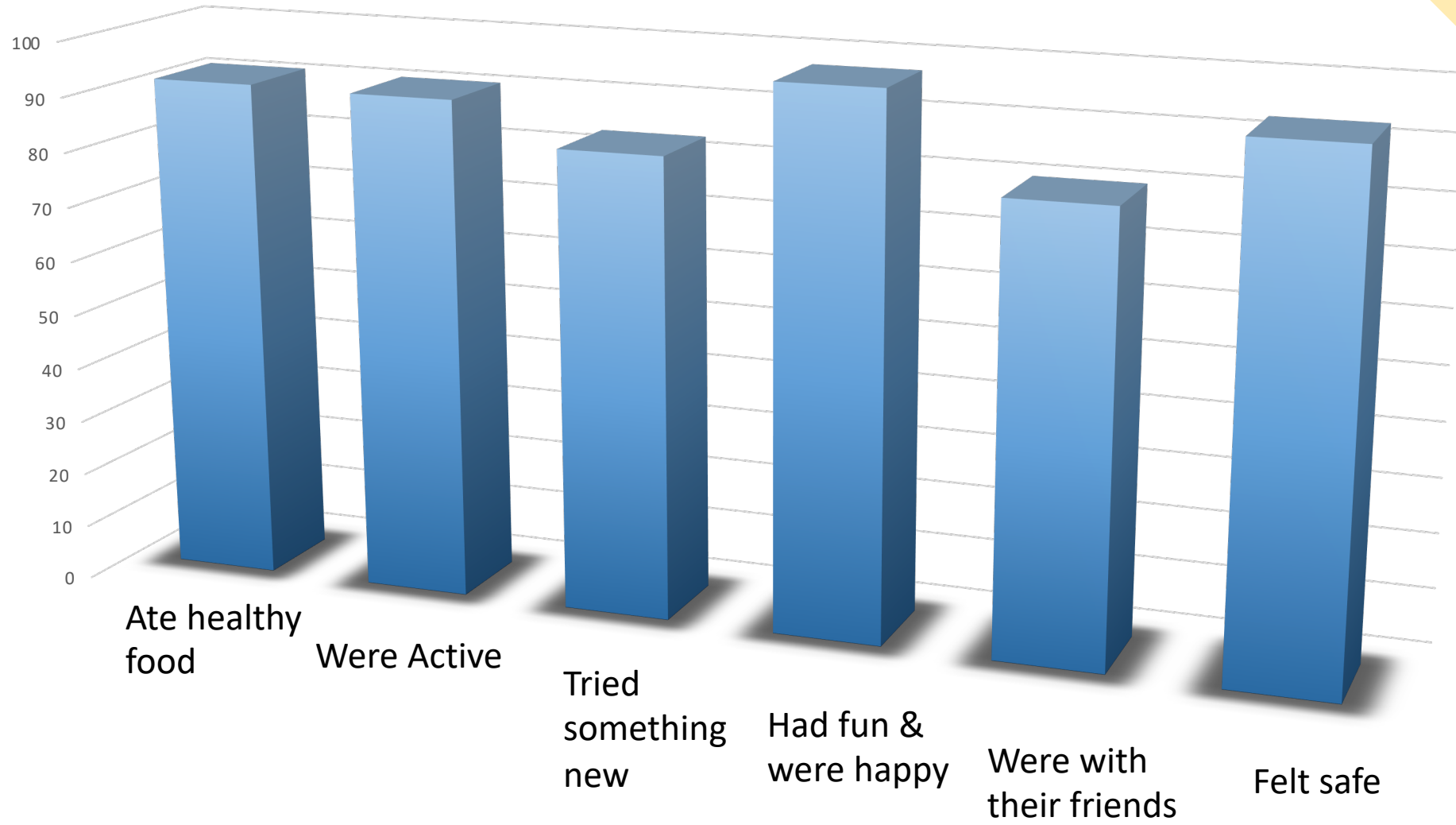


The Magnificent Mr Kai and Pandora

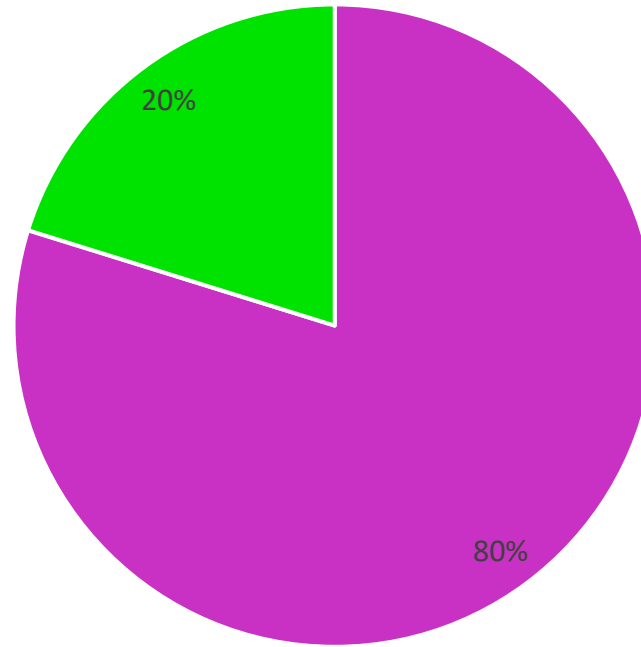
Children's Survey Results

- 229 Total responses
- 182 primary
- 47 secondary

Participants who said:



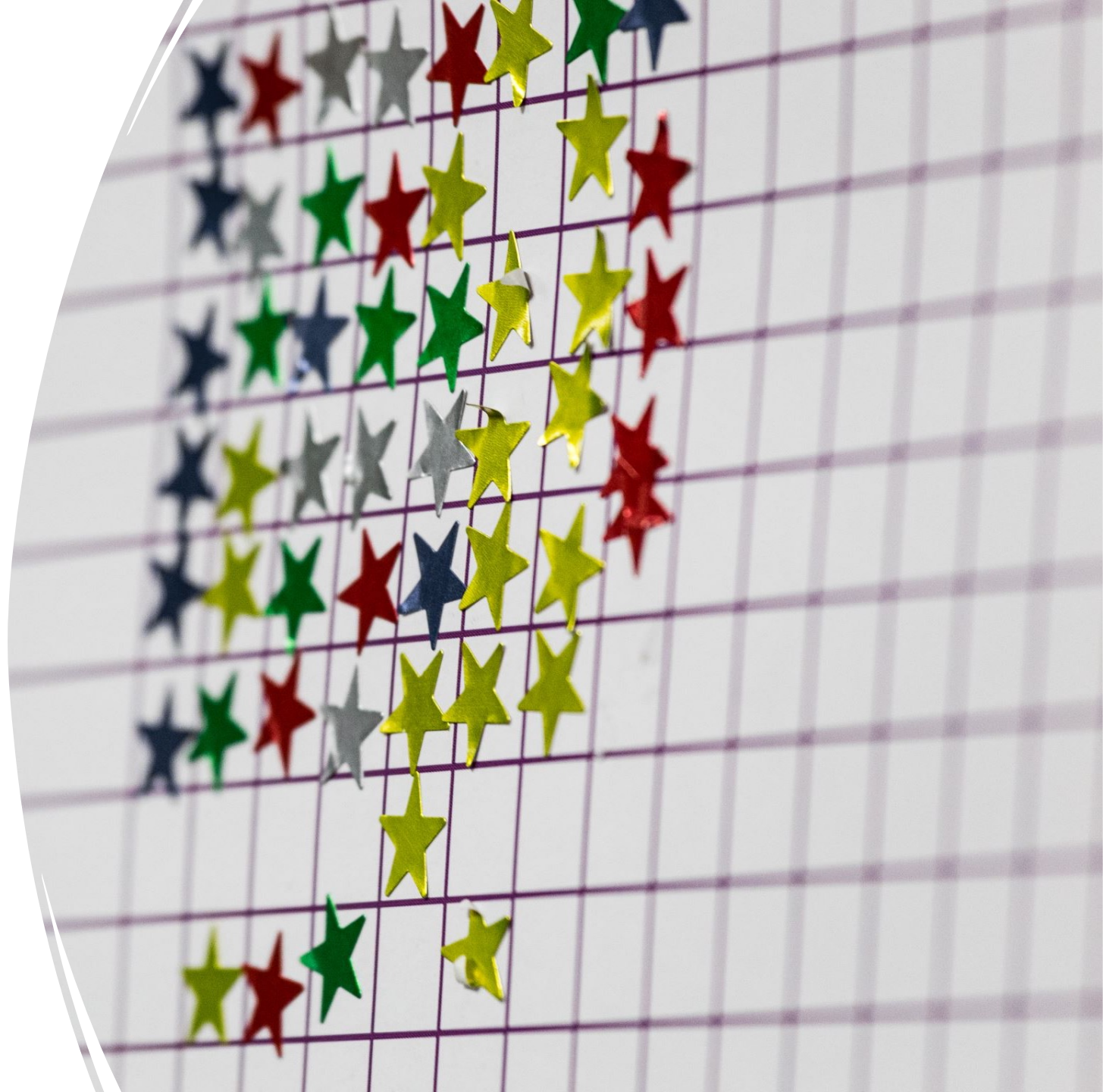
Primary / Secondary breakdown



■ Primary ■ Secondary

Star ratings for provision

- 97% of participants rated the provision they attended as either Best (79%) or Good (18%)
- Only 3% rating the provision as Average.



What was the best part of the activity?



TAYCT Tetbury

- Silks, Tightwire, Flower Sticks
Learning new things
Coming with friends
Fun in the holidays
- "Being able to choose the games we wanted to play" "Playing football" "Playing dodgeball"
"Colouring and doing the puzzle"
"The meatballs were delicious"
- Den Building, Fire Starting, Fire on Water! Whittling, Fire! Tree-Swing!
Hide and Seek, Stuck in the Mud!
- Trying the food, Cooking Chicken Pie, Making Apple Pie, Learning to Everything, Made a pie, Piping the icing, Having fun with everyone, I loved learning how to make new recipes.
- Eating, testing the cars
- Slime, gloop, dinner
- The space and running around,
The food and activities
- Lunch, Firelighting
Marshmallows on the fire
- The Dj, The Food, Seeing my friends
- Tubing, going down the hill going on the fast one
- The plate spinning and the graffiti art were best,
I loved the lasagne, thank you for the artpack
- It was all brilliant thank you
We had a great time

The best part of the activity pt 2 and comments from parents

- Football, Playing with friends, All of it, cricket
- Calendars, Playing games in hall, Being able to play with other children and have fun,
- Sports, Dodgeball, Hama beads and bracelet making, The sports and leaders
- Arts & Crafts, Leadership Program


- Comments from parents who stayed and cooked with their children: This was the first time I saw my daughter cooking - and she is 12! Another parent: The children really enjoyed cooking new meals. They had a wonderful time.

Carlene [Profile Picture]
It was brilliant, thank you x
1 w Love Reply

Hayley [Profile Picture]
Thank you Siena had a fantastic time! Thank you for putting these workshops on for the children it's really appreciated!!
1 w Love Reply

Donna [Profile Picture]
Thank you ,Molly had a brilliant time .We really appreciate all your hard work that you do for the community.
1 w Love Reply

1 w Love Reply

 Kayleigh K [Profile Picture]
Thank you so much - we had an amazing morning , and are so thankful these happen every half term, it's so helpful for us as a family - please pass on to whoever you need to for future fundraising!
1 w Love Reply

Is there anything that would have made it better?

Page 79



Graffiti Vinyls Tetbury

"If I knew more people already" "Being able to play games outside"

"More people my age" "A dog" "Pizza"

More aerial, Longer sessions

More time to finish out whittling

No bananas on the fire

Longer sessions, chocolate

Selling Tuck, Being allowed out onto the Rec, Keeping vegetarian food more separate on the table

Marshmallows

Need an escalator for tubing
better weather, dry tubes
slushies instead of squash

Swimming
Gymnastics

More children

Nothing, everything is great
Its fine how it is

world
jungle



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL



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COUNTY COUNCIL



Department
for Education

Parent Feedback

The kids had the best time thanks so much.:-)

What a wonderful gift. We are so grateful to you and your team!

Thank you so much! This means we can all go to the cinema as a family now, something that rarely happens, so this is much appreciated.

Thank you so much my daughter is over the moon

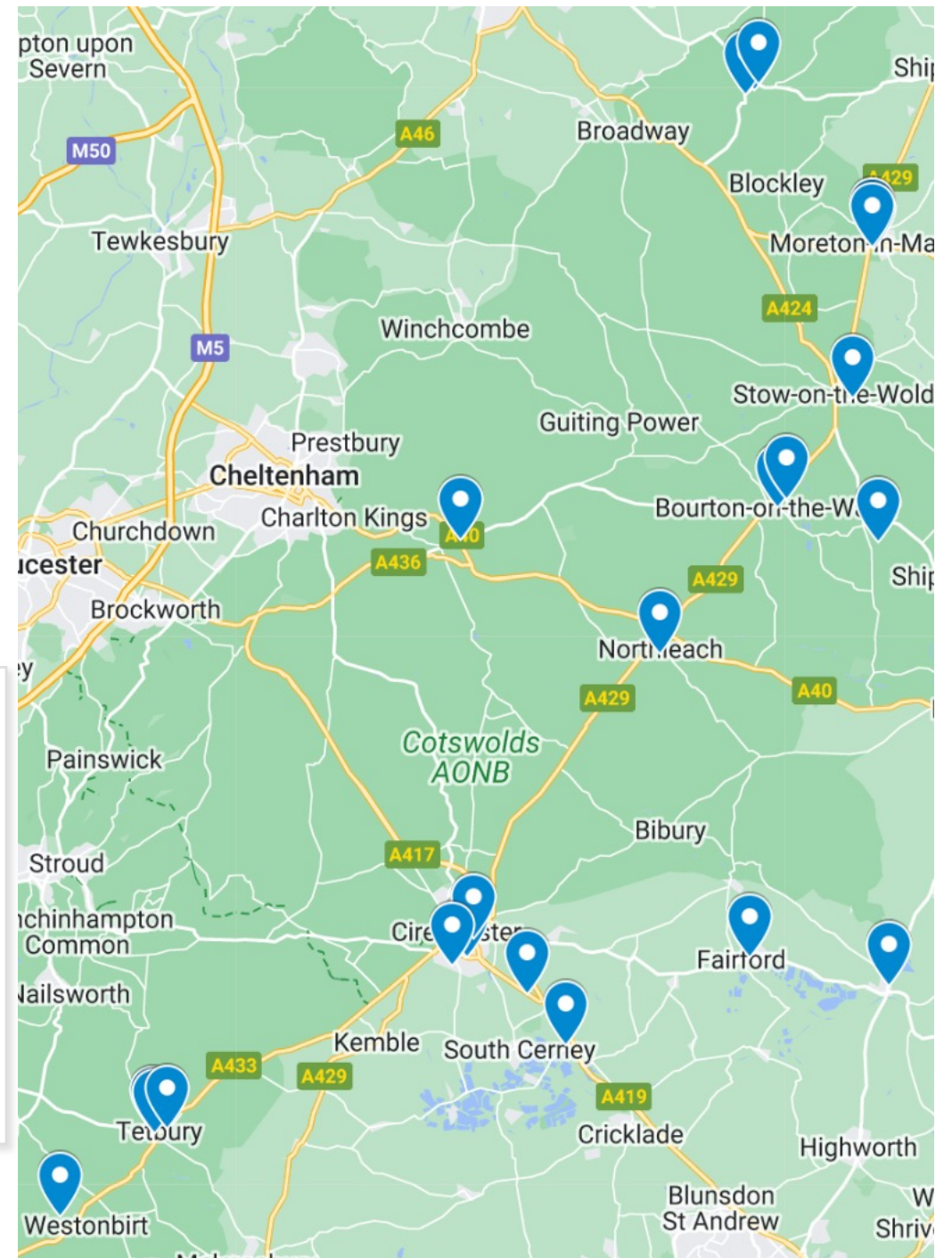
You and your team are just amazing and bring a lot of happiness into so many peoples lives. I am a 100% supporter of your scheme and although I would always give my family booking to someone more deserving, we really do appreciate it.



Disco and Crafts Lechlade

Map of provision in the Cotswolds

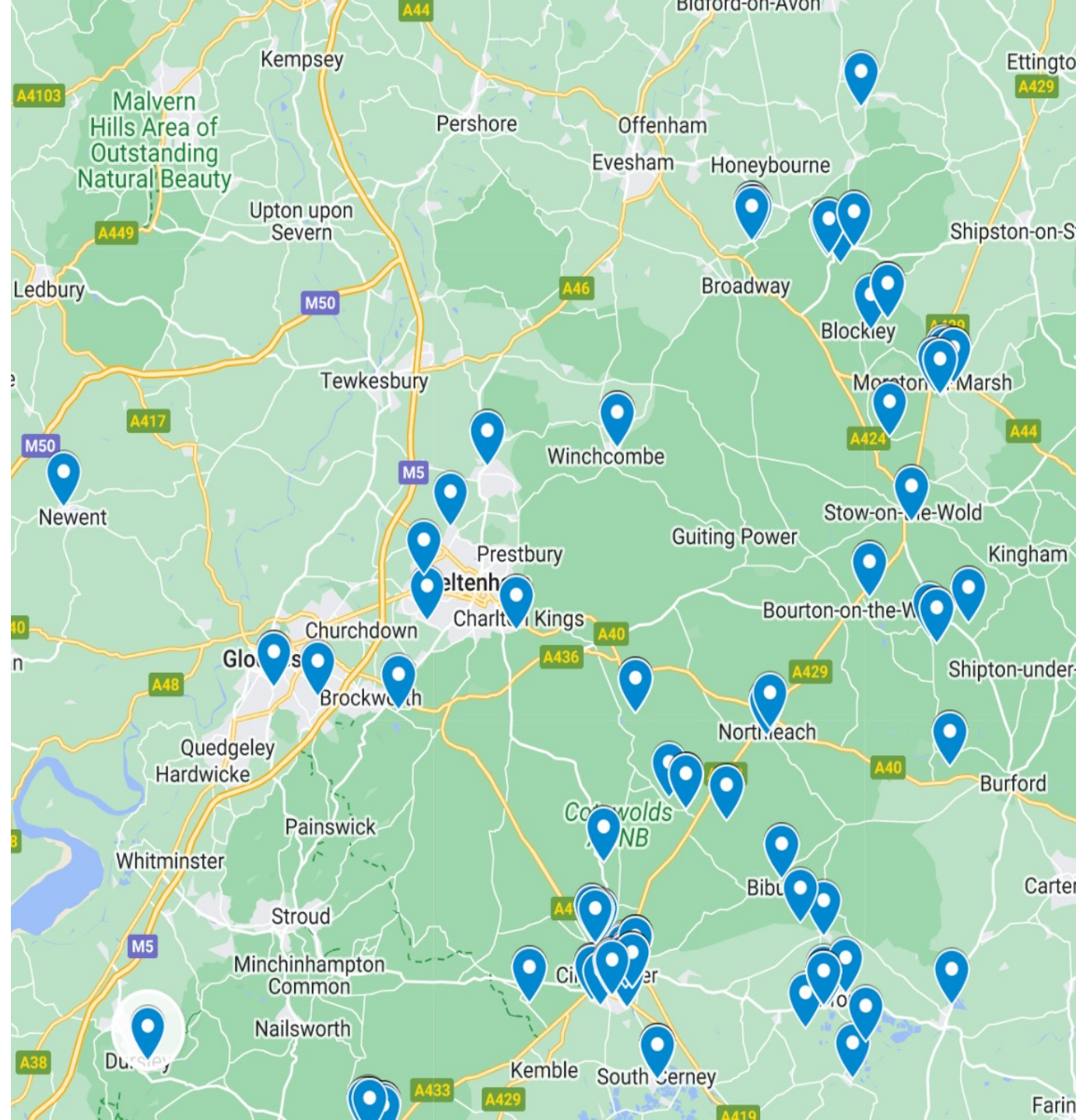
- See [Google Map Link](#)
- Broken down into HAF / HAP / Open Access and Family Provision



FSM Participants in the Cotswolds



Bloodhound Education Chipping Campden



Community Connectors

Type	Up to Summer 23	Winter 23	Total
Primary	222	38	256
Secondary	109	34	113
HAF	266	4	294
HAP	60	28	70
Home Schooled	5	10	5
ECHP	34	7	41
SEND/Disability	42	8	50
TOTALS	331	38	369

Youth Pass Pilot

Young people taking part:

- 8 young people
- Deerpark and Kingshill Schools in Cirencester

What our offer included:

- Cinema tickets
- Ice Skating tickets
- Co-op food package

Learning Points:

- Schools were shocked that more parents did not return the permission forms – they had sent out to 25 for each school
- Feedback from participants enables them to get a £10 voucher

Cotswold District Team

World Jungle

- Ben Ward – ben@worldjungle.org.uk
- Jane Manning – jane@worldjungle.org.uk
- Asha Ward – info@worldjungle.org.uk

Cotswold District Council

- Sarah Clifton-Gould sarah.clifton-gould@publicagroup.uk
- Jane Morgan jane.morgan@publicagroup.uk
- www.haf.worldjungle.org.uk



World Jungle Christmas Party with The Kitchen Club

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Cotswolds District

Holiday Activity & Food Programme

Summer HAF 2024



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COUNTY COUNCIL



Department
for Education

Overview

21 different HAF providers offering:

- Forest School
- Sailing, Paddleboarding, Kayaking
- Archery and Bushcraft
- Swimming Sessions
- Circus skills
- Engineering
- Westonbirt, family events
- Youth Festival
- Open access events on parks
- Cinema
- Wildlife Park / Falconry and Gifford Circus
- Open air swimming
- Gymnastics
- Activity Camps



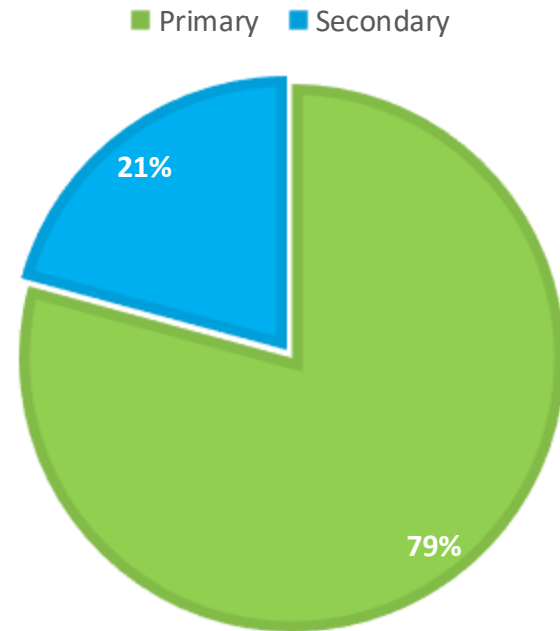
Summer 2024



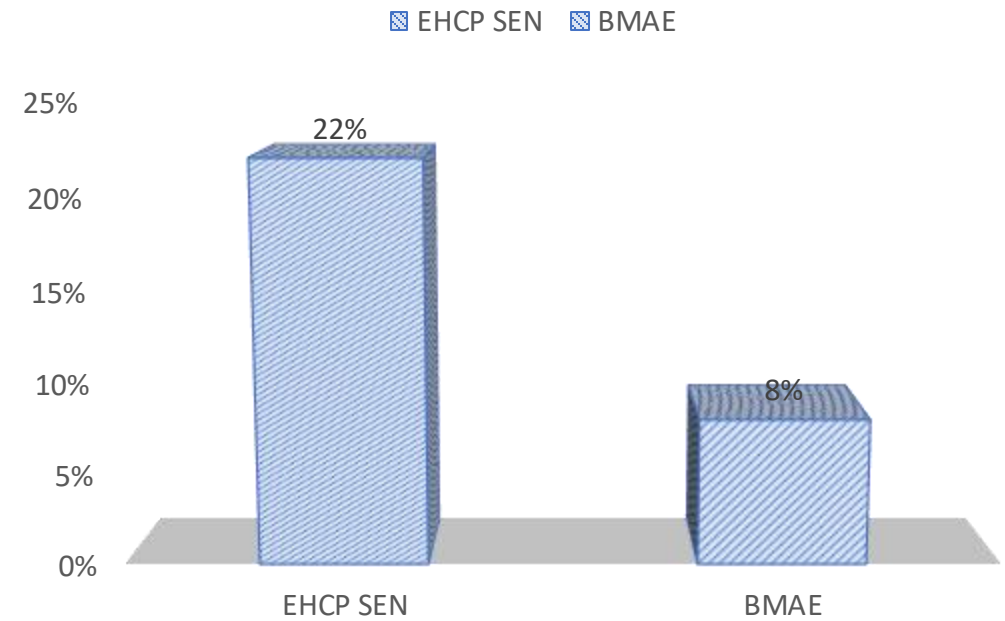
SESSIONS BOOKED / ATTENDED	SUMMER 24	SUMMER 23
Total UP* Booked	2480	2780
Total UP* Attended	2196	2439
Total Sessions Booked	3614	3530
Total Sessions Attended	3019	2764
Total Meals Served	2282	1773
Primary Booked	1506	1791
Secondary Booked	403	498
FSM Participants booked	1583	2010
EHCP/SEN/Disabilities	545	491
BAME	8% (201)	
BAME (including prefer not to say)	18% (457)	565

Statistics for Summer HAF 2024

Age Breakdown



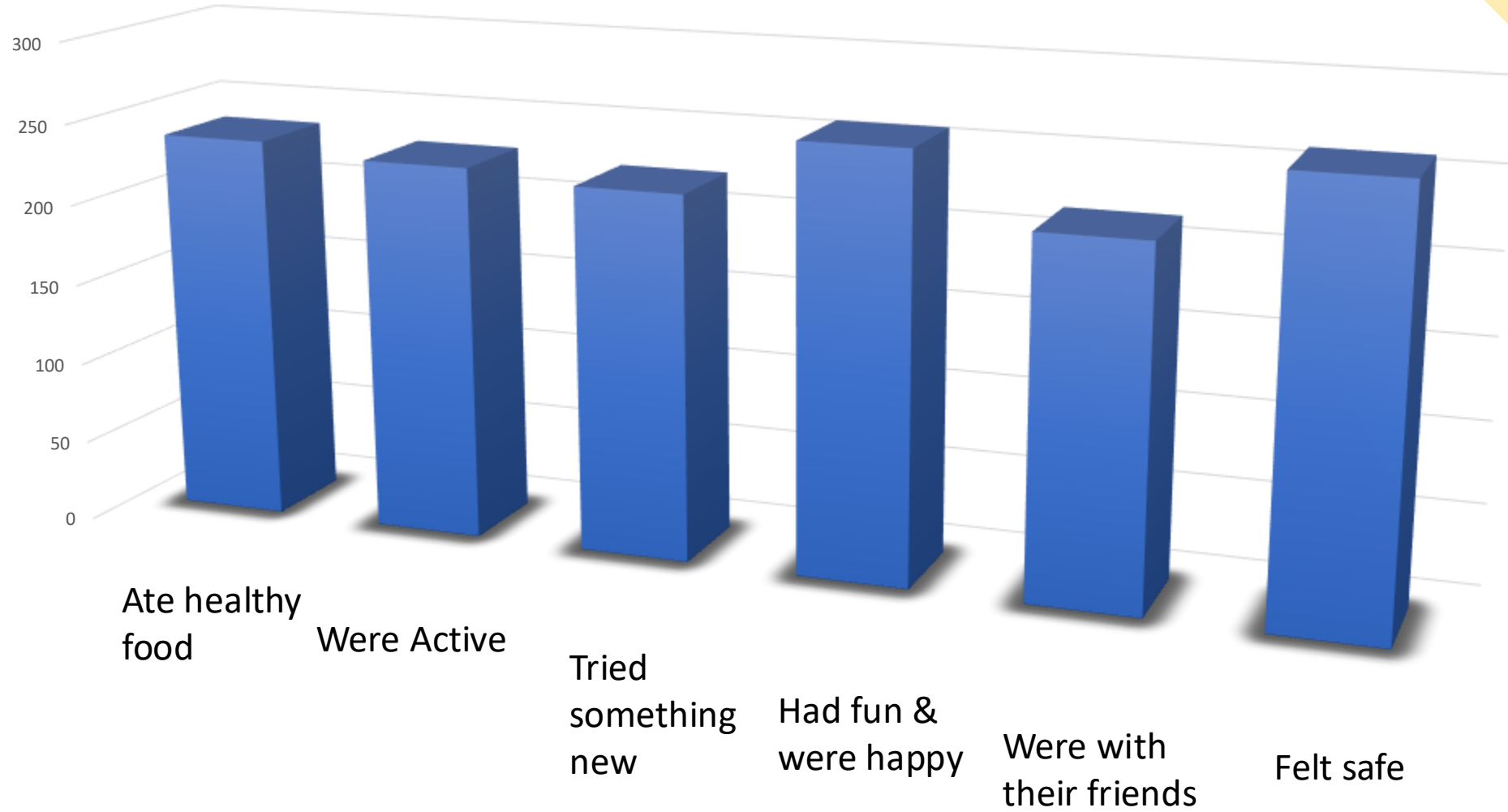
SEND / EHCP / BAME



Children's Survey Results

- 995 Total responses
- 714 primary
- 281 secondary

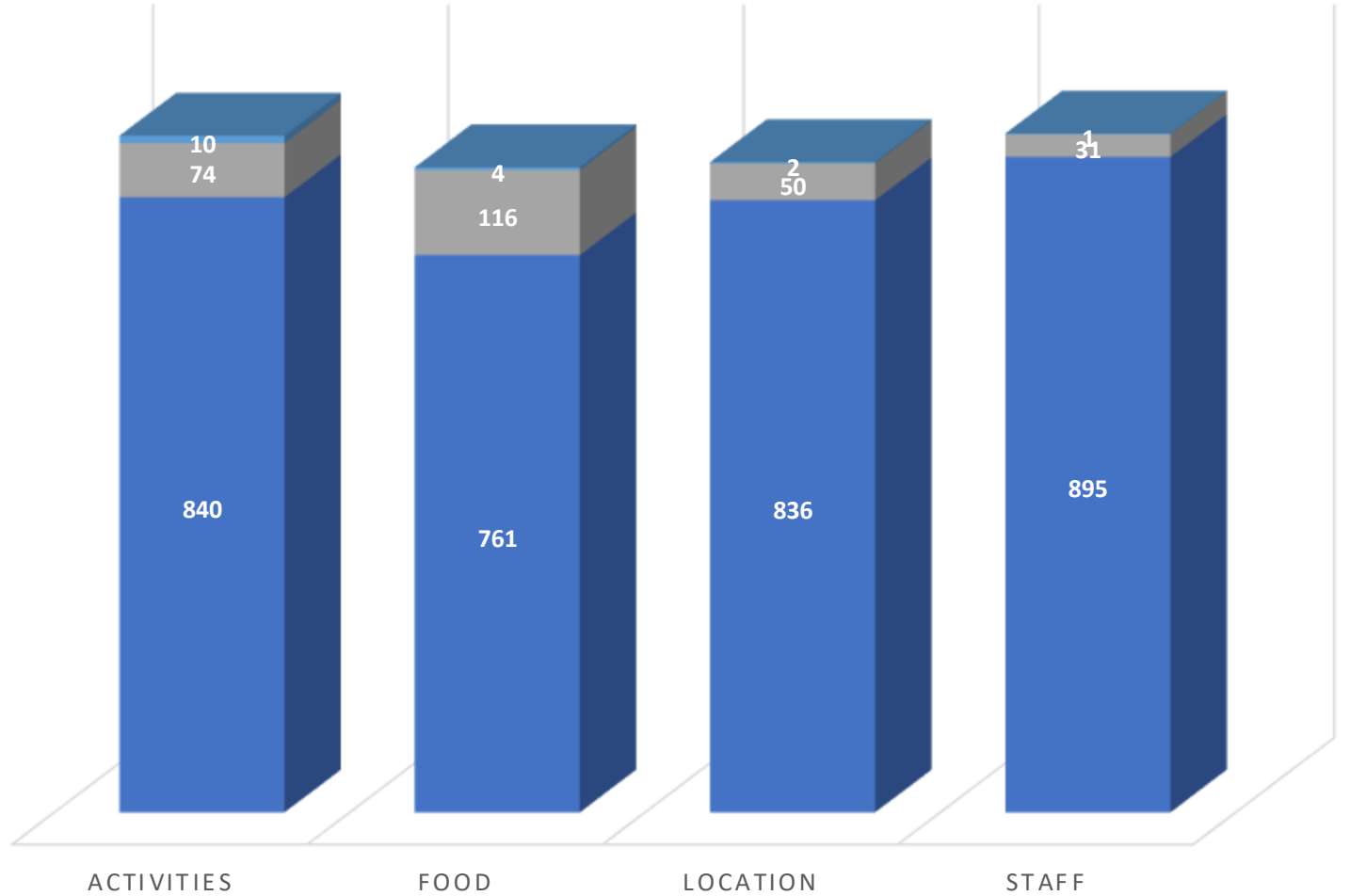
Participants who said:



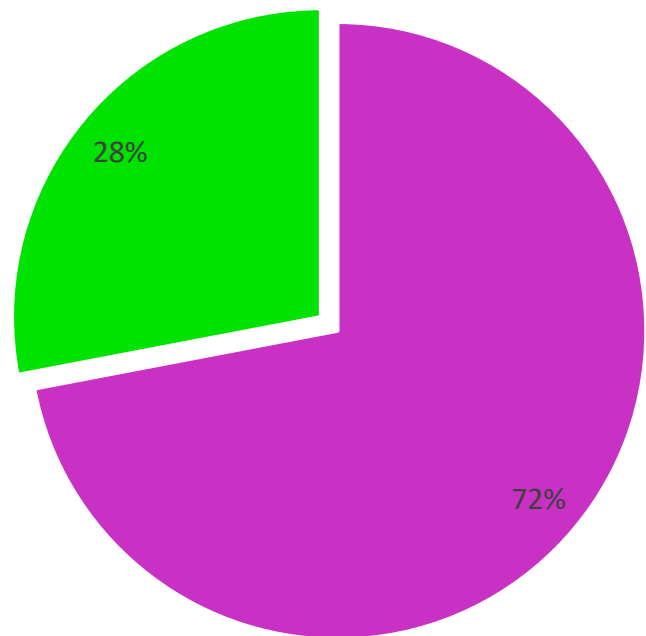
The FACE Questions:

THE FACE QUESTIONS

■ Happy ■ Average ■ Sad



Primary / Secondary breakdown survey responses



■ Primary ■ Secondary



Star ratings for provision

- 83% of participants rated the provision they attended as Best and 14% Good
- Only 1% rating the provision as Average.



What was the best part of the activity?



Participants had a blast and enjoyed so many different parts of the activities! Here are the main highlights:

1. **Adventure & Fun:** Things like silks, trapeze, kayaking, jumping off jetties, paddleboarding, and woodland adventures (like building dens, starting fires, and making catapults) were big hits!
 2. **Hanging Out with Friends:** A lot of people loved simply being with their friends, whether they were playing dodgeball, exploring the woods, or taking part in group games and talent shows.
 3. **Creativity & Learning:** From juggling, making parachutes, and archery, to arts and crafts, cooking, and woodland art, everyone loved learning new things and getting hands-on.
 4. **Unique & Fun Experiences:** The magic shows, rocket launches, bike riding, tug of war, and slingshot competitions brought a lot of excitement and laughter.
 5. **Food & Treats:** Whether it was making pizza, tasting yummy food, or enjoying meals with friends, the food was a big highlight for many!
- Overall, the best parts were the mix of adventure, creativity, time with friends, and of course, all the fun activities (and delicious food!) that made the experience unforgettable.

If you were not here today what would you be doing?

If participants weren't here today, they shared that they would likely be doing a mix of everyday activities. Here are the most common responses:

1. **Chilling at Home:** 47% of respondents said they'd be relaxing at home, whether that meant watching TV, playing on their phones, or sleeping in. Some mentioned spending time with family, like hanging out with cousins or visiting grandma.
 2. **Gaming & Screens:** 24% of respondents would be playing video games like Fortnite, Minecraft, Roblox, or chilling with their Xbox or PlayStation. YouTube and TikTok were also popular choices for downtime.
 3. **Spending Time with Friends:** 14% of respondents whether playing at the park, riding scooters, or just hanging out, some said they would be with friends if not at the activity.
 4. **Outdoor Fun:** 10% of respondents mentioned they'd be outside playing at the park, riding bikes, or even going fishing with family.
 5. **Creative or Productive Activities:** 5% of respondents would be drawing, making bracelets, reading, or doing schoolwork like Maths Passport or thinking about upcoming exams.
- In short, if they weren't here, most would be at home, gaming, hanging out with family or friends, or be just in front of the TV!



Is there anything that would have made it better?

When asked if anything could have made the day better, most participants felt things were already fantastic, but here are some of the common suggestions:

1. **More Time:** Many participants wished they could have had more time to enjoy the activities, whether it was for swimming, kayaking, sailing, or just extending the overall experience.
 2. **Additional Fun Elements:** Some fun ideas included more gymnastics, treehouses, warmer water, junk food at lunch, or adding marshmallows, music, dancing, and even a water fight or face painting!
 3. **Weather:** A few people mentioned wanting warmer weather, more sunshine, or less wind to make the day even better.
 4. **More Variety:** A couple of participants suggested having more food options or different sandwich bread, while others mentioned wanting to go further out during water activities or have more time on specific equipment.
 5. **Everything Was Great:** A large number of participants said “nothing” or “no” when asked if anything could be improved, with many calling the day perfect, brilliant, or the best thing they've ever done.
- Overall, while a few tweaks like more time and extra fun elements were mentioned, most participants were happy and thought the day was already amazing!



Fire Lighting, Cotswold Forest Schools

Provider Feedback on Survey Process

- Providers requested that all districts give the option of collating group questionnaires, especially if providers are covering the cost of printing. This approach saves time by enabling providers to summarize daily feedback rather than entering individual responses.
- Conducting evaluations in group settings has been efficient, helping to keep children engaged and fostering a sense of community.
- However, there are challenges with attendance, inconsistent form completion by children, and difficulties in coordinating staff to manage the survey process.
- A suggestion was made to send forms to parents for completion with their children to improve response rates



World Jungle Go Wild Bubbles



Parent Feedback

- **Positive Feedback:**

- O loved camp, and the parent appreciated Seth and the team's support.
- HAF offers great opportunities for kids to socialize, try new things, and access food.
- Thank you for organising the amazing circus!! We had a fantastic time!!
- Parents also like that World Jungle events don't require booking, have a variety of activities, and are well supported by the team.
- My son had the best time with these guys today at lake 32 they were amazing
- My daughter had the best today at lake 32 thank you for giving us a chance to experience this she hasn't stopped smiling since we got home it was a wonderful experience and massive confidence booster and great team building skills

- **Improvements Suggested:**

- More events in rural areas, clearer promotion of free events, and an easier booking system.
- Events book up quickly, and children often miss out.
- Parents prefer trips where they can accompany their children.

- **Support Needed:**

- More activities during other holidays and for families, as well as better access to SEN activities.
- Food boxes and hampers were missed.

Parents Forum

- **90 parents on the forum**

Used for:

- Questions
- Feedback
- Communicating with each other
- Promoting other relevant events
- Signposting





Parent Feedback HAF Countywide Festival

😊 One parent who was concerned about animals wandering at the Gloucestershire HAF festival. She did not want to encounter them but was seen later in the same day feeding and grooming a goat! I asked her about this, and she said, 'it's because they are tethered, they're sweet really'. The child of this mother followed her mother's example although hesitant tentatively groomed the goats.

😊 One child said to me 'this is really good; I like the food and the smoothie bike. I made this smoothie for you'.

😊 Being recognised and trusted by parents at the event was fantastic. One parent told me that she hadn't had her summer food vouchers. As GCC were at the event I approached them to ask about this on the mother's behalf. I was able to obtain vouchers immediately for this parent, she said when I gave them to her 'thank you so much, that will really make a difference'. I continue to liaise with GCC about this family not getting their food vouchers



Parent Feedback

Ticketed - Gifford Circus

😊 88% of the children attending said the show was good, 14 families said that they thought all of the show was good and would change nothing. Some families loved different acts such as the main comedy acts or the roller skaters, but the majority liked everything about the show.

😊 I made it in for the second half and the children were so enthusiastic at the show, joining in, laughing and dancing in the ring at the end.

😊 One parent spoke to me at length about her difficulties with gaining a school place for her child and how life as a single parent with a child who has SEND is so difficult. They clearly needed to talk and of course I was happy to listen. During the interval I observed how energetic the child was, struggling to stay in one place and losing interest very quickly. We re-entered the tent together, ensuring that the child was happy with the surroundings, and I sat across the gangway from them in case they needed more help. What I saw was joyful. The child was totally absorbed in the show, on their feet dancing, laughing and responding to requests to shout out or join in from the performers.

Parent Feedback

SEN – Horses for Wellbeing

😊 One of the children commented 'that owl must be quite frightened, I hope it will be alright'. It was a treat for the children to see such an elusive bird during the day.

😊 'My child who has OCD went on the HAF/SEND Horses 4 Wellbeing Day and absolutely loved it, she said it was 'A very loving place and she felt very welcome'. As a parent I agree they were so welcoming and the venue was fantastic, what an amazing idea.'

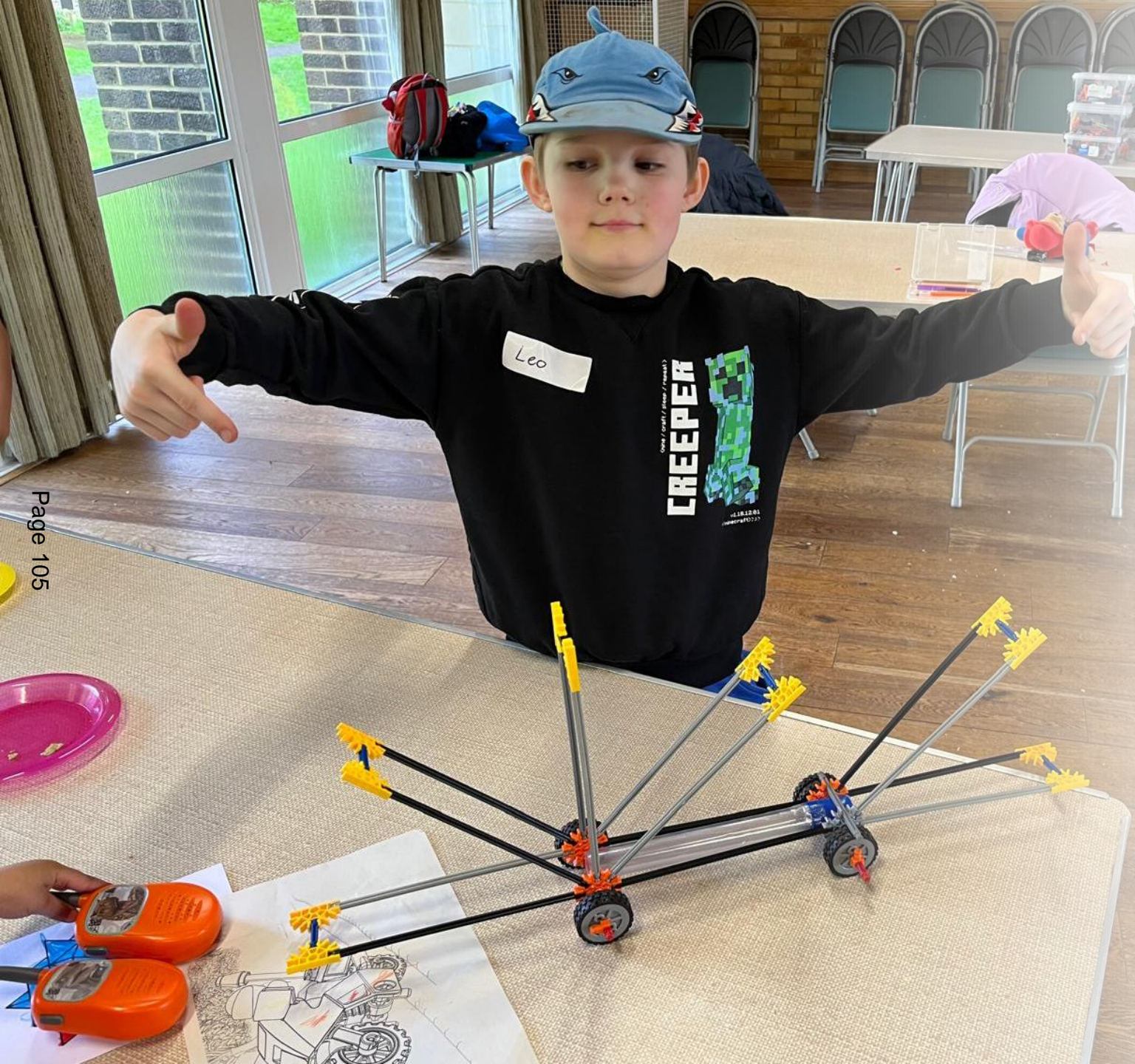
😊 I spoke with one parent who was pleased with how things were set up. She felt confident about leaving her children in the care of the staff once she had observed the activities for a while. She said 'I was nervous about leaving my children because they have been badly affected by trauma. I could see though that things were well set up. I am confident about leaving my children in the care of the staff because I can see they are comfortable.'

Parent Feedback SEN - Bloodhound

These workshops were structured to make SEN children feel welcome and designed so they could work at their own pace, take time out and all be successful in the activities.

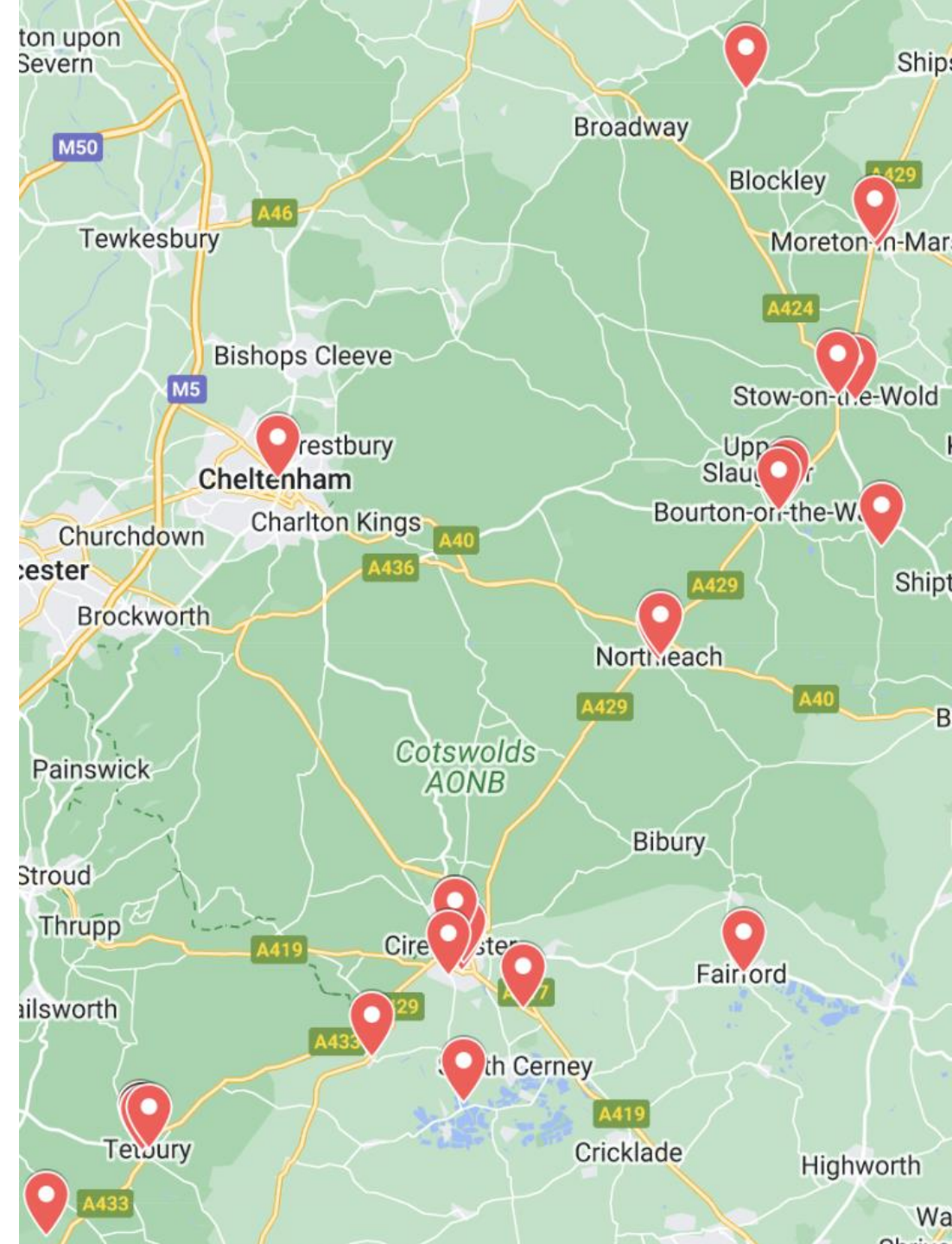
Parent Feedback

- “The sessions are really good fun and a great lunch with healthy options”
- "Fantastic these activities are available to children who wouldn't get the opportunity as parents cant' afford it.
- “Great they can attend with their friends.”
- “We would like to see more SEND sessions.”



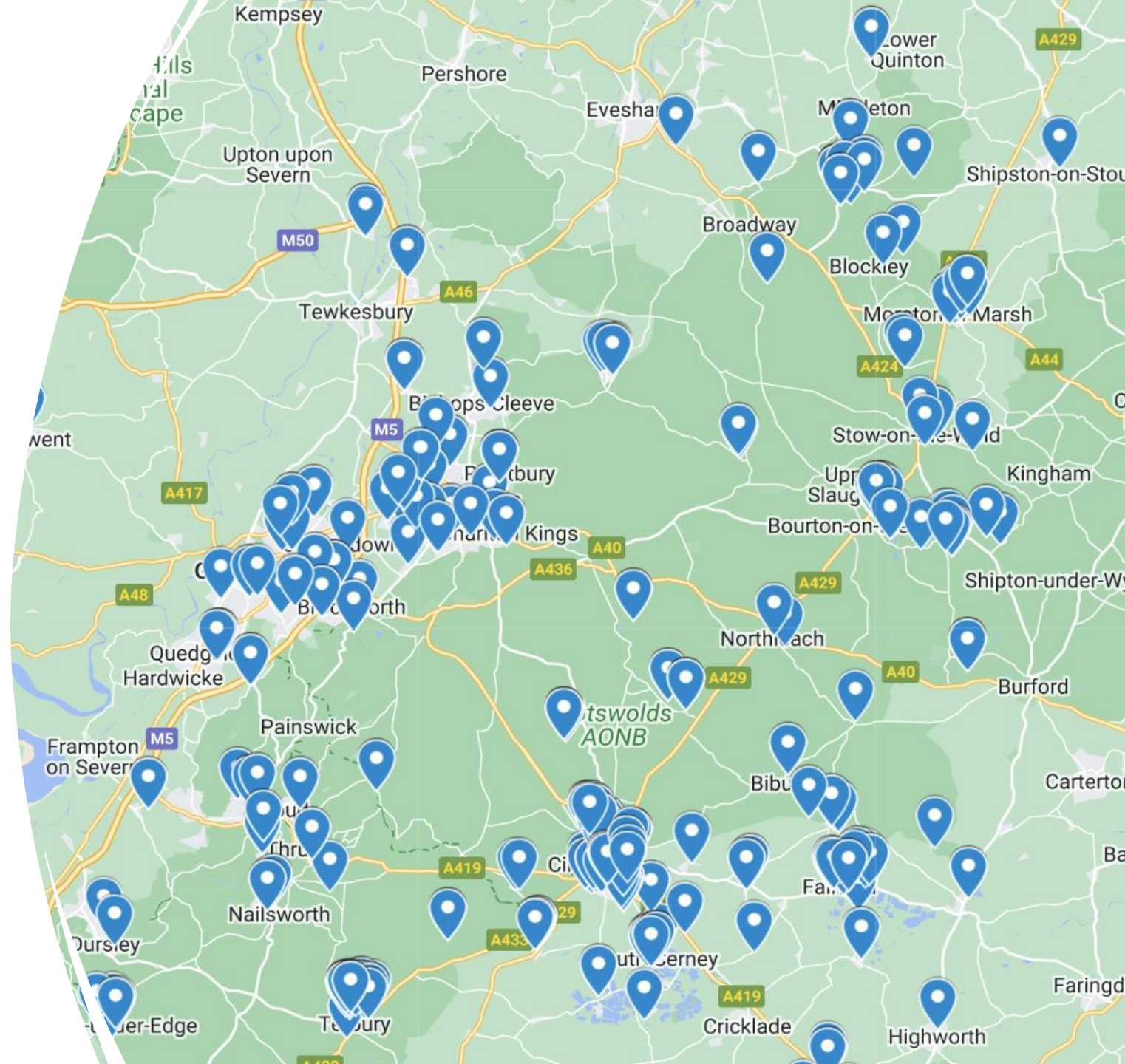
Map of provision in the Cotswolds

- See [Google Map Link](#)
- Broken down into HAF / HAP / Open Access and Family Provision



Individuals by Postcode, School, Gender FSM status Summer 24

[Google Map Link](#)



Community Connectors

Participants engaged Summer 2024



Type	Spring 24	Summer 24
Primary	89	114
Secondary	19	78
HAF	89	152
HAP	17	40
Home Schooled	2	14
ECHP	21	5
BAME	19	19
SEND/Disability	25	45

Community Connectors Feedback

Families were emailed and made aware of links to feedback for sharing positive experiences and any concerns. Feedback was also provided by families through the Cotswold What's App group and through connector focus groups at 4 events.

Families were very positive about the range of provision and pleased to see more SEN activities available. They would like to see events spread over the year rather than lots at one time and there was frustration over no shows, particularly where events were fully booked and a waitlist.

They liked being able to do things in their community with friends and didn't want to send children on trips if they were going to be with people they didn't know. Families found the community connector serve very helpful for all the challenges on making bookings, checking information and especially for those with limited IT knowledge and access to IT. It helped with language barriers.

Lots of families contacted us to say thank you.



Community Connectors Feedback

- Families found booking and searching by phone difficult as not a user friendly format, cannot find info and hard to jump between pages without being timed out.
- The website didn't have a search facility by area or date for them to find things locally in a specific timeframe.
- Frightened to cancel a booking if they have booked several together in case they lost them all, not just one. The confirmation format puts them all together so it looks like one booking.
- GCC suggested they make more tutorial videos for families to watch about how to use CABs. We responded that not many of these families would have the time or skill to do this.
- Number for SEND connector should be on the district pages, not just main GCC website so more families are aware of it.





Cotswold District Team

- **World Jungle**
- Ben Ward – ben@worldjungle.org.uk
- Jane Manning – jane@worldjungle.org.uk
- **Cotswold District Council**
- Sarah Clifton-Gould sarah.clifton-gould@publicagroup.uk
- Jane Morgan jane.morgan@publicagroup.uk
- **Community Connectors - Bloodhound**
- Kirsty Allpress - kirsty.allpress@bloodhoundeducation.com
- Nishani Nanayakkara - accounts@bloodhoundeducation.com

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**Struggling with your rent?
local housing allowance
shortfall? rent arrears? benefit
cap? bedroom tax?**

If you receive **Housing Benefit** or
Housing Element of Universal Credit,
apply to the Discretionary Housing fund
at www.cotswold.gov.uk/dhp/
Tel: 01285 623035



**Struggling with
Council Tax for this year?
or have outstanding debt
from last year?**

If you claim for **Council Tax
Support**, you could be eligible for
the **Exceptional Hardship fund**
at www.cotswold.gov.uk/
ApplyForDHP
Tel: 01285 623035



Citizens Advice will administer the **Household Support Fund** on behalf of Cotswold District Council.

The fund is used to support residents in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also help with costs for oil, portable gas cylinders, boiler repair/service, winter clothing, insulation and white goods.

Tel: 0808 800 0510 Tel: 0808 800 0511. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.
Or visit the website www.citizensadvice-stroudandcotswold.org.uk

Are you or your partner state pension age?

You may be entitled to **Pension Credit** - Pension Credit can top up low income. Find out if you are eligible www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility

Tel: 0800 99 1234



SCAN ME



More than 10 weeks pregnant? or have a child under 4?

You may get help to buy healthy food and milk
www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Tel: 0300 330 7010



SCAN ME



Some benefits entitle your child to FREE school meals

Find out if you are eligible - www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/free-school-meals

Tel: 01452 425390



SCAN ME



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Agenda Item 10



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 07 NOVEMBER 2024
Subject	2025/26 BUDGET STRATEGY AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) UPDATE
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Every, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Email: mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Email: david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Email: david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report sets out the Budget Strategy to support the preparation of the 2025/26 revenue and capital budgets and presents an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast.
Annexes	Annex A – Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025/26 to 2028/29 Annex B – Draft Capital Programme and Capital Financing Statement 2025/26 to 2028/29
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approves the 2025/26 Budget Strategy as outlined in the report. 2. Approves the revised Capital Programme including the additional expenditure on Disabled Facilities funded by Disabled Facilities Grant, as set out in Annex B.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering good services
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	N/A



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council approved its Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and set the budget for the 2024/25 financial year on 21 February 2024. This Report sets out the Council's Budget Strategy for 2025/26 and provides an update to the MTFS forecast position.
- 1.2 **A significant budget gap was identified in the February 2023 and February 2024 MTFS forecasts.** The indicative position outlined for 2024/25 through to 2027/28 was an unfunded budget gap of £4.182m (down from £5.053m). With the decision to return the majority of services from Publica to the Council, without further mitigating action the unfunded budget gap can be expected to have increased over the last 6 months.
- 1.3 Ensuring financial sustainability is one if not the key issue facing all local authorities currently. Reductions in the core long-term funding Councils have received over the last decade, continued uncertainty around the timing and impact of proposed local government finance reforms (previously referred to as the Fair Funding Review), and the impact of higher levels of inflation and interest rates all contribute to the pressure on the Council's continued financial sustainability position.
- 1.4 The uncertainty around local government finance reforms, which have already been delayed several times since April 2020. Following the General Election in July 2024, the Government have indicated that a further single-year finance settlement will be provided for 2025/26.
- 1.5 As outlined in the Policy Paper ["Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25"](#), the outcome from the Spending Review will set spending plans for a minimum of three years of the five-year forecast period. This will be reported at the Spring Budget in March 2025 with a multi-year finance settlement expected from 2026/27. This makes it difficult to forecast the Council's financial prospects over the immediate medium-term period.
- 1.6 The Inflation rate has continued to fall since the February 2024 MTFS (CPI currently 1.7%) easing the pressure on the Council finances.
- 1.7 Interest rates have remained at a higher level throughout the current financial year although the Bank of England has reduced rates by 0.25% to 5.00% in August 2024. The expectation is for further interest rate reductions over the next two years.
- 1.8 With a budget gap over the MTFS period, the budget strategy provides the framework for the Council and its service delivery partners when assessing funding priorities.
- 1.9 Having a clear set of budget principles for the Council to accept and work toward helps a clear framework on the journey to setting a balanced budget for the forthcoming year. These are set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report and cover the Council's Best Value Duty, approach to reserves, full cost recovery through fees and charges, and capital investment priorities.
- 1.10 The 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement only provided a funding allocations for a single financial year. With the new Government indicating a further single-year settlement



for 2025/26 the broad assumption is for another ‘rollover’ settlement with no material changes in funding levels anticipated. Therefore, assumptions on funding have not been fundamentally reviewed for the purposes of the MTFS update and remain uncertain.

- 1.11 The 2025/26 Budget estimate for Council Tax assumes an increase in the number of dwellings liable for Council Tax (i.e., a 1% increase in the Taxbase) and a £5 increase in a Band D charge for Council Tax. This falls within the permissible level of increase before triggering a local referendum and equates to an increase less than 10 pence per week for a Band D property.
- 1.12 Forecasting business rates income is complex with the impact of the external economic environment, additional reliefs, and the impact from the April 2023 revaluation contributing to the level of uncertainty around forecasts for the medium-term.
- 1.13 An updated estimate has been included in this MTFS of £5.000m to match the 20245 budgeted level. Whilst this estimate has been included in the MTFS it is prudent to consider the overall level of resources (Council Tax plus Government Funding) and apply a degree of damping to avoid over estimation.
- 1.14 Table ESI below includes the budget pressures that have been included in the draft revenue budget and MTFS.

Table ESI – Budget Pressures

Item & Summary	2025/26 (£'000)	2026/27 (£'000)	2027/28 (£'000)	2028/29 (£'000)
Budget Pressures				
2024/25 External Audit scale fee increase (10%)	14	14	14	14
Spacehive Platform Fee (Crowdfund Cotswold)	30	30	30	0
Asseet Management - Rental Income	8	8	8	8
TOTAL	52	52	52	22

- 1.15 Table ES2 below sets out the cost reduction and income generation items brought forward from February 2024 that have been included in the MTFS update.
- 1.16 Given the scale of the financial challenge the Council is facing, a longer-term view has been taken on the development of the refreshed Savings and Transformation plans. These will be brought forward over the coming months once an action plan for each major workstream has been developed. Project Management support and external support (e.g. APSE, LGA) may be required on individual lines of enquiry to ensure options are fully appraised prior to inclusion in the programme.
- 1.17 Subject to further due diligence, additional savings and transformation items will be put forward as part of the administration’s budget proposals in February 2025.



Table ES2 – Savings Proposals

Savings (b/f from Feb 2024 MTFS)	2025/26 (£'000)	2026/27 (£'000)	2027/28 (£'000)	2028/29 (£'000)
<u>Corporate Savings</u>				
LGPS - Secondary Rate (PIA) (Budget savings)	(196)	(196)	(196)	(196)
<u>Other Expenditure Savings</u>				
Ubico - Rezoning of Rounds	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
<u>Fees & Charges</u>				
Car Parking Fees	(120)	(210)	(293)	(394)
Garden Waste - fee increase	(115)	(231)	(348)	(465)
TOTAL	(931)	(1,137)	(1,338)	(1,555)

Publica Review

- 1.18 Following reports from Human Engine (November 2023) and Local Partnerships (March 2024), Council approved the Detailed Transition Plan (“DTP”) report at its meeting on 31 July 2024. This set out the process that would be followed to return the majority of services to the Council with an initial transfer of services taking place on 01 November 2024.
- 1.19 The DTP and covering report provided members with an initial estimate of additional cost of Phase I (enduring impact) and the one-off costs (provision for redundancy).
- 1.20 These cost estimates have been updated for this report but should be treated with a degree of caution – they are estimates at the current time and will vary as appointments are made to new roles within the council.
- 1.21 The table below provides members with a reconciliation between the financial implications set out in the July 2024 DTP and those included in the MTFS update included within this report.



Reconciliation of movement in additional cost	July 2024 DTP (£'000)	November 2024 update (£'000)	Change (£'000)
Phase 1 Baseline Cost	3,674	3,616	(58)
Sharing + Pension Impact	326	318	(8)
New Roles	553	619	66
New Model Total	4,553	4,553	0
Publica Savings (Direct)	(240)	(240)	0
Indirect Savings	(283)	(282)	1
Enduring Impact	4,030	4,031	1
Indicative Annual Increase / (Decrease)	356	415	59

- 1.22** It should be noted that these cost estimates only cover Phase 1 of the DTP. No estimate has been included in the MTFs for Phase 2. Proposals for the next phase are at a very early stage and will require extensive due diligence before any decision is taken. This is in-line with the approach taken with Phase 1 and is vital to ensure the Council is able to remain financially sustainable given the likely cost increase that will result from Phase 2.
- 1.23** It is important to note that the gross increase in cost of Phase 1 (£0.937m in a full year) was net of cost reductions of £0.522m associated with changes made to the Publica management structure (giving the net cost estimate of £0.415m). Elements of the new posts (shown in the waterfall) could be considered as one-off changes to the Council's structure and matched by comparable reductions in the Publica contract sum. The associated cost reductions have been front-loaded and it is not anticipated that similar cost reductions would be realised in Phase 2.
- 1.24** In terms of one-off costs, paragraph 5.10 of the CTP covering report included the following: *"A prudent estimate would be for the Council to anticipate around £0.300m of redundancy and associated costs which allows for a level of mitigation. This represents an equal one-third share of the costs with future salary savings allocated on the same basis."*
- 1.25** The current estimate for the Council's share of redundancy and pension strain costs is £0.274m and within the amount set aside within the Financial Resilience reserve.
- 1.26** The draft MTFs shown in Table ES3, and Annex A is based on the most credible assumptions and forecasts of income and expenditure over the next 4 years. The uncertainty around the timing and impact of local government finance reforms makes it difficult to estimate with certainty the likely budget gap that the Council will need to close by 2026/27. However, whilst this outcome is uncertain, there is a need for the Council to ensure financial sustainability is maintained over the MTFs period and develop a robust and balanced savings and transformation plan to close the forecast budget gap.



1.27 It is therefore appropriate for the Council to consider a revenue budget position over the next two financial years that delivers a surplus to ensure the Financial Resilience reserve is replenished to mitigate the financial position forecast from 2026/27.

Table ES3 – Draft MTFS

	2024/25				
Underlying Budget Gap - November 2024	Latest	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)
Service Revenue Expenditure	16,584	16,584	16,584	16,584	16,584
Non-Service Expenditure & Income	(699)	(1,378)	(923)	(849)	(367)
Inflation Provision		629	1,220	1,825	2,454
Budget Pressures	0	52	0	0	0
Publica Review Phase 1	174	417	469	469	469
Technical Adjustments					
Draft Net Revenue Budget (Before Savings)	16,060	16,304	17,350	18,029	19,139
TOTAL Funding	(15,577)	(15,153)	(13,852)	(12,479)	(11,211)
Underlying Budget Gap	482	1,151	3,498	5,550	7,928
Savings identified					
LGPS		(196)	(196)	(196)	(196)
Ubico - rezoning of Waste & Recycling	(375)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
Car Park fees		(120)	(210)	(293)	(394)
Garden Waste fee - cost recovery		(115)	(231)	(348)	(465)
Other Savings	(450)				
Revised Budget Gap / (Surplus)	(343)	220	2,361	4,213	6,374
				6,451	12,825

1.28 The Financial Resilience reserve was relied upon in 2022/23 and 2023/24 to balance the budget (£2.103m) which was not sustainable over the medium-term. Council approved the motion in November 2023 recognising that it could not continue to use reserves to balance its revenue budget. The 2024/25 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy were prepared on the basis that planned operating surpluses in 2024/25 and 2025/26 were transferred to the Financial Resilience Reserve.

1.29 The draft MTFS shows a revised moderate surplus of £0.343m in 2024/25 with a deficit of £0.220m in 2025/26. Although this remains a positive outcome at this stage of the budget setting cycle, consideration should be given to options to increase the projected surplus.

1.30 A review of the Reserves and Balances strategy will be undertaken to consider the adequacy of reserves considering the continued financial risks faced by the Council. The review will consider guidance published under CIPFA Bulletin 13: Local Authority Reserves and Balances (March 2023).



1.31 As reported in the 2024/25 Outturn report, slippage of £1.513m has been included in the Capital Programme for 2024/25. Additional expenditure of £0.800m (Disabled Facilities Grant-funded) and £0.393m of EV Charging Points (ORCS Grant) have been included giving a revised budget of £9.509m, as shown in the table below. The capital programme for 2025/26 to 2027/28 remains unchanged. Total expenditure decreases to £1.328m in 2025/26, increases to £6.651m in 2026/27, with an estimate of £2.720m for 2027/28.

Table ES4 – Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28

Capital Programme	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 Budget (£'000)	2026/27 Budget (£'000)	2027/28 Budget (£'000)	TOTAL Budget (£'000)
Leisure & Communities	1,310	50	550	50	1,960
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing	3,351	700	700	700	5,451
Environment	2,458	428	5,251	1,820	9,957
ICT, Change and Customer Services	350	150	150	150	800
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	752	0	0	0	752
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	134	0	0	0	134
Land, Legal and Property	880	0	0	0	880
Transformation and Investment	274	0	0	0	274
	9,509	1,328	6,651	2,720	20,208

1.32 As set out in the *2024/25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy* report, the Council’s capital expenditure has up until the current financial year been predominantly financed from capital receipts. As these are forecast to deplete over the capital programme period the Council will need to undertake prudential borrowing to support future capital expenditure plans. Other sources of finance support the capital programme, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions) or the Council’s own resources (revenue, reserves, and capital receipts).

1.33 The Capital Financing position will be reviewed by the s151 Officer during the year as expenditure forecasts are updated to ensure a balanced use of capital resources and mitigation of current and future interest rates.

1.34 The report sets out the Council’s financial prospects for 2025/26. Final budget proposals, including the outcome from the Local Government Finance Settlement, will be presented to the Cabinet and debated at Council during February 2025.



2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council approved its Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and set the budget for the 2024/25 financial year on 21 February 2024. This Report sets out the Council's Budget Strategy for 2025/26 and provides an update to the MTFS forecast position.
- 2.2 A significant budget gap was identified in the February 2023 and February 2024 MTFS forecasts. The indicative position outlined for 2024/25 through to 2027/28 was an unfunded budget gap of £4.181m (down from £5.053m). With the decision to return the majority of services from Publica to the Council, without further mitigating action the unfunded budget gap can be expected to have increased over the last 6 months.

Table 1 – February 2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy position

	2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 (£'000)	2026/27 (£'000)	2027/28 (£'000)
MTFS Summary				
Net Service Revenue Expenditure	15,858	15,858	15,858	15,858
Corporate Items/Non Service Income & Expenditure	(1,015)	(649)	(50)	24
Transfers to/(from) earmarked reserves	476	(557)	(701)	(701)
Provision for Inflation	1,117	1,993	2,694	3,414
Service + Corporate Items	16,437	16,645	17,801	18,596
Budget Pressures	584	628	690	740
Technical Adjustments	77	77	77	77
Risk Items	0	0	0	0
Savings and Transformation Plan items	(2,036)	(2,931)	(3,205)	(3,422)
Draft Net Revenue Budget	15,061	14,419	15,362	15,990
TOTAL Funding	(15,577)	(14,743)	(13,852)	(12,479)
Budget Gap / (Surplus)	(516)	(324)	1,511	3,511
				4,181

- 2.3 Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), the Council is legally required to set a balanced budget for the following financial year and remains in balance. Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1998 requires the Section 151 Officer to report to all Members if there is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget.
- 2.4 In common with the almost all local authorities, the council faces several external budget pressures that are impacting on its finances over the medium-term. Although inflation has fallen back to the Bank of England's target (CPI 2.00%) there remains uncertainty around the pace of interest rate reduction in the current financial year which have an influence over the Council's budget for 2025/26 and the MTFS period both directly and indirectly.



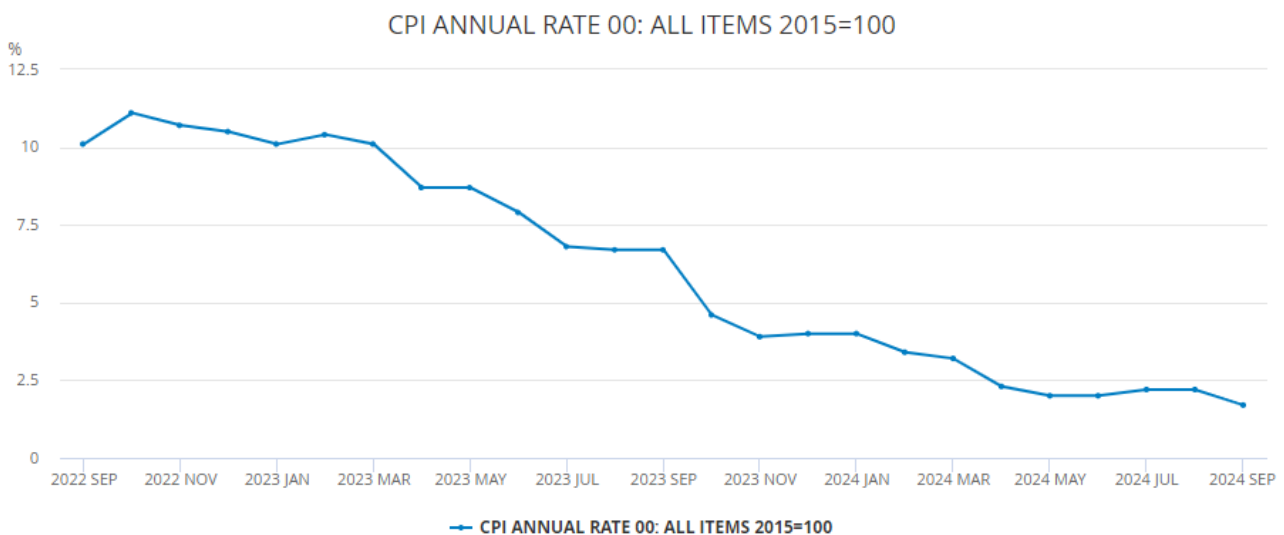
- 2.5 Members should consider some of the wider issues facing local government that will inform the 2025/26 revenue and capital budgets and the MTF5.
- 2.6 A number of local authorities have issued section 114 notices since 2018 with Birmingham City Council being the most high-profile along with Woking Borough Council, Slough Borough Council and Thurrock Council. A section 114 notice indicates that the council's forecast income is insufficient to meet its forecast expenditure for the next year.
- 2.7 Whilst the number of authorities issuing section 114 notices is relatively low (8 out of 317 local authorities in England since 2018) it is unprecedented to have this many issued in a short space of time.
- 2.8 A number of other local authorities have indicated they are facing significant financial challenge. The LGA reported in March 2024 that one in five council leaders and chief executives in England thought it was very or fairly likely that a Section 114 notice may need to be issued. Grant Thornton reported in January 2024 that 40% of Councils were at risk of financial failure over the next five years.
- 2.9 **Whilst there is no immediate risk of Cotswold District Council having to consider issuing a section 114 notice, members will note the budget gap forecast over the medium-term must be closed to maintain financial sustainability. The increase in cost of returning services to the Council must be balanced and within the financial envelope set out in the MTF5.**
- 2.10 The level of uncertainty across the sector makes it more difficult to plan for the medium-term. As outlined earlier in the report, Local Government Finance reforms, originally due to be implemented from April 2020, have been pushed back until at least April 2026.
- 2.11 Therefore, it should be noted the updated MTF5 position set out in this report is subject to uncertainty and a degree of estimation of costs and income. As with all estimates and assumptions, there is an inherent risk that they may not be accurate. The financial position will continue to be monitored with the estimates and assumptions reviewed and updated throughout the budget setting process. These will be finalised once the provisional Local Government Settlement is announced which is expected in December following the Autumn Budget on 30 October 2024.



3. EXTERNAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Inflationary Pressures

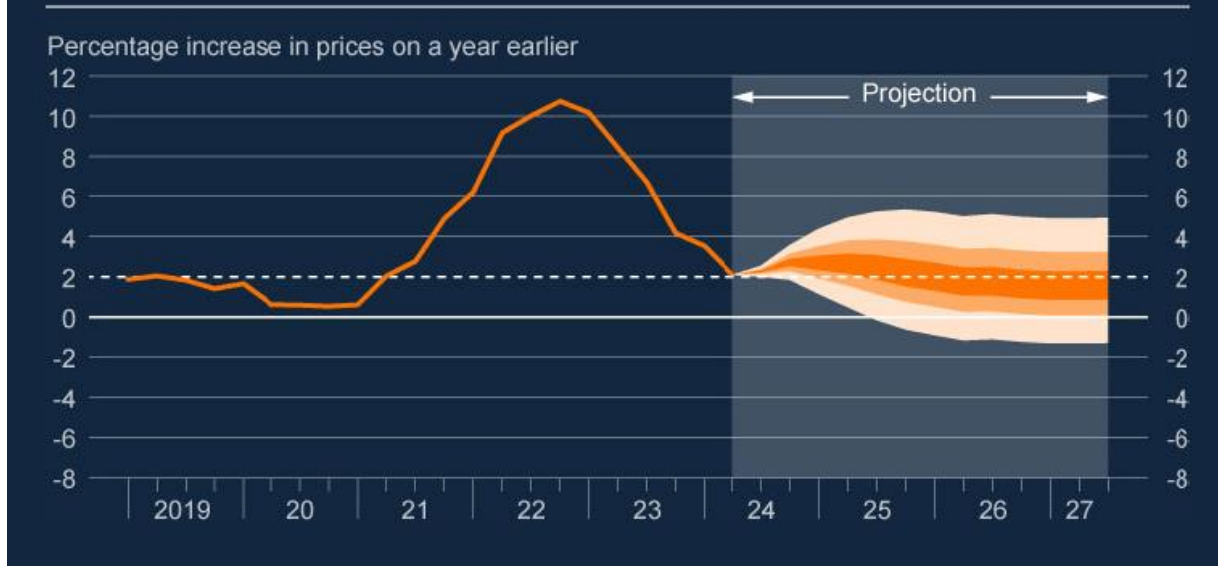
- 3.1** The level of inflation, as measured by the Consumer Prices Index, for September 2024 is 1.7% (down from 2.2% in August 2024). Although it is not the Government's preferred measure of inflation, the Retail Prices Index is 2.7% (3.5% in August 2024). Core inflation (as defined by the Office for National Statistics as the CPI Rate excluding energy, food, alcohol, and tobacco) fell to 3.2% (3.6% in August 2024). Commentary from economists on the inflation rate indicated the rate may track back up in the October 2024.



- 3.2** Although general inflation has reduced since the start of the calendar year, the Council is subject to specific inflationary pressures on its services (e.g., fuel costs on waste and recycling service) which have tended to track higher than CPI and RPI.
- 3.3** The forecast for inflation is to remain within the Bank of England's target of 2.0% (CPI) although there was debate when inflation remained at relatively high levels suggesting the bank should consider revising the target to 3.0%. The graph below shows the different CPI forecasts that are published in the quarterly Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee report (August 2024).



Chart 1.4: CPI inflation projection based on market interest rate expectations, other policy measures as announced



- 3.4** The lower inflation expectations shown in the Bank of England's Fan Chart above will need to be taken into account when assessing the impact on 2025/26 revenue and capital budgets and over the MTFs-period.

Inflationary Pressures – Pay Award

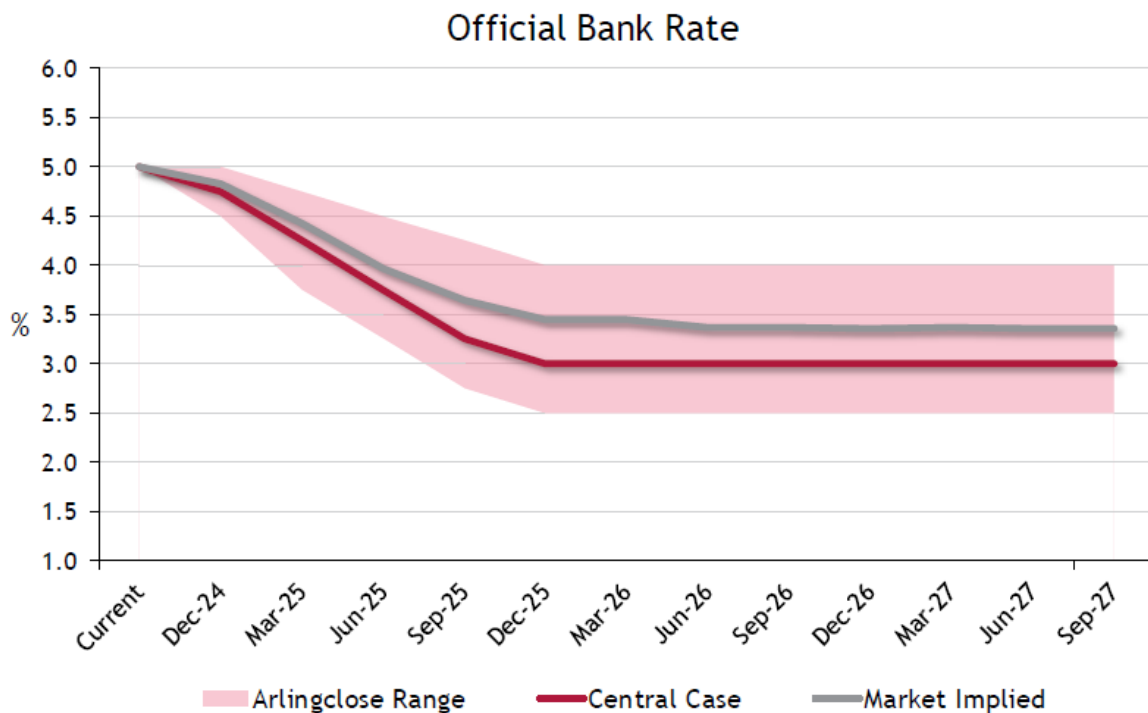
- 3.5** The assumption made for the 2024/25 budget was for an average Pay Award of 5% across Publica and Council staff with 6% budgeted for across Ubico. Inflationary provision of just under £1m has been included in the budget for the pay award across Publica and Ubico contracts and for retained staff costs.
- 3.6** The Local Government pay award was settled on 22 October 2024 as set out below. With effect from 01 April 2024:
- an increase of £1,290 (pro rata for part-time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive (equating to an increase of between 2.50% and 5.77% depending on the paygrade)
 - an increase of 2.50% on all pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer.
 - an increase of 2.50% on all allowances

3.7 The financial implications of Pay Award outlined above is within the inflation allowance in the current year’s budget. Any surplus provision in 2024/25 will be transferred to the Financial Resilience reserve to maintain financial sustainability over the MTFs period and to mitigate the impact of Phase I of the Publica Review. An adjustment to the 2024/25 base salary budget will be included in the February 2025 MTFs once the full impact of the Pay Award has been applied to employee salaries.

Interest Rates

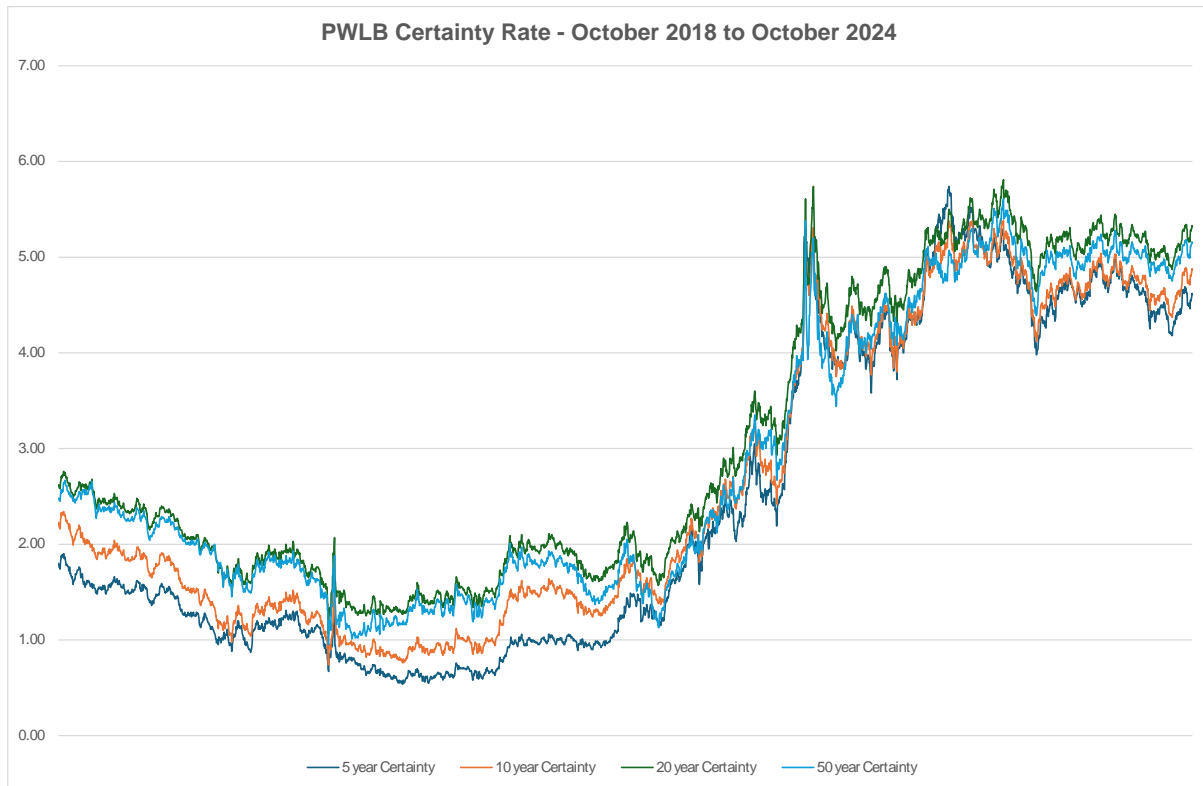
3.8 The Bank of England reduced the Base rate in August 2024 by 0.25% with the easing of inflationary pressures taking the base rate to 5.00%. The MPC voted to maintain rates at 5.00% at their latest meeting in September 2024. The council’s treasury management advisors have forecast at least one further reduction during the year with an expectation that the base rate will reduce in November. The next MPC meetings are scheduled for 07 November 2024, 19 December 2024, and 06 February 2025.

3.9 Following the release of the inflation data on 16 October 2024, economic commentary suggested the Bank of England may increase the pace of interest rate reductions in 2024 and early 2025.



3.10 To support the Capital Programme over the medium-term, the Council may need to undertake borrowing during the coming financial year although this is dependent on a number

of factors. With PWLB interest rates remaining relatively high compared to the previous 12 years, this will impact the expenditure required to service any borrowing the Council undertakes.



- 3.11** The Council has limited and reducing internal resources to support the capital programme (capital receipts, earmarked reserves). Unless further capital receipts are received as a result of asset disposals, the Council will need to undertake prudential borrowing.
- 3.12** With interest rates expected to remain high during the financial year, the Council will need to ensure capital expenditure and capital financing decisions are made ‘in the round.’ This will ensure that existing and new capital schemes are not considered in isolation and are prioritised against the Council’s Corporate Plan and reference to affordability and deliverability.

Economic Outlook

- 3.13** The International Monetary Fund published their latest half-yearly outlook for the global economy on 22 October 2024. It was widely reported that the IMF forecast for the UK economy was more positive with growth for 2024 now forecast at 1.1% rather than 0.7%. The forecast for 2025 remains unchanged at 1.5%.



- 3.14** The IMF acknowledged the ‘soft-landing’ for western economies following relatively high levels of inflation and highlighted there remains risk given international trade disputes and conflicts in the Middle East could drive prices up.
- 3.15** Recent commentary published by the Council’s Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose, highlights the near-term uncertainty in the global economy.

“The move from a seemingly stable global outlook through the summer until mid-September has been replaced by more uncertainty. While the economic growth outlook appears to have improved, which makes the path for interest rates less clear, the uncertainty may largely stem from upcoming political events that could have significant consequences for growth, inflation, fiscal and monetary policy. Recent movements in gilt yields represent investors seeking compensation for the less certain outlook for interest rates.

The next MPC meeting is on 7th November, and we expect the Committee will vote for a further reduction in Bank Rate to 4.75% in line with our long-held interest rate view. We remain of the opinion that inflation will remain under control, with underlying measures, particularly services inflation, easing, amid a relatively tame growth environment, prompting the Bank of England to loosen monetary policy.

The gilt market is likely to remain volatile until the UK Budget and US Election have taken place, at which point there may be greater certainty over the interest rate path.”

4. 2025/26 BUDGET STRATEGY – ASSUMPTIONS

- 4.1** The 2025/26 Budget Strategy outlines the principles and aims for the revenue and capital budget preparation process and takes into account the need for the Council to achieve a balanced budget position and maintain financial sustainability over the medium-term.
- 4.2** The February 2024 MTFs identified a significant budget gap over the MTFs period. With the additional pressures as set out in Section 3 of the report, the budget strategy provides the framework for the Council and its service delivery partners when assessing funding priorities.
- 4.3** As set out in paragraph 2.6 to 2.8., many Councils are facing a significant financial challenge in setting a balanced budget for the forthcoming year. Whilst the financial challenge for Cotswold District Council is not proportionately as extreme as some other local authorities, it is still a significant challenge for the Council to address.
- 4.4** Having a clear set of budget principles for the Council to accept and work toward helps a clear framework on the journey to setting a balanced budget for the forthcoming year, as such Cotswold adopted the following principles for 2024/25 which remain sound:
- A clear focus on fulfilling the Council’s Best Value Duty (*“make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”*). Further development and



mobilisation of the continuous savings programme through the Cabinet Transform Working Group (CTWG). Key objective for CTWG is to review savings and transformation proposals to close most of the budget gap by driving out costs from the running expenditure of the Council and its service delivery partners, focused both in the short and medium term.

- The Council will not rely on the use of one-off funding sources to address recurring budgetary pressures, specifically it should not place material reliance on use of reserves for revenue purposes over the medium-term.
- Maintaining financial sustainability over the MTFS period, the Council should take steps to replenish the Financial Resilience reserve in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to mitigate the budget gap forecast from 2026/27.
- Recognising the challenging inflationary environment, the Council is currently operating in and the increase in service costs, where services are charged for, fees and charges need to be set at an optimal price, ensuing full cost recovery as a minimum.
- Ensuring the long-term viability of service provision from as stable a position as possible is vital to continued success of quality service delivery, there a continued focus on budget sustainability will be key to all considerations with a reduce use of one-off measures or borrowing to fund activity.
- Recognising the capital investment priorities outlined in the Council Corporate Plan and the importance to the residents of the district, a sustainable funding solution should be developed to fund the emerging capital programme – with a specific focus on funding all new capital activity predominantly from capital receipts with minimal borrowing.

Pay and Price Inflation

- 4.5** The budget will be prepared on a ‘standstill’ basis in that no price inflation will be added other than to contractual commitments to pay an annual inflationary increase such as external contracts and software licence agreements.
- 4.6** Prudent provision will be made in the 2025/26 budget for the pay award to ensure the Council’s budget is protected in the short-term with the broad assumptions used in the MTFS set out below.
- Publica: 3.00%
 - Ubico: 3.00% (CDC to hold an additional 1.00% in contingency)
 - CDC: 2.50% to 3.00% (depending on position)
- 4.7** Non-pay inflation will be applied to specific elements of the Ubico contract where there is a material impact on service costs and an agreed assessment of the evidence of inflationary pressures (e.g., Fuel prices).



- 4.8 The ONS published the September CPI and RPI figures on 16 October 2024 with CPI reducing to 1.7% and RPI falling to 2.7%. These figures are used as the basis for uprating of some welfare benefits.
- 4.9 As set out above, the MTFS will include an allowance for these inflationary pressures over the medium-term and will be reviewed over the Autumn.

Fees and Charges

- 4.10 As set out in the paragraphs above, the Council is currently exposed to inflationary pressures in service delivery costs. Where services are charged for, fees and charges need to be set at an optimal price, ensuing full cost recovery as a minimum. This is in accordance with Cabinet decisions included in prior year MTFS reports to *“charge for services to ensure they are not subsidised by other taxpayers.”*
- 4.11 The February 2024 MTFS included an assumption for inflationary increases across key fees and charges such as Green Waste licence and Car Park fees. A report will be considered by Cabinet in February 2025 on the revised fees and charges for 2025/26.

Commercial Property Income/Asset Management

- 4.12 The Council’s revenue budget for 2024/25 includes £0.422m of gross rental income from Commercial Property which provides funding for other Council services. Given the risk in holding commercial property (e.g., occupancy rates and fluctuations in the property market), income and expenditure budgets associated with the portfolio will be reviewed considering the external economic environment. This will help ensure the Council is budgeting at the appropriate level and that risks to income and expenditure changes across the medium term can be incorporate into the MTFS and Capital Programme.
- 4.13 The 2025/26 budget (as set out in the February 2024 MTFS) assumed further costs/loss of rental income for the year of £0.070m with further pressures over the MTFS period. This will be reviewed against the current position on rental income expectations with any updated forecast included in the February 2025 MTFS.
- 4.14 The Asset Management Strategy (AMS) was adopted in May 2024. The strategy provides a longer-term view (i.e., the next 10 years) of the approach to managing the Council’s land and buildings.
- 4.15 The AMS will be supported by detailed asset management plans for the Land and Buildings assets it holds considering stock condition surveys and including consideration of any investment required to achieve minimum efficiency standards (MESS). This work is already underway with the Council considering priority areas such as Old Station and Memorial Cottages with further plans will come forward over the coming months.



- 4.16** The budget setting process will need to consider whether a proportion of commercial income is set aside in an Earmarked Reserve each year to provide an ongoing funding stream to manage the portfolio and any Asset Management requirements that are identified in the AMS.

Local Government Pension Scheme

- 4.17** An actuarial review of the Local Government Pension Scheme was undertaken in 2022 with a revised funding schedule included in the February 2023 MTFS. This resulted in a reduction in the employer secondary rate payment of £0.139m in 2023/24 increasing to £0.335m in 2024/25 and £0.531m in 2025/26.
- 4.18** For the purposes of the MTFS, no change has been forecast to the level of pension fund contribution at the current funding period (2025/26). Assumptions around employer contributions will not be updated until the conclusion of the next actuarial review which will commence in March 2025 with any changes to contributions taking effect from 2026/27. Clearly, there is a risk at the next valuation for contribution levels to increase should the actuarial assessment require.

Interest Rates – Investments and Borrowing

- 4.19** Treasury management income remained well above budget expectations in 2023/24 with total investment income of £1.783m. Although the 2024/25 Q1 forecast for Treasury management income remains above target due to higher interest rates and cash balances, interest rates are expected to reduce over the next 12 months.
- 4.20** As outlined in the Treasury Management Strategy, the Council invests its surplus balances with a budgeted income return of £1.3461m in 2024/25. The Strategy sets out that the Council aims to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, to maintain the spending power of the sum invested.
- 4.21** The Council has two broad classes of investments – Short-term investments (Debt Management Office and Money Market Funds where balances are held for short periods until required) and Pooled Funds.
- 4.22** The initial forecast for 2025/26 is £1.001m recognising the gradual reduction in interest rates forecast in 2025/26. This will be reviewed over the coming months with a final estimate included in the revenue budget and MTFS to be considered by Cabinet and Council in February 2025.

Government Funding

- 4.23** Following the General Election in July 2024, the new Government published an assessment of the finances [“Fixing the foundations: public spending audit 2024-25”](#). The report highlighted an expected overspend on departmental spending of £21.9bn.



- 4.24** The Government have since indicated that the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26 will be for a single year, with the outcome from the spending review due to report into the Spring 2025 budget. A Local Government Finance policy statement is expected to be published in November following the budget which may provide some clarity and certainty on key aspects of funding to support budget setting and financial planning.
- 4.25** For the purposes of this report, it has been assumed that the overall level of Government funding remains largely unchanged for 2025/26. The exception to this is the forecast for Retained Business Rates with the level of retained rates being comparable to the 2024/25 budgeted level.
- 4.26** Owing to the timing of the General Election, no consultation has taken place on key aspects of Local Government Finance reform or on the design of the New Homes Bonus scheme.
- 4.27** For the purposes of the MTFS it is assumed that, other things being equal, any additional New Homes Bonus payment will result in an equal and opposite change in the Funding Guarantee. In other words, it is assumed there would be no increase in the level of resources for 2025/26.
- 4.28** The Government have deferred the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) by a year (now October 2025). Commentary included in the 2023/24 settlement indicated pEPR may have provided additional income to local authorities.
- “2024-25 brings with it a significant new funding stream, subject to successful delivery of the Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) scheme as soon as is feasible within this financial year; local authorities can expect to receive additional income from the scheme whilst being asked to submit data relevant to their waste collection services. Alongside His Majesty’s Treasury and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, we will be assessing the impact of additional pEPR income on the relative needs and resources of individual local authorities in the coming year.”*
- 4.29** The broad assumption made at this stage is there is unlikely to be any material change to the funding position already set out in the 2024/25 settlement and included within the MTFS.

Council Tax

- 4.30** The assumption for 2025/26 is there is no change to the Council Tax referendum principles for shire district and borough councils – increases of Council Tax of up to 3% or £5 (whichever is higher). Should the referendum principles be amended (usually when the Local Government Finance Settlement is published), this will be considered and any recommendation included in the February 2025 MTFS
- 4.31** The 2025/26 Budget estimate for Council Tax assumes an increase in the number of dwellings liable for Council Tax (i.e., a 1% increase in the Taxbase) and a £5 increase in a Band D charge for Council Tax. This falls within the permissible level of increase before triggering a local referendum and equates to an increase less than 10 pence per week for a Band D property.



- 4.32** At their meeting on 20 March 2024 Council approved to introduce a Council Tax premium on second homes (from April 2025) and to apply the maximum premium for Empty Homes (from April 2024) as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- 4.33** The Government laid regulations on 08 October 2024 setting out exceptions to council tax premiums on second and empty homes. These regulations will come into force on 01 November and have effect from 01 April 2025. Further guidance will be provided once the regulations come into force.
- 4.34** The initial estimate provided in the March 2024 report indicated that £3.4m of additional Council Tax would be generated with Cotswold District Council's share being £0.246m. As part of the calculation of the Council Taxbase, this estimate will be reviewed taking into account the exemptions set out in regulations and subsequent guidance.
- 4.35** The March 2024 report proposed that the District Council's share of the additional revenue is set aside in the Council Priority: Housing Delivery reserve to facilitate the provision for additional affordable housing units across the district.
- 4.36** This proposal is subject to ongoing review by the Leader and Deputy Leader, in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive to ensure the level of funding available to support the Council priority and the Council's wider financial sustainability objectives are met.
- 4.37** The Empty Homes Premium is applied to dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished with an increasing level of premium depending on the length of time the property has remained Empty.
- Premium of 100% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) after 1 year up to 5 years of becoming empty;
 - Premium of 200% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) between 5 years and 10 years;
 - Premium of 300% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) for 10 years or more.
- 4.38** The decision to set Council Tax remains an annual decision for Council to consider when setting the budget in February.
- 4.39** The Council has consulted on proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme (LCTS) with changes focussed supporting more people with the cost of living and provide more support to those families with dependent children.

Business Rates

- 4.40** Forecasting business rates income is complex with the impact of the external economic environment, additional reliefs, and the impact from the April 2023 revaluation contributing to the level of uncertainty around forecasts for the medium-term.



- 4.41** An initial estimate of £4.516m was included in the February 2024 MTFS. This has been revised to £5.000m to match the 2024/25 forecast.
- 4.42** Whilst this estimate has been included in the MTFS it is prudent to consider the overall level of resources (Council Tax plus Government Funding) and apply a degree of damping to avoid over estimation. The MTFS includes scenarios on both funding and expenditure to provide members with a range of potential outcomes. In effect, the overall level of funding in the balanced and pessimistic scenarios can be seen as a reduction in the estimate of business rates income for the year. Further detail of the modelling and scenarios are set out in Section 5 of the report.
- 4.43** The Council is required to finalise its Business Rates estimates for 2025/26 and its initial estimate of any surplus or deficit for 2024/25 by 31 January 2025 which will be included in the February 2025 MTFS.
- 4.44** The Council is a member of the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool. The main aim of the pool is to maximise the retention of locally generated business rates and to ensure that it further supports the economic regeneration of the wider Gloucestershire.
- 4.45** Subject to approval from the Secretary of State as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement, it is assumed that the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool will continue for a further year (i.e. 2025/26).
- 4.46** Following a review of the financial performance undertaken by LG Futures on behalf of the Gloucestershire s151 officers, it was recommended that the composition of the pool was amended to maximise the amount of pool benefit retained in Gloucestershire. 21 different scenarios were modelled with the three highest gain changes being:
- Exclude Cheltenham Avg. total gain of £2.4m
 - Exclude Cheltenham & Forest of Dean Avg. total gain of £2.3m
 - Exclude Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Avg. total gain of £2.0m
- 4.47** The highest gain using each of the four data years is to exclude Cheltenham. Using the four data sets, the difference in gains would be:
- 2021/22 data All £2.9m exc Cheltenham £4.7m +£1.8m
 - 2022/23 data All £3.8m exc Cheltenham £6.3m +£2.5m
 - 2023/24 data All £4.2m exc Cheltenham £6.9m +£2.7m
 - 2024/25 data All £4.6m exc Cheltenham £7.4m +£2.8m
- 4.48** Given the purpose of the Gloucestershire Pool is to share benefit and maximise the retention of business rates locally, it is intended that the local distribution agreement will be updated (it was last updated in 2012) to ensure that Cheltenham receives benefit as if it were a member of the formal business rates pool using the current allocation basis in place.



- 4.49 The change in Pool composition was subject to informal discussion with Gloucestershire Leaders and Chief Executives with universal support for the changes.

Financial Resilience Reserve

- 4.50 A Financial Resilience reserve of £1.875m was established as part of the *Draft Budget Proposals 2023-24 and Latest MTFS Forecasts* report to Cabinet in November 2022 with the intention to hold at a level that allows the Council to mitigate short-term fluctuations in income and expenditure (e.g., Business Rates, Government funding changes).
- 4.51 The reserve assists with mitigation of the budget gap identified in the MTFS and to facilitate profiling of a Savings and Transformation plan and support the award of the Leisure and Culture contract over MTFS period.
- 4.52 The projected balance on the Financial Resilience reserve is £2.854m by the end of the 2024/25 financial year. This does not take into account any addition to the reserve due to the reduced impact from the Pay Award.
- 4.53 As set out in this report, the Council must set a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year. Whilst the Financial Resilience reserve is intended to support the Council MTFS and mitigate the budget gap identified; it should not be utilised on an ongoing basis to balance the budget.

5. 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2025/26 TO 2028/29

- 5.1 As set out in section 2 of this report, a significant budget gap was identified in the February 2023 and February 2024 MTFS forecasts. The financial position over the medium-term remain challenging and uncertain. It is widely expected that reforms to local government finance, originally due in 2020/21 but delayed several times already, will result in a substantial reduction in the Council's funding from central Government. The timing of these reforms remains uncertain with the assumption in the MTFS that these reforms will be delayed further and not implemented until 2026/27.

Financial Sustainability

- 5.2 Ensuring financial sustainability is one if not the key issue facing all local authorities currently. Reductions in the core long-term funding Councils have received over the last decade, continued uncertainty around the timing and impact of proposed local government finance reforms (previously referred to as the Fair Funding Review), and the impact of higher levels of inflation and interest rates all contribute to the pressure on the Council's continued financial sustainability position.



- 5.3** For the Council to meet its legal obligation to provide statutory services and to support the priorities as set out in the Council Plan, financial sustainability must be maintained over the MTFS period.
- 5.4** There are a range of safeguards in place that help to prevent local authorities overcommitting themselves financially. These include:
- Balanced Budget requirement: England, Sections 31A, 42A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended.
 - Chief Finance Officer (CFO) duty to report on robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves (under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003) when the authority is considering its budget requirement.
 - Requirements of the Prudential Code
- 5.5** These requirements are reinforced by Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 which requires the CFO to report to all the authority's councillors if there is or is likely to be unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget. This would include situations where reserves have become seriously depleted, and it is forecast that the authority will not have the resources to meet its expenditure in a particular financial year.
- 5.6** Paragraphs 2.6 to 2.8 of this report outlined the wider sector position regarding Section 114 notices and authorities in financial difficulty. It is important that members understand the legal framework which support local authority budget setting and financial sustainability.

Publica Review

- 5.7** Following reports from Human Engine (November 2023) and Local Partnerships (March 2024), Council approved the Detailed Transition Plan ("DTP") report at its meeting on 31 July 2024. This set out the process that would be followed to return the majority of services to the Council with an initial transfer of services taking place on 01 November 2024.
- 5.8** The DTP and covering report provided members with an initial estimate of additional cost of Phase I (enduring impact) and the one-off costs (provision for redundancy).
- 5.9** These cost estimates have been updated for this report but should be treated with a degree of caution – they are estimates at the current time and will vary as appointments are made to new roles within the council.
- 5.10** The table and Waterfall chart below provides members with a reconciliation between the financial implications set out in the July 2024 DTP and those included in the MTFS update included within this report.



Reconciliation of movement in additional cost	July 2024 DTP (£'000)	November 2024 update (£'000)	Change (£'000)
Phase 1 Baseline Cost	3,674	3,616	(58)
Sharing + Pension Impact	326	318	(8)
New Roles	553	619	66
New Model Total	4,553	4,553	0
Publica Savings (Direct)	(240)	(240)	0
Indirect Savings	(283)	(282)	1
Enduring Impact	4,030	4,031	1
Indicative Annual Increase / (Decrease)	356	415	59

5.11 The main changes between July 2024 and the November 2024 estimate are:

- Additional Communications Team post [+£73k].
- Reduction in Development Management and Forward Planning estimate [-£7k]
- Reduction in estimate of Director and Executive Assistant roles [-£3k]
- Other minor changes in cost estimate [-£4k]

5.12 It should be noted that these cost estimates only cover Phase 1 of the DTP. No estimate has been included in the MTFS for Phase 2. Proposals for the next phase are at a very early stage and will require extensive due diligence before any decision is taken. This is in-line with the approach taken with Phase 1 and is vital to ensure the Council is able to remain financially sustainable given the likely cost increase that will result from Phase 2.

5.13 It is important to note that the gross increase in cost of Phase 1 (£0.937m in a full year) was net of cost reductions of £0.522m associated with changes made to the Publica management structure (giving the net cost estimate of £0.415m). Elements of the new posts (shown in the waterfall) could be considered as one-off changes to the Council's structure and matched by comparable reductions in the Publica contract sum. The associated cost reductions have been front-loaded and it is not anticipated that similar cost reductions would be realised in Phase 2.

5.14 In terms of one-off costs, paragraph 5.10 of the CTP covering report included the following: *"A prudent estimate would be for the Council to anticipate around £0.300m of redundancy and associated costs which allows for a level of mitigation. This represents an equal one-third share of the costs with future salary savings allocated on the same basis."*

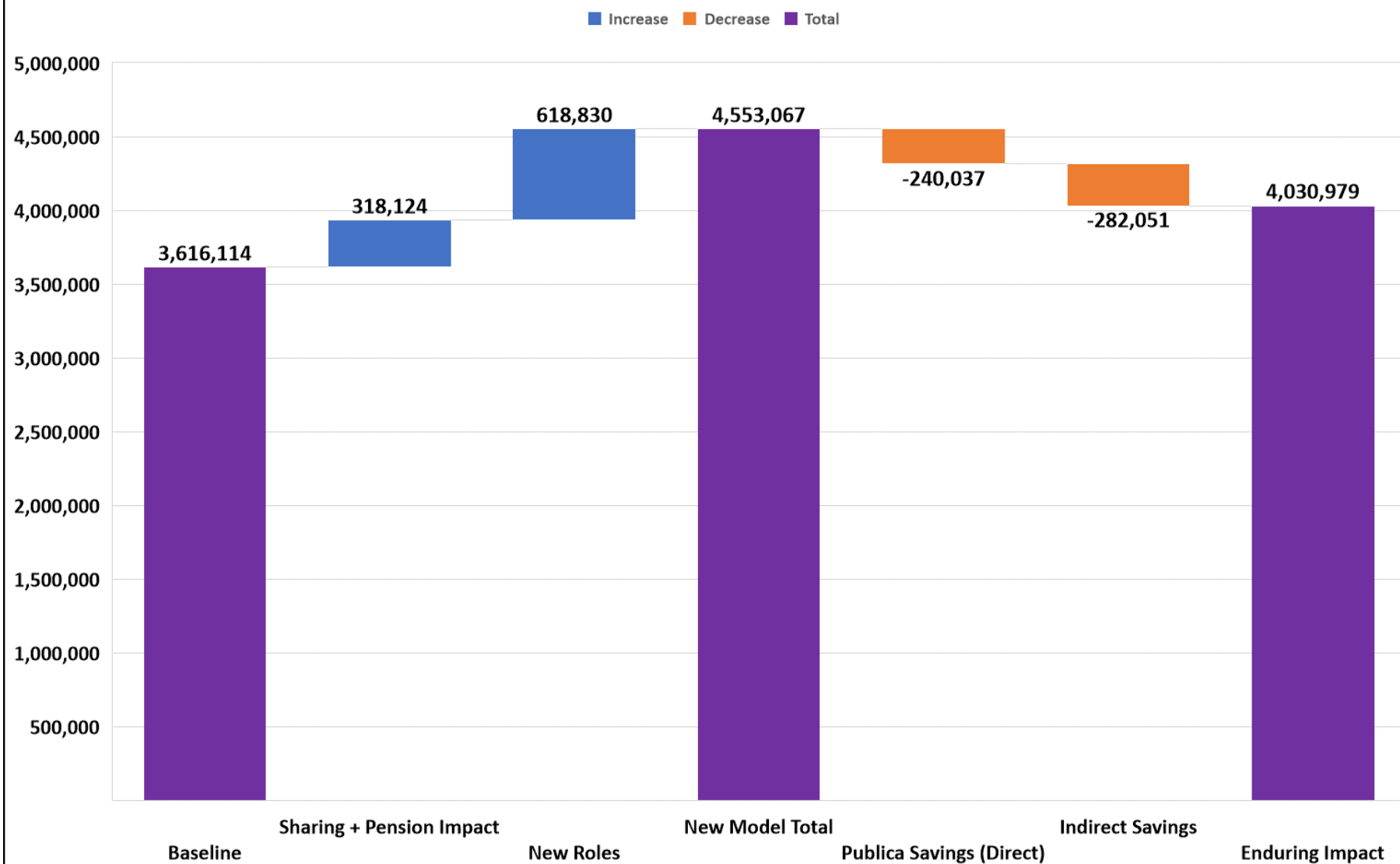
5.15 The current estimate for the Council's share of redundancy and pension strain costs is £0.274m and within the amount set aside within the Financial Resilience reserve.



- 5.16** Members have received updates in the quarterly financial performance reports on the costs associated with the Transition Programme. The table below provides an update on costs incurred up to Q2 2024/25 (i.e. 30 September 2024) and a forecast for the remainder of the Phase I period (i.e. to 31 March 2025). The forecast to the end of the year indicates that £0.274m of the £0.500m set aside to support the transition programme will have been utilised on Phase I preparation and delivery.
- 5.17** The forecast for the Transition Programme includes ‘soft’ commitments (i.e. principal of expenditure has been agreed but timing and duration of spend not yet confirmed) for additional support for the areas below. The forecast includes estimates for 2025/26 expenditure:
- Finance Business Partnering
 - Project Management Support (Programme Manager)
 - HR Payroll Support
 - Strategic HR support (External oversight and critical friend review of TUPE)



PHASE 1: Baseline Movements Reconciliation (All Business Areas)





Item	Description	2023/24 Financial Year		2024/25 Financial Year			TOTAL Estimate	CDC Share (£)
		2023/24 Actual (£)	2023/24 CDC Share (£)	2024/25 Actuals to Q2 (£)	2024/25 Forecast (£)	2024/25 CDC Share (£)		
Programme Director	Interim Programme Director (AP) sourced through Tile Hill	56,950	18,983	119,305	92,664	70,656	268,919	89,640
External Legal advice	External Legal advice to support transition of service from Publica to Councils including TUPE advice	14,327	4,776	17,793	27,880	15,224	60,000	20,000
Human Engine Report	Consultancy and support provided July to October 2023	26,400	6,600	0	0	0	26,400	6,600
Local Partnerships	20 days consultancy in 2023/24 - LGA funded	0	0	0	0	0		
Local Partnerships	Additional support outside of the LGA-funded consultancy	0	0	0	0	0		
Support to Councils	Additional Finance Business Partner support	0	0	0	29,072	14,536	116,288	58,144
Programme Office	Programme Manager Nov-March	0	0	0	0	0	42,000	14,000
Programme Office	Backfill costs for Finance Business Partner role	8,925	2,975	59,805	68,715	42,840	137,445	45,815
Programme Office	HR Payroll Support	0	0	0	8,596	2,865	17,192	5,731
Programme Office	External oversight and critical friend review of TUPE conversations and processes	0	0	0	20,000	0	20,000	6,667
Programme Office	Backfill costs for HR Business Partner role	0	0	17,224	23,955	13,726	82,357	27,452
		106,602	33,334	214,127	270,882	159,848	770,601	274,048



Budget pressures included in the MTFS.

5.18 Table 2 below includes the budget pressures that have been included in the draft revenue budget and MTFS.

Table 2 – Budget Pressures

Item & Summary	2025/26 (£'000)	2026/27 (£'000)	2027/28 (£'000)	2028/29 (£'000)
Budget Pressures				
2024/25 External Audit scale fee increase (10%)	14	14	14	14
Spacehive Platform Fee (Crowdfund Cotswold)	30	30	30	0
Asset Management - Rental Income	8	8	8	8
TOTAL	52	52	52	22

- **Commercial Property Income:** reduced rental income expectations and void costs forecast for 2025/26 with anticipation of asset disposals in future years as part of the emerging Asset Management Strategy.
- **External Audit Scale Fees:** the external audit scale fee was increased by 151% for the new PSAA-led contracts from April 2024. This major reset in the scale fee had been widely expected owing to the current audit backlog and the wider challenges in wider audit market. A further increase of 10% for April 2025 is expected based on draft information from PSAA.
- **Income pressures:** an indicative budget pressure is included in the draft revenue budget and MTFS to address the income shortfall on specific fees and charges. The level of the adjustment to income budgets will be reviewed to ensure compensating expenditure adjustments are considered to bring the service budget back in line.

Savings included in the MTFS update

5.19 The table below sets out the ongoing cost reduction and income generation items from the February 2024 MTFS. Further work will be undertaken over the budget setting process to refine existing items and to consider additional items as they are identified through the detailed review of Publica and Ubico service delivery budgets, and through the Cabinet Transform Working Group.



Table 3 – Savings items included in the MTFS

Savings (b/f from Feb 2024 MTFS)	2025/26 (£'000)	2026/27 (£'000)	2027/28 (£'000)	2028/29 (£'000)
<u>Corporate Savings</u>				
LGPS - Secondary Rate (PIA) (Budget savings)	(196)	(196)	(196)	(196)
<u>Other Expenditure Savings</u>				
Ubico - Rezoning of Rounds	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
<u>Fees & Charges</u>				
Car Parking Fees	(120)	(210)	(293)	(394)
Garden Waste - fee increase	(115)	(231)	(348)	(465)
TOTAL	(931)	(1,137)	(1,338)	(1,555)

5.20 The savings proposals in table above have been included in the draft revenue budget and MTFS.

- **Car Park Tariffs, Pay and Display:** an annual inflationary uplift was included from 2025/26 in the February 2024 MTFS. The figures in the table above indicate the additional income that would arise from the annual uplift but will need to be carefully modelled before any proposals come forward to take into account performance in 2024/25 following the introduction of new tariffs and Sunday Charging.
- **Garden Waste Fee, Recovery of costs:** an annual £5 increase in the Garden Waste fee was included from 2025/26 in the February 2024 MTFS. This will need to be reviewed against any corresponding change in service costs from Ubico. The estimate of income is based on the number of existing subscribers and maintains the discount in the fee offered to residents in receipt of Local Council Tax Support.
- **Waste & Recycling Collections:** The full-year impact of the review of all the waste and recycling rounds across the district is confirmed at £0.500m.

Development of credible/robust savings proposals/CTWG

5.21 An important part of the approach to maintaining financial sustainability will be to continue to deliver efficiencies and savings over the coming years. The Council Plan and services must be delivered within the overall resource envelope available to the Council thereby reducing reliance on earmarked reserves to support the budget.

5.22 The level of savings included in the February 2024 MTFS, and the update set out in this report does not meet the budget gap identified. The Financial Resilience reserve is being used to balance the budget in the short-term and will be depleted over the MTFS period leading to a potential deficit position by 2026/27. The Council will need to address the scale of the budget gap to ensure a balanced budget can be set for 2025/26 and beyond. The position set out in



this report is by no means complete and the budget gap may change due to assumptions being updated.

- 5.23** The CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code) is designed to support good practice in financial management and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. The FM Code is based on a series of principles supported by specific standards which are considered necessary to provide the strong foundation to
- financially manage the short, medium, and long-term finances of a local authority
 - manage financial resilience to meet unforeseen demands on services.
 - manage unexpected shocks in their financial circumstances.
- 5.24** A key element of demonstrating financial sustainability and compliance with the FM Code is for the Council to ensure suitable mechanisms are in place around savings so that they are identified, agreed, planned, implemented, and achieved. This will help to ensure the funding gap identified within the MTFS is addressed in a planned and managed way.
- 5.25** The Cabinet Transform Working Group (CTWG) was established in March 2023 to provide a robust approach to addressing the budget gap identified over the MTFS period. The programme established a revised process for how transformation projects and savings are identified, evaluated, and approved, with clearer reporting and monitoring and governance arrangements. The group have met several times during the year and are reviewing a number of options.
- 5.26** Given the scale of the financial challenge the Council is facing, a longer-term view has been taken on the development of the refreshed Savings and Transformation plans. This will help ensure adequate cost reductions are identified, scoped, and planned over the MTFS period. Savings ideas will be grouped by workstream and indicate outcomes expected in terms of financial and service benefits and set challenging but achievable action plans for delivery by agreed periods.
- 5.27** These will be brought forward over the coming months once an action plan for each major workstream has been developed. Project Management support and external support (e.g. APSE, LGA) may be required on individual lines of enquiry to ensure options are fully appraised prior to inclusion in the programme.
- 5.28** This will require careful consideration of the resources required to support and deliver a more comprehensive medium-term programme where service delivery responsibility is evolving.
- 5.29** Subject to further due diligence, it is anticipated that a draft programme will be included in the February 2025 MTFS with a clear delivery plan for each year. However, the programme will need to be flexible and agile to meet the financial challenge and be capable of scaling up or down to meet any emerging requirement.



Scenarios/Modelling

- 5.30 The MTFS update is based on the most credible expenditure, income and funding position and sets out the resulting budget gap with additional action required over the coming months to mitigate the position for 2025/26 and over the MTFS period.
- 5.31 With the level of uncertainty, a number of scenarios have been developed to model the impact and sensitivity on distinct levels of inflationary pressures, cost reduction measure, and income/funding options. This enhances the financial planning process and supports the Council's continued financial sustainability priority, providing a degree of flexibility over the coming months as the MTFS is reviewed and refined in advance of the formal approval of the budget and MTFS by Council in February 2025.
- 5.32 As set out in the external auditor's Annual Report ([External Auditor's Annual Report, Audit and Governance Committee 25 July 2023](#)) the Council faces a lack of funding certainty and external economic factors which could lead to different financial scenarios.
- 5.33 The table below sets out the key characteristics of the scenarios that will be utilised in the development of the February 2025 MTFS.
- 5.34 The scenarios modelled are reasonable current/balanced (i.e., most credible), worst case (pessimistic), mid-case, and optimum financial outcome (best/optimistic).
- 5.35 The three alternative scenarios broadly differ from the current scenario as follows:
- **Inflation:** + or – 1.0% on Pay Award (being the single largest contributor to inflationary pressures)
 - **Council Tax:** All scenarios assume Council Tax is increased by £5 per annum and the taxbase increases by 1%.
 - **Local Government finance reforms:** assumption these are delayed until 2026/27 with short-term (3 years) transitional protection.
 - **Business Rates Income:** current scenario assumes £5.0m of retained business rates income in 2024/25 and 2025/26. Best case assumes £5.0m in 2024/25 and £5.1m in 2025/26. Worst case assumes £4.0m in 2024/25 and 2025/26. All scenarios assume a reduction to the baseline funding level (£2.3m) from 2026/27.
 - **Savings:** Scenarios will assume additional savings targets for ranging from £0.500m to £2.250m over the MTFS period.
 - **Other:** funding forecasts based on the latest Pixel MTFP Model that will be available following the publication of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Draft MTFS

- 5.36 The draft MTFS shown in Table 4 and Annex A is based on the most credible assumptions and forecasts of income and expenditure over the next 4 years. The uncertainty around the timing and impact of local government finance reforms makes it difficult to estimate with



certainty the likely budget gap that the Council will need to close by 2026/27. However, whilst this outcome is uncertain, there is a need for the Council to ensure financial sustainability is maintained over the MTFs period and develop a robust and balanced savings and transformation plan to close the forecast budget gap.

- 5.37** It is therefore appropriate for the Council to consider a revenue budget position over the next two financial years that delivers a surplus to ensure the Financial Resilience reserve is replenished to mitigate the financial position forecast from 2026/27.
- 5.38** The Financial Resilience reserve was relied upon in 2022/23 and 2023/24 to balance the budget (£2.103m) which was not sustainable over the medium-term. Council approved the motion in November 2023 recognising that it could not continue to use reserves to balance its revenue budget. The 2024/25 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy were prepared on the basis that planned operating surpluses in 2024/25 and 2025/26 were transferred to the Financial Resilience Reserve.
- 5.39** The draft MTFs shows a revised moderate surplus of £0.343m in 2024/25 with a deficit of £0.233m in 2025/26. Although this remains a positive outcome at this stage of the budget setting cycle, consideration should be given to options to increase the projected surplus.

Table 4 – Draft MTFs

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	Latest				
Underlying Budget Gap - November 2024	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)
Service Revenue Expenditure	16,584	16,584	16,584	16,584	16,584
Non-Service Expenditure & Income	(699)	(1,378)	(923)	(849)	(367)
Inflation Provision		629	1,220	1,825	2,454
Budget Pressures	0	52	0	0	0
Publica Review Phase 1	174	417	469	469	469
Technical Adjustments					
Draft Net Revenue Budget (Before Savings)	16,060	16,304	17,350	18,029	19,139
TOTAL Funding	(15,577)	(15,153)	(13,852)	(12,479)	(11,211)
Underlying Budget Gap	482	1,151	3,498	5,550	7,928
Savings identified					
LGPS		(196)	(196)	(196)	(196)
Ubico - rezoning of Waste & Recycling	(375)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
Car Park fees		(120)	(210)	(293)	(394)
Garden Waste fee - cost recovery		(115)	(231)	(348)	(465)
Other Savings	(450)				
Revised Budget Gap / (Surplus)	(343)	220	2,361	4,213	6,374
				6,451	12,825



Corporate Plan 2024-2028

- 5.40** A new Corporate Plan covering the period 2024-2028 was adopted by Council at their meeting on 24 January 2024. The MTFs and Corporate planning process are aligned to ensure adequate resources are available to support the Corporate Plan priorities whilst maintaining financial sustainability over the plan period.

Balances and Reserves Strategy

- 5.41** A review of the Reserves and Balances strategy will be undertaken to consider the adequacy of reserves considering the continued financial risks faced by the Council. The review will consider guidance published under CIPFA Bulletin 13: Local Authority Reserves and Balances (March 2023).
- 5.42** The Council's financial position is supported by its balances and reserves. The requirement for financial reserves is acknowledged in statute. Sections 31A, 32 42A and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require billing and precepting authorities in England and Wales to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement.
- 5.43** The Council has a General Fund balance and number of earmarked reserves to support delivery of key priorities and financial sustainability.
- 5.44** The General Fund Balance will need to be maintained at a risk-assessed minimum level (currently £1.760m). The Financial Resilience Reserve balance will need to be held at a level that mitigates short-term fluctuations in income and expenditure (e.g., Business Rates, Government funding changes).
- 5.45** These reserves should not be utilised to fund normal, on-going service provision.
- 5.46** The Council holds earmarked reserves to support the priorities included in the Corporate Plan. This funding is available for investment in initiatives which support delivery against these priorities.
- 5.47** The table below sets out the closing position on the General Fund balance and earmarked reserves for 2023/24.



Table 5 – Balances/Reserves

	Closing Balance 31/03/2024	Estimated Balance 31/03/2025	Estimated Balance 31/03/2026	Estimated Balance 31/03/2027	Estimated Balance 31/03/2028	Estimated Balance 31/03/2029
Estimated Reserve balance over MTFS period	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)	(£'000)
General Fund	(1,760)	(1,760)	(1,760)	(1,760)	(1,760)	(1,760)
Council Priorities						
Council Priorities Fund - Allocated (Table X)	(151)	(151)	(151)	(151)	(151)	(151)
Council Priorities Fund - Unallocated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Council Priority: Transformation and Change	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
Council Priority: Publica Review	(471)	(311)	0	0	0	0
Council Priority: Climate Emergency	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)	(250)
Council Priority: Housing Delivery	(750)	(750)	(750)	(750)	(750)	(750)
Council Priority: Local Plan	(908)	(908)	(908)	(908)	(908)	(908)
Council Priority: Regeneration/Infrastructure	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
Financial Resilience Reserve	(2,512)	(2,854)	(2,621)	(247)		
Financial Resilience Reserve - shortfall (indicative)					3,979	10,336
Risk Mitigation	(550)	(550)	(550)	(550)	(550)	(550)
Other Revenue reserves	(2,237)	(2,094)	(2,094)	(2,094)	(2,094)	(2,094)
Subtotal Earmarked Reserves	(8,228)	(8,268)	(7,724)	(5,350)	(1,124)	5,233
TOTAL GF Balance + Earmarked Reserves	(9,988)	(10,028)	(9,484)	(7,110)	(2,884)	3,473

6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FINANCING

- 6.1** The Council's Capital Strategy and Capital Programme are considered over a five-year period. The Strategy provides the framework for the Council's capital expenditure and financing plans to ensure they are affordable, prudent, and sustainable over the longer-term.
- 6.2** The Council set out its Capital Programme for the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 based on the principles of the current Capital Strategy and was approved by Council at their meeting on 21 February 2024.
- 6.3** As reported in the 2024/25 Outturn report, slippage of £1.513m has been included in the Capital Programme for 2024/25 giving a revised budget of £8.326m, as shown in Table 6. The capital programme for 2025/26 to 2027/28 remains unchanged. Total expenditure decreases to £1.328m in 2025/26, increases to £6.651m in 2026/27, with an estimate of £2.720m for 2027/28.



Table 6 – Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28

Capital Programme	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 Budget (£'000)	2026/27 Budget (£'000)	2027/28 Budget (£'000)	TOTAL Budget (£'000)
Leisure & Communities	1,310	50	550	50	1,960
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing	3,351	700	700	700	5,451
Environment	2,458	428	5,251	1,820	9,957
ICT, Change and Customer Services	350	150	150	150	800
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	752	0	0	0	752
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	134	0	0	0	134
Land, Legal and Property	880	0	0	0	880
Transformation and Investment	274	0	0	0	274
	9,509	1,328	6,651	2,720	20,208

6.4 The capital programme is focussed on delivering against the Council’s key priorities, with further schemes coming forward to on enhancing the delivery of core services through improvement and enhancement of assets. A review of the programme will be undertaken as part of the budget setting process and will be focussed on

- Affordability and deliverability of schemes
- Current capital financing resources and potential capital receipts arising from the Asset Management Strategy
- Actions agreed in response to the financial sustainability improvement recommendations.

Capital Financing

6.5 As set out in the *2024/25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy* report, the Council’s capital expenditure has up until the current financial year been predominantly financed from capital receipts. As these are forecast to deplete over the capital programme period the Council will need to undertake prudential borrowing to support future capital expenditure plans. Other sources of finance support the capital programme, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council’s own resources (revenue, reserves, and capital receipts).

6.6 The level of prudential borrowing included in the capital financing statement reflects the financing available in the revenue budget, capital receipts align with forecasts and grant funding and other contributions are based on already notified allocations or best estimates at the time of preparation. If additional resources become available, projects that meet the Council’s strategic capital objectives will be brought forward for approval.



Table 7 – Capital Financing 2024/25 to 2027/28

Capital Financing Statement	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 Budget (£'000)	2026/27 Budget (£'000)	2027/28 Budget (£'000)	TOTAL Budget (£'000)
Capital receipts	6,267	628	1,780	2,020	10,695
Capital Grants and Contributions	2,830	700	700	700	4,930
Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO)	0	0	0	0	0
Community Municipal Investments (CMI)	412	0	0	0	412
Prudential Borrowing	0	0	4,171	0	4,171
	9,509	1,328	6,651	2,720	20,208

6.7 The Capital Financing position will be reviewed by the s151 Officer during the year as expenditure forecasts are updated to ensure a balanced use of capital resources and mitigation of current and future interest rates.

7. RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

7.1 There are a number of financial risks that the Council will face over the medium-term. The 2024/25 Budget and the MTFs will need to be prepared with consideration of these risks, but as with any forecast, an inherent level of risk will remain.

7.2 The main risk is around the nature and scope of local government funding from the Government from 2026/27. The implementation of the Fair Funding Review and Business Rates changes has already been delayed (originally due from April 2020) and is assumed to be delayed until April 2026. The forecast impact on District Councils is likely to be significant as resources are moved around Local Government to recognise Social Care cost pressures.

7.3 It is difficult to estimate with certainty the impact on Cotswold. Fundamental changes to the way in which each Council's needs are assessed and funded are difficult to model despite some engagement from Government with local authorities. Therefore, considerable risk and uncertainty remains in the estimates for 2026/27 and beyond.

7.4 However, an initial estimate of a near 50% reduction in the level of retained business rates income has been included in the MTFs assumptions from 2026/27 (reduction from £5.0m to £2.5m). An estimate has been made around transitional arrangements, but these are not based on any indication or commitment from the Government but have been based on financial modelling provided by Pixel including a view on damping (transitional arrangements upon implementation of the new distribution methodology to avoid significant step-changes, shocks or disruption to stable financial planning and service delivery).



- 7.5** Further risks remain in terms of the wider economic environment – interest rates and inflation along with projections for UK Growth over the MTFS period will have an influence on the Council’s budget preparation and MTFS.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1** Budget Consultation will take place as part of the wider engagement with residents. As set out in the LGA Must know document:

“Formal consultation on the budget needs to be legally compliant, and that includes taking account of the government’s statutory guidance on best value. Section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999 states that councils must consult taxpayers, service users and other interested persons when deciding how to fulfil their Best Value duty. Although there is no specific requirement to consult widely on the budget, (the council must consult with non-domestic rates payers on its plans for expenditure under Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992), it is an important element of achieving best value and many councils take the opportunity of setting the budget to meet their statutory best value responsibility”

- 8.2** Consultation provides members with the opportunity to engage with residents on the Council’s financial position (in particular the size and scale of the financial challenge), what it will need to do to address this, and the priorities for the coming year.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1** The report sets out the Council’s financial prospects for 2025/26. Final budget proposals, including the outcome from the Local Government Finance Settlement, will be presented to the Cabinet and debated at Council during February 2025.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** Save for any legal duties and requirements set out in the body of the report there are no further legal implications arising directly from the recommendations and the report.



12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 12.1** There are no direct implications arising from this result. The equalities impact of policy change or through the implementation of projects referred to in this report will be considered in subsequent reports to the Cabinet or Council as appropriate.

13. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1** None

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1** None
(END)

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Medium Term Finance Strategy UPDATE - 2024/25 to 2028/29

Medium Term Financial Strategy	MTFS Period					
	2024/25 (£'000)	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 (£'000)	2026/27 (£'000)	2027/28 (£'000)	2028/29 (£'000)
Net Service Expenditure Budgets						
Environmental and Regulatory Services	485	620	620	620	620	620
Business Support Services - Finance, HR, Procurement	1,136	1,285	1,285	1,285	1,285	1,285
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,359	2,423	2,423	2,423	2,423	2,423
Land, Legal & Property	945	829	829	829	829	829
Publica Support to CEO	131	139	139	139	139	139
Revenues & Housing Support	615	930	930	930	930	930
Environmental Services	4,830	4,496	4,496	4,496	4,496	4,496
Leisure & Communities	1,918	2,342	2,342	2,342	2,342	2,342
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,947	1,653	1,653	1,653	1,653	1,653
Democratic Services	1,095	1,176	1,176	1,176	1,176	1,176
Retained Services	2,034	2,469	2,469	2,469	2,469	2,469
Reversal of Accounting Adjustments	(1,636)	(1,778)	(1,778)	(1,778)	(1,778)	(1,778)
Net Service Revenue Expenditure	15,858	16,584	16,584	16,584	16,584	16,584
Corporate Items/Non Service Income & Expenditure						
Non Service Income & Expenditure	111	108	108	108	108	108
Risk and Contract Contingency	200	200	200	200	200	200
Interest Payable	9	9	7	99	173	147
Interest Receivable	(1,346)	(1,333)	(1,001)	(495)	(495)	(495)
Minimum Revenue Provision	12	12	35	35	35	543
Transfers to/(from) earmarked reserves						
Net Transfer from Earmarked Reserves	(871)	(871)	(871)	(871)	(871)	(871)
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO)	200	0	0	0	0	0
2024/25 Budget Adj - reversal of RCCO	(200)	0	0	0	0	0
Additional Transfer to Earmarked Reserve - TM Risk	100	100	33	0	0	0
Transfer to Business Rates Risk Reserve	959	959	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Workforce Planning Reserve	118	118	112	0	0	0
Reserve adjs Non-Estab [BAL100/B8240]	170	0	0	0	0	0
Adjusted Budget	(539)	(699)	(1,378)	(923)	(849)	(367)
Contract Inflation	1,200	0	489	955	1,431	1,932
Pay Inflation	68	0	140	265	394	521
Energy Cost Inflation	(150)	0	0	0	0	0
Adjusted MTFS Position	1,117	0	629	1,220	1,825	2,454
Service + Corporate Items	16,437	15,886	15,835	16,881	17,560	18,671
Budget Pressures and Growth						
Budget Pressures	584	174	469	469	469	439
Technical Adjustments	77	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotal	660	174	469	469	469	439
Savings and Transformation Plan						
Contract Savings	(150)	(150)	0	0	0	0
Fees and Charges	(777)	0	(235)	(441)	(642)	(859)
Corporate Savings	(196)	0	(196)	(196)	(196)	(196)
Expenditure Savings	(913)	(675)	(500)	(500)	(500)	(500)
Subtotal	(2,036)	(825)	(931)	(1,137)	(1,338)	(1,555)
Net (Savings) or Growth	(1,375)	(651)	(462)	(669)	(869)	(1,116)
Draft Net Revenue Budget	15,061	15,235	15,374	16,213	16,692	17,555

Medium Term Finance Strategy UPDATE - 2024/25 to 2028/29

Medium Term Financial Strategy	MTFS Period					
	2024/25 (£'000)	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 (£'000)	2026/27 (£'000)	2027/28 (£'000)	2028/29 (£'000)
Draft Net Revenue Budget	15,061	15,235	15,374	16,213	16,692	17,555
Funded by:						
Council Tax	(6,597)	(6,597)	(6,879)	(7,166)	(7,459)	(7,756)
Business Rates Retention - Local share of retained rates	(5,014)	(5,014)	(5,000)	(2,527)	(2,660)	(2,799)
Returned Business Rates Retention System funding	0	0	0	(237)	(237)	(237)
Returned Multiplier Cap Compensation funding	0	0	0	(453)	(453)	(453)
Rural Services Delivery Grant	(818)	(818)	(818)	(818)	(818)	(818)
Funding Guarantee (replaced Lower Tier Services Grant)	(2,231)	(2,231)	(2,298)	0	0	0
Services Grant	(13)	(13)	(12)	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus	(287)	(287)	0	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant / (Negative RSG)	(144)	(144)	(146)	1,723	1,742	1,764
Damping (10% floor in funding reduction assumed)	0	0	0	(4,373)	(2,595)	(911)
Collection Fund - Council Tax (Surplus) / Deficit	(28)	(28)	0	0	0	0
Collection Fund - Business Rates (Surplus) / Deficit	(445)	(445)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL Funding	(15,577)	(15,577)	(15,153)	(13,852)	(12,479)	(11,211)
Budget Gap / (Surplus)	(516)	(343)	220	2,361	4,213	6,344

Capital Programme & Capital Financing Statement 2022/23 to 2026/27

	2024/25 Budget (£'000)	Slippage (£'000)	Adjs (£'000)	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 Budget (£'000)	2026/27 Budget (£'000)	2027/28 Budget (£'000)	TOTAL Budget (£'000)
Capital Programme								
Leisure & Communities	1,310	0	0	1,310	50	550	50	1,960
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing	2,289	262	800	3,351	700	700	700	5,451
Environment	1,857	218	383	2,458	428	5,251	1,820	9,957
ICT, Change and Customer Services	350	0	0	350	150	150	150	800
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	573	179	0	752	0	0	0	752
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	134	0	0	134	0	0	0	134
Land, Legal and Property	300	580	0	880	0	0	0	880
Transformation and Investment	0	274	0	274	0	0	0	274
	6,813	1,513	1,183	9,509	1,328	6,651	2,720	20,208

	2024/25 Budget (£'000)	Slippage (£'000)	Adjs (£'000)	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 Budget (£'000)	2026/27 Budget (£'000)	2027/28 Budget (£'000)	TOTAL Budget (£'000)
Capital Financing Statement								
Capital receipts	5,006	1,070	192	6,267	628	1,780	2,020	10,695
Capital Grants and Contributions	1,732	106	992	2,830	700	700	700	4,930
Earmarked Reserves	0	0		0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO)	0	0		0	0	0	0	0
Community Municipal Investments (CMI)	75	337		412	0	0	0	412
Prudential Borrowing	0	0		0	0	4,171	0	4,171
	6,813	1,513	1,183	9,509	1,328	6,651	2,720	20,208

Capital Programme & Capital Financing Statement 2022/23 to 2026/27

Capital Programme by Service Area	2024/25 Budget (£'000)	Slippage (£'000)	Adjs (£'000)	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 Budget (£'000)	2026/27 Budget (£'000)	2027/28 Budget (£'000)	TOTAL Budget (£'000)
Leisure and Communities								
Replacement Leisure Equipment	0	0		0	0	500	0	500
Investment in Leisure Centres	1,150	0		1,150	0	0	0	1,150
CLC Pool Works	110	0		110	0	0	0	110
Crowdfund Cotswold	50	0		50	50	50	50	200
	1,310	0	0	1,310	50	550	50	1,960
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing								
Private Sector Housing Renewal Grant (DFG)	700		800	1,500	700	700	700	3,600
Affordable Housing - Davies Road MiM (S106)	291			291	0	0	0	291
Cottsway Housing Association Loan	698	142		840	0	0	0	840
Bromford Joint Venture Partnership	600	120		720	0	0	0	720
	2,289	262	800	3,351	700	700	700	5,451
Environment								
Waste & Recycling receptacles	80			80	80	80	80	320
Pay and display machines - replacement programm	0			0	125	0	0	125
Provision for financing of Ubico Vehicles	1,574	86		1,660	223	5,171	1,740	8,794
In cab technology (Street Cleaning)	60			60	0	0	0	60
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	109	79		188	0	0	0	188
Electric Vehicle Charging Points - ORCS Grant			383	383	0	0	0	383
Public Toilets - Card Payment (bc)	34			34	0	0	0	34
Changing Places Toilets	0	53		53	0	0	0	53
	1,857	218	383	2,458	428	5,251	1,820	9,957

Capital Programme & Capital Financing Statement 2022/23 to 2026/27

Capital Programme by Service Area	2024/25 Budget (£'000)	Slippage (£'000)	Adjs (£'000)	REV 2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 Budget (£'000)	2026/27 Budget (£'000)	2027/28 Budget (£'000)	TOTAL Budget (£'000)
ICT, Change and Customer Services								
ICT Capital	150			150	150	150	150	600
Planning Documents and Scanning Solution	200			200	0	0	0	200
	350	0	0	350	150	150	150	800
UK Rural Prosperity Fund Projects	573	179		752	0	0	0	752
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	134			134	0	0	0	134
Land, Legal and Property								
Trinity Road Carbon Efficiency Works	0	370		370	0	0	0	370
Trinity Road Roof Repairs	0	13		13	0	0	0	13
Asset Management Strategy	300	197		497	0	0	0	497
	300	580	0	880	0	0	0	880
Transformation and Investment								
Tetbury Homeless Property (Cabinet May 2022)	0			0	0	0	0	0
Trinity Road Agile Working (Council March 2022)	0	274		274	0	0	0	274
	0	274	0	274	0	0	0	274
TOTAL Capital Programme	6,813	1,513	1,183	9,509	1,328	6,651	2,720	20,208

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