

Corporate Plan 2025-2028

Foreword

Welcome to the 2025 refresh of Cotswold District Council's Corporate Plan.

In the last year, we've made great progress across a number of key projects and ambitions – and I'm proud of everything we've achieved. Against the backdrop of ongoing financial pressures – which are impacting every council in the country – we have delivered hundreds of genuinely affordable homes and brought more services back in-house to drive greater responsiveness and accountability.

We have significantly improved the scores which measure our response to tackling climate change. We have also generated funding to the tune of £1.2million for dozens of community projects, renewed a Green Economic Growth Strategy and supported economic development through management of two prosperity funds.

That's on top of keeping our promise to deliver good services in waste and recycling, planning, licensing and more.

But anyone reading this will know all too well that life doesn't stand still, and so it's sensible that we review the council's priorities to ensure that they're keeping pace with a changing world.

As you'll note reading through this document - by and large, our priorities remain the same. But we have given due consideration to how we build on recent success. And while this plan represents evolution not revolution, significant new challenges have emerged in the last year – prompting us to turn up the dial in certain areas, as well as introduce a new priority.

Central government has more than doubled the number of new houses that the district is expected to deliver with immediate effect. For a district like ours, where 80 per cent of the land is designated as National Landscape and therefore given the strongest protection against development, finding suitable locations for 1,000 new homes per year is problematic. We need more affordable homes, but we also need sustainable communities.

The government has also asked Cotswold District Council and neighbouring authorities in Gloucestershire to develop proposals for big changes to local government, which would abolish county and district councils, replacing them with one or two unitary authorities. Both of these critical changes present substantial challenge for the council.

As such, to balance the need we have in the district for more affordable homes and to support further economic growth, while ensuring housing development is proportionate and sustainable, we are forging ahead with a full update to our Local Plan, and reasserting control of the district's destiny when it comes to development.

This initiative cuts across almost all of our core priorities and will be a central focus in the coming year.

We have also added a new priority: Preparing for the future. This will ensure that as we continue to deliver against our priorities for residents *now*, we leave a lasting legacy, as the council prepares to hand over the reins to a successor authority in 2028.

This evolution of our priorities is supported by a robust action plan which we believe is ambitious but achievable. I'm excited for what lies ahead, as we work - united as one community - to leave a fitting legacy for this beautiful district as it faces a new future.

Councillor Mike Every
Leader, Cotswold District Council

United We Serve: Building a lasting legacy for the Cotswolds

Our purpose, vision, priorities and values

Cotswold District Council is proud to serve the communities that reside in one of the UK's most iconic and cherished areas, a place revered around the world for its natural beauty and heritage.

Around 90,000 people call this district home, in more than 100 close-knit communities and parishes. They are the stewards of the beautiful, national landscape, hosts to its millions of annual visitors, and the key drivers for its continued economic development.

Our purpose

As a council, we exist to provide good services that meet their needs. From planning and housing, to climate action and community wellbeing, our work is rooted in improving lives, strengthening communities, and protecting the unique character of the Cotswolds.

As we approach a period of significant change in local government, we remain focused on delivering for our communities with purpose, integrity, and ambition.

This corporate strategy recognises and embraces the challenges facing the district, and sets out our vision through to 2028, when the council is expected to be replaced as part of national plans for Local Government Reorganisation.

The strategy is underpinned by an action plan that describes in detail how we will deliver against our ambitions, and leave a lasting legacy for the district.

Our vision

As we plan for the future, we are working to leave a legacy of:

- Genuinely affordable, sustainable housing
- Resilient, connected communities
- A thriving local economy
- A protected and enhanced natural environment
- Good, transparent public services

Our values:

Everything we do is built on principles of trust, confidence and transparency, listening to the needs of our community and providing good value for money. At Cotswold District Council, we:

- put our **communities first**: their priorities are our priorities
- are **one team**: working for our residents and businesses
- are **business focussed**: ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and good value for money
- are **set up for success**: to deliver against our corporate priorities

Our strategic priorities

Between now and 2028, the priorities we've set out to achieve this legacy are:

- Preparing for the future
- Delivering good services
- Responding to the climate emergency
- Delivering housing
- Supporting communities
- Supporting the economy

Our commitment

As we seek to leave a lasting legacy for a new unitary authority, we will remain flexible and responsive in a world characterised by change, steadfast in our vision to continue delivering good services while enhancing and protecting communities – ensuring they're sustainable and prosperous.

Preparing for the Future

Why is this important?

The UK government has decided that Gloucestershire should be served by a unitary local government structure; that is one or two principal councils rather than the current county and district/borough/city Councils which currently serve the county. Under Government proposals, Cotswold District Council services will transfer to a successor council in April 2028. Until then, we need to work with partners to ensure our residents' needs will be met now, and into the future.

What will we achieve?

Services will transfer seamlessly into a successor council, and continue to deliver effectively on behalf of Cotswold residents.

How will we do this?

- **Driving organisational and cultural change to be fit for the future**
- **Preparing for Local Government Reorganisation**
- **Developing our workforce**
- **Deliver a new Local Plan**

What have we done?

- We held a Town and Parish Council Summit, to ensure local councillors understand changes that are coming.
- Worked with partner councils on a programme of public engagement, the results of which will form part of a singular evidence-base that will support the development of unitary authority proposals
- Councillors and officers are collaborating counterparts at Gloucestershire councils to share information and design services, drawing on best practice within existing councils to ensure future unitary council delivery meets local needs.

Cabinet Lead quote

'The challenges that lie ahead are significant, but change brings opportunity, and I'm excited about how we plan to tackle these challenges. It's important that we work united as one community to leave a fitting legacy for this beautiful district, as it faces a new future'

Cllr Mike Evely

Delivering Good Services

Why is this important?

As a council, we exist to provide vital services to our residents, businesses and visitors. We will deliver our services both effectively and efficiently, ensuring they're designed to reflect our commitment to climate change, and best value for local taxpayers.

What will we achieve?

Our services will provide value for money and high standards. We will work with our contractors and partners, such as town and parish councils, to sustain valuable services, and help maintain the Cotswolds environment we are all proud of.

How will we do this?

- **Ensure value for money and good standards**
- **Enhance financial resilience and make best use of our assets**
- **Play our part in maintaining and enhancing the public realm**
- **Deliver a new Local Plan**

What have we done?

- In November 2024 we brought around 70 staff back in-house to the council, maximising responsiveness and democratic accountability.
- The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Peer Review confirmed improved performance, with the Council no longer at risk of designation. A 13-point action plan is being implemented, including new enforcement processes and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements.
- the council received strong and encouraging feedback from the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review. The review team recognised the council's commitment to improvement, highlighting significant progress since the original 2022 review.

Cabinet Lead quote

"Along with public safety, consumer protection, and support for local businesses, we also provide waste and recycling services. I'm committed to reducing missed collections and improving our service through better communication tools and adapting to new laws and user needs"

Cllr Andrea Pellegram

"As every council in the country comes under continuous financial pressure, we know we have a clear responsibility to deliver good value for money, ensure financial resilience, and to manage the district's public purse with utmost care and consideration."

Cllr Patrick Coleman

Responding to the Climate Emergency

Why is this important?

Minimising and adapting to the effects of climate change are priorities for everyone. The science is settled; global warming is a consequence of human activity, and greenhouse gas emissions must be cut to net zero. All major international agencies now agree that climate change, and the associated biodiversity crisis, is the biggest threat to life on Earth. Achieving the necessary reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and delivering nature recovery not only impacts us, it requires everything we do to change – from transport and energy generation to food production and the way we use energy in our homes and workplaces.

What will we achieve?

Though our success will play out over a long period, everyone will benefit from a decarbonised, healthier society, and a more resilient natural environment. In the short term there will be cost savings for residents and businesses, as well as employment and investment benefits.

Our commitment to electric vehicle charging points and renewable energy installations will ensure residents, businesses and visitors can transition to and use hybrid and electric vehicles in the Cotswold district.

How will we do this?

- **Support and enable residents and businesses to reduce their own carbon emissions**
- **Decarbonise council operations**
- **Increase resilience to the effect of climate change**
- **Deliver a new Local Plan with policies that are 'green to the core'**

What have we done?

- Carbon emissions have reduced 41% against the 1990 baseline year, from 4.7million kg CO2e in 1990 to 2.76million kg CO2e in the year 2022 to 2023.
- The council has agreed to install 26 electric vehicle charging points in its car parks in Tetbury, Cirencester, Stow-on-the-Wold and Moreton in Marsh. Of the 150 publicly accessible EV chargers across the district, the council has installed 49
- The council had almost doubled its climate score according to Climate Emergency UK, placing it in the top 15% of district councils nationwide and second in Gloucestershire for climate improvement.
- The council is helping residents to install solar panels through the Cotswold Home Solar scheme. This has already led to solar panels being installed at 27 homes, and installation is underway at a further 18 homes, on track to collectively save £450,000.

Cabinet Lead quote

“We’ve established a cross-portfolio Climate Board, ensuring every cabinet member and senior officer is accountable for climate action in their portfolio. This means climate objectives are integrated into every service we deliver, shaping project approvals and performance reviews. Already this approach has helped the council almost double its Climate Emergency UK score — placing us in the top 15% of district councils nationwide — and expand EV charging and home solar schemes. Looking ahead, we’ll continue to drive decarbonisation of council operations, while building resilience to flooding, heatwaves and other impacts of climate change, and empowering residents and businesses to take action alongside us.”

Cllr Mike McKeown

Delivering Housing

Why is this important?

Cotswold is at the centre of a housing affordability crisis. The gap between earnings and house prices is one of the highest in the country, and there is a shortage of good quality, genuinely affordable housing to rent. As of May 2025, the average property price in the Cotswold district was £419,000, which is substantially higher than the UK average of £269,000, and more than 14 times the average salary. Local people struggle to find and afford suitable accommodation, and many of the district's younger generation are forced to leave the area because they can't afford to live here. We are committed to providing good quality affordable housing, with an emphasis on social rent and provision for young people, military veterans and families.

We will urge the development of homes that are carbon neutral in their build and fuel efficient in their use. Energy efficient homes that are powered by renewable energy are also cheaper to run – contributing to long-term affordability.

We want to ensure that provision for the homeless strikes a balance between meeting their needs, in a way that is financially sustainable for the council. Housing is key to the things we love about living in the Cotswolds: resilient, supportive communities, health and wellbeing, and a safe place to live and thrive. Without a home, none of this can happen, and so it's vital we tackle the housing emergency, and strive to provide a home for everyone.

What will we achieve?

We will deliver good quality housing that is genuinely affordable. Homes that can be adapted to meet changing needs over the lifespan of the building, all while enabling local people on low incomes to stay local. We will ensure that suitable, good quality accommodation is provided for homeless people, and will help them to move into more settled accommodation in the long-term. We will continue to maximise the opportunities presented by our own assets as well as explore innovative routes to progress affordable housing provision within the district.

How will we do this?

- **Work with our partners to deliver more affordable homes**
- **Understand everyone's housing needs**
- **Deliver the new Local Plan**

What have we done?

- An exemplar project is the carbon zero affordable housing development in Down Ampney, which will deliver 13 social rented homes. The scheme, granted planning consent in March 2025, involves a vacant plot owned by the council and a neighbouring site with domestic garages owned by Bromford Flagship. The homes will feature roof-mounted solar PV panels, ensuring low utility bills for tenants. Working with partners and stakeholders, we are developing a pipeline of rural affordable housing opportunities, including on council-owned land parcels.
- We are developing a partnership with Bromford/Flagship, who manage 70% of the affordable housing stock in the Cotswold district, with the mutually agreed objectives of
 - Increasing the supply of new homes that are genuinely affordable and create sustainable places and communities.
 - Ensuring that existing homes and communities are resilient and ready to respond to the challenges of the climate emergency.
 - Working collaboratively to ensure residents can thrive in the places they move to.
- We are working with partners and stakeholders to promote an environment for landowners, developers and registered providers of affordable housing to bring forward rural housing opportunities.

Cabinet Lead quote

“Delivering more social rented affordable homes so local people can stay local is a key priority. Through our new Local Plan, we’ll deliver on our climate promises and we’ll retain control over housing to help communities thrive despite government-imposed targets.”

Cllr Juliet Layton

Supporting Communities

Why is this important?

The health and wellbeing of our residents is generally good - above England and regional averages. The Cotswold district is one of the safest, with levels of crime, and we're lucky enough to be surrounded by beautiful countryside. But we do face some challenges – including barriers to service access, as well as loneliness and isolation due to the rural nature of our location.

We know sustainable behaviour change can only be achieved when residents are involved in the design and implementation of services, and so we're committed to working with community, voluntary and public sector partners to tackle these challenges and improve our residents' health and wellbeing for good.

What will we achieve?

We want our district to be the best in the UK for health and wellbeing. We want to ensure all our neighbourhoods are safe and enjoyable places to live, where we know – and can rely on – our neighbours, with access to leisure opportunities and a vibrant cultural scene to enrich our lives.

How will we do this?

- **Strengthen our links with town and parish councils and key stakeholders**
- **Encourage community health and wellbeing**
- **Support our residents in crises**
- **Deliver the new Local Plan**

What have we done?

- In July 2024, the Council agreed to recommission Crowdfund Cotswold. To date, this programme has supported over 50 projects with £1.2m, pledged from almost 4,300 backers.
- Local charities, activists and others have come together to form the Cotswold Food network, to work creatively to tackle hunger, healthy food and food waste. This partnership has also worked with the council to support financial inclusion, helping households tackle rising food and utility bills.
- The council secured £50,000 through the Strengthening Local Communities Fund to deliver 14 multi-generational community events across the north and south of the district.
- In September 2024, the council launched an 'unsung heroes' award scheme, to celebrate contributions so many people make to their communities. Following the success of this scheme, we launched a 'Young Unsung Hero' category in 2025, to recognise the efforts of young people in trying to give back to the communities they have grown up in.

Cabinet Lead quote

"Our voluntary and community sector is doing vital work—but it needs stronger support. We'll boost access to warm spaces, affordable food, and financial help, with practical, local solutions that ensure rural communities aren't left behind."

Cllr Claire Bloomer

"Promoting the health, wellbeing and safety of Cotswolds residents is such an important part of what we do as a Council. We work with partner organisations to achieve this and their role in making that happen is invaluable."

Cllr Paul Hodgkinson

Supporting the Economy

Why is this important?

The Cotswold economy is home to businesses of all sizes and across all sectors forming the cornerstone of our local economy. The visitor economy – built on the back of our beautiful landscape, towns and villages – accounts for a significant proportion of employment and has been severely impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. However the Cotswold economy is about much more than tourism, and there is potential for even greater diversity. We will manage government investment funds to support those interventions that provide the conditions for businesses and their employees to thrive and grow. Through our economic recovery plan, we want to enable businesses to become more resilient, by enhancing their digital presence and looking at different business models. Our green economic growth strategy puts the climate agenda at the heart of future growth.

What will we achieve?

We want to nurture a dynamic, vibrant and balanced economy, and to grow high value, highly skilled, low environmental impact businesses in the Cotswolds. Our region is already home to some highly creative and innovative businesses. Exciting projects in the agri-tech, cyber and digital, medical equipment and environmental technology sectors promise to provide great opportunities for local people and businesses. As a business-friendly council, we won't just communicate regularly with our local business community – we will work with them and our partners to grow the district's economy to provide better opportunities for local people.

How will we do this?

- **Develop the skills of our residents**
- **Grow a strong and sustainable economy**
- **Manage the opportunity and impact of the visitor economy**
- **Deliver the new Local Plan**

What have we done?

- Working with the Royal Agricultural University to bring to the table proposals for an Innovation village to support home grown businesses
- Over the past three years, the district has successfully managed a £1.76m Shared Prosperity/Rural England Prosperity Fund, supporting local businesses, the growth hub and critical community infrastructure. In 2025, we've allocated a further £560k
- In 2024, the Council adopted a renewed Green Economic Growth Strategy. The area now hosted cutting edge green aviation businesses such as ZeroAvia and Vertical Aerospace and a growing agritech specialism, as well as continued to attract year-round visitors to our high-quality tourist offer.

Cabinet Lead quote

"Local businesses are the backbone of the economy all across the Cotswolds and we will continue to champion them with initiatives and policies that encourage investment and job creation. We will put innovation and collaboration at the heart of our business community and support exciting projects right across our region"

Cllr Tristan Wilkinson