



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REPORT
April 2021 - June 2021

Cotswold District Council Corporate Plan 2020-24

Our Aim

To rebuild the Council so it can be proactive and responsive to the needs of our residents and businesses in a fast changing environment, building for the future whilst respecting our heritage

Our Priorities



Our Principles

- rebuilding trust and confidence in the council by promoting a culture of openness and transparency
- providing value for money for our residents and businesses by using our resources wisely and investing in the district's fabric and future
- listening to the needs of our community and acting on what we hear

Executive Summary Highlights

- The second phase of the cashless parking project has been completed with the change to cashless payment methods implemented at car parks at the Abbey Grounds, Old Station and the Leisure Centre from June 2021; this project will deliver multiple benefits including supporting the Council's carbon reduction commitment and reducing cash collection costs. As the use of the Council's Rissington Road Car Park in Bourton-on-the-Water has increased, there have been some complaints regarding the ability to pay for car parking by payment card at the payment machines, and some customers have experienced problems with downloading the pay by phone application to mobile phones as a result of poor mobile phone signal strength in the car park. Officers have been working with the supplier to improve the performance of the payment machines by installing an antenna to boost the mobile phone signal strength. A survey of mobile signal strength is being carried out at all car parks prior to the roll out of further phases of the cashless car parking project to minimise the risk of similar issues occurring. The machines will also be upgraded to use "roaming sims" which will utilise the strongest mobile phone signal rather than being limited to one mobile network provider. Officer resources have been made available to provide support to car park users at peak demand time. The implementation of further phases of the project has been delayed with phase 3 delayed until the end of September 2021.
- The Council completed the procurement of a contractor, and design work has commenced to install energy efficiency and carbon reduction technologies at Cirencester and Bourton on the Water leisure centres, Moreton in Marsh Area Centre and the Museum Resources Centres at Northleach. The carbon reduction measures will be funded from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (BEIS).
- In April, the Council completed the procurement of an electric vehicle charge point provider, which will enable the Council to roll out EVCPs in a number of locations in the District. Design work is underway starting with council-owned public car parks and council offices.
- Work is progressing on the Kemble housing site. During April, there was an expressions of interest exercise which was twin tracked with the preparation of a draft contractual JV, which has since been received from Trowers Hamlin. The expressions of interest have been evaluated and a delegated authority report has been issued to the Chief Executive for a decision to appoint a preferred Registered Provider.
- Cottsway Housing Association is working with the Council to deliver 100% social rent on a scheme of 15 units at Davies Road, Moreton in Marsh with commuted sums funding from the Council and match funding from Homes England. The planned scheme included air-source electric heating and improved insulation but will now also include the provision of solar PV. The additional costs will be covered by loan financing to Cottsway Housing Association from the Council.
- In May 2021, the Cabinet approved the Local Development Scheme, and the Draft Cotswold District Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy for public consultation. The GI Strategy forms part of the Local Plan evidence base and other Council strategies; and responds to the Council's Climate and

Ecological emergencies and corporate priorities to improve health and wellbeing. The purpose of the GI strategy is to assist in the creation of sustainable places to live, which are resilient to climate change and the challenges it brings.

- The Council's new approach to community grants, Crowdfund Cotswold, was launched in Q4, and is gaining a great deal of interest. In late May, the Council determined its first set of pledges, agreeing to support 13 projects with pledges to the value of around £72,000.
- The Council has been awarded nearly £73,000 from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to improve employment outcomes or prospects of future employment outcomes for long-term unemployed young people and groups facing the most complex and intractable barriers to work.
- The Council has received £100,000 grant funding from Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group to work with the local Integrated Locality Partnership and others, to build on community focussed work to reduce health inequalities. The Council will be working in partnership with 'We Can Move' and involve residents and relevant community groups in developing ways to make it as easy as possible to become more active, especially for those who need it most, including patients with a long-term condition.
- The Tourism team made a successful bid to Visit England's Destination Management Organisation (DMO) Recovery Fund and received funding (£73,000) for 'Escape to the Cotswolds' – an online digital marketing campaign to develop and promote online bookable experiences and to increase Cotswolds Tourism's social media followers to 150,000 followers across all channels by the end of July.
- The Development Consent Order (the planning application) for the A417 Missing Link was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by Highways England in June 2021. The project, which at around £450m, is the biggest infrastructure investment in the District for a generation, is designed to reduce congestion and improve road safety on this important link between Cirencester and Gloucester and, more widely, the M4 and M5 motorways.
- The Council is working with the Inward Investment Team at GFirst LEP to support ZeroAvia which has relocated from Cranfield to Cotswold Airport. ZeroAvia is a leading innovator in decarbonising aviation, and is developing a hydrogen-electric powered aircraft. It has increased its staff numbers from 10 to 50 with the potential to continue to grow significantly.

Deliver services to the highest standard



The Context

The Council aims to create services that are inclusive and flexible which meet the diverse and changing needs of its residents and communities. To achieve this, it will be important to listen to residents to understand what is important to them, identify the areas in which they need support, and adapt. In the context of reducing budgets over the last ten years and the phasing out of incentivised income streams such as New Homes Bonus, which has been further exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19, the Council will need to take a strategic approach, and make the best use of the available resources.

The Council will work with a range of public and private sector partners to help deliver its aims and objectives and to provide services seamlessly. The emphasis will be on efficiency and effectiveness whilst remaining true to the Council's commitments on climate change and a green economy.

Actions we are taking

In September 2020, the Council adopted the Recovery Investment Strategy 2020-24 which sets out the framework within which the Council can invest in the infrastructure of the District which will deliver on the Council Priorities whilst also closing the emerging budget gap. The Asset Management Plan sets out how council owned assets including service and commercial properties will be managed, and includes an Acquisition and Disposal Strategy. The current AMP is being reviewed and updated and will support the implementation of the investment strategy.

The Council is taking steps to move to cashless parking including contactless, card, by phone or using an app at all council owned car parks over the next 12 months. Moving to cashless parking has multiple benefits; it will support our carbon reduction commitment and reduce the costs associated with cash collection and vandalism of pay and display machines. Officers drive approximately 20,000 miles each year across the District to collect from the machines in addition to daily travelling to the secure depot to count and bank. In January 2021, Cabinet approved the proposal to remove the option to pay by cash

in all car parks using a phased approach which will enable the Council and its service provider, PayByPhone, to promote the change and assist users over an extended period. The first two phases have been completed with the change to cashless payment methods implemented at car parks at Rissington Road, Bourton on the Water; Mangersbury Road, Stow on the Wold; and Beeches car park, Cirencester from March 2021; and from the Abbey Grounds, Old Station and the Leisure Centre from June 2021. To support the implementation, additional repeater signs for the pay by phone option were located in all the car parks as well as warning signs and increased communications with the media and stakeholders relating to each car park. As the use of the Council's Rissington Road Car Park in Bourton-on-the-Water has increased, there have been some complaints regarding the ability to pay for car parking by payment card at the payment machines, and some customers have experienced problems with downloading the pay by phone application to mobile phones as a result of poor mobile phone signal strength in the car park. Officers have been working with the supplier to improve the performance of the payment machines by installing an antenna to boost the mobile phone signal strength. A survey of mobile signal strength is being carried out at all car parks prior to the roll out of further phases of the cashless car parking project to minimise the risk of similar issues occurring. The machines will also be upgraded to use "roaming sims" which will utilise the strongest mobile phone signal rather than being limited to one mobile network provider. Officer resources have been made available to provide support to car park users at peak demand time. The implementation of further phases of the project has been delayed with phase 3 delayed until the end of September 2021.

Whilst all of the Council's public toilets are of a good standard there are some improvements that could be made to ensure they remain modern and clean. A review of our public toilets was commissioned by the Council's new contractor Danfo Ltd, and a condition survey was carried out by an independent body, the British Toilet Association; recommendations for improvements have been proposed. Alongside the review, officers have gathered a range of information on each site including any major refurbishment work, income, expenditure and footfall. A report, which brings the two strands of work together, has been prepared for the Cabinet Member responsible for public conveniences and Senior Officers for consideration of the next steps.

Whilst the provision of toilets is not a statutory function, the Council provides a number of public conveniences across the District to both support tourism and local visitors, and prevent any environmental health impacts from lack of accessibility. The Council has started to explore opportunities to improve accessibility to public conveniences via 'comfort partnerships'. An information gathering exercise has commenced to understand how other local authorities are operating schemes in which businesses offer their facilities to the public/tourists, with the potential for trialling it in the District; Gloucester City Council is already operating such a scheme.

Currently, the market for building control services is buoyant; the service achieved its best performance during 2020-21 over the last three years. Between January and June 2021, the service dealt with 345 applications compared to 265 and 303 in the comparative periods of 2020 and 2019. To maximise income, the service sends out marketing letters with each planning application requiring a building regulations application, as well as entering into partnerships with architects to take on plan checking work for applications both inside and outside the District. Currently, the service has approximately 20 partners.

In March 2021, the Cabinet approved the creation of the Civic Pride Programme for a two year period, which has now been rebranded 'Clean and Green'. The key strategic outcome of this proposal is to achieve a reduction in enviro-crime within the District, delivering the benefit of a high quality environment where economic growth is supported and where the Council positively engages with the community to not only solve immediate issues, but to prevent

further recurrences. While two new civic pride posts are yet to be recruited to, the Lead Enviro-crime Officer is taking opportunities to engage with communities arising from operational work. For example, a recent investigation into an abandoned vehicle on Council land has led to an opportunity for the local community to get involved in maintaining a small parcel of land with the aim to enhance the environment around them. Furthermore, the enviro-crime work has been successful in establishing routine partnership work with the largest social housing provider, Bromford Housing, in dealing with community ASB related problems. By working closely with the Bromford coach and their 36 neighbour coaches across the District, the Council is able to support and be more effective in reducing enviro-crime.

Respond to the climate crisis



The Context

The national regulatory and policy context for the Council's action on the climate emergency is largely unchanged from that reported in the previous quarter.

The Government has become more visibly focused on hosting the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in November, and this, combined with ongoing reporting of climate change-exacerbated extreme weather events, is helping to increase public awareness of the increasingly pressing issue.

Two recent and important reports from the Climate Change Committee are relevant here. The first is the 2021 Progress Report to Parliament (June 2021), looking at both mitigation and adaptation. On **mitigation**, the Progress Report shows that Covid lockdown measures led to sharp falls in emissions in aviation and surface transport during 2020, but despite historic promises on climate action, the Government has been much too slow and inconsistent in turning these into actionable strategies and policies. The report calls for a strong Net Zero Strategy comprising a Net Zero Test for all Government policy; an ambitious Heat and Buildings Strategy; new plans on surface transport, aviation, hydrogen, biomass and food, and strengthened plans for the power sector, industrial decarbonisation, the North Sea, peat and energy from waste. On **adaptation** to the inevitable, already 'baked-in' impacts of climate destabilisation, the report shows worthwhile progress in only five of 34 sectors. Among the report's 50 recommendations, the following are probably more relevant to Cotswold District: plans to address overheating risk in homes through building regulations; making adaptation reporting mandatory for all infrastructure sectors; building a strong emergency resilience capability for the UK against climate shocks, learning from the COVID-19 response; implementing a public engagement programme on climate change adaptation, and rising to the big cross-cutting challenges of public engagement, fair funding and local delivery.

The second important report from the Climate Change Committee (June 2021) is the Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk, giving statutory advice to the Government on the priorities for the forthcoming national adaptation plans and wider action, and looking at more than 60 risks and opportunities that are fundamental to every aspect of life in the UK - natural environment, health, homes, essential infrastructure, and the economy. Alarming, the evidence shows that the gap between risk and rate of adaptation has widened, as adaptation actions have failed to keep pace with the worsening reality of climate risk. The report shows that (just as with mitigation) acting now will be cheaper than waiting to deal with the consequences, and calls on the Government to lead that action. The report identifies eight priority risk areas needing the most urgent action in the next two years, all of which are relevant to Cotswold District: Risks to the viability and diversity of terrestrial and freshwater habitats and species; risks to soil health from increased flooding and drought; risks to natural carbon stores and sequestration; risks to crops, livestock and commercial trees; risks to supply of food, goods and vital services due to climate-related collapse of supply chains and distribution networks; risks to people and the economy from climate-related failure of the power system;

risks to human health, wellbeing and productivity from increased exposure to heat in homes and other buildings, and lastly multiple risks to the UK from systemic or cascading climate change impacts overseas.

Actions we are taking

The Council's electric vehicle charging point delivery plan was adopted by Cabinet in January 2021, and an electric vehicle charge point installer procured in April. The roll-out has now started and design work is underway starting with Council-owned public car parks and Council offices. Work is being coordinated with Gloucestershire County Council to target installations at residents without off-street parking. The result of these measures will be greater confidence among residents who are considering moving to EV use, which should help a 'snowball' effect of market take-up as EVs become commonplace.

A significant part of both the Council's own emissions footprint, and that of the whole District, is heating buildings (homes and workplaces). In relation to domestic properties in the District, the government announced the premature end of the 'able to pay' sector Green Homes Grant scheme in March 2021. The Council is collaborating with neighbouring second tier authorities in Gloucestershire, and with West Oxfordshire DC, on proposals to access government funding to support improved enforcement of private landlords' compliance with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards regulation, which will both reduce carbon emissions and help tenants at risk of fuel poverty, and to support the creation of new energy retrofit supports for able-to-pay owner-occupiers.

A housing 'Net Zero Carbon Toolkit' has been produced in collaboration between the partner Councils. The Handbook fills a gap in the market for well designed, visually appealing, direct, authoritative guidance based on the latest understanding of Net Zero Carbon policy and technology, and is aimed primarily at small scale builders, architects, contractors and allied trades, although it is also accessible for householders. It covers both new build housing and retrofit, and once launched by the three partner Councils and disseminated within the Districts, will be made available to all councils for dissemination. The Toolkit should help give confidence to householders, specifiers and installers in achieving much better carbon performance, best value for money, and highest quality.

The Council has commissioned a Renewable Energy Strategy for the District, to feed into the Local Plan review. An interim report from the study has been received by officers, and the study's initial conclusions will now be made public through a consultation portal, allowing residents to consider the consultants' recommendations and record their views and opinions ahead of the final report and conclusions in September. The public consultation will provide a voice to Cotswold residents who will in the future live alongside renewable energy generation in the landscape, help to raise awareness of this important part of the climate crisis response, and make the final study conclusions stronger and therefore more valuable in the context of the Local Plan review and its eventual Examination in Public.

The £1.2m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding secured in Q4 has enabled the procurement of a contractor to install the energy efficiency and carbon reduction technologies at Cirencester and Bourton on the Water leisure centres, Moreton in Marsh Area Centre and the Museum Resources Centres at Northleach. Design work is underway and completion is now expected before the end of March 2022, subject to confirmation from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). As well as very significant carbon emissions savings, the projects will reduce energy costs for

the Council, and particularly the roof-mounted PV panels will be a visual signal for residents of the Council's intentions, and hopefully an encouragement to others to make similar investments, particularly owners and occupiers of larger buildings, both in the public and private sectors.



Provide socially rented homes

The Context

The high quality natural and built environment makes the District a desirable place to live. Cotswold District has a high number of properties owned outright (37.8%, vs 30.6% national average) reflecting the attractiveness of the District as a place to retire or to purchase a second home.

House prices and rents are relatively high. It has been reported that the stamp duty holiday which will start to be phased out at the end on 30 June 2021 has driven up house prices in particular in rural areas. At the end of December 2020, the median property price in Cotswold District was £385,000, 54% higher than the median property price in England and Wales, while the median monthly rent was £850 in 2020-21, over 16% higher than the national median (Private rental market summary statistics - April 2020 to March 2021, Valuation Office Agency). There is a shortage of good quality rented accommodation that is genuinely affordable. Affordable housing helps to meet the District's housing needs and can include low cost home ownership or rented accommodation which typically has a discount of around 20% on the market rent, however this may still not be truly affordable for some residents. Social rented homes have a rent that is lower than affordable rent and therefore provides homes for those on lower incomes or in receipt of full Housing Benefit.

The high house prices and high rents, coupled with the lower than average earnings from local jobs, means housing affordability is a significant challenge for residents in the District which may result in the out migration of young people or alternatively encourage people to commute into Cotswold for work, while living in areas where housing is cheaper.

Actions we are taking

The Council's Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy and action plan was adopted by Cabinet on 8 February 2021 and sets out the delivery strategy for the Council to accelerate provision of social rented and affordable homes for local people. The current focus is to facilitate the affordable housing identified within the Local Plan and through rural exception sites and community-led housing opportunities, and to work with Housing Associations to maximise affordable housing delivery. The Council plans to go further and bring forward additional affordable homes through enabling and direct intervention which may include provision of land and other funding. In addition, any development the Council acquires or builds must be carbon zero in support of the Council's Climate Change emergency commitment. Although this will increase the cost of affordable housing, it will reduce ongoing revenue costs for tenants. Based on the outcomes from the Member workshop in October, discussions with local Registered Providers, and a review of delivery options, Officers recommended that the Council establishes a formal partnership with one lead Registered Provider.

The February Cabinet report also sets out the options for delivery of the Kemble site. Cabinet agreed that delivery should be in partnership with a Registered Provider. Legal advice was commissioned and obtained on the most suitable partnership model; and a specification was produced and checked by Trowers Hamlin and passed to procurement to commence expressions of interest in a Contractual Joint Venture (JV) for delivery of Kemble and Down Ampney sites. During April, there was an expressions of interest exercise which was twin tracked with the preparation of a draft contractual JV, which has

since been received from Trowers Hamlin. The expressions of interest have been evaluated and a delegated authority report has been issued to the Chief Executive for a decision to appoint a preferred Registered Provider.

Officers are undertaking an options appraisal for future use of Sheep Street Cottages and the Cotswold Club. These options include the potential use for service delivery with regard to homelessness accommodation and other housing options. The Council has commissioned and received Energy reports to understand the feasibility of achieving carbon zero. Both buildings have been viewed by a housing provider for use as specialist accommodation; however, there are concerns about the financial and practical viability to deliver against the Council priorities of affordable housing and carbon reduction.

In March, following recommendation from Cabinet, the Council allocated commuted sums grants to two projects to deliver low carbon affordable housing. A sum of £478,500 was allocated to provide 100% social rent on a scheme of 15 units at Davies Rd, Moreton in Marsh; previously an open market scheme with 40% affordable housing only. A further allocation of £102,000 will be used to enhance the environmental sustainability of the homes. The planned scheme included air-source electric heating and improved insulation but will now also include the provision of solar PV. The additional costs will be covered by loan financing to Cottsway Housing Association from the Council (approved by Full Council in July 2021). Cottsway Housing Association has successfully submitted an application to Homes England for match funding; and the scheme is being progressed by the Housing Association.

The second allocation of commuted sums was to Gloucestershire Rural Housing Association (GRHA) for a scheme of 14 homes at Sunground, Avening. The sum of £332,000 (approx) will deliver this rural exception site, formerly a market cross subsidy development of six affordable rent and five private market homes, as a 100% low carbon affordable housing development. The scheme will receive Homes England funding through Bromford which is developing the scheme on behalf of GRHA. The scheme will provide nine social rented and five shared ownership homes for local people, incorporating rainwater harvesting, air-source heating, solar panels and bio-diversity measures. The development has been delayed due to underground utility issues, but is expected to proceed shortly.

In July 2021, Full Council approved the allocation of commuted sums grants for 28 social rent homes at Stockwells, Moreton-in-Marsh to be delivered by Bromford Housing Association. The new development will be the first modular build of its kind anywhere in the Cotswolds. To support the Council to meet its Climate Emergency Strategy, Bromford has been working on how the introduction of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) can support the move towards delivering net zero homes. The Stockwells regeneration scheme represents an opportunity for the Council and Bromford to create the first social rented, MMC net zero homes within the District. With funding support from the Council, Air Source Heat Pumps will replace traditional gas boilers, reducing CO2 emissions from heating and hot water by around 80%. In addition, the introduction of a large solar PV system will reduce net carbon emissions of the development to zero.

One of the Council's aims is to reduce reliance on bed and breakfast and hotels for emergency homeless accommodation. In June 2020, Cabinet approved funding to implement a 'Housing First' model to help reduce rough sleeping within Cotswold District. 'Housing First' is an approach aimed at people with multiple needs who have faced persistent challenges in sustaining accommodation; they are supported by intensive case management and a personalised

approach to live in their own, permanent home. This approach has been well documented in the USA and Sweden for many years. The UK is gradually adopting the approach which is strongly recommended by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The funding will be used to identify and place six individuals with the most complex needs into a permanent tenancy, supported by Housing Benefit and/or Universal Credit. Service level agreements have been agreed with Bromford and Aspire (support provider), and a dedicated staff member was appointed by Bromford in December 2020 to provide one to one support for the clients. Six clients who would benefit from the Housing First approach have been identified; with four of them having moved into long term accommodation and are being intensively supported by our partner, Aspire to maintain the tenancy. Aspire is working with the other two clients who are waiting for a suitable property to ensure that they are ready to accept the tenancy when it is offered. The Countywide partnership working that the Housing Team has been involved in has identified a further two clients in the District who need the Housing First type approach and they have been accepted on to the Countywide scheme.

The Housing Team is actively participating in a number of countywide funding bids including the Rough Sleeper Initiative round 4 (RSI4) and the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme round 2 (RSAP) fund. The Council is investigating potential options for submitting a specific bid to RSAP to increase the availability of supported accommodation in the District. The Housing Team has identified a council owned building which could potentially be converted into supported accommodation, however, planning concerns may mean submission for the 2021/22 round of bidding is not feasible. Other funding options are being considered and a full report on the options will be presented to Cabinet later in 2021.



Make our local plan green to the core

The Context

In July 2020, the Council made a further commitment to the environment by declaring an Ecological Emergency. Key to the commitments made in both emergencies is the partial update to the Local Plan and making it green to the core.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in August 2018, the National Planning Policy Framework has introduced new guidance. The guidance increases the importance of climate change adaptation and mitigation and the role that Local Plans play. In the next few months the Environment Bill and the Agricultural Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent. Along with the Clean Growth Strategy they represent the Government's ambition to combat climate change and give the environment a bigger mandate.

Actions we are taking

The adopted Local Plan has been reviewed and at a meeting of Full Council in June 2020, members unanimously resolved to partially update the Local Plan. A review of Local Plan policies is the first step in the Local Plan process and reveals which policies can be left as they are and which policies are likely to need updating. The process of updating the Local Plan will consider the options available to the Council and local communities. Along with international and national pledges made by the Government, the update will reflect the work being undertaken by other services across the organisation. The Renewable Energy Strategy is a good example of this.

The Local Plan can be seen as the glue that holds various corporate objectives together and provides physical action; it also translates national legislation to a local level. The partial update of the Local Plan will aid the building of new homes, in the right place, with suitable green infrastructure that promotes the transition to carbon neutrality. It will assist in providing services and opportunities to enhance the area both for the wellbeing of the people living here as well as its visitors. It will also provide the tools to enhance, create and protect the local environment and the biodiversity of the District and its neighbours.

During Autumn 2020, Cabinet took a decision to pause the formal and regulatory plan making process until there was clarity on the Government's Planning for the Future White Paper and transitional arrangements from the old system to the new, and consequent change to the National Planning Policy Framework. Specific details are available in the November Cabinet paper and also as part of the Council's response to the government consultations, as well as the Council's Local Plan webpages. Cabinet also confirmed the funding to take forward the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan.

In February 2021, the Government provided clarity on the District's future housing needs, which has returned housing need to previously anticipated levels; e.g. approximately 490 homes per year down from the proposed 1,200 homes per year. As a result, the Council has recommenced its programme of work to undertake a partial update of the Local Plan. The project will be supported by an updated project plan called the Local Development Scheme (LDS) that sets out key stages in the local plan making process. For example, a statutory public consultation is programmed for the end of 2021. In May 2021, the Cabinet

approved the LDS, and the Draft Cotswold District Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy for public consultation. The GI Strategy forms part of the Local Plan evidence base and other Council strategies; and responds to the Council's Climate and Ecological emergencies and corporate priorities to improve health and wellbeing. The purpose of the GI strategy is to assist in the creation of sustainable places to live, which are resilient to climate change and the challenges it brings.

The Local Plan Programme Board, which has membership of all political parties, met for the first time in March 2021 to discuss and define the Corporate Strategy's priority to make the Local Plan 'green to the core' as well as considering project milestones. During the early months of 2021, the Council prepared a Sustainability Appraisal scoping document, which has been consulted upon with representations from Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England as part of the statutory process. The Sustainability Appraisal scoping document sets out the context, objectives and approach of the assessment; and identifies relevant environmental, economic and social issues and objectives. The Council will be commissioning in the summer months of 2021 an integrated appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to support the partial update of the Council's Local Plan.

Work continues on the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan project which was officially rebooted in January 2021 and work has already begun on revising the Town Centre Strategy contained in the Council's Local Plan. The Council will be carrying out feasibility studies with Cirencester Town Council during 2021 to assist with the eventual master plan options and also to support Cirencester Town Council's emerging Neighbourhood Plan. Consultants were appointed in May to carry out an assessment of possible changes to retail and other uses in the town centre and to provide scenarios that will assist with anticipating future parking demand. The Council's Cirencester Town Centre Health Check is programmed to be updated during the late spring and early summer months of 2021, and will be a joint project with Cirencester Town Council.

In March 2021, the Council appointed its first Sustainable Transport Strategy Lead officer, responsible for developing and delivering a new Sustainable Transport Strategy to support the partial update of the Local Plan and the transition to a carbon zero future. The Lead officer's work will involve supporting local community groups, parish and town councils in taking local action to support low carbon travel, as well as considering the integration of sustainable travel into the Council's objectives on supporting the visitor economy and economic development. The sustainable transport strategy will also assist the preparation of a new Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan.

Support health and well-being



The Context

The Health and Wellbeing of our residents is generally good and above the England and County average in most measures. We are one of the safest districts with very low crime levels and are surrounded by beautiful countryside. However, we do face some challenges. Cotswold District has an ageing population; over the last 10 years, it has experienced greater growth across all 65+ age groups compared to England and Wales. Many of our older residents live alone, and coupled with the rurality of the District, loneliness and access to services are issues for the District.

We also need to take into account the wider determinants of health - social, economic and environmental factors such as unemployment, low income, poor housing, and lifestyles which have an impact on people's health and wellbeing. This means that we need to work with a wide range of partners, to pool resources and to apply a whole systems and asset-based approach to address challenges together.

Actions we are taking

We want Cotswold District to be the best in the country for health and wellbeing, and promoting healthy lifestyles and providing opportunities for people of all ages to be active is key. A Leisure Strategy determined by local priorities and outcomes was developed with the aim of providing effective and sustainable physical activity and sport opportunities for local communities via investment in our stock of leisure facilities and other non-facility interventions. In March 2021, Cabinet approved the Leisure Strategy and authorised officers to work in partnership with other organisations on the feasibility of the projects identified within the strategy, and to undertake a leisure management options appraisal to determine the most suitable delivery model, contract scope and contract terms for the Council's leisure facilities, when the current contract expires. It is anticipated that a Corporate Programme Manager will need to be appointed to manage the delivery and outcomes of the strategy, and a Members working group has been established to develop the scope for the Contract options appraisal, with the first meeting in July.

Promoting healthy lifestyles, fun and self-care for all ages, and providing the facilities and opportunities to support communities to stay active is important, but we also need to encourage resilient, well-connected and active communities that take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing goals. Some of the actions the Council is taking include a review and revision of the community grant scheme which focus on our priorities, hosting regular community forums, and investing in asset-based/place-based community development.

The Council's new approach to community grants, Crowdfund Cotswold, launched in Q4, with the first deadline of 21 April. There was a huge amount of interest – with more project ideas being registered by the scheme partners, Spacehive, on the Cotswold site than for a comparator site in Liverpool (urban and with a much higher population). In late May, the Council determined its first set of pledges, agreeing to support 13 projects with pledges to the value of around £72,000 (this includes grant resources from the County Council, directed at Covid recovery). The project ideas reflect some of the areas the Council has traditionally invested in, such as play provision and civic buildings, as well as attracting project ideas that reflect the Council's priorities, with some

innovative projects that will help address the climate change emergency (e.g. Kingham to Bourton Recreational Trail), ecological emergency (Cotswold Waterpark 'Perch pod') and health and wellbeing (Cotswold Friends, Into Nature CIC). Moreover, the crowdfund platform is enabling sizeable contributions from both residents and from local businesses which is anticipated to increase with further rounds.

In line with other districts across the county, the Council has received £100,000 grant funding from Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group to work with the local Integrated Locality Partnership and others, to build on our community focussed work to reduce health inequalities. The community wellbeing team will lead this work and collaboration with voluntary and community sector organisations and our communities will feature heavily. The scheme will work in partnership with 'We Can Move' and we will involve residents and relevant community groups in its development and implementation. Through this work, a dedicated physical activity pathway will be developed for Cotswold residents to make it as easy as possible to become more active, especially for those who need it most, including patients with a long-term condition (LTC). The aim is to increase the number of community-based physical activity opportunities across the District, including specialist exercise classes for LTC patients and community-led activities by using existing assets (facilities, green open spaces etc.). The project is likely to start in the autumn for a period up to three years initially.

The Council is taking a range of actions to improve equal access to quality services across the District including actions to tackle food poverty and investing and supporting youth engagement work. The Council has been awarded nearly £73,000 from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to improve employment outcomes or prospects of future employment outcomes for long-term unemployed young people and groups facing the most complex and intractable barriers to work. The Council and Cirencester Town Council in partnership with the wider Cotswold Youth Network, voluntary and community sector, will offer an innovative and responsive service to young people between the ages of 16 -25 who are not currently involved in education, employment or training. The partnership will provide a holistic service to support young people that offers a personalised support programme tailored to the individual needs of the young person. The initiative will start in September 2021 and incorporates two key elements to cover the whole District:

- C-Hub - a bespoke youth hub facility in the heart of Cirencester which will include an outreach service to more remote areas in the south of the District such as Tetbury and Fairford/Lechlade. It will be staffed by a Youth Hub Coordinator (1.0 FTE) and additional support services as required.
- A flexible rural outreach service for the north of the district to ensure young people can access support, even those geographically distanced from Cirencester. Similarly to the C-Hub, it will be staffed by a Youth Hub Coordinator (0.6 FTE). The long-term aim is to develop a second physical Youth Hub in the north of the District.

The co-ordinator roles will support young people using a combination of one-to-one (face to face or virtual/remote) support sessions, online training, and through referrals to other agencies and partners, and community venues as required.

The Community Wellbeing team has worked in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and the local voluntary and community sector to deliver the 'Holiday Activity and Food programme' (HAF) during the Easter School Holidays aimed at children in receipt of free school meals. This scheme is funded by the Department for Education. Over 550 'Cook Along' food boxes were delivered to families across the District via eight community-led collection points and direct deliveries. The offer also included 'Den Building Kits' as well as free face-to-face activities in line with Covid regulations, in Moreton-in-Marsh,

Bourton-on-the-Water, Cirencester, Fairford and Tetbury. A HAF programme for the summer holidays is currently being coordinated which aims to ensure children are entertained, active, educated, safe, and fed between Monday 2 August and Friday 27 August 2021.

The Cotswold Youth Network planned and delivered the 'Cotswold Youth Roadshow' during the May/June half-term. The aim of the Roadshow was to engage with young people across the District, offer fun activities and to hear views about being a young person in Cotswold District; just under 200 young people in 13 locations participated over a four day period. The consultation activities, in general, showed quite a positive picture of how young people in Cotswold District feel and a more in depth analysis is currently being undertaken. Partnership work was both positive and fruitful and the event provided a great opportunity to promote children and young peoples' services and to involve town and parish councils.

The Council is working with a number of partners to create tools for raising awareness of domestic abuse and other hidden harms such as hate crime, modern slavery and stalking. Meetings with Cirencester 6th Form College to arrange the production of a series of Hidden Harm videos by their students have restarted following a pause due to the Covid-19 pandemic with the aim of raising awareness amongst their peers. The production of videos will start in September 2021. The Cotswold Domestic Abuse Champions Network is being expanded; the Health and Well-being Team has contacted most Hairdressers in the District encouraging them to get their staff trained, as well as training providers for the Hair and Beauty industry with a view to incorporating Domestic Abuse champion training into the basic course.

Enable a vibrant economy

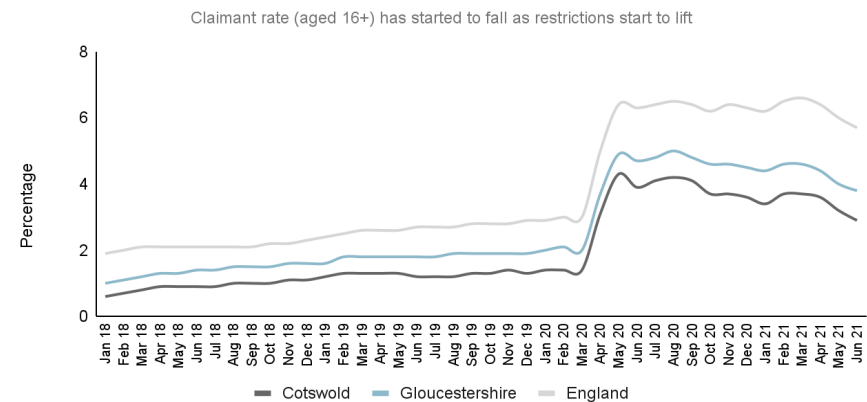


The Context

The District supports an economically active population of around 47,700 and has strengths in Finance and Business Services, ICT including Science and Technology, Retail, and Accommodation and Food Services. A large proportion of businesses are small enterprises employing less than 10 people. Median wages for people working in the District are below the national average, and affordability of housing is a significant issue for the District, which can result in skill and labour shortages. Historically, unemployment has been relatively low but has risen since the start of the pandemic but the full extent of job losses has been masked by the Job Retention Scheme (furlough) which has been extended until the end of September 2021.



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey



Source: ONS, Crown Copyright Reserved (Nomis)

The Cotswolds is well-known as a popular visitor destination and the visitor economy accounts for a significant proportion of the local economy - 7000 jobs or 18% of the total. Many of these jobs have been furloughed during the pandemic, but with restrictions now being eased that number is falling, although some elements like hospitality are reporting difficulty in recruiting. We also have many companies at the cutting edge of innovation and the opportunity to grow key sectors like agritech, cyber and digital, medical equipment and environmental technologies.

The lack of a reliable broadband connection especially in rural districts can add to social isolation as well as reduce opportunities to be economically active. Openreach is currently working in Cirencester and has recently announced plans to deliver full fibre to Tetbury, South Cerney, Lechlade, Northleach, Fairford and Bourton-on-the-Water by 2026 at the latest. A detailed timetable is awaited. Gigaclear are also onsite in Cirencester and Wesonbirt. However, there are still some areas where broadband is poor and even superfast connectivity is not sufficient for some businesses to operate in the way they wish to. The District Council is working with the Fastershire Project to address these areas.

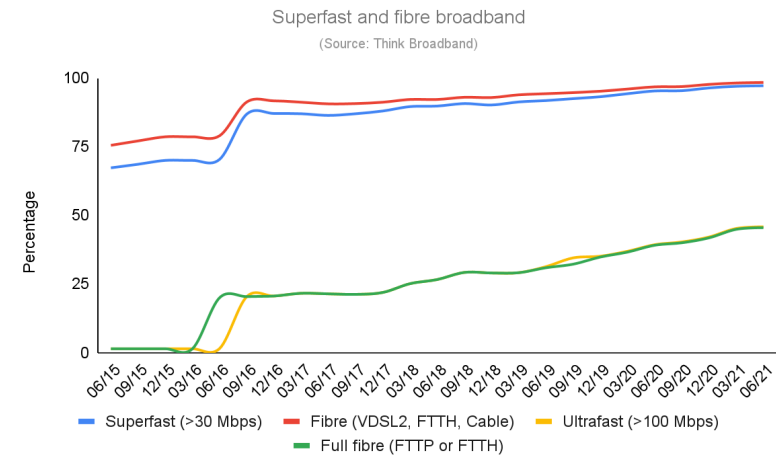
Much of our work to enable a vibrant economy will be achieved in partnership with key stakeholders ranging from the County Council, GFirst LEP, Chambers of Commerce and other business groups, Town and Parish Councils, institutions like the Royal Agricultural University and Cirencester College and individual businesses.

Actions we are taking

The draft Green Economic Growth Strategy was adopted at the Cabinet meeting in December 2020. The Strategy sets out the challenges and issues for the District, and how they will be addressed. It identifies the key areas that will deliver growth in the District, as well as a recovery plan for the local economy. The Cotswold Economic Advisory Group which was set up to advise, oversee and challenge the implementation of the Strategy; and provide a link to the main institutions and the wider business community in the District continues to meet regularly and provide valuable advice and assistance. The group has representation from key stakeholders including Cirencester College, the Royal Agricultural University, Campden BRI, St James's Place, the Federation of Small Businesses and Corin Medical. Most recently the Group considered the six monthly update report on progress against the Green Economic Growth Strategy and the progress in creating a Green Business Pledge for businesses to commit to reducing their carbon emissions.

The economy has started to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic but levels of activity have generally been lower than pre-Covid times. The retail and hospitality sectors have been particularly hard hit including those businesses that are particularly dependent on the visitor economy. The tourism team has been working not only to assist business recovery and future resilience but also to highlight at a national level the continuing impact of the Covid pandemic on the hospitality sector. During English Tourism Week in May, the tourism team met local MPs and the Tourism Minister, as well as holding a virtual meeting with board members of Visit England and local hospitality businesses so that they could highlight the issues they still face.

Much of the focus over the last year has been on preparing town centres to reopen following multiple lockdowns and restrictions as well as supporting businesses to adapt to the changed environment e.g. to transact more digitally where possible. Social media, newspaper and digital campaigns have promoted safety messages and encouraged customers to continue to support local businesses whenever they can and return to town centres in a safe way



when they reopen, supported by the Government's Reopening High Streets Safely fund. In addition, the funding has enabled the Council to engage 'Business Advisers' who contacted town centre businesses in towns across the District to ensure they have the support they need. The Council also arranged a series of webinars aimed at the hospitality sector to assist them in reopening safely and successfully when the economy opened up at the end of the third national lockdown. The Council has been allocated a further £81,144 from the 'Welcome Back Fund', which is an extension of the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund which runs until the end of March 2022. Cabinet has approved indicative allocations of £50,000 for physical works to town centres and £30,000 to create a 'virtual high street' to assist town centres to be more digitally resilient. The Council is currently collating suggestions from town councils and others for the physical works to town centres. An Economic Recovery intern has been taken on to assist with town centre-related work.

Town centres were already having to evolve in order to adjust to changing shopping habits, which has been accelerated by Covid-19 and multiple lockdowns. Our local traders have had to become more digitally able in order to survive in a period when physical footfall has been significantly reduced. The Council is continuing to work with tech company Maybe to support businesses to improve their social media presence which is expected to improve sales, and help to offset the losses from a reduction in physical footfall. The Maybe platform assists businesses to interact on social media in a place-based way which helps to raise their profile. Regular webinars have been held, including three aimed specifically at Cotswold businesses. The project went 'live' in September 2020, initially in Cirencester and Chipping Campden and has been rolled out to other towns in the District, including Tetbury, Northleach, Bourton-on-the-Water, Stow-on-the-Wold, Moreton-in-Marsh, Fairford, Lechlade and South Cerney. Over the last few months we have been increasing our efforts to encourage more businesses to sign up. The Council has also been working with GFirst LEP to launch a digital grant scheme to assist businesses with a grant of up to £3,000 for a project to improve their digital capability, which will be funded by each District Council contributing £60,000 from the Government's Additional Restrictions Grant; the scheme will be administered by the LEP.

The Uncover the Cotswolds Digital Health Check Survey, conducted on behalf of Cotswolds Tourism yielded 126 responses. The aim of the survey was to understand the digital confidence of tourism businesses in the wider Cotswolds area. The results clearly showed that local businesses needed support to improve their digital skills and online presence: only 26% were confident in their digital skills and 29% confident in the online visibility of their business. The areas identified as particular weaknesses were using social media, website content and website SEO/Google analytics. In response to the survey results, the tourism team commissioned 19 short training videos covering a wide range of digital skills. These are all now available online, free of charge, to any local business.

The Digital Health Check Survey also highlighted that many hospitality businesses were failing to take advantage of the opportunities offered by online sales and booking – over 40% had no online booking on their websites. In conjunction with Visit England the tourism team has been working to help businesses become bookable online via Tourism Exchange Great Britain (TXGB). TXGB is a business-to-business platform connecting tourism businesses to a diverse range of domestic and international distributors.

The tourism team made a successful bid to Visit England's Destination Management Organisation (DMO) Recovery Fund and received funding (£73,000) for 'Escape to the Cotswolds' – an online digital marketing campaign to develop and promote online bookable experiences and to increase Cotswolds Tourism's social media followers and organic reach with the aim of reaching 150,000 followers across all channels by the end of July.

A key focus of the Tourism team is to improve the dispersal of visitors across the Cotswolds, increasing visitors to less visited towns and to encourage less visits to places struggling at peak times to cope with visitor numbers. The Real Cotswolds project has identified eight towns across the Cotswolds which are able to accommodate more visitors. The focus will be on improving online presence with increased coverage on the Cotswolds.com website, better imagery and with dedicated e-newsletters to potential visitors; work on Cirencester is most advanced with Tetbury and Northleach to follow later in the year. Conversely, the impacts on some of the most visited areas such as Bourton, Bibury and the Slaughters is being reduced by discouraging media coverage, working with tour operators and accommodation providers to encourage off peak visits, and looking at ways to promote better circulation of visitors within the villages.

In addition to the Covid-19 related work that has taken place during the quarter, the Council is working with partners to bring sites forward which will support the Council's ambition to grow high value, highly skilled, low environmental impact businesses in key areas including agritech, digital/cyber, medical equipment and environmental technologies, and to enhance the opportunities available for local people, particularly young people. So for example, the Council is working with the Royal Agricultural University and their development partner Henry Boot Developments (HBD) to bring forward their Triangle site for agritech or education-related activity. The Council is also working with the prospective purchaser of the Mitsubishi site at Watermoor. The purchaser is proposing to continue with the existing uses, albeit with a new tenant or tenants. The Council is also working with ZeroAvia which has relocated from Cranfield to Cotswold Airport. ZeroAvia is a leading innovator in decarbonising aviation, and is developing a hydrogen-electric powered aircraft. The Council is working with the Inward Investment Team at GFirst LEP to support ZeroAvia which has increased its staff numbers from 10 to 50 with the potential to continue to grow significantly.

The construction of the Applied Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College moves on at pace, with the structure now out of the ground. The new Applied Digital Skills Centre will give the District a great opportunity both to develop a workforce with the digital skills needed in the 21st century, and also to grow its digital and cyber sectors. The Council continues to work closely with the College, particularly to identify partnerships with business which would be mutually beneficial.

On infrastructure, the Development Consent Order (effectively the planning application) for the A417 Missing Link was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by Highways England in June 2021; a decision is likely to take some time to make. The project, which at around £450m, is the biggest infrastructure investment in the District and indeed the whole county for a generation, is designed to reduce congestion and improve road safety on this important link between Cirencester and Gloucester and, more widely, the M4 and M5 motorways. While new road building projects can be seen as environmentally damaging, much of our efforts have been focused on delivering opportunities for environmental improvements as well as economic benefits.