



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REPORT
October 2021 - December 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 Flood Warden programme has been launched. The Council is working in partnership with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) and Town and Parish councils to recruit local volunteer Wardens to help improve local flood preparation and responses. The Council will provide training, PPE, best practice guidance and other support to volunteer Flood Wardens;
- The parking enforcement function has been brought back in-house to allow for a closer alignment of the function/activities to the Council's priorities, including the Climate Change Emergency; as well as facilitating improvements in the car park service through closer alignment of the in-house enforcement service and the car park management team;
- The Council submitted an Expression of Interest to the government for £162,500 of funding for Changing Places Toilets (CPTs) for the Abbey Grounds, Cirencester; Cotswold Farm Park, Guiting Power; Cotswold Country Park and Beach, North Cerney; and Birdland, Bourton-on-the-Water. The toilets are larger and accessible to people who cannot use standard accessible toilets, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches, and space for carers. The Council is awaiting the outcome of the bid.;
- A project team has been set up to launch the Council's Community Investment opportunity for residents to invest in the Council's response to the climate emergency, and the legal elements are being progressed as we move towards the first issue in 2022-23. This Council was one of the first five UK councils to become part of the Green Finance Institute and Abundance Investment's Local Climate Bond campaign. Initially, the Community Investment will finance the roll-out of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the District and the installation of energy efficiency measures, included in Solar PV, at the Council's Trinity Road offices in Cirencester;
- The £1.2m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is progressing with the installer now under contract with a firm price programme. The installer is on site at Cirencester and Bourton on the Water leisure centres undertaking preparatory works;
- In December 2021, the Cabinet approved the recommendation to dispose of the Cotswold Club, Cirencester on the open market in its current condition, and that the capital receipts from the sale be earmarked for investment in carbon zero affordable housing developments on other sites in the District. Other options such as utilising it for homelessness accommodation, social housing and residential accommodation were not financially viable;
- A planning application for the Stockwells development, Moreton-in-Marsh was approved by the Planning Committee in December 2021. It will be delivered by Bromford Housing Association with funding support from the Council, and will be the first social rented, Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) net zero homes within the District;

- The Community Wellbeing team was commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council and worked in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector to deliver the 'Holiday Activity and Food programme' (HAF) during the Christmas school holidays after having delivered a successful summer holiday scheme aimed at children in receipt of free school meals;
- Max Associates was selected to undertake the leisure management options appraisal. The Members' Working Group re-convened in November 2021 to finalise the evaluation criteria. The consultants have shortlisted four options and will be undertaking a detailed evaluation of each of these in early 2022;
- 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. The examination is now underway and will run until May 2022;
- In December 2021, the Cabinet approved an early stage Local Plan public consultation. This goes live on Friday 4th February and closes Sunday 20th March;
- Work is progressing on the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan project, which is split into two discrete parts, (1) feasibility assessments; and (2) a framework masterplan. The former examines key issues affecting the town centre such as the changing nature of uses in the high street, parking demand and capacity and the future impact on transport modes of achieving zero carbon. The Council has completed an assessment of possible changes to uses in the town centre and an updated Cirencester Town Centre Health Check. In December 2021, the Council commissioned a consultant to prepare a Framework Masterplan which will bring the whole project to life and invite local communities to engage and shape the future of their town centre during 2022;
- The Housing Team continues to actively participate in a number of countywide funding bids, including the Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022- 2025 (RSI 2022-25) which was launched November 2021. This funding, typically released on an annual basis, has been released as three year funding in order to provide stability. A Working Group has been set up to discuss how the Adult Homelessness pathway can be shaped over the lifetime of this fund, with the ultimate aim of ending rough sleeping for all.

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 October 2021, Cabinet considered a refresh of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and draft budget proposals for 2022/23, as a basis for consultation with the community from 5 October to 19 November 2021. The budget sets out the financial envelope for the Corporate Plan, which details how the Council will deliver against all of its adopted aims, priorities and principles. The Council used a wide range of communications channels to share the key budget messages and highlight the consultation to as many residents, businesses and community organisations as possible, encouraging them to take part. An edition of Cotswold News was delivered to all households across the District, and the consultation was promoted both online (the Council's website and social media, e-letters, and the use of video and webinars) and in person (Town and Parish fora, and promotional stands in Cirencester, Bourton-on-the-Water, Moreton-in-Marsh and Tetbury). The Council received 432 responses to the consultation, an increase of 106 responses on the consultation last year. Overall, respondents agreed with the Council's approach to balancing the budget and delivering its priorities by small increases in Council Tax together with generating more money from new investments including inviting local people and communities to invest in initiatives, and by applying a principle of setting our fees and charges to ensure they are not subsidised by other taxpayers.

In December 2021, Cabinet considered the high level options on the future use of the Trinity Road offices, Cirencester, accelerated by home-working during the Covid-19 pandemic and the adoption of the Agile Working strategy. Detailed proposals showing revised allocation of office space have been shared with Cabinet Members for agreement, and wider staff consultation has since been completed. Based on the modelling, it is likely nearly 40% of the existing space occupied by the Council can be released for alternative use. Options have therefore been considered for repurposing this space or relocating the offices to free up the whole site for redevelopment with a focus on how the Council can use this asset to deliver against its priorities, specifically carbon reduction, commercial investment to underpin the financial sustainability of the Council and delivery of affordable housing. At its meeting, Cabinet agreed to actively market the estimated 30 - 40% spare space generated for commercial tenants, providing both revenue savings and a revenue return for the Council, as well as

implementing some of the carbon measures such as installing solar PV, lighting and smaller measures in the office buildings which should achieve a reduction in carbon emissions of approximately 59CO₂t per year (20%), whilst a feasibility study to assess options for roof repairs or replacement, incorporating options for insulation and reduction in heat loss is undertaken. A report seeking approval to proceed with the implementation and funding for the new office layout is expected at Cabinet and Full Council in March 2022.

Over the last year, the Council has taken steps to move to cashless parking including contactless, card, by phone or using an app at all council owned car parks using a phased approach. Moving to cashless parking has multiple benefits; it will support the Council's carbon reduction commitment and reduce the costs associated with cash collection and vandalism of pay and display machines. The first two phases have been completed and include 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. Over the summer months, some customers were unable to pay for car parking by payment card at the payment machines, while others 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. Consequently, Phase 3 of the project has been paused while technical issues are resolved.

In December 2021, the Cabinet received a report on the options for parking enforcement once the contract with the Council's current provider, APCOA ends in March 2022. Although the report acknowledged that APCOA generally performs well in its duties and also 'adds value' by reporting to the Council issues such as sign displacements and damaged street furniture, it also recognised that the importance of the service in safeguarding the income and reputation of the Council. The Cabinet agreed that the function should be brought back in-house to allow for a closer alignment of the function/activities to the Council's priorities, including the Climate Change Emergency; as well as facilitating improvements in the car park service through closer alignment of the in-house enforcement service and the car park management team. APCOA staff transferred to Publica on 31 December 2021.

The Council submitted an Expression of Interest to the government for £162,500 of funding for Changing Places Toilets (CPTs). Research conducted by the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers indicated that country parks, open spaces, tourist attractions, and transport networks are where users would like to see new CPTs. If approved, the funding will be used for CPTs in the Abbey Grounds, Cirencester; Cotswold Farm Park, Guiting Power; Cotswold Country Park and Beach, North Cerney; and Birdland, Bourton-on-the-Water. The toilets are larger and accessible to people who cannot use standard accessible toilets, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches, and space for carers. The Council is awaiting the outcome of the bid.

The Council recognises that communication is key to establishing excellent working relationships and working alongside our partners to deliver services, as well as engaging our communities and supporting them to take responsibility for the environment around them. Town and Parish councils were invited to attend one of the two Town and Parish forums taking place at Trinity Road, Cirencester and Moreton Area Centre (MAC) in October 2021. The focus of the events was on improving relationships and sharing good practice, and how the Council can support Town and Parish Councils more generally; although other topics that arose on the night included planning and the budget. Feedback from participants was gathered via a survey which has indicated that 89% of those surveyed were satisfied and found the events helpful. One suggestion from attendees was that the Council could play a role in promoting good practice and connecting Town and Parish councils. The Council has started to look at how to involve Town and Parish councils as key speakers at future events. A

schedule of engagement events was drafted but the forum planned for January/February has been delayed to March 2022 due to the Omicron variant and the Campden and Vale District Ward Election.

In March 2021, Cabinet approved the creation of the Civic Pride Programme for a two year period, which was 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. Two new Clean and Green officers started in November 2021, supporting the Lead Enviro-crime Officer. The team will act as the link between the Council, Councillors and communities developing and delivering initiatives, campaigns and educational programmes as well as supporting and working with partners and organisations. So far, they have been out and about working with other community workers including the Police. In a joint venture, the Clean and Green team and Police Community Support Officers have contacted schools to arrange talks on litter picking to take place in the New Year. In addition, 31 Town and Parish councils have signed up to be community litter picking hubs and equipment and tabards are on-order to distribute to these hubs. The Clean and Green programme board met on 8 November 2021 and agreed a soft launch campaign to Members, Town and Parish councils and staff before Christmas and a public launch in Spring 2022.

A village warden for Bourton on the Water was also recruited and started in October. The aim of the role is to ensure visitors, businesses and residents respect the local area; and to improve the local environment and promote community cohesion.

Some areas of the District are susceptible to flooding, causing distress and anxiety to those affected. During winter of 2020/21 several locations in Cirencester, South Cerney and Bledington and properties in Siddington, Mickleton, Moreton in Marsh, Daglingworth, Coberley and Adlestrop were severely affected by flooding. One of the Council's aims is to support both residents and businesses by providing advice and guidance, and promoting and delivering flood mitigation measures where it is able to. Following Cabinet approval in July 2021, the Flood Warden programme has been launched in which the Council will provide a supportive role. The Council is working in partnership with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) and town and parish councils to recruit local volunteer wardens to help to improve local flood preparation and responses. The Council will provide training, PPE, best practice guidance and other support to volunteer flood wardens to ensure early intervention and to help create sustainable responses to flooding. The Flood Wardens will be the first line of defence, letting the relevant authorities know about flood risks, flood events and also sharing information with their own communities. By working collaboratively with local partners to set up the Flood Warden scheme and holding a local 'flooding forum', the Council aims to encourage action across the organisations responsible for flood management.



Respond to the climate crisis

The Context

The CoP26 climate conference in Glasgow in November was an important event in making progress towards international agreement and commitment to climate action. Nonetheless it must be recognised that the level of international commitments made, and plans for action, falls a very long way short of the speed and scale of action necessary to adhere to the aspirational target agreed at the Paris CoP in 2015, of not more than 1.5 degrees of global heating above pre-industrial levels.

The national regulatory and policy context for the Council's action on the climate crisis is largely unchanged from that reported in the previous quarter, other than the long-awaited Heat and Buildings Strategy issued by BEIS in October. The Heat and Buildings Strategy sets out the high level direction for reducing carbon emissions from UK buildings, with a focus on fabric efficiency and low-carbon heating – principally meaning heat pumps but also, controversially, looking at hydrogen boilers (which many commentators regard as an inappropriate use of hydrogen fuel).

Outside of national legislation, the pace of change and scale of commitment to carbon emissions reduction from private sector actors continues to accelerate. Examples are a £3bn investment into UK hydrogen production from wind and solar sources announced in October, an international industrial coalition plan to fully decarbonise steel, shipping and aviation, and global cement producers' pledge to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.

Actions we are taking

The Council's Climate Emergency Strategy of September 2020 identified the Council's different spheres of influence over carbon emissions in the District. These range from those that are relatively easier to tackle (actions under the direct control of the Council, such as decarbonising the Council's own buildings, fleet and operations), which have relatively limited impact on District-wide emissions, through to those that are hard to tackle, but which could have much greater impact on District-wide emissions (enabling District-wide action and engaging with all stakeholders, such as issuing so-called 'climate bonds' to invest in carbon reduction activity).

Direct Control

The key projects are the comprehensive decarbonisation of the District's leisure centres, opportunities for reducing carbon emissions from the Ubico waste fleet, minimising carbon emissions as a result of changes to the use of Trinity Road offices, improving the energy performance of Council property currently let to commercial tenants, and providing 'carbon literacy' training to Council officers and Members.

The £1.2m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding (BEIS) 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. The installer is now under contract with a firm price programme and is on site at the two leisure centres undertaking preparatory works. One

challenge facing all such installations is delays in the supply chain of heat pumps, solar panels etc, caused by a variety of factors including Covid, global demand, bottlenecks in microchip manufacture and shipping delays. Nonetheless, completion of the works is still planned for March 2022, although BEIS has permitted extensions if justified by circumstances.

The leisure centres will in the future be heated with almost no gas consumption, with heating instead provided by electrically powered air source heat pumps resulting in both savings in carbon emissions and energy costs for the Council.

In December, Cabinet considered the high level options on the future use of the Trinity Road offices in Cirencester and agreed to actively market the estimated 30 - 40% spare space generated for commercial tenants, providing both revenue savings and a revenue return for the Council, as well as implementing some of the carbon measures such as installing solar PV, lighting and smaller measures in the office buildings which should achieve a reduction in carbon emissions of approximately 20%. A further report is expected at Cabinet and Council in March 2022.

A selection of Publica staff have now received 'carbon literacy' training, with plans to roll the training out more widely across the partnership starting in November.

Indirect Control

The Council's agile working policy has reduced carbon emissions from staff commuting (although, it is difficult to accurately measure the savings achieved), and the Council is in the process of procuring electricity sourced from renewable generation. In addition, discussions are continuing with the developers of ground-mounted, utility-scale solar farms in the District, offering the potential both for Council direct investment in line with the Recovery and Investment Strategy and potentially the supply of solar power to Council premises, through projects that will deliver substantial carbon savings for the District.

Place Shaping

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 is underway starting with Council-owned public car parks and Council offices; the contractor is expected to report back shortly on the first detailed locations. The project illustrates one of the key challenges faced by many carbon reduction projects, namely grid connection. As more processes in society become electrified (particularly transport and heat), as well as building new 'distributed' renewable electricity generation such as solar or wind farms, greater pressure will be put on the electricity distribution networks – both in terms of physical infrastructure and the ability of network operators to respond to increasing numbers of queries and requests for new connections, at domestic and commercial scale. At District-wide scale, the renewable energy resource and policy study has now been completed, and shows the theoretical technical potential for the District to generate 100% of its expected 2050 energy demand, from a mixture of solar, wind and biomass. These issues around the use of renewable source energy in the District will now start to be aired through the public consultation on the Local Plan partial update.

District-wide enabling

In July 2021, Cabinet agreed to pledge that it will issue the Council's Community Investment, using the Community Municipal Investment (CMI) model; and was one of the first five UK councils to become part of the Green Finance Institute and Abundance Investment's Local Climate Bond campaign. The CMI model is a way for local communities to invest in climate change projects to support the Council to meet its climate change targets. Initially, the Community Investment will finance the roll-out of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the District and the installation of energy efficiency measures, included in Solar PV, at the Council's Trinity Road offices in Cirencester. A project team is now in place and progress is being made with the legal elements of the bond as we move towards the first issue in 2022-23.

A Gloucestershire-wide Local Authority partnership is taking forward an 18-month project to build LA capacity to deliver support to able-to-pay owner-occupiers, supporting them to invest in energy efficiency and decarbonisation works in their own homes. The project has been awarded grant funding and is now underway with this Council leading the workstream on market analysis and business planning for a future one-stop-shop retrofit service for Cotswold residents. New collaboration agreed with bodies outside of the core partners (Ashden Trust, and the not for profit technical support organisation owned by the LGA, Local Partnerships) is enhancing the project.

Work begins shortly on the revised Cotswold Design Guide and heritage retrofit guidance, the latter supported by Historic England. Linked to the home retrofit support is the development of a 'Solar Together Cotswold' scheme which, if adopted by Council, will give Cotswold District residents access to least-cost high quality rooftop solar PV.

Engaging

This is a very important part of the Council's overall climate crisis response, and there is much work to do to help build confidence and momentum among all District-wide stakeholders, from residents to businesses and public sector bodies. We envisage the creation of a District-wide network of individuals and organisations interested in the climate challenge, supported by the Council's newly procured digital engagement platform.

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 started 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 2020, 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.

An expressions of interest exercise resulted in Bromford being selected as the preferred RP, with the Kemble site to be taken forward via a Contractual Joint Venture (JV). The draft JV is being finalised; however, the Kemble site has been paused, and alternative schemes will now be considered for delivery first. Bromford has started work to appoint architects for development of an alternative scheme.

In December 2021, Cabinet received a report on the potential uses of the Cotswold Club, Cirencester including options to utilise it for homelessness accommodation, social housing and residential accommodation. As the property is a grade II listed building, it would require listed buildings consent, and the cost of conversion taking into account the Council's zero carbon commitment would make these options financially unviable. Based on the high level cost appraisal, the financial risks associated with the conversion of a listed property and the opportunity to release capital for reinvestment in carbon zero affordable homes on other sites in the District, Cabinet approved the recommendation that the property be disposed of on the open market in its current condition, and that the capital receipts from the sale be earmarked for investment in carbon zero affordable housing developments on other sites in the District.

In March 2021, an allocation of approximately £332,000 from commuted sums grants was approved for a scheme of 14 homes at Sunground, Avening, which will deliver this rural exception site as a 100% low carbon affordable housing development. The scheme has received Homes England funding through Bromford which is developing the scheme on behalf of Gloucestershire Rural Housing Association (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 biodiversity measures. The grant agreement has been signed off, and work on site is expected to commence 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. A planning application was submitted during Q2 for the redevelopment and was approved by the Planning Committee in December 2021. The Stockwells regeneration scheme represents an opportunity for the Council and Bromford to create the first social rented, Modern Methods of Construction (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.

As part of the Council's Affordable housing delivery programme, the Council is promoting innovative alternative methods of providing rural affordable housing such as encouraging community-led housing approaches. This includes working with Community Land Trusts through the Council's Community-Led Housing Enabler and identifying opportunities for the Council to directly deliver rural housing, including through the use of its own land. The allocation of small revenue grants to community groups will support this objective by providing both a start-up grant to assist groups in forming, gaining membership and incorporating, and a pre-development grant to progress their project to the planning application stage. In November 2021, the Cabinet agreed to authorise the determination of allocations from the Council's Community Housing Fund (CHF) small grants fund to an Allocations Panel consisting of a number of Public officers as well as the Council's Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness. Two grants will be made available to community-led housing groups and established organisations to bid for, firstly a start-up grant of up to £1,000 and secondly a predevelopment (second stage) grant of up to £10,000. The initial start-up fund is for new groups to help them get established and can pay towards the costs

of incorporation, legal advice, capacity building, publicity or general costs such as meeting room hire. The second stage grant is aimed at established incorporated groups/organisations that are at the site and planning stages of their housing development project. It is aimed at helping fund up-front costs which may be incurred in trying to bring housing projects forward. This could include the appointment of consultants, financial feasibility appraisals, solicitor's fees, setting up a website or planning application fees.

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 is being 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 were agreed with Bromford and Aspire (support provider), and a dedicated staff member is providing one to one support for the five clients that have been successfully accommodated. The team is currently searching for the right properties for the one remaining place on the scheme due to the changing circumstances of the initial clients placed. The initial contract for the support element for this project ended in December 2021, therefore the Housing Team has been exploring matched funding options with Aspire. The Council set aside a healthy amount for the project in 2020 and has also received a Homelessness Prevention Grant Uplift amount in 2021, so the current underspend for year one combined with a portion of the Homelessness Prevention Grant uplift, can be utilised for our 'matched' funds element to extend the project into a second year. The project has proved successful and all three partners are keen to provide longevity with the potential to expand to include more units, therefore longer term funding options should be considered.

The Housing Team continues to actively participate in a number of countywide funding bids, including the Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022- 2025 (RSI 2022-25) which was launched November 2021. This funding has typically been released on an annual basis however, Central Government has decided to release this as three year funding in order to provide stability and to meet its aims to end rough sleeping. A Working Group has been set up now that details of the funding have been released to discuss how the Adult Homelessness pathway can be shaped over the lifetime of this funding, with the ultimate aim of ending rough sleeping for all.

The Council had identified one of its own properties as a potential opportunity to be converted into supported accommodation which was discounted due to the costs and difficulties in changing the use of the building; and a second property identified as suitable for supported housing has now been pledged to the Afghanistan Resettlement Programme. The Housing Team will continue to work with colleagues in Estates and wider countywide partners to formulate a plan to address the gap in supported accommodation in the District.



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 government's National Planning Policy Framework has introduced new guidance which increases the importance of climate change adaptation and mitigation and the role that Local Plans play. This is in addition to the Clean Growth Strategy, Environment Act (2021) and UK Net Zero Strategy which 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 Cotswold District 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 2020 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. A new Local Development Scheme (LDS), published on the Council's website, sets out key stages in the local plan making process. A Local Plan Programme Board, that has membership of all political parties, will monitor the progress of the Local Plan partial update.

In December 2021 the Council's Cabinet approved an early stage Local Plan public consultation. This goes live on Friday 4th February and closes Sunday 20th March.

The Council has begun the process of updating its evidence base and studies to support the partial update of the Council's Local Plan, including:

- the draft Cotswold District Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy, which was open for public consultation during July and August. The GI Strategy forms part of the Local Plan evidence base and responds to the Council's Climate and Ecological emergencies and corporate priorities to improve health and wellbeing. A summary of comments received together with a final edit of the Strategy is now underway;
- an updated Sustainability Appraisal - this is a statutory and iterative process in the production of the Local Plan; it helps to ensure policies promote sustainable patterns of development. An early stage appraisal will support the public consultation in January 2022;
- an updated Habitats Regulation Assessment - like the Sustainability Appraisal this is a statutory and iterative process; it will examine the effect of proposed development on protected habitats. A scoping document will support the public consultation in January 2022;
- an updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment - a key piece of evidence that helps to ensure proposed development is located away from areas that flood.
- an updated Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) which seeks to identify land that could be suitable for allocation in the updated Local Plan. This was published in November 2021 and local communities will be able to comment on the document through the Local Plan consultation scheduled in January 2022.

Work continues on the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan project which was officially rebooted in January 2021. The project is split into two discrete parts, (1) Feasibility assessments; and (2) a framework masterplan. The former examines key issues affecting the town centre such as, the changing nature of uses in the high street, parking demand and capacity and the future impact on transport modes of achieving zero carbon. The Council has already completed an assessment of possible changes to uses in the town centre and an updated Cirencester Town Centre Health Check; both documents will be available via the Council's website in early 2022. Further feasibility assessments will be carried out in 2022. In December 2021, the Council commissioned a consultant to prepare a Framework Masterplan which will bring the whole project to life and invite local communities to engage and shape the future of their town centre. The work aligns and supports the Council's Local Plan partial update and Cirencester Town Council's Emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

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 authorised officers to work in partnership with other organisations on the feasibility of the projects in the Strategy. Specialist Leads for each of the three themes (Healthier District, Connected Community and Active Environment) were identified and developed action plans for each area. In addition, a Programme Board was established and had its first meeting in September 2021.

The actions and projects are currently being prioritised to determine whether they are short, medium or long term projects. In the New Year, the Board plans to invite external stakeholders to a workshop in order to introduce the programme and also to determine what added value each partner could bring e.g. resources and funding.

Concurrently, a leisure management options appraisal which also includes the Council's Corinium Museum is being undertaken to determine the most suitable delivery model, contract scope and contract terms for the Council's leisure facilities, when the current contract expires. The first Members' Working Group was held in July 2021 to determine the key drivers for undertaking a Leisure Management Options appraisal, for example to increase participation, which has been used to form part of the consultant's brief to help narrow down the number of potential operating models for consideration. Max Associates was selected to undertake the work with a kick off meeting in October 2021. The Members' Working Group re-convened in November to finalise the

evaluation criteria for the study. At this stage consultants have shortlisted four options and will be undertaking a detailed evaluation of each of these in early 2022.

The Council's new approach to community grants, Crowdfund Cotswold, launched in February 2021, with the first funding round ending in June 2021. Following the round two deadline for Crowdfund Cotswold on 15 September, the Autumn round projects have run funding campaigns during the quarter. Five projects passed Spacehive's verification process, of which four were awarded pledges by this Council, totalling £10,300. Three projects have now hit their funding targets, and all three are directly related to the Council's priorities on climate change and ecological emergencies. There are a number of interesting projects that were not quite in a position to campaign this quarter, so we are confident there will be some strong projects in the Spring round. Some projects have levered in pledges from local businesses, as well as residents, which is a positive step in developing better awareness and buy-in to the Crowdfund approach.

The Council is taking an asset-based community development approach aiming to support more resilient, well-connected and active communities. In September 2021 the Council employed its first Community Builder, and a second post will be recruited in Spring/Summer 2022. The purpose of these roles is to connect with local communities, to speak and listen to residents, to help bring people together who feel passionate about doing something in their community and encourage them to take action themselves. Community Building aims to empower local people to shape their local area in a way that is right for them using their skills, knowledge and passion as well as other existing assets. This initiative is working in partnership with the Council's 'Green and Clean' programme.

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 secured just under £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 'Cotswold New Start' launched in October 2021 and has employed two Youth Support Project Officers. The Project Officers are working closely with Cirencester and Cheltenham Job Centres and other relevant local and national partners, and received just under 20 referrals in the first 10 weeks.

The Council is a part of the Cotswold Integrated Locality Partnership (ILP). ILPs are partnerships made up of senior leaders of health and social care providers and local government. They work with each other to bring services together and plan how they are delivered to their local populations. The Cotswold ILP has identified two priorities: *Building a better community of support - Healthy Lifestyles & Prevention priority* and *Building a better community of support - Social Isolation, Loneliness & Frailty priority*. The ILP is taking a Population Health Management approach to identifying priorities and developing interventions, and presents excellent levels of engagement from wider partners including housing providers and third sector organisations enhanced during Covid. Similarly to the Council, the ILP is taking an asset-based community development approach by building on existing assets across the District as well as active involvement of patients/residents. The ILP is currently looking at the wider determinants of health and in particular the impact of deprivation on health and wellbeing outcomes in specific areas of the District.

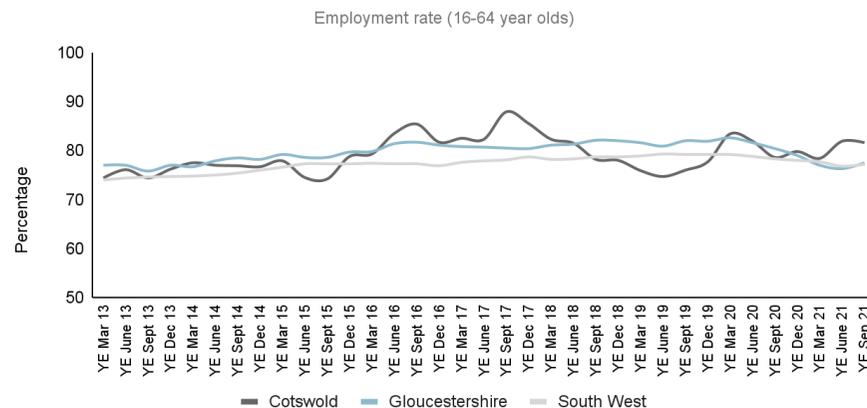
The Community Wellbeing team was commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council and worked in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector to deliver the 'Holiday Activity and Food programme' (HAF) during the Christmas school holidays after delivering a successful summer holiday scheme aimed at children in receipt of free school meals. The County Council secured match-funding which enabled us again to have an open access offer for all young people locally to create a more inclusive offer without losing the focus on disadvantaged young people and children. The scheme is funded by the Department for Education, and the purpose of the programme is to make sure children are entertained, active, educated, safe, and fed during the Christmas holidays. Structured youth activities as well as access to a range of free ticketed offers like Cotswold Farm Park, the Barn Theatre, Westonbirt Arboretum, the Corinium Museum and many more were planned and successfully delivered between Monday 20 and Thursday 23 December. In addition, a healthy food box offering recipes as well as baking kits and transport options were offered to families. The scheme will be evaluated and an infographic will be available in the next report. The Department for Education has committed to fund this scheme for another three years until 2025.



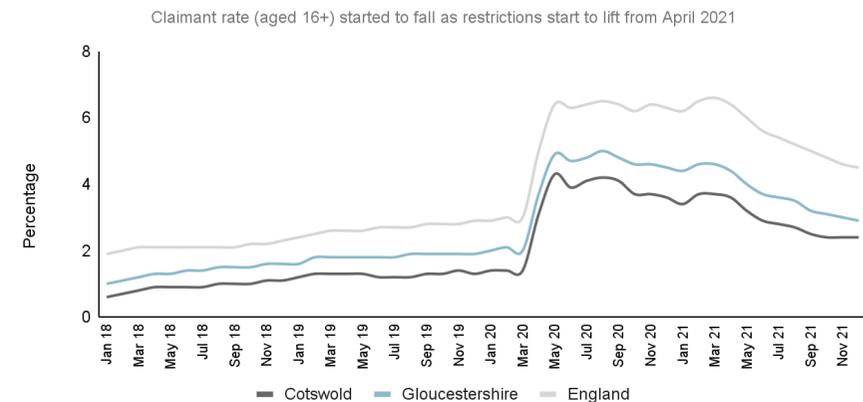
Enable a vibrant economy

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, although has fallen back in recent months. The true picture has been masked by the Job Retention Scheme (furlough) which was extended until the end of September 2021. It will be a number of months before the full effect of the ending of the scheme will be known.



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 were furloughed during the pandemic, but with the easing of restrictions that number fell sharply and many businesses are now reporting difficulties in recruiting. The number of job postings in the District in November 2021 was at its highest since January 2019, running at over three times the level of January 2019, indicating both that the economy has bounced back sharply but also highlights the issues being faced

with recruitment in some key sectors like hospitality, agriculture and care. There are also 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.

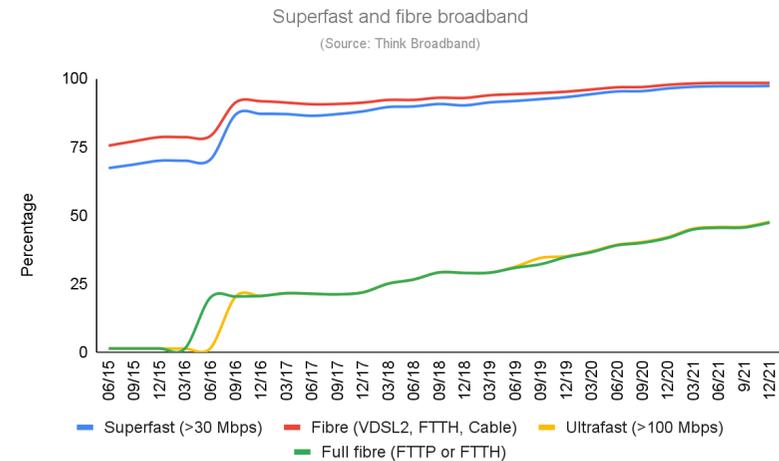
Gigaclear is also onsite in Cirencester and Westonbirt. However, there are still some areas where broadband is poor and even superfast connectivity is not sufficient for some businesses to operate in the way they wish to. The District Council is working with the Fastershire Project to address these areas.

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 Green Economic Growth Strategy 2020 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 GFirst LEP. Most recently, the Group considered the latest (December 2021) six monthly update on progress against the Green Economic Growth Strategy in advance of it being presented to Cabinet and looked at what its priorities should be for 2022. The Group agreed it was most important to focus on two areas - how businesses can reduce their carbon footprint and the attracting and retaining of talent.

Much of the focus over the last year or so has been on helping town centres to reopen and recover 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. The Council was 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 approved indicative



allocations of £50,000 for physical works to town centres and £30,000 to assist town centres to be more digitally resilient. The Council approved a range of town centre 'beautification' projects submitted by Town and Parish Councils. Of the 23 projects submitted, 19 were approved, and these projects are now at various stages of delivery. An Economic Recovery intern was recruited for an initial 10-week period and her contract was extended until the end of October to assist with the delivery of 'Welcome Back Fund' projects. Part of the intern's work was to assess the health of town centres across the District and, in particular, to assist with the town centre health check as part of the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan. Her work showed that Cirencester has a town centre vacancy rate of 11%, 3% below the national average of 14%. Of the 38 vacant units, 15 were either under offer or have strong interest shown in them. It has been encouraging to see a number of new entrants opening in the town centre in recent months. The smaller towns within the District have much lower vacancy rates and none of these are of concern at this time, although we need to be mindful of the pace of change on the high street.

The Council has also been working with GFirst LEP to deliver a digital grant scheme to assist businesses with a grant of up to £3,000 to improve their digital capability, which has been funded by each District Council contributing £60,000 from the Government's Additional Restrictions Grant; the scheme is being administered by the LEP. Eighteen grants were approved from this fund from a range of businesses across the District. The scheme has now closed.

The visitor economy, a major sector of the local economy, continued to recover during the Autumn with evidence of strong demand; visitor numbers to the Cotswolds.com website were 74% up on pre-Covid levels in 2019. However, the emergence of the Omicron variant dampened confidence and demand during the Christmas period, which is traditionally a crucial trading time for hospitality businesses. Businesses reported cancellations of Christmas parties and staff absences due to Covid isolation as significant factors, and going forward it will be difficult for local tourism businesses to plan ahead with so much uncertainty over potential trading levels.

During the Autumn Cotswolds Tourism's Destination Management Plan was updated (www.cotswolds.com/dmp). Cotswolds Tourism's overarching objectives are now all intimately linked with sustainability: Supporting local businesses to achieve sustainable growth; spreading visitor numbers geographically and seasonally; championing the move to digital; striving to maximise the benefits of tourism, while minimising the impacts; and efforts to make the destination more accessible and inclusive.

In December 2021, the sustainable tourism survey was launched (www.cotswolds.com/survey), and is being promoted via the Council's newsletter and social media. The survey was designed to see how visitor economy businesses can be helped to take steps to becoming more sustainable, and understanding the barriers. It builds on the results of a previous survey that indicated that, 'green tourism and sustainability' is an area in which businesses would particularly benefit from training/support with 43% of those surveyed responding positively. A business' 'green credentials' are becoming increasingly important to the decision making process of visitors; nearly half of UK residents said that Covid-19 lockdown has made them more eco-conscious when it comes to booking holidays.

In December, Cabinet agreed to renew the grant funding of Visitor Information Centres (Chipping Campden, Stow-on-the-Wold, Tetbury and Bourton-on-the-Water) for 18 months starting in April 2022. Over the next quarter, the Council will be supporting the VICs to agree priorities, and to encourage a proactive approach, becoming digitally enabled, and working to improve the visitor economy of the local area.

In addition to the Covid-19 related work that has taken place during the quarter to support businesses, as well as promoting tourism, 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. The Council is working with:

- the Royal Agricultural University and their development partner Henry Boot Developments (HBD) to bring forward their Triangle/University Gate site. The Council's Chief Executive, the Cabinet Member for Economy, and the Economic Development Lead have met with the new Vice Chancellor at the RAU and a workshop is planned for February 2022 where ideas for the site will be explored.
- the new owners of the former Mitsubishi site in Cirencester, now renamed Watermoor Point. The purchaser is marketing the warehouse and office elements separately to let, with the latter being serviced offices.
- 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 Council and GFirst will continue to support ZeroAvia in its continued growth.
- Bathurst Developments in relation to the first phase of employment land at The Steadings development. They have appointed a developer partner who is confident about the demand for the units.

The construction of the Applied Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College moves on at pace and is anticipated to be completed in early Spring 2022. 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. The College has also been awarded £4m of funding from the Government for a new T-level building which will help to provide high level skills in the District. T Levels are based on the same standards as apprenticeships, designed by employers and approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. It is equivalent to 3 A-levels and involves an industry placement.

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. The examination is now underway and will run until May 2022. 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.