

Meeting the Challenge 2:
Together We Can

Gloucestershire County Council's
Strategy 2015-2018

(2017/18 update)

January 2017

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1. Foreword by the Leader and the Chief Executive

These are times of unprecedented change for Gloucestershire County Council and our partners. We are facing considerable challenges at the same time as enormous opportunities. The challenges take the form of rising demand for the services we provide to the most vulnerable children, adults and families at the same time as we face continued reductions to our funding. The opportunities are about our relationships and the ways we can work together with local people and communities, with our partners and with Central Government to improve outcomes for local people and communities.

Under our strategy - Meeting the Challenge: Together We Can - we have continued to deliver significant savings from the Council's budget, ensuring we remain financially resilient and freeing up resources to respond to changing patterns of need and demand. Although the need to make tough choices continues, this means we can continue to respond to those who are the most vulnerable and in the greatest need of our help and support. For example, for the second year running, we will be investing additional resources into extra social workers to work with vulnerable children and their families. We are also increasing the number of social workers who are able to respond to and help those with severe mental health problems.

Alongside this, we are working ever more closely with our partners across the public sector and beyond to shape the future of health and social care, grow the local economy and develop the skills we need and to make public services as effective and efficient as possible.

This update of our strategy reflects the progress we have made and sets out our response to the new challenges and opportunities that are presenting themselves.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne
Leader

Peter Bungard
Chief Executive

2. Our Vision and Values

Our vision is to use the resources available to us to improve quality of life for Gloucestershire people and communities.

Our plans are built on three clear values that have informed the direction we are taking and the decisions that we will make in implementing this strategy:

- Living within our means
- Doing the right thing
- Helping communities help themselves

Living within our means

We can't afford to spend money we haven't got. This means we have to focus on our priorities in order to manage our budgets and reduce our borrowing.

We will do that by:

- Being as efficient as possible and saving money by joining up with partners to increase our buying power and reduce costs.
- Making tough but necessary choices about the services we provide and about what we will and won't do.
- Implementing reductions to government grants locally – where government reduces funding for specific services, we will not be able to afford to subsidise those services locally.
- Reducing our debt and the cost it places on our revenue finances.

Doing the right thing

We will spend our money where the need is greatest and where we know it will make the biggest difference. We want to make sure local people get good outcomes from their services and we understand that it is the quality of the service that matters to local people, not who provides it.

Our focus will be on:

- Making a difference for the most vulnerable children, young people and adults.
- Providing the infrastructure and services that keep the county moving and working.
- Making decisions that take account of the long-term, as well as immediate challenges.
- Finding the best, most efficient way of delivering services. If someone else can do a better job or make the money go further, then we should make use of their skill and expertise.
- Constantly looking for opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

Helping communities help themselves

The Council is at its most effective when it is helping people to live successful lives as independently as possible and helping communities to help themselves. We believe giving power to local people gets better results and better value.

We will:

- Give individuals more say about the services and the support they receive.
- Encourage communities to do more themselves and giving them tools for community action.
- Recognise that some areas need more help than others and that, with a little support, they can get their ideas off the ground.
- Work with communities and partners to build their capacity so that they can do more for themselves.

3. Our Context

For most people in Gloucestershire outcomes are good and, if you look at the county as a whole, we have high levels of educational attainment and employment, good health and a high quality of life.

Nevertheless, we know that this is not everyone's experience, and that for those in greatest need, outcomes are much poorer. A significant number of people rely on the County Council and our partners to help to meet their needs and to live fulfilling lives. The number of vulnerable people is growing, creating more demand on Council services. This is because:

- The population is growing and people are living longer – The number of people in Gloucestershire aged over 85 whose day to day activities are limited a lot by long term illness and disability is predicted to rise by over a quarter by 2021.
- Medical advances – Children who are born with a disability are more likely to survive into adulthood and people can live much longer with a serious disability.
- Changes to community and family life – Families are more likely to live further away from each other than in previous generations. That makes it more difficult to care, for example, for an elderly parent who is beginning to struggle.
- Changing public expectations – The growth of the internet and social media mean that public services are much more visible to local people. The publicity surrounding a single incident somewhere in the country can increase demand for our services overnight. This is particularly true of those services that are concerned with keeping vulnerable children or adults safe.
- Despite its overall affluence, we have areas of Gloucestershire amongst the most deprived 10% in the country.

While much of this change is positive, it means that the circumstances in which our services were designed have changed radically. If we carry on trying to respond in the same ways, those services will become overwhelmed, cost more than we can afford, and give increasingly poor results for the people that rely on them.

Instead, we need a response that is suited to today's opportunities and challenges – one that fits with the way people live their lives, builds on the strengths of our communities and focuses the Council's resources where they can be most effective.

4. Our Funding

Currently, funding for Council services comes from two main sources: grant funding from Central Government and Council Tax from local residents. Based on announcements about public sector spending as a whole, we know that this funding will continue to reduce over the coming years. We also know that we will face unavoidable cost increases, increased demand for council services and other service pressures.

However, over the same period, changes to the way that councils are funded will give us more autonomy, more control over our income and more incentives to grow the local economy.

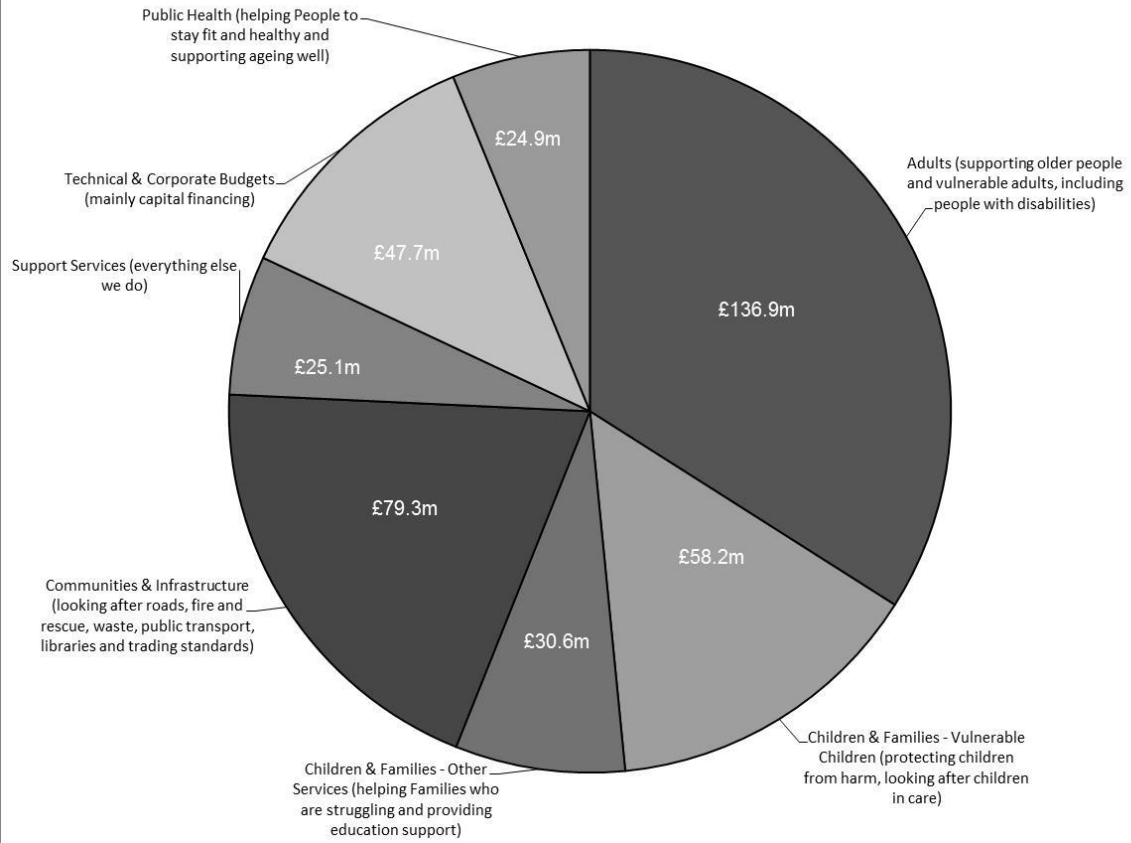
We remain committed to keeping Council Tax low and relentlessly pursuing every opportunity to reduce costs, improve the efficiency of all of our services and focus on the things that make the most difference for local people. We are also making targeted strategic investments to transform services that work with the most vulnerable people and families.

In line with national trends, we are seeing higher levels of demand for services for vulnerable people - children, families and adults. The past year has seen an increase in the number of referrals to safeguarding services, an increase in the number of children who need our support and ultimately an increase in the number of children coming into our care. There is a growing number of people living with long term conditions, such as dementia, and that increases the need for us to provide support.

As the diagram below shows, services for children and families and vulnerable adults together make up well over half of the Council's budget. For this reason, we cannot afford to exclude them from the need to make savings, but at the same time we are making targeted, strategic investments in key areas such as Children's Safeguarding, support for Children in Care and Adults with Mental Health Problems.

In recognition of these national pressures, the Government continues to offer us the opportunity to raise an additional levy on Council Tax to fund the growing cost of social care. For 2017, the Council has chosen to maintain the levy at 2%, which raises an additional £4.99 million for Adult Social Care services. We believe that by doing this at the same time as focussing relentlessly on outcomes, we can improve the way we support the most vulnerable people.

2017-18 Proposed Budget



5. Our Approach and Your Response

Faced with the need to continue to make the money we receive go further, we are, of course exploring every opportunity available to us. We will continue to focus on “getting our own house in order” - delivering services as efficiently as possible in order to minimise the impact of savings on our service users. However, we believe that efficiency alone is not enough, and along with other councils up and down the country, we need to make a fundamental shift in the way we deliver services to adapt them to today’s challenges and opportunities.

We have a 4-stage approach that describes how the Council works with individuals, families and communities to make sure that we are able to be there for the most vulnerable people when they most need our help.



Active Individuals

- Helping people to make the right life choices like being active and healthy
- Signposting people to what they need within their own communities

Active Communities

- Investing in community capacity and building on existing support
- Providing support for people to do more for themselves, their families and their communities

Getting people back to independence

- Providing intensive support for a quick recovery following an accident, illness, injury or crisis
- Effective short-term interventions that let families help themselves

Being there when we're needed most:

- Providing specialist support for those who really need our help
- Targeting long-term care on people with complex needs

We recognise that this approach has implications for Council partners, local communities and service users. In particular, we are working jointly with the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG) to ensure that our strategies align and a number of the objectives within this strategy are shared objectives that are also reflected in GCCG's draft Sustainability and Transformation Plan.

We know that we can't deliver this strategy alone. For that reason, before finalising this strategy we undertook an extensive engagement and consultation exercise involving over 2,700 local people through roadshows, community and staff workshops and an online questionnaire.

The results showed clear and consistent support for our proposed approach, and a willingness to work with us to make it happen. The results also helped us to identify those areas where we need to refine or develop our proposals. In particular, people gave us the following messages:

- When reviewing those buildings and areas of land that the Council no longer needs, we should consider all options for their future use including transferring them to community ownership and using them to generate income, as well as selling them in order to pay off debt.
- While people overwhelmingly support a move to provide more Council services and information online, we do need to keep opportunities for face-to-face or telephone contact for those people who do not have internet access and for those instances when personal contact is important.
- Individuals and communities are willing to take on a bigger role in helping people to stay independent longer, but the Council has an important role to play in acting as a catalyst and making it easier for people and groups to take on new roles.
- The Council needs to give communities time and practical help to step forward in areas where we are stepping back.

All of the feedback received has helped us to develop this strategy further and to ensure that we are meeting our responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty to pay due regard to the needs of those groups whose characteristics are protected under the duty¹.

The following chapters describe how we are applying this approach and what it means for communities, services and service users.

¹ Full details of the consultation are available online at http://togetherwecan.gloucestershire.gov.uk/repository/documents/MTC2_Phase_1_Consultation_Report.pdf and a Due Regard Statement is available alongside the Cabinet Report

6. Active Individuals

Everyone can take steps to reduce the chances that they will need to rely on council support in future. By making healthy lifestyle choices, keeping active and planning for the future, people are less likely to end up needing our care and help.

The County Council can help people to stay active by providing access to information advice and support that can help them make the best choices for themselves and their families. When people have to deal with a crisis in their lives or need to make changes in order to remain independent, we will make sure they can access the advice they need.

Our evidence suggests that more people would prefer to use the Council's websites to access information, find out about a service or report an issue than are currently able to do so. When people want to do things like report a pothole or a broken streetlamp, find equipment to help them live independently or follow up a request for a service, it makes sense for the public and the Council if information can be easily accessed online.

We know that not everyone has internet access, and some people will still want to deal with a real person, so we won't phase out other ways of getting in touch entirely. By making more services available online, not only will we make it more convenient for those who prefer to access services via the internet, but we will also be able to save the Council money and free up phone lines for those who need them.

Since launching this strategy in April 2015, we have:

- Upgraded our People's Network PCs, making it easier for people to get online who don't have internet access at home.
- Introduced free Wi-fi to all our libraries.
- Made improvements to specific areas of the Council's website to make it easier to access services online. This has included making it easier to book vans into our Household Recycling Centres, apply for school places and find out about Adult Education courses online.
- Launched a new mobile application to help people with a Learning Disability into employment.
- Mapped the county to identify all those places where members of the public can access the internet securely and safely and targeted training on those areas of the county with the lowest levels of internet use.

Over the next year, we will:

- Continue to increase the range of services available over the Council's website and via social media whilst preserving other channels for those that cannot access services via the internet.

- Review all of the information, advice and guidance services that the Council commissions to make sure that they represent the best value for money and help to signpost people to appropriate sources of help.
- Continue to review Council buildings to provide more joined up access to advice, information and services and create opportunities to rationalise properties.
- Continue to build on the Council's strong track record of helping people with disabilities into paid employment and suitable accommodation.
- Continue to work with public and community transport providers, where necessary, helping them provide transport to essential services for vulnerable and isolated people at a price taxpayers can afford.
- Continue to review and refocus all the Council's public health contracts to focus on those which do most to improve the health of our local population and reduce dependence on social care in the long-term.
- Continue to improve signposting of services for vulnerable people and their carers, making sure that people have access to good quality information and advice.

We will measure success by:

- An increase in the number of people who access services on the Council's website.
- A reduction in the costs associated with contacting the Council.
- An increase in the number of people with learning disabilities who are in sustained employment.

7. Active Communities

With the help of family, friends and neighbours, most people manage without the council's support. Thousands of people across the county provide formal or informal care and without that support, the council would be completely unable to meet the demand for its services. Nevertheless, with an ageing population, the number of people who need help from the council is growing.

We believe that, working closely with colleagues from the NHS, we can help communities to identify those individuals who are at risk of becoming more vulnerable in future, then help those individuals to find support within their own communities that helps them remain as independent as possible.

We also know that, an unexpected change, crisis or emergency can lead to people or families struggling to cope with the everyday demands of life. When this happens, we want them to be able to find help, support and advice within their own communities.

We know some communities are better able to respond in this way than others, and that the Council has an important role to play in supporting community capacity building, promoting volunteering and helping community groups. We want to be as flexible and adaptable as possible to local need, working in partnership with parish councils and other community organisations at a local level.

Since launching this strategy, we have:

- Providing over 300 grants to help people and communities to be active.
- Provided 60 grants for activities for children and young people.
- Agreed an 'Active Communities' policy with partners to make sure that we work together to harness the energy of local communities to help themselves and provide support for people at risk of becoming lonely or isolated.
- Agreed a new Integrated Risk Management Plan for our Fire and Rescue service, focussed on working with communities to prevent emergencies and keep vulnerable people safe.
- Launched a pilot scheme through the Fire and Rescue service where fire safety volunteers can offer fire safety assessments in people's homes.
- Carried out £925k worth of repairs and improvements to local roads through 228 Highways schemes promoted and prioritised by local members, with more planned for completion before the end of the financial year.
- Worked with local schools to make sure there are enough places for a growing population of children and young people.

Over the next year, we will:

- Continue to encourage and help GPs and other professionals to signpost to sources of help within communities.
- Continue to pursue and develop strategies for working with individuals, communities and partners others to relieve the demand on social care services by helping people make the most of other support available to them.
- Work jointly with schools, Health, police and other partners to offer flexible, comprehensive, community-based support that targets prevention on those children and families who need it most.
- Continue to focus the Fire & Rescue Service on prevention, making our priority preventing emergencies before they happen, helping reduce fires and accidents and making more use of retained and community fire-fighters where possible to build community resilience.
- Work jointly with health partners on asset based community models, led by service-users, that build their capacity and give a strong voice to their members.
- Expand existing children's centres childcare facilities to meet government proposals to increase the nursery education entitlement to 30 hours a week for 3 and 4 years olds of working parents.
- Launch our targeted family support service operating from Children's Centres, providing preventative help focussed on those areas where children and families most need our support.
- Continue to reshape support to vulnerable adults utilising community based support wherever possible.

We will measure success by:

- Evaluating the impact of locally delegated budgets
- The number of community projects supported

8. Getting People Back to Independence

When people need our help, following an accident, emergency hospital admission or other crisis in their lives, our focus will be on giving them support to help them back to independence.

We already provide reablement to people following a stay in hospital, and do extremely well compared to other areas in getting people out of hospital quickly, once they are ready. However, we think we could do more to target the service on those most likely to benefit and to focus reablement on helping people to regain their skills, confidence and independence. We also want to continue to increase our use of Telecare technology to help people to look after themselves safely.

In the case of Children and Families, our focus will be on help that makes a lasting difference. Families can get caught up in referral and assessment processes when what they really need is quick access to help and support.

We want to keep families together within the community wherever possible, preventing family breakdown by providing more effective early support. At the same time we want to take more decisive action to improve outcomes for those children who are at risk.

Across our work with children and families, we are focussing strongly on the quality of the services we provide and the interventions we make. We encourage everyone involved in the lives of children and families to take responsibility for developing solutions together. This is helping to build a strong ethos and culture at all levels from the families themselves, to front-line workers and senior management.

Since launching this strategy, we have:

- Continued to work closely with local hospitals to make sure that people are discharged as quickly as possible once their medical treatment is finished and they are ready to return home or move into another care setting.
- Put in place new Domiciliary Care services that focus on improving people's outcomes and, whenever possible, increasing their levels of independence.
- Replaced Statements of Special Educational Need with new Education, Health and Care plans based on a more rounded view of a child's needs.
- Introduced a completely new approach to helping vulnerable children and young people get to school, college or training to make sure that access to education is considered as part of the wider needs of the young person and their family and our support is targeted where it is most needed.
- Won an award from the Municipal Journal in recognition of the joint work between service users and our Disability Team in reviewing the quality of service provision.

Over the next year, we will:

- Extend the provision and speed up the delivery of Telecare technology to promote independence and personal safety.
- Reshape reablement to improve performance and provide a stronger focus on helping people back to independence.
- Continue to work with schools, health and other partners to establish a clear, comprehensive early help offer for children and families.
- Continue to ensure that social workers can focus more on intervention and less on assessment, providing specialist support for those who really need our help.
- Complete the roll-out of our new Domiciliary Care contracts.
- Wherever possible, continue to move investment away from lengthy placements and into programmes that are proven to help turn children's and families' lives around.
- Work with our partners in the criminal justice sector to join up public protection and safeguarding practice in order to tackle child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
- Reduce youth offending and improve services for our care leavers
- Work with commissioners and providers across the whole health and social care system to deliver joined up care and contain the costs associated with a rapidly ageing population.
- Review all mental health contracts to ensure the right balance between community-based support, short term support and longer term care.
- Continue to review and where necessary, recommission public health contracts while ensuring that the remaining investment supports the Council's priorities within the strategic approach we have agreed with partners.

We will measure success by:

- An increase in the number of people remaining at home following Reablement
- A reduction in the number of children coming into Children's Safeguarding Services more than once

9. Being There When We're Needed Most

We want to be there for those who need us the most, even if that means making difficult decisions about what we can't afford to do.

We believe we can improve the way we provide long-term care to vulnerable people and those with physical and learning disabilities. Gloucestershire supports more people in nursing care than similar authorities. This reduces their independence and separates them from their friends, families and communities. It also often costs more than the alternatives. We are reducing the number of people we admit to nursing care, not only because it makes financial sense, but also because it is the right thing to do for the individuals concerned. We want to focus on providing community-based care that works alongside the support people get from their families and neighbours.

We also want to increase the choice people have over the care they receive. We are doing well in providing service users with personal budgets, but do not currently make as much use as we can of direct payments – putting people's budgets directly in their control.

We will continue to champion the needs of children across the Education system, working in partnership with schools to achieve good standards and to make sure Gloucestershire children get the start in life that they deserve.

We recognise that some families need specific help from us. The number of children in care has continued to rise nationally and locally, making it increasingly difficult to find suitable placements for vulnerable children when they are needed. While we will continue to work hard to try to reduce the number of children who need to come into care, we are also investing in new ways of working with those children and young people with the most complex needs. Our aim is to make sure that every child who needs it has access to a placement that addresses all their needs, provides stability and security, and works with them to improve their outcomes in a timely way.

Since launching this strategy, we have:

- Maintained a focus on performance and quality in the face of increased demand for both adult and children's services.
- Reduced high levels of admissions to residential and nursing care, bringing us closer in line with similar areas.
- Recruited more social workers so that they have smaller caseloads and can provide better support.
- Secured £1.5m through the Department of Education's Innovations Programme to develop different ways of working with vulnerable young people to improve their outcomes and reduce risk.

- Implemented a transformation plan for Children’s mental health with the Clinical Commissioning Group and other partners and piloted a schools-based approach to improving children’s mental health.
- Strengthened the line management of adult social care teams to ensure a strong focus on achieving the best possible outcomes with our resources.
- Renegotiated some of biggest contracts with social care providers to ensure that we continue to secure the best possible value for money for our most vulnerable service users.
- Created a specialist team to purchase all placements to ensure that the Council gets the best possible value for money.
- Rolled out Electronic Call Monitoring to providers of Domiciliary Care for people with disabilities and older people to make sure that service users get the support they need, to provide extra reassurance to families and to help with the accurate processing of payments.

Over the next year, we will:

- Invest significant additional resources into Children’s social care in order to achieve better outcomes for children and ensure quality remains high in the face of increased demand.
- Develop an Intensive Support & Intervention Service to support and improve outcomes for children coming into care with the most complex needs.
- Invest in additional social workers to help those with significant mental health problems.
- Continue to make more use of community-based care and rely less on residential and nursing care in order to bring us broadly into line with similar areas.
- Standardise the way we purchase and provide transport for vulnerable adults in order to get the best possible deal for the Council.
- Fully integrate services for children and adults with disabilities into a single, all-age, all-disability approach.
- Develop the capacity and capability of providers to care for and address the needs of adults, children and young people with challenging behaviour.
- Simplify the administration of direct payments across personal social care and health budgets.

We will measure success by:

- The number of people helped to become more independent
- The number of older people and vulnerable adults receiving ongoing support through domiciliary, residential and nursing care
- The number of children in care
- Feedback from service users about the quality of the care they receive
- An increase in the use of direct payments

10. Providing the Infrastructure for a Thriving Economy

Jobs, business and growth are crucial to the wellbeing of Gloucestershire people. As a council we will continue to work hard to support Gloucestershire businesses and employers.

We have a particular responsibility, working with partners in both the private and the public sector for creating the infrastructure and environment for a thriving economy. This includes maintaining safe, functioning roads, disposing of the county's rubbish, promoting economic development and growth, helping people to develop the skills for a thriving economy and securing investment in critical infrastructure.

It is important that Gloucestershire continues to be in a strong position to compete in the national and international economy. That means making sure we have an infrastructure that works and is attractive to potential investors, and that we have good plans ready to attract grant funding from central government and that we can provide a workforce with the skills are needed.

Since launching this strategy, we have:

- Continued to roll out superfast fibre broadband to nearly 90% of local homes and secured a further £2m of funding from Government for the next phase.
- Won Large Project of the Year award at the Institute of Highway Engineers West Mercia Awards for our work on improvements to the 'Cheltenham and Gloucester' and 'Walls' roundabouts.
- Continued to invest at least £2.1m a year in flood alleviation measures.
- Achieved full planning permission and agreed to project manage the Cinderford Northern Quarter road.
- Started work on the Elmbridge roundabout project with work scheduled to be completed by Autumn 2017.
- Attracted over £4m in Government funding and negotiated a deal with the Police and Crime and Commissioner that will unlock the regeneration of the Blackfriars area of Gloucester City Centre and the refurbishment of Shire Hall.
- Begun to introduce LED street lighting across the County, which will reduce the Council's carbon footprint and save £22m over the next 12 years.
- Continued to cash-protect the county's roads whilst saving money through the efficiencies and opportunities offered by our new Highways contract

Over the next year, we will:

- Continue to work with our partners, including GFirst (Gloucestershire's Local Economic Partnership), to accelerate economic growth and improve productivity.
- Support GFirst to deliver the Strategic Economic Plan
- Seek devolved powers over national funding streams for training, skills and apprenticeships in order to target resources more effectively, tackle worklessness and support vulnerable young people into employment by helping them to develop the skills that local employers need and value.
- Continue the roll out of next generation broadband across County with the aim that everyone in Gloucestershire will have access to the broadband services they need.
- Deliver further transport improvements across Gloucestershire, funded via the Government's Growth Deal process.
- Continue to work with District Councils to reduce and reuse waste, improve recycling rates and stop waste going to landfill
- Use the money available to ensure investment in highways is spent where it's most needed and that we maintain a safe and functioning road network
- Maximise resources secured through the planning system for investment in critical infrastructure, such as highways and schools.
- Use land the Council owns to create opportunities for economic growth and employment.

We will measure success by:

- The amount of external funding secured to support the County's infrastructure.
- Coverage of next generation access broadband.
- A reduction in the rate of residual household waste.
- The number of apprenticeships created.

11. Getting our Own House in Order

We want Gloucestershire County Council to continue to be a well run council that is transparent, accountable and focussed on what matters to local people at the same time as keeping our running costs to a minimum.

Over the past six years, we have done exactly that, making significant savings. We will do the same in the coming year. Our support services are increasingly focussed on helping to transform the way the Council works and its services, managing areas of highest risk and driving change on the front-line.

Since launching this strategy, we have:

- Delivered almost £42m in savings
- Rolled out new ICT through the Worksmart programme to support flexible working across the Council's workforce and provide opportunities to reduce the amount of office space needed.
- Continued to generate revenue savings through the sale of Council property that is no longer needed.
- Established a new partnership with Gloucester City Council to share services.

We will:

- Continue to develop our workforce to respond to the changing needs and challenges faced by the Council and the people it serves.
- Continue to use money from the sale of redundant Council buildings and land to repay debt and free up money for frontline services.
- Continue to reduce the council's running costs and the cost of support services.
- Aim to increase the amount of income the Council generates in order to keep it broadly in line with similar councils.
- Continue to offer traded services to schools and other partners where that can help to generate efficiencies of scale, make services more sustainable or create mutual benefit.
- Continue to reduce the county's carbon footprint and take opportunities to generate of renewable energy from the Council's land.
- Be ready to seek greater devolved powers for the Council and its partners in order to join up local public services, improve efficiency and deliver savings for local people.

We will measure success by:

- The proportion of the budget spent on 'non-frontline' services
- The amount of revenue saved through debt redemption
- A reduction in the Council's Carbon emissions