

**DRAFT**

# **Building Back Better in Gloucestershire**

## **Council Strategy**

**2022-26**

## Introduction

Gloucestershire is a great place to live, work and do business. Most local people enjoy a high standard of living, and our levels of health and wellbeing are comfortably above the average for the country. Generally, local people are well-educated, unemployment is low. Gloucestershire's economy is strong and resilient and the local environment is diverse and attractive.

During the pandemic, our communities have pulled together like never before. We have seen innovation on an unprecedented scale with council staff and communities stepping up to face new challenges. The lockdowns also gave us time to think about our future and how we want to build back better from Covid.

We want Gloucestershire to be a magnet for innovation and investment through a City Region that rivals the likes of Bristol, Cardiff and Swindon. A billion pounds of investment is going into our infrastructure to improve our connectivity with partners in the Western Gateway and beyond and attract businesses into our county. A key part of this is the A417 'Missing Link', which will boost our growth and prosperity by facilitating journeys both north and south of the county. We want Gloucestershire to be a hub of skills, entrepreneurship, and business. To do this we need to attract talent and nurture the talent that we already have. Our recent shortlisting for the Fusion Reactor Bid demonstrates that Gloucestershire is ready to be at the forefront of opportunity and progress by attracting greener investments and creating greener jobs.

As we build out of the pandemic, we must do so with a greener, healthier economy. In order to create a Greener Gloucestershire, everyone must have the opportunity to make greener choices. It may be driving an electric vehicle that uses one of the 1000 EV charging points we are installing across the county, or cycling along our 26 mile cycle spine that stretches from Stroud to Bishop's Cleeve. £20 million is being invested into the Arle Court Transport Hub to enable more journeys to central Cheltenham, Gloucester, the railway stations and the hospitals by sustainable modes of travel including by providing e-scooters, cycling routes, buses, electric charging points and park and ride. This project is a huge step in revolutionising Gloucestershire's sustainable travel infrastructure and will boost our local economy. A green economy is a modern, forward facing economy and that is what Gloucestershire needs for the future we want to build.

Everyone should have a fair chance to succeed – no matter where they come from. However, some communities and individuals in Gloucestershire still do not have equal access to opportunity. We must level up the areas that haven't felt that the gates of opportunity are open to them. We are holding a pioneering 'Build Back Better - Levelling Up Conference' with representatives from the communities that want to level up. This is an opportunity for community led action to ensure that Gloucestershire is a place where everyone has the tools to thrive. We are investing in the next generation with £150million going towards new schools, including a carbon zero school in Leckhampton and a new Social Emotional and Mental Health needs school in Brockworth. We are also supporting our Market Towns through £500,000 of funding for events in areas such as Coleford, Pittville and Stonehouse.

We are proud of Gloucestershire today, but are nonetheless ambitious about where Gloucestershire can go next. After an unprecedented two years, it is time to start building back better.

**Cllr Mark Hawthorn MBE**  
Leader of the Council

**Pete Bunguard**  
Chief Executive

## **Our Vision:**

To make the most of all that Gloucestershire has to offer, help improve the quality of life for every community, support businesses to be successful and make sure the county is a place where people want to live, work and visit.

Our ambition is for Gloucestershire to be:

### **A Magnet County**

A growing working age population, with more 18-40 year olds with high level qualifications choosing to live and work in the county

### **An Innovative County**

More businesses starting up, growing and investing in research and innovation

### **A Skilled County**

More people with high-level skills and jobs in skilled occupations

### **A Prosperous County**

Rising productivity and household incomes offering higher living standards

### **An Inclusive County**

The economic and social benefits of growth to be felt by all communities, including rural, urban and our areas of highest deprivation. Opportunities to be available for all and good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not

### **Healthy County**

People to have a good work/life balance and improved health and wellbeing

### **A Connected County**

Improved transport and internet connections so that people and businesses can connect with each other more easily

### **A Sustainable, Low Carbon County**

More efficient use of resources, more use of sustainable energy and carbon-neutral by 2045.

### **A Resilient County**

Active, resilient local communities that keep people safe, provide them with support and help them to make a positive contribution

## Challenges and opportunities

In order to achieve our vision and ambition for Gloucestershire, we need to understand and plan together for the opportunities and challenges we are facing.

### Demographic change

Gloucestershire's population is ageing more quickly than the UK average. The increasing number of retired people in the county will bring experience, resources and time to their communities, but as they grow older and more frail they will also need more support from health, social care and safeguarding services. We are also seeing more people living with disabilities and other long-term conditions in all age groups.

At the same time, our 18-64 population is expected to remain about the same. Young people tend to leave the county in their late teens and early twenties - the net loss can be as many as 400 19-25 year olds per year. While the concept of 'working age' is changing, we do need to respond to this challenge, to make sure we have the skills we need to keep the county competitive and support economic growth.

We can also expect to see a trend towards more people living as single person households. This will make it harder for people to rely on immediate family for support in the future, and make it more important that they are part of resilient communities that look out for one another. By 2043 42% of households are projected to include someone aged 65+ compared to 33% of households in 2018, which will also presents new challenges.

### Climate Change

Along with other councils up and down the country, the county council has declared a climate change emergency. This recognises the irreversible impact that humans have already had on climate change and the need for bold and timely action to be taken. The County Council is providing a strong leadership role, working with other public sector bodies and local communities to reduce carbon emissions right across the county. We are already close to achieving carbon neutrality as a council and have made a strong public commitment to doing all we can to achieving a carbon neutral county by 2045. We have backed that up with a wide range of ambitious yet practical actions as set out in our Climate Change Strategy.

### Inequalities and deprivation

Inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society. They are usually as a result of the social, economic and environmental conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. While living standards in Gloucestershire are high overall, there are areas of the county where residents' outcomes fall well below national averages and where, as a result, local people are more likely to depend on the services we provide. The word 'deprivation' is sometimes used to describe these areas, but it really describes neighbourhoods in which residents face greater social, economic and environmental challenges (e.g. lower incomes, poorer housing or lower educational attainment).

In Gloucestershire 19,415 people (3.1% of the county's population) currently live in areas amongst the most deprived 10% in England. Males living in these most deprived areas live 8.7 years less than those in the least deprived 10%, and females live 6.5 years less.\*\*  
(footnote \*\*This is based on data for the period 2017-2019.)

Health inequalities have existed in our society for many years but were brought into focus during the Covid-19 pandemic. We quickly saw evidence of a disproportionate impact on those who already face disadvantage and discrimination. For example, those living in areas

of high deprivation, people from ethnic minority communities, older people and people with disabilities. The measures put in place to limit the spread of the virus have also impacted disproportionately on those already facing disadvantage, including through loss of employment and income, and school closures. However, there are a great many 'assets' within our communities, including knowledge and skills, relationships, resourcefulness and compassion. These were rapidly and efficiently used during the pandemic with the contributions of volunteers, community groups and individuals helping to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of all of us.

As we emerge from the pandemic the council is committed to ensuring no community is left behind and we support them to 'level up'. Our approach will be to make sure we build on the local assets, relationships and good examples of working with communities that already exist. We are also working closely with other local groups and organisations, to develop a community-centred approach to creating a place where everyone can thrive.

### **Rural isolation**

As well as being one of our best assets, the rural nature of the county makes it difficult for some people to access the services they need. This is a particular challenge for the three out of every twenty Gloucestershire households that have no access to a car or van. The roll-out of high-speed broadband has already reached nearly all addresses across the county, but we need to continue to work towards full coverage so that all households and businesses benefit.

### **Our economic potential as a growing county**

The growth that is planned for Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury is a game-changer. It allows us to think imaginatively about the role we want Gloucestershire to play in the sub-region, and the infrastructure we need to have in place to make that happen. It has the potential to free us from some of the constraints that would otherwise be a barrier to economic growth, and to enable change on a significant scale. The challenge to delivering on this potential, is in our ability to create a clear and sustainable plan alongside other local authorities, partners and stakeholders in the county.

### **The power and resilience of our communities**

Gloucestershire has a thriving voluntary and community sector and already benefits from the ideas, effort and energy of the many thousands of people who are active in their communities. We are already seeing a willingness from communities to play an increasing role in the early and preventative steps for health and social care. We know there is an appetite in many communities to do more, and we want to work more effectively with those who want to make a difference to the places they live and work. The Covid-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to not only strengthen existing community and voluntary groups but for new groups to flourish. The shared aim of supporting each other through a global crisis has brought about noticeable gains in terms of the county's vibrant VCSE sector.

### **The readiness of our partnerships and relationships**

Gloucestershire already benefits from the fact that almost all our key public sector partners work to the same geographic boundary and serve the same population. Changes to the way the public sector is funded, and the potential for different relationships within the south west and at a national and European level make it more important than ever to work creatively with partners to make sure Gloucestershire punches above its weight and continues to attract investment and national funding.

### **The potential of digitisation to transform public services**

The rapid growth of digital technology provides tremendous opportunities to think differently and transform the way we deliver services for local people. For example, social media

continues to change the way we communicate and interact with communities. Local government has yet to explore fully the potential of 'big data' to predict future demand for services and to design and deliver preventative solutions. In terms of the wider economy, the potential of robotics and artificial intelligence will be critical given our likely limitations on working age population numbers.

While the impact of these issues and the speed with which they will affect us is hard to predict, what will matter is our ability to anticipate, respond, adapt to make sure we can provide effective leadership across our communities.

## **Data graphics pages – to be converted to infographics**

1. Gloucestershire has a population of 640,650.  
(footnote Mid 2020 Population Estimates, ONS)
2. Since 2010 the population has grown by 7.8% compared to 7.2% for England and Wales for the same period.  
(footnote - Mid 2020 and Mid 2010 Population Estimates, ONS)
3. Assuming current population trends continue, the population in Gloucestershire will reach 683,849 by 2028 and 738,482 by 2043.  
(footnote - 2018 based subnational population projections, ONS)
4. Since 2010 the growth of the older population (aged 65+) has outpaced that of the younger population. Older: 26.8% 20-64: 3.2%, 0-19: 4.2%  
(footnote - Mid 2020 and Mid 2010 Population Estimates, ONS)
5. Although Gloucestershire generally benefits from a high standard of living 19,415 people (3.1%) live in areas that are in the most 10% deprived nationally.  
(footnote - Indices of Deprivation 2019, MHCLG and Mid 2019 Population Estimates, ONS)
6. Gloucestershire has around 830 children in care (Oct 2021) and the County Council supports 5,821 adults receiving long term care (Sept 2021).
7. Manufacturing and health are significant sectors in terms of employment accounting for 11.6% and 12.9% of employment respectively.
8. Renewable energy production from the Council's estate in the year to Nov. 2021 – 61.1 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e (Carbon Dioxide equivalent).
9. There are around 3,300 miles of road within the county. 507 miles of road (15%) have been fully resurfaced in last 4 years.
10. 29,928 highways defects have been repaired between April and October 2021
11. During the lockdowns, the County Council's Community Help Hub received 6,738 requests for help.  
(footnote - This figure will include some duplicate requests)
12. 82.1% of total support requests involved help accessing food and general supplies.
13. Total number of incidents attended by GFRS during 2020/21 was 5090; but only 1301 (25%) of those were fire related.

## **Our Priorities for Gloucestershire**

The first part of this strategy has set out our long-term vision and ambition for Gloucestershire. The remaining sections set out our *key priorities* in different areas and the actions we will take over the next four years to help achieve them.

### **Tackling Climate Change**

- Produce a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan that reduces council emissions to net zero by 2030 and helps to reduce Gloucestershire's emissions to net zero by 2045;
- support communities and businesses to do their bit, investing in 1000 electric vehicle charge points & to increase Gloucestershire's woodlands and biodiversity;
- lead by example, putting climate at the heart of our decisions and working in partnership across Gloucestershire's public sector to make the greatest impact.

### **Improving Our Roads**

- Invest a further £100M in road resurfacing over 4 years:
- Reduce the proportion of roads which require significant repair or replacement;
- Improve network resilience to adverse conditions;
- Improve customer satisfaction with road condition;
- Do more proactive planned works and fewer reactive pothole repairs.

### **Sustainable Growth**

- Support a strategic plan for Gloucestershire's future growth, through partnership working between all local authorities and other stakeholders.
- Secure the funding for the required strategic infrastructure to enable and accelerate this growth;
- Ensure that the opportunities to learn new skills, training and education are directly linked to the future jobs being created.

### **Levelling up our Communities**

- Work with local partners to attract national Levelling Up Funding to regenerate our high streets, market towns and neighbourhoods.
- Work alongside neighbourhoods to develop plans that build on their strengths, and attract local and national investment to help deliver them.
- Support local residents to develop new skills, career pathways and employment opportunities.
- Link local people to jobs by providing sustainable transport solutions and reducing barriers to employment.
- Shape local community services to make sure they adapt to the needs and aspirations of local residents.
- Work with local schools and academies to improve the quality of local education provision.

### **Securing Investment for Gloucestershire**

- Support the delivery of major transport investment.

- Progress the delivery of the Gloucestershire Sustainable Travel Corridor;
- Bid for funding to improve M5 Junction 9 and re-route the A46 to facilitate the delivery of the Garden Town proposals.
- Work with the Western Gateway Partnership to secure improved rail connections that support business and leisure needs.
- Secure nationally important investment programmes to create improved job opportunities, including bidding to host UK's first Nuclear Fusion Power Plant.

### **Transforming Children's Services**

- Continue to develop a comprehensive range of good quality education, early years and care provision that meets the needs of all young people.
- Improve our early intervention/early help offer.
- Support local schools in developing a high performing local education system that meets the needs of all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Continuously improve services; building on our investments in local provision such as Trevone House and our £150M investment in schools.
- Invest in social workers and other frontline staff by developing our comprehensive training and development offer, supported by the Children's Services Academy.

### **Transforming Adult Social Care**

- Embed early intervention and prevention, together with strength-based working, into all aspects of our work across the Adult Social Care System;
- Build a world class 'model' of short term care (the 'Enhanced Independence Offer') together with the NHS and other partners;
- Deliver a Technology Strategy: using technology to support carers and improve the quality of care that people receive.

### **Transforming Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service**

- Deliver our Service Improvement Plan supported by additional investment and resources;
- Improve the culture of our service;
- Use the Fire Professional Standards to make sure our staff and the communities we serve are safe and well;
- Deliver our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) to reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies in the county.

### **Improving Customer Experience**

- Make it easier and quicker for customers to find the advice or support they need.
- Wherever possible resolve issues/questions the first time a customer contacts us.
- Look to find the best possible solutions for our customers, even if that means looking beyond our own role or services.
- Develop a Customer Improvement Strategy, to make sure our staff – and customers - know what we expect from them.
- Regularly ask customers how we are doing and respond to what they tell us
- Train and support staff to deliver a consistently positive/fair experience for all customers.

## Tackling Climate Change

### **Our ambition:**

A Greener Gloucestershire; where our way of living today is considerate of future generations and the natural environment.

### **We will:**

limit the effects of global warming and protect our natural environment by:

- delivering a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan that reduces the council's emissions to net zero by 2030 and helps reduce Gloucestershire's emissions to net zero by 2045.
- supporting communities and businesses to do their bit, including investing in 1000 charge points to help people make the switch to electric vehicles and to increase Gloucestershire's woodlands and biodiversity.
- leading by example, putting climate change at the heart of our decisions and working in partnership across Gloucestershire's public sector to make the greatest impact.

In 2019 the county council declared a Climate Emergency and the Cabinet agreed a Climate Change Action Plan with an annual rolling programme backed by a £1m action fund.

The Climate Change Act commits the UK government to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050. Tackling the causes of climate change, and adapting to its impacts, touches on all aspects of the economy so councils have a key role to play, working with government and local communities and include climate change in our thinking when making local policy decisions.

To date we have invested in low energy LED street lighting, energy efficient buildings and solar power to reduce our net carbon emissions by 83% since 2006 - well on our way to achieving net zero by 2030.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the whole county will be more challenging, in particular switching to greener energy for transport and heating our homes. However, in partnership with communities, businesses and other public sector organisations we believe we can build back better and greener from the pandemic.

The 10 key areas we will focus on over the next four years of the Council Strategy are:

1. Reducing our Carbon Footprint – coordinated action to reduce the county council’s emissions to net zero by 2030, put climate change at the heart of all our decisions, and publish our progress in an annual report
2. Greener buildings, greener energy – investing in solar power and green energy solutions for all new county council buildings; enabling households to switch to renewable electricity and lower carbon heating.
3. Trees on the doorstep and more woodland - replacing highway ash trees on a 2 for 1 basis, working with partner councils, community groups and Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership to plant 360,000 trees over the next three years to hit our target of 1 million trees by 2030
4. Cycling for all – creating a separated cycle route connecting Gloucester and Cheltenham by 2023, part of a 26-mile continuous cycle route across the centre of the county by 2026; connecting communities with convenient, safe routes to increase cycling in line with national targets.
5. The right to breathe cleaner air - working with residents, businesses, schools and district councils to raise awareness about air quality so that year on year fewer Gloucestershire residents live in areas where air pollution exceeds national limits.
6. Making the switch to electric – installing 1000 electric vehicle charge points in communities across the county by 2025; expanding e-scooter hire to communities across the county in 2023 and for all new council cars and vans to be ultra-low or zero emissions by 2024.
7. Getting back on the buses – start construction of the £20m 1000 space Arle Court Transport Hub to offer commuters, shoppers and visitors to Cheltenham a high quality bus, coach, bike and e-scooter interchange with electric vehicle charging; agreeing an Enhanced Partnership investment plan with bus operators for faster, more reliable journeys in cleaner buses investing £40 million to achieve a 10% increase in bus trips by 2025.
8. Nature on your doorstep – working with partners so that Gloucestershire supports the achievement of UK biodiversity targets and increasing public participation in conservation activities.
9. Less waste and more recycling – working with local communities and partners to limit waste, increase recycling rates, and to ensure that council contracts include ambitious targets for recycled materials. Generating energy from the waste we cannot recycle and minimise waste sent to landfill.
10. Education and information – we will raise awareness of the things we can all do to reduce our impact on the environment, creating Green Zones in our Libraries, refreshing our web pages, actively promoting key messages and events, supporting the Climate Youth Panel and champions in the workplace and communities.

## Improving Our Roads

### Our ambition:

To have well maintained local roads which serve all of Gloucestershire's road users, create a more resilient network, allow reliable journeys and which help boost local businesses. Making the improvements that make a real difference to residents.

### We will:

- Invest a further £100M in road resurfacing over 4 years.
- Reduce the number of roads that need significant repair or replacement.
- Improve the resilience of network to adverse conditions.
- Improve customer satisfaction with road condition.
- Do more proactive planned works and fewer reactive repairs.

Well maintained local roads allow for faster and more reliable journeys, boosting local businesses and serving all road users. High quality local roads are also central to the future of transport, playing an important role in people taking up greener forms of transport such as cycling and buses.

The local road network is extensive and complex and plays a part in almost every journey. Our role is to inspect, maintain and renew roads, footways, cycle routes, bridges, retaining walls, lighting, drainage, traffic signals, trees, land and much more.

Over the last four years we have started on the journey of investing in the condition of local roads in Gloucestershire and have completed almost 700 schemes resulting in 507 miles of new surface. We know there is more to do and we now need to widen our focus to include minor roads. While these roads are generally quieter, they are close to where people live, work or go to school and by improving these roads residents will feel the difference on their doorstep.

On road safety, we want to deliver *safer roads, healthier streets*; lowering speed limits where people live and building more crossing points to achieve the Vision Zero road safety ambition by 2050 and enable 50% of all urban trips to be walking and cycling by 2045.

We have also committed to improving the customer experience when reporting highways issues. We want it to be clear what you can expect from us, what services we can provide, and to give better information and support when you need the help of our partners.

Providing additional funding each year we will work with partners to invest in:

- resurfacing and surface treatments to increase the reliability in the network across the county, with the goal of renewing at least another 500 miles of network over the next 4 years

- targeted programmes of small-scale patching to address localised problems
- a programme of footway and cycleway maintenance
- a wide programme of highway maintenance including of drainage, road markings, bridges, traffic signals, verges and more
- supporting the economic recovery

Alongside all of this, there will be a focus on making customer contact simple, responsive and informative, using appropriate technology, with enough resource.

## **Sustainable Growth**

### **Our ambition:**

A Gloucestershire wide plan for sustainable growth, delivering coordinated housing and employment development, including the associated infrastructure, skills and training.

### **We will:**

- Encourage the development of a single plan for Gloucestershire’s future growth, through partnership working between all local authorities and other stakeholders.
- Secure the funding for the infrastructure needed that will help to deliver this growth.
- Make sure that the skills, training and education available are directly linked to the future jobs being created.
- Deliver the Gloucestershire Climate Strategy by 2045

There is an urgent need to ensure the delivery of significant future growth in Gloucestershire. House prices are at an all-time high, as supply remains low and demand high. Employment land and the associated new jobs are required to enable the continued economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Currently there is no regional or county-wide growth strategy in Gloucestershire. This leaves a significant gap between national planning policies/guidance and the local level – i.e. District Councils’ Local Plans, Joint Core Strategy. It is proposed that county partners look to develop a future strategic plan for Gloucestershire – through agreeing and developing a ‘City Region’. The strategy would shape and influence the approach taken by all seven local authorities. This would seek to introduce a ‘step change’ in the future delivery of both housing and employment throughout Gloucestershire.

It is important to step away from ‘suburb thinking’ and move towards ‘city-wide thinking’. The whole of the county should be benefitting from ‘City Region’ strategic infrastructure. A key aspect of which is Gloucestershire’s continued involvement in the Western Gateway – a cross-border economic partnership working together to bring clean, economic growth across the region.

The new body brings together councils and businesses from Swansea to Swindon and from Tewkesbury to Weston-Super-Mare. It will be the first “powerhouse” in either the South West of England, or Wales, and the first to cross a national boundary. The Western Gateway aims to attract investment, development and growth into the area, drive forward major infrastructure projects and the linking up of

universities and colleges. In Gloucestershire, the Great Western Gateway is expected to give a major boost to a “city-region” approach to future planning and economic growth across Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury.

This growth would be supported through the delivery of significant associated strategic infrastructure, such as highways, transport, schools, libraries, flood alleviation, waste, etc. In addition, there will be an increased skills offer, to ensure that the required training and education is directly linked to the future jobs being created (such as cyber and fusion technology).

It is vital to secure the infrastructure and investment to enable the future economic growth. So investment must continue to be secured for Gloucestershire by making the most of all future funding opportunities that are presented.

This growth should protect the unique environmental, historical and cultural heritage of the county, as well as contributing towards Gloucestershire’s Climate Change Strategy and the commitment to deliver a carbon neutral county by 2045.

This will be funded and delivered in partnership with various stakeholders, such as the District Councils, GFirst LEP, Department for Transport, National Highways and Homes England.

## **Levelling up our Communities**

### **Our ambition:**

To work with communities across the county to: reduce inequalities, regenerate high streets, market towns and neighbourhoods; improve infrastructure, jobs, skills and education provision; and help residents to achieve their ambitions for the places they live.

### **We will:**

- Work with local partners to attract national Levelling Up Funding to regenerate our high streets, market towns and neighbourhoods;
- Listen to local communities about what they want to achieve and how;
- Work alongside neighbourhoods to develop plans that build on their strengths, as well as attracting local and national investment to help deliver them;
- Supporting local residents to develop new skills, careers and job opportunities;
- Link local people to jobs by providing sustainable transport solutions and reducing barriers to employment;
- Shape local community services to make sure they can adapt to the needs and aspirations of local residents;
- Working with local schools and academies to improve the quality of local education provision.

At the time of writing this strategy, we are awaiting the Levelling Up White Paper. Gloucestershire is ready to take advantage of this exciting opportunity and has already benefitted from the first wave of funding to the tune of £12.8m. We will work with local partners, building on their energy and ideas to improve high streets, market towns and local neighbourhoods and to help them to thrive.

While the majority of local people enjoy better health and quality of life than most of the country, we know this isn't the case for everyone. In some of our neighbourhoods, life expectancy, job opportunities and quality of life is much poorer. Despite several decades of interventions, these problems continue. While some of our high streets and market towns attract tourists from across the globe, others struggle to survive. There will always be differences between our communities, which should be celebrated but we believe that no community should be left behind. We know that the key to success lies in focussing in on the strengths of a community, listening to local people and businesses, understanding what they want for their area, then working alongside them. That will be our approach.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us, that despite barriers in their way, these same communities have shown tremendous resilience, have mobilised armies of volunteers and grassroots support. Some of this, particularly in Gloucester City, is the result of an 'Asset Based' approach that begins with what is strong about

communities, not what is wrong with them. We want to support and engage with our communities to help them realise their ambitions across areas including skills, education, employment and their health & wellbeing. There is growing evidence that this approach works.

In Matson, Robinswood and White City, for example, local residents have clearly told us what their aspirations and plans are, as well as what they need from local partners through a Community Partnership. Initially, we will work with the Partnership to understand how the county council can help to achieve the goals within their plan and to provide a joined up response to the issues it identifies. Actions already identified that we can take on include helping local people to develop skills and job opportunities, removing some of the barriers to economic activity, and working with schools to help them to improve the quality of local education.

From there, we will work with other areas where inequalities are greatest, starting with St Paul's, St Peter's and St Mark's in Cheltenham and Cinderford West in the Forest of Dean. We will work with existing voluntary and community groups, the district councils, housing providers, other local public services and partners to engage local residents, supporting them to identify their priorities and solutions and share what we have learnt about what works.

This isn't just about the neighbourhoods in which people live. It is also about the places where they work and shop and spend their leisure time. Therefore, we will also work alongside businesses and local councils to regenerate those high streets and market towns that are struggling to survive. We will help them to get funding from Government and elsewhere to help them adapt their offer, to regenerate and to repurpose space that is going unused. The first round of our Market Towns Fund has seen £385k allocated to more than 40 cultural and community events, with individual grants of up to £25k awarded to organisers of music festivals, summer fayres and Christmas goodwill evenings across all six districts of the county.

We will use the Levelling Up Funding we have already received to connect people from Gloucester, Cheltenham, Bishops Cleeve and beyond to jobs, employment and training opportunities in Gloucester Docks by improving sustainable transport links.

We will work alongside Gloucester City Council and Gloucestershire University to regenerate the former Debenhams building and bring economic and cultural activity back to Northgate Street and King's Square.

Having been successful in the first wave of Levelling Up funding, we want to carry on that momentum through the lifetime of this strategy to create a lasting legacy across our county.

## Securing Investment for Gloucestershire

### Our ambition:

To work with partners to attract the investment we need to deliver major infrastructure projects to support sustainable economic growth.

### We will:

- Support the delivery of major transport investment including:
  - the upgrade to M5 Junction 10 in support of the delivery of future housing and employment growth;
  - the A417 Missing Link to improve highway safety and remove a pinch-point within the strategic road network;
  - improve capacity on Gloucester's south-west bypass to improve travel within the city; and
  - the West of Cheltenham Transport Infrastructure Scheme to enable delivery of Cyber Central.
- Push ahead with delivering the Gloucestershire Sustainable Travel Corridor which includes new and upgrades to existing cycling routes and ambitious plans for a Mass Transit scheme linking Cheltenham and Gloucester.
- Bid for funding to improve M5 Junction 9 and re-route the A46 away from Ashchurch to help deliver of the Garden Town proposals.
- Work with the Western Gateway Partnership to secure improved rail connections that support business and leisure needs.
- Secure nationally important investment programmes for example the delivery of Cyber Central as part of the Golden Valley Development and bidding to host UK's first Nuclear Fusion Power Plant to create improved employment opportunities for local people.

Delivering large scale investment in our infrastructure is essential to ensure long-term sustainable growth in Gloucestershire. It provides employment and skills development, opens up housing and employment land, and drives improvement in both the economy and quality of life. We will continue to seek funding where opportunities arise to invest in our infrastructure network through the effective strong partnership we have built with government, regional partners and transport operators.

Having successfully secured funding from Homes England for the upgrade of M5 Junction 10 the county council is now managing the delivery of the scheme. This will improve access to and from the motorway northbound and southbound to a new link road into Cheltenham. It will support growth plans and help to solve long standing traffic and travel issues; helping to keep our county moving. The project complements the funding secured by the LEP to deliver the West of Cheltenham Transport Infrastructure Scheme at M5 Junction 11 and the A40. In addition to the highway improvements, the scheme includes the development of a new Transport

Hub at Arle Court Park and Ride facility providing electric vehicle charging points and improved cycle facilities which will link into the planned Gloucestershire Sustainable Travel Corridor.

After many years of work by the county council setting out the case for investment in the A417 to remove the problems for road users and those who live or work in the area caused by the Missing Link, funding for this complex scheme has been identified by National Highways.

Gloucestershire has successfully attracted funding from the Government's first round of Levelling Up scheme to widen a pinch-point on the Gloucester Southwest Bypass at Llanthony Road and helping to deliver the Gloucestershire Sustainable Travel Corridor. This corridor will form part of the planned 26-mile cycle 'spine' through the county from Stroud to Bishops Cleeve, allowing the county council to create a substantial local cycling and walking network, helping people to get about sustainably in residential areas.

Improvements in the infrastructure that our public transport relies on will result in improvements both in terms of increased services and the quality of bus or train facilities to meet customer expectations. Providing a mass transit option is necessary if we are to deliver a viable alternative to the car for trips that cannot be made by walking or cycling.

In addition to making movement within and through our county as easy as possible we will need support the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities to attract further investment.

Work continues by our district partners in setting out the case for investment for the Ashchurch Garden Town. We are supporting this process by seeking funding to remove the barrier caused by the existing A46 by looking to reroute it and ensure the necessary improvements are made at M5 Junction 9.

Maintaining and attracting new employment opportunities is key to Gloucestershire's and we will continue to work with partners to promote the county. Examples of this include the delivery of Cyber Central as part of the Golden Valley Development in the West of Cheltenham and ambitious plans to host UK's first Nuclear Fusion Power Plant. The STEP Fusion project is a joint bid with South Gloucestershire Council, which builds on our nuclear heritage and the regions expertise in advanced engineering, construction, aerospace, digital and cyber. It also allows us to maximise on future opportunities, such as the development of small modular reactor technology by the Rolls Royce consortium.

## Transforming Children's Services

### Our ambition:

Consistently deliver services to children and families that are rated good or better by Ofsted.

### We will:

- Continue to develop a comprehensive range of good quality education, early years and care provision that meets the needs of all young people, including those with special educational needs, behavioural needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve our early intervention/early help offer delivered through a multi-agency Family Hub model.
- Support local schools to develop a vibrant and high performing education system that meets the needs and aspirations of all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable.
- Continuously improve our services through effective intervention and the development of local provision. This work will build on our investments in local provision such as Trevone House and our £150M investment in schools.
- Invest in our social workers and other frontline staff through development of our comprehensive training and development offer, supported by the recently created Children's Services Academy.

Children's Services are on an improvement journey following the 2017 Ofsted inspection, which judged services to be inadequate. Over the past 18 months, the significant and ongoing impact of Covid on children and families has led to increased demand for support and services. This in turn has had a negative effect on the provider market - most significantly care provision for vulnerable and complex children which means we have had to adjust how we work to deal with the uncertainties and challenges Covid has brought. However, our ambition to offer good quality intervention leading to positive outcomes for Children and their families remains paramount.

Over the past 12 months a number of national initiatives have set out a future direction for services for children and young people. The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report; '*The Best Start for Life*' proposes a multi-agency, hub-based model to provide seamless support for families at the earliest opportunity. It's vision is a shared approach to leadership, with strong local accountability and the active participation of all sectors. Alongside this, the Independent Review of Children's Social Care '*The Case for Change*', makes the case for a move away from acute services towards effective early help.

Our improvement journey in children's social care is built on a number of key elements, the most important of which is a '*grow your own*' approach to workforce development, driven by our Social Work Academy. Our ambition is to become the 'employer of choice' in the region, with excellent opportunities for career development and progression. We recognise that staff are our most precious resource and investment in them will bring better outcomes for children and families.

In response to the national direction, our service structures will be transformed in order to provide a more seamless service for children and families, with more coordination with safeguarding partners. Our commissioning strategy aims to develop locally determined care provision, working with provider partners to deliver better quality outcomes for children and young people and greater certainty on costs and capacity. This work means that children and young people will be able to remain closer to home and their support networks.

Covid has been a huge challenge for the education and social care sector, however, it has also highlighted the importance of local relationships and delivery. Locally there is a greater appetite for working with our partners, particularly with schools and a recognition of the importance of the local authority as an active participant in the local education system. The development of the Education Reference Group (ERG), which draws together the local authority, local leaders in education, the Regional Schools Commissioner and Diocesan representatives, will provide the focal point for addressing issues and improving outcomes for pupils.

The Early Years' sector in Gloucestershire currently involves around 700 providers and around £33 million in activity. It is very much the front end of the education system and key to providing children with the best start in life. Working through the Child Friendly Gloucestershire Coalition, we will ensure that high quality, affordable early year's childcare is available to all children and that the targeted 2-year-old offer reaches the most vulnerable children and families. This will also engage the voluntary and faith sectors who run non-regulated parent and toddler groups to participate fully in our aim to provide the best start in life for our youngest children.

The development of a Family Hub model, centred around our Children and Family Centres, will be a key element in our future early intervention and early help offer. This will bring together a wide range of agencies and sectors working with children and families pre-birth to 5 years and form part of our wider 0-19 years family support offer. Our aim will be to provide support to families at the earliest opportunity to stabilise and prevent escalation to statutory services. Our approach will recognise the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and compensate for those through effective least intrusive interventions.

A review of the current SEND arrangements is underway at a national level. While we await the outcome of that review, we will continue our development work to implement a digital approach to education, health and care plans (EHCP) and ensure we have the range of provision in place to meet the needs of children with additional needs and disability in the county. We will continue to invest in special school places and services for children with complex needs as part of our £150M investment programme in schools and to help provide for the increasing demand.

An effective and accessible alternative education offer with a strong focus on supporting pupils back into mainstream, will help meet the needs of children struggling to maintain a school place.

## **Transforming Adult Social Care**

### **Our ambition:**

We aspire to be one of the best Adult Social Care departments by citizens, colleagues, partners and providers and by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Care Quality Commission in their assurance processes.

### **We will:**

- Make early intervention and prevention, together with strength-based part of all aspects of our work across the Adult Social Care System and in our proactive engagement with the developing Integrated Care System in the county.
- We will build a world class ‘model’ of short term care (the ‘Enhanced Independence Offer’) together with NHS and other partners; improving the impact of short term help to make sure people regain their confidence and independence whenever possible; for example, after a stay in hospital.
- Deliver a Technology Strategy: exploring the potential of technology to support carers and improve the quality of care that people receive.
- Work with independent care providers to address capacity gaps and over provision including use of central government funding to improve the terms and conditions of care sector staff.
- Respond to any legislation following the Government’s commitment to produce a White Paper which will begin a once in a generation transformation of adult social care (“Build Back Better. Our Plan for Health and Social Care” September 2021).<sup>1</sup>

Adult Social Care within the county is transforming; reflecting the changing marketplace, local aspiration to support people to live independently and emerging local and national good practice and requirements of the Care Act 2014. Over the last four years the council’s Adult Single Programme has provided the structure for that transformation. This has particularly been through the development of a strengths-based ‘three tier conversation’ practice model but changes also reflect work that’s taken place with communities and with other system partners including Housing.

Through the programme we have substantially reduced our reliance on residential and nursing care, enabling a greater number of people to live independently and to do so with greater say over how they live and what’s important to them. In part this has been made possible by reshaping how we respond to people and ensuring we do so with minimal delay.

---

<sup>1</sup> That document also indicates the Government’s commitment to deliver on the financial reforms set out in Phase 2 of the Care Act.

For all our successes, demographic changes, even without the additional impact of the pandemic, indicate there will continue to be rising demand for support from people with increasingly complex needs. This requires us to continue to better manage and develop how we respond to demand.

This will involve a range of partnerships, many of which will be new and stronger relationships with communities. Whilst it will be challenging financially, it will result in investment in local communities and will provide opportunities to work with community and voluntary sector agencies in new ways and ensure we are sensitive to the strengths and needs of individual communities.

We will continue to reduce reliance on care home settings by creating innovative alternatives and encouraging the use of community-based services, whilst recognising that there will always be a need for specialists too. We will also further develop our offer to carers and for all people with care needs and not just those we support. With our partners we will promote the importance of early intervention and prevention; developing it as a key part of all we do.

In line with this change we have a series of projects targeted at living within our means and adjusting to meeting demand differently. Most of these are designed around the implementation of national policy and good practice – building technology into the heart of everything we do, expanding on the model of reablement, avoiding crisis, commissioning differently and improving the customer journey.

The scale and pace of change is expected to continue at an unprecedented level. In response we will actively engage with service users and their carers to share our plans and ensure all voices are heard and concerns and questions are actively addressed.

Alongside our own ambitions we will also have to implement the Government's own reforms to a tight timescale. At this time the full requirements are not known, but we are aware that it will require investment in new technology, increased staffing and the further development of our relationship with the Independent Sector within the county.

We don't yet know whether any changes in legislation will result in people making different choices about their care, but we will need to be responsive should this be the case. However we do know that it will change the balance of state versus self-funded care and in itself that will promote new ways of working.

## **Transforming Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service**

### **Our ambition:**

A county council run Fire and Rescue Service that provides the highest standards of community safety and emergency response services to the communities of Gloucestershire.

### **We will:**

Respond to the challenges of our previous inspection findings by focusing on:

- Deliver our Service Improvement Plan supported by additional investment and resources where they are most needed;
- Improve the culture of the service;
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff and the communities we serve by embedding the Fire Professional Standards; and
- Deliver our comprehensive Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) to reduce the risk of fire and other emergencies in the county.

GFRS began a transformation journey following an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in 2019, which produced a number of findings and recommendations concerning the Service's culture, leadership, management and staff development. Whilst substantial areas have been addressed so far through determined enthusiasm, the journey is an ambitious long term programme of work across four years that seeks sustainable improvements.

Our Service Improvement Plan was developed to deliver on priorities such as revised recruitment and promotions processes; improved organisational culture with increased openness and diversity; an improved Health and Safety environment; embedding Fire Professional Standards in support of learning and development and the creation of the Community Risk Management Plan 2022 – 2026 designed to ensure we have the right resources, in the right place, at the right time.

Our continuing improvement journey has been supported through additional investment in resources to deliver on our priorities. Our latest 2021 HMICFRS inspection, the outcomes of which will be published in the Spring of 2022, will ensure we strive to give greater efficiency and effectiveness to our communities through collaborative working with Gloucestershire Constabulary and other partner agencies.

## **Improving Customer Experience**

### **Our ambition:**

To make it as easy as possible for all customers to get in touch with us, with staff consistently doing all they can to resolve their request or question quickly, fairly and efficiently.

### **We will:**

- Make it easier and quicker for customers to find what they want, get the advice or support they need or find who it is they need to speak with and, when it's not us, easily work out who it is that can help.
- Wherever possible resolve issues/questions the first time a customer contacts us.
- Look to find the best possible solutions for our customer's problems, even if that means looking beyond our role. If there's a good reason to hand-off; clearly explain why.
- Develop a Customer Improvement Strategy, to make sure our staff – and customers - know what we expect from them.
- Regularly ask customers and staff how things are going and respond to what they tell us
- Train and support staff to deliver a consistently positive/fair experience for all customers.

In recent years we have become very good at changing the way we deliver our services to make sure we can meet the increased demand for them.

Whilst we will continue to look for ways to provide the most effective services, we know there are things we can do better when it comes to responding to the needs of our customers. This can often be something quite simple – but which makes a big difference.

Even when it's not something we are directly responsible for, we need to actively help people, so they are quickly in touch with the right person, organisation or service. We do this most of the time but we will try hard to always do it.

We know from conversations with residents that their experiences vary and can be improved. We will put in place customer service standards for the Council, with a focus on staff trying their hardest to positively and actively solve a customer's enquiry.

We will also aim to sure make staff know the history of a customer's contact with the Council so decisions/advice by officers is always made in full view of all the facts. This will help to make sure we are being fair and consistent.

We will develop a Customer Improvement Strategy that will include a single set of customer standards for the Council and acceptable behaviours standards for both our staff and customers. We'll develop these through talking to our customers, and analysing compliments, complaints, social media comments/messages, feedback direct to services and results of the forthcoming resident's survey.

We need to get better at consistently tracking the experience and outcomes for all our customers whenever and however they contact us. Before we do this, we will undertake a thorough analysis of our customers' current experiences and how well or not our staff, processes and systems support a positive relationship. This will make sure that we identify which areas of the Council we should concentrate on first. We will also see where digital services/technology can support a better customer experience.

## Delivering our Ambitions

As an authority, we must continue to ensure we are an organisation fit for the future, in order to deliver on our commitments and fulfil our strategic leadership role. That is why we have set ourselves such an ambitious and challenging strategy for the next four years.

### Our financial outlook and challenges

The way in which councils are funded has changed dramatically over the last decade, with big reductions in the level of funding we receive from Central Government.

In October 2021, the Chancellor announced the outcome of the Spending Review, which will cover the next 3 years (2022-23 to 2024-25), with local government set to receive an additional £1.6bn in grant funding in each year - £4.8bn over the period.

Whilst we do not yet know the outcome of the Fair Funding Review for Local Government, we expect to see further significant changes, including a review of the way business rates are calculated. This would mean that future funding would be more closely linked to growth in the local economy, including online sales activity, than has previously been the case.

We are also likely to see more of a 'whole system' approach to funding, such as through the roll out of 'Integrated Care Systems' with the NHS. Many of our priority projects and programmes rely on funding from national schemes, limited funding pots or from partners such as Highways England, Homes England and our District authorities. These will require joint resources and strategic leadership to deliver.

The three-year settlement means our finances are currently on a more stable footing than the last few years, but uncertainties remain in the economy and the long term impact of Covid 19, so efficiencies will continue to be necessary to ensure good value for money for Gloucestershire.

### Getting our own house in order

To remain fit for the future, there are also a number of operational improvements we will need to deliver:

**ICT:** We are investing in replacing our core infrastructure. This will increase security and allow our staff to be as productive as possible, making it easier to work with colleagues and partners. The next phase includes developing our workforce's digital skills and our ability to use digital innovation to improve customer experience.

**Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion** is a key priority within our Workforce Strategy. We are aiming to recruit from the widest pool of talent and to benefit from a diverse and inclusive workforce where all can flourish and progress. We have developed a three-year workforce action plan which includes:

- Increasing workforce diversity;

- Inclusive strategies and policies;
- Collecting, analysing and publishing workforce data;
- Equality and inclusion learning and development;
- Improved health and wellbeing for all.

**Strategic Procurement Transformation:** We are reviewing and transforming our approach to strategic procurement to ensure the council gets the best possible value for money from its suppliers. This includes modernising our procurement and contract management IT systems to give us better, more complete oversight of our contracts, to help us plan further ahead and to identify opportunities to secure better deals by joining our buying power across the council and beyond.

**Workforce - recruitment and retention to hard-to-fill roles:** Some roles which were already hard to fill are increasingly difficult following the pandemic, and this can impact our ability to deliver critical services & impacts on our partners. We will develop ways to improve the recruitment and retention of staff in the hardest to fill areas and support our partners and providers to do the same.

**Agile working:** We have already begun to provide the tools, technology and support that will help our staff to work in a more flexible way, travel less, work more easily with others and achieve a better work/life balance. This will continue to be an area of focus. Alongside this, we hope that Government will legislate to allow council meetings to take place on a virtual or hybrid basis, allowing us to take advantage of the opportunities that provides.

**Maximising use of our estate:** We will continue to review the council's estate and how we make best use of it. This will include continuing to modernise and adapt the Shire Hall complex to make it accessible, fit for purpose & more suitable for agile working. We will continue to look for opportunities to combine space across the Council and with our partners; proactively seeking ways to reduce the council's carbon footprint and increase renewable energy generation.

**Business Intelligence:** We have already implemented the IT infrastructure that will allow us to roll out a new generation of business intelligence and analytics tools across the council. The next phase will be to develop these to provide us with a better understanding of service need and performance, laying the foundations to be able to benefit from developments in artificial intelligence and applied analytics.

**Social Value:** Social value is an approach that seeks to secure additional social, economic and environmental benefits for local people and communities from everything the council does. We will put in place a social value policy and provide officers with tools to help them build social value into the way the council designs, delivers and commissions its services. We will also monitor and report the impact of this work to make sure it is making a difference.

**Further information:**

- Detail of our funding and forecast budgets can be found in the Medium Term Financial Strategy which accompanies this document. ([link](#))

**DRAFT** Gloucestershire County Council Strategy 2022/26

- Detail of our planned activity for the coming year can be found in the Directors 'Commissioning Intentions' (*link*)
- Performance information is published quarterly for scrutiny (*link*)