



Cheltenham Borough Council Corporate Plan 2025 to 2028

Introduction

Cheltenham is a world-renowned cultural destination; our town is rated one of the best places to live and it is also the UK's capital of cyber and security.

We want everyone who lives and works in our town to benefit from Cheltenham's successes, and for all our residents and communities to thrive, not just survive, so that our town continues to be a fantastic place to live, work and visit.

Our decision in 2023 to bring housing services back into the council has given us an opportunity to review our existing Corporate Plan and ensure our priorities and activities going forward reflect our additional responsibilities not only as a housing provider, but as landlord to the tenants and leaseholders who live in our properties.

We are setting a higher standard for ourselves, and our town, to build a better future for everyone in Cheltenham, but we also recognise that pressures such as the cost of living impact our residents, businesses and communities. So, we will continue to work alongside our partners in the months and years ahead to deliver practical support and, as a council, we will aim to provide an excellent service to everyone, regardless of need or access to technology. We will also continue to invest in partnerships and services that will strengthen the long-term financial stability of Cheltenham.

This corporate plan sets out five key priorities, which we will be our focus over the next three years. Recently, the prospect of devolution and local government reorganisation has come to the fore. We will not ignore this, but it will not distract us from delivering what we have set out in this plan, and we will remain focused on delivering a better future for everyone in Cheltenham.

The principles that will guide our priorities

The delivery of our priorities is based around six principles. We will:

1. Help all our communities to benefit and prosper from our strong local economy
2. Work together with everyone in our networks to improve our borough and support our residents to be healthy, our communities to be strong and our businesses to thrive
3. Be commercially minded to keep costs down and our council financially stable, so we always provide value for money to the taxpayer
4. Use data and research to drive improvement, listening carefully to our residents, communities and businesses to underpin informed decisions
5. Ensure the climate emergency agenda is at the forefront and integral to all our decision-making
6. Be risk aware, rather than risk averse

Our key priorities

Over the next three years we will focus on five key priorities:

- Key priority 1: Securing our future
- Key priority 2: Quality homes, safe and strong communities
- Key priority 3: Reducing carbon, achieving council net zero, creating biodiversity
- Key priority 4: Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes
- Key priority 5: Taking care of your money

The council delivers both statutory and discretionary services and all contribute in some way to our key priorities. However, there are a number of major activities which will be essential to deliver if we are to make significant progress. We have identified these below and will track and report on our progress against these activities on an annual basis.

Key priority 1: Securing our future

As the home of GCHQ, we will build on Cheltenham's place as the capital of cyber and security to generate growth. Our mission will be to work in partnership to create good jobs and productivity growth that will make everyone in Cheltenham better off and also deliver benefits for Gloucestershire and the wider region.

We will play our part in breaking down barriers. Through our partnerships and social value programmes, we will bring opportunity for all and support our residents to develop the skills and talent they need to benefit from our growing tech and security industry.

What we will do over the next three years

Our aims:

Moving forward with the delivery of the Golden Valley development is essential to creating lasting growth for our borough. We want local people to have access to good jobs, skills and training opportunities, which will ultimately support all our local businesses.

We are also ambitious about maximising the social value benefits from this development. With our partners we are already delivering social value activities, but we have further plans to ensure we secure social value benefits into the long term.

We also want to support our wider local economy and will continue to work with Cheltenham BID, our businesses, and our partners in the hospitality and tourism sectors, to promote Cheltenham as a place to live, work, visit, meet, and invest.

Our actions:

- By the end of year 1 of this plan we will begin the phase 1 construction process of the Golden Valley development, which will deliver the Innovation Centre, Mobility Hub and infrastructure.
- By the end of year 1 of this plan we will agree clear social value targets with the main contractor for phase 1 construction, which we will track and report on.
- By the end of year 1 of this plan we will commence marketing parcels of land to housing developers to bring forward the residential element.

- In year 1 of this plan, we will work in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and other authorities to develop a Local Growth Plan for Gloucestershire and, in future years, we will support with delivery of the objectives and outcomes.
- By the end of year 2 of this plan we will create a Social Value Charter, which will form part of the lease for all Golden Valley occupiers and tenants.
- By the end of year 3 of this plan we will commence construction of other commercial buildings on the development.
- We will continue to promote Cheltenham as a vibrant and attractive destination for visitors and for businesses through our dedicated Visit Cheltenham and Moving to Cheltenham websites.
- We will deliver a range of activities in partnership with Cheltenham BID and others to support the local economy.

Supporting key performance indicators:

- Employment rate
- Jobs created through Golden Valley development
- Innovation Centre tenants with no previous presence in Cheltenham
- Social value benefits – activities delivered; value quantified where possible
- Direct visitor spend
- Vacancy rates in council-owned investment properties

Key priority 2: Quality homes, safe and strong communities

We will make best use of our existing housing stock, deliver more homes and increase the number available for social rent. We will ensure these homes are matched to local housing needs to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

We will ensure that all Cheltenham Borough Council homes are high quality and safe, aiming to set the standard by which all local housing providers and private landlords should follow.

As one team, we will create a new integrated offer alongside partners to build positive connections with all our communities, make people feel safer and improve our neighbourhoods, public spaces and town centre.

What we will do over the next three years

Our aims:

Everyone should expect to live in a decent and safe home, and for our tenants and leaseholders, we will ensure we deliver this through our housing improvement programme and our housing investment plan.

Our housing improvement programme will deliver on our mission for housing services; *“Together with our tenants we provide safe, secure and well-maintained homes that help everyone reach their potential”*, ensure we meet our obligations as a social housing landlord and achieve the five consumer standards introduced by the Regulator for Social Housing. These standards are the:

Safety and Quality Standard: we must provide safe and good-quality homes for our tenants and good quality landlord services.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard: we must be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect.

Tenancy Standard: we must ensure a fair allocation and letting of homes and manage our tenancies well.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard: we must engage with partners, which may include the Police, voluntary sector and charities, so that our tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.

Competence and Conduct Standard: all our social housing staff should have the skills, knowledge and experience to provide tenants with a quality and respectful service.

The council currently owns over 5,000 residential properties which are mix of social rented, leasehold and shared ownership homes. We know we need to have a full understanding of all our properties, and are undertaking a comprehensive stock condition survey programme, so we can make improvements where needed and provide the standard of housing our tenants and leaseholders deserve.

We also know that more affordable homes are needed for local people. To help meet this need we will continue delivery of our housing investment plan and develop a housing asset management strategy to ensure the homes we provide meet future needs. As part of this, we will aim to achieve an average of 35% affordable housing from all qualifying residential development brought forward across the borough.

We will ensure that our partnership working to deliver the neighbourhood and community standard brings benefits for everyone who lives in Cheltenham, so that all our residents can live in safe neighbourhoods, feel safe in their homes and feel safe to enjoy everything Cheltenham has to offer. We will also set standards through the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan to ensure quality homes, safe and strong communities are delivered into the future.

Our actions:

- By the end of year 1 of this plan we aim to put all the requirements in place to be C2 compliant under the housing regulator's consumer standards ratings
- By the end of year 1 of this plan we will complete a stock condition survey of all our residential properties.
- In year 2 of this plan, we will complete development of our first housing asset management strategy.
- By the end of year 3 of this plan all senior housing staff will achieve a relevant housing qualification.
- By the end of this plan, we will complete our housing improvement programme and aim to have all the requirements in place to achieve a C1 rating.
- Over the next three years we will continue our housing investment plan and will deliver a net gain in the number of council properties available for rent, ensuring new homes reflect local needs.

- Over the course of this plan, we will develop the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan in line with the published local development scheme timetable.
- Over the course of this plan, we will work with other parties including developers, government departments and agencies (e.g. Homes England) to achieve our aim of delivering an average of at least 35% affordable housing from qualifying residential development in the borough.
- We will retain our Purple Flag status for managing our evening and nighttime economy.

Supporting key performance indicators:

- Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction
- Housing complaints
- Percentage of council homes meeting the decent homes standard
- Number of households on the housing waiting list
- Main homelessness duty accepted
- Affordable homes delivered as a percentage of all qualifying residential development in the borough
- Level of antisocial behaviour

Key priority 3: Reducing carbon, achieving council net zero, creating biodiversity

We will continue to decarbonise council buildings, homes and the way we work, striving to achieve net zero by 2030. We will maximise opportunities to retrofit our council homes and buildings to reduce carbon, make them warmer and reduce the cost of bills.

And we will provide support to our residents and businesses to help them to do the same.

We will drive increased biodiversity in our borough and fully utilise our planning system to encourage developers to enhance our natural environment, mitigating the impact of new buildings.

What we will do over the next three years

Our aims:

As a town, we are rightly proud of all our parks and green spaces. We have many different wildlife habitats in our borough, some of which are significant and protected spaces, and the town also has a long and distinguished history of tree cover. It is vital we manage our spaces to protect and enhance biodiversity and approach development in a way which leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state.

Our Climate Emergency Action Plan sets our overall roadmap for reducing carbon emissions to achieve net zero and we will continue to deliver actions identified in the plan. In particular, we have opportunities through the Golden Valley development and our housing investment programme to deliver new low and zero carbon buildings in our borough. We also have an outline decarbonisation plan for retrofitting our social housing and will explore external funding options to make progress on this.

The integration of our housing services also means our fleet of vehicles has grown significantly, and we will look at how we can reduce the carbon emissions associated with this.

Our actions:

- By the end of year 1 of this plan we will publish our first Biodiversity Duty report.
- By the end of year 1 of this plan we will prepare a tree strategy, which will establish policies for the management of tree stock owned by the council, feed into local planning policy and help deliver against our climate commitments.
- By the end of year 1 of this plan we will produce an action plan for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace, meeting our obligations to the Cotswolds Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation.
- By the end of year 2 of this plan we will complete construction of the Innovation Centre at Golden Valley, which will be a low carbon building. As tenants move in, we will monitor operational carbon emissions and track this against our zero-carbon goal.
- By the end of year 2 of this plan we will complete decarbonisation assessments of the key operational buildings owned by the council.
- In years 2 and 3 of this plan we will report on the actions we have taken to fulfil our biodiversity duty.
- We will fulfil our biodiversity net gain (BNG) obligations within the planning system.
- We will use our housing investment programme to build low or zero carbon new homes.
- We will accelerate retrofit of our social housing as funding becomes available.
- Over the term of this plan, we will transition the council's fleet to electric vehicles where there are viable options and explore interim measures where viable options are not currently available.

Supporting key performance indicators:

- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) secured
- Council carbon footprint
- Number of operational properties assessed for decarbonisation
- Percentage of council housing stock retrofitted with carbon reduction measures
- Percentage of electric vehicles within fleet

Key priority 4: Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes

We will use our sport, leisure, arts and cultural assets to provide opportunities for everyone to be happier, healthy and more active.

We will build on our heritage as a globally recognised cultural and festival town to encourage more people to take part in culture.

We will invest in our leisure and sports facilities to broaden participation.

We will work together with our NHS, social care and police partners encouraging greater investment in activities that reduce pressure on our health system and reduce the incidence of crime and disorder.

What we will do over the next three years

Our aims:

Opportunities to be healthy and active should be available to everyone, whether that's through simply spending time in our green spaces or through participation in sport, leisure or culture.

Our leisure and culture assets and services are our key vehicle for providing accessible opportunities for everyone and we need to safeguard these for the future.

To effect meaningful change more broadly on the inequalities agenda, and to ensure we support work on prevention of crime and disorder, we know that we must continue to work with both our public sector partners, and with other organisations through No Child Left Behind.

We also have a role to play in supporting groups and organisations working to make a practical difference within their local communities.

Our actions:

- In year 1 of this plan, we will review and revise our policies for managing the community assets owned by the council.
- Over the next three years we will develop a long-term strategy for leisure and culture and start the process of re-procuring our leisure and culture services to safeguard these services for the long term.
- Over the next three years, we will track the level of investment made by our partners in our services and initiatives.
- Over the next three years we will continue to provide grant funding, agreeing clear measures of success with grant recipients to ensure this funding is directed to best effect.

Supporting key performance indicators:

- Level of investment made in our leisure and culture assets and services by us and by funding bodies
- Donations and sponsorship received by the No Child Left Behind initiative
- Number of programmes and initiatives supported by No Child Left Behind
- Global visitor numbers to our leisure and culture assets
- Number of concession memberships taken out at Leisure@
- Free participation events held by our leisure and culture service provider

Key priority 5: Taking care of your money

We will always strive to deliver high quality services that meet your needs as efficiently as possible.

We will continue to look for ways in which we can capitalise on innovation or new technology to improve customer experience and make your money go further.

We will take a commercial and prudent approach to managing our budgets and investments to ensure we remain financially stable and resilient and to secure the long-term financial sustainability of our funding and budgets.

What we will do over the next three years

Our aims:

Ensuring we balance our budgets and work towards becoming a financially sustainable council is essential to the delivery of this priority.

We will also make sure that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) we collect from new developments in Cheltenham, which is ringfenced by national legislation for infrastructure, is spent wisely on both local neighbourhood schemes and broader strategic schemes.

We recognise, too, that the prospect of local government reorganisation means we must take account of this in some of our decision-making.

Our actions:

- By the end of year 1 of this plan we will complete the sale of the Municipal Offices and our share of Gloucestershire Airport, generating capital receipts for investment in service delivery.
- Over the course of this plan, we will reduce the budget gap year-on-year over the medium-term financial strategy period.
- By the end of this plan, we will relocate to alternative accommodation, which improves services for residents and is more efficient to run.
- By the end of this plan, we will rebuild the Housing Revenue Account balance back to the target of £1.5m.
- We will continue to work with our partners Gloucester and Tewkesbury, through the Community Infrastructure Levy Joint Committee, to ensure funding is appropriately allocated to both neighbourhood and strategic schemes. We will also oversee the schemes and be responsible for appropriate monitoring and governance of the funding awarded.
- We will engage with all our Gloucestershire partners on progressing the aim of moving to a new operational depot site to deliver waste and recycling and other environmental services.

Supporting key performance indicators:

- Annual level of general balances
- Percentage savings achieved against agreed budget
- Business rates collection rate
- Council tax collection rate
- Rent and service charge collection rates
- Operating margin of the Housing Revenue Account
- Number of initiatives supported by the Community Infrastructure Levy

Our overall measure of success

Our overall measure of success is how our residents feel about Cheltenham, the council and our services. So, we will run a residents survey in the first year of this plan and again at the end to help us assess how well we have done.

Our plan on a page

Our corporate plan priorities

Securing our future

Create good jobs and grow productivity that will make everyone better off and also deliver benefits for Gloucestershire and the wider region

Use partnerships and social value programmes to support skills and talent development so our residents can benefit from our growing tech and security industry

Promote Cheltenham as a place to live, work, visit, meet and invest to support our wider local economy

Quality homes, safe and strong communities

Make best use of our housing stock, deliver more homes and increase the number available for social rent

Match delivery to local housing needs to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping

High quality, safe homes, setting the standard for all local housing providers and landlords to follow

Make people feel safer and improve our neighbourhoods, public spaces and town centre

Reducing carbon, achieving council net zero, creating biodiversity

Continue to decarbonise council buildings, homes and the way we work, striving to achieve net zero by 2030

Maximise opportunities to retrofit council homes and buildings to reduce carbon, make them warmer and reduce cost of bills

Drive increased biodiversity

Utilise our planning system to enhance our natural environment, mitigating the impact of new buildings

Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes

Use our sport, leisure, art and cultural assets to provide opportunities for everyone

Build on our heritage as a cultural and festival town to encourage more people to take part in culture

Invest in our leisure and sport facilities to broaden participation

Work together with NHS, social care and police partners and encourage investment in activities that reduce pressure on health system and incidence of crime and disorder

Taking care of your money

Deliver high quality services efficiently that meet customer needs

Look for ways to capitalise on innovation or new technology to improve customer experience

Take a commercial and prudent approach to manage budgets and investments

Remain a financially stable and resilient council

Secure long-term financial sustainability of funding and budgets

Aims, actions and indicators to measure success