



Corporate Plan 2023-27

Making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and visit



Introduction

This plan sets out the vision and priorities of Uttlesford District Council for the next four years. It also outlines how the council will deliver its services, measure its performance, and manage its resources in a challenging and changing environment.

Our vision is to make Uttlesford the best place to live, work and visit. We want to preserve and enhance the natural beauty, rural character and heritage of our district, while supporting sustainable growth and development that meets the needs and aspirations of our communities. We want to provide high quality and accessible services that are responsive to local needs and deliver value for money. We want to work with our partners and residents to tackle the key challenges and opportunities facing our district.

This version of the plan contains actions specific to the 2025/26 year, which is the third year of the plan's life.

It should be noted that if local government reorganisation in Essex goes ahead, a comprehensive review of the council's priorities and projects will be undertaken in order to ensure the council's ambitions are matched to its available resource while it works through the implications of reorganisation. Should this prove to be the case, the Corporate Plan will be revised mid-year.



Priorities

To achieve our vision, we have four strategic priorities that will guide our work over the next four years:



Protecting and enhancing our environment



Encouraging economic growth



Building strong communities



Putting residents first

Delivery

To deliver this corporate plan, we will:

- Develop annual service plans that detail how each service area will contribute to the corporate priorities
- Monitor and report on our performance against key indicators and targets on a quarterly basis
- Review our financial position regularly and ensure effective budget management and control
- Engage with our stakeholders, including residents, businesses, partners, staff and councillors on a regular basis
- Review this corporate plan annually and update it as necessary to reflect changing circumstances

Our four-year plan will be delivered during challenging financial times in which we need to reduce our budget by around 25 percent.



Protecting and enhancing our environment

We will protect and improve our environment by reducing our carbon footprint, promoting biodiversity, managing waste and recycling, and supporting green initiatives.

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
Take action on climate change	Clearly set out and publicise our priorities for the coming years to meet our net zero by 2030 pledge, including reducing emissions from our vehicle fleet and corporate buildings.	We will refresh our Climate Change Action Plan, detailing the projects we will focus on during the year. These will support work to reduce carbon emissions.	We will refresh the Action Plan by May 2025 and then monitor successful completion of activities with quarterly updates on progress to the Climate Change and Biodiversity Board.
	Reduce direct emissions from council housing stock. This includes new-build homes being planned/developed.	We will install clean-air heating solutions and develop measures to retro-fit homes to improve sustainability and contribute towards meeting the 2030 net zero pledge.	UDC has been successful in its bid to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund with the aim of improving the environmental performance of c.200 of our housing stock. We are commencing a programme of works for decarbonisation – works will commence in January 2025. The works will be completed by January 2027. The works include exterior wall insulation, installation of solar panels and heat pumps.
		In collaboration with the North Essex Councils, develop our estates decarbonisation plan to include proposition for investment in renewable energy, to support achieving our Net Zero Carbon target.	We will agree and prioritise a portfolio of projects by August 2025 to attract investment to generate income and support the transition to Net Zero.

	<p>Provide community leadership and enable local action on climate change.</p> <p>Deliver sustainable ways of working across the council to reduce the carbon impact of business activities.</p>	<p>We will organise a celebration event to showcase achievements from 3 rounds of the Zero Carbon Communities fund. The event will provide the community with an opportunity to share learning, knowledge and experience.</p> <p>We will develop and introduce a sustainability policy to help us consider and reduce the environmental impact of business activities.</p>	<p>We will evaluate the event, which will be held in the Autumn of 2025, and use feedback from the ‘Sustainable Uttlesford’ network of community groups and projects to understand community climate action across the district.</p> <p>We will produce a policy by December 2025.</p>
<p>Conserve and enhance the quality and diversity of the district’s natural habitats and wildlife</p>	<p>Fulfil our bio-diversity duty by using the planning system to conserve, enhance and create new ecological habitat.</p>	<p>We will support and promote the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Uttlesford, to ensure widespread reach and engagement.</p> <p>We will manage Council land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity. We will identify and deliver projects on our own estate and publish our progress and achievements.</p> <p>We will develop robust planning policies as part of the Local Plan relevant to habitat protection, enhancement and creation.</p> <p>We will require and monitor bio-diversity net gain in relation to new development and ensure the council has access to specialist advice from a qualified ecologist.</p>	<p>We contributed positively to the Essex-wide LNRS consultation and promoted engagement among district residents. We will develop an Action Plan by June 2025.</p> <p>We will publish our first Biodiversity report by 1 January 2026.</p> <p>We carefully considered Regulation 19 responses on our proposed policies and have submitted the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for consideration. We will make modifications as necessary throughout 2025 to ensure the plan can be adopted.</p> <p>Processes for Bio-diversity net gain monitoring are now in place and being applied and updates provided as part of our Biodiversity Report (above).</p>

<p>Work with partners to deliver sustainable transport</p>	<p>Steer development to the most sustainable locations using the Local Plan and via planning decisions.</p> <p>Work with Essex County Council and other stakeholders to promote and facilitate sustainable, reliable, and adaptable transport infrastructure.</p>	<p>Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the active travel and shared transport pilot schemes in Saffron Walden as part of the DEFRA funded Clean Air project, to build evidence to support roll out of schemes elsewhere in the district.</p> <p>Develop a spatial development strategy and robust planning policies as part of the Local Plan in order to support sustainable travel.</p> <p>Complete the Uttlesford Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.</p>	<p>EV Car Club scheme was launched in November 2023 and uptake will continue to be monitored and evaluated through 2025/26 as part of the two-year trial period. E-bike loan schemes will be monitored and evaluated ahead of March 2026.</p> <p>Following the Regulation 19 consultation the Local Plan has been submitted to government and includes various sustainable transport measures. The examination will take place in mid-2025.</p> <p>The LCWIP has been completed and went out to consultation end of 2024. The consultation will enable the council to develop a priority list of schemes in collaboration with ECC for delivery.</p> <p>Undertake an assessment of S106 and S278 agreements to review which schemes are aligned with the new local plan policies and transport strategies. By September 2025.</p>
<p>Manage waste in a sustainable way</p>	<p>Work with partners across Essex on a new waste strategy for the county.</p>	<p>Following adoption of the Waste Strategy for Essex we will continue to work with partners to implement the strategy. Including rolling out pilot projects to recycle waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) across the district, introduce food recycling facilities at flat complexes by Spring 2025. We will also participate in a project 'one bag a week' to help residents reduce their residual waste and increase recycling.</p>	<p>We will roll out a WEEE recycling scheme in Spring 2025 which will enable residents to dispose of small electrical items as part of waste collection services.</p> <p>Recycling services will be introduced at some flat complexes and effectiveness measured over several months. Residual waste should be reduced and participation in recycling services improved.</p>

	Review our domestic recycling and waste services to make sure they are as efficient as possible and review and improve our waste service for businesses.	Following confirmation of the national policy – Simpler Recycling - we will consider how best to implement the changes required.	We will obtain Member support for a clear pathway to meet new requirements under Simpler Recycling. Member workshops will be organised in Spring 2025.
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Encouraging economic growth

We will support and promote a vibrant and diverse economy by attracting investment, facilitating business growth, enhancing skills and employability, and improving connectivity and infrastructure.

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
Improve connectivity infrastructure	<p>Support work to ensure residents and businesses benefit from superfast broadband.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to improve connectivity, including 5G technology.</p>	<p>We will continue to work with Essex County Council on the Superfast Essex project, particularly targeting areas where major broadband suppliers cannot deliver service.</p> <p>Work as part of the Essex and Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) to ensure residents and businesses get maximum benefit from superfast/gigabit broadband and 5G delivery.</p>	<p>We will have an officer representative in attendance at all Gigaclear Project Board Meetings to ensure our position is presented against the delivery plan outcome for the district.</p> <p>We will continue to have a member and an officer in attendance at the DIZ meetings and regular engagement with Digital Essex, ensuring we have early access to information and initiatives available to enhance connectivity across the district.</p> <p>Connectivity infrastructure features in the Economic Development Plan 2025-2029.</p>

<p>Support the resilience and growth of the local economy</p>	<p>Provide business support, information and advice to help the business community grow.</p> <p>Enhance the skills and employability of local residents. Attract tourism and investment to the district.</p>	<p>We will complete the actions set out in the Economic Development Plan 2025–2029. The plan sets out our nine priorities which contains detailed information about the way the council supports the business community either directly or by being an influencer on wider network groups.</p> <p>The Economic Development Plan 2025–2029 priorities include how we will support skills development, inward investment and Tourism either directly or as an influencer on wider network groups.</p> <p>We will work with partners including other Essex councils to deliver economic priorities across a wider area, benefitting from economies of scale in procurement and scope of delivery.</p> <p>UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a government funded scheme related to the levelling up agenda to support the local economy and administered at a local level. This provides a local business support package, skills training and grants for the rural business community.</p>	<p>We will deliver the priorities as set out in the Economic Development Plan, progress on which will be reported the Scrutiny Committee twice a year and to Cabinet at the end of each financial year.</p> <p>We will play an active role in relevant county and regional forums including the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium, the Innovation Core Group and the North Essex Economic Board, ensuring at least one council attendee at all relevant meetings to ensure the district’s views and priorities are represented.</p> <p>The UKSPF allocations/awards are reviewed by the local partnership panel made up of members, officers and community/voluntary representatives on a quarterly basis. The outcomes of the awards are included in the progress reports for the Economic Development Recovery Plan to Scrutiny and Cabinet.</p>
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Building Strong Communities

We will build strong and resilient communities by engaging with our residents, delivering new housing and tackling social isolation.

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
<p>Provide and maintain quality homes and invest in thriving communities</p>	<p>Deliver high-quality housing management services to empower our tenants and ensure communities prosper.</p>	<p>We are self-assessing its services against the regulatory Consumer Standards to identify where improvements are required. UDC reviews its compliance with the Complaints Handling Code and puts in place improvement plans where we are non-compliant. UDC uses customer feedback and engagement to shape our services. The council is increasing its capacity in resident engagement to ensure compliance in this area.</p> <p>We will ensure that our new repairs and maintenance contract, which launches in April 2025, delivers on the council's objectives, complies with regulatory requirements and delivers high levels of resident satisfaction. UDC is recruiting a new client team to hold the contractor to account.</p>	<p>We will work towards full compliance with the Consumer Standards by the end of June 2025.</p> <p>We will retain its compliance with the Complaints Handling Code. Our performance against the Complaints Handling Code is published each June in the Annual Complaints Report, which is reported to the Tenants' Panel, Housing Board and the Ombudsman.</p> <p>A new Tenant Engagement Strategy will be published by the end of May 2025.</p> <p>Quarterly performance reports will be published against all key indicators. Monthly KPIs will be managed locally.</p> <p>Implementation of the new contract from 1 April 2025, with the new integrated IT system going live and tenants being able to report repairs through the council's customer service centre.</p>

	<p>Commit to improving the condition of our homes by investing in our housing stock.</p> <p>Provide quality homes through managed growth.</p>	<p>Develop an Asset Management Strategy aligned to the HRA Business Plan that delivers Decent Homes compliance through planned work programmes.</p> <p>Seek development opportunities and work with other social housing providers to maximise the delivery of affordable housing.</p>	<p>We will publish and maintain a five-year Capital Works Programme by June 2025 and measure our progress against it.</p> <p>We will refresh asset data through stock condition surveys, asset grading and maintaining a validated compliance register. This is an ongoing process. This will be informed by a strategic HRA asset appraisal.</p> <p>We will publish the HRA 30-year business plan to identify capacity for investment in new and affordable housing by June 2025.</p> <p>A housing development pipeline for the district will be published by September 2025, which will set out our plan for delivering new council housing.</p>
<p>Tackle rural priorities</p>	<p>Draw together our understanding of issues and challenges particularly facing our villages and rural communities – including rural isolation, rural poverty and homelessness, rural economy, rural crime and safety issues etc.</p> <p>Develop this into a coherent plan across of the range of interventions we and other partners both currently make and can potentially introduce to serve our rural communities to the fullest.</p>	<p>Convene partners across sectors to join an Uttlesford Rural Summit – to identify key issues and opportunities. Thereafter, to develop a shared action plan across agencies.</p>	<p>The project’s priorities will be managed and measured through the delivery of the specifics in the emerging multi-agency action plan.</p>

<p>Plan for future housing needs in a sustainable way</p>	<p>Introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support the Local Plan and fund new infrastructure in the district.</p> <p>Deliver a robust Local Plan that sets out a vision, and objectives, for addressing climate change, meeting future development needs in a planned and managed way, and setting out policies and standards to ensure that our historic and natural environment is conserved and enhanced.</p>	<p>Work with a range of stakeholders, including Essex County Council, the NHS, water companies, and neighbouring councils to ensure adequate provision of infrastructure is made to support new development.</p> <p>Prepare a Local Plan, for examination, following a range of approaches to resident engagement. The outcome of consultations and best possible evidence fed into the submission to government.</p> <p>Ensure delivery through a Building Safety Regulator compliant Building Control service.</p>	<p>A number of meetings with key stakeholders are being held to ensure statements of common ground are agreed with key stakeholders. Local Plan is being measured against the LDS timetable and is on schedule. Work to implement a CIL commenced at the end of 2024 and there will be wide public consultation on it by September 2025. Work will run alongside the Local Plan.</p> <p>We have an agreed Local Plan timetable (the LDS) against which progress is measured. The Local Plan is on schedule for adoption in Q1 2026.</p> <p>Support relevant officers to ensure they maintain registration under 2023 Building Safety Act. Registration is renewed every four years.</p>
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Putting Residents First

We will deliver excellent services for the benefit of our residents by ensuring budgetary stability and value for money, embracing new technology and developing our workforce.

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
Ensure financial stability	<p>Deliver a balanced budget every year.</p> <p>Review services through a structured programme to ensure efficiency and value for money.</p> <p>Prioritise money towards the areas of greatest need and impact.</p>	<p>The required budget savings over the next four years will be delivered through the Blueprint Uttlesford programme, through which every council service is being reviewed. Savings will come from a combination of increased income and budget reductions.</p> <p>The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2025 to 2030 demonstrates a need to reduce the net the General Fund budget by £7.5 million, once year 1 Blueprint Uttlesford savings are taken into account.</p>	<p>A separate workstream of benefit realisation and cost control has been established and is being led by the Director of Finance and Revenues and Benefits. This ensures financial changes are logged and maintained.</p> <p>The financial position of the council is reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet and annually the budget and MTFS are approved by Full Council.</p>
Use commercial assets to fund services	<p>Manage the commercial asset portfolio to maximise income for the council to be used on services for residents.</p> <p>Review the portfolio to ensure it represents best value for the council.</p>	<p>The commercial asset portfolio generates income to support the council's services. Regular reviews will continue to be undertaken to ensure it still provides the best value.</p>	<p>The CIPFA Prudential Code requires an annual report on commercial investments and option appraisals. This report will be presented to the Investment Board and as necessary to Cabinet and Council. It is due in April 2025.</p>

<p>Enhance digital access and innovation across council services</p>	<p>Consider emerging technology, such as AI, when redesigning services.</p> <p>Review our online services to ensure they are helping residents do what they need to do, within the council’s financial constraints.</p>	<p>Through the Blueprint Uttlesford programme and the ICT Business Plan, service reviews will include consideration of the best way to deploy value for money technology to ensure we can continue to deliver the services on which our residents rely.</p> <p>We will implement enhanced technology including the use of AI to improve customer service.</p>	<p>Through the ICT Business Plan, we are beginning to make use of robotics and artificial intelligence to streamline routine tasks and processes, for example using a bot to register IT Helpdesk calls.</p> <p>Each Blueprint Uttlesford review has a set review methodology and template. Through this it will be possible to demonstrate how technology has been used to maintain or enhance service delivery. The Blueprint Uttlesford programme will last for four years.</p> <p>Procure and implement AI systems through the Blueprint Uttlesford transformation programme, considering service requirements during each review., This programme runs until the end of 2027/28</p>
<p>Further develop a skilled, motivated and diverse workforce</p>	<p>Review our recruitment, onboarding, induction and retention processes to ensure we attract and retain a workforce that is representative of our community. Promote an inclusive workplace to help us recruit the best people in line with our values and behaviours.</p> <p>Ensure our learning and development offer is accessible to all, affordable, efficiently delivered and aligned to emerging developmental priorities.</p>	<p>We will monitor progress against the activities set out in the Workforce Action Plan and will use self and external assessments to measure success such as Disability Confident and Armed Forces accreditation, an increased number of candidates for jobs, a reduction in staff turnover rates, targeted training for our priority areas and improved compliance with mandatory training.</p> <p>We will produce a Member Development Strategy to ensure all councillors have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform effectively in their capacity as elected representatives of the local community</p>	<p>This priority will be delivered through the Workforce Plan and Action Plan 2023-2027, which will be regularly reviewed and updated according to corporate priorities and engagement with staff.</p> <p>The Strategy will go to Full Council by May 2025 for approval following discussion and recommendation at Audit and Standards Committee. A training programme will then be developed for the 2025/6 council year following the principals contained in the strategy.</p>

