



Corporate Plan 2023-27

Making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and visit



Protecting & 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.



Building strong communities

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



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.



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.



<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/corporate-plan>

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.



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
- Identify key risks, develop appropriate mitigation and report progress regularly to meet the aims of this plan
- 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>Governance and workplan (Climate Action Plan) is currently under review to ensure resources are focused on most critical issues for UDC. Recruitment to the vacant climate change officer post was successful and the team is now back at capacity.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committee recently considered an update report on the delivery of the climate action plan and included detail on achievements across the organisation.</p> <p>It is worth highlighting that Uttlesford was recognised earlier this year as one of the most improved councils in the 2025 national Climate Emergency UK Action Scorecards and highest in the East of England.</p> <p>The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) project commenced in January 2025 with property surveys and consultation with tenants. The next phase, which will see physical work starting, is scheduled for November 2025. The planned programme includes external wall insulation, solar panel installation, and air source heat pumps.</p> <p>The London Road Decarbonisation project is progressing and is currently in procurement phase and currently on target. A fourth round of the Zero Carbon Communities fund is being launched in the Autumn with funding decisions due in early 2026.</p> <p>The switch to HVO is underway with procurement in progress and it is hoped that the first delivery will be in January.</p> <p>Sustainable Uttlesford (SU) is progressing with some support from the Council. Sustainable Uttlesford committee continues to meet monthly. A focused session is planned on sustainable waste management in November.</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>The Local Plan is nearing completion with just main modifications remaining ahead of planned adoption. Policies relating to natural environmental appear to have stood up to scrutiny during the formal examination.</p> <p>Processes for securing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) via the Planning regime are in place and gain is set to be doubled upon adoption of the new Local Plan.</p> <p>Plans and a brief are in place to ensure the council's first Bio-diversity report is produced for January 2026.</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>The sustainable transport measures contained within the emerging Local Plan appear to have stood up to scrutiny during examination and will form part of the council's statutory policy framework once adopted.</p> <p>Following the completion of the LCWIP and a review of S106 monies, projects will begin to be implemented across the district.</p> <p>Monitoring of the Saffron Walden App Bike Scheme continues. The upward trend in usage continued strongly again in May with another 10 percent growth in monthly rentals compared to April. This made May the strongest month ever with rentals for the month at 442. This is 34 percent up on last year and 10 percent up from April this year. The team are exploring ways in which this service can be maintained after the expiration of the Clean Air Project which provided initial funding.</p>		

	<p>The second community bike ride was held in Saffron Walden on 15 June which was well attended by residents and involved a family bike ride around the town centre. National charity Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMoUK) has been commissioned to write a developer guide for shared mobility in Uttlesford. The first draft is currently being considered.</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>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.</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>Following confirmation of the national policy – Simpler Recycling - we will consider how best to implement the changes required.</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> <p>We will obtain Member support for a clear pathway to meet new requirements under Simpler Recycling. Member workshops will be organised in Summer 2025.</p>
	<p>Two Member workshops were held in July and September exploring the challenges of maintaining recycling rates and meeting the requirements of Simpler Recycling. Uttlesford have now been involved in four behaviour change projects over the earlier part of the year: flats recycling and the one bag a week challenge have concluded, and waste electrical recycling service commenced in June and rolled out to all residents.</p> <p>A further project has been undertaken to encourage food waste recycling in areas where the community have not been as receptive to recycling services. All the trials are now being evaluated and the conclusions built into future plans. Feedback from the workshops and the four projects will be built into a report which will be considered by Members in Q4 (January to March 2026).</p>		

Learning will also be shared across the Essex waste partnership.



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
Support the resilience and growth of the local economy	Provide business support, information and advice to help the business community grow.	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>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>
	Enhance the skills and employability of local residents. Attract tourism	The Economic Development Plan 2025–2029 priorities include how we will support skills development, inward investment and Tourism	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

	<p>and investment to the district.</p>	<p>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>outcomes of the awards are included in the progress reports for the Economic Development Recovery Plan to Scrutiny and Cabinet.</p>
	<p>The Economic Development Plan mid-year update for 2026/26 is being presented to councillors in November. This provides updates on the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund.</p> <p>Current priorities include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Supporting our town centres (the council has been supporting the Saffron Walden BID and supported the development of the Makers and Maltings Markets) (2) Rural Businesses (so far focus has been on the council's 'Campaign for Rural Pubs') (3) Small Business Growth Support (delivering a number of events for small businesses and planning the Uttlesford Business Awards) (4) Promotion of entrepreneurship and business start-up support (updated the Uttlesford Business Start-up guide, led and NEEB Young Entrepreneurs Programme, and hosted an Ambitious Women in Essex event) (5) Business sustainability and the green agenda (supported community Bike Day and launched the Zero Carbon Business Grant) (6) Tourism and the visitor economy (refreshed the Discover Uttlesford website, working with external partners to ensure Uttlesford visitor information is kept up to date across online platforms) (7) Skills and apprenticeships (supported local schools deliver workshops as part of the NEEB Young Entrepreneurs programme) 		

	(8) Strategic level inward investment (working with the UK Innovation Corridor to promote the district, which a focus on major sites like Chesterford Research Park; and (9) Digital Connectivity (through the UKSPF funded WECAN Digital Inclusion Programme and the DIZ)		
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>Digital Connectivity across the district is featured as one of the nine priorities in the Economic Development Plan 2025/29. Uttlesford has had a presence at the DIZ throughout the year. The DIZ has procured a mobile connectivity mapping platform which enables us to better understand the coverage of mobile connectivity across the DIZ area, to identify 'not spots' and areas of concern, and visualise patterns that can inform future connectivity planning.</p>		



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
Provide and maintain quality homes and invest in thriving communities	Deliver high-quality housing management services to empower our tenants and ensure communities prosper.	<p>We bring all our landlord services up to the standards required to meet our legal and regulatory obligations and drive improved tenant and leaseholder satisfaction.</p> <p>We will have in place service delivery arrangements for the future which maintain those standards, while always looking for ways to improve.</p> <p>We will make our services easy to access for all our tenants and communities. This includes making it easy for our tenants to give their feedback to us.</p> <p>We will make sure that our Tenant and Leaseholders Panel have proper oversight of how our services are performing and are able to scrutinise services in a meaningful way.</p>	<p>We will work towards full compliance with the Consumer Standards by the end of August 2025.</p> <p>We have put in place a new set of performance indicators which focus on areas which are a high priority for the council and our tenants. We will retain our compliance with the Complaints Handling Code.</p> <p>We will carry out a census of all our tenants and be proactive in adjusting services to meet their needs. We will encourage tenants to ask us to change the way we deliver their services as their needs change.</p> <p>A new Tenant Engagement Strategy will be published by the end of June 2025. This will be based on feedback received by our tenants. Our strategy is based on encouraging more people to get involved through offering many ways for them to do so.</p>

		We will ensure that our new repairs and maintenance contract delivers on the council's objectives, complies with regulatory requirements and delivers high levels of resident satisfaction and social value.	Embedding 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>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 October 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 September 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>We have completed our review of the housing landlord service against the requirements of the regulatory consumer standards, and with the aim of gaining an independent view on our levels of compliance the council commissioned a 'mock inspection' by one of the leading housing consultancies specialising in this area. The next step will be to deliver any further actions as required to enable UDC to meet the highest levels of compliance.</p> <p>We have continued to develop our approach to tenant engagement, and our first resident scrutiny activity has taken place, focusing on complaint handling as this was the lowest performing area in the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey.</p>		

Our performance in complaint handling in relation to the statutory Complaints Handling Code achieved 100% during the last three months and our recent self-assessment against the Code found that we were compliant with its requirements.

The Tenant Engagement Strategy was published to timetable and is available on the council's website. In July 2025 we launched a tenants census to gain a better understanding of who lives in our homes, so that we can ensure that services are delivered around the needs and circumstances of households, and to provide the communication channels which our tenants need so they can access our services.

The new repairs and maintenance contract was successfully mobilised; however, performance challenges have arisen that we are addressing. These in the main are anticipated challenges which come with a new contract. The council is addressing these challenges as they arise. The Property Services Client team is partially in place with vacancies being filled with interim staff, and options are being explored to fill the remaining posts.

We are achieving good regulatory and legal compliance on health and safety, with compliance work on other areas of the housing landlord service progressing well.

The delivery of the social housing decarbonisation project is in progress, with all preparatory surveys completed and resident engagement currently underway. However, we are facing some commercial challenges with the contractor that are being addressed to ensure the project can be delivered effectively.

The HRA asset appraisal has been completed, and this will influence both the HRA business plan and the asset management strategy, which is planned to be concluded in December 2025. (The reason for this slight delay is a Corporate Management Team decision to incorporate the findings from the HRA Asset Appraisal, rather than wait for a further year before incorporating. This will give accurate and timely data which we can use to inform our property investment and new homes plans for the coming year.) This is being followed by in-depth options appraisals on some sites so that we can ensure we are matching new developments with local housing demand. As part of this work, have recently launched a district-wide survey on housing provision for the older/retired population. We are also carrying out an in-depth review of housing-owned garages and allotment sites.

Overall, we remain committed to delivering high-quality services while navigating the challenges that arise.

For delivery of new homes, we have identified a small number of general needs sites which will be delivered within the next two and a half years. The HRA asset appraisal as referred to above will be helpful in identifying any potential opportunities for development now and in the future.

Tackle rural priorities	<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>The newly established Corporate Programme is structured around six key themes, one of which is Community Uttlesford. The Head of Transformation and Project Management has engaged with lead officers from the relevant service areas, Communities, Climate Change, Health & Wellbeing, and Economic Development to start to shape design of this programme. A formal programme initiation process will now commence, and the group is working to identify specific activities and initiatives that will be implemented under this theme and in which rurality will be a central strand of work.</p>		
Plan for future housing needs in a sustainable way	<p>Introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support the Local Plan and fund new infrastructure in the district.</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>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>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>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>Develop policies to protect historic buildings and create guidance to ensure any works are carried out sensitively. Ensure delivery through a Building Safety Regulator compliant Building Control service.</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>The adoption of relevant policy and publish of guidance material in 2025/6.</p> <p>Support relevant officers to ensure they maintain registration under 2023 Building Safety Act. Registration is renewed every four years.</p>
	<p>A draft CIL charging schedule has been produced and is currently subject to public consultation. Adoption is anticipated Spring 2026 as per agreed timetable.</p> <p>The Local Plan is nearing completion with just main modifications remaining ahead of planned adoption. Policies relating to climate change and heritage, including the setting of heritage assets, appear to have stood up to scrutiny during the formal examination.</p>		



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>
	<p>The medium-term financial strategy assumptions were updated during the summer 2025 and reported to Cabinet in October 2025. Included in the MTFS update is the new savings requirement, which will be updated further at the time of setting the 2026/27 budget. The savings programme will be delivered under Blueprint 2.0 and led by the Chief Operating Officer.</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>The annual report was presented to the Investment Board in April 2025. No assets were identified as suitable for marketing at that point in time.</p>		
	<p>Consider emerging technology, such as AI, when redesigning services.</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>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>Progress in this area of work continues to be on hold pending decisions on Local Government Reorganisation and who the Council will merge with.</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>
	<p>Corporate training has been delivered for Domestic Awareness, Complaints Handling, Sexual Harassment for managers, Share Point, Cyber Security and Counter Fraud. We have also partnered with other councils across Essex to develop a pool of trained mediators, of which 4 of our staff have been trained.</p> <p>A new Learning and Development Lead commenced work in September 2025 and is currently reviewing our recruitment onboarding, induction and retention processes and our learning and development offer. A survey was circulated to staff in October to identify skills and knowledge gaps which will help us to shape our learning and development programme and target our resources, which will include getting staff ready for LGR.</p> <p>We have also partnered with Harlow District Council to procure a new Learning Management System which will host over 2,000 online courses, will enable us to upload our own course content, and provide us with a reporting facility to monitor training activity across the council including mandatory training compliance. It will be accessible to all our staff from early January 26.</p>		

A policy has been approved for employees registering as foster carers and the council has gained accreditation as a Fostering Friendly organisation.

We are now working towards the 'Working Well' accreditation which includes providing staff with free health checks, stop smoking kits and developing staff volunteers to become Workplace Health Champions and Mental Health First Aiders.

A workshop was held with a group of staff volunteers in July to get feedback on key themes from the staff survey. Recommendations that have been actioned include revamping the staff conferences and introducing more wellbeing support.

The Member Development Strategy was developed by a task and finish group of the Audit and Standards Committee and approved by Full Council in April 2025.

At the May Annual Council meeting a permanent working group was established and this group will meet in December 2025 to review take up of member training opportunities thus far and make recommendations as appropriate.

The working group will also consider a training programme for the 2026/27 council year.

Feedback forms for all training have been developed and used. Training for 2025 already delivered includes Planning Committee, Licensing, Audit and Code of Conduct (the last of these also for parish councils). Well-received workshops on Parking and Recycling have also been held.