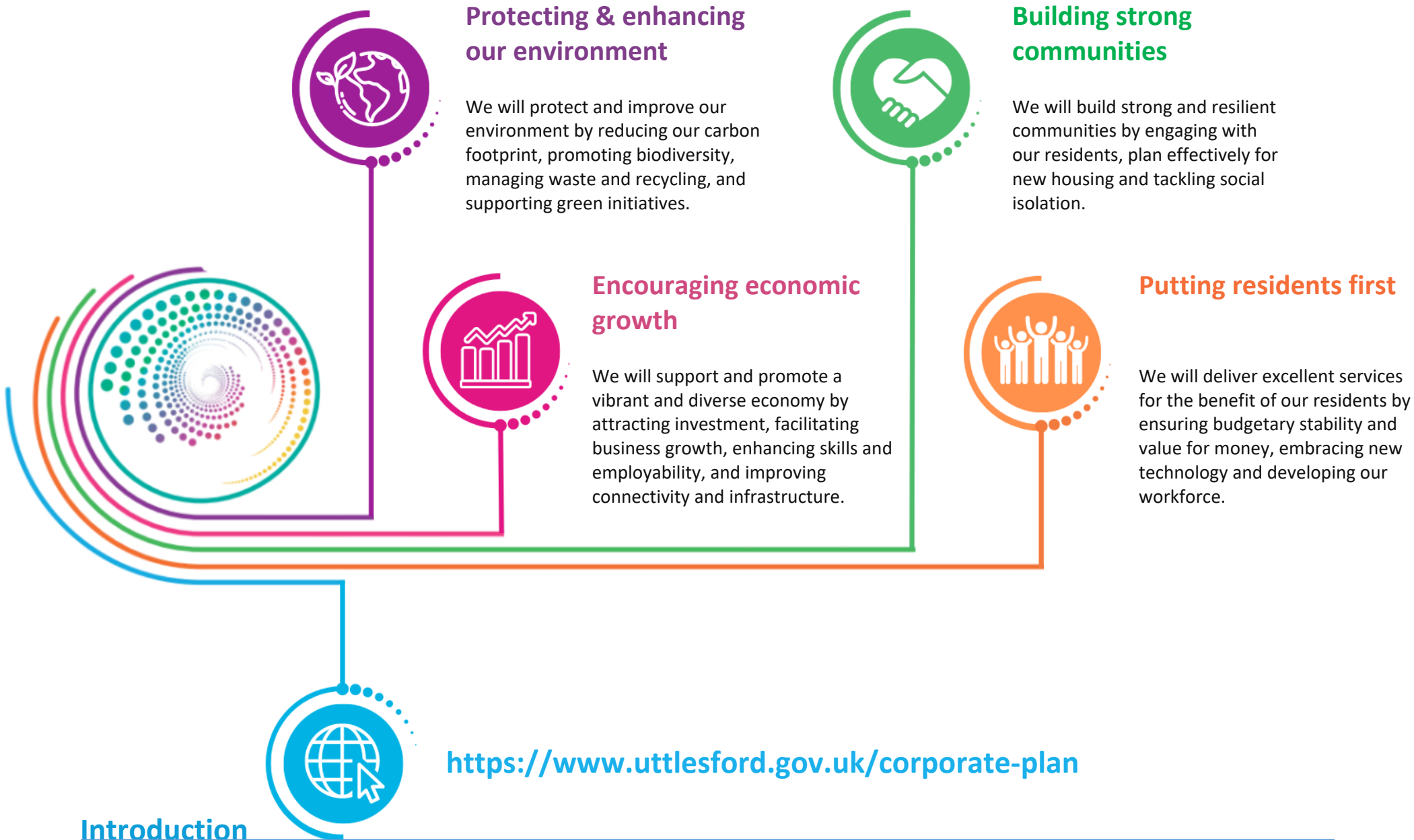




Corporate Plan 2023-28

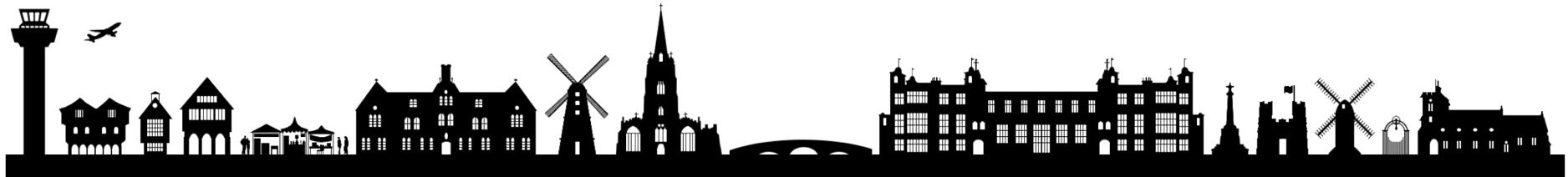
Making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and visit



This plan sets out the vision and priorities of Uttlesford District Council for the next five 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 2026/27 year, which is the fourth 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, working with our service directors to scope and agree the projects and activities we will focus on during 2026/27.	Through the Climate Change Action Plan, we will develop a detailed carbon reduction management delivery plan for our estates, operations and fleet. The plan will be in place by March 2027.
	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.	We will deliver the key London Road Decarbonisation Project according to project plan timescales. The project is underway with the contract having been signed in January 2026 and preliminary works commencing in March. The project is due to complete by the end of December 2026. A project board is in place which is part of the overarching Corporate Programme which has established reporting structures.
		We will develop our estates, operations and fleet decarbonisation plan to include plans for investment in renewable energy, to support achieving our Net Zero Carbon target.	A programme of social housing decarbonisation work started in January 2026. The works will be completed by September 2026. The works include exterior wall insulation, installation of solar panels and heat pumps to c200 properties. In addition to the projects and funding achieved in 2025, we will agree and prioritise a portfolio of projects by June 2026 to further 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 <u>The Uttlesford Big Green Festival</u> 6th to 14th June 2026 working in partnership with Sustainable Uttlesford. This weeklong event will inspire and celebrate community climate action across the district. The event will provide an opportunity to show case projects that have been supported by the Zero Carbon Communities fund.</p> <p>We will develop a sustainability community of practice for managers and staff to help embed sustainability policy into business operations at the Council.</p>	<p>As part of this work, we are developing a Renewable Energy Solar Farm Strategy by July 2026 to assist with managing solar development in the district.</p> <p>We will evaluate the event and continue to collaborate with Sustainable Uttlesford to identify funding opportunities that will support the implementation of the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy and community energy projects in across the district.</p> <p>We will recognise and promote operational climate action which has made a positive environmental impact. Achievements will be shared via staff newsletters and conferences and in our buildings.</p>
Conserve and enhance the quality and diversity of the district's natural habitats and wildlife	<p>Fulfil our bio-diversity duty by using the planning system to conserve, enhance and create new ecological habitat.</p>	<p>The Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was published in July 2025. We will promote the LNRS and the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2025 primary goals and commitments for restoring nature.</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 deliver biodiversity and nature restoration policies and projects that align with the LNRS and EIP commitments including a District Tree Strategy. We will publish our first Biodiversity Duty report including our objectives for the next five years by March 2026.</p> <p>We will identify opportunities for increasing delivery of Enhanced Biodiversity Duty on the Council estate, and develop a delivery and monitoring plan, and a set of indicators to enable effective reporting on our progress by March 2027.</p>

		<p>We have developed 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>The Local Plan is now advanced and includes vanguard policies for bio-diversity and habitat protection. We will work to see that it is adopted in accordance with our published timetable (in March 2026) for use in planning decisions.</p> <p>Processes for Bio-diversity net gain monitoring are in place and being applied and updates to be provided as part of our Biodiversity Report (above).</p>
Work with partners to deliver sustainable transport	<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>We will complete and submit a final report to DEFRA on the delivery of the active travel and shared transport pilot schemes in Saffron Walden Clean Air project and will agree a follow-on action plan.</p> <p>We will work with developers to support the expansion of shared transport schemes to new developments in other parts of the district.</p> <p>We will work with developers to deliver sustainable transport in new developments.</p> <p>The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has been completed and submitted to Active Travel England.</p>	<p>In collaboration with our scheme operators, we will identify funding opportunities to develop operating models and to enable the continuation of existing successful shared transport schemes by March 2027.</p> <p>The Local Plan is now at an advanced stage and includes various sustainable transport measures. Adoption anticipated in March 2026.</p> <p>We will make best use of S106 developer contributions to deliver prioritised sustainable transport schemes.</p> <p>The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) will be reviewed and a priority list of schemes (in collaboration with ECC for delivery) is being developed for the end of June 2026 with some schemes already moving to delivery phase.</p>



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.	<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 Uttlesford Local Plan, which includes strategy and policies for the economic development of the district, will complement the above.</p>	<p>Progress on the Economic Development Plan is reported to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet twice a year. The focus for the year will be on rural businesses, particularly on rural hospitality businesses which form a key part of our visitor economy, and creating opportunities to increase our engagement with businesses across a range of sectors.</p> <p>Officers play a key role in the delivery of the North Essex Economic Board 5 year economic strategy which this year will focus on the rural economy.</p> <p>Officers meet with a range of groups including formal partnerships such as the Visit Essex and Digital innovation Zone, but also informal groups such as the Greater Essex EDO network, and the cross-border Innovation Core, an off shoot of the UK Innovation Corridor. This creates opportunities to inform and understand the wider regional context and how this influences the Uttlesford economy.</p>

	Enhance the skills and employability of local residents. Attract tourism and investment to the district.	<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>Work is underway on the local priorities set out in the Economic Development Plan, progress on which is reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny.</p> <p>Uttlesford is leading on the NEEB rural economy programme.</p>
Improve connectivity infrastructure	Identify opportunities to improve connectivity, including 5G technology.	<p>Having completed the Gigaclear project which saw more than 4,000 rural Uttlesford homes connected to superfast broadband for the first time, we are now working with developers to ensure sufficient digital infrastructure is included in all new housing and commercial schemes.</p> <p>Work with Digital Essex (ECC) and as part of the Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) to ensure residents and businesses get maximum benefit from superfast/gigabit broadband and 5G delivery. This includes working with key partners on funding opportunities to improve connectivity in the district.</p>	<p>The Local Plan is now at an advanced stage and includes a provision to ensure all development demonstrates digital infrastructure will be put in place.</p> <p>We continue to have a member and an officer in attendance at the Digital Innovation Zone (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>A mapping project is underway to improve our understanding of mobile coverage across the district, including a survey to understand resident and community views on mobile connectivity and mast.</p>

		<p>Support the development of digital skills to ensure residents and businesses can access digital services.</p>	<p>This information can then be used to inform a business case for investment in connectivity infrastructure which is expected to be developed by March 2027.</p> <p>Officers also promote initiatives aimed at helping residents and small business owners to upskill in areas such as digital marketing.</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
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. We will put in place the resources needed to deliver the required improvement actions.</p> <p>We will bring repairs and maintenance in-house in order to stabilise and improve the service offered to tenants.</p> <p>We will hold our maintenance contractors to account to ensure they provide value for money and deliver against the standards set by the council and all legal and regulatory obligations.</p> <p>Awaab's Law came into force in October 2025. Will we meet our legal obligations in</p>	<p>We will measure our progress in delivering actions as recommended following a mock housing inspection which concluded in December 2025. The action plan forms part of the wider Corporate Project Board work and progress will be reviewed fortnightly. Updates on the delivery of the action plan will be reported through the Corporate Management Team, The Tenants and Leaseholder Panel, Housing Board and Cabinet.</p> <p>A comprehensive project plan will be used for the process of bringing services back under direct council control. This forms part of the Corporate Programme, reported monthly to CMT and quarterly to Cabinet. It is anticipated that services will start to be provided directly from 1 April 2026.</p> <p>A suite of KPIs will be used to monitor the repairs and maintenance service, reported quarterly to CMT, Housing Board and the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.</p> <p>We have developed a tracker for damp and mould cases so that we can monitor actions and</p>

		<p>managing damp and mould in tenants' homes when we become aware of it.</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. We will use feedback and tenant insight to identify where services can be improved.</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>the time taken to carry out these actions. The case management is reviewed on a weekly basis. We will have a dedicated resource for co-ordinating and monitoring actions – where actions are not delivered in time or to the right standard this will be escalated to the Strategic Director, CMT, Housing Board, the Tenants and Leaseholder Panel and Cabinet.</p> <p>We are carrying out a census of all our tenants, and we will have a record of tenants' requirements for accessing our services. We will record requests for service adjustments. Approximately 30% of tenants have now provided the information. Tenants who have not responded will be followed up through new surveys and through housing management colleagues when they visit tenants through the day-to-day service delivery. This is a rolling programme.</p> <p>Our tenant scrutiny activities, which are commissioned by the Tenants' Panel, will include an action plan where tenants make recommendations on how services can be improved. An action plan will be produced at the end of each individual scrutiny activity and will be reported to Housing Board.</p> <p>We carry out impact assessments on all our tenant engagement activities so we can understand the different tenant involvement has made in how we deliver our services.</p>
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		<p>We will work with tenants to agree a new set of Service Standards for all our landlord services.</p>	<p>Tenant workshops are being held in February 2026, following which service standards will be developed by September 2026.</p> <p>We will publish these standards by the end of April 2026 and make sure our staff are aware of them and work towards them. We will assess our performance against them annually and publish the outcomes in our Annual Report to Tenants.</p>
	Commit to improving the condition of our homes by investing in our housing stock.	<p>Develop an Asset Management Strategy aligned to the HRA Business Plan that delivers Decent Homes compliance through planned work programmes.</p>	<p>We will publish and maintain a five-year Capital Works Programme by 30 June 2026 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 which was completed in September 2025.</p>
	Provide quality homes through managed growth.	<p>We will publish a Housing Delivery Strategy 2026-2028, setting out a pipeline of addition council homes, with the aim of delivering by March 2028. This will be based on the 30-year HRA Business Plan and identified local housing demand for both general needs and sheltered housing.</p>	<p>The council will assess itself against the delivery targets set out in the Housing Delivery Strategy and in terms of meeting local housing demand. The Housing Delivery Strategy will be drafted by the end of June 2026. The council will assess itself by determining the number of additional homes delivered against the targets set out in the Housing Delivery Strategy.</p>
		<p>This includes regeneration activity across council-owned land, redundant sites and other parts of the Housing Revenue Account estate, including garage sites and allotment sites with high vacancy levels.</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>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>We prepared 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>It includes vanguard policies to protect historic buildings and will enable us to produce further guidance to ensure any works are carried out sensitively. Ensure delivery through a Building Safety Regulator compliant Building Control service.</p>	<p>We have statements of common ground agreed with all key stakeholders. We have produced an Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the local plan's requirements and emerging CIL requirements will assist with addressing our infrastructure deficit.</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 March 2026.</p> <p>Following adoption of the Local Plan we will produce detailed guidance material by March 2027.</p> <p>We have ensured officers maintain registration under 2023 Building Safety Act and are planning ahead to ensure renewal every two to four years (as required by legislation).</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>Budget savings required over the next four years will be delivered through the Blueprint Uttlesford 2.0 programme. Savings will come from a combination of increased income and budget reductions.</p> <p>The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2026 to 2031 demonstrates a need to reduce the annual net General Fund budget by approx £4.5 million by the end of the period.</p>	<p>A separate workstream within Blueprint Uttlesford 2.0 has been established to oversee this and other projects. This ensures financial changes are logged and maintained. Blueprint Uttlesford 2.0 is one theme of the council's overall Corporate Programme and progress is reported quarterly to Cabinet.</p> <p>The financial position of the council is reported at least bi-annually to Cabinet and annually the budget and MTFP 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 May 2026.</p>

<p>Enhance digital access and innovation across council services</p>	<p>Consider emerging technology, such as AI, when redesigning services.</p>	<p>Through the Blueprint Uttlesford 2.0 programme and the ICT Business Plan, consideration will be given to 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>Further enhanced development will be considered with our new council partners once the unitary council decision has been made.</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>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>We will use our Member Development Strategy to ensure all councillors have the opportunity to acquire necessary skills and knowledge to perform effectively in their capacity as elected representatives of the local community</p>	<p>We will monitor progress against the activities set out in the Workforce Action Plan and other corporate programmes such as LGR. We will use self and external assessments to measure success such as Disability Confident and Armed Forces accreditation, a reduction in staff turnover rates, staff survey results, targeted training for our priority areas and improved compliance with mandatory training using a new on-line learning management system.</p> <p>The Member Development Working Group will produce an annual report in March 2026 which will include a recommended training programme for 2026/27. This will be considered by the Audit and Standards Committee.</p>