



# Corporate Plan 2023-28

Making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and visit









## 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
<b>Take action on climate change</b>	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) has been reviewed. Governance for climate and biodiversity action will be brought into the existing Officer Programme Board. Climate Estates and Operations commencement meeting has been held so that we can now consider a work plan.</p> <p>The Climate Change Team has moved into the Planning Directorate and this will benefit Planning Policy, Economic Development, and Climate Change teams in terms of cross-working.</p> <p>The London Road Decarbonisation project is progressing, now has relevant planning consents, a contract awarded, and work now commencing on site.</p> <p>The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund project has progressed with a contractor on boarded in January. It is expected that retrofit works on c.200 properties will be completed by May 2026.</p> <p>Sustainable Uttlesford community collaboration delivered a successful Waste and Recycling event at Foakes Hall with 40 participants. Peacock Community Energy successfully launched as a Community Benefit Society in November. And, in February Sustainable Uttlesford held its first AGM and celebrated its first-year anniversary. Over 60 members and partners were in attendance. The collaboration has launched a website and directory and has over 120 members.</p> <p>Round 4 of the UDC Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme was delivered in the autumn with more than 20 applications received. 17 Grants have been awarded to a range of community climate projects.</p>		

	<p>The switch to HVO fuel was completed in January 2026 and our carbon impact of waste services will be dramatically reduced over the coming months. It is worth noting that the final cost of the fuel supplied to UDC was substantially lower than expected.</p> <p>Officers are collaborating as a member of North Essex Councils Climate Partnership (NECCP) on a Renewable Energy Opportunities Work Stream. In 2025 Officers reviewed opportunities on Council owned assets and agreed a high-level list of potential sites for Solar PV installation. Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) have now agreed a shortlist of projects which will be taken forward for the first phase of desk top modelling, due to be completed at the end of March 2026. UDC sites in this first phase include Little Canfield Business Park and Car Parks at Lord Butler Leisure Centre and Swan Meadow.</p> <p>With regard to the proposal for a sustainability policy, it has been decided it is better rather than adopt a single policy, to instead develop workstreams across different functions of the council such as facilities management, HR and waste, with overarching governance sitting with the Blueprint 2.0 board.</p>		
<p><b>Conserve and enhance the quality and diversity of the district's natural habitats and wildlife</b></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 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 in the January 26 to March 26 quarter.</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 have made modifications as necessary throughout 2025 to ensure the plan can be adopted.</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.	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>The Local Plan is due for adoption on 25 March 2026 and, if adopted, will become the statutory planning framework for Uttlesford the following day. It includes high standards for bio-diversity net gain from new developments.</p> <p>Processes for securing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) via the Planning regime are in place and specialist software is being used to monitor BNG.</p> <p>The council's first Bio-diversity report has been produced and will be published shortly and no later than 26 March 2026. In January Ecologists completed site visits to identify opportunities on our estate aligned to the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy and this will be included within the report. A Bio-diversity workshop for staff from across the council was held in February to ensure that officers across the council are aware of their responsibilities under the duty.</p>		
<b>Work with partners to deliver sustainable transport</b>	Steer development to the most sustainable locations using the Local Plan and via planning decisions.	<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>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 took place in mid-2025.</p>

	Work with Essex County Council and other stakeholders to promote and facilitate sustainable, reliable, and adaptable transport infrastructure.	Complete the Uttlesford Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.	<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>Upon adoption the Local Plan will provide policy hooks for a range of sustainable transport measures.</p> <p>Following the completion of the LCWIP and the review of S106 monies, projects will begin to be implemented across the district.</p> <p>The DEFRA funded bike hire scheme projects in Saffron Walden have been extended for a further 12 months, the current operator Active Cycling Projects will continue both schemes until end of March 2027. Monitoring of the Saffron Walden App Bike Scheme continues. It remains well-used and was promoted via our second community bike ride in Saffron Walden in June. EV Car Club operator Co-Wheels is due to submit options to UDC to consider how they could continue to operate the club after completion of the current project contract later this year.</p> <p>We are preparing Developer Guidance for Shared Mobility to support the Local Plan, which is now in final draft and will be shared more widely this spring. We have also appointed a supplier to deliver the design and infrastructure for the REPF funded signposting and wayfinding project. Due to finalise map board designs with key settlements in Q4.</p>		
<b>Manage waste in a sustainable way</b>	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 Summer 2025.

	<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>
	<p>The council successfully launched collections of small electrical items last year and officers will continue to monitor the performance of this new service. Three service trials for food recycling from flats, waste reduction and participation monitoring were organised and the outcomes monitored. Evidence showed food waste collections from flats was supported by residents and it will be rolled out to other flats in 2026/27. The WEEE service was also supported by residents and over a tonne was collected in the first three months.</p> <p>As reported in a previous iteration of this plan, a successful waste strategy workshop with members was held in September 2025 and in 2026/27 the service will further engage with members on Simpler Recycling implementation.</p> <p>Learning will also be shared across the Essex waste partnership.</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
<b>Support the resilience and growth of the local economy</b>	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.	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.  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.
	Enhance the skills and employability of local residents. Attract tourism and investment to the district.	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.	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>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>The team had a change in personnel during the second half of the year but is now back at capacity with two officers in post. The ED team also manages the Council's car parks.</p> <p>Progress on the Economic Development Plan this year has included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supporting our town centres - officers have supported the new manager and directors of Saffron Walden BID and supported the development of the Makers and Maltings Markets in Dunmow</li> <li>2. Rural Businesses - the 'Campaign for Rural Pubs' has been very successful with 43% of our pubs engaging with the campaign via networking events, grant funding and digital skills. The campaign was featured on BBC news and BBC Essex radio. Rural businesses have also benefitted from grants to increase productivity as part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund</li> <li>3. Small Business Growth Support - officers have delivered a number of events for small businesses, including the Uttlesford Business Awards in February attended by 200 people</li> <li>4. Promotion of entrepreneurship and business start-up support - updated the Uttlesford Business Start-up guide, led on the delivery of the NEEB Young Entrepreneurs Programme, and hosted an Ambitious Women in Essex event aimed at female start-ups</li> <li>5. Business sustainability and the green agenda - supported UDC's community Bike Day and Sustainable Uttlesford initiatives, administered the Zero Carbon Business Grant aimed at the hospitality sector</li> </ol>		

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>7. Skills and apprenticeships - delivered workshops in 3 secondary schools as part of the NEEB Young Entrepreneurs programme</li> <li>8. Strategic level inward investment - member of the UK Innovation Corridor to promote the district, engaged with stakeholders to provide information to ECC's new Extraordinary Essex website and NEEB's inward investment brochure</li> <li>9. Digital Connectivity - as part of the DIZ officers have worked on a mobile connectivity mapping project. The WECAN Digital Inclusion Programme received UKSPF funding to deliver sessions until March 2026 with a focus on rural and socially isolated residents</li> </ol>		
<p><b>Improve connectivity infrastructure</b></p>	<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. We have set up a Mobile Coverage Community Views Survey which will be sent out to residents this spring.</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
<p><b>Provide and maintain quality homes and invest in thriving communities</b></p>	<p>Deliver high-quality housing management services to empower our tenants and ensure communities prosper.</p>	<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>

	<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>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.</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>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> <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 received the outcome for the mock regulatory inspection of our landlord services which completed in November 2025. We have put in place a plan to help us move towards full compliance of our housing service. The inspectors found overall the council was performing to a good standard against the consumer standards with key areas of focus being reactive repairs and voids.</p> <p>As part of our Tenant Engagement Strategy, we are continuing to support tenants in scrutinising our services. Following the tenant scrutiny activity on our complaints handling, we are implementing the recommendations made.</p>		

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel reviewed our Stage 1 complaint responses, identifying improvements around clarity, empathy, completeness of explanations, and consistency in remedies and compensation. In response, we have updated the complaints letter template, strengthened guidance on providing full explanations and timeframes, improved the use of empathetic language, introduced earlier investigation and consistent compensation approaches, and committed to calling all complainants for new cases from April 2026.

A new scrutiny exercise is being developed by tenants – this will be a review of the Lettable Standard for newly-let council homes. Alongside this we continue to identify more ways to engage tenants. We are arranging for an independent market research company to carry out satisfaction surveys for repairs and complaint handling. This project will commence in April or May 2026. We have organised a major community engagement event in Saffron Walden for the summer of 2026 and this is set to be bigger and better than previous years, with our local partners being keen to get involved.

As previously reported, the Tenant Engagement Strategy was published ahead of schedule, in April 2025.

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.

Our tenants census launched in July 2025 has given us an important insight into 30% of our tenants and more work is ongoing to encourage more tenants to tell us about their needs and preferences for service delivery. We will use this information for giving tenants better access to services. We are recruiting more staff to help us analyse all the feedback we receive from tenants so we can demonstrate how we have learned from this feedback and are making changes to our services as a result.

While the new repairs and maintenance contract was successfully mobilised, we have encountered significant performance challenges and in December 2025, the Cabinet took the decision to bring the repairs service in-house. This decision was driven by the recognition that the services required by our tenants were not being delivered to the expected standards. The transition to an in-house service is set to launch in April 2026, and it will enable us to provide direct delivery of repairs and maintenance services. This new approach will combine the Property Client Team and the Operational Team, allowing for greater direct control over service delivery and ensuring that we can respond more effectively to the needs of our tenants.

The benefits of this transition include improved accountability, enhanced communication, and a more streamlined process for addressing repairs and maintenance issues. We believe that by having direct oversight, we can better meet the expectations of our tenants and ensure that their needs are prioritised.

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) programme has also commenced, overcoming initial challenges and delays. We are committed to delivering on the required needs of our community through this programme.

We are achieving regulatory and legal compliance in health and safety, with compliance work in other areas of the housing landlord service progressing well. We submitted our compliance information by the August deadline.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) asset appraisal continues to play a crucial role in shaping our stock investment requirements and its finding will shape the asset management strategy that is now planned for completion in May 2026. We will take this to Cabinet for approval in June 2026. The delay in the publication of the asset management strategy and the performance challenges on the repairs and maintenance contract has impacted on the publication of the 5 year capital works programme that was due to be published in October 2025. This will now be included within the asset management strategy and published in June 2026.

The HRA asset appraisal has been completed. 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, we carried out 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. This is ongoing and we aim to complete this by the end of Quarter 1 2026-7.

The 30 year HRA Business Plan is being updated to reflect the HRA Asset Appraisal and associated Asset Management Strategy. The updated HRA Business Plan will also be published in June 2026.

We aim to deliver more social housing in the next two years to meet identified local housing need, and this includes redeveloping sites in the district which are no longer fit for purpose. We will develop a Housing Delivery Strategy 2026-8, setting out our plans. The strategy will be ready for Member approval in April 2026. We will use evidence collected through our recent Older Persons Housing Survey when deciding the types and locations of new housing. We have already successfully negotiated the purchase of 14 new homes in Dunmow to meet housing need in the local area and are in discussions with other property developers to acquire more much-needed affordable housing.

Our Housing and Homelessness Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2026, and our new Housing Strategy is under development – our intention is to consult with key stakeholders in the district and bring this to Members for approval by the end of October 2026.

<p><b>Tackle rural priorities</b></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. 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 Corporate Plan includes specific project around tackling rural priorities including isolation, poverty and crime. This work will continue, with key partners where appropriate, through the existing collaborative work of council teams including Economic Development and Health and Wellbeing, but the overarching programme will no longer be developed and progressed due to the lack of available officer time caused by Local Government Reorganisation.</p> <p>This priority has been removed from next year’s Corporate Plan, as already reported to Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council during the approval process.</p>		
<p><b>Plan for future housing needs in a sustainable way</b></p>	<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.</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>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>The adoption of relevant policy and publication 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 consulted on. It is expected to be subject to Examination in Public end of April / early May 2026. The timetable is dependent on the availability of examining inspectors. With some slippage as a result of examination 'queues' it is envisaged CIL can be in place summer 2026. As a result of the work, we have identified some £200m of infrastructure requiring funding and CIL can assist in funding that.</p> <p>Once adopted (25 March 2026) The Local Plan will enshrine local policies relating to climate change and heritage, including the setting of heritage assets.</p> <p>Registration under the 2023 Building Safety Act is in place for all relevant officers.</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
<b>Ensure financial stability</b>	<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 26/27 budget and 5 year Medium Term Financial Plan was approved by Council on 24 February 2026. The savings programme is being delivered under Blueprint 2.0 and led by the Chief Operating Officer.</p>		
<b>Use commercial assets to fund services</b>	<p>Manage the commercial asset portfolio to maximise income for the council to be used on services for residents.</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>

	Review the portfolio to ensure it represents best value for the council.		
	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. The next annual report is scheduled for May 2026.		
<b>Enhance digital access and innovation across council services</b>	Consider emerging technology, such as AI, when redesigning services.	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.	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.
	Progress in this area of work continues to be on hold pending decisions on Local Government Reorganisation and who the Council will merge with.		
<b>Further develop a skilled, motivated and diverse workforce</b>	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.	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.	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>Ensure our learning and development offer is accessible to all, affordable, efficiently delivered and aligned to emerging developmental priorities.</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>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>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 partnered with Harlow District Council to procure a new Learning Management System which hosts over 2,000 online courses. It also enables us to upload our own course content and monitor training activity across the council including mandatory training compliance. This was rolled out to our staff in early January 26 and included the first batch of 15 mandatory courses. We are now creating learning pathways for targeted areas and using the system to improve our onboarding and induction process which will be piloted in February/March 2026.</p> <p>In addition, we have delivered face to face corporate training including Domestic Awareness, Complaints Handling, Sexual Harassment for managers, Cyber Security, and Communicating with Empathy. 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 policy has been approved for employees registering as foster carers and the council has gained accreditation as a Fostering Friendly organisation.</p> <p>We are now working towards the 'Working Well' accreditation and have provided staff with free health checks, stop smoking kits and are developing staff volunteers to become Workplace Health Champions and Mental Health First Aiders.</p> <p>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.</p>		

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 which met in December 2025 to review take up of member training opportunities and make recommendations. The working group met again in February 2026 and considered a training programme for the 2026/27 council year. This will go to Audit and Standards Committee, along with an annual report, in March 2026.

Feedback forms for all training have been developed and used. Training for 2025/26 included Planning Committee, Licensing, Audit and Code of Conduct (the last of these also for parish councils). Well-received workshops on Parking and Recycling were also held.