



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.



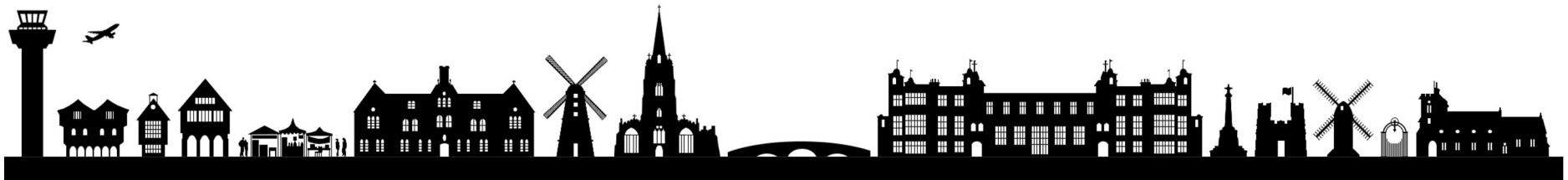
<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/corporate-plan>



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 and rural character 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.



Priorities

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



Protecting and enhancing our environment



Encouraging economic growth



Building strong communities



Putting residents first

Delivery

To deliver this corporate plan, we will:

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

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



Protecting and enhancing our environment

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

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
Take action on climate change	Clearly set out and publicise our priorities for the coming years to meet our net zero by 2030 pledge, including reducing emissions from our vehicle fleet and corporate buildings.	We will refresh the Climate Change Action Plan, which will set out the major projects we will deliver in order to reduce our carbon emissions and support work in the community.	We will complete the Action Plan refresh by March 2024 and then monitor successful completion of activities with the Action Plan and provide quarterly updates on progress.
	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 pledge.	We will ensure we have up to date information on the energy efficiency of the housing stock by March 2024, and a programme of work to deliver on our commitments will follow from 2024/25.
	Deliver sustainable ways of working across the council to reduce the carbon impact of business activities.	We will deliver Carbon Literacy training for our Leadership and Senior Management team to support embedding sustainability and climate change into key decision making across the council.	Training will be developed and delivered to the council's management team by the end of October 2023.

	Provide community leadership and enable local action on climate change.	We will provide community grants via the Zero Carbon Communities fund to deliver community projects that are focused on carbon emission reduction and biodiversity restoration or enhancement.	A second round of grant funding will be available to community groups, with applications required by 23 December 2023 and a decision made in the early part of 2024.
Manage waste in a sustainable way	<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 national policy, we will treat the waste and recycling we collect as a resource. We will contribute to the development of the new Waste Strategy for Essex which will determine how we will manage waste for the next generation.</p> <p>We will conduct a detailed review of all our waste and recycling services through the change programme Blueprint Uttlesford to ensure they are operating efficiently and effectively.</p>	<p>We will play an active role in the development of the county-wide strategy through attendance at appropriate meetings and forums, ensuring the views of this district are taken into account. We anticipate the strategy being approved during 2024.</p> <p>The review of Environmental Services is scheduled for 2024/25. In the meantime, opportunities for service improvement will continue to be explored.</p>
Conserve and enhance the quality and diversity of the district's natural habitats and wildlife	Fulfil our bio-diversity duty by using the planning system to conserve, enhance and create new ecological habitat.	We will support and promote the public consultation on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Uttlesford, to ensure widespread reach and engagement.	We will promote the consultation, which runs from November to December 2023, through our communication channels to drive engagement among district residents.

		<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>Relevant policies will be included within a Reg 18 Local Plan by November 2023.</p> <p>Bio-diversity net gain data will be monitored for every major planning decision from November 2024 with a rolling target of 100% of schemes to include bio-diversity net gain.</p>
<p>Work with partners to deliver sustainable transport</p>	<p>Work with Essex County Council and other stakeholders to promote and facilitate sustainable, reliable, and adaptable transport infrastructure.</p> <p>Steer development to the most sustainable locations using the Local Plan and via planning decisions.</p>	<p>Complete the Uttlesford Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.</p> <p>Deliver 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>We will complete the Plan by March 2024 and develop from it a priority list of schemes for investment.</p> <p>EV Car Club and Community Cargo Bike schemes will launch by November 2023 and uptake will be monitored and evaluated during the two year trial period.</p> <p>A Reg 18 Local Plan with an agreed draft spatial strategy will be published by November 2023.</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	<p>Provide business support, information and advice to help the business community recover and grow.</p> <p>Enhance the skills and employability of local residents. Attract tourism and investment to the district.</p>	<p>We will complete the actions set out in the Economic Development Recovery Delivery Plan which contains detailed information about the way the council supports the business community.</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>We will deliver the schemes as set out in the Economic Development Recovery Plan, progress on which will be reported to the Scrutiny Committee.</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>
Improve connectivity infrastructure	<p>Support work to ensure residents and businesses benefit from superfast broadband.</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>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>Identify opportunities to improve connectivity, including 5G technology.</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 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>
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Building Strong Communities

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

Priority	What we will do	How we will do it	How we will measure it
<p>Provide and maintain quality homes and invest in thriving communities</p>	<p>Commit to improving the condition of our homes by investing in our housing stock.</p> <p>Provide quality homes through managed growth.</p> <p>Deliver high-quality housing management services to empower our tenants and ensure communities prosper.</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>Use customer feedback and engagement to shape the services we provide and continue our multi-agency community events.</p>	<p>We will publish and maintain a five-year Capital Works Programme and our progress against it by March 2024.</p> <p>We will refresh asset data through stock condition surveys, asset grading and maintain a validated compliance register. This is an ongoing process.</p> <p>We will publish the HRA 30-year business plan to identify capacity for investment in new and affordable housing by March 2024.</p> <p>We will then draft and publish an Asset Management Strategy in 2024/25.</p> <p>We will produce and deliver a Tenant Engagement Strategy to include scrutiny of services by March 2024.</p>

<p>Plan for future housing needs in a sustainable way</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>Introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support the Local Plan and fund new infrastructure in the district.</p>	<p>Prepare a draft Local Plan, for public consultation, utilising a range of approaches to resident engagement to ensure that all who want to contribute are able to do so. Use the outcome of consultations and best possible evidence to produce final plan for submission to government.</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 will have an agreed Local Plan timetable by November 2023 that will lead us to submission to government by December 2024.</p> <p>We will have an agreed Local Plan timetable by November 2023 and demonstrate collaboration with stakeholders in the lead up to submission in December 2024.</p>
<p>Tackle rural priorities</p>	<p>Draw together our understanding of issues and challenges particularly facing our villages and rural communities – including rural isolation, rural poverty and homelessness, rural economy, rural crime and safety issues etc.</p> <p>Develop this into a coherent plan across of the range of interventions we and other partners both currently make and can potentially introduce to serve our rural communities to the fullest.</p>	<p>Work with our partner agencies, councils and communities to map out the issues and the interventions, and to stimulate a debate around priorities, leading to a new and coordinated plan.</p>	<p>The project’s priorities will be mapped out in a three-stage discovery, challenge and action process involving stakeholder representatives, from September 2023 to April 2024.</p> <p>Progress with the mapping of issues and services will then be tracked against the project plan developed.</p> <p>The ultimate product of this work is improved opportunities and outcomes for local communities, and those measures will be identified along the way as part of the process.</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 of £6.6 million over four years will be delivered through the Blueprint Uttlesford programme, through which every council service will be reviewed. Savings will come from a combination of increased income and budget reductions.</p>	<p>A separate workstream of benefit realisation and cost control has been established and will be led by the Director of Finance and Revenues and Benefits. This will ensure financial changes are logged and maintained.</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.</p>
Enhance digital access and innovation across council services	<p>Consider emerging technology, such as AI, when redesigning services.</p>	<p>Through the Blueprint Uttlesford programme, 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>Each Blueprint Uttlesford review has a set review methodology and template. Through this it will be possible to demonstrate how technology has been used to maintain or enhance service delivery. The Blueprint Uttlesford programme will last for four years.</p>

	Review our online services to ensure they are helping residents do what they need to do, within the council's financial constraints.	We will consider implementing chatbot and AI technology to deal with simple requests from customers in a quick and efficient way, starting with a chatbot function for LiveChat via the website.	A decision on whether to proceed with the LiveChat chatbot project will be taken by December 2023.
Further develop a skilled, motivated and diverse workforce	<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>	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.