



GCC

Council Strategy 2025-2029

A Stronger Future, Built Together.

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A Stronger Future, Built Together

Welcome to this new council strategy.

This is our plan to help Gloucestershire grow and improve, making it a fairer, greener, and more welcoming place where everyone has the chance to thrive.

In this document we explain our key priorities, what we want to achieve and how we aim to do it.

Gloucestershire is a great place to live, work, and visit. It's perfect for raising a family, starting a business, joining a community, and has beautiful towns and countryside to enjoy.

It is also a place where young people can thrive — whether you're a teenager discovering your path or in your twenties building your future, this is a county that backs ambition, creativity and opportunity.

The county also has its challenges—like deprivation, loneliness, poor transport links, and not enough affordable housing or access to services.

As the county council we have the privilege of being able to help tackle those challenges and unlock the county's full potential.

This is something that we want to do in true partnership with our staff, our residents, our businesses, and colleagues in our health services, the police, education providers, our voluntary, charity and faith organisations and many, many other groups and individuals. Our offer is to work with and empower our communities and partners to shape their own future.

Our vision is simple but powerful: a county where everyone feels welcome, supported, and inspired. Where compassion and fairness are at the heart of everything we do. Where evidence and community feedback drive our choices, and where every pound is spent wisely.

Our ambition is clear: to create opportunities for every child and adult, to nurture strong and caring communities, and to protect the natural beauty and built environment that makes our county unique.

We are excited to get on with this work and eager to work with you to build a better, stronger Gloucestershire.



Jo Walker

Chief Executive
Gloucestershire County Council



Lisa Spivey

Leader
Gloucestershire County Council

Our Vision: A Stronger Future, Built Together

We want:



Gloucestershire to be a thriving county where everyone can live a healthy life, get a good education and job and feel proud of their area.



A county where everyone is treated fairly and can easily access opportunities and services, where we protect and enhance our natural and built environment, and where everyone feels welcome and included in a kind and caring community.



Every child to have the best possible start, with schools and learning that give them the skills and confidence to succeed.



Every adult to have the chance to learn, work and be independent.



Gloucestershire to be full of energy and ideas, building on our legacy of innovation.



Everyone to know they are supported by a council that listens, learns, and does the right thing, providing services people can rely on.

Working with our network of partners, we will take on the critical challenges facing Gloucestershire with ambition, drive, and energy. People will be able to see and feel the difference in their everyday lives.

We are committed to:

Education, jobs and opportunity



Growing our local economy so people have good jobs near to home and every community benefits. Giving every child the best start in life and helping young people and adults learn and build their futures.

Roads and places



Fixing and maintaining our roads, ensuring we have excellent public transport, and that our public spaces are safe, clean and welcoming.

Climate and nature



Looking after our environment and recognising that tackling climate change starts locally with innovative and sustainable solutions.

Health and wellbeing



Helping everyone to live healthier lives with the right support when they need it, in vibrant and resilient communities.

Care



Providing exceptional care for all those that need it, including our most vulnerable children and adults.

Fairness and inclusion



Tackling poverty and deprivation and transforming services to ensure everyone is included and no one is left behind.

Our core values

Our values are at the heart of everything we do and how we treat each other. They were developed by our staff at the council. Our values provide essential guiding principles about the way that we work and set the tone for our culture and identity; they encompass what we care about.



Accountability

We do what we say we will.



Integrity

We are honest, fair and speak up.



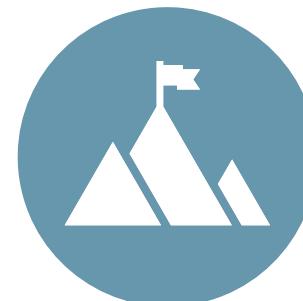
Empowerment

We enable communities and colleagues to be the best they can.



Respect

We value and listen to each other.



Excellence

We continually improve through listening, learning and innovation.

Living our values every day



Gloucestershire has a **population** of
669,380

(Source: Mid 2024 Population Estimates, ONS)

Since 2015 the
population has grown by

8.4%

compared to 6.8%
for England and Wales
 for the same period
 (Source: Mid Year Popn Ests, ONS)

Since 2015 the **growth of the older population (aged 65+)** has outpaced that of the younger population



Older: **17%**
 16-64: **6.0%**
 0-15: **7%**



In 2023, the **wholesale and retail trade** was the **largest employer in the county**, employing
46,000 people

and accounting for **14.3% of employment**. This was followed by **Human health and social work activities (13.8%)** and **Manufacturing (10.6%)**.

(Source: BRES, ONS)



60,924
 highways defects
 were repaired
 in the previous year
 (2024/25)

Renewable energy production from the Council's estate in the financial year 2024/25 was
61,565,046 kWh



Gloucestershire has
766 children in care

(as at August 2025) and the County Council supports



There are around
3477 miles
 (5596km) of roads of road within the county

407 miles
 of road (12%) have been fully resurfaced in last 6 years



There are
13,867 pupils

receiving **SEN Support** and

6,957 children

with an **EHCP maintained by the LA**
 (as at 1 September 2025)

6513 adults
 receiving long term care (4/9/25)

Although Gloucestershire generally benefits from a **high standard of living**



21,054 people (3.2%)

live in areas that are in the **most 10% deprived nationally**.

(Source: IMD 2019, MHCLG and Mid 2022 Population Estimates, ONS)

Between 2022 and 2047 the number of people aged 85+ is projected to increase by

111%

(Source: Mid Year Population Estimates, ONS)

Total number of **incidents attended by Fire and Rescue services** in Gloucestershire was

6,358 for 2024/25

(Home Office figures)



Our local Challenges

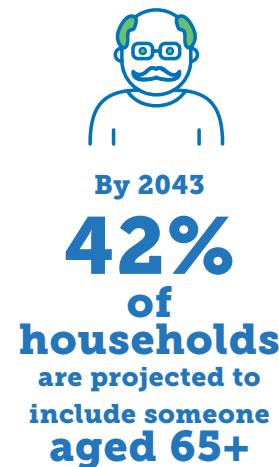


Demographic change

Gloucestershire's population is ageing more quickly than the UK average. The increasing number of retired people in the county will bring experience, resources and time to their communities, but as they grow older and frailer, they will also need more support from health, social care and safeguarding services. We are also seeing more people living with disabilities and other long-term conditions in all age groups. At the same time, our 18-64 population is expected to remain about the same. Young people tend to leave the county in their late teens and early twenties. In the period 2023-2024 the net loss of 15-19-year-olds stood at 620.

While the concept of 'working age' is changing, we do need to respond to this challenge, to make sure we have the skills we need to keep the county competitive and support economic growth. We can also expect to see a trend towards more people living as single person households. This will make it harder for people to rely on immediate family for support in the future and make it more important that they are part of resilient communities that look out for one another. By 2043 42% of households are projected to include someone aged 65+ compared to 33% of households in 2018, which will also present new challenges.

(Source: Mid 2024 Population Estimates, ONS)



Volume of change among public sector partners

The public sector is entering a period of profound transformation, with local authorities, the NHS, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), and the Police all facing significant structural, financial, and technological change. This scale of reform - driven by pressures to improve outcomes, reduce inequalities, and deliver value - will reshape how services are commissioned, delivered, and integrated. As functions shift across organisations, and digital and data capabilities evolve, the need for strong, collaborative partnerships becomes critical and yet more challenging. Without alignment, fragmentation risks service disruption; but with shared strategy and investment, partners can co-design responsive, place-based systems that better meet the complex needs of communities.



Health inequalities and deprivation in our communities

Health inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in health between groups, often rooted in the conditions we are born, grow, live, work and age in - such as education, employment, income, housing, and access to services.

Promoting equality and inclusion benefits everyone, not just those directly affected by disparities. By removing barriers to opportunity, we build stronger, more resilient communities where everyone can thrive.

Although Gloucestershire generally enjoys a high standard of living, some neighbourhoods and groups face significantly poorer outcomes. These areas, often described as experiencing 'deprivation', are identified using the national Index of Multiple Deprivation and reflect challenges like low income, poor housing, and limited educational attainment. Currently, 21,054 people in Gloucestershire (3.2% of the population*) live in areas ranked among the most deprived 10% in England. Life expectancy in these areas is starkly lower - men live 8.2 years less and women 6.8 years less than those in the least deprived areas**. These gaps have widened in recent years. The average age of death for those with a learning disability is 20 years less than average. (LeDer Annual Report, 2023-24)

The recent pandemic highlighted and intensified health inequalities, disproportionately affecting those already facing disadvantage - such as individuals from diverse ethnic communities and people with disabilities. The subsequent rise in living costs has also contributed to inequalities, increasing risks for vulnerable groups in our communities. Impacts include cold and damp housing due to fuel poverty, difficulties in accessing affordable and nutritious food, financial insecurity, and mental health challenges.

To address health inequalities, we need a combination of policy-level action and community-led initiatives, which focus on the social, economic, and environmental factors which impact on our health and wellbeing. Every directorate and team across the organisation has a role to play in reducing inequalities, and there are opportunities to consider them in all our business activities, for example, in policy and decision making, in the way we commission goods and services, and in how we recruit our staff.

In Gloucestershire, we are fortunate to have valuable assets in our local communities which we can build on to support good health and wellbeing for all.

*Needs updating when IMD 2025 available. ** This is based on data for the period 2021-2023

Our local Challenges



Rural/Urban communities

As well as being one of our best assets, the rural nature of the county makes it difficult for some people to access the services they need. This is a particular challenge for the three out of every twenty Gloucestershire households that have no access to a car or van. Access to reliable and affordable public and community transport is critical to combatting rural isolation. The roll-out of high-speed broadband has already reached nearly all addresses across the county, but we need to continue to work towards full coverage so that all households and businesses benefit.

Approximately 70% of the population live in areas classed as 'urban city or town' or 'rural town and fringe'. By contrast, 30% of the county is rural. Our challenge is to ensure the most vulnerable and isolated people in our county have the support they need and stay connected with public services.

“ Access to reliable and affordable public and community transport is critical to combatting rural isolation.

Climate change

Our public commitment to tackling our carbon emissions isn't just about our contribution to achieving net zero, but also about all the co-benefits these activities can bring. It has been estimated that climate action can bring £1.7 billion worth of co-benefits by 2050 to Gloucestershire*. This includes improving health and well-being of our communities and residents through things such as cleaner air, as well as helping to deliver nature recovery, increasing biodiversity and protecting our beautiful green spaces.

You will see an acceleration of the changes we are putting into place across the county, from trees and nature recovery to solar panels on our rooftops. This work will continue as we address both our corporate emissions and those across Gloucestershire, collaborating with partners and suppliers to achieve our net zero objective.

*from the co-benefits atlas: UK Co-Benefits Atlas



Estimated

**£1.7
billion
of climate
action
co-benefits
by 2050**



School funding and arrangements for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEND)

Despite additional national funding being put into the special educational needs system in recent years, this investment has been outstripped by levels of need and demand, creating a significant national financial deficit, and Gloucestershire faces this same challenge. At the end of the financial year 2024/25, Gloucestershire had a High Needs block deficit of £80.5m, with this forecast to rise to around £125.1m by the end of 2025/26 and to £254.4m by the end of 2028/29.

Whilst the Department for Education, through its Delivering Better Value programme, recognised that Gloucestershire was taking all the right steps to ensure value for money from public

funds from its Dedicated Schools Grant, as a result of a long standing inequity in the distribution of the National Funding Formula for schools to local authorities, Gloucestershire remains very poorly funded both in terms of the High Needs Block and the Schools Block.

Despite this context, we have worked hard to address the challenges we face. We are working locally to reduce expenditure, whilst maintaining provision for children and young people and delivering our statutory responsibilities. As part of our ambition to provide the right support at the right time for our children, and to work proactively to tackle the current challenges in SEND, Gloucestershire is the joint lead authority for the Southwest region, working with the Department for Education on testing their proposed reforms to the national SEND arrangements which will inform the content of the Schools White Paper due in Autumn 2025.



At the end of 2024/25 Gloucestershire has a High needs block deficit of £80.5m with this forecast to rise by end of 2028/29

Our local Opportunities



LGR/Devolution

Local Government Reform and Devolution, as proposed by the Government's English Devolution White Paper, present a generational opportunity to reshape governance and unlock local potential. By transitioning to unitary structures and devolving powers to regional authorities, councils can simplify service delivery, strengthen local leadership, and gain greater control over transport, housing, jobs, and skills. For residents, this means clearer accountability and more responsive services. For local authorities, it enables strategic collaboration across sectors and geographies, supports neighbourhood empowerment, and creates the conditions to reduce inequalities and deliver better outcomes across Gloucestershire.

“ The county's labour market performs well, supported by a highly skilled and well-qualified population.



Economic potential

Gloucestershire benefits from a diverse economy that is not overly dependent on any single employer or sector, with above-average proportions of manufacturing and small businesses contributing to resilience. The county's labour market performs well, supported by a highly skilled and well-qualified population, strong educational outcomes for young people, and a notable enterprising spirit reflected in higher self-employment rates. Over half the county is designated as a National Landscape, and this exceptional environmental quality enhances its appeal for residents, businesses, and visitors. Gloucestershire is also well placed to capitalise on growth in key sectors including advanced engineering and manufacturing, cyber and digital, agri-tech, and green technologies, as well as export-intensive industries. These strengths position the county to thrive in a high-skill, innovation-led economy. However, relative affluence can mask pockets of deprivation in both rural and urban areas, with challenges such as housing affordability and access to services posing risks to inclusion and long-term prosperity.



The strength of our communities and partners

As a Council, there is an opportunity to collaborate and coproduce with people and partner organisations at a local level to understand and build on our collective strengths. Nationally and locally, there is also a renewed focus on the value of place, which recognises the importance of our communities and neighbourhoods, where we live and work on our health, wellbeing, and life outcomes.

Our communities are diverse; geographically, culturally, and socially which contributes to the rich assets of our county. Gloucestershire also benefits from the contribution of over 4,500 Voluntary and Community sector organisations⁽¹⁾, who provide grassroots support to individuals and communities. Building on this shared heritage and sense of place we can do more to overcome challenges and deliver change.

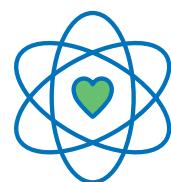
Footnote (1): Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance State of the Sector Report 2025



The power of Digital and Data

The potential of Digital and Data solutions for delivering continuous improvement is a key opportunity for the council. Investment in our Digital and Data & Intelligence programmes offers significant potential to enhance efficiency and improve outcome delivery. By harnessing advanced analytics, AI automation, and integrated data systems, the Council can streamline operations, target services more effectively, and enable well researched, evidence-based decision-making. These innovations support more agile and responsive public services, helping to reduce duplication and optimise resource use. Crucially, they also enable a sharper focus on improving outcomes for residents, particularly those in under-served communities, by identifying gaps, tracking progress, and addressing inequalities with greater precision and impact.

Gloucestershire benefits from
over 4,500
voluntary and community
sector organisations



Strategic Priorities

Theme 1 Children & young people thrive

We are committed to ensuring that every child and young person in our county has the chance to thrive, succeed, and live a life of opportunity.

Our ambition is to deliver continuously improving outcomes for young people by getting it right from the earliest point - through timely, skilled interventions and inclusive, community-led support. Improving outcomes for children cannot be achieved in isolation. That's why we work in close partnership with families, schools, health services, as well as other public sector and voluntary organisations to co-produce solutions that reduce inequalities and respond to the complex needs of our communities. By embedding a culture of early intervention, shared values, and strong local collaboration, we aim to reduce inequalities and demand for specialist services to build the conditions for sustainable, long-term success. Together, we are creating a county where children and young people are supported to flourish - academically, emotionally, and socially.

1

Outcome

Give every child the best start in life by enabling excellent early years provision and the chance to grow up with the support of family help and protection delivered locally, when it's needed.

2

Outcome

Be ambitious for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), ensuring they have opportunities to take part in family, community and school life, and can develop their independence as they enter adulthood.

How we will do it

- Develop our Family Hubs to be 'one stop shops' for parents and families in our **community** to find the support they need to help themselves, alongside a high-quality virtual offer for all, providing flexible help face to face and online.
- **Work with early years and childcare providers to ensure sufficient places are available**, well equipped to support children's development, and inclusive of children with additional needs.
- **Work with partners and families to design and deliver multiagency family help and child protection teams** as part of our Families First Transformation Programme.

How we will do it

- **Deliver with schools, parents and carers a whole school approach to inclusion.** Responding appropriately to legislation change, inspection and improvement programme.
- **Deliver 500 additional special school places** by opening two 200-place all-through special schools (2027 and 2028) and resource bases on mainstream sites.
- **Developing the operating model to offer outreach earlier intervention into schools** and specialist taskforce wraparound support for children accessing alternative provision.
- **Opening additional early years SEND assessment centres** in the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean.

3

Outcome

An excellent wide-ranging education for all.

4

Outcome

Be outstanding corporate parents and family to children growing up in our care and entering adulthood.

5

Outcome

The council is an innovative and agile organisation that attracts additional resources to support children and families, and offers excellent career opportunities for a highly skilled children's services workforce.

How we will do it

- In partnership with schools, colleges, education settings and employers** promote an excellent balanced education for all ages, linking education and skills with life chances and industries of the county.
- Develop school capacity and support children to succeed** by encouraging parent and community engagement and other opportunities to partner with schools.
- Ensure the provision of youth services** to support young people as they progress through school and beyond.

How we will do it

- Develop our fostering offer** so more children in care can grow up in a family, close to their community and those they care about, including into adulthood when that's right for them.
- Open four children's homes and a supported accommodation project** so that even more of our children can grow up and enter adulthood in Gloucestershire.
- Improve the pathways into education, training and employment for care leavers** so that more of our young people succeed.
- Work with housing partners** to ensure young people get the right accommodation offer at the right time, in the right place and can stay for as long as they need to.

How we will do it

- Develop the Social Work Academy** to recruit, retain and train a multi-disciplinary children's workforce.
- Extend our workforce strategy to maximise routes into employment** and provide excellent opportunities for qualification, career development and progression.
- Work with partners and communities** to maximise income streams such as social investment, in our pursuit of accelerated and sustainable improvement.
- We will scope a strategic partner** and explore alternative delivery models to provide accelerated and sustained improvements for children and families.

Strategic Priorities

Theme 2

Strong, healthy communities that care

Gloucestershire benefits from a strong sense of community in all corners of our county, with a variety of local identities and community assets.

We are committed to helping our communities thrive, to reducing inequalities, and to delivering the best possible support offer to those that need us. In Gloucestershire we have a growing but ageing population. We need to be creative in how we meet the needs for people who need additional support from their communities and us. That includes tackling the needs and inequalities for some of our working age population. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in our communities. WE want to harness that expertise to help us deliver our priorities. By working more closely together, we can empower people with lived experience, our staff and partners to help us drive positive changes for the people that need additional care we will ensure that their voices are heard by decision makers as we transform our services now and in the future.

Ensuring we make all Gloucestershire's communities safe and healthy places to live, work and come together is at the heart of all we do. We have made a strong commitment to community safety, with transformation in our Fire and Rescue Service, who play a vital role in enabling safer communities, and through focussing on prevention and reducing health inequalities we will help the people of Gloucestershire to live longer, healthier lives, and delay the need for long term social care.

6

Outcome

People live healthier lives for longer and health inequalities are reduced.

The communities where people live and work are healthy places which support good health and wellbeing.

7

Outcome

People receive an excellent adult social care service when they need it.

People know where to go to get the right information to help themselves and each other.

How we will do it

- Establish a 'health in all we do' approach where health impact, equality and opportunities are considered across the council's decisions and programmes.
- Invest in grass roots projects which help address inequalities via a new community grant scheme.
- Deliver against the strategic priorities in the Gloucestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy.
- Deliver high quality evidence-based services to support health and wellbeing, informed by an understanding of local need and assets.

How we will do it

- Invest in adult social care transformation to deliver the necessary market development and service improvements for the future.
- Deliver our improvement plan following our CQC inspection.
- Improve how we provide information, advice and guidance using digital and technological methods and traditional methods.

8

Outcome

People thrive and live a good life, supported to maintain their independence by services that work together in their communities.

9

Outcome

People are supported by a care sector which is resilient and by a workforce of paid and unpaid carers who are skilled, motivated and valued.

10

Outcome

Communities are protected to be safe and resilient, and supported by an effective, efficient and inclusive Fire and Rescue service which is rated good.

How we will do it

- Develop our approach to co-production with people with lived experience of social care.
- Increase the uptake of technology enabled care and self-directed support.
- Expand our approach to hyper-local commissioning of domiciliary care. Working with Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB) partners and responding to reforms.
- Deliver our older persons and adults of working age prevention strategies.
- Work with the wider health system and communities to deliver neighbourhood health plans.

How we will do it

- Value, support, and train our local care workforce, enabling people to develop skills, enhance career opportunities, and develop transferrable recognised qualifications.
- Carers, including young carers, are supported to care for their family member, have the information they need, and can access training and upskill.
- We will establish a virtual social care academy to make our training offer available to all carers, paid and unpaid.

How we will do it

- Continued progress to be made in supporting all minority groups to feel comfortable and to be themselves when at work.
- Modernise our rural response model and ensure it is fit for the future.
- Adapt skills and assets to meet evolving risks, demand, and legislation.
- Reducing our carbon footprint by adopting environmentally compatible technologies to make GFRS more efficient and sustainable for the future.
- The Fire and Rescue Service achieves an inspection rating of 'Good'.



“

We are building a council that people are proud to work for and with - one that is rooted in integrity, collaboration, and transparency.



Strategic Priorities

Theme 3

A place to be proud of

We recognise the importance of place shaping in the identity, opportunities, and quality of life for our county.

Our focus is on working with partners and communities, to make Gloucestershire a sustainable county where infrastructure is fit for purpose, and economic and environmental ambitions are realised in ways that benefit everyone. Investing in the things that make people proud of where they live and work - from accessible transport, to thriving local economies and a resilient natural environment. Through collaborative action and long-term thinking, we aim to ensure that Gloucestershire is not only a place that meets the needs of our varied communities but is also inspiring and inclusive. Together, these priorities aim to build a Gloucestershire that people are proud to call home, are excited to work in our thriving local industries, or to visit our beautiful historic landscapes, market towns and festivals.

11

Outcome

Support a healthier, more resilient natural and built environment, including responding to the risks and impacts of climate change to the benefit of communities.

12

Outcome

Improve the quality and safety of our roads through targeted capital improvement schemes, effective communication with the community, and coordinated efforts to improve the street-scene.

How we will do it

- Implement a two-year transformation programme for nature recovery, climate change and waste reduction, working with District partners.
- Complete and deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Review direct greenhouse gas emissions from GCC owned sources and implement a plan to achieve net zero by 2030.
- Target emissions from our contractors and suppliers to support them to reach net zero by 2050 by implementing changes to our contract and procurement processes.
- Review the purpose, location and infrastructure of Household Recycling Centres.
- Produce and implement, with Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, a community clean energy strategy.

How we will do it

- Fix our roads - deliver more resurfacing schemes to maximise the repair and benefit roads and pavements.
- Improve communications and engagement – deliver a communications plan, and review the quality of communications with the community, particularly to ad-hoc requests.
- Tidier streets - We will raise standards across our highways and public spaces by coordinating works to deliver a more attractive street scene that residents can be proud of, working with town and parish councils to play a greater role in supporting this work locally.
- Quality of work – By working closely with contractors, utility companies, and local communities, we will improve the consistency and durability of our work, ensuring residents see lasting improvements rather than short-term fixes.

13

Outcome

Foster inclusive and sustainable local economic growth and prosperity, which tackles inequality.

14

Outcome

Gloucestershire attracts inward investment and delivers cohesive, connected and sustainable infrastructure to drive economic growth.

15

Outcome

Communities are connected with improved, safer, healthier and greener public transport, enabled by well maintained, enhanced and delivered transport infrastructure

How we will do it

- Deliver new digital inclusion and infrastructure strategies.
- Deliver the *Get Gloucestershire Working* programme and Connect to Work activity through our Adult Education service which supports our most vulnerable residents.
- Deliver the Local Growth Plan in collaboration with all of Gloucestershire's local authorities – supporting skills, inclusive employment, culture, environment and innovation.
- Produce a new Spatial Development Strategy in collaboration with all of Gloucestershire's local authorities to deliver a long-term sustainable land-use plan supported by a review of the Local Transport Plan.
- Make our rules for contract sustainability stronger by making sure suppliers deliver social value and are supporting our environmental aims.

How we will do it

- Work in partnership to deliver key infrastructure, such as M5 Junction 9 and 10 and A46, with associated housing, affordable housing, employment land and community infrastructure.
- Support the attraction of new private investment through Invest in Gloucestershire.
- Adapt to new Planning legislation to enable affordable housing and employment land (E.G. golden valley).
- Deliver Local Development Guide.

How we will do it

- Improve road safety with speed limit reviews and community 20's programme, cameras to improve compliance, pedestrian crossings and prioritised accident investigation and remedial programme to address road safety concerns and support active travel.
- Work with bus operators, to enable a network of frequent reliable services which connect with each other and with rail services for a countywide strategic bus network.
- Deliver bus improvement measures aligned with Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding, including: Multi operator ticketing, bus priority measures, district bus hubs, extend bus and community (Robin) services and develop next phase of Rapid Transit.
- Speed up the delivery of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) through systems improvement.
- Review programme for cycleways and improve footway and cycleway maintenance and local schemes to encourage active travel.

Strategic Priorities

Theme 4

An open, fair and sustainable council

We are building a council that people are proud to work for and with - one that is rooted in integrity, collaboration, and transparency.

Our ambition is to create a modern, responsive local authority that delivers excellent services, empowers communities, tackles inequality, and leads with clarity and accountability. As we prepare for the future outlined in the government's local government reorganisation plans, we are embracing the opportunity to shape a sustainable council that reflects the needs and aspirations of Gloucestershire's diverse communities. We are committed to working in partnership across the public, voluntary, and community sectors to co-design solutions, harnessing the capability of digital, data and intelligence to improve decision making and outcomes. By embedding participation, transparency, and innovation into everything we do, we will ensure that our transformation is not only strategic but also inclusive, creating a council that is resilient, forward-looking, and truly representative of the people it serves.

16

Outcome

We champion equality and inclusion, and are trusted by our communities to listen to what local people care about and work with them to find and shape the right solutions together. Better opportunities and outcomes for those communities that need more support.

17

Outcome

Strengthen leadership, culture, and workforce capability to make GCC a great place to work.

How we will do it

- Make a clear promise to champion equality and inclusion, backed by a practical plan that sets out what we'll do and how we'll do it.
- Build stronger connections with local communities and groups, improving our customer service and making it easier to communicate with us using both formal channels and more informal ways of staying in touch.
- Work alongside communities to shape and deliver solutions together, based on what matters most to them.
- Keep developing a motivated workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities.
- Actively seek out partners and stakeholders and work together for the benefit of the county and its residents.

How we will do it

- Embed values-led leadership and inclusive culture through refreshed behavioural frameworks.
- Implement a new learning management system and online appraisals to underpin employee development and high performance.
- Develop and maintain organisation design principles, as well as job design and capacity, to support strategic objectives.
- Promote GCC as an employer of choice through branding, recruitment, and retention strategies.

18

Outcome

Deliver Local Government Reorganisation in a way that is collaborative, sustainable, and aligned with community needs.

19

Outcome

Deliver a balanced budget and long-term financial resilience through smarter planning and cross-cutting efficiencies.

20

Outcome

Use digital innovation and data intelligence to improve services, collaboration, and decision-making.

How we will do it

- Ensure organisational readiness in advance of launch day.
- Maintain strong internal governance & co-ordinate joint arrangements across councils with partners.
- Develop and deliver an implementation road map in line with minister's decision.
- Maintain proactive and positive engagement with employees and wider stakeholders, including partners, parish and town councils, throughout implementation to support wellbeing during uncertainty and retain critical skills and capacity.

How we will do it

- Ensure robust mechanisms are in place to deliver our savings programme.
- Lobbying Government to address the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit within Education and mitigating wherever possible to prepare for the end of the statutory override.
- Transform procurement and contract management to deliver better value, transparency, and social impact. Deliver a procurement strategy that embeds social value, supports climate change and nature recovery, encourages participation by local suppliers, SMEs and social enterprises, enables insourcing and increased local spend.
- Rationalise our estate to maximise value, efficiency, and sustainability; increase partner co-location to save money and generate income, while reducing carbon footprint through renewables and energy efficiency including at Shire Hall.

How we will do it

- Deliver the One Programme to unify HR, finance, procurement, and payroll systems, and explore opportunities for further integration and automation.
- Expand use of AI (e.g. Copilot) to improve the experience of residents as they access services as well as drive efficiencies.
- Deliver our Data and Intelligence Strategy toward becoming an intelligence led organisation, with increased use of high quality, centralised data sources, enabling research and analysis.
- Deliver cross-cutting digital projects to support transformation and cost savings, plus cyber security developments, protecting the data we hold and business continuity planning.

Resource allocation and challenges

Like most local authorities, Gloucestershire County Council is facing a complex financial landscape shaped by national policy shifts, structural pressures, and rising demand across services.

Three key challenges stand out:

1

Employment Rights Bill



The anticipated implementation of the Employment Rights Bill, particularly the introduction of Fair Pay Agreements, is expected to put pressure on staffing costs, especially in sectors such as social care.

2

Fair Funding Review



The long-awaited Fair Funding Review is not expected to be finalised until December 2025, creating uncertainty around future allocations. More rural authorities like Gloucestershire are currently expected to be relatively worse off compared to more urban authorities, but it should also give us a longer-term view of our financial settlement for future planning.

3

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Deficit



The DSG deficit is one of the most pressing financial risks. As of March 2025, Gloucestershire's High Needs block was forecast to reach a deficit of £123.5 million by March 2026. This is driven by rising demand for Education Health and Care Plans, alternative provision, and SEN packages. While temporary Government mechanisms allow the deficit to be ring-fenced, the long-term sustainability of the DSG remains in question. National lobbying continues, as well as local mitigation planning.



Monitoring and evaluation - Performance and risk reporting

Performance and risk are monitored through a quarterly reporting cycle, to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees, and generally include:

- Council Strategy action updates
- The corporate performance indicator set – tracking key performance indicators
- The Strategic Risk Register (SRR) – identifying and assessing corporate risks.

Other plans and reference documents:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Directorate Plans -
 - The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which will accompany this document in February, lays out the financial spending plans to achieve our aims. This is a four year document that is refreshed each year and can be found on our website once it is approved by Full Council each February.
 - Directorate Plans contain the next layer of detail on delivery of activity, set out for the year ahead (rather than the 4 year term of the overall Council Strategy). These can be found in the appendices of the MTFS document on our website.
- Gloucestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy



