



Forest of Dean  
— DISTRICT COUNCIL —

# Forest of Dean District Council Corporate Plan

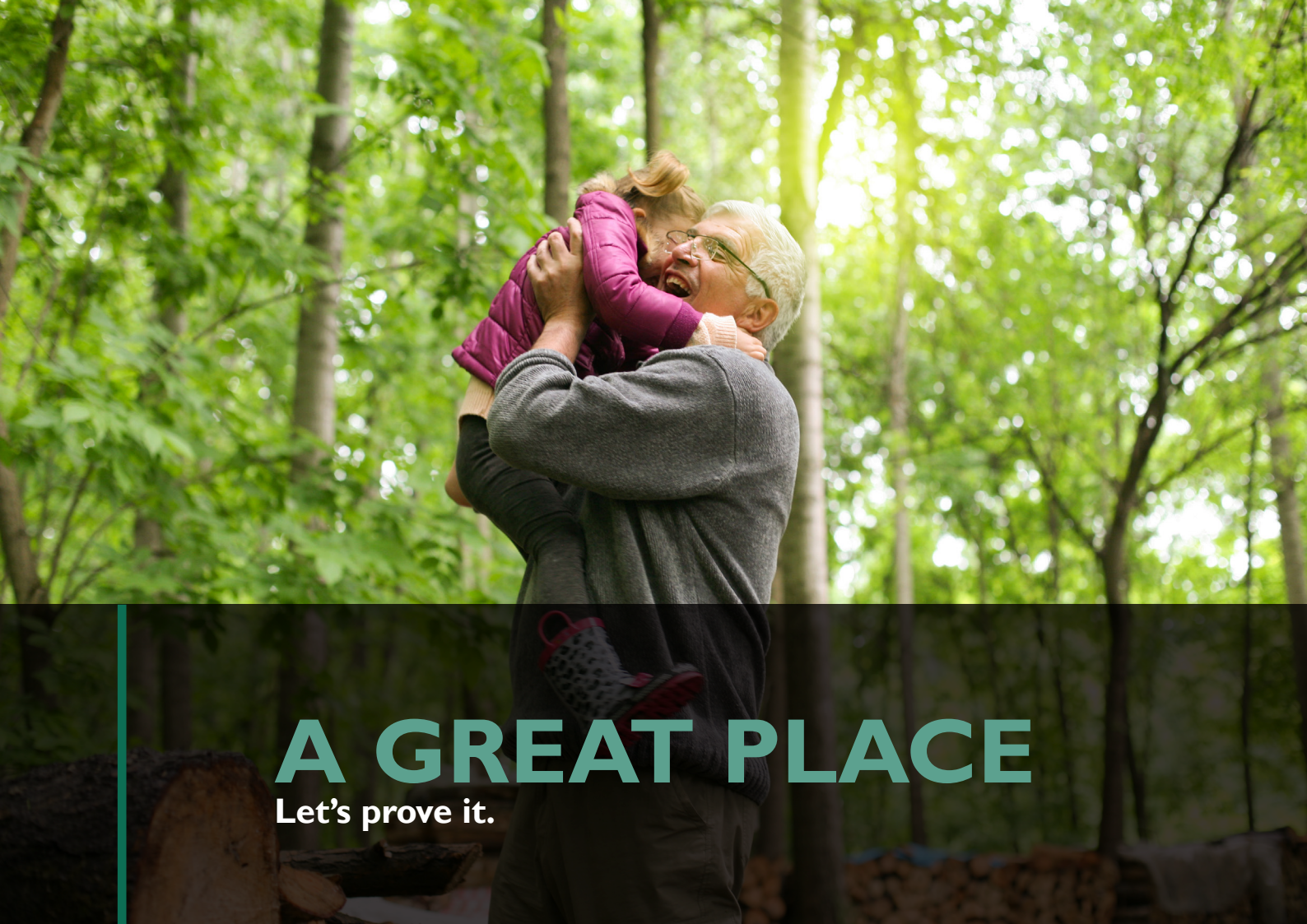
A great place to live, learn, do business and enjoy.



Plan Approved:  
5 Dec 2019

Timescale:  
2019 - 2023





# A GREAT PLACE

Let's prove it.

**Our District is already a special place. We want to build on this distinctiveness, so this corporate plan sets out our high level areas of focus for the District over the next four years.**

It outlines areas where we want to concentrate work both within the Council and with partner organisations, to improve the quality of life for our residents and visitors, and address the climate change emergency. These efforts will result in better connected communities – socially; digitally; and through improved transport.

During this four year period, patterns for the longer term sustainable future will be established as the District's new Local Plan (covering up to 2041) will start to emerge.

This means that work over the lifetime of this corporate plan will provide a critical foundation with long term consequences.



### Our vision is:

**For the Forest of Dean District to be a great place to live, learn, do business and enjoy.**

**To celebrate and enhance the unique make-up of the Forest.**

**To do this successfully, we need to remember its rich cultural and economic heritage and to build on the area as an aspirational place with a reputation for nurturing amazing people.**

A place where residents have a fantastic work-life balance and feel secure in their communities – creating a draw for industry to nestle amongst the wild spaces. A modern, connected Forest with deep roots.

While we will not achieve our aspirations by standing still as the trees do, we must also protect the very essence of what is so special about our Forest of Dean.

We believe it is possible to bring business, homes and sustainable futures in terms of education, jobs and leisure opportunities to our communities without losing what is so special to our district.

*It does not have to be a case of one or the other.*

Let's celebrate this wonderful area; its towns, its communities, let's make them thrive, let's bring good quality well paid jobs, enhance our education provision, improve housing options and improve the social mobility of our young people.

Let us allow our communities to live the lives they wish to live, let us give people opportunity; while safeguarding this place, on this planet, that we all love so much.

**That is what this plan is aimed at. It is deliberately pointed at being a plan for the place we all want the Forest of Dean to be. From Redmarley to Sedbury, and everywhere in-between, let us join together and achieve what this district is capable of.**



*The Forest of Dean District is a wondrous place with wonderful communities.*

*We would be delighted if the people of the Forest of Dean would join us in making this Plan a reality.*

**Cllr Tim Gwilliam**

Leader of the District Council



# Guiding the corporate plan.

## 3 principles, 5 key areas

*Everything we do will be built on the following principles and work with the key areas identified.*



### Creating Social Value

We will consider the social, economic, environmental and biodiversity impacts of any activity or venture and in all our decision making.



### Considering our Impact on Climate Change

We will consider the impact on climate change in all our decision-making, aiming to make the council (and the District) carbon neutral by 2030.



### Seeking Value for Money

We will aim for the highest quality and for the best value in all our decision-making to secure financial sustainability for the council and therefore secure service delivery for the future by thinking about both short and longer term implications.



## FIVE KEY AREAS OF FOCUS All of equal importance.



### COMMUNITY

**Improve community wellbeing, supporting and celebrating our distinctiveness.**

### ECONOMY

**Develop a vibrant economy that is resilient and future proofed.**

### HOUSING

**Provide a range of affordable housing to meet the needs of the District.**

### ENVIRONMENT

**Protect and enhance the local environment and address the climate emergency.**

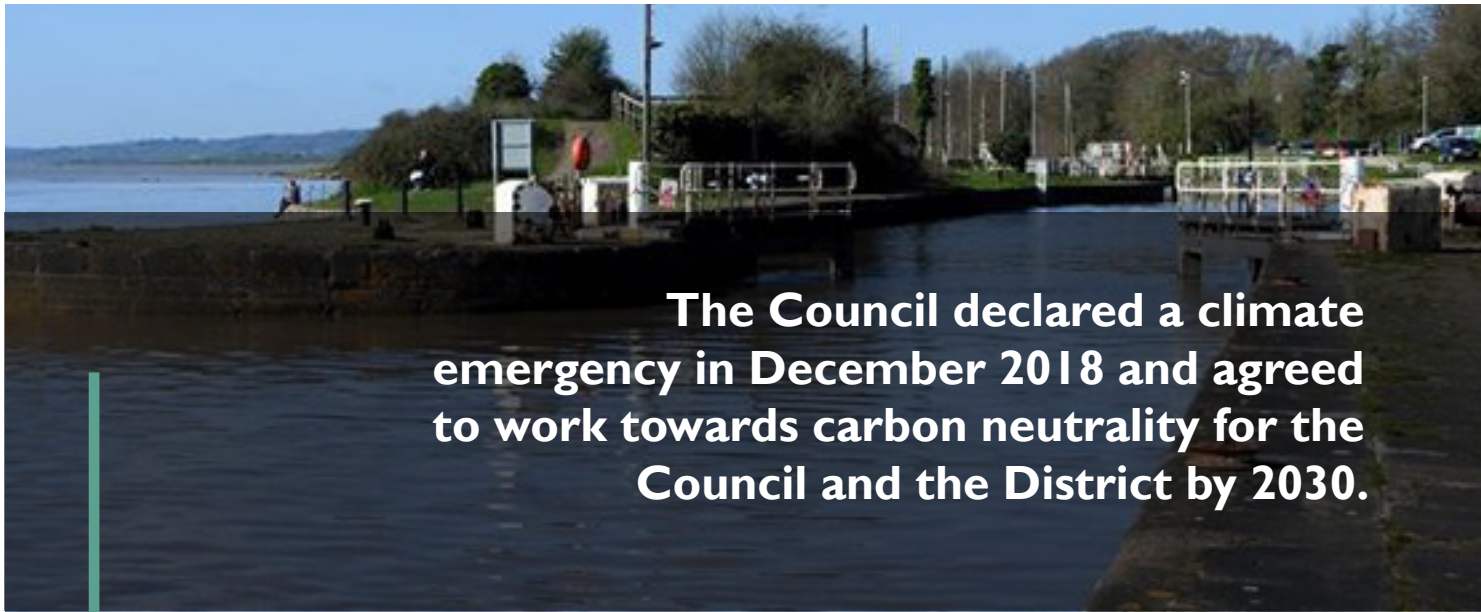
### SERVICES & FINANCE

**Deliver great services through achieving financial sustainability.**



# ENVIRONMENT

Protect and enhance the local environment and address the climate emergency.



**The Council declared a climate emergency in December 2018 and agreed to work towards carbon neutrality for the Council and the District by 2030.**

*The world's leading climate scientists warn that there is less than 12 years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.*

We need to take bold steps to reduce CO2 emissions from the current national average level of 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes.

The District is well-placed to champion rural decarbonisation. We have huge carbon sequestration potential with 21% of the District being public forest estate, and abundant clean renewable resources (solar, wind

and tidal) to become 100% self-reliant on zero-carbon energy.

We also want to protect and enhance our glorious natural environment and its natural biodiversity through our planning policies and our activities in the natural and built environment.



# ENVIRONMENT

## WHAT ARE WE PLANNING TO DO WITH OUR PARTNERS?

01

### Secure a low carbon future

Define and develop our strategic approach to securing a low carbon future for the District, taking urgent steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change, to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

02

### Reduce our carbon footprint

Establish a baseline, then measure and reduce the Council's carbon footprint, leading by example.

03

### Safeguard our landscape

Seek appropriate nationally and internationally recognised designations to establish and enhance the District as a stronghold for nature and the environment.

04

### Enhance our environment

Enhance our natural and built environment through our planning policy, ensuring sustainable management of natural resources, an increase in digital connectivity and enriched biodiversity.

05

### Manage our waste better

Champion waste prevention and reduction, followed by re-use then an increase in household recycling and composting; whilst reducing residual waste and the use of plastics wherever cost effective alternatives are available.



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**TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE  
THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT  
AND ADDRESS THE CLIMATE  
EMERGENCY**



### SPECIFIC ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE



#### Climate change action plan

Develop and implement a climate change action plan to make the Council net carbon neutral by 2030.



#### Seek 'national landscape' designation

Seek 'national landscape' designation for the Forest of Dean District as outlined in the 2019 Landscapes Review (Glover report)



#### UNESCO\* Biosphere reserve

Take forward the economic impact assessment to support a case for UNESCO\* Biosphere reserve designation for the District (\*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).



#### Waste service design review

In preparation for the expiry of the current waste contracts in July 2024, carry out a procurement options and waste service design review, taking into consideration any implications from the Government's Resources and Waste Strategy.



#### Engage with the community

Engage with the community to encourage and promote immediate and longer term actions they can take to reduce their carbon footprint.



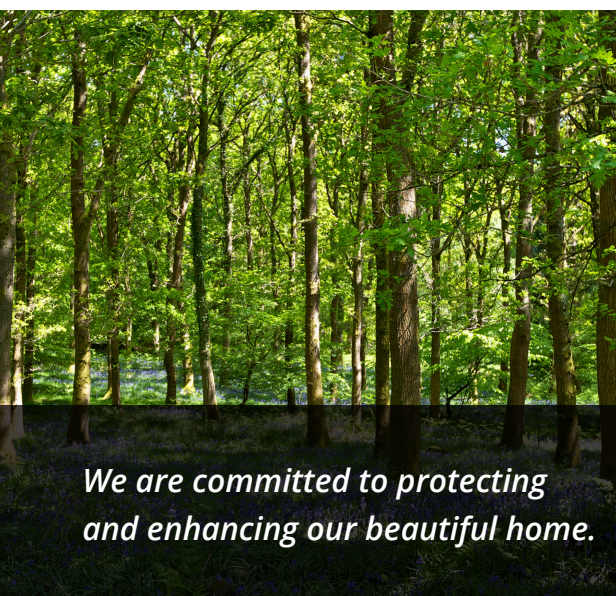
#### Enhanced waste collection infrastructure

Develop an enhanced waste collection infrastructure - depot, bulking, storage and transfer facilities - to support our waste minimisation and recycling plans



#### Support and enhance those helping the climate

Support climate change resilient places, communities and businesses, and enhance environmental quality and biodiversity through the review of our Local Plan

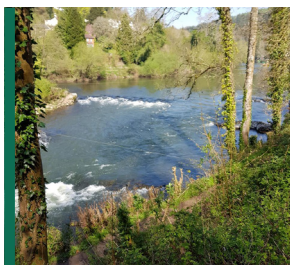


*We are committed to protecting and enhancing our beautiful home.*





## HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?



### MONITORING CARBON REDUCTION ensuring we are on track

Monitoring carbon reduction in Council operations, showing we are on track to carbon neutrality by 2030. Our carbon reduction officer will ensure this is done to the best of our ability.

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### REDUCED CARBON FOOTPRINT reaching carbon neutrality

A reduced carbon footprint for the District, demonstrating that we can achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

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### ACHIEVING RECOGNITION as a place worth protecting

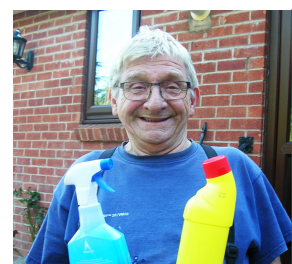
By achieving Biosphere, AONB status and other designations.

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### REDUCING RESIDUAL WASTE and improving reuse

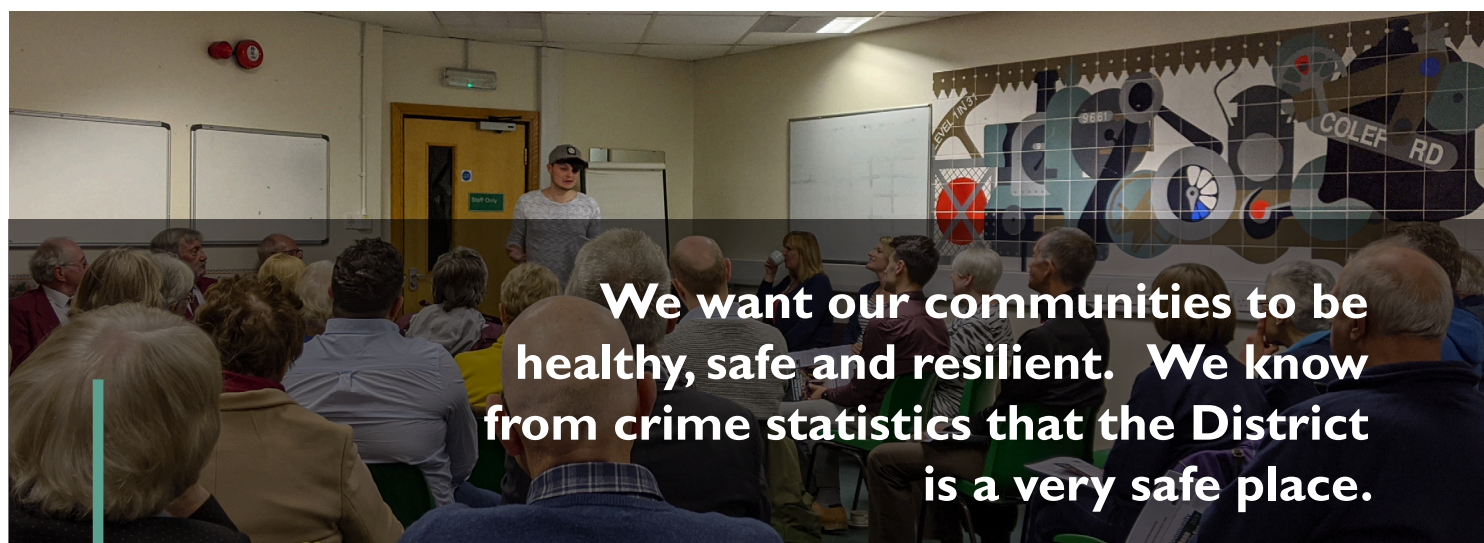
Reduced residual waste and improved recycling and composting.

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# COMMUNITY

Improve community wellbeing, supporting and celebrating our distinctiveness.



**We want our communities to be healthy, safe and resilient. We know from crime statistics that the District is a very safe place.**

***However, there are health inequalities to be addressed and we want to strengthen our overall approach to community development. Social isolation and loneliness present a challenge – for young and for old – and lack of transport compounds this.***

Out of 317 English local authorities, the District is ranked 143 in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 which looks at a basket of – mainly economic - indicators. This is a continuing deterioration, with the District ranked 155 in 2015 and 186 in 2010.

The Thriving Places Index (TPI) provides a rounded view of wellbeing, looking at a wide range of indicators based on conditions that need to be delivered fairly and sustainably for everyone to prosper now and in the future. It recognises that what makes somewhere a great place to live is not just dependent on how wealthy an area it is and that more money does not necessarily make people happier. The 2019 TPI provides a

baseline against which we can measure progress in improving community wellbeing and resilience.

We know that the District scores poorly on indicators for social mobility which measure how likely it is that people from disadvantaged backgrounds can make social progress in comparison to their parents. Improving social mobility is a long-term challenge and many aspects of social mobility can only be measured over a much longer timespan than this four year plan. However, the national State of the Nation reports should enable us to track some shorter term progress. The 2017 report ranked the District as 303 out of 324 areas in England.



# COMMUNITY

## WHAT ARE WE PLANNING TO DO WITH OUR PARTNERS?

01

### Enhance health and wellbeing

Secure enhanced health and wellbeing for our residents, promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

02

### Improve residents' happiness

Improve residents' happiness through addressing what matters most to their quality of life and by using an asset based approach to community development – working with the very many strengths that already exist in our communities.

03

### Connect health and leisure

Seek a comprehensive network of health and leisure facilities in the District.

04

### Raise educational standards

Raise educational standards and increase employment skills that will lead to increasing social aspirations and improving social mobility.

05

### Work together

Develop our relationship with parish and town councils.

06

### Listen to the next generation

Encourage and develop the voice of young people.



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**IMPROVE COMMUNITY  
WELLBEING, SUPPORTING  
AND CELEBRATING OUR  
DISTINCTIVENESS**

### SPECIFIC ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE



#### Address key issues

Address key health issues and promote community wellbeing through the development of our new Local Plan, leading to a high quality built environment.



#### Establish a youth Council

Establish a virtual youth council or similar body.



#### Use our grants scheme

Use our community grants to enhance community facilities and promote a healthy lifestyle.



#### Forest Wellbeing Partnership

Establish a Forest Wellbeing Partnership to address and improve community wellbeing, including social inclusion, transport and safer communities.



#### Communicate with Parish and Town

We will hold regular Parish Forums with parish and town councils.



#### A new leisure strategy

Develop a new leisure strategy to secure District leisure facilities for the future.



#### Community lottery

Set up a community lottery for the District to support local good causes.



*Providing residents with the means to improve themselves and their lives.*



## HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?



**MONITOR**  
**the annual thriving places index**

The 2019 TPI provides a baseline against which we can measure progress in improving community wellbeing and resilience.

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**MONITOR**  
**ONS’ personal wellbeing surveys**

We will look for an improvement in annual Office of National Statistics’ Personal Wellbeing surveys.

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**MONITOR**  
**our social mobility ranking**

Improving social mobility is a long-term challenge and many aspects of social mobility can only be measured over a much longer timespan than this four year plan. However, the national State of the Nation reports should enable us to track some shorter term progress.

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# HOUSING

Provide a range of affordable housing to meet the needs of the District.



**We need to continue to work to provide better access to quality homes and supply of affordable housing in partnership with Registered Housing Providers and local developers.**

***The average house price in the District in April 2019 was £246,273, a 9.4% increase on the previous year, compared to a 1.3% increase in all England (Land Registry data report).***

The median house price is 7.8 times the median gross annual earnings for full-time employees in the District for 2018. In terms of housing need there were 2,123 households on the housing register in need of affordable housing at the end of June 2019. Of these, 566 households were in moderate, high or very high housing need.

These figures demonstrate we need to continue to work to provide better access to quality homes and increase the supply of affordable housing in partnership with Registered Housing Providers and local developers. From April 2017 to March 2019 the

Council enabled the delivery of 121 new affordable homes.

Whilst rough sleeping is comparatively rare, we carry out a lot of work to prevent and tackle homelessness in the District. In 2018/19 we prevented 137 households who were at high risk from becoming homeless.



# HOUSING

## WHAT ARE WE PLANNING TO DO WITH OUR PARTNERS?

01

### More social and rented housing

Deliver more social and rented housing in the District, including through the use of sites owned by the Council.

02

### Lower running cost homes

Deliver lower cost and low carbon or carbon neutral homes.

03

### Tackle homelessness

Tackle and prevent homelessness.

04

### Reduce unused buildings

Bring empty and underused buildings in the District into residential use.

05

### Develop second home policies

Monitor the impact of second home ownership and develop policy to mitigate any negative impacts.

06

### Higher rental standards

Drive up standards in private rented housing.



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**PROVIDE A RANGE OF  
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO  
MEET THE NEEDS OF THE  
DISTRICT**

### SPECIFIC ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE



#### Improve private rentals

Use the private sector landlords' forum to support and inform landlords around key legislative or policy changes and as an arena to share best practice.



#### Secure tenants

Secure tenants for our new development of ten apartments at Foxglove Gardens, Coleford.



#### Maximise affordable housing

Use the review of our Local Plan to maximise delivery of affordable housing that addresses the needs of the District's communities.



#### Promote community led housing

Promote appropriate sites for self-build housing and encourage community housing led developments.



#### Council owned homes

Investigate the feasibility of setting up a housing company to develop low cost, low carbon, rented homes and secure tenants for these.



*Enabling residents to remain in the District as well as attracting new residents.*



## HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?



### **SUPPORTING** people at risk

The number of successful homelessness preventions will be monitored.

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### **REDUCED** empty homes

A reduced number of empty homes will indicate that there is less residential space going to waste.

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### **INCREASED** affordable homes

An increased number of affordable homes would enable low income and new buyers to gain a foot in the property market and make a house truly home.

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### **INCREASED** social rented properties

Providing homes for those that could otherwise not afford them.

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### **INCREASED** low carbon homes

This helps towards the climate emergency and the long term plans of those living within the homes by reducing energy needs and producing renewable energy on site.

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# ECONOMY

Develop a vibrant economy that is resilient and future proofed.



**Developing a vibrant local economy must be complementary to our work on tackling climate change and compatible with a sustainable future.**

*National, international and regional trends in employment have resulted in a general decline in manufacturing - although it is still a major sector of our economy. There have been moves of various enterprises out of the District - or even abroad - and we are seeing a reduced need for floor space due to changing technology.*

The relatively dispersed population and the fact that there is no one dominant town within the District means that there is much retail trade lost to surrounding (larger) settlements. There has been a recent growth in employment in tourism, which is becoming increasingly significant.

Whilst unemployment remains below national levels at 3.2% (compared to a UK level of 4%), approximately 49% of workers who commute to work, do so to jobs outside the District.

The District is reasonably accessible by private transport but has just one main line train station at Lydney and overall

public transport is not well developed. Digital connectivity – high speed broadband and mobile phone coverage - is patchy at best which can be a deterrent to new businesses and also reduce the potential for home working.

Developing a vibrant local economy must be complementary to our work on tackling climate change and compatible with a sustainable future. Bold climate action can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities, as well as improved wellbeing for people everywhere.



# ECONOMY

## WHAT ARE WE PLANNING TO DO WITH OUR PARTNERS?

01

### Utilise our partnerships

Build a more resilient and vibrant economy that is compatible with addressing climate change, through our planning policy, the Forest Economic Partnership and GFirst LEP - the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership.

02

### The five foundations of productivity

Focus on the five foundations of productivity identified in the UK Industrial Strategy – Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place.

03

### Attract business that works

Encourage business relocation to the District and provide for a range of employment opportunities, with a particular focus on agri-tech, cyber-tech and home working, whilst making our local environment and quality of life key selling points of the District.

04

### Support visitor economy

Support the growing visitor economy to showcase what the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley has to offer.

05

### Increase employment skills

Increase employment skills in young people, to enhance their ability to secure good jobs, by ensuring a better alignment between the skills base and the employment base.

06

### Support local employment

Raise awareness and improve engagement between the District's businesses, the High Schools and Academy Trusts to support local recruitment and apprenticeship opportunities.

07

### Western Powerhouse

Support and promote the Western Powerhouse and engage at a strategic level with other local authorities to ensure the District's potential is fully recognised and addressed.

08

### Improve infrastructure

Lobby for improved transport infrastructure, utility provision and digital connectivity, to enable greater economic prosperity in the District and help reduce out-commuting.



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**DEVELOP A VIBRANT  
ECONOMY THAT IS RESILIENT  
AND FUTURE PROOFED**

### SPECIFIC ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE



#### Forest Economic Partnership

Support four full stakeholder meetings of the Forest Economic Partnership each year.



#### Vibrant economy strategy

Develop a comprehensive Vibrant Economy Strategy for the District.



#### Secure tenants

Secure commercial tenants for Foxglove Gardens development.



#### Use the Local Plan

Use our Local Plan review to support the development of a vibrant local economy.



*A resilient local economy will attract more business and therefore raise the availability of jobs.*



## HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?



### REDUCED unemployment

A reduced unemployment rate will indicate that we are doing well to improve employment within the District.

### IMPROVEMENT IN social mobility ranking

An improvement in our Social Mobility measures and ranking indicates that residents feel that they are able to improve their lives - and are doing so.



### SUCCESSFUL business start-ups

Only 60% of start-ups make it past the first three years. We want to see a much higher rate within the District.

### INCREASED NUMBER of business rate paying businesses

An increase in this number indicates that more businesses are able to have proper premises, indicating success.



### INCREASED ACCESS to high speed broadband

An increased percentage of businesses and properties with access to high speed broadband and resilient phone networks indicates that businesses and workers are more able to work flexibly and in a worldwide space.

# SERVICES & FINANCE

Deliver great services through ensuring financial sustainability.



***Local government is facing unprecedented financial challenges as funding from central government becomes more and more volatile and reduces year on year. This requires us to engage in greater commercial activity to be financially sustainable, without reliance on central government funding so that we can safeguard and improve our local services for residents and businesses.***

We need to shape our organisation around our priorities, as much as possible, whilst efficiently delivering the services local people and businesses need. Our approach to any commercial activity will consider the social value we can create at the same time, by considering the social, economic and environmental benefits of an activity or venture.

We recognise the way people access services is changing significantly and organisations are developing radical new

approaches to support customer access. We want to modernise our services through provision of digital services offering customers more choice in how they can do business with the Council, whilst still supporting those who wish to contact us face-to-face or by phone. We are also committed to involving our service users in helping us design and improve our services.



# SERVICES & FINANCE

## WHAT ARE WE PLANNING TO DO WITH OUR PARTNERS?

01

### **Make better use of space**

Maximise the benefit of the Council's estate through decreasing our office space need and working with the One Public Estate group for Gloucestershire.

02

### **Ongoing reductions in costs**

Use our capital funds to deliver ongoing reductions in running costs.

03

### **A commercial approach**

Take a commercial approach to borrowing and investment to secure a return on investment to protect the delivery of our services.

04

### **Deliver social value**

Create and deliver social value through our commercial activity.

05

### **Modernise our services**

Develop and modernise our services to make them easier to access and use, so that our residents notice visible improvements.

06

### **More accessible**

Enable more self-service options, so that people can do business with the Council at any time.



Forest of Dean  
— DISTRICT COUNCIL —

**DELIVER GREAT SERVICES  
THROUGH ENSURING  
FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

### SPECIFIC ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE



#### Annual review of fees

Review our fees and charges on an annual basis.



#### Commissioning strategy

Produce a Commissioning strategy designed to meet local needs and deliver excellent and efficient services to support this corporate plan.



#### Review strategies

Review our Capital, Commercial and Treasury Management strategies each year so that we become less reliant on volatile central government funding.



#### Maximise estate value

Produce a revised Asset Management strategy to maximise the value of the Council's property estate.



#### Improve our website

Improve our website so that more service transactions can be carried out online.



*Maximising the value we can deliver by  
utilising what we have efficiently.*



## HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?



### **REDUCED** reliance on reserves

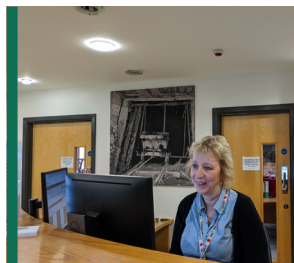
Balanced Medium Term Financial Strategy with reduced reliance on reserves by 2022.

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### **INCREASED** return on investment

Increased return on our capital investment, compared to 2018/19.

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### **INCREASED** customer satisfaction

Increased customer satisfaction with face-to-face, telephone and website access to, and delivery of, Council services.

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### **UNQUALIFIED** value for money

Unqualified Value for Money opinion received from our external auditor each year.

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