

Commercial & Transformation Strategy

March 2026



Forest of Dean
— DISTRICT COUNCIL —

Commercial and Transformation Strategy

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I. Opening Statement

As a district council, our responsibility is to protect what makes the Forest of Dean such a special place - our communities, our landscape, and the wellbeing of the people who call this district home.

Looking ahead, it's clear that we face real challenges: uncertainty in national funding, pressures on local services, and increasing expectations from residents who rightly want good value for money and reliable support.

To meet these challenges, we must continue modernising how the council works while staying firmly rooted in our values. This Commercial & Transformation Strategy gives us the framework to do just that. It helps us strengthen our financial resilience so we can protect local services, while also supporting the Council Plan's ambitions around thriving communities, nature recovery, decarbonisation, value for money, and a sustainable local economy.

But this strategy is not simply about generating income or cutting costs. It's about doing things smarter - working with our staff and partners, embracing innovation where it adds value, and making sure that every pound we spend benefits the people and environment of the Forest of Dean. By taking a more thoughtful, commercially aware, and community-focused approach, we can continue to improve services, support local initiatives, and protect the natural heritage that defines our district.

Our goal is simple: a resilient, responsible and forward-thinking council that delivers for residents today, while safeguarding the Forest of Dean for generations to come.



Cllr. Sid Phelps
Cabinet Member for Property and Projects

2. Executive Summary

Forest of Dean District Council (FoDDC) faces a period of significant financial pressure, shifting resident expectations, and increasing demand for modern, efficient, and sustainable services. Alongside this, the current Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) identifies a projected £3.1m funding gap, requiring a disciplined, coordinated, and organisation-wide transformation approach over the next few years.

This Commercial & Transformation Strategy sets out how FoDDC will:

- strengthen financial resilience
- deliver MTFS-aligned transformation savings
- modernise how services are designed and delivered
- build a confident, capable, and commercially minded workforce
- maximise value for money and strengthen partnership working
- prioritise environmental sustainability, social value, and community wellbeing.

It brings together commercial ambition, income generation, efficiency improvements, savings opportunities, and transformation activity into a single strategic framework.

3. Overview and Background

FoDDC is currently financially stable, but future uncertainty around Government funding, inflation, and service demand poses growing risks. The district's rural geography, environmental priorities, and community expectations require a modern, flexible, and financially robust organisation.

This strategy forms part of the **Enterprising and Effective Council** objective and sets out a structured approach for how the council will:

- deliver transformation and efficiency savings
- modernise services using digital tools, redesign methods, and data
- strengthen commercial capability and optimise income
- support the delivery of the Council Plan 2024–2028.

4. Why We Need a Commercial and Transformation Mindset

Through nurturing a more commercial and resilient approach at the council, we hope to:



deliver **MTFS** financial savings and reduce avoidable demand



develop a commercially skilled and change-confident workforce



improve service quality, accessibility and user experience



strengthen collaborative relationships



drive innovation and continuous improvement



use digital tools wisely to achieve productivity and value.

5. Vision

Forest of Dean District Council's plan sets out the council's vision and commitments: Thriving Communities, Decarbonisation and Nature Recovery, a Sustainable Economy, and an **Enterprising and Effective Council**. It recognises the need for urgent action, community involvement, and financial sustainability, and holds ambitious aims to transform the district into a model of environmental stewardship and community resilience.

The Commercial Strategy, which supports the delivery of the council's priorities and aims, has the following vision:

VISION

We want to remain a financially secure, sustainable, and high performing council, fostering innovation with a commercial and transformation-led approach to service delivery, that makes a meaningful difference to our communities and environment.

6. Guiding Principles

The strategy adopts the guiding principles from the Council Plan and applies them to commercial and transformation activity, including:

- **evidence-based decision-making**
- **social and environmental value**
- **partnership working**
- **financial sustainability**
- **inclusivity and accessibility**
- **innovation and continuous improvement.**

7. Strategic Objectives

1. Optimise commercial performance and financial management	2. Nurture a modern, commercial, and resilient culture	3. Prioritise social value, nature recovery, and sustainability
<p>This includes delivering MTFS transformation savings by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• strengthening oversight of income, savings, and efficiencies.• aligning commercial and transformation activity with MTFS assumptions.• embedding financial and benefits reporting across the organisation.	<p>FoDDC will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• build capability in commercial thinking, digital skills and financial literacy.• support staff through change, including potential future Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).• encourage innovation, learning and collaboration.	<p>Transformation activity will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• embed environmental and social value into service redesigns.• capture sustainability benefits to reduce long-term costs.• support carbon reduction and nature recovery.

8. Strategy and Policy Links

This strategy aligns with:

- MTFS 2025/26–2029/30
- FoDDC Council Plan
- Sustainable Economy Strategy
- People & Culture Strategy.

9. Methodology, Transformation, and Implementation Plan

9.1 Operating Model for Transformation

Stage	Details
Discover	Identify transformation opportunities across: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• MTFS savings themes (for example, Publica efficiencies, or asset rationalisation)• high-value services (for transformation, benefit outcomes, or residents)• demand, social value, and cost baselines.
Design	Develop business cases with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• expected MTFS savings• cashable vs. non-cashable benefits• timescales and KPIs• co-design with users, staff, and partners.
Enable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build capability through training and tools.• Remove barriers to change.• Provide transformation and financial modelling support.
Deliver	Implement MTFS savings schemes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publica management streamlining (£230k–£330k)• digital automation and self-service (c. £50k)• accommodation strategy (£50k savings)• contract optimisation (Ubico, leisure)• energy savings. (£35k)
Embed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lock in improvements through governance, training, and reporting.• Build improvements into business-as-usual operations.
Improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuously review performance.• Identify new opportunities to close the remaining budget gap.

9.2 Implementation Plan

Theme	Short–Medium Term Actions	Medium–Long Term Actions
<p>1. Governance: Strategic Alignment & Assurance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the Commercial & Transformation Working Group (CTWG) to ensure alignment with the MTFS, Council Plan and organisational priorities. • Introduce quarterly commercial and transformation reports to SMT and Members. • Embed financial and commercial performance indicators within the Council Performance report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen strategic decision-making using an evidence-based approach to fees, charges, and commercial opportunities. • Apply commercial assessment methods across major council projects to ensure alignment with long-term strategy and funding pressures.
<p>2. Commercial Capability: Building a Skilled, Confident Workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a customer-focused, value-for-money commercial culture through learning, training, and shared best practice. • Deliver training in financial literacy, benefits management, and commercial thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed commercial competence across all roles and service areas. • Ensure commercial and transformation skills form part of core organisational capability.
<p>3. Financial Sustainability: Supporting MTFS Delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and support savings and income opportunities across all directorates to close the projected MTFS gap. • Apply commercial and transformation inputs to key financial decisions, such as, property/assets and major contracts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop long-term savings and income strategies embedded within service planning. • Standardise financial sustainability assessment across the organisation.
<p>4. Transformation & Change Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support directorates to mitigate impacts of the funding gap through redesign, demand management, and modernisation. • Prepare staff for major organisational change (LGR for example), building resilience and a positive change culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver and track service-level income and savings plans. • Embed a benefits-management approach to ensure improvements become sustainable and repeatable.

<p>5. Social Value & Value for Money</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support delivery of a Social Value framework aligned to the Council Plan, MTFS, and Procurement Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed social value in quarterly reports for SMT and Members.
<p>6. Environmental Value: Supporting Decarbonisation & Nature Recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise green and environmental investment. • Support embedding of the Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) into all major projects and decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed net zero considerations and nature recovery principles into all transformation activity.
<p>7. Data & Technology: Enabling Modern, Efficient Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data, automation, and digital tools to create commercial opportunities and support MTFS savings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop AI-enabled service improvements where appropriate. • Standardise reporting and analytics for improved organisational decision-making.

10. Governance and Structure

The CTWG reports to the council’s Strategic Management Team and sets strategy priorities, approves associated delivery plans, tracks benefits and risk, and ensures alignment with the MTFS and Council Delivery Plan.

11. Strategy Delivery

The delivery plan is outlined in the Enterprising and Effective Council element of the Council Delivery Plan and underpinned by this strategy’s three objectives.

12. Procurement and Contract Management

Commissioning and Procurement activities are currently supported by our partner organisation Publica. They include commissioning, tendering, contract award, and contract management. They are regulated by internal contract procedure rules and public procurement law (Procurement Act 2023). The internal contract procedure rules guide procurement undertakings at FoDDC.

A Commissioning and Procurement Board, consisting of senior executives of Publica and all partner councils, guides and advises on procurement activities and all contracts with a spend value over £50,000.

13. Risk Management

Commercial strategies and plans involve risk, and these are outlined in the service/operational risk register. We aim to mitigate risks while still enabling opportunities through strong governance structures, transparent reporting, and robust decision-making processes.

Legal guidance will be sought early on in any commercial undertakings. Specialist advice will be sought as necessary and when appropriate.

Commercial and Transformation risk themes for consideration include:

- **financial risk** (cost overruns, unpredicted costs, inflation, investment / disinvestment)
- **benefits risk** (over or under estimation, optimism/pessimism bias)
- **people risk** (capacity, capability, change fatigue. Mitigation via training, phased roll-outs, comms)
- **technology risk** (integration, security, supplier lock-in)
- **equalities and environmental impacts** (assessed through Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIA) and equality impact processes).

14. Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure that we stay on track to meet our objectives, and that we're able to adapt to change, this strategy and the associated relevant items in the Council Delivery Plan will be reviewed biannually by the CTWG, and reported on quarterly to SMT.

The council's performance reports will demonstrate delivery of the strategic priorities and service improvements.

15. Conclusion

This integrated strategy positions FoDDC to:

- deliver the transformation savings required by MTFS
- modernise services and strengthen performance
- build organisational resilience and capability
- deliver social, environmental, and economic value.

It provides a disciplined, evidence-based framework for navigating the financial, operational, and environmental challenges and changes of the coming decade.