



Public Document Pack STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB

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COUNCIL

To all Members of Stroud District Council

Wednesday, 19 April 2023

You are hereby summoned to attend Meeting of **STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL** in the Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud on **THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2023** at **7.00 pm**

Kathy O'Leary
Chief Executive

Please Note: The meeting is being held in the Council Chamber at Stroud District Council and will be streamed live on the Council's [YouTube Channel](#). A recording of the meeting will be published onto the [Council's website](#). The whole of the meeting will be recorded except where there are confidential or exempt items, which may need to be considered in the absence of press and public.

If you wish to attend this meeting, please contact democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk. This is to ensure adequate seating is available in the Council Chamber.

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES**
To receive apologies for absence.
2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**
To receive declarations of interest.
3. **MINUTES (Pages 5 - 16)**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2023.
4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**
To receive announcements from the Chair of Council, Leader of Council or Chief Executive.
5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**
The Chair of the relevant Committee will answer questions from members of the public submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures laid out in Section 3, Paragraph 8, of the Constitution.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF QUESTIONS

Noon on Friday, 21 April 2023

Questions must be submitted to the Chief Executive, Democratic Services, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud and can be sent by email to

Democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

6. RECOMMENDATION FROM ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Environment Committee – 30 March 2023

The Chair of Environment Committee will present this item.

6a. INTERIM FLEET PROCUREMENT STRATEGY - UBICO (Pages 17 - 30)

To update Council on the method of Ubico fleet replacement over the next four years and agree the required budget.

7. RECOMMENDATION FROM AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Audit and Standards Committee - 18 April 2023

The Chair of Audit and Standards Committee will present this item.

7a. REVISED COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK POLICY (Pages 31 - 52)

To consider the revised Complaints & Feedback Policy.

8. MEMBER QUESTIONS

See Agenda Item 5 for the deadline for submissions.

9. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

9a. MOTION ON DOMESTIC ABUSE - PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR TRINA DAVIS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR STEPHEN DAVIES

Domestic abuse can affect anyone, destroying families and lives, leaving lasting physical and emotional scars, and having a particularly devastating impact on children and young people. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was introduced to strengthen the response across all agencies, provide further protections for those experiencing domestic abuse and put in place enhanced measures to bring perpetrators to justice.

Council notes that:

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on first tier councils (county and unitary councils) to Prepare a Domestic Abuse Strategy. Gloucestershire County Council has prepared a Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2110605/gcc-domestic-abuse-strategy.pdf>
- The District Council plays an important role in the delivery of the Domestic Abuse Strategy, working in multi-agency partnership with the County Council and others including the Police, the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) and Stroud Beresford Women's Refuge, our current charity of the year.
- The District Council is working on the preparation of a Domestic Abuse Policy relating to tenants and tenancies, and another relating to staff, as well as reviewing its Safeguarding Policy and training, including in relation to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Council resolves that:

- Officers are asked to prepare a report for consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee to set out this Council's role in addressing Domestic Abuse within the context of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the County Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy. The report should include:
 - Recognition of the need for the preparation of a clear and concise overarching District Council Domestic Abuse Strategy to show how the different strategies and policies of different councils and council

- services relate to each other, provide appropriate support and protection to victims and address the perpetrators of Domestic Abuse.
- Recognition that the preparation of the above strategy will be led by the Strategic Director of Communities, who chairs the cross-service Safeguarding Group.
- Consideration of how Members are to be involved in the preparation of the above strategy and other Domestic Abuse policies as appropriate and in the identification of any gaps, potentially through a Working Group or Task and Finish Group to complement the cross-service Safeguarding Group chaired by the Strategic Director of Communities.
- Reference to the need for cross-service and staff / Member work to identify any gaps in provision and recommend how these will be addressed.
- Consideration of further training needs for staff and Members in relation to Domestic Abuse.
- The overarching District Council Domestic Abuse Strategy referred to above will be brought to a future meeting of relevant committees for consideration.

9b. MOTION REGARDING THE REJECTION OF THE ILLEGAL MIGRATION BILL - PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR DOINA CORNELL AND SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR STEVE HYND

This Council is committed to defend the human rights of all our residents, and to fulfil our public sector equality duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people.

In 2019 this Council committed to join the Lift the Ban Coalition calling on the UK Government to change the law to give people seeking asylum the ability to seek work. The Council also committed to appropriate provision to support asylum seekers in Stroud District, including promotion of education and training to enable them to better integrate into the District and play an active role in the success of the local economy.

Since then, the Council has played an important role in cooperating and partnering with other Gloucestershire councils and GARAS (Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) to support asylum-seekers and refugees fleeing war and persecution, from Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine and other countries.

This Council notes that:

- At the end of 2021, around 89 million people were forcibly displaced across the world. Of these, 27 million were refugees, whilst 53 million were internally displaced within their country of origin.
- Of all the refugees in the world, 72% are living in countries neighbouring their country of origin, often in developing countries. The UK is home to approximately 1% of the refugees who were displaced across the world.
- In 2022, 75% of initial asylum decisions made by the UK Government resulted in a grant of asylum or other form of protection.
- The Government has brought forward yet another immigration bill, at a time when there are currently no safe routes to the UK for nationalities of many countries most likely to be granted asylum including those with family members in our local communities.
- People who arrive irregularly, when there are no safe and legal routes available to them, would never be allowed under the provisions of the new Illegal Migration Bill, to access the asylum system. Instead, they are likely to

be detained and / or left destitute, without the right to work and in limbo indefinitely.

- The Illegal Migration Bill would also remove vital protections for women and children, and victims of trafficking, meaning they could all face detention.

This Council resolves to:

- Condemn the Illegal Migration Bill, which it considers to be in opposition to fundamental tenets of international human rights law, and represents an attack on migrants' rights.
- Commit to defend the rights of all people in our communities to live side by side in dignity and to continuing to welcome those who make our district their home.
- Call on the Home Secretary to:
 - a) Withdraw the Illegal Migration Bill.
 - b) Commit to resourcing an asylum system that can deliver fair and timely asylum decisions.
 - c) End the Home Office contracts with providers of temporary, often poor quality and unsuitable accommodation for asylum seekers.
- Call on the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to open discussions with local authorities about the best ways and resources needed to provide good quality long term accommodation for all those in need, including asylum seekers, within our communities.
- Mandate our Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to this effect.

10. UPDATE TO THE CONSTITUTION (Pages 53 - 100)

This report brings forward to Council a number of proposed amendments to the Constitution.

11. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REVISIT AND FEEDBACK REPORT (Pages 101 - 114)

To inform Members of the feedback from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge progress review, which took place on 17 January 2023.

12. UBICO FIVE YEAR VISION AND BUSINESS PLAN 2023/2024 (Pages 115 - 140)

To provide an update on the Ubico Five Year Vision and Business Plan 2023/2024.

13. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP (Verbal Report)

To agree changes to the membership of Strategy and Resources Committee.



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COUNCIL

Thursday, 16 February 2023

7.00 - 9.54 pm

Council Chamber

Minutes

Membership

Councillor Steve Robinson (Chair)

Councillor Norman Kay
 Councillor Beki Aldam
 * Councillor Paula Baker
 Councillor Martin Baxendale
 Councillor Natalie Bennett
 Councillor Catherine Braun
 * Councillor Chris Brine
 * Councillor Martin Brown
 * Councillor Jason Bullingham
 Councillor Doina Cornell
 * Councillor Gordon Craig
 Councillor Kate Crews
 Councillor Laurie Davies
 Councillor Stephen Davies
 Councillor Katrina Davis
 Councillor Jonathan Edmunds
 Councillor Christopher Evans
 Councillor Helen Fenton
 Councillor Colin Fryer
 Councillor Lindsey Green
 * Councillor Victoria Gray
 * Councillor Jessie Hoskin
 * Councillor Nicholas Housden
 Councillor Nick Hurst
 Councillor Steve Hynd
 * Absent

Councillor Trevor Hall (Vice-Chair)

Councillor George James
 Councillor Julie Job
 * Councillor Christopher Jockel
 Councillor John Jones
 Councillor Haydn Jones
 Councillor Robin Drury-Layfield
 Councillor Jenny Miles
 * Councillor Dave Mossman
 Councillor Gill Oxley
 Councillor Loraine Patrick
 Councillor Martin Percy
 * Councillor Keith Pearson
 * Councillor Nigel Prenter
 Councillor Mattie Ross
 Councillor Mark Ryder
 Councillor Lucas Schoemaker
 * Councillor Ashley Smith
 Councillor Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
 Councillor Haydn Sutton
 Councillor Brian Tipper
 Councillor Ken Tucker
 Councillor Chloe Turner
 * Councillor Tricia Watson
 Councillor Rich Wilsher

Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive
 Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer)
 Strategic Director of Resources

Head of Property Services
 Building Programmes Manager

Others in Attendance

Ian Mather, Consultant Engineer



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CL.054 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Baker, Brine, Brown, Bullingham, Craig, Gray, Hoskin, Housden, Jockel, Mossman, Pearson, Prenter, Smith and Watson.

CL.055 Declaration of Interests

There were none.

CL.056 Minutes

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December were approved as a correct record.

CL.057 Announcements

The Chair asked everyone to join him for a minute silence to remember two previous Councillors, Sue Reed and Barbara Tait. Councillors John Jones, Studdert-Kennedy, Ross, Braun and Kay paid tribute to both Sue Reed and Barbara Tait and offered condolences to their friends and families.

The Chair encouraged all Members to attend Councillor tours of Ebley Mill that had been arranged.

The Leader, Councillor Braun, provided an update regarding the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge progress review. The final visit had taken place on the 17 January and the report covered the progress that had been made on the identified actions. The Leader thanked Officers and Councillors for their hard work.

Councillor Davies announced that he had stepped down as Leader of the Conservative Group and they would be looking to elect a new Leader shortly.

CL.058 Public Question Time

There were none.

CL.059 Member Questions

There were none.

Recommendations from Strategy and Resources Committee

CL.060 The Fair Pay and Senior Pay Policy Statement 2022/23

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and explained that the Council was required under section 38 of Localism Act 2011 to have a pay policy statement in place for each financial year, she highlighted the following key areas:

- The lowest paid employees were on the apprentice grade.
- The highest paid employee was a grade 12.
- The ratio between the highest and lowest paid employees was calculated at 1:10 which was within the Government guidelines.
- The current remuneration levels for staff.
- The Council utilised spot salaries, there were no bonuses, annual increments or performance related payments.
- There had been a slight increase in the head count from the previous year due to vacant posts being filled.
- The change to the National Living Wage had been applied earlier than necessary in December to support staff during the Cost of Living Crisis.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Bennett commended the report.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED That this statement was approved.

CL.061 Council Tax Support Scheme

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and explained that this was to set the Council Tax Support Scheme for the coming financial year and to establish how Council Tax support would be administered for working age people. She highlighted the following:

- Since 2013 the Council had adopted the Governments Default Scheme.
- The Council intended to continue this in order to support more vulnerable residents.
- Administrative changes were made to the scheme last year to reduce the burden on the Revenue and Benefits Team therefore, income changes of £10 and under would not require reassessment.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillors Bennett, Kay, Stephen Davies and Hynd commended the team for their report.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

FOR: 37 Votes

Councillors

Beki Aldam
Martin Baxendale
Natalie Bennett
Catherine Braun
Doina Cornell

Colin Fryer
Lindsey Green
Trevor Hall
Nick Hurst
Steve Hynd

Martin Percy
Steve Robinson
Mattie Ross
Mark Ryder
Lucas Schoemaker

Kate Crews
Laurie Davies
Stephen Davies
Trina Davis
Robin Drury-Layfield
Jonathan Edmunds
Christopher Evans
Helen Fenton

George James
Julie Job
Haydn Jones
John Jones
Norman Kay
Jenny Miles
Gill Oxley
Lorraine Patrick

Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
Haydn Sutton
Brian Tipper
Ken Tucker
Chloe Turner
Rich Wilsher

AGAINST: 0 Votes

ABSTENTIONS: 0 Votes

RESOLVED To adopt the scheme for 2023/24.

CL.062 Council Tax Support Fund

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and explained that:

- In December the Government announced an additional £100m of funding for Local Authorities to support vulnerable households already in receipt of Council Tax support.
- Stroud District Council was allocated £148,746 for 2023-2024.
- The discount would apply to current claimants who had an outstanding council tax liability for the 2023-24 financial year.
- This scheme was similar to the Council Hardship Scheme which was administered during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- There were no requirements for any recipient of Council Tax Support to make a separate claim under this scheme, as part of the billing process in March, all eligible residents would be assessed and the discounts applied automatically.
- A local approach could be established to utilise any remaining funding to further support those in need.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Davies commended the support from Central Government and Stroud District Council for distributing the funding in a fair and sensible way.

Councillors Kay and Bennett expressed their support.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To:

- a) **Adopt and implement the scheme for 2023/24**
- b) **Delegate to the Strategic Director of Resources the ability to make minor changes to the scheme to ensure funding is used effectively.**

CL.063 Stroud District Council Capital Strategy

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and explained that this was an annual requirement for the prudential code. She gave a brief overview of the Capital Strategy and highlighted the main changes which included:

2022/23

- In the Principals of the Capital Strategy found on page 40. Item 3 had been amended to include 'will not' in the heading.
- The Priorities of the Council Plan were set out on page 42.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

In response to Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, the Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that the change of wording on page 40 was in regard to purchasing Capital Assets. It meant that Stroud District Council would not purchase assets solely for a commercial return.

Councillors Bennett and Braun commended the report and encouraged other Members to support it.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED to approve the Capital Strategy at Appendix A

CL.064 General Fund Budget 2023/24, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The financial settlement had been agreed by parliament and was detailed in section 2.1 of the report, found on page 61 of the reports pack. The settlement for 2023/24 had been used to stabilise the financial position of the Council and provide new investment into the Council's priorities.
- Managing the impact of high inflation had formed an integral part of the budget setting process which was still above 10% and added to cost pressures. The increase in costs due to inflation were not covered by the financial settlement and were detailed in paragraphs 3.19 – 3.31 of the report.
- There was a proposed increase of 2.99% for Council Tax which was detailed in Appendix I on page 183 of the report.
- Page 65 detailed the current non-ringfenced grants which included an additional Funding Guarantee Grant to increase all Councils' Core Spending Power by a minimum of 3%.
- Paragraphs 3.2 – 3.18 of the report explained the changes to Budgets for 2023/24 which included the 2022/23 pay award, planning for the 2023/24 pay award and increases to the Ubico contract.
- There was an assumed budget gap of £3m at the end of the Medium-Term Financial Plan however the position of this, which was largely influenced by estimates of the future funding reform, were currently unknown.
- Section 5 of the report on page 75 highlighted the additional funding that had been allocated and highlighted that allowance had been made to accommodate the replacement of the Ubico fleet.
- Section 6 detailed the report from the Section 151 Officer to confirm that the estimates were robust and that the reserves were adequate.

The Strategic Director of Resources gave the following answers in response to questions from Members:

- Paragraph 3.20 on page 68 of the report stated that the council must pick up 40% of any additional costs incurred for homelessness or a long term disability placement. It was confirmed that these costs would need to come from the General Fund Budget.

- The decarbonisation of Stratford Park and the Museum in the Park was still considered viable with the current cost increases. This was detailed in the report at agenda item 9 for consideration during the meeting.
- Paragraph 3.41 detailed the additional funding for 15 houses for households fleeing conflict in Ukraine and Afghanistan. These 15 houses would be purchased in addition to any current housing stock and would therefore not have an impact on families currently on the waiting list. They would form part of the Councils housing stock after the period of use for refugees.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillors Turner, Cornell, Drury-Layfield, Bennett and Braun commended the report were pleased that the Councils priorities were still being invested in despite the difficult budget.

Councillor Davies echoed the comments regarding the difficult budget and thanked Central Government for the support.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

FOR: 37 Votes

Councillors

Beki Aldam	Colin Fryer	Martin Pearcy
Martin Baxendale	Lindsey Green	Steve Robinson
Natalie Bennett	Trevor Hall	Mattie Ross
Catherine Braun	Nick Hurst	Mark Ryder
Doina Cornell	Steve Hynd	Lucas Schoemaker
Kate Crews	George James	Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
Laurie Davies	Julie Job	Haydn Sutton
Stephen Davies	Haydn Jones	Brian Tipper
Trina Davis	John Jones	Ken Tucker
Robin Drury-Layfield	Norman Kay	Chloe Turner
Jonathan Edmunds	Jenny Miles	Rich Wilsher
Christopher Evans	Gill Oxley	
Helen Fenton	Lorraine Patrick	

AGAINST: 0 Votes

ABSTENTIONS: 0 Votes

RESOLVED To:

- Approve the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan as set out in Appendices A-D**
- Increase the council tax by 2.99% to £229.17 at Band D, an increase of less than 13p per week for the services provided by Stroud District Council;**
- Note the uncertainty around the impact of changes to future local government funding**
- Approve the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix E**
- Approve the planned changes to the reserves as set out in Section 4 of the report and Appendix F**

- f) **Approve the fees and charges policy and list of Council fees and charges as set out in Appendices G and H**

In addition to the recommendations from the Strategy and Resources

- g) **To approve the Council Tax Charges for the District as set out in Appendix I.**

CL.065 Housing Revenue Account Estimates - Revised 2022/23 and Original 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2022/23 -2026/27

Councillor Ross, Chair of Housing Committee, introduced the report and informed Council that the financial position had worsened since the previous year. She highlighted the following key points:

- Table 1 on page 195 detailed the changes to the budget from 2022/23.
- Rents were proposed to be increased by the 7% limit set by Central Government which was lower than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% which would have been 11.1%.
- New tenancies were not limited to 7% and it was recommended that these were increased by 11.1%.
- Shared Ownership Rents were now proposed to be capped at the 7% increase in line with social rents instead of the 13.1% discussed at Housing Committee.
- There were five Independent Living schemes that had district heating systems, a cap had been introduced to protect tenants from the increase in costs in the short term. Changes in gas prices would be reviewed during the year, and if necessary, a revised charge would be applied in year.
- Independent Living (IL) - Proposed costs had again been capped at the residential rate and IL tenants were eligible for housing benefits and universal credit to support with costs.
- Garage rents were set to rise by 7%.
- A new Tenancy Support Fund was proposed to support tenants with increased costs and £200k had been set aside for this.
- Additional budget may be requested in year to support the ongoing works with Damp and Mould in Council Homes.
- The New Build and Development programme budget had been realigned, this would result in an increase in the budget and would effect the viability of some schemes.
- Proposed increase to the acquisitions budget in line with the Local Authority Housing Fund.
- Section 8 detailed the transfers to and from earmarked reserves and whilst the budget had been balanced for 2023/24 and 2024/25, the balances were lower than recommended. There would be a full review of the housing service scheduled to take place in 2023/24.

In response to Councillor Davies, Councillor Ross explained that since the tragic incident of the death of a toddler due to the property conditions, Central Government had required all social housing providers to investigate damp and mould issues as a matter of urgency. Stroud District Council (SDC) had already begun looking into this. It was thought that the cost-of-living crisis had had an adverse effect on damp and mould cases due to the financial difficulties associated with heating homes.

Proposed by Councillor Ross and seconded by Councillor Schoemaker.

Councillors Studdert-Kennedy and Kay thanked Councillor Ross and Officers for the report.

Councillor Davies thanked Central Government for their contributions and the rent cap. He requested that if there were damp and mould issues within the district, this should be highlighted to Councillors and deeper analysis should be completed to understand whether it was due to lifestyle choices or building inadequacy. He concluded by stating that he would be supporting the budget.

Councillor Aldam paid tribute to the toddler who had passed away as mentioned earlier in the meeting and debated the generosity of contributions received from Central Government in comparison with the rising food bank figures in the District.

Councillor Schoemaker echoed Councillor Aldam's comments.

Councillor Ross commended the Officers for the report and expressed her support for the councils housing stock.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was Carried unanimously.

FOR: 37 Votes

Councillors

Beki Aldam	Colin Fryer	Martin Pearcy
Martin Baxendale	Lindsey Green	Steve Robinson
Natalie Bennett	Trevor Hall	Mattie Ross
Catherine Braun	Nick Hurst	Mark Ryder
Doina Cornell	Steve Hynd	Lucas Schoemaker
Kate Crews	George James	Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
Laurie Davies	Julie Job	Haydn Sutton
Stephen Davies	Haydn Jones	Brian Tipper
Trina Davis	John Jones	Ken Tucker
Robin Drury-Layfield	Norman Kay	Chloe Turner
Jonathan Edmunds	Jenny Miles	Rich Wilsher
Christopher Evans	Gill Oxley	
Helen Fenton	Lorraine Patrick	

AGAINST: 0 Votes

ABSTENTIONS: 0 Votes

RESOLVED That:

- a) The revised HRA revenue budget for 2022/23 and original budget 2023/24 are approved
- b) The movement to and from HRA balances and capital reserves as detailed in Appendix B and section 9 are approved
- c) That from 1 April 2023:
 - i. Social rents and affordable rents are increased by 7%, in line with national rent guidance
 - ii. Garage rents are increased by 7%

2022/23

iii. Landlord service charges are increased by 7%, except Independent Living Scheme charges and district heating charges which are increased as set out in Appendix A

iv. Shared ownership rents are increased by 7%

d) That the HRA Capital Programme for 2022/23 to 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix C, be included in the Council's Capital Programme.

Recommendations from Audit and Standards Committee

CL.066 Unified Code of Conduct

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the report and explained that Gloucestershire Monitoring Officers had worked together to create a unified Code of Conduct that would apply across all levels of government. He further explained that 16 Parish Councils had already adopted the code and asked Councillors to do the same.

The Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that many District Councillors were also members of a Town or Parish Council and the unified code would help to maintain the same standard across all tiers of local government.

Proposed by Councillor Studdert-Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Percy.

Councillor Davies welcomed the Unified Code of Conduct and encouraged Parish and Town Councils to adopt the new Unified Code.

Councillors Percy and Studdert-Kennedy echoed the comments above.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED to adopt the unified code of conduct.

CL.067 Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2023/24

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The council held a training event for Members in early February presented by LINK services, the councils treasury advisors.
- The councils capital plans and plans to repay debt through Minimum Revenue Position (MRP) led to a forecast of borrowing for the councils capital financing requirement. Table 6 on page 237 of the document pack detailed the changes of internal borrowing up to 2025/26.
- The liability benchmark on page 235 of the document pack was a new prudential indicator for this report. Comparisons with the Housing Revenue Account liability benchmark could be found at appendix F to the report.
- The treasury investments had performed well over the last 12 months as interest rates had risen.

Proposed by Councillor Studdert-Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Percy.

Councillor Turner thanked the Officers for the report and commended the Ethical Investment Policy. She highlighted the recent climate commitment roll backs from BP and Shell and urged the council to engage with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and the Brunel pension partnership to cease pursuing any further engagement and move to divest as soon as possible.

Councillor Percy echoed Councillor Turners comments.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To:

- a) **adopt the prudential indicators and limits for 2023/24 to 2025/26;**
- b) **approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24, and the treasury prudential indicators;**
- c) **approve the Investment Strategy 2023/24, and the detailed criteria for specified and non-specified investments; and**
- d) **approve the MRP Statement 2023/24**
- e) **approve the Ethical Investment Policy**

The meeting was adjourned for a 10 minute break, during which, Councillor Wilsher left the meeting.

CL.068 Decarbonisation of Stratford Park Leisure Centre, the Museum in the Park, Stroud and The Pulse, Dursley

The meeting was adjourned for a 10 minute break. During which, Councillor Wilsher left the meeting.

The Head of Property Services introduced the report and explained that the report was for the approval of heat pump installations at Stratford Park, The Museum in the Park and The Pulse. The current heating and ventilation plants had reached the end of their lifespan and therefore it was the right time to explore renewable energy sources. She then highlighted the following key points:

- The council had been successful in securing a grant of £4.69m from Salix, the delivery body for the governments public sector decarbonisation scheme. Further details of this could be found in section 3 of the report.
- Strategy and Resources Committee had recommended that council approve funding for 12% of the project which totalled £700k.
- Salix had estimated that the heat pumps would save approximately 732 tonnes of carbon per annum.
- The project would also present an opportunity to provide the Museum with its own heating system separate from the Leisure Centre.
- There would be a period of closure whilst the swap over of plant took place the quieter periods for both the Museum and the Leisure Centre were being targeted for this to take place, the estimated loss of revenue was detailed in table 3 on page 268 of the reports pack.
- The main project risks were set out in section 7 of the report which could be found on page 270.
- It was hoped that a Member Champion from the Community Services and Licensing Committee would join the project board and provide update on the projects at future committee meetings.

2022/23

Members of the Committee had the opportunity to ask technical questions of the Officers and consultant engineer. In response to queries it was confirmed that:

- the gas supplies at the sites would be capped off but infrastructure wouldn't be removed completely; so could be available, if required and suitable, for alternative fuel sources in the future
- The current recommendation was for air-source heat pumps however as detailed in paragraph 2.5 of the report, contractors would have the option to submit tenders for both ground-source and air-source heat pumps prices could then be compared. As ground source were expected to be more expensive a report would need to be brought back to Council if these were recommended and a larger budget was required.
- The current heating and ventilation plant is at the end of their life, action needed to be taken soon. It was also a requirement from central Government that all buildings should be decarbonised by 2035.
- The air-source heat pumps would generate a 1-1 output at minus 10 degrees.

Councillor Crews left the meeting.

In response to Councillor Cornell it was confirmed that tenderers would be asked to use the Social Value Portal where they would be scored on things such as use of local suppliers.

Councillor Sutton debated the use of ground-sourced heat pumps and how they would work in an area such as Stratford Park which had multiple underground springs.

Proposed by Councillor Aldam and seconded by Councillor Hall.

Councillors Davies, Turner, Hurst, and Hall commended the report.

Councillor Aldam thanked the Officers for the report.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To:

- a) **Add the decarbonisation of Stratford Park Leisure Centre, the Museum in the Park, Stroud and The Pulse, Dursley, to the Capital Programme and**
- b) **Authorise the Head of Property Services, in consultation with the Chair of Strategy and Resources, Chair of Community Services and Licensing, and the Strategic Director of Resources to procure and award the contract for the works**

CL.069 Ubico Shareholder Decision

The Chief Executive, as the Ubico Shareholder Representative, introduced the report and explained that Forest of Dean District Council sought to extend their contract with Ubico to include waste, recycling and street cleaning services.

Proposed by Councillor Turner and seconded by Councillor Drury-Layfield.

Councillors Drury-Layfield and Turner commended the report.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To authorise the Chief Executive in her role as Ubico Shareholder representative to approve the variation of the Ubico Partnership's contract with Forest of Dean District Council to add delivery of their Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning services from 2024.

CL.070 Continuation of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC)

The Chief Executive introduced the report and explained that they were asking for a further extension to the GEGJC whilst they finalised the details for its replacement.

In response to Councillor Kay, the Chief Executive confirmed that they were hoping to be able to bring a report back to Council in 6 months' time with a clear recommendation to move forward.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Braun explained the importance of the committee and encouraged Members to support the extension.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was Carried Unanimously.

RESOLVED

- a) That the GEGJC will continue to operate from 31 March 2023 for a further temporary period as agreed at the GEGJC meeting on 9 February 2023, and
- b) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive to agree the length of the extension and complete the appropriate legal documentation to allow the Inter Authority Agreement to be extended beyond 31 March 2023.

CL.071 CIVIC TIMETABLE

The Civic Timetable was circulated as part of the reports pack.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Schoemaker.

Councillor Laurie Davies left the meeting.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously

RESOLVED To approve the Civic Timetable for 2023/2024.

The meeting closed at 9.54 pm

Chair

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2023

Report Title	Interim Fleet Procurement Strategy - Ubico			
Purpose of Report	To update the committee on the intended method of Ubico fleet replacement over the next four years.			
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES to: i) Include £45k in the capital programme for HVO Tank ii) Increase the vehicle purchase budget in the capital programme by £152k to meet the higher cost of EV procurement as recommended by Environment Committee.			
Consultation and Feedback	Liaison with the CN2030 Team and guidance from the Energy Saving Trust			
Report Author	Michael Towson, Community Services Manager Email: michael.towson@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	To proceed with alternative options as laid out in the report.			
Risks	1) That the cost of HVO rises, creating pressure on revenue budgets. 2) That HVO supply is interrupted These risks are mitigated – see 7.6			
Background papers	None			
Appendices	Appendix A – HVO Fuel Briefing Paper SDC Feb 23			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Stroud District Council own the seventy-seven fleet vehicles that Ubico operate in the district. All of the vehicles are recorded on a rolling capital plan, with replacement cycles ranging from 5 to 10 years, depending on the vehicle type.
- 1.2 The capital funding is authorised within the usual Council reporting process. This assumes fleet replacement on a like for like basis. Any alteration requires additional capital investment to be sought.
- 1.3 In 2023/24 there are 24 vehicles due for renewal. Twelve are large refuse collection vehicles (RCVs), six are 7.5 tonne food waste vehicles, with the other six made up of three more variants. Trials are currently being conducted, to assess whether there is any prospect of round rationalisation on food waste.
- 1.4 SDC is committed to Carbon Neutral 2030, with the Council Plan (EC6.3) detailing a specific objective in relation to fleet; it commits to ‘increase the proportion of council and partner fleet vehicles powered by zero or low carbon technologies’.

- 1.5 Every Ubico vehicle replacement is reviewed to assess and determine operational need and available technologies. This report seeks the approval to formalise this review process.

2. FLEET ELECTRIFICATION TO DATE

- 2.1 As per the Members Briefing dated 22nd February 2022, a good start has been made on electrifying the Ubico fleet. Charging provision has been readied, albeit further investment will be required (see 6.6-6.8), with two EV vehicles already operational and investment set aside from 22/23, for a further four.
- 2.2 The existing EV vehicles are a car derived van, used by the building cleaning team and an industrial street sweeper.

3. ELECTRIC VEHICLE PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 The car derived van has been an excellent addition to the fleet. The street sweeper has been less successful, with a number of technical glitches leading to time off the road and recovery to the workshop.
- 3.2 The technology for industrial machines, is in its infancy and therefore being pioneers, comes with associated risks. Nonetheless, successful trials were undertaken prior to purchase, so the performance in the field is disappointing.
- 3.3 The experience of the above echoes the eRCV (electric RCV) trial undertaken. Whilst the trial illustrated the potential to use electric vehicles, the battery life was not sufficient to complete larger rounds.
- 3.4 This has reaffirmed the operational stance that eRCVs are currently more suited to urban environments where mileages tend to be lower and terrain is often flatter. This is reflected by the local authorities that have invested to date.
- 3.5 In more rural environments, such as Stroud, there is limited scope to do this. Tewkesbury Borough Council are going through a similar process and recommendations similar to those in this report, have been presented to Council.
- 3.6 Any vehicle malfunction or shortcoming, increases the risk of service failure, with repeated problems posing a reputational risk. Residents value the waste services they receive and there is a keenness to maintain high satisfaction levels.

4. ELECTRIC VEHICLE OPTIONS FOR 2023/24 REPLACEMENT

- 4.1 Most vehicles now have an electric option or alternative, although some remain too specialised in the short term.
- 4.2 Currently there is no off the shelf option for split back RCVs, used to conduct the twin stream recycling. This also applies to the existing food waste vehicles and the 4x4 vehicles used for awkward collections.
- 4.3 There is therefore potential to switch up to nine fleet vehicles to EV in 2023/24.

5. HYDROGEN FUEL CELLS

- 5.1 The first hydrogen fuel cell waste collection vehicle has been added to fleet in the Merseyside area.

- 5.2 The local authority has a partnership arrangement with a commercial partner to share refuelling infrastructure.
- 5.3 Indicative costs suggest each RCV would cost circa. £0.75m, with significant additional investment required to realise the correct refuelling setup.
- 5.4 It is too early to detail precise costings and the technology remains too new for consideration at this renewal.

6. FLEET PROCUREMENT – OPTIONS APPRAISAL AND RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 Table 1 illustrates a basic options appraisal for the replacement of Ubico fleet in line with the capital replacement plan.

Table 1 – Options for Ubico Fleet Procurement

Option 1 – Do nothing; procure diesel fleet for all vehicles
Option 2 – Procure exclusively EV fleet, unless model variants aren't available
Option 3 – Continue to invest in EV fleet where it doesn't represent a service risk and take steps to ensure a smooth transition to carbon neutrality, whilst safeguarding operational performance

- 6.2 Given previous commitments option 1, isn't feasible. It won't generate carbon savings and will severely hinder the ambitions of our CN2030 strategy.
- 6.3 Option 2 remains aspirational. Moving to EV fleet too quickly risks operational failure. There isn't sufficient surety to ensure vehicle range, especially considering the topography of the district. Battery degradation also poses a risk, especially in the latter years of the vehicle life. To assure service, reserve diesel fleet would be required, essentially double covering.
- 6.4 This leaves option 3 as the most prudent. Weighing up our CN2030 commitments, advice from the fleet management team at Ubico, our operational experience with EV vehicles and the risks associated with service failure, there is an important balance to be struck between decarbonising fleet and ensuring the vehicle specification. The Environment Committee, at their meeting on the 30 March 2023, agreed to proceed with the fleet procurement as follows:
- Light vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes – wherever possible replace with an EV option.
 - Vehicles over 3.5 tonnes – assess EV opportunities and consider a switch to EV, utilising extensive vehicle trials to evaluate the operational suitability. If EV is considered to present an operational risk, purchase the latest Euro 6 standard vehicles and potentially switch to the use of cleaner fuels i.e. HVO (see section 7)
- 6.5 Applying this strategy for the 2023/24 renewal cycle will focus the switch to EV on five vehicles. One car derived van and four 3.5 tonne cage tippers, used on the streets/grounds service. Subject to operational trials, this will require an additional investment of £152k and generate carbon savings of circa. 36 tonnes p.a.
- 6.6 However, this further investment in EV fleet also requires an upgrade to the supply capacity from the grid. Currently the depot is supplied with 69 KVA, which is sufficient to supply the six vehicles already funded.
- 6.7 To simultaneously power the additional five vehicles highlighted in 6.5, SDC will need to engage the national grid to increase the supply and/or source alternative solutions.

Property Services via Facilities Management are already engaged in this process, which may include a future business case for photovoltaic (PV) cells with solar batteries, added to the roof of the depot in Gossington.

6.8 Further alternatives, such as off site charging, will also be considered.

7. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO)

- 7.1 HVO is an alternative to traditional B7 diesel. It is a second-generation biofuel, which can be used as a direct replacement for diesel, being approved for use by manufacturers and requiring no vehicle modification whatsoever.
- 7.2 The introduction of HVO for use with the diesel powered vehicles on fleet, will allow an additional transitional step to the EV journey.
- 7.3 An additional briefing paper on HVO is attached as Appendix A. This has been written by the Head of Fleet Operations at Ubico.
- 7.4 In summary the use of HVO reduces 'well to wheel' carbon emissions by 80-90%. Whilst it may not be a long-term solution that removes particulate pollution, it is viewed as an appropriate stepping stone to carbon neutrality. This was reflected to SDC officers in a seminar conducted by the Energy Saving Trust.
- 7.5 As with the transition to EV, HVO does come at a premium. The current price differential between HVO and diesel has been inflated in line with supply disruption, partially created by the war in Ukraine.
- 7.6 Any risks associated with supply, are completely mitigated by the ability to switch between fuels without the requirement for modification. Therefore, the use of HVO comes with little risk to service provision, albeit a switch back to B7 diesel may be seen as a retrograde step.
- 7.7 Based on a representative figure of 21.8 pence above the price of diesel per litre and calculating using the actual fleet mileage figures for 2021/22, this would equate to an additional revenue cost of £82k p.a.
- 7.8 However, at the time of writing price differentials have changed quickly, exacerbated by the decreasing cost of diesel. Current prices, which illustrate a differential of 57 pence per litre, equates to an additional revenue spend of £215k p.a. Whilst there is an expectation that differentials will return to previous ranges, of between 15 and 26 pence per litre, this will be driven by market forces.
- 7.9 For 2023/24 the budget for diesel on the Ubico contract has been based on a diesel price of 155 pence per litre. This means that some of the price differential has already been accounted for in the approved base budget. Therefore in 2023/24, based on the very latest figures, an additional revenue budget of circa. £110k would be required for the switch. In future years, based on the range expectation, the additional cost of using HVO will be between £57k and £215k.
- 7.10 A full site survey will be required, but the use of HVO is also likely to require a new fuel tank, with a one-off capital cost of £45k. The vast majority of the fleet will be able to operate on HVO, but diesel will still be used on fleet that is not compatible, or for which there is no manufacturer agreement.

- 7.11 The carbon savings for HVO are considerable. Calculating on the same mileage figures and assessing the existing fleet for suitability, it's estimated to reduce total carbon emissions by 1,049 tonnes p.a.
- 7.12 In terms of carbon payback this will maximise and front load carbon savings, well beyond the equivalent financial investment in eRCVs. Based on a typical RCV round in the district, an eRCV would achieve a saving of approximately 41 tonnes p.a.
- 7.13 In light of the impressive carbon savings and recognising that HVO is a genuine transitional fuel, it is also recommended that SDC commence the use of HVO in Ubico fleet, wherever possible. This change is recommended to take place by the summer/autumn of 2023.

Future Potential to Retrofit Vehicles with EV Technology

- 7.14 EV Technology continues to develop rapidly. Should we proceed to purchase euro 6 emission RCV's in 23/24, as per the recommendation, there is a future option to retrofit the chassis of these vehicles, applying an electric drivetrain to make them 100% electric.
- 7.15 This use of so called donor vehicles is something that is happening locally, with RVS in Dursley, undertaking some of this work. The costs for retrofit are below that of a new eRCV, but without the more extensive warranty support.

Driver Behaviours

- 7.16 Using vehicle telematics to improve driver behaviours has already proved beneficial on other Ubico contracts and SDC are keen to introduce it.
- 7.17 Installing connected fleet management software, 'Ubiconnect', it utilises a 'safe driving assistant' providing real-time in-cab feedback and coaching to drivers whilst they are on the road. This is supported by the Ubico Driver Liaison Manager, who closely analyses data provided by the software and uses this to help improve driver performance.
- 7.18 The software has helped reduce costs and increase operational efficiency, delivering savings in carbon and improved air quality. Driver behaviours impact fuel use and can have a large bearing on tyre wear. A new tyre policy has already been introduced, achieving carbon savings across Ubico of around 96 tonnes, whilst the driver behaviours module has delivered carbon savings of 90 tonnes in the Cotswold DC area.
- 7.19 SDC will ready new fleet for introduction of this software.

8. SUMMARY

- 8.1 Ubico and the SDC Multi Service Team are keen to decarbonise fleet. However, there is a keenness to transition in such a way as to not risk service provision.
- 8.2 It is therefore recommended to continue with a step change approach, assessing vehicle procurement on a case by case basis, to ensure we have the best available vehicles to do the job.
- 8.3 In the short term this means switching smaller fleet vehicles to electric, whilst using cleaner fuels (HVO) for larger vehicles.
- 8.4 In 2023/24 applying this strategy will switch up to 20% of the vehicles due for replacement, to electric. EV adoption for critical services will increase further as technology develops within the industrial sector.

9. IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Financial Implications

There are financial implications arising from this report. A proposal of £197k increase in the capital programme for a HVO Tank and additional costs associated with EV vehicle procurement. Additional capital costs will be met through borrowing as with the wider Ubico capital programme. As outlined in the report, the use of HVO fuels will result in additional revenue cost as it is more expensive than conventional diesel. This cost will be met in 2023/24 through the waste and recycling reserve with future years requiring an update to the Medium Term Financial Plan. Members will be updated on the revisions made to the budget as a result of the use of this fuel.

Adele Rudkin, Accountant

Tel: 01453 754109 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk

9.2 Legal Implications

The Council will need to comply with its Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015 when undertaking the procurement of new vehicles referred to in this report.

All contracts need to be prepared by or reviewed by One Legal prior to signature.

Donna Ruck, Senior Lawyer

Tel: 01684 272696 Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

9.3 Equality Implications

There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision.

9.4 Environmental Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications throughout with specific detail provided in 7.11-7.13.



Ubico Limited

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Option in the Stroud District Council Diesel Vehicle Fleet

Report: Briefing Paper

To: Mike Towson – Stroud District Council

From: Ian Bourton - Head of Fleet Operations, Ubico

1. Background

- 1.1. During recent discussions with Mike Towson at Stroud District Council (SDC) concerning alternative fuels, Ian Bourton, Head of Fleet Operations at Ubico presented opportunities for SDC to reduce their carbon footprint within their existing and future vehicle fleet.
- 1.2. Discussions were based around industry knowledge and the current expectations concerning battery electric vehicles and first and second generation bio-fuels.
- 1.3. Ubico talked through various options for SDC where its geographical location, infrastructure and nature of the operational activities currently prevent the use of zero emission battery electric vehicles. Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) was of particular interest to SDC due to its 'drop in fuel' capabilities and well to wheel greenhouse gas emissions savings that could be realised within a significant part of both the existing vehicle fleet and future vehicle fleet, relatively quickly. Ubico's Head of Fleet Operations was requested to produce a briefing paper document on HVO use for the SDC vehicle fleet.
- 1.4. This is that document, and explores the option of introducing HVO (a second generation bio-fuel) into SDC operational fleet of diesel vehicles.
- 1.5. Ubico currently operates 77 road registered vehicles and 76 trailers and plant to deliver front line services for SDC. The vast majority of SDC road registered vehicles currently run and operate on diesel fuel.

Appendix A

- 1.6. The majority of heavy use diesel vehicles owned by SDC and operated by Ubico use the latest Euro 6 engine technology. Euro 6 is the name given to a set of limits for harmful emissions produced by a vehicles internal combustion engines. The Euro 6 limits are the most stringent in reducing harmful emissions from engines that are available today, when burning traditional mineral B7 diesel.
- 1.7. In 2021/22 SDC used 412,838 litres of fuel. Diesel fuel being the most significant fuel at 397,514 litres. To give a sense of volume, using the UK Government GHG Conversion factors for 2021/22, this would calculate to approximately 1259 tonnes of CO₂e emissions per year.
- 1.8. It is widely accepted by experts that emissions created by petroleum based mineral B7 diesel (traditional diesel) used in all engines have a negative effect on air quality, are harmful to human health and to the environment.
- 1.9. Two biofuels potentially available to SDC to operate the diesel vehicle fleet are Traditional FAME biodiesel (Fatty Acid Methyl Ester) – a first generation bio-diesel; and HVO bio-fuel (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) – a second generation bio-fuel.
- 1.10. Biodiesels and bio-fuels are a replacement for traditional mineral B7 diesel fuel. Biodiesels and bio-fuels are produced from any carbon source that is easy to replace. Natural vegetable oils and fats are probably the most well-known example or renewable organic materials used to create bio-fuels.
- 1.11. Biodiesel and bio-fuel is a liquid fuel produced from these renewable organic materials.
- 1.12. Biomethane is a renewable equivalent biofuel for vehicles that run on natural gas. None of SDC vehicles currently run on natural gas. Therefore, Bio-methane is not considered in this document.
- 1.13. Biodiesels and bio-fuels used in vehicles burn much cleaner than petroleum based diesel fuel and produce lower harmful emissions.
- 1.14. FAME biodiesel and HVO bio-fuel are different products even though they can both be produced from renewable organic materials. FAME is a first generation biodiesel and can retain moisture in its production process that when used in higher blended percentages may not be ideal for modern engines. FAME is also not supported by the majority of the manufacturers of vehicles that SDC own.

- 1.15. HVO is a second generation bio-fuel produced where contaminants are removed during the hydrogen saturation production process creating the same chemical composition as traditional mineral diesel.
- 1.16. The use of Palm oil in biofuels is believed to have been a driver for deforestation of tropical rain forests around the world. Deforestation can have a large negative impact on greenhouse gasses and harmful to wildlife. Biofuels can be manufactured from Palm oil, but it doesn't have to be and there are manufacturers that do not use Palm oil in the manufacture of bio-fuel.
- 1.17. The EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED ii) bans all Palm oil in biofuels in stages, by 2030. Ubico only source and use HVO that has not been manufactured from Palm oil.
- 1.18. The production of renewable fuels is highly complex and environmental performance varies significantly with feedstock. Ubico only use biofuels that are produced from renewable feedstocks.
- 1.19. Hydrogen is not a naturally forming substance and has to be manufactured. In the case of HVO, Ubico would seek to only use procurement routes where the hydrogen had been manufactured from renewable technologies.
- 1.20. UK legal requirements for current traditional mineral B7 diesel is a 7% FAME blend (known as B7, which means the fuel is made up of a *maximum* 7% FAME and 93% mineral diesel)
- 1.21. The potential problems associated with FAME biodiesel and the lack of vehicle manufacturer support of the existing SDC vehicle fleet make up, effectively meaning that FAME biodiesel in any high blend above 7% should not be considered by SDC or Ubico as a replacement for traditional mineral B7 diesel. The carbon saving impact would therefore be nil, unless SDC decided manufacturers vehicle warranties should be dispensed with, which would present a significant financial and resource risk.

2. HVO Bio-fuel

- 2.1 HVO biofuel is a paraffinic based liquid diesel fuel. It is a 'drop in fuel' - a fuel that doesn't require any adaption to the operational fuel infrastructure, the vehicle (where manufacturer use is approved) or the vehicle maintenance regime.

Appendix A

- 2.2 The hydrogen treatment removes all oxygen from the oil; this gives the advantage of avoiding oxidation. HVO that Ubico use is required to meet specific European and UK fuel specifications (EN15940).
- 2.3 The feedstock can be the same or of a lower quality than FAME biodiesel enhancing sustainability.
- 2.4 The temperature level that HVO bio-fuel can still operate normally in is less of a consideration than FAME bio-fuel. HVO operates at temperatures of less than minus 20°C.
- 2.5 HVO is readily available in formats that have not included Palm oil in its manufacture. Manufacturers can identify the origin of the raw material to verify the credentials of the HVO product and provide Zemo or similarly approved Renewable Fuel Declarations (RFD) Certificates.
- 2.6 The UK market and vehicles using HVO is relatively small, but increasing. However, HVO has been in use regularly over the past five years in Europe and has increased by 50% globally over the past 5 years.
- 2.7 The Governments renewable transport fuel statistics (Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation statistics: Period 10 (2017/2018), report 6 [DfT 2019]) show that the average GHG emission savings using pure HVO biofuel (HVO100) is 91% when compared to petroleum based mineral diesel. 91% is the total 'well to wheel' saving including feedstock, production and tail pipe emissions.
SDC should be confident in saving a total of between 80% and 90% well to wheel greenhouse gas emissions by vehicles using HVO as their fuel. Where a net zero carbon is a future requirement, the remaining carbon could be subject to any future SDC carbon offsetting programme.
- 2.8 Not all manufacturers approve the use of HVO, but a significant number of SDC fleet do. The non-approval does not necessarily mean that that HVO has been tested and failed, but more likely that certain manufacturers have not tested the product at all, and this will come in the future. It is important to note that non approval is often because the test procedure for the manufacturers to approve everything is extremely time-consuming and expensive. Recent models of Mercedes, Volvo, Dennis Eagle, DAF, Ford, Citroen, Peugeot, Isuzu and Renault are makes of vehicles that SDC operate that have been approved for HVO use, as

long as it meets EN15940 standards. Fuso vehicles have not yet been approved for HVO use.

- 2.9 To control this risk a separate fuel tank and systems would be required for all vehicles that could operate on HVO. HVO use vehicles would continue to use the existing 30,000 litre bulk fuel tanks located at Gossington Depot. The 6000 litre bulk fuel tank would need to be increased in size to accommodate Non-HVO use. The dispensing of the correct fuel would be controlled by the fuel management system.

3. HVO Financials

- 3.1 HVO carries a premium over traditional B7 diesel. Over the previous four years the price of HVO has varied when compared to traditional B7 diesel. During these four years the price differential varied between 15p and 26p per litre. The recent war in Ukraine has pushed this margin up to 53p per litre (31.01.2023). There is an expectation this will return to more normal premiums, or even lower when the war is over.

- 3.2 For SDC there would be a Capital expenditure to purchase a bulk fuel tank and locate it in Gossington Depot. An additional 20,000 litre fuel tank, fuel pumps, telemetry points, dispensing ID and integration with the existing fuel management software system (Triscan) would attract a budget price of approx. £45,000.

- 3.3 Financial impact:

	ppl	Fuel Used (Litre)	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Estimated Cap Ex - Fuel tank etc		397,514	£45,000.00		
HVO Min Cost Differential	0.15		£59,627.10	£62,012.18	Year 2 + Inflation
Total Cost			£104,627.10	£62,012.18	Year 2 + Inflation
HVO Max Cost Differential	0.26		£103,353.64	£107,487.79	Year 2 + Inflation
Total Cost			£148,353.64	£107,487.79	Year 2 + Inflation
HVO Current Inflated Cost Differential	0.53		£210,682.42	£174,109.72	Year 2 + Inflation
Total Cost			£255,682.42	£174,109.72	Year 2 + Inflation

Appendix A

Year 2 Hypothesis Inflation	4%				
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- 3.4 Traditional B7 Diesel and HVO prices are subject to constant variation and the cost differential is not a certainty.
- 3.5 There is the opportunity to use the existing 6000 litre fuel tank for storing the existing requirement of traditional B7 diesel that is already installed on site that previously held the now redundant rebated fuel (red diesel). This would require regular deliveries of fuel and may attract a 'small load charge' premium on each delivery and constant monitoring.
- 3.6 Lessening the impact on price differentials is possible with a programme of eco-driver performance utilising on-vehicle telematics systems. This will create a fuel saving, further environmental savings and reduce the net effect of increased HVO cost. This programme is highly recommended and has been proven successful.

4.0 Assumptions

- 4.1 Decisions and discussions with Ubico on alternative fuels (bio, electric, hydrogen, etc) form part of the wider SDC strategy on carbon and air pollution reduction. SDC will decide the relevance, appropriate infrastructure and achievability of SDC targets.
- 4.2 Ubico's expertise on vehicle fleet will interact and inform part of SDC environmental team/expert's decisions of SDC's route to nett carbon.
- 4.3 Governance and approvals of any Ubico recommendations on vehicles and alternative fuels remains with SDC environmental team/experts to ratify that it meets with SDC's vision and future infrastructure.

5.0 Options

Option 1

Do nothing. Continue to use traditional mineral bio-fuel, up to 7% FAME. Publically relying on the fact that majority of SDC operated vehicles will be the latest 'Euro 6' engine technology that is available today and SDC will embark on a programme of

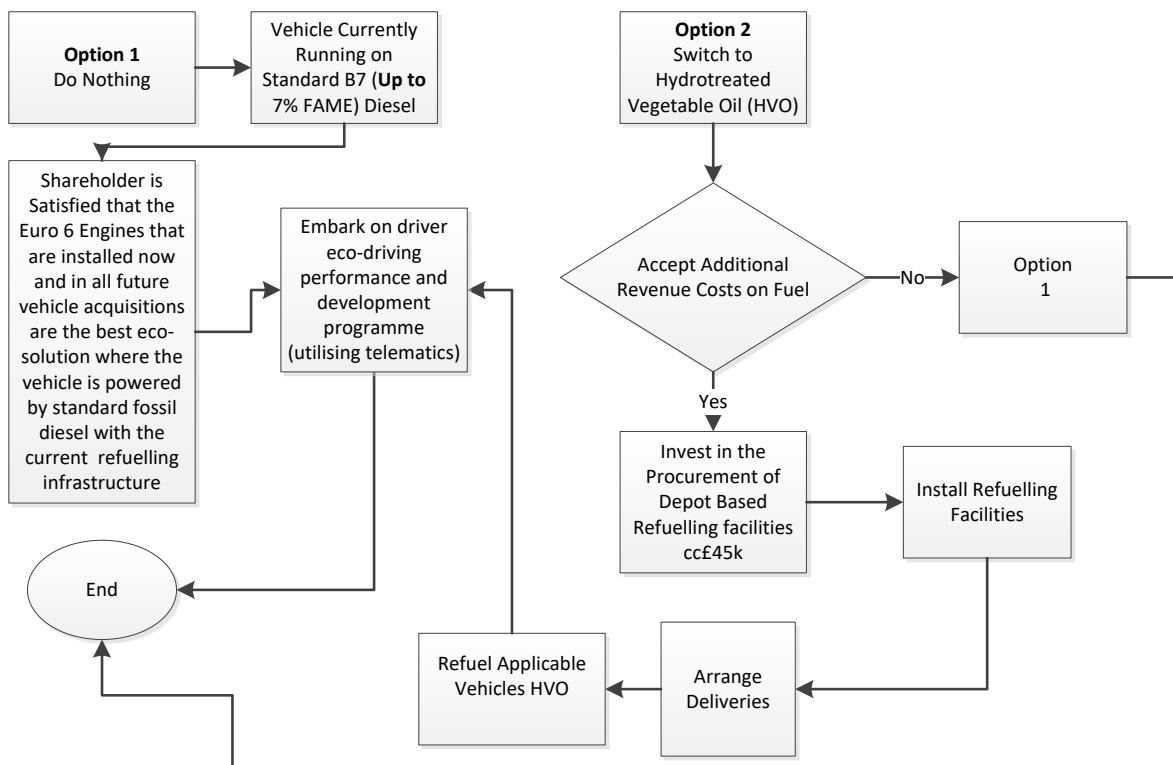
improving driver environmental performance by utilising vehicle telematics systems and managing driver development programmes in eco-driving techniques.

Option 2

Switch to HVO bio-fuel where possible providing a nett 80%-90% (plus) saving on ‘wheel to well’ greenhouse gas emissions, accepting the additional expenditure required in section 4 above. Option 2 would have a significant effect on reducing nett greenhouse gases. HVO is available as a ‘drop in’ fuel with no changes required to the infrastructure or exiting manufacturer approved vehicles, but is usually (pre Ukraine war) an average of cc15-20% more expensive to purchase, having a negative effect on revenue budgets. Mitigate some of the increased HVO costs is possible by managing the environmental performance of drivers, which reduces fuel consumption.

Author	Ian Bourton, Head of Fleet Operations, Ubico Email: Feb 2023
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OPTIONS FLOW CHART



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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY 27 APRIL 2023

Report Title	Revised Complaints & Feedback Policy			
Purpose of Report	To consider the revised Complaints & Feedback Policy			
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES: (a) To adopt the revised Complaints & Feedback Policy; and (b) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Resources to approve minor changes to the policy as recommended by Audit and Standards Committee.			
Consultation and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Policy & Governance Team • Community Access & Engagement Manager • Strategic Leadership Team • Leadership & Management Team • Social Housing Services • Involved Tenants Group • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group • All Group Leaders 			
Report Author	Owen Chandler, Information Governance Officer Email: owen.chandler@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	None			
Background Papers	Housing Ombudsman's Complaint handling code April 2022 Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's 'Effective complaint handling for local authorities' May 2022 2019 Corporate Complaints Policy & Procedure			
Appendices	Appendix A: 2023 Complaints & Feedback Policy v2.5 Appendix B: 2023 Complaints Process Flowchart Appendix C: Equality Analysis Form			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	Yes	No

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 18 April 2023 the Audit & Standards Committee considered the revised Complaints & Feedback Policy and resolved to recommend them to Council for adoption. The report can be accessed [here](#).
- 1.2 In 2019 the current '[Corporate Complaints Policy & Procedure](#)' document was put into operational use. This policy was designed for feedback received from external stakeholders such as customers, service users and Council social housing tenants. The revised policy continues to follow this designation. While this is predominantly an

operational policy, as one of our key customer facing documents it is important that members are aware of this review and confirm their support for the revised policy.

- 1.3 Since the introduction of the 2019 policy there have been changes to officer roles and general updates to complaints best practice which needed to be reflected in the operational policy.

This review also provided the opportunity to ensure that as a key customer facing document the Complaints & Feedback policy reflects our organisational Values and Behaviours and Council service standards. This updated One Council policy provides a useful reference document for all stakeholders and facilitates a consistent level of service across the whole Council.

2. KEY CHANGES

- 2.1 The revised Complaints and Feedback Policy can be found at Appendix A. Although the principles of the complaints & feedback policy remain unchanged, it has been updated to reflect current best practice of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman.
- 2.2 The revised complaints & feedback policy has been widely consulted throughout the authority with key stakeholders. The main changes are detailed below.
- 2.3 **Policy name changed from 'Corporate Complaints Policy & Procedure' to 'Complaints & Feedback Policy'**. This change has been made to reflect that we are interested in all feedback and removing 'corporate' makes it clearer that the policy is for our customers and not just an internal document.
- 2.4 **Standardised response times to stage 2 complaints.** All stage 2 complaints now have up to 20 working days to send a final response. This homogenises the time to respond across all complaints leading to a consistent service and a predictable experience for complainants. For reference, Housing and Information Governance complaints already had 20 working days to respond, this change brings our other complaints in line with these. We are still well within the local government ombudsman's recommendation that local authorities should be allowed "up to 12 weeks for a full response to the complaint".
- 2.5 **Introduced a peer-review for stage 2 complaints.** We know that when a complaint is made, our customers expect a fair and thorough investigation. While we're confident this has always been the case, we wanted to evidence this as part of our stage 2 process. As such, any stage 2 complaint responses will be reviewed by a senior officer from a service area not related to the complaint. This peer-review will check that the responses are clearly written and that any arguments or findings are fair and accurate. The senior officer carrying out the peer review has the authority to request the originating service amend the complaint response if it fails any of these tests.
- 2.6 **Delegation to Strategic Director of Resources** - We have added in a final section to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Resources to approve minor changes such as improved analysis of all complaints and the reporting of low-level complaints which do not reach the stage 1 threshold. These changes will help us better understand the needs of our customers and deploy resources to the areas that matter the most to our communities.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 **Technology Improvements.** We are in a period of significant technological improvement through the 'fit for the future' programme, and we want to improve our policies and procedures as new technologies and systems are developed. This revised policy allows us

to work towards controlled improvements to reporting and analysis as part of the programme.

- 3.2 **Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.** Given its relevance to the Complaints & Feedback policy, a separate review is being undertaken of our suite of policies related to unacceptable behaviour. This will assess our existing policies to ensure they reflect the increasing prevalence of digital unacceptable behaviour and collate them into a single document where applicable. The policies affected are: unacceptable behaviour by complainants, violence and aggression towards staff, personal security register, and lone working.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

No financial implications are anticipated from this new policy.

Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources

Tel: 01453 754115

Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk

4.2 Legal Implications

Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code ("the Code") forms part of the membership obligations set out in the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

The Code seeks to be prescriptive only where the Ombudsman believes clear and consistent practice by all landlords is essential. The Ombudsman recognises that each landlord will need to adapt its complaints policy and processes to meet the needs of its residents. Consequently, there are some areas where a landlord can use its discretion, either for all residents or on a case-by-case basis, to achieve best practice in complaint handling.

Landlords will be asked to self-assess against the Code annually on a 'comply or explain' basis and publish this on their website. Non-compliance could result in the Ombudsman issuing complaint handling failure orders.

One Legal

Tel: 01684 272 691

Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

4.3 Equality Implications

An EIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and no equality implications arise.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

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Complaints & Feedback Policy

April 2023

Corporate Policy &
Governance

Stroud District Council
Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf
Stroud
GL5 4UB

Email: customer.services@stroud.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/>

Telephone: 01453 766321

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Introduction

Stroud District Council is committed to delivering high-quality local services to support our communities, protect our environment and support the local economy. To help us achieve these goals we welcome your feedback and want to know when we get things right and when things go wrong.

This policy and procedure sets out how you can provide feedback and what we do with it. We have also adopted a [set of service standards](#) so you know what to expect whenever you contact us.

We follow the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's [best practice for complaints handling](#) and the Housing Ombudsman's [complaint handling code](#).

When you give feedback we will:

- Listen to you, understand your point of view and treat you with respect
- Keep you updated if we can't resolve something straight away
- Be honest and explain our decisions
- Put things right if something has gone wrong
- Learn from your feedback and continually improve our services

Just as we will treat you with respect and listen to your feedback, we expect you to respect and listen to us and understand what we can and can't deal with. We may not always be able to deliver what you want us to, but we will make sure we explain why if this is the case.

Tips for making a complaint and giving feedback

- Try to keep your feedback brief and to the point with the key events and what happened
- Tell us the dates and times in the order they happened
- Let us know if anyone else was involved including names, job titles or identifying characteristics
- Let us know what your desired outcome is and if you would like a response

How can you make a complaint and give feedback?

You can send feedback through any of our contact channels. When you get in touch, please let us know your preferences for how we should contact you.

- Online: stroud.gov.uk/contactus
- Email: customer.services@stroud.gov.uk
- Phone: 01453 766 321¹
- Post: Stroud District Council, Ebley Mill, Stroud, GL5 4UB
- Text: 07851 729 229 (start your message with the word: COUNCIL²)
- Face to Face with our community colleagues or by arranging an appointment to visit us at our main offices at [Ebley Mill](#)

¹ Call charges may apply

² Messaging charges may apply

Appendix A

- Social Media:
 - Facebook: @strouddistrictcouncil
 - Twitter: @strouddc

What can we deal with under this policy?

There is a difference between the services that Town & Parish, District and County Councils provide. This policy covers feedback about the following Stroud District Council services:

- Animal Welfare
- Anti-Social Behaviour:
 - Fly Tipping
 - Dog Fouling
 - Littering
 - Noise
 - Graffiti
 - Abandoned Vehicles
- Building Control
- Business Rates
- Council Carparks
- Council owned Social Housing
- Council Tax
- District Council Staff
- District, Town and Parish Councillors
- Environmental Health
- Elections and Voting
- Food Safety
- Homelessness and Housing Advice
- Housing Benefit
- Licensing
- Pest Control
- Planning Applications & Policy
- Public Parks and Open Spaces
- Public Toilets
- Street Cleaning
- Waste & Recycling Collection

There are some exceptions

As public services are very varied, you might find that what you want to discuss with us has a separate regulation or may be the responsibility of another organisation. If you contact us about something that has its own procedure or is the responsibility of someone else, we'll let you know.

Common District Council issues that may have their own procedures are:

- **Planning appeals** go through the [Planning Inspectorate](#)
- Complaints made about **Council Staff** may be managed under internal disciplinary policies depending on the issues raised
- Complaints about **District or Town & Parish Councillors** will be investigated under the Nolan Principles and the [Council Code of Conduct](#) and are managed by the Monitoring Officer of the Council
- **Council Tax and Business Rates** may need to be escalated to the [Valuation Tribunal](#) rather than the Local Government Ombudsman depending on your complaint
- **Freedom of Information, Environmental Information Regulations and Data Protection** have an internal review process managed by the Data Protection Officer of the Council and regulated by the [Information Commissioner's Office](#)

Gloucestershire County Council has their own [complaints page](#) and they can help with:

- Adult Social Care
- Children and Young people's Services including Social Care
- Highways (Roads, Roadworks, Potholes etc.)
- Parked Vehicles breaking parking rules (e.g. double yellows)
- Household Recycling Centres
- Libraries
- County Councillors
- Education

If you have an issue with any **benefits** other than Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit, you'll need to contact the [Department of Work and Pensions](#).

For any feedback for **Town & Parish Councils** that isn't related to a Councillor, please [contact the Council directly](#).

Feedback about **schools, hospitals and private businesses** should be made directly to the organisation.

Vehicles on a road that are a hazard should be directed to the police by calling 101.

A matter related to the interpretation of the law or other **legal action** can only be resolved through the legal system and therefore won't be treated as a complaint.

Insurance claims are dealt with on their own merits and not as a complaint.

What is a complaint?

We view complaints as an opportunity to improve and we want to make giving feedback easy. We will treat a complaint generally as "*an expression of dissatisfaction about a Council service that requires a response.*"³

Wherever possible we will try to resolve a valid complaint straight away. When we can't do that, we will agree with you further actions and timescales. We explain the complaints process in the [Our Complaints Procedure](#) section of this document. For all complaints we will record what went wrong and how we put things right to learn and improve.

We can decide to escalate an issue to a complaint if there are signs of dissatisfaction. Likewise we can decide to not treat something as a complaint if it is not valid. If we decide to not accept a complaint, we will give you a detailed explanation why and what your options are in a response.

Where we have followed our policies and regulations correctly but there is a difference of opinion, including policy disagreements, it is unlikely to be treated as a complaint.

³ For housing complaints the exact definition used is: 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'

Compliments and comments

We want to know when we've delivered a good service and you can make a comment or compliment through any of our contact channels. Just like a complaint, we will listen to your feedback and learn from it to keep delivering the services you value.

When you send us a compliment or comment we will direct it to the service area it best relates to. There, a manager will assess the feedback and investigate any further actions needed.

If you have asked us for a response to your compliment or comment, we will make sure we reply to you within **10 working days**.

How we will learn from your complaints and feedback

When we receive your feedback, as well as resolving your enquiry we will use the information you've given us to:

- Find the root cause of events and make improvements
- Monitor performance to ensure we're improving
- Identify patterns in the feedback we receive and investigate trends
- Publicly report our complaint and compliment performance annually
- Learn from our successes and failures

Using support to make a complaint or give feedback

We understand that everyone is different, and you may want or need support to give feedback. We will support accessibility requirements where we can such as large print, braille, minicom facilities, physical access to buildings and interpretation services.

You may also ask a third party or representative to help you such as a friend, family member, Citizens Advice, legal adviser or your local Councillor or MP.

In these circumstances you must give explicit consent for them to support you with your enquiry. You can provide consent over the phone after answering security questions or you can give it in writing. Your consent is only applicable for the specific issue you have raised. Any further matters will need a new consent. We will record the consent on our system until your enquiry is resolved. If consent is written, the third party representative must be able to provide a copy to enable us to communicate with them.

Time limitations on making a complaint and giving feedback

In general, making a complaint or giving feedback should be done as quickly as possible.

It is unlikely we will accept feedback that is over 12 months old as it can be impractical or impossible to effectively investigate and form a fair conclusion. In exceptional cases individual circumstances will be considered and we will inform you if we believe we can investigate the matter you raise.

Both the Housing and Local Government Ombudsman are also unlikely to take on a complaint which is over 12 months old.

Equality monitoring

We want to ensure that we are providing an equitable service to all our customers. As part of our feedback process we may ask you if your enquiry is related to any of the protected equality characteristics. Providing this information is voluntary, and your choice will not affect how your complaint is investigated. We would encourage you to provide this data as it helps us assess if we're reaching all the District's residents, that our services are appropriate for everyone's needs and that any shortfalls are investigated and resolved.

How we manage your data

All feedback received will be processed under UK Data Protection legislation⁴. When feedback is received it may need to be discussed with relevant Council service areas and external third parties to resolve any issues and implement corrective actions. Please do not supply any information you are not comfortable being shared in this way. We may contact you for more information if it is needed to resolve your feedback.

After the closure of your feedback your details including your name and contact details will be kept for up to two years, or longer if there is a statutory requirement, to allow us to put in place corrective actions and in case you contact us again about a related issue.

We ask that any feedback is given using a real name and contact information. While you can make a complaint anonymously, it is unlikely that we can investigate it thoroughly and put in place corrective actions without having contact with an individual. Anonymous complaints will be assessed to decide if there is adequate evidence to investigate.

Unacceptable behaviour

We understand that when things go wrong it can often be personal and emotional. We will respect and listen to your feedback to resolve your concerns; however we will not accept any threatening, abusive or persistently vexatious behaviour made towards anyone involved with the Council. We likewise expect anyone working for the Council and Councillors to treat you with respect.

We have a dedicated policy which explains how we will manage unacceptable behaviour across our services.

⁴ The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR 2021

Our complaints procedure

When a complaint is made, depending on the situation we'll deal with it in one of two ways.

- If you contact us to say something has gone wrong and we are confident we can fix the issue as part of our routine services, we will let you know right away what will happen and when the matter will be resolved. Much of the contact with the Council is dealt with this way as we appreciate that most of us want to quickly fix a problem and make sure it doesn't happen again.

For these types of complaints we may need time to fix the problem and we'll agree with you when we'll get back in touch to let you know when it's sorted.

- If you contact us and we can't confidently fix the issue as part of our routine services, or you have asked for a formal response, we will begin an investigation into your complaint by following our [Stage 1 process](#).

However your complaint is managed we will make sure we explain our understanding of your complaint, what you expect as an outcome and agree between us the actions that will be taken. At all stages we will ensure any parties related to the complaint have adequate opportunity to comment before a final decision is made.

We will also ensure each complaint is dealt with on its own merits and reviewed in an impartial manner. We will consider all the information and evidence carefully and only disclose your complaint as necessary to investigate the matter.

If after the stage 1 process you are dissatisfied with our decision, you can escalate your complaint to stage 2 within one month of our stage 1 decision. If you request escalation after this time the Council may require you to start the complaints process again.

At stage 2 we will review the stage 1 response and assess whether we have robustly investigated the complaint and responded appropriately. If after stage 2 you are still dissatisfied, you may have the right to escalate your complaint to a relevant [Ombudsman](#).

If a valid complaint has no prospect of resolution, such as where it is demanding actions that the Council cannot take, we may refer the complainant to an Ombudsman service without completing all stages of this complaint process.

Sometimes we will reach a decision which agrees with part of your complaint but not all of it. If this is the case, we will say that your complaint is 'partially upheld'. If this happens, we will give clear reasons for our decisions supported by relevant policy, law and good practice. You may still have the right to escalate the part we haven't upheld to the next stage. If your complaint goes to an Ombudsman, they may also only partially uphold your complaint.

As a public body we are dedicated to using public funds responsibly and will only issue financial compensation if required to as statutory payments or in exceptional circumstances. The Council's Social Housing function has a [compensation policy](#), this policy is only applicable to relevant housing complaints.

Stage 1 Process

When a complaint is received, we will record the complaint in our complaints system. The complaint will be allocated to the relevant service (Council Tax, Housing, Planning etc.) or where a complaint involves multiple services our contact centre will make it clear which service will lead your complaint and co-ordinate the response.

We will acknowledge all stage 1 complaints within **3 working days** of receiving them. We will contact you to explain what we understand your complaint to be, what you expect as the outcome, and we'll ask for more information if needed.

We will contact you throughout the complaint process if any other clarification or discussion is needed to investigate the matter.

We will provide a written decision to the complaint within **10 working days** or where this is not possible, we will be clear about the reasons why and arrange further contact at intervals agreed by you and us until the complaint is resolved. If you are still dissatisfied at the end of the stage 1 investigations, you can escalate your complaint to stage 2.

Our written decision will include:

- The original complaint (as agreed with you during the first acknowledgement)
- The steps we have taken to investigate the complaint
- What we've considered (applicable laws, policies, best practice)
- Our decision and the reasons for it
- What will happen next (any actions to be taken) and the timescales to do it
- Any lessons learned and changes we will make following your complaint
- How you can escalate your complaint if you still are dissatisfied
- Confirmation that your complaint was stage 1

Stage 2 Process

Stage 2 is the last stage of our internal complaint process. We will acknowledge your complaint within **3 working days**, and we will set out our understanding of the outstanding issues and the outcomes you have told us you are seeking. We may ask for further clarification if any points are unclear.

A further investigation will be conducted and the decision, unchanged or amended, will be peer reviewed and considered by a manager from a different service area to the service that dealt with your stage 1 complaint. The peer review ensures an impartial assessment is made by someone unrelated to the service area for fairness and scrutiny.

Stage 2 investigations may take more time to complete as they can involve more in-depth investigation, interviews, visits or consultation with specialists.

Stage 2 reviews will generally receive a final decision within **20 working days** of escalation. In exceptional circumstances, where more time is needed for consultation or investigation, we will be clear about the reasons why and arrange further contact at intervals agreed by you and us until the complaint is resolved. If you are still dissatisfied at the end of our stage 2 investigation you will be told how to escalate your complaint to the relevant Ombudsman.

Appendix A

At the completion of stage 2 our written response will include:

- The original complaint (as agreed with you during the first acknowledgement)
- The steps we have taken to investigate the complaint
- What we've considered (applicable laws, policies, best practice)
- Our decision and the reasons for it
- What will happen next (any actions to be taken) and the timescales to do it
- Any lessons learned and changes we will make following your complaint
- Confirmation that your complaint was stage 2
- How to escalate your matter to the Ombudsman if you are still dissatisfied

Ombudsman Services

You will be given details of how to contact the relevant ombudsman as part of your complaint if it reaches stage 2.

- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
For most Council services you will be directed to the Local Government Ombudsman. For more information you can visit lgo.org.uk or phone 0300 061 0614
- Housing Ombudsman
Council owned social housing complaints are escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. For more information you can visit housing-ombudsman.org.uk or phone 0300 111 3000

Future updates to this policy

The Council is committed to ensuring that we manage complaints and feedback using best practice and accurate, relevant reporting. To achieve this we may periodically review and update how we report complaints by using new technologies or amending operational processes.

The Strategic Director of Resources may authorise operational changes and any major policy amendments will be authorised by the District Council. If there are changes to the processing of personal data, this will be reflected in our Privacy Notices.

In parallel with improvements to our customer management systems we aim to improve reporting of the informal complaints that we resolve promptly but know have an impact on our customers. Changes to this reporting will be reflected in future transparency reports when the supporting systems are available.

Document Responsibility		
Name	Document title	Service
Owen Chandler	Complaints & Feedback Policy	Corporate Policy & Governance

Document Version Control			
Date	Version	Issued by	Summary of changes
September 2019	1.0	S Sen	Created
December 2022	2.0	O Chandler	Full rewrite
January - March 2023	2.1-2.5	O Chandler	Consultation amendments

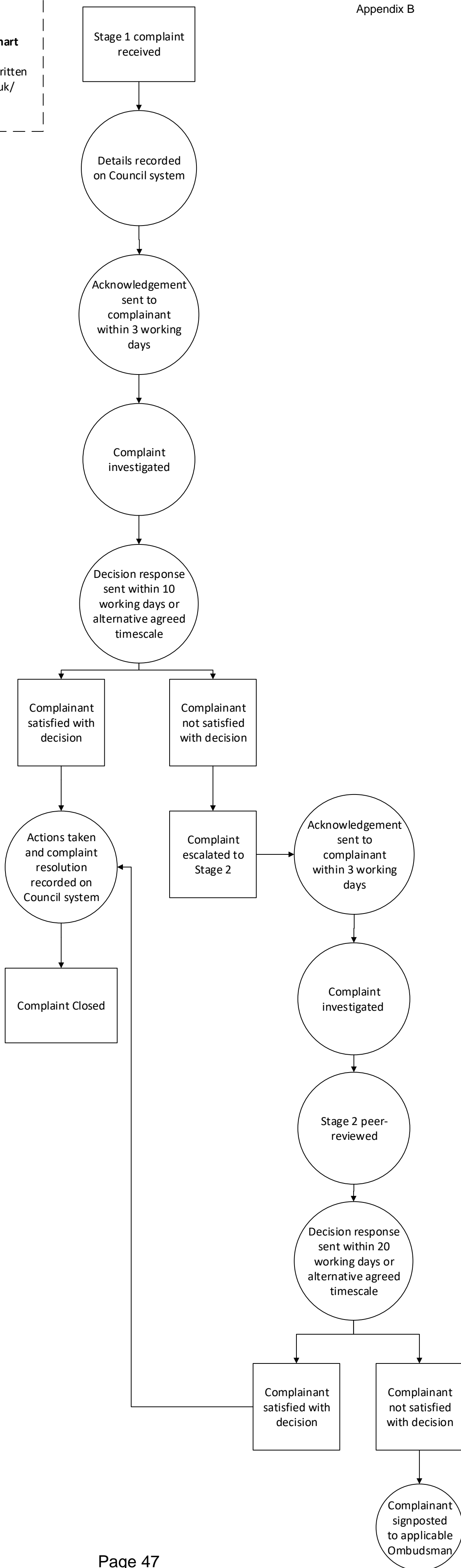
Policy Review			
Updating frequency	Review date	Person responsible	Service
3 years	April 2026	Information Governance Officer	Corporate Policy & Governance

Document Review and Approvals		
Name	Action	Date
Audit & Standards Committee		18/04/2023
Council		27/04/2023

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**Stroud District Council
Complaints & Feedback Policy
Stage 1 & Stage 2 Complaints Flowchart**

For additional detail please view the written policy or get in touch at stroud.gov.uk/contactus



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Equality Analysis Form

By completing this form you will provide evidence of how your service is helping to meet Stroud District Council's General Equality duty:

The Equality Act 2010 states that:

*A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have **due regard** to the need to –*

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are listed in Question 9

Stroud District Equality data can be found at:

<https://inform.gloucestershire.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

Please see Appendix 1 for a good example of a completed EIA.

[Guidance available on the HUB](#)

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Name(s): Owen Chandler	Telephone: N/A
	E-Mail: owen.chandler@stroud.gov.uk
Service: Corporate Policy & Governance	Date of Assessment: 2023-02-06

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Complaints & Feedback Policy

Is this new or an existing one?

3. Briefly describe its aims and objectives

- To modernise the SDC complaints policy ensuring it aligns with best practice of our key regulators the Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman
- To ensure that the policy reflects SDC processes
- To improve the consistency of complaints management across the organisation
- Improving the experience for customers and businesses when giving feedback and the

Appendix C

management of feedback for our services To improve the long-term awareness and learning from the reporting of informal complaints which do not reach the threshold of a stage 1 complaint but have an impact on Officers and Customers and Businesses

4. Are there external considerations? (Legislation / government directive, etc)

- This policy, as it will be used by all services of the Council, was written in consideration of any regulations required of service areas. The policy is flexible enough to provide a consistent framework across the organisation while enabling services to comply with their own legislative requirements.
- The Local Government Ombudsman acts under part III of the 1974 Act. The investigation of complaints, which it states is limited to complaints from members of the public alleging they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration and/or service failure.
- The Housing Ombudsman Scheme is approved by the Secretary of State under section 51 of, and Schedule 2 to, the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Building Safety Act 2022 (the Act).
- Customers of the local authority may engage the Human Rights Act 1998 if they believe we have breached their rights.
- The Equality Act 2010 says public authorities must comply with the public sector equality duty. This is in addition to their duty not to discriminate against any of the 9 protected characteristics.

5. Who is intended to benefit from it and in what way?

All users of council services are expected to benefit, due to the simplification and clarification that this reviewed policy provides for customers and officers of the Council. The reviewed policy also reflects current SDC processes and will be an accurate reference document for complainants to assess our performance and understand their options.

6. What outcomes are expected?

The adoption of this new policy will improve reporting across the Council leading to greater insight into the issues which our customers are passionate about and the services they value. We also expect greater consistency of experience across the Council as all services will adopt the new policy at the same time.

7. What evidence has been used for this assessment?: (eg Research, previous consultations, Inform (MAIDEN); Google assessments carried out by other Authorities)

Assessment is based on historic SDC complaints data and feedback from operational staff. The new policy is in accordance with the Ombudsman’s guidance, the SDC Council Plan and is based on best practice across the private and public sectors.

8. Has any consultation been carried out? See list of possible consultees

This is an operational document and consultation has predominantly been internal. We have consulted the EDI working group, SLT, LMT, a selection of officers and a group of SDC tenants who often engage with project work.

9. Could a particular group be affected differently in either a negative or positive way?

(Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure)

Protected Group	Type of impact, reason and any evidence (from Q7 & 8)
Age, Disability, Gender Re-assignment, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religion – Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Marriage & Civil Partnership, Rural Considerations	Neutral – For all characteristics the policy will not have any direct effects. It facilitates the management of any complaints and feedback raised in relation to them but neither prejudices against or directly benefits any group, individual or entity. As with the current complaints policy, customers can self-report if feedback relates to a protected characteristic.
Disability	Neutral – We have ensured that we have multiple contact channels available to support accessibility requirements and have a specific support section in the policy to outline how we can accommodate individual’s needs. The service standards are available in an easy read version which highlights how to make a complaint.

10. If you have identified a negative impact in question 9, what actions have you undertaken or do you plan to undertake to lessen or negate this impact?

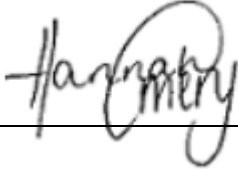
Please transfer any actions to your Service Action plan on Excelsis.

Action(s):	Lead officer	Resource	Timescale

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function * (delete those which do not apply) and where a negative impact has been identified, actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact.

We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment

Completed by: Owen Chandler	Date: 2023-02-06
Role: Information Governance Officer	
Countersigned by Head of Service/Director: Hannah Emery	Date: 2023-03-23
	

Date for Review: Please forward an electronic copy to eka.nowakowska@stroud.gov.uk

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
COUNCIL
THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2023

Report Title	Update to the Constitution			
Purpose of Report	This report brings forward to Council a number of proposed amendments to the Constitution.			
Decision(s)	<p>The Council RESOLVES to:</p> <p>a) Approve the amended Councillor Call for Action (Appendix A)</p> <p>b) Approve the amended Whistleblowing Policy (Appendix B)</p> <p>c) Agree to the deletion of section 9 of the Constitution (Members Relation Document) (Appendix C)</p> <p>d) Approve the revised Planning Code of Conduct(Appendix D)</p> <p>e) Approve the use of electronic signatures and seals</p> <p>f) Amend delegation C3A.9 in the officer scheme of delegation as set out in part 7 of this report</p> <p>g) Approve the amended Councillor Role Profiles (Appendix E)</p> <p>h) Give delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution</p>			
Consultation and Feedback	<p>The decisions and associated documents were considered and agreed for recommendation to Council by the Constitution Working Group on 1 February 2023.</p> <p>The Planning Code of Conduct was also considered by the Development Control Committee on 7 March 2023 and Group Leaders on 19 April 2023.</p>			
Report Author	<p>Claire Hughes, Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer)</p> <p>Email: claire.hughes@stroud.gov.uk</p>			
Options	Council could decide not to approve the amendments.			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices	<p>Appendix A – Councillor Call for Action</p> <p>Appendix B – Whistleblowing Policy</p> <p>Appendix C – Section 9, Members Relations Document</p> <p>Appendix D – Planning Code of Conduct</p> <p>Appendix E - Councillor Role Profiles</p>			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	No	No

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

1.1 The Constitution is a live document which requires regular review and revision. As part of its ongoing review the Constitution Working Group (CWG) met on 1 February 2023 to

consider several proposed changes. These changes were all approved for recommendation to Council.

- 1.2 This report seeks to bring forward the recommendations of the CWG and asks Council to approve them for implementation.
- 1.3 Members should note that changes proposed by the Monitoring Officer are identified as tracked changes throughout the Appendices. Changes marked in green indicate the changes requested by the CWG.

2. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

- 2.1 The Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) is a mechanism that provides councillors with a mechanism to raise local issues which they have not been able to resolve via other methods at a committee of the Council.
- 2.2 In accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 the provisions came into effect on 1 April 2009 and the Council last reviewed its scheme in May 2013.
- 2.3 The existing CCfA remains largely relevant, however some amendments are proposed to bring clarity to the process. A tracked change version of the document is attached at Appendix A.

3. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

- 3.1 The existing policy has been reviewed in accordance with the review period and updated to reflect any changes in legislation and best practice. The proposed changes also bring the policy in line with the other Gloucestershire districts.
- 3.2 Prior to presenting the revised document to the CWG it was approved by ARA the Councils internal auditors. A version showing the tracked changes is attached at Appendix B.

4. MEMBERS RELATIONS DOCUMENT

- 4.1 Section 9 of the Constitution consists of a Member Relations Document (copy attached at Appendix C). This document purports to set out the expectations around member conduct, particularly in relation to each other and makes reference to political group meetings which sit outside of the Councils remit.
- 4.2 In light of the recently revised Code of Conduct, The Member/Officer Protocol and the supplementary Member's Code on Planning this section is no longer deemed necessary and the recommendation is that it should be removed from the Constitution.

5. PLANNING CODE OF CONDUCT (MEMBERS CODE ON PLANNING)

- 5.1 The current Members Code on Planning was adopted in April 2000 and whilst it has been updated a few times it is due for a review.
- 5.2 The existing Code remains largely fit for purpose, however there are some additional sections recommended which would bring it into line with best practice.
- 5.3 The amendments to the document include:
 - 5.3.1 Inclusion of a new introductory paragraph and clarity around the role of the committee (paragraphs 1 and 2)

- 5.3.2 Introduction of a requirement for all applications made by planning staff and those staff in politically restricted posts for to come before committee for determination (paragraph 5.3)
- 5.3.3 Introduction of a requirement for all applications made by the Council itself to come before committee for determination (paragraph 5.5)
- 5.3.4 The addition of some wording to assist members who also sit on town/parish councils (paragraph 6.4)
- 5.3.5 Introduction of a section (paragraph 10) setting out the process for public speaking
- 5.3.6 Confirmation that members should not vote on an application unless they have been present for the whole presentation and debate (paragraph 11)
- 5.3.7 Clarification that members with an interest should not take part in the site visit in relation to that application (paragraph 12.4)
- 5.3.8 Confirmation that members must attend the mandatory training prior to sitting on the committee and must attend at least one follow up training session every year thereafter (paragraph 15)
- 5.4 As this Code relates specifically to the Development Control Committee a copy has been shared with members of that committee and a session was held on 7 March to receive their feedback. It was also considered by Group Leaders on 19 April 2023.
- 5.5 Key points of feedback from the CWG and DCC were as follows:
 - 5.5.1 Despite a recommendation from the Planning Peer Review to amend the name of the DCC to remove the word control there is no member support for this change;
 - 5.5.2 A concern was raised regarding the requirement to bring Councillor and some Officer applications to committee. Those concerns centred around safeguarding and that bringing these applications to committee would highlight individuals private address and other details (e.g. the layout of their homes). However, it is important to note that this is common practice throughout councils and represents the most transparent method of determining such applications. Members will also be aware that the information is already within the public domain as it will be available on the website. Therefore, the recommendation to make this change remains.
 - 5.5.3 The initial proposal to limit speaking times on applications was not agreed by the CWG, however they were minded to include a guideline of 5-10 minutes. This was considered by DCC who took the view that the chair should be able to exercise discretion over the length of speeches and members should be discouraged from speaking at length.
- 5.6 A copy of the updated protocol showing the tracked changes is attached at Appendix D.

6. USE OF ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES AND SEALS

- 6.1 In recent times there has been a mounting trend towards developing a paperless working environment by making more use of electronic means of communication and document retention. As a result the use of electronic signatures became more common.
- 6.2 The Electronic Communication Act 2000 and the Electronic Signature Regulations 2002 deal with the admissibility and authenticity of electronic signatures.
- 6.3 With the move towards more remote/hybrid working it is now necessary to accept and formally recognise the validity of electronic signatures on documents such as contracts, agreements, leases, deeds, minutes, resolutions and register of interest forms when used

by both the Council and those with whom it enters into a contract or other legally binding deeds and documents.

- 6.4** In addition, remote working does cause some difficulties in affixing the Council's Common Seal to contracts and other documents. The Common Seal is currently held by One Legal in accordance with the Constitution. In the present circumstances it is necessary for physical attendance and signature to affix and witness the affixing of the Common Seal. It is proposed that where possible mobile sealing will be permissible provided that the software being used is secure, reputable and effective in allowing both the Council and other parties to easily sign documents with a strong audit trail to confirm who has performed the signature.
- 6.5** In order to effect this change some amendments to the Constitution will be required. For example, the addition of the following additional paragraphs:
- 6.5.1 Electronic signatures may be used by both the Council and the Supplier in accordance with the Electronic Signature Regulations 2002 provided the sufficiency of security arrangements has been approved by the Director of One Legal.
- 6.5.2 Electronic signatures will, in accordance with the Electronic Communication Act 2000, be accepted as a fair representation of a willingness to enter into a contract by and with the Council, insofar as the e-signature is a true representation of the authorised person's written signature and (i) and (ii) below apply (to the supplier) in which case an e-signature and a signature will be referred to as the same.
- i) the Contract will be entered into in relation to being either under seal or under hand; and
 - ii) is supported with a contemporaneous document of authenticity and authorisation from the Supplier.

7. REVIEWS AGAINST DECISIONS

- 7.1** After the meeting of the CWG discussions have been ongoing between the Monitoring Officer and One Legal with regards to reviews against housing decisions. At present the information provided to the tenant states that a review hearing will be held by a member of the Audit and Standards Committee and someone from One Legal. However, the Constitution provides that such hearings must be heard by a member of the Audit and Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.
- 7.2** Acknowledging the short timeframes in which hearings must be held, the fact that the position of the Monitoring Officer is shared, and the small number of councillors on the Audit and Standards Committee it is recommend that the scheme of delegation (C3A.9) be amended to make provision for these hearings to be conducted by One Legal and any member, provided that they have had the necessary training and are not a member of the Housing Committee.

8. COUNCILLOR ROLE PROFILES

- 8.1** The Councillor profiles were last updated in April 2019 so were due for review. They remain largely fit for purpose, but some minor amendments are required including the addition of a section on member champions, linking it to the Member Champion Protocol.
- 8.2** The revised document, as attached at Appendix E, was considered by the CWG on 28 March 2023 who approved it for recommendation to Full Council.

9. IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Financial Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources

Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk

9.2 Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations of the report. Any decision to amend the Constitution rests with Full Council. The Constitution should be kept under review and amended where necessary to provide a clear governance framework that will support effective and lawful decision making in a manner that also supports accountability, scrutiny and transparency.

One Legal

Tel: 01684 272012 Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

9.3 Equality Implications

An EIA is not required because There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision.

9.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

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COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

This protocol sets out how elected members of Stroud District Council can make use of [the Councillor Call for Action](#).

Deleted: The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced the Councillor Call for Action from 1 April 2009.

Deleted: this new power.

Deleted: May 2013 (republished Nov 16)



COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

1 What is a Councillor Call for Action?

1.1 The prime aim of the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) is to support elected members in achieving improvements for their local areas. In their day to day roles councillors identify issues of significant concern to their communities. They seek to resolve problems by talking to the Council and other service providers. If they cannot resolve a particular issue **by talking to officers, fellow Councillors or the Monitoring Officer**, they are able to refer it to a relevant committee for further investigation.

2 Outline of the process

2.1 The CCfA is deemed to be an option of "last resort". A CCfA will only be included on the relevant Committee agenda if the Chair, in consultation with the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer is satisfied that:

- the councillor has made all reasonable efforts to resolve the matter via direct liaison with council officers and/or relevant partners; and
- the issue of concern is a matter in respect of which the council has a statutory power or duty to deal with and is not precluded by adopted council policy or legislation; and
- the CCfA does not, in any event, relate to:
 - any matter relating to a planning decision;
 - any matter relating to a licensing decision;
 - any Council Tax/Housing Benefit complaints and queries;
 - any matter relating to an individual or entity in respect of which that individual or entity has a right of recourse to a review or right of appeal conferred by or under any enactment;
 - any matter which is vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable to be included in the agenda for, or to be discussed at, a meeting of a Committee

2.2 A valid CCfA will be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the Committee which will agree a resolution for the CCfA.

3 Activity to resolve issue

3.1 Before referring a matter to a Committee, Councillors must have made use of existing mechanisms and exhausted these. The emphasis is on Councillors resolving issues at an early stage by making use of existing local mechanisms. The CCfA is not a mechanism to bring frivolous or minor issue to a committee

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Councillor resolves the issue at a local level.¶
If this is not possible, the councillor refers the issue to the Chief Executive who will send it to the Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Committee.¶
Relevant members and officers agree how the CCfA is to be handled.¶
The CCfA is

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meeting and the Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant committee will be mindful of this in determining if the CCfA is appropriate.

- 3.2 Councillors will need to be able to demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to resolve the matter. Appendix 1 provides some guidance on the sorts of activity that it is expected that a councillor will have undertaken before making a request to the Committee.

4 Referral to Committee

- 4.1 If the Councillor is unable to resolve the matter, then they will be able to refer the matter to the relevant Committee [in accordance with the process set out in paragraph 2 above](#).

- 4.2 Councillors will be expected to exercise some judgment over what is referred to the Committee. Issues that should be referred are those which have wider policy or strategic implications, are indicative of a broader issue or are particularly problematic.

- 4.3 If a Councillor is satisfied that they have a viable CCfA, they should notify the Chief Executive in writing.

- 4.4 The Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Committee, [in consultation with the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer](#) will consider the request and inform the Councillor whether they accept the CCfA. Reasons the Chair and Vice Chair may not agree to take the CCfA forward to the Committee could include:

- Insufficient information has been provided
- More could be done to resolve the issue at a local level
- The CCfA is, or has stemmed from, a vexatious complaint
- The matter has recently been examined
- The matter is the subject of an ombudsman complaint or other official complaints procedure.
- The matter falls under excluded matters. For example: planning and licensing appeals.

- 4.5 The Councillor has the opportunity to reply to the Chair and Vice Chair with further information to substantiate the CCfA.

- 4.6 If the CCfA is accepted, the relevant Members, senior officers and partners will be notified by the Chief Executive [or Monitoring Officer](#).

5 Determining how each CCfA is to be handled

- 5.1 To allow the Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Committee to make an informed decision, it is suggested that they hold a meeting with the relevant Councillor to agree how the CCfA is to be handled. This meeting would be an opportunity for them to agree the key questions to be answered, the information required, who needs to be involved and the timescale.



- 5.2 Relevant partners, Members and senior officers should be involved in the CCfA at an early stage. It is necessary to get a balance between involvement to resolve issues at the earliest opportunity and not involving people unnecessarily.
- 5.3 It is also a critical part of the process in making sure that Councillors are fully aware of the roles, responsibilities and priorities of the organisations concerned. This should help to ensure that neither the public nor Councillors have unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved.

6 Role of the relevant Committee

6.1 The subject matter for the CCfA will be the subject of a report from the relevant Head of Service, with such supporting information and evidence as is reasonably available. If the matter also or exclusively entails consideration of information held by another public body or partner, an appropriate representative shall be invited to the Committee meeting to provide that information, make representations, or answer questions

6.2 The relevant Committee will hear from relevant witnesses, including the Councillor submitting the CCfA.

6.3 A ward councillor may address the Committee in respect of the CCfA, usually this will be for a period of 10-15 minutes but can be longer at the discretion of the Chair. ~~for up to 10 minutes.~~

6.4 The Committee may also consider representations from any citizens of the ward affected by the CCfA, subject to the discretion of the Chair.

6.5 Upon hearing all the evidence the Committee will determine the matter as follows:

- Write a report setting out the Committee's findings and recommendations
- Decide that it is a complex issue requiring further investigation and refer the matter to another body for a more detailed review. Decide not to make a report and take no further action.

6.6 The CCfA will be considered in public session unless consideration of the issues involves the disclosure of exempt or confidential information as defined by the Access Procedure Rules of this Constitution.

6.7 Where Members and partners are requested to take action to resolve a particular issue they will be asked to make a formal response to a future meeting of the relevant Committee.

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Appendix 1

Examples of the steps which a Councillor could be expected to have taken before submitting a Councillor Call for Action.

- 1 The relevant complaints procedures have been complied with.

If the issue appears to be that a standard service has not been provided, or not provided to a sufficient standard, then the Councillor should check that the relevant complaints procedure has been used, and that the service provider has responded to the complaint.

- 1 The Head of Service has been approached.

The issue may at its core be that local people feel that the standard service is not the right one for local conditions, and therefore the matter may be a question of making some slight adjustments at management's discretion. The Councillor would therefore be expected to have discussed the matter with the Head of Service in an attempt to secure the change. Again, this could apply across the range of partner agencies.

- 2 Relevant partnership bodies or local groups have been approached.

- 4 It is more likely though that matters which merit a Councillor Call for Action are more complicated than the former examples. One likely possibility is that the matter requires attention from a number of agencies acting in partnership. The Councillor should in such cases demonstrate that local partnership bodies have had an opportunity to respond.

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Adopted - [April 2023](#)

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WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY
FOR
STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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1. ABOUT THIS POLICY

- 1.1 We are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards in accordance with Stroud District Council's Officer Code of Conduct. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time, or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent such situations occurring and to address them when they do occur.
- 1.2 Staff are often the first to realise that there may be something of concern occurring within the Council. Usually, any issues can be resolved swiftly and satisfactorily. However, when these concerns relate to more serious matters, staff may be discouraged from expressing their concerns or 'whistle-blowing'.
- 1.3 Whistleblowing is the term used when an employee passes on information concerning wrongdoing. This can also be called 'making a disclosure' or 'blowing the whistle'. Typically (although, not always) the wrongdoing will be something that the employee has witnessed at work.
- 1.4 Staff may feel disloyal and may fear victimisation or harassment. In such circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice. However, any person raising a concern is protected in law.
- 1.5 Whistleblowing law is embedded in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998). This legislation provides that an employee has the right to take a case to an Employment Tribunal if they have been victimised at work or lost their job as a consequence of 'blowing the whistle'.
- 1.6 This policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to make disclosures at an early stage, rather than waiting. Staff are also encouraged to raise any issues internally with the Council first rather than raising it outside of the organisation. If issues are raised externally in the first instance you may weaken the protection given to you under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.
- 1.7 This policy also seeks to ensure concerns are raised in the right way and seeks to protect those staff members against whom complaints are made from malicious allegations. The Council has a duty to investigate all reports

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of irregularity. This does not mean that the organisation supports the allegation.

2. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

2.1 The aims of this policy are:

a) To encourage staff to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.

Deleted: report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, ...

b) To encourage staff to be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature of which they become aware. Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work.

c) Ensure all reported allegations are treated in absolute confidence, with every effort made by the Council not to reveal a whistleblower's identity if they so wish. However, there may be times when we are unable to resolve a concern without revealing your identity, for example where your personal evidence is essential. In such cases, we would discuss the rationale with the whistleblower in the first instance to establish how the matter can be best progressed.

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d) Provide a robust procedure and ensure any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the whistleblower who raised the issue, as appropriate.

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e) To provide staff with guidance on how to raise those concerns.

f) To reassure staff acting in good faith, that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

2.2 This policy covers all employees, officers, apprentices, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns, casual workers and agency workers.

2.3 This policy takes account of the Whistleblowing Arrangements Code of Practice issued by the Whistleblowing Commission

Deleted: British Standards Institute and Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work).

2.4 This policy is not a substitute for the Council's other policies and procedures on such matters as personal grievances, bullying and harassment, health and

safety, safeguarding issues (children and/or adults) or complaints. It should also not be used to raise matters relating to an employee's own terms and conditions of service.

2.5 There are existing procedures in place to enable staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This process does not form part of this policy. For further guidance on whistleblowing and grievances, staff can contact the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) at www.acas.org.uk/grievances.

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2.6 If a member of the public has a concern about any service they have been provided by the Council then this should be raised as a complaint. There are existing procedures in place which relate to this. However, if that concern relates to malpractice by a member of staff, then they should be directed to Human Resources at the earliest opportunity.

2.7 If a member of the public has concerns relating to malpractice by a Councillor, then they should be directed to the Monitoring Officer at the earliest opportunity.

2.8 Making malicious, vexatious or false allegations will not be tolerated and is a disciplinary offence. If a person makes an allegation in good faith and reasonably believes it to be true, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, the Council will recognise your concern. However, if a person makes an allegation frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, appropriate action, which could include disciplinary proceedings, may be taken.

2.9 An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority such as a manager, staff should not agree to remain silent and should report the matter at the earliest opportunity.

2.10 This policy maybe amended at any time.

3. PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLICY

3.1 The Monitoring Officer has day-to-day operational and overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

3.2 The Monitoring Officer must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.

3.3 The Monitoring Officer, in conjunction with the Audit and Standards Committee should where appropriate review this policy from a legal and operational perspective at least once a year.

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3.4 Managers should ensure all staff, including agency staff, consultants and contractors etc. are aware of and follow Council Policies and Procedures. Managers should register any whistleblowing cases brought to their attention immediately with Human Resources and provide support to any employee making such a complaint.

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3.5 Senior and Statutory Officers will respond to whistleblowing submissions positively and within the timescales set out.

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3.6 All staff are responsible for the success of the operation of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the Monitoring Officer.

4. WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

4.1 Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:

- a) Criminal activity;
- b) Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;
- c) Miscarriages of justice;
- d) Failure to observe health and safety regulations or actions which involve risks to the public or other staff;
- e) Damage to the environment;
- f) Bribery;
- g) Financial irregularity including fraud, corruption or unauthorised use of public funds or other assets;
- h) Negligence;
- i) Breach of our internal policies and procedures including our Code of Conduct;
- j) Conduct likely to damage our reputation;
- k) Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- l) Claiming benefits and/or expenses to which there is no entitlement;
- m) Neglect or abuse: physical or verbal;

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n) Any other unethical conduct, malpractice, negligent or unprofessional behaviour;

o) The deliberate concealment of any of the above.

4.2 A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of our activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it under this policy.

4.3 This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your own personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases, you should use the Grievance Procedure or the Bullying and Harassment Policy as appropriate.

4.4 If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer or the Human Resources Manager, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

5. EMPLOYEE SAFEGUARDS AND ASSURANCES

5.1 Harassment or Victimisation

5.2 The Council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice.

5.4 The Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation in any form of anyone raising a legitimate concern. Any employee who attempts at any stage to apply any retribution or detriment to a whistleblower will face serious disciplinary charges, which could lead to dismissal.

5.5 The Council will support and protect whistleblowers who raise an issue in line with this policy, in accordance with the safeguards contained in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This legislation protects everyone from victimisation and dismissal when speaking out against corruption or malpractice at work.

5.6 Protection does not mean that if an employee is already the subject of disciplinary action or redundancy procedures that those procedures would cease or be suspended as a result of their whistleblowing.

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5.7 It may be that the employee making the report is (or was) directly involved in the action now being raised. In such circumstances it is in the employee's own interest to come forward as soon as possible. The Council cannot promise not to act against such an employee but the fact that they came forward may be taken into account.

5.7 Confidentiality

5.8 We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If you ask us not to disclose your identity, we will not do so without your consent unless required by law. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you [prior to any disclosure](#).

5.9 We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Monitoring Officer or one of the other contact points listed in paragraph 6.2 and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

5.10 At all times the whistleblower will receive full support from the Council. There will be a limited number of people aware of the investigation at any one time.

5.11 Staff who whistleblow can seek independent support from the charity Protect. Details can be found at www.protect-advice.org.uk

6. **PROCEDURE**

6.1 We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. It is expected that managers will consult with the Monitoring Officer.

6.2 However, if you feel that your line manager has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:

- a) The Monitoring Officer;
- b) The Human Resources Manager;
- c) Head of Service;
- d) Strategic Director; or
- e) Head of Audit Risk Assurance (ARA).

Deleted: Chief Internal Auditor.

Contact details are set out at the end of this policy. If you do not know who the relevant Head of Service or Strategic Directors is for your role this can be obtained from the Human Resources Manager or the Monitoring Officer.

Alternatively, you may wish to use our confidential 24 hour “whistleblowing” answerphone service on 01452 427052 which is managed by ARA’s Counter Fraud Team (CFT).

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6.3 Once you have raised a concern, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be contacted in order to obtain additional information.

6.4 In some cases we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

6.5 We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

6.6 If we conclude that a whistleblower has made false allegations maliciously or with a view to personal gain, the whistleblower will be subject to disciplinary action.

6.7 The Monitoring Officer will keep a record of reported whistleblowing concerns (whistleblowing record). All line managers and investigator(s) are responsible for updating the Monitoring Officer with the necessary details for maintaining the whistleblowing record.

6.8 Raising a concern as an elected member

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6.4 If an elected Member has any concerns about the Council’s work, they should raise the matter directly with Democratic Services, the Chief Executive or the

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Monitoring Officer. In the case of financial irregularity, disclosure may be made to the Officer appointed under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

6.5 Raising concerns as a third-party such as a contractor, or agency staff

6.6 Concerns should be raised with Human Resources, the Chief Executive or the Monitoring officer. In the case of financial irregularity, disclosure may be made to the Strategic Director of Resources.

6.7 Alternative Reporting Routes

6.8 There are a number of prescribed bodies and organisations who may be contacted if there is a reason not to raise the matter internally. Staff can find guidance by following the link below which provides a comprehensive list with contact details therein. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blowing-the-whistle-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies--2/whistleblowing-list-of-prescribed-people-and-bodies>

6.9 In the case of Local Government, that would include raising concerns with the Council's External Auditor (to establish who this is, contact Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited <https://www.psa.co.uk>). If the concerns relate to the conduct of public business, value for money or fraud and corruption relating to the provision of public services, staff may contact the National Audit Office <https://www.nao.org.uk>.

6.10 The Council would not ordinarily expect a whistleblower to make disclosures to the media (including via social media) prior to raising the matter internally. If a person does approach the media with their concerns (or publishes details via social media), the whistleblower should expect in most cases to lose their whistleblowing law rights.

6.11 Concerns may be raised by telephone, in person or in writing. The earlier the matter is raised, the easier it is to take action. A whistleblower is asked to provide the nature of the concern and why they believe it to be true, background details giving names, dates and places where possible, together with any other supporting evidence or information. A whistleblower may be asked if they have any personal interest in the matter.

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7. IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED

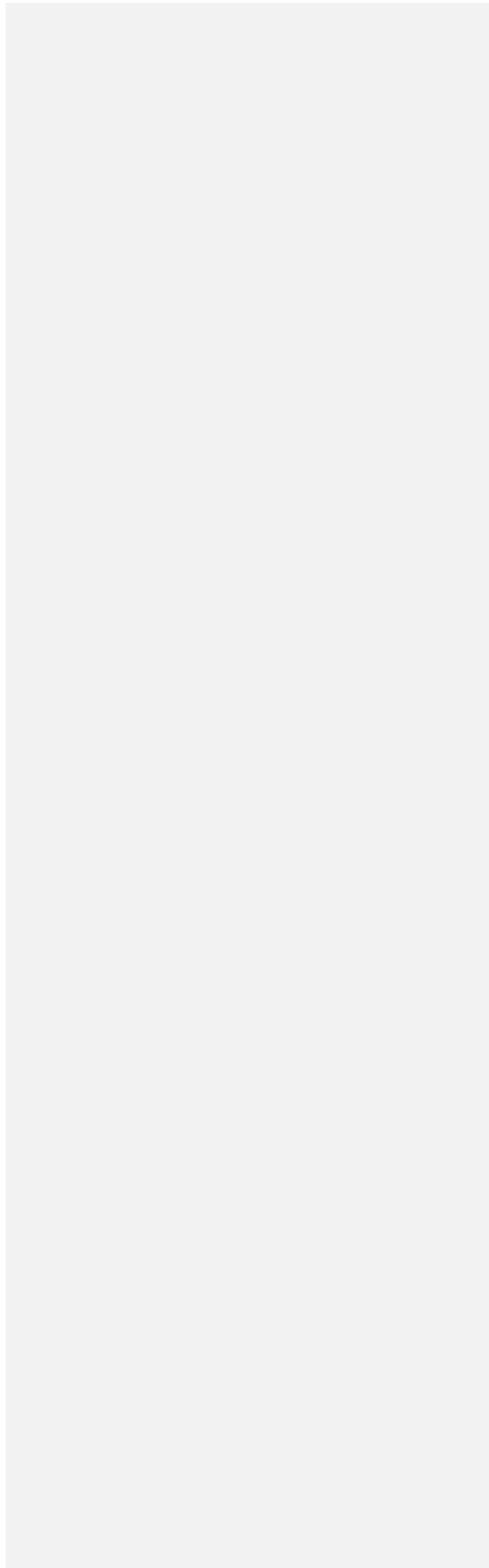
7.1 While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us to achieve this.

7.2 If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with one of the other key contacts in this policy. Alternatively, you may contact our external auditors (who may liaise with officers of the Council). Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

8. CONTACTS

Role	Officer Name/Co.	Tel. No.	E-mail Address
Monitoring Officer	Claire Hughes	01453 754128	Claire.Hughes@stroud.gov.uk
Strategic Director of Resources (S151 Officer)	Andrew Cummings	01453 754115	Andrew.Cummings@stroud.gov.uk
Human Resources Manager	Lucy Powell	01453 754286	lucy.powell@stroud.gov.uk
External Auditors	Bishop Fleming	01242 505970	www.bishopfleming.co.uk
SDC's Head of Audit Risk Assurance (ARA)	Piyush Fatania	01452 328883	piyush.fatania@stroud.gov.uk or Piyush.fatania@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Protect	(Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: (020) 3117 2520	E-mail: whistle@protect-advice.org.uk Website: https://protect-advice.org.uk/
24 hour confidential whistle blowing answerphone service		01452 427052	

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Section 9 - Member Relations Document

Given the variety and complexity of relationships amongst Members, the opportunity has been taken to introduce a Protocol on Member/Member Relations. This Protocol does not seek to cover everything or be prescriptive in its application. General guidance is offered on some of the issues that most commonly arise or cause concern. It is hoped, therefore, that the approach which this Protocol adopts will serve as a guide to dealing with other issues that may arise from time to time.

Adopted 29 July 2004

A INTRODUCTION

1. This Protocol seeks to encourage best practice and to promote greater clarity and certainty between the various relationships. If any Member is unsure about any matter, s/he should contact their Group Leader and/or the Monitoring Officer for appropriate advice and assistance.

B GENERAL MEMBER/MEMBER ISSUES

2. The opportunity is taken to **reinforce** the following points:-
 - (i) In order to ensure the business of the Council is transacted in an effective and efficient manner and with a view to ensuring that the Council is not brought into disrepute, the key guiding principle for Members has to be one of “engendering mutual trust, openness, honesty, fairness, transparency and treating everyone with respect”;
 - (ii) Political Group meetings, whilst they perform an important part in the preliminaries to Council decision-making, are not formal decision-making bodies of the Council and, as such, are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Council. Conclusions reached at such meetings do not, therefore, rank as Council decisions and it is essential that Members understand and interpret such decisions accordingly;
 - (iii) In accordance with the Constitution, political group meetings should not be held prior to meetings of the following:-
 - ❖ Licensing Panel
 - ❖ Development Control Committee
 - ❖ Audit and Standards Committee
 - (iv) Any breach of this part of the Protocol by a Member should be brought to the attention of the relevant Group Leader or, if appropriate, the Chair of Council for consideration.

Legal and District Audit Considerations:

3. Members of the Council do not, as elected members, have any special immunity from civil or criminal wrongs that they may commit against fellow Members, Officers or members of the public. Members must abide by Stroud District Council's Code of Conduct for Members and ensure they do not, for example, slander or libel another person.
4. During the course of their normal duties for the Council, Members will, therefore, only have a qualified (not absolute) protection against prosecution or civil action. This means that in any proceedings Members would have to show that their comments were made in good faith, had justification and were not made out of malice. Anyone can bring private civil litigation proceedings against an elected member.

Public Relations Issues:

5. The Council's Communications Manager is responsible for dealing with the press and other media organisations on behalf of the Council. It is important, therefore, that all official communication relating to the Council (but not party political or private matters) is dealt with by them, so as to ensure the proactive, effective and efficient management of the Council's public image, relations and interface.

C. SPECIFIC POINTS ON MEMBER/MEMBER RELATIONS

6. The relationship between Members and Members is generally characterised by mutual trust, openness, fairness, transparency, respect and courtesy. These are **essential** for good local government and serve to enhance local democracy. The use of inappropriate language or behaviour and conduct of Members could result in legal action against the Council and the Member(s) concerned
7. Members must ensure that all communication between them (including written communication) does not bring the Council into disrepute, cause any embarrassment to them, or lead to the breakdown of mutual trust, respect and courtesy in Member/Member relations.

Equality Issues:

8. The Council has statutory duties with regard to equality issues and, in accordance with Stroud District Council's Code of Conduct for Members, Members must also promote equality by not discriminating against others. Members shall not, therefore, by their behaviour or speech act in a discriminatory way with regard to, for example, a person's gender, race, disability, religion, ethnicity, nationality or sexual orientation.

Conduct or Capability Issues:

9. Members should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of a Member (or of Members' collectively) at meetings held in public or before the Press in a way which is likely to bring the Council into disrepute, as responding in the same manner in public does not project a positive perception of the Council and should be avoided. If any Member feels that s/he has not been treated with the proper mutual trust, respect or courtesy, or has any concern about the conduct or capability of a fellow Member, s/he should raise the matter, in private, with the relevant Group Leader of the political group concerned.

Unacceptable or Inappropriate Behaviour:

10. When attending meetings of Stroud District Council the Chair of the meeting shall ensure that Members are not questioned (whether through the nature, tone or language used), in such a manner as could be considered by a reasonable person to be hostile, offensive, derogatory, harassing, bullying, victimising, discriminatory or otherwise unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour by a Member.
11. Any allegation of unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour by a Member will be reported to the Leader of the relevant Political Group or, if appropriate, the Chair of Council for consideration.

Resolving Disputes

12. In order to avoid escalation of any situation, once any possible breach has been reported to a Group Leader or the Chair of Council, or in his/her absence the Vice-Chair of Council, the situation will be investigated within ten working days. The investigation will ascertain the facts and every effort will be made to resolve the dispute between the Members concerned. Mediation will be offered where appropriate to assist in resolving the dispute.
13. Any sanctions to be applied will be determined by the relevant Group Leader, or in the case of Members who are not part of a political group by the Chair of Council.

Planning Code of Conduct

This code of conduct seeks to demonstrate the Council's commitment to the highest possible standards of behaviour in its operation of the planning system.

Updated [April 2023](#)

Deleted: Members' Code on Planning

Deleted: was formally adopted by the Stroud District Council on the 20th April 2000 and was updated in 2015 to reflect changes in relevant law and other subsequent changes to the Council's Constitution. It

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Version: [April 2023](#)

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Section 8
Planning Code of Conduct

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1. INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1 This Protocol sets out guidance for both officers and members when determining planning applications, specifically those which come before the Development Control Committee for determination.
- 1.2 It sets out the role of the Development Control Committee and its members, how the Committee will operate and when and how it takes decisions. It should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for members.
- 1.3 Planning is not an exact science. Rather it relies on informed judgement within a firm policy context. It is often highly contentious because its decisions affect the daily lives of everyone and the private lives of individuals, landowners and developers. This is heightened by the openness of the system (it actively invites public opinion before taking decisions). This is reinforced by the legal status of development plans and decision notices. It is essential, therefore, that the planning process is characterised by open and transparent decision-making.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The development management role of the Development Committee is to manage development and other operations in the district, so as to provide a sustainable physical, social and economic environment for the benefit of the whole community by exercising the Council's powers under the Town and Country Planning Acts, and various legislative provisions concerned with the protection of the environment, in accordance with the approved development plan, the national planning policy framework (NPPF), the Local Plan and the Council's relevant adopted strategies including the strategies for Climate Emergency and Green Economic growth, subject to any agreed scheme of delegation to officers. As a quasi judicial Committee members of the Committee are required to be non-partisan and to represent the entire district. The practice of political whipping has no place in the decisions of the Development Control Committee, because decisions must be made on material planning considerations.

2.2 Statutory Functions of the Committee

The Committee is responsible for those functions allocated to the Council under the statutory provisions (to include statutory instruments, government circulars and planning policy statements and guidance) for control over development as defined in section 55(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 or any replacement legislation within the district or that will have an impact on the district save those matters delegated to officers and included in the scheme of delegation. Members involved in the planning process shall at all times comply with the requirements of this protocol, which are in addition to the Code of Conduct for members.

3. GENERAL ROLE AND CONDUCT OF COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

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- 3.1 The successful operation of the planning system relies on ensuring that Councillors and Officers involved in its operation act in a way that is not only lawful, fair and impartial but is also clearly seen to be so. The Council acknowledges that the public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct and probity by all persons holding public office.
- 3.2 The overriding principle is that Councillors appointed to the Development Control Committee should not favour any individuals or groups and must represent their constituents as a body and vote in the interests of the District as a whole. Clearly Councillors will take account of all views expressed but they should not deliberately favour any person, company, group or locality, nor put themselves in a position where they appear to do so.
- 3.3 When dealing with planning matters only material planning considerations should be taken into account. Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.4 Whilst this Local Code deals primarily with planning applications, the principles it endorses apply with equal vigour to consideration of the Local Plan and associated development briefs, enforcement cases and all other planning matters.
- 3.5 Members must not put pressure on officers to put forward a particular recommendation. (This does not prevent you from asking questions or submitting views to the Head of Development Management or the relevant case officer, which may be incorporated into any committee report).
- 3.6 Members should recognise that officers are employed by the Council, not by individual Councillors. A successful relationship between Councillors and officers can only be based upon mutual trust, respect, courtesy and understanding of each others positions. This relationship, and the trust which underpins it, should never be abused or compromised.
- 3.7 Members must recognise and respect that officers involved in the processing and determination of planning matters must act in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct for Officers and their professional codes of conduct, primarily the Royal Town Planning Institute's Code of Professional Conduct. As a result, planning officers' views, opinions and recommendations will be presented on the basis of their overriding obligation of professional independence, which may on occasion be at odds with the views, opinions or decisions of the Committee or its Members.
- 3.8 Officers involved in the processing and determination of planning matters must also act impartially and in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees (so far as is relevant). In addition those that are

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members of the Royal Town Planning Institute are expected to comply with the relevant sections of the Royal Town Planning Institute’s Code of Professional Conduct.

- 3.9 Only Councillors and Officers of the Council who are prepared to observe this Code ought to be involved in the process of dealing with planning matters, such as determining planning applications, applications for listed building consent and applications for conservation area consent.

4. DECLARATION AND REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

- 4.1 Councillors will declare and register interests as required by the Council’s Code of Conduct for Members at Section 5 of this Constitution.
- 4.2 Councillors will also need to comply with the provisions of that Code that prevent them taking part when they have an interest.

5. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS, AND COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 Serving Councillors of the Development Control Committee in accordance with recognised good practice should not act in any way for anyone pursuing a planning matter within the area of the District Council. No Councillor whose employment or business involves dealing with planning matters within the district should be a member of the Development Control Committee. All Councillors and their appropriate Group Leaders must consider the appropriateness of their involvement in the committee. They are required to make a reasonable assessment of whether their professional interests would preclude them from sitting on the committee. Advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of any appointments. It is anticipated that a cautious (whilst practical) approach in the interests of the Council should generally be taken.
- 5.2 Notwithstanding the general requirements regarding declarations of interests if a Councillor or Officer of the Council, (or any close relative, or associate) submits their own development proposal to the Council, they should take no part in its processing. Furthermore the relevant Councillor or Officer shall inform in writing the [Head of Development Management](#) and copy to the Monitoring Officer, all such proposals as soon as they are submitted.

5.3 ~~All applications submitted by Councillors, or employees (with the exception of non-planning staff who are not in politically restricted posts) or which relate to land owned by a Councillor or employee (save for the exceptions listed) will be dealt with as a Committee and not under the Scheme of Delegation.~~

5.4 Proposals for the Council’s own development (or a development involving the Council and another party) should be treated in the same way as those by private developers and in accordance with relevant statutory guidance. The

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same administrative process, including consultation, should be carried out in relation to the Council's own planning applications, and they should be determined against the same policy background (i.e. the Development Plan and any other material planning considerations). Decisions must be made strictly on planning merits and without regard to any financial or other gain that may accrue to the Council if the development is permitted. It is important that the Council is seen to be treating such applications on an equal footing with all other applications as well as doing so.

Applications submitted by the Council and private applications in respect of Council owned land (e.g. prior to a land sale being agreed or negotiated) must be determined in accordance with the scheme of delegation and determined by the Committee as appropriate.

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6. LOBBYING, PREDETERMINATION AND PREDISPOSITION

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6.1 If Councillors are to undertake fully their constituency roles it is inevitable that they may, or will be, subject to lobbying on planning matters and specific planning applications. Lobbying is a normal and perfectly proper part of the political process. Local concerns need to be adequately aired. However in the context of deciding on a planning application great care is required of Councillors in order to maintain both the Council's and the Councillor's own integrity as well as the public perception of the impartiality of the planning process.

6.2 As a result of the legal requirement to make planning decisions impartially, Councillors should not consciously favour, or appear to favour, any person, company, group or locality. As a matter of general principle a Councillor who fully commits themselves to a particular view on a planning application prior to its consideration at Committee should not take part in the formal decision making process. A previously declared view must raise the presumption that the Councillor has prejudiced their position, cannot objectively assess the full facts before the Committee, and is unable to contribute fully to the debate in accordance with the legal and ethical framework. Accordingly where a Councillor has publicly declared or otherwise made known a conclusive view on the planning matter or application before the meeting and whilst it is a matter for the individual councillor, they should not take part in the debate on, or vote on the issue.

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6.3 Where a District Councillor (who is a member of the Committee) is also a Parish/Town Councillor there is a need for caution to be exercised in considering matters at the Parish/Town Council stage. This is because of the Councillor's additional responsibility as a member of the District Committee charged with making a decision on the planning application. It is important to bear in mind that Parish/Town Councils are consultees in the planning process and may be asked for their comments on an application at a time when not all the relevant material planning considerations have been received and the full implications of an application investigated. As a result it would normally be inappropriate to participate in the vote that decides the Parish/Town Council's comments and views on an application. Participating in such a vote could be

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construed as expressing a conclusive view on an application – contrary to the requirement mentioned in the preceding paragraph. A District Councillor’s expertise as a member of the Committee can be put to its best use in advising and guiding the Parish/Town Council on the planning issues that arise from the application. When the application comes to be decided by the Local Planning Authority the views of the Parish/Town Council will be considered and taken into account.

6.4 Where a Councillor does vote on an application at a meeting of a Town/Parish Council they may find it helpful to make the following statement to clarify their position:

“While I will consider this matter as a Member of this Council, I am also on the Development Control Committee of Stroud District Council and may be called upon to vote on any application that this council responds to. In the light of additional information received, I may not vote at the District Council’s Development Control Committee as I will in this meeting.”

6.5 Where the Monitoring Officer believes that a Councillor has prejudiced their position by expressing a conclusive view on an application before its determination by the Committee, the Monitoring Officer will advise the Councillor that it would be inappropriate for them to take part in the debate, or vote on the application. It is then for the member to decide whether to act on that advice.

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6.6 In order to avoid such action Councillors who will be involved in the determination of a planning matter should, prior to the meeting, listen to points of view about a planning proposal. Where an applicant requires planning or procedural advice the applicant should be referred to the appropriate officer. In most cases, particularly for matters which are likely to be controversial, Councillors should not indicate (or give the impression of) clear support or opposition to a proposal in a manner which suggests they have a closed mind to any other views or further information which may be available at the meeting at which the planning matter is discussed. In particular Councillors should not declare their voting intention before the meeting at which a decision is to be taken. To do so without all relevant information and views would be unfair and prejudicial and may amount to maladministration. The system must be seen to be fair to all parties.

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6.7 Accusations of partiality can be avoided if a Councillor has not openly declared before a meeting the way they intend to vote. Short of high profile lobbying for a particular outcome, it should be possible for a Councillor to indicate support to a particular body of opinion whilst waiting until the Development Control Committee and hearing all the evidence presented before making a final decision. This is important because of the Councillor’s overriding duty to the whole local community.

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6.8 Whilst Councillors involved in making decisions on planning matters will begin to form a view as more information and options become available, a decision can only be taken by the Committee when all available information is to hand and has been duly considered. Individual Councillors should reach their own conclusions on an application or other planning matter rather than follow the lead of another Councillor or their political group. No political group meetings should be held prior to a meeting of the Development Control Committee.

6.9 It follows that Councillors involved in the decision making on planning matters should not organise support or opposition to a proposal, lobby other Councillors, act as an advocate or put pressure on officers for a particular recommendation. However, other Councillors (who are not part of the decision making process) within a Ward can make representations and address the relevant Committee pursuant to the Council's Standing Orders.

6.10 Similarly Councillors involved in the determination of planning applications should take great care to maintain impartiality when attending public meetings in relation to planning matters. At such meetings it is preferable for no view on the merits or otherwise of a proposal to be given. If a view is expressed it should be made clear that this view will be reconsidered in the light of all the information at the Development Control meetings.

6.11 Where a member of the Development Control Committee finds themselves in a lobbying situation, the Councillor should actively take steps to explain that whilst they can listen to what is said, it prejudices their impartiality to express a firm point of view or an intention to vote one way or another.

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6.12 If a Councillor involved in determining planning matters has responded to lobbying by openly advocating a particular course of action prior to a Committee meeting, that Councillor should declare such an interest and whilst it is a matter for the individual councillor, they should not take any part in the decision making process even if he does not have an interest under the Planning Code of Conduct. It is acknowledged that this requirement may well cause practical difficulties for Councillors. There is however the compelling requirement to ensure that a planning application is processed and determined in a transparently open and fair manner.

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6.13 Officers involved in the processing or determination of planning matters should not attend public meetings in connection with development proposals (i.e. pre-application) or submitted planning applications unless those meetings have been arranged by or with the express agreement of the Council or the senior planning manager has given their consent to the attendance. When attending such meetings extreme caution should be exercised in giving any views on the application. Officers should only provide information by way of explaining background or policy and give no view on the merits or otherwise of the proposal.

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- 6.14 If Councillors consider that they have been exposed to undue or excessive lobbying or approaches, these should be reported to the Monitoring Officer, who will in turn advise the appropriate Officers.
- 6.15 Councillors serving on the Development Control Committee should attend, debate and vote on all the applications included on the Schedule unless the individual member decides that a conflict of interests necessitates [their](#) withdrawal from consideration of a particular item.

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7 OFFICERS' PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS WITH APPLICANTS

- 7.1 In any discussions on planning issues, it will always be made clear at the outset, that such discussions will not bind the Council to make a particular decision, and that any views expressed are based on the Officers provisional professional judgement but do not commit the Council to any particular decision.
- 7.2 Advice given will be consistent and based upon the Development Plan and other material considerations. Every effort will be made to ensure that there are no significant differences of interpretation of planning policies between planning officers.
- 7.3 A written note will be made of pre-application discussions where appropriate and two or more Officers will attend meetings on major planning issues. As a matter of standard good practice a follow up letter will be sent, particularly when material has been left with the Council.
- 7.4 Every effort will be made to ensure that advice is impartial.
- 7.5 To maintain impartiality it is preferable that Councillors do not take part in the officers' pre-application discussions with applicants. Should there be occasions when Councillors are involved, they will be advised by the appropriate professional officers of the Council, which will always include a senior planning officer. The involvement of Councillors in such discussions will be recorded as a written file record.

8. OFFICER REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

- 8.1 Reports to Committee on planning matters must be accurate and cover all relevant points. Where a planning application is subject to a full report this will refer to the provisions of the Development Plan, all other relevant material planning considerations. Normally the report will include a full description of the site and any related planning history. It will include the substance of objections and the views of people who have been consulted.
- 8.2 All reports will have a written recommendation of action/decision, and oral reporting (other than to update an existing report) will only be used on rare occasions and carefully minuted when this does occur.

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8.3 All reports will contain a technical appraisal which clearly justifies the stated recommendation.

8.4 All reasons for refusal and conditions to be attached to permissions must be clear, unambiguous and in accordance with law and policy.

9. THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS AND DECISIONS CONTRARY TO OFFICER RECOMMENDATION AND/OR THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

9.1 In determining all types of planning related applications the Council will follow the relevant government guidance and case law.

9.2 In discussing, and then determining, a planning application or other planning matter Councillors will confine themselves to the planning merits of the case and the reasons for making a final decision should be clear and convincing, and supported by planning evidence. If Councillors wish to refuse or grant an application against Officer advice or impose additional conditions on a permission, the reasons for refusal, grant or the additional conditions must be clearly stated at the time the propositions are moved at the meeting.

9.3 If a resolution is passed which is contrary to a recommendation of the relevant planning officer (whether for approval or refusal) a detailed Minute of the Committee's reasons will be made. Officers shall be given the opportunity to explain the implications of the contrary proposal immediately prior to the Chair's final statement and vote.

9.4 Planning decisions (unless delegated) are made when the Committee is in public session. It is expected that Councillors will conduct the business of the Committee in a fair and sensitive manner. The debate on a planning application will be confined to the planning merits of a development proposal. In addition Councillors and Officers will address one another during the debate in a proper manner and through the Chair.

9.5 If the Officer report recommends approval of a departure from the Development Plan, the justification for this should be included, in full, in the report.

9.6 Senior Legal and Planning Officers should attend meetings of the Committee to ensure that procedures have been properly followed and planning issues properly addressed.

9.7 Councillors with interests under the [Planning Code of Conduct](#) should withdraw from the meeting and not speak or vote in the decision making process. If they insist on so doing the decision reached by the relevant Committee may well be open to legal challenge, or result in a finding of maladministration against the Council including cases where the Ombudsman personally names the Councillor in his decision letter. Councillors are also reminded of the advice in section 4 above which covers situations other than those where interests arise pursuant to the [Planning Code of Conduct](#).

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9.8 Where a Councillor wishes to support the Council or an appellant in respect of any appeal against a refusal of planning permission, or in civil or criminal enforcement action that Councillor shall notify in writing (normally at least 7 days before any Inquiry or Hearing) their intention to the Director of One Legal.

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9.9 In deciding whether to make representations in a personal or private capacity, the Councillor should consider very carefully beforehand, whether there could be any allegation of a conflict of interest as set out in the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

10. PUBLIC SPEAKING AT MEETINGS

10.1 The purpose of permitting public speaking is to enable those affected by proposed developments to inform the Committee of their viewpoint and to contribute to an open, fair and transparent debate on applications in which they have an interest. All public speaking will be carried out in accordance with any guidance issued by the Council.

10.2 Guidance will be provided for members of the public who wish to speak at planning meetings and practical assistance will be provided for persons undertaking public speaking by Council officers at the meeting.

10.3 Public speaking is limited to four minutes per speaker. For each application there are three available public speaking slots: Town or Parish representative, Objectors to the application and Supporters of the application (this includes the applicant/agent)

10.4 Items will be considered in the following order:

- Introduction of item by the Chair
- Brief Presentation and update by the planning case officer
- The Ward Member(s) (maximum of 5 minutes)
- Public Speaking
 - Town/Parish Council
 - Those who oppose the application
 - Those who support the application
- Committee Members question of officers
- Committee Members debate the application
- Committee Members vote on the application

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11. DECISION MAKING AND THE VOTING PROCESS

Councillors should only vote on an application if they have been present for the whole of the presentation of, and discussion on, the application

12. SITE VISITS

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12.1 The Site Inspection Panel (SIP), which includes all members of the [Development Control Committee](#), will meet the week before the Committee to view all sites on the forthcoming agenda. The relevant Ward Member(s) will be invited to attend.

12.3 At the site visit, Councillors are there to view the site and not to hear representations or debate the merits of the application. A decision on the application will be made at the next full meeting of the Development Control Committee in the light of all the information then available.

12.4 [Councillors who have an interest in an application are precluded from attending any site visit on a matter. In addition if an interest become apparent during a site visit the member should immediately declare it to the chair and withdraw from the site.](#)

13. WHIPPING AND POLITICAL PRE-MEETINGS

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[13.1](#) The Whip will not apply from any of the political groups on their respective members of the Committee while they are taking part in Development Control business. No political meetings of Development Control Committee members shall take place.

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14. COMPLAINTS AND RECORD KEEPING

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[14.1](#) In order that any complaints can be fully investigated, record keeping will be complete and accurate. In particular, every planning application file will contain an accurate account of events throughout its life, particularly the outcomes of meetings or significant telephone conversations.

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[14.2](#) The same principles of good record keeping will be observed in relation to enforcement and development plan matters. Monitoring of record keeping will be undertaken on a continuous basis by officers.

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15. TRAINING

[15.1](#) [All members of the Development Control Committee are required to attend mandatory training prior to sitting on the Committee and at least one further training sessions each year thereafter.](#)

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ROLE PROFILES FOR COUNCILLORS

This section explains what is expected of Councillors in undertaking their duties.

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Role Profiles for Councillors

Chair Of Council

The role and function of the Chair is set out in Article 5 of this constitution. In addition, the Chair will have the following duties and responsibilities:

Duties and Responsibilities

- To chair meetings of the Council ensuring among other things that all points of view have a fair opportunity to be heard, that procedure rules are applied and observed, and that debate is guided towards clear and relevant decisions.
- To represent the Council in the District and elsewhere on occasions where a civic representative is invited or otherwise required.
- To participate in events, receptions, programmes and activities designed to recognise and encourage civic awareness in the community, where appropriate.
- To attend and chair briefings for Council meetings, involving leaders of the political groups and to be proactive in making proposals for the effective conduct of the agenda.
- To host Council events of a non-party-political nature as required.
- To promote good relationships between Councillors, between political groups and between Councillors and Officers.
- To oversee the spending of the Civic Fund for the benefit of the whole District.
- To ensure that the Vice-Chair is kept informed of all relevant civic matters and has a useful civic role during their period of office.
- To attend Chair Skills training as appropriate, usually at the start of the term of office.

Vice-Chair of Council

The Vice-Chair of Council will support the Chair of Council in their role and in their absence undertake the duties within the role profile for the Chair of Council.

Chair of a Committee

Appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs

- (a) The Annual Meeting of the Council will agree the appointment of members to committees and the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs to such committees as are provided for, unless the Council decides in any instance not to do so, in which case the chair is appointed at the first meeting of a committee in the municipal year.
- (b) The appointment of a Member as Chair of a Committee shall not take effect unless and until that Member has undergone such training as may be determined by the Council (in the absence of which shall be such training as may be determined by the Monitoring Officer).
- (c) The process of appointment is set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

Role and Function of Committee Chairs

The Chair of a Committee shall:

Deleted: (a)

- (i) lead the work of the committee and make sure it carries out its business effectively and efficiently, lawfully and within its terms of reference;
- (ii) chair meetings of the committee impartially and in such a way as to facilitate open discussion, obtain valid contributions from members and produce sound decisions;
- (iii) assist the public and press in terms of their rights of access; and
- (iv) ensure respectful engagement between the committee, its officers, guests and the public and maintain ethical conduct throughout the meeting.
- (v) lead an agenda management process for the Committee in association with the Vice-Chair and Group Spokespersons; and
- (vi) act as consultee and spokesperson for their Committee in instances of exercise of delegated authority by an officer, where that delegation is subject to being in consultation with the Chair of the Committee or where otherwise requested by a Chief Officer.

Key Responsibilities of Committee Chairs

(a) The Chair of a Committee will undertake:

- (i) To have a working knowledge of the functions, policies, practices, procedures, services and budgets of the Committee which they chair.
- (ii) To lead in the development of the work of the Committee which they chair in association with the Vice-Chair and Group Spokespersons, including the agenda management process, also taking into account the wider vision, such as corporate, cross-service and partnership issues.
- (iii) To ensures that the Committee which they chair 'self scrutinises' to ensure that it continues to make sound decisions which are lawfully compliant and take account of all the relevant information
- (iv) To lead in consideration and review of service delivery, policy development and in the implementation of policies approved by the Council where these relate to the Committee which they chair.
- (v) To be the Council's lead spokesperson in respect of the Committee's activities and act in liaison with the Leader and Deputy Leader in matters of Council policy.
- (vi) To establish effective working relationships with the Group Spokespersons on the Committee and with other Committee Chairs and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.
- (vii) To establish effective working relationships with the Chief Officers, and other key officers.
- (viii) To represent and pursue the interests of the Committee which they chair in the community and at regional and national levels.
- (viii) To ensure that meetings of the Committee which they chair are properly conducted and reports of proceedings are forwarded on as necessary, for example to full Council.
- (ix) To promote and uphold high standards of ethical conduct by the Council's Members and officers.

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Role and Responsibilities of Committee Vice-Chairs

The Vice Chair will:

- (a) assist the Chair in carrying out their role and responsibilities as set out at above; and
- (b) undertake the responsibilities of the Chair in their absence.

Terms of Reference Specific to Certain Chairs

A Strategy and Resources Chair will also:

- Be the Council Leader.
- Will have the lead role in co-ordinating the work of the Committees across the Council, liaising with other Committee chairs as needed to ensure the work of all Committees is undertaken in a holistic manner and having regard to the Corporate Plan.

Deleted: Delivery

B Communities, Environment and Housing Committee Chairs will also:

- Sit on the Strategy and Resources Committee.
- Will champion the function of their individual Committee but in doing so will recognise their part in the holistic purpose of the Strategy and Resources Committee as a body comprised of key leading members from across all functions of the Council.

C Development Control Committee Chair will also:

- Chair meetings of the Sites Inspection Panel.
- Maintain the non-party political status of Committee proceedings and meeting management.

D Community and Licensing Committee Chair will also:

- When sitting as a member of a Licensing Panel chair that panel hearing.
- Promote good relationships between the Council, the various licensing trade groups and communities within the District.
- Maintain the non-party political status of Committee proceedings and meeting management.

E Audit and Standards Committee Chair will also:

- Maintain the non-party political status of Committee proceedings and meeting management.

Leader of Council (Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee)

As the Council operates a Committee System, no formal legal powers and duties are vested in the Leader or Deputy Leader under the Local Government Act 1972 or the Local Government Act 2000. In practice, however, all local authorities need to appoint a councillor to hold the most significant elected Member role within the Council, to be seen as the political head of the Council and to provide a focal point for political leadership and strategic direction for the Council, both within the Authority but also to outside organisations, partners, governmental bodies and the community at large.



Likewise, there are several other roles that involve political leadership and representation of the Council, beyond civic or formal functions and the role of a councillor as Member of the Authority (which are described in Article 2 above) and are set out below.

Appointment of Leader and Deputy Leader

- (a) At the Annual Meeting of Council, it will appoint a Leader of the Council who shall act as Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.
- (b) At the Annual Meeting of Council, it will appoint a Deputy Leader of the Council who shall act as Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.
- (c) Once appointed, the Leader and the Deputy Leader will hold office until the next Annual Meeting unless they: -
 - (i) resigns from the office
 - (ii) is no longer a member of the Council or
 - (iii) is removed from office by resolution of the Council
- (d) The process of appointment is set out in the Council's Standing Orders

Role and Function of the Leader

- (a) The Leader shall be:
 - (i) the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.
 - (ii) entitled to attend all meetings of the Council's functional committees in an ex officio capacity.
- (b) The Leader will:
 - (i) provide a focal point for political leadership and strategic direction for the Council.
 - (ii) represent the interests of the Council in circumstances where that is necessary; and
 - (iii) ensure effective Corporate Governance and ethical conduct throughout the Council.

Key Responsibilities of the Leader

The Leader will:

- (a) Be the political (rather than ceremonial) leader of the Council, for the benefit of all the District's communities - its residents, taxpayers, businesses, public bodies and other public authorities.
- (b) Represent and pursue the interests of the Council in the community and at international, national and regional levels.
- (c) Be the key contact for outside organisations (including Central Government, Local Authority Associations and Council partners), and internally for the Council's Chief Officers.
- (d) Be the representative voice of the Council, for example, in its dealings with Central Government, other Local Authorities and their Associations, and positively promote the Council as a whole to the media.



- (e) Promote the long-term financial, business and economic stability of the Council and the District.
- (f) Meet regularly to progress the Council's objectives with Committee Chairs, the Chief Officers, Group Leaders, partner organisations, stakeholders, community representatives, government representatives, local Members of Parliament, etc.
- (g) Promote high standards of corporate governance and ethical conduct throughout the Council including working with all political groups to seek to achieve, where possible, cross party co-operation.
- (h) Promote and maintain professional working relationships and mutual respect between all Members and officers.
- (i) Work across the Council, particularly with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of its Committees and Sub-Committees, and to be responsible for the development and implementation of the Council's strategic vision for the future, policy framework, budgets and other strategies.

Role and Function of the Deputy Leader

- (a) The Deputy Leader shall be the Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee
- (b) The Deputy Leader will:
 - (i) assist the Leader of the Council in representing the Council to its residents, stakeholders, and partners and in providing political leadership for the Council and the District.
 - (ii) assist the Leader in carrying out the key responsibilities associated with the role of Leader (as set out above);
 - (iii) work with the Leader and Committee Chairs on budget and policy development; and
 - (iv) undertake the responsibilities of the Leader in their absence.

Political Group Leader

Political groups, and the leader (and any deputy group leader) of a political group, have a formal role under the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 in respect of political balance of committees and appointments of the Council.

The Council acknowledges the key leadership role played by the leaders of all political groups on the Council and the importance of their commitment to cross-party working.

Role and responsibilities of Political Group Leaders are:

- (a) To provide the leadership of a political group.
- (b) To be the principal political spokesperson for the political group.
- (c) To nominate members of their Group to serve on Committees, Working Groups, outside bodies, etc.
- (d) To be a representative voice in dealings with government agencies, local authority associations etc.



- (e) To encourage the highest standards of conduct by members of the group and to work with the Monitoring Officer to resolve complaints informally where appropriate.
- (f) To appoint group spokespersons and allocate other responsibilities to group members as appropriate.
- (g) To assist in ensuring appropriate levels of attendance are maintained by group members.
- (h) To encourage a culture of learning and development among members, including the active participation of group members in briefings, seminars and other learning and development processes.
- (i) To maintain effective liaison with the other group leaders, including being a member of an informal Group Leaders' meeting, attending Group Leaders' briefings and so forth.
- (j) To establish and maintain effective working relationships with the Chief Officers and other senior officers and to meet regularly them in order to keep fully apprised of relevant service issues.

Member Champions

Member Champions are elected Members who act as an advocate or spokesperson for a specific area of the Council's business or a particular interest within the community, they have evolved in the Council as a result of national initiatives and approval at Council. The primary responsibility of each Member Champion is to encourage communication and positive action over the issue they represent.

Members who are appointed as a Member Champion are required to act within the parameters of the Member Champion Protocol set out in this Constitution.

Roles And Functions of All Councillors

Councillors will participate constructively in the good government of the District in the interests of all residents. They will contribute actively to the formation and review of the Authority's policies, budget, strategies, plans and service delivery.

Councillors will deal with constituents' enquiries and representations and will effectively represent the interests of the Ward for which they were elected and the views of constituents.

Terms of Reference

- To fulfil the statutory and locally determined requirements of an elected Member of a Local Authority.
- To participate effectively as a member of any meeting to which the Councillor is appointed, for example by regular attendance at meetings and ensuring that they are adequately briefed and prepared for the meeting.
- To participate in the activities of an outside body to which the Councillor is appointed and to report those activities to Council on an annual basis.
- To act as community champion for their ward. To provide a voice and advice for local individuals and interest groups in their dealings with the Council and, where appropriate, to advise them on the pursuit of complaints.
- To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Authority's services, management arrangements, powers/duties and constraints and to develop good working relationships with relevant Officers of the Authority.

Deleted: This includes the Council's E-communications Policy.



- To develop and maintain good working relationships with the local Town or Parish Council and with local County Councillors [and to promote the Town and Parish Charter](#).
- To contribute constructively to open government and democratic participation by encouraging community engagement in the governance of the area.
- To keep up to date with all developments affecting the District and the Council including Government policies and prospective legislation.
- [Attend meetings of Parish Councils within the ward, as appropriate.](#)

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2023

Report Title	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge revisit and feedback report			
Purpose of Report	To inform Members of the feedback from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge progress review, which took place on 17 January 2023.			
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES to note the feedback report prepared by the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and the progress made against the Action Plan.			
Consultation and Feedback	The Peer Challenge progress review involved focus groups with Members, officers, and Parish and Town Council Clerks and Councillors. The Action Plan arising from the Peer Challenge visit in 2022 was developed in consultation with officers and members and approved by Strategy and Resources Committee.			
Report Author	Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive Email: Kathy.OLeary@stroud.gov.uk Hannah Barton, Policy & Projects Officer Email: Hannah.Barton@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	N/A			
Background Papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to Council on LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report 19 May 2022 • LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report 2022 • Report to Strategy & Resources Committee on LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan 24 November 2022 			
Appendices	Appendix A – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review for Stroud District Council			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) gives all local authorities the opportunity to participate in a Corporate Peer Challenge as part of its sector-led improvement programme. The Council undertook a Peer Challenge in March 2019 as the then new Chief Executive and Leader considered it an ideal time to take up the offer to review how the council was doing and how best to tackle current and future challenges.
- 1.2 Ordinarily the Peer Challenge team would have carried out a light-touch revisit within two years of the original visit, but this was delayed by the pandemic. As a result, a fuller review was undertaken in March 2022.

- 1.3 The 2022 review was conducted by a team of elected Members and senior officers from other local authorities, together with advisors from the LGA. They were invited to give us the benefit of their experience of working with and leading similar organisations.
- 1.4 The Peer Challenge team reviewed a range of documents and supporting information, including a position statement prepared for the Peer Challenge, which included the challenges the Council faces, and the progress made since the last Peer Challenge visit in 2019. Over their 2.5 day visit they also held focus groups with representatives from Parish and Town Councils, staff, councillors, stakeholders and other partners.
- 1.5 Following the Peer Challenge team's visit in 2022 they prepared a report that was submitted to Council on 19 May 2022. This included eight key recommendations in respect of areas for development and improvement (see [pages 4 to 6 of the feedback report](#)).
- 1.6 In response to the recommendations in the feedback report, an Action Plan was prepared which included actions identified to address the recommendations, the anticipated timescale and lead officers responsible for delivery of each action. This was developed in consultation with senior managers and members of Strategy & Resources Committee, and progress against the Action Plan was reported to Strategy & Resources Committee on 24 November 2022 ([see report to Strategy & Resources Committee](#)).
- 1.7 The Peer Challenge team undertook their revisit of the Council in January 2023, which considered the progress the Council has made against the Action Plan.

2. JANUARY 2023 PROGRESS REVIEW

- 2.1 The progress review is an integral part of the Peer Challenge process. Taking place approximately six months after the Council published the Peer Challenge Action Plan, it is designed to provide space for the Council's senior leadership to:
 - Update peers on the early progress made and to receive feedback on this including how the action plan aligns to the Peer Challenge team's recommendations;
 - Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team's 2022 visit, including any further support needs; and
 - Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date.
- 2.2 The Peer Challenge team stated that it was clear from the Action Plan prepared by the Council that progress had been made against every recommendation from the Peer Challenge feedback report. The Peer Challenge team selected four areas they felt appropriate for a deeper dive as their focus for the progress review. These were:
 - Working with town and parish councils
 - Create a Member Development Group
 - Action Plan for improvement to Housing Services
 - Clarity on embedding the One Council ethos.
- 2.3 To undertake the review, the peer team visited the Council on 17 January 2023. As part of this they met with the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT), attended a focus group of councillors, a focus group of staff and spent time touring the district and some of the major sites and areas of significance. Ahead of their visit they also held a focus group with representatives from Parish and Town Councils.

- 2.4 The progress review ended with the Peer Challenge team presenting their initial findings to a meeting of political Alliance leaders and SLT. This led to a wide-ranging and positive conversation about the significant progress to date and challenges ahead.
- 2.5 The Peer Challenge progress review (Appendix A) sets out the Peer Challenge team's comments and conclusions.

3. PROGRESS REVIEW REPORT

- 3.1 The Peer Challenge team noted that the Council has made significant progress in a number of areas since the March 2022 visit, and a number of projects clearly demonstrate the Council's ambition for place. Some of the highlights from the report are below:
- Stroud is in many ways a unique place with a strong industrial heritage, but with a real focus on the future and ensuring both the development but also sustainability of the district. This shines through both in the value base of the council and indeed its communities and the stakeholders we met with. The peer team found that what underpins all of this is strong partnerships between the council and its communities and both staff and council members who are real advocates for the council and the district.
 - The district council was credited for driving forward the work with town and parish councils and the work developing the Parish and Town Council Charter was singled out for praise.
 - The political Alliance continues to work as an effective leadership model and whilst there have been some changes since the peer team last visited, those changes have not affected the ability of SDC to carry out its responsibilities for the people of Stroud.
 - The focus group spoke very positively about the Member Development Group. The group reflected real enthusiasm for the opportunity to take ownership of the member development programme. The peer team felt that this also reflected positively on member officer relationships at SDC; councillors were very complimentary about the calibre of staff working for the council.
 - The peer team felt there was a willingness amongst staff who want to do the right thing, and it was clear they [Housing Services] were now a team looking forward with positivity; this bodes well for the future.
 - Staff reflected to the peer team that they can see the values being lived out by the senior leadership team. The positive working relationships between members and officers is further evidence of that One Council ethos becoming embedded.
 - There is an overwhelming sense from those that the peer team spoke to of working for an organisation that does not just care about staff but wants staff to care about each other. The peer team heard that SDC has its heart in the right place, it has staff who want to work for an organisation that cares, that has a sense of purpose and is doing the right thing, a good employer and provider of services for the right reasons.
- 3.2 The Peer Review process is about continuous improvement and in addition to the highlights included in the report, there were several suggestions made regarding ways in which we can improve across all the recommendations. These will be considered and any remaining actions from the original action plan will be included in the relevant service area's Service Plan for 2023/24.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Peer Review process has been a very positive one for the council. It has helped us focus on particular issues to address but it has also highlighted the many areas of good practice, the commitment and dedication of the council's officers and members and the work undertaken by the council.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to this decision.

Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources

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5.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

One Legal

Tel: 01684 272012 Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

5.3 Equality Implications

There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision.

5.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Stroud District Council

17th January 2023

Feedback



Appendix A

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1. Introduction

Stroud District Council (SDC) undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during March 2022 and promptly published the full report with an action plan.

The progress review is an integral part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. Taking place approximately six months after the council published the CPC action plan, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Update peers on the early progress made and to receive feedback on this including how the action plan aligns to the CPC's recommendations
- Consider peer's reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date

The LGA would like to thank SDC for their commitment to sector led improvement. This review was the next step in an ongoing and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

Original Peer Team Recommendations

The peer team feedback report from the Corporate Peer Challenge that took place in March 2022 included the following recommendations:

- **Pace of activity**

Ensure there is sufficient corporate and strategic capacity, focus on reviewing progress to date and plan effectively for the delivery of agreed plans and strategies. Focus on the delivery of what you have agreed are your priorities to ensure that what you do is done well and your activity is outcome driven.

- **Capacity of senior leadership team**

Consider the structure in place for informal meetings now that key Plans are in place – are meetings proportionate? Consider the capacity of your senior leadership team so that they can continue to deliver for you as they have been doing very capably.

- **Create a Member Development Group**

Create a Member Development Group to coordinate and prioritise a programme of ongoing member training and support new members to find their place in the council and understand and embrace the member officer protocol. If Members own this agenda, they can shape it to what they need.

- **Clarity on embedding the One Council ethos**

Ensure there is a coherent plan that sets out how the One Council ethos will be embedded across the whole council (officers and members). This includes officers working across departments and it includes officers and members displaying corporate loyalty and mutual respect to each other.

- **Action plan for improvement to housing services**

Continue to work on your action plan for improvement for housing services making sure the teams within that service understand their corporate responsibilities and feel that they are an integral part of the council. Ensure a clear plan to put tenants at the heart of what they do.

- **Opportunity to reset Customer Services**

Customer Services - there is an opportunity to reset your approach, making it more efficient, corporate, and centralised. If Customer services (or Community contact) is carried out to its highest level, you can free up resource by answering and responding to queries at first point of contact. Good customer service leads to a highly regarded council.

- **Align the council Plans and Strategies**

As the council's FFF Programme is rolled out, ensure it aligns with the Council Plan, 2030 Strategy and MTFP and there is a clear internal communications plan, alongside the Community Engagement Plan.

The Community Engagement Plan could include expected outcomes agreed with communities. There is clearly work done on external communications and engagement with the media. Ensure that there is also attention paid to internal communications with a communications strategy to ensure that resources are appropriately assigned to both aspects.

- **Working with town and parish councils**

Consider working more effectively with town and parish councils to maximise the developing relationships – whilst developing the Working Together project to put a protocol in place for engagement, continue and enhance the regular forums that are in place already (for example they could be theme based e.g., how towns and parishes can engage in planning policy, or planning consultations and see the results of their engagement).

Timing, approach, and peer team

The progress review at Stroud District Council took place on 17th January 2023.

It was clear from the action plan provided to the peer team (previously presented to SDC Strategy and Resources Committee on 24 November 2022), and the position statement for the progress review, that progress has been made against every recommendation from the corporate peer challenge feedback report. The peer team selected four areas they felt appropriate for a deeper dive as their focus for the progress review. The following section sets out the peer team comments and conclusions.

For this progress review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Katherine Marriott – Chief Executive, Rushcliffe Borough Council
- Tom Beattie – previous Leader, Corby Borough Council
- Paul Clarke – Principal Advisor, SW Local Government Association
- Kathryn Trant, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

To undertake the review, the peer team spent a day at Stroud District Council. As part of this they met with the senior leadership team, attended a focus group of councillors, a focus group of staff and spent time touring the district and some of the major sites and areas of significance.

The progress review ended with the peer team presenting their initial findings to a meeting of political Alliance leaders and the senior leadership team, which led to a wide ranging and very positive conversation about the significant progress to date and challenges ahead.

3. Progress Review - Feedback

SDC has made significant progress in a number of areas since the peer team visited in March 2022. As referenced above, the peer team were shown a number of projects that the council is involved during the peer visit that clearly demonstrated the council's ambition for place. Some of the projects are longer term and complex with strategic delivery partners involved. The role of the council will be critical going forward to make things happen.

From that site visit the peer team reflected that Stroud is in many ways a unique place with a strong industrial heritage, but with a real focus on the future and ensuring both the development but also sustainability of the district. This shines through both in the value base of the council and indeed its communities and the stakeholders we met with. The peer team found that what underpins all of this is strong partnerships between the council and its communities and both staff and council members who are real advocates for the council and the district.

The peer team focused on the following four areas for discussion.

Working with town and parish councils

Prior to being on site for the progress review, members of the peer team met with a focus group of town and parish councils to assess progress against the actions taken related to working with town and parish councils. Feedback from those who attended the focus group was positive, the district council was credited for driving forward the work with town and parish councils and the work developing the town and parish charter was singled out for praise. There was recognition from town and parish council stakeholders of the council taking a reciprocal rather than top down approach.

There was one suggestion to ensure contact lists were updated so that invites to events and meetings went to the right people and a further suggestion to consider direct contact numbers being available for some officers. These were just suggestions to improve the relationship; overall people feel that concerns have been taken seriously and there has been a genuine improvement in the relationship between SDC and town and parish councils.

Although the town and parish council focus group held in advance of the progress review was not as widely attended as we might hope, nevertheless there was positive engagement. Lack of some town and parish council representation at events was reported to the peer team as a frustration for those who do engage, and no doubt for SDC too. We discussed what more the council could do to encourage wider attendance at such events, such as using your ward councillors to trial and promote events, perhaps run an event during the day and evening as many councillors have daytime commitments and finally using publicity after the event, using quotes from attendees, and perhaps making presentations available. Those who do attend will be your best advocates and we encourage the council to persist with its very positive actions.

Create a Member Development Group

As part of the progress review, a focus group was held which members were invited to attend. Whilst attendance was low it was cross party, and there was general consensus that members saw themselves as members of the council representing the people of Stroud rather than wearing party political hats.

The political Alliance continues to work as an effective leadership model and whilst there have been some changes since the peer team last visited, those changes have not affected the ability of SDC to carry out its responsibilities for the people of Stroud. Alliance leaders and the chief executive should be credited for this.

The focus group spoke very positively about the Member Development Group which met for the first time in September 2022. The importance of making the distinction between training and development and understanding that councillors are not staff and therefore the same training for both may not be appropriate is understood.

The group reflected real enthusiasm for the opportunity to take ownership of the member development programme. The peer team felt that this also reflected positively on member officer relationships at SDC; councillors were very complimentary about the calibre of staff working for the council.

Action Plan for improvement to Housing Services

The action plan and position statement both evidence the significant work that has taken place within Housing Services. At a staff focus group held as part of the progress review there was positive feedback that things have been put in place and improvements made. However, it was also clear that housing staff are working in a particularly challenging environment. Many of those challenges are external such as housing asylum seekers, Ukrainian refugees, pressure following the recent publicity regarding addressing damp and mould in rented properties, and the cost of living crisis. There are unsurprisingly challenges around recruitment; perhaps a benchmarking exercise would be helpful to ensure the council is making the right offer to staff.

The peer team heard from staff about ideas for improvements, how working with neighbourhood wardens was going well, an example of working well with members on anti-social behaviour issues, recognition of wanting to change the working pattern to spend more time out on the patch and looking at the repairs and responsiveness side to see if improvements could be made to that model.

The peer team felt there was a willingness amongst staff who want to do the right thing, and it was clear they were now a team looking forward with positivity; this bodes well for the future. .

Clarity on embedding the One Council ethos

In both the member and officer focus groups held as part of the progress review there was positive feedback about the One Council ethos. A lot of work has taken place on the organisation values and behaviours but there was a recognition by all that things don't change overnight.

Importantly, Staff reflected to the peer team that they can see the values being lived out by the senior leadership team. As referenced earlier, the positive working relationships between members and officers is further evidence of that One Council ethos becoming embedded.

Like many councils, SDC is facing challenges of capacity and resilience and coping with external pressures. Despite all of this SDC continues to improve and it is very clear that this is becoming an underpinning strength of the council's core culture. There is an overwhelming sense from those that the peer team spoke to of working for an organisation that does not just care about staff but wants staff to care about each other. The peer team heard that SDC has its heart in the right place, it has staff who want to work for an organisation that cares, that has a sense of purpose and is doing the right thing, a good employer and provider of services for the right reasons.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Stroud District Council for undertaking an LGA CPC progress review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice, and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Paul Clarke (Principal Adviser) is the main point of contact between the authority and the Local Government Association (LGA) paul.clarke@local.gov.uk .

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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**COUNCIL****THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2023**

Report Title	Ubico Five Year Vision and Business Plan 2023/2024			
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on the Ubico Five Year Vision and Business Plan 2023/2024.			
Decision(s)	The Council RESOLVES to Note the Business Plan for 2023/24			
Consultation and Feedback	Officers and shareholders; Environment Committee in December 2022, Group Leaders and Chair of Environment Committee.			
Report Author	Kathy O’Leary, Chief Executive Email: kathy.oleary@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	The report is for information only.			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices	Appendix A - Ubico Five Year Vision and Business Plan 2023/2024			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Stroud District Council has a multi-service contract with Ubico to provide the collection of waste and recycling, street cleaning, grounds maintenance and building cleaning. Ubico is a teckal company wholly owned by local authorities including Stroud District Council.
- 1.2 The annual business plan is produced by Ubico and taken to the Directors and Shareholders meetings in February / March of each year for agreement for the following financial year. It sits within the context of a five-year vision for the company agreed in 2021. Directors and Shareholders meet quarterly to progress the business plan and monthly meetings are held with officers to discuss operational performance. The Strategic Director of Communities sits as a director on the Ubico Board and the Chief Executive fulfils the shareholder function for the Council.
- 1.3 Whilst the Chief Executive has authority as the shareholder representative to approve the business plan, it is being brought to Council for Members to note and consider.

2. BUSINESS PLAN 2023/2024

- 2.1 In 2019, it was agreed that the Council’s Environment Committee would have early sight of the draft business plan prior to its consideration by director and shareholder sign-off meetings, to allow for Members’ comments to be considered prior to the plan being finalised and endorsed by shareholders.

- 2.2 At the Environment Committee on 8 December 2022, Ubico's Managing Director gave a presentation which included outlining the business plan themes for 2023/2024. Similar presentations were made to groups and committees at each Ubico council.
- 2.3 The proposals contained in the business plan are built around the four key pillars of People, Operational Excellence, Climate and Business Development and focus on the following themes:
- Leveraging synergies and economies of scale
 - Harnessing opportunities to deliver back to partners
 - Using technology to drive operational efficiency
 - Understanding our communities' needs
 - Inspiring our workforce to be committed to providing value for money and carbon neutral services.
- 2.4 The year 2023/24 is the third year of the delivering the five-year vision for Ubico agreed in 2021. The business plan for 2023/24 seeks to build on the successes already achieved, and will focus particularly on Ubico's people, carbon reduction, digitisation and collaborative working.
- 2.5 The written version of the Business Plan for 2023/2024 was shared with the board of directors and shareholders in February and councils were asked for any further feedback.
- 2.6 The resulting final version of the business plan is attached here. It is intended to publish the plan in May 2023 once the shareholders have signed off the written resolution to approve it.
- 2.7 Ubico will submit individual business cases for approval as appropriate to support potential investment proposals within the 2023/2024 Business Plan, to develop areas of the business identified as having potential to deliver greater value for shareholders.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Members are recommended to note the Business Plan for the financial year 2023/2024 appended here.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

An annual contract sum is reviewed and agreed with Ubico as part of the budget setting process and considered by full Council each February.

Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources
Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The Chief Executive will need to make a formal decision to approve the business case as the representative of SDC as shareholder.

One Legal

Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

4.3 Equality Implications

Ubico's Business Plan promotes equality of access to essential services.

4.4 Environmental Implications

The Business Plan supports the Council's environmental and climate change priorities.

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2023/24 Business Plan

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1. Business Overview

1.1. Introduction

Ubico delivers high quality front line environmental services for our shareholder councils, which support and improve our local communities to remain clean, green and pleasant places to live and work. The company has grown significantly in its first 10 years of operations, with our eighth local authority shareholder joining as a partner in 2021.

We set out a new five-year vision for the company in 2021, and in 2023/24, the third year of this vision, we will build on the successes already achieved. Particular areas of focus will be around our people, carbon reduction, digitisation and collaborative working.

Ubico's most valued resource is its committed, dedicated and experienced workforce and we must ensure we continue to attract and retain staff with the knowledge and skills required to deliver excellent quality services. Recently, external to Ubico, low unemployment rates, salary inflation and general inflation have created additional challenges to both staff retention and staff recruitment. A salary benchmarking exercise undertaken in 2022 will be revisited in 2023 as it is vital that we continue to evaluate and understand the scale of these challenges and the potential risk to quality service delivery and identify options to mitigate these risks if necessary. We will also look to develop further in the areas of staff attraction, retention and upskilling.

Climate and carbon reduction activity will continue to have a strong emphasis, where we will seek to further improve our carbon reduction activities and support our partners to achieve their carbon goals. Digitisation of our processes remains a pivotal activity, driving innovation and serving as a platform for further development in the future. Our size and geographical coverage places the company in a strong position to explore innovative collaborative and cross boundary opportunities to deliver greater value to our shareholders, and we will continue working with them to progress these opportunities. We will also continue to present proposals for business development and wider partnership working for shareholder consideration.

1.2. Our shareholders

Ubico is a wholly-owned local authority company with eight shareholders, Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucester City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.



1.3. Quality and safety at our core

Health, safety and compliance remain our number one priority and we are committed to driving continuous improvement in these areas. This is demonstrated through our ongoing achievement of industry-recognised accreditations, including ISO 45001 and ISO 14001 for our Health and Safety Management and Environmental Management Systems respectively. We are committed to building a positive health and safety culture which is evident in all our activities and services, and is driven by our Safety, Health, Environment and Quality team and our health and safety performance is reviewed by our Board of Directors at every board meeting. Our internal compliance function is committed to providing assurance to all our stakeholders and is vital in the organisation's commitment to maintain high standards of compliance and to seek continuous improvement.

In 2023/24 we will remain committed to improving our health and safety performance, in particular around the area of vehicle accidents. We will continue to support our staff through the ongoing provision of health and wellbeing support and advice, which we have recently strengthened through the introduction of our employee engagement app. We will continue to investigate further opportunities provided by the app to improve employee support even further, building on the strong provision already in place.

Our internal training provision affords us the flexibility to deliver targeted health and safety training, which is specific to our activities and delivered at a time and pace to best support our teams. We will seek to further strengthen this offering through increased trainer hours, and effective support and administration of this important division.

1.4. Our core services



Refuse collections



Food waste collections



Garden waste collections



Recycling collections



Trade waste and recycling collections



Recycling centre management



Recycling and bulking transfer



Street cleansing



Building and public convenience cleaning



Grounds maintenance



Fleet management and maintenance



MOT and taxi testing

1.5. Our values

deliver quality
be safe
do the right thing
care for our environment
work together

1.6. Governance and risk management

1.6.1. Governance

Good corporate governance and the continued professional development of the board of directors and the senior management team is fundamental to the effective operations of the company. In 2023/24 we will continue to ensure appropriate competency standards and qualifying criteria are applied to all directors and follow the spirit of the UK Corporate Governance Code. At all times, the company will remain open, transparent and accountable. The board and its members will operate as a cohesive team, with its priority at all times to further the aims, goals and values of the company, whilst always having risk and risk management at the forefront of discussions.

Ubico's board of directors comprises three executive directors, four non-executive directors from local authority shareholders, and three independently appointed non-executive directors including an independent chair of the board. The independent non-executive directors will complete their first three-year term of appointment in February 2023, with all three seeking re-appointment to their roles, offering the board stability, continuity of knowledge and resilience.

The board is supported by two sub-committees, a Risk and Audit Committee and a Governance and Nominations Committee. These committees support the board in key governance areas, for example, better understanding of business risk, and ensuring the processes to mitigate risk are effective and there is compliance.

As a company, we regularly review our policies, procedures and governance arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose, represent good practice and meet all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, with key policies routinely scrutinised and signed off by the board of directors.

As the company grows, new criterion for reporting is met, and for the year 2021/22 the company was obliged, for the first time, to include carbon performance reporting in its Statement of Annual Accounts, and to produce and publish on its website a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement. The production of these reports, and the delivery of any associated activities required to meet prescribed standards, will continue, becoming routinely embedded in the company's governance processes.

An internal audit plan is completed annually with Audit Risk Assurance (ARA) continuing to deliver Ubico's audit services throughout 2023/24. A full annual audit plan is agreed by the board. The findings and the full audit reports are shared with the full board of directors for review and oversight, and progress against action plans arising from the audits is monitored by the risk and audit committee and reported to the board.

External audit of the company's accounts is determined by our shareholders at the Annual General Meeting.

1.6.2. Risk management

Risk management is a core principle of effective corporate governance and is also a key contributor to a sound internal control environment. Ubico continues to seek and adopt recognised best practice in the identification, evaluation and cost-effective control of risks and opportunities to ensure that these are managed at acceptable levels. Our strategic risk management objectives include board and senior management setting a 'tone from the top' on the level of risk we are prepared to accept - our 'risk appetite'. We maintain a strategic approach to risk management in order to make better informed decisions and use risk management to enable consistent appraisal of options and improved flexibility/agility in delivering change. We are committed to developing leadership capacity and skills to ensure understanding of the risks facing the company and how we manage them, and to integrate risk management into how we run Ubico business/services. Overall, we aim to develop a culture of well-measured risk taking throughout Ubico, including strategic, programme, partnership, project and operational risk.

1.7. 2022 Headline Performance

Pillar	Measure	2021 Goal	2021 Achievement	2022 Achievement	2026 Goal
People	Vacancy fill rate (advertisement closed to acceptance)	<1 month	84.08% fill rate Time to hire 2.4 months	85.02% fill rate Time to hire 1.9 months	<1 month
	Annual training budget utilisation	80% of annual training budget	80.08% (Apr to Dec)	100% (21/22)	100% of annual training budget
	Conformance to mandatory training to schedule	>90%	New starters >95%	New starters >95%	>95%
	Staff turnover	<14% attrition	9.62% (20/21)	13.4% (21/22)	<10% attrition
Operational Excellence	Service KPIs - Missed bins (per 100,000 collections)	<0.05 %	0.073%	0.0807%	<0.05 %
	Fleet compliance	Fleet Audit Scores >90%	92.37% average	92.76% average	Fleet Audit Scores >95%
	RIDDOR occurrence	<12 per year	6	11	<9 per year
	Deliver to set budget	Within 5% set budget	-6.4% (20/21)	-3.1% (21/22)	Within 3% set budget
Climate	Reduced carbon emissions	Benchmark in 2021/22	Carbon reduction strategy in place Baseline work in progress (consultant engaged to advise on methodology)	Emissions from activities from fuel consumption: CO2e 6,237t	Sophisticated measures in place across transport, buildings and key activities
Business Development	% Service coverage of core services to existing shareholders		82.61%	82.61%	95%

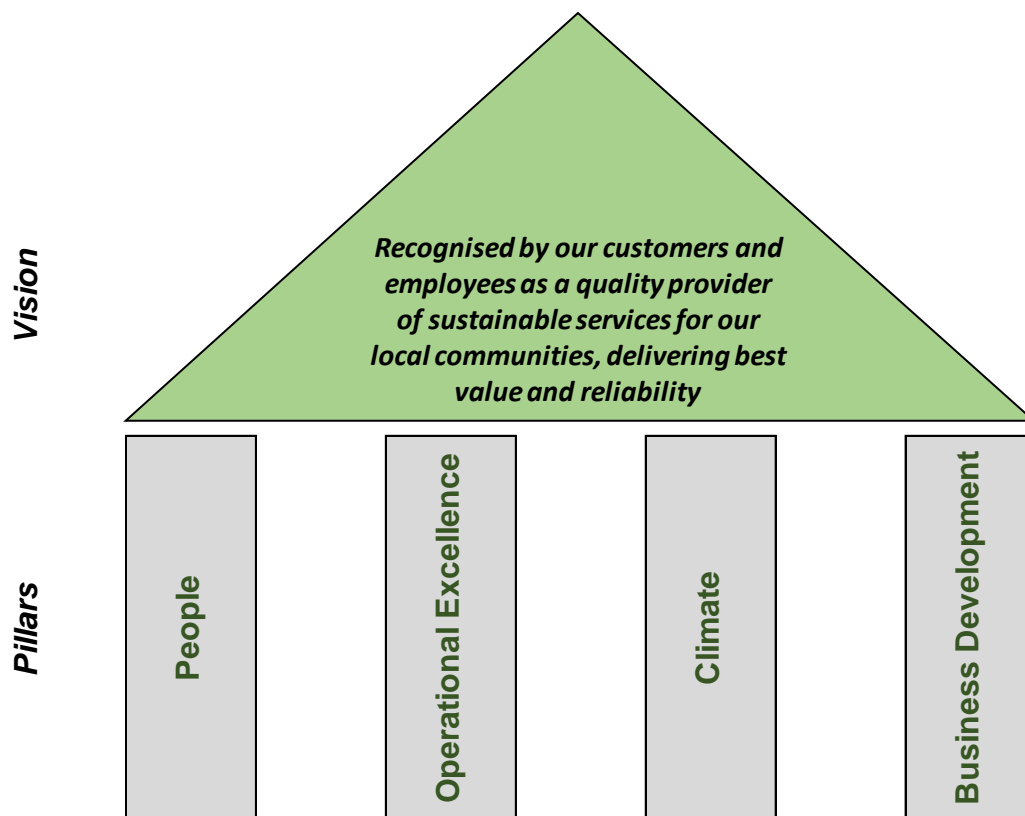
1.8. Our five-year vision (2021-2026)

Recognised by our customers and employees as a quality provider of sustainable services for our local communities, delivering best value and reliability

Through:

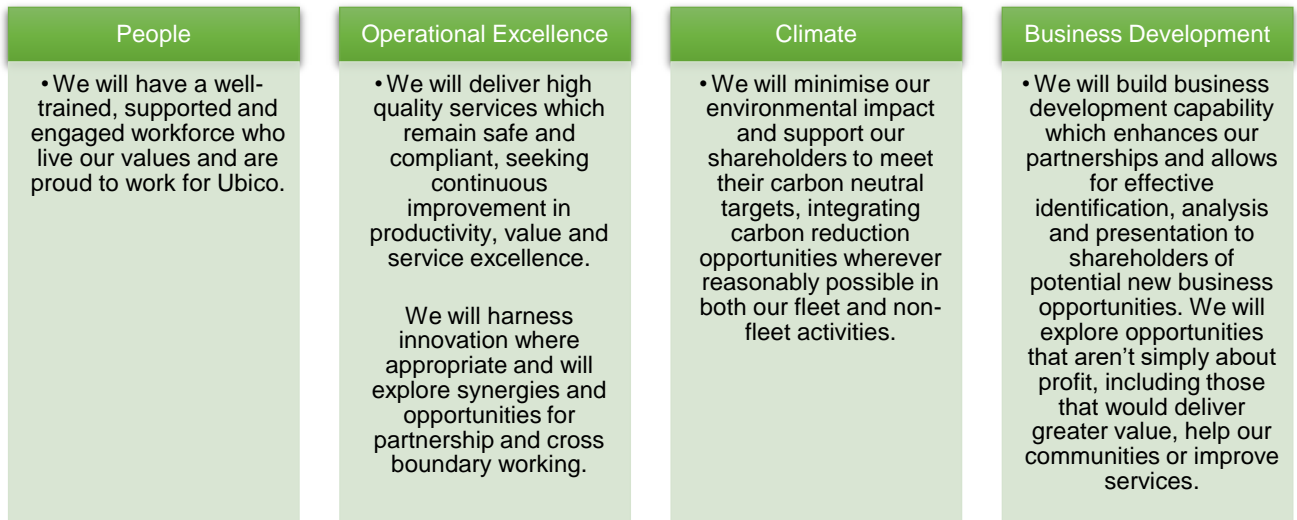
- Leveraging synergies and economies of scale
- Harnessing opportunities to deliver value back to our partners
- Using technology to drive operational efficiency
- Understanding our communities' needs
- Inspiring our workforce to be committed to providing value for money and carbon neutral services

1.9. Strategic Pillars of our vision



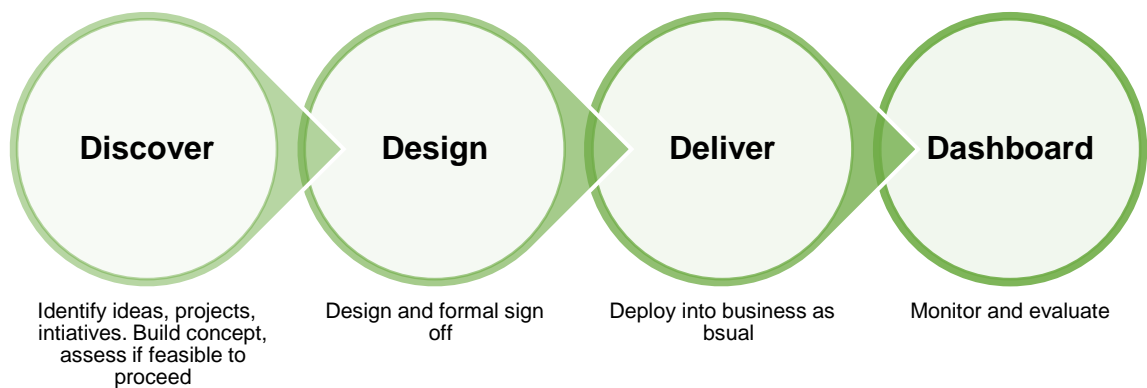
2. Business Plan 2023/24

Ubico's 2023/24 business plan is built around our four key pillars:



2.1. Project lifecycle

We have adopted a project lifecycle with four phases; Discover, Design, Deliver and Dashboard, and these can be seen alongside the activities outlined in this business plan. This aids in identifying the stage of each project or initiative and assists with long term planning and mapping, and resource management.

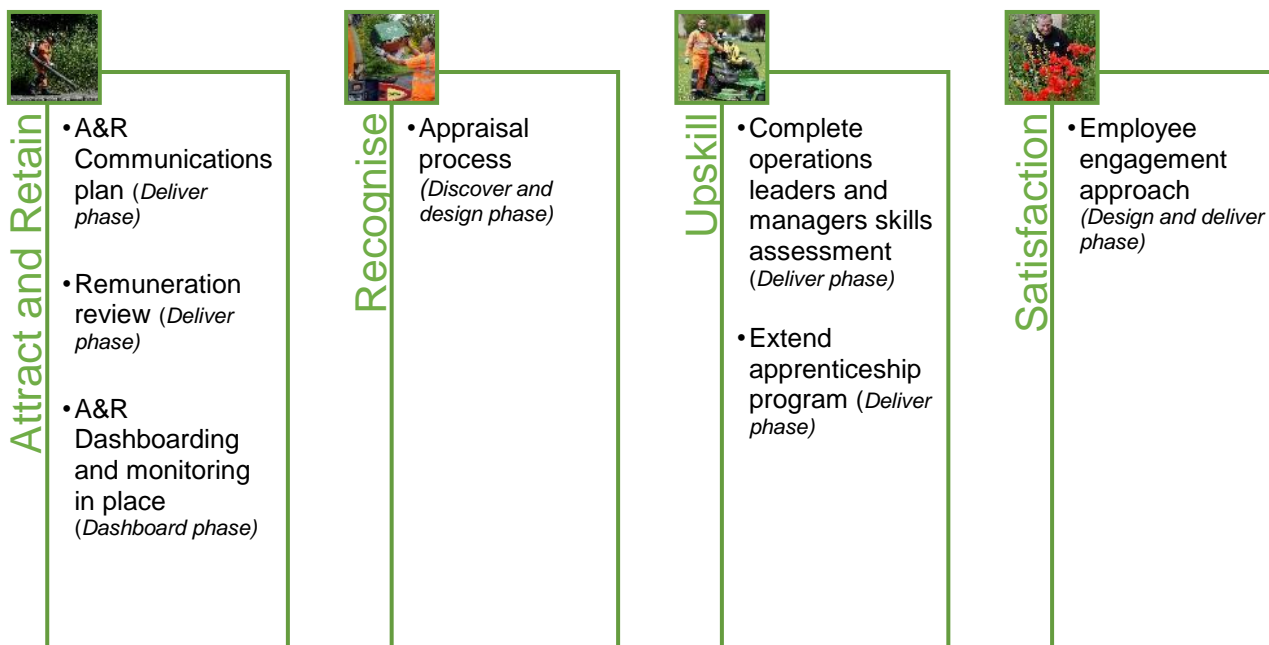


2.2. People Pillar

We will have a well-trained, supported and engaged workforce who live our values and are proud to work for Ubico.

2.2.1. 2023/24 Focus areas

There are four focus areas in our business plan for our People pillar for 2023/24 - Attract and Retain, Recognise, Upskill and Satisfaction.



2.2.2. 2023/24 Activity

It is imperative that Ubico remains an attractive employer, attracting and retaining staff with the right skills and experience, and ensuring they are valued, supported and recognised for the excellent work that they do. In 2023/24 we will have a strong focus on our people, building on and developing from key activities achieved in recent years.

Our Communications Strategy has a strong focus on improving our market presence and enhancing our reputation in order to attract strong candidates to apply for our vacancies, as well as significant activity around supporting and ensuring strong engagement with our existing employees. In 2023/24 we will continue to enter sector awards to promote the excellent work of the business; we will seek to improve the promotion of Ubico and its impact with our partner councils through their communication channels, and we will improve

Appendix A

communications awareness and knowledge in our management teams. We will continue to encourage sign up to our employee rewards app which offers numerous benefits for our staff, including discounts at many popular retailers, access to support around money and managing personal finances, an online health portal containing an online library of health and wellbeing information and access to our employee assistance programme. It is also an excellent platform for employee engagement and communication, and we will continue to share company updates and messages through the app as well as through our more traditional communication channels, and we will expand our use of the app to include employee engagement questionnaires and surveys.

In order to continue to deliver safe, compliant and relevant services for its shareholders, Ubico must offer a package that is competitive and attractive in the marketplace, both to retain current, loyal employees, as well as to attract new ones when required. In 2023/24 we will revisit the salary benchmarking exercise undertaken in 2022/23 to ensure Ubico remains competitive and attractive for both existing and new employees. We will reconcile the findings with our current terms and conditions to ensure early identification of any structural gaps which could risk the ongoing effectiveness of service provision.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of our activities around attraction and retention, we will introduce a dashboard of relevant KPIs, which will be reviewed regularly and lead to an action plan for ongoing or future focus areas.

A methodology will be proposed to the senior management team for a suitable new appraisal process for the company, which will then be trialled with a small sector of the workforce. Skills assessments will be completed for operations leaders and managers, and we will identify priority upskilling for individuals or specific roles.

In recent years, we have significantly strengthened our apprenticeships offering which has led to an increase in the number and variety of apprenticeships offered by the company. However, we do not consider that we have met our potential in this area and see this as a focus area for ongoing improvement. In 2023/24 we will improve our publicity around our apprenticeship opportunities, review our training offer to include apprenticeships as part of the reward and recognition package where appropriate, and further increase the range and number of apprenticeships we offer across the business.

2.2.3. People risks and mitigations

Area	Risk	Mitigation
Attract	We are unable to create packages that are competitive in the marketplace.	Continue to improve reward and recognition schemes, staff engagement and the support we provide. Assess market conditions and review with shareholders as required. Monitor interest in vacancies, vacancy fill rate, attrition rate.
Retain	We do not meet our potential in our apprenticeships offer.	Improve our publicity around apprenticeships, increase the range on offer.
Upskill	Inadequate capacity in in-house training team.	Increased trainer resource/hours available, effective support and administration put in place.
	No formal company-wide appraisal or development programme in place.	Ongoing development of the training function, skills assessments in place for priority roles, appraisal process designed.
Satisfaction	Employees are dissatisfied and leave the company.	Continuous improvement around staff support and engagement. Consider expansion of benefits offered both via our employee engagement app and outside it.

2.3. Operational Excellence Pillar

We will deliver high quality services which remain safe and compliant, seeking continuous improvement in productivity, value and service excellence. We will harness innovation where appropriate and will explore synergies and opportunities for partnership and cross boundary working.

2.3.1. 2023/24 Focus areas

There are two focus areas in our business plan for our Operational Excellence pillar for 2023/24 - Performance and Quality.



Performance

- Digital Transformation (In-Cab, Dashboarding, Operations Management) *(Deliver phase)*
- Fleet Management System Review *(Discover phase)*



Quality

- Ubico Communications Plan Implemented and Measured *(Deliver & dashboard)*
- Ubico 5 year financial plan *(Deliver phase)*
- Ubico Business Intelligence Dashboard *(Discover phase)*

2.3.2. 2023/24 Activity

The activities identified in our Operational Excellence pillar support Ubico in providing high quality, safe and compliant services, harnessing continuous improvement and innovation wherever possible.

2023/24 will see the ongoing program of digital transformation continue apace, with large workstreams dedicated to introducing an in-cab technology system which is standardised across the company, in line with the partner-agreed roadmap.

Our fleet management system, introduced to standardise internal fleet processes, maintain high compliance standards and improve reporting, is due for renewal or extension in 2024 and we will undertake work to define our fleet management needs ahead of any procurement decision.

We recognise that communication is central to the delivery of our services and priorities, and want to ensure that our priorities, objectives, values and ambitions are understood by our shareholders, communities, workforce, partners, and other stakeholders. To further underpin our progress, we must continue to effectively communicate and engage with our diverse range of external and internal stakeholders. In 2023/24 we will undertake a perception survey with our stakeholders to identify areas of strength and opportunities for continuous improvement. We will strengthen our external communications by appointing a board communications champion, and we will consider opportunities to speak at events and conferences.

We aim to provide strategic longer-term cost projections to all partners for their individual contracts. This will enable a better understanding of cost commitments when aligned to residency profiles, service level commitments and climate target aspirations, with a view to then combining our plans be able to create a company five-year financial plan to better support our strategic aims.

We will continue to develop the measurement of our progress against our strategic goals and recognise the need for sound business intelligence to be able to react and adapt to change and give a higher assurance of success. We will develop the measures and metrics required to create a business intelligence dashboard for our management teams together with a roadmap for the creation of the means to collect, record and report on those metrics.

2.3.3. Operational Excellence risks and mitigations

Area	Risk	Mitigation
Performance	Digitisation projects do not meet plan.	Program structure enables progress monitoring at appropriate levels, allowing early identification and escalation of risks, and intervention to mitigate. Detailed project plan in place, required resource in place and fully funded, with appropriate skills to deliver to requirements.
Quality	Inflationary cost pressures.	Continue to highlight potential areas of cost pressure as early as possible in both budget setting processes and monthly forecasting reports. Ensure partners are aware that Ubico do not hold contingency funding.
	Information gaps, concerns over data security and/or the cost of data collection devalue planning and information reporting initiatives	Risk that the cost of collecting the data required to provide data insights is prohibitive or the data is not directly available may undermine the drive for insight to drive value. The mitigation is to have clarity of data needs, combined with pragmatism over the means to collect data and the appropriate skills in place to build requirements 'right first time' in a secure manner. We will look to leverage partner capabilities but to date we are having to build a capability within which takes time and has more risk of failure.

2.3.4. Procurement Activity 2023/24

In 2023/24 we will complete procurement activity to allow contract award as follows:

Further to procurement activity undertaken in 22/23, contracts will be awarded for the supply of:

- PPE and uniform
- Static compactor service and maintenance
- Occupational Health
- Pest Control
- Cleaning and grounds products
- Site fire and security contracts

Award contract extensions or undertake new procurement activity and award a contract for the supply of:

- Weed Control Operations (covering Cheltenham & Cotswold)
- Vehicle Telematics
- Employee Rewards and Engagement App
- Waste management route modelling software
- Insurance Services
- Confidential waste disposal services

Undertake new procurement activity and award a contract for the supply of:

- Mobile Phones
- Fleet Maintenance - Downs Road
- Fleet Tyres
- Insurance Brokerage Services
- Workshop Overalls Cleaning
- Fleet Framework - Liquid Fuels - Diesel
- Liquid Fuel - Supply of HVO
- Textile Recycling
- Learning Management System (activity deferred from 22/23)

2.4. Climate Pillar

We will minimise our environmental impact and support our shareholders to meet their carbon neutral targets, integrating carbon reduction opportunities wherever reasonably possible in both our fleet and non-fleet activities.

2.4.1. 2023/24 Focus areas

There are two focus areas in our business plan for our Climate pillar for 2023/24 - Our Environmental Impact, and Supporting Partners with their Impact



Our Environmental Impact

- Measure our energy use (*Design and deliver phase*)
- Design carbon dashboard (*Design phase*)
- CI Programme Q1-4 (*Discover and Design phase*)



Supporting Partners with their Impact

- Work with partners to capture and evaluate climate opportunities (*Discover and design phase*)
- Design process for capturing partner climate opportunities (*Discover and design phase*)

2.4.2. 2023/24 Activity

Ubico's carbon strategy recognises two strands of activity:

- Ubico owned carbon reduction activities that are within the gift of the company to deliver.
- Shareholder sponsored activity which requires approval and funding from our shareholders.

Building on work undertaken in 2022/23, we will continue to measure our emissions, and design a carbon dashboard for ongoing measurement and monitoring of our carbon performance. This dashboard will be a key input into identifying new carbon projects.

In 2023/24 we will continue to work in close partnership with our shareholder partners to deliver carbon reduction and climate beneficial initiatives. We will seek to increase Ubico’s involvement with both individual climate officers and wider partnership climate forums and will design a process to capture and evaluate partnership climate opportunities. In some of our depots and offices, we face the challenge of not having access to information around our specific energy usage, and we will work with our council landlords to overcome this issue and get accurate reporting in place. We will seek to understand any requirements or opportunities within the buildings that we occupy, and we will produce individual options strategies for partners on fleet CO₂ / CO₂e reduction.

2.4.3. Climate risks and mitigations

Area	Risk	Mitigation
Our Environmental Impact	Emissions from fleet remain high due to ageing fleet or fuels chosen.	Alternative fuel vehicle options identified on fleet replacement programmes; replacement strategy agreed with partners.
	Inability for Ubico to access energy usage details for the buildings it occupies.	Close partnership working with our council landlords to ensure Ubico’s energy usage can be separately identified and is available for Ubico to report on.
Supporting Partners with their Impact	Ubico is not consulted on decisions which could impact carbon emissions, or the success of our carbon reduction initiatives.	Ubico invited to attend key meetings, both with individual partners and in wider partnership forums to ensure our input or impact on our activities is considered.

2.5. Business Development Pillar

We will build business development capability which enhances our partnerships and allows for effective identification, analysis and presentation to shareholders of potential new business opportunities. We will explore opportunities that aren't simply about profit, including those that would deliver greater value, help our communities or improve services.

2.5.1. 2023/24 Focus areas

There are two focus areas in our business plan for our Business Development pillar for 2023/24 - Innovation and Evolution, and Build.



Innovation & Evolution

- Cross boundary phase 1 (*Deliver phase*)
- More for Partners (*Discover & deliver phase*)
- Service innovation (*Deliver phase*)



Build

- Expansion of services for existing partner(s) (*Discover phase*)
- Embed board and shareholder review process for strategic proposals (*Deliver phase*)

2.5.2. 2023/24 Activity

Further to presentations to partners in 2022/23 to understand appetite and direction around cross boundary and collaborative working proposals, we will design a roadmap for this activity, identifying key strands of work, outlining any additional resource requirements, and highlighting priority activity. We will also continue to support partners with any service (re)design or innovation projects and will continue to support the Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP) in partnership with the three partners involved in that programme.

We will continue our work begun in 2022/23 exploring opportunities for delivering services to shareholder partners which build on our existing capabilities. The feasibility exercise begun

last year evaluating the options and benefits of Ubico extending its activities beyond recycle handling and bulking and into the downstream haulage or reprocessing activity will be concluded and presented to shareholders for consideration. We will continue to work with partners to evaluate high level options for strategic depot locations across our operational areas to inform partner decision making, where necessary.

Ubico delivers operational environmental services, and our vision sees us delivering as many of our core services as possible for our current shareholder partners. From 2024 we will be expanding the services we deliver for Forest of Dean District Council to include waste, recycling and street cleaning services and will begin the mobilisation for this change in 2023/24. We will also continue to evaluate any other opportunities to extend the range of services provided to each of our partners, within our core service portfolio.

An area we aim to develop in the coming year is the progression of strategic ideas and projects which arise outside those identified in the business plan, for which we require shareholder authorisation. To address this, we will embed a new process where projects will have clear information requirements and approval flows with board and the shareholders to simplify and accelerate decision making and delivery.

2.5.3. Business Development risks and mitigations

Area	Risk	Mitigation
Innovation & Evolution	Cross boundary or collaborative working proposals are not endorsed by all partners.	Proposals adjusted to reflect the opportunity should only some partners wish to proceed. Suitable governance arrangements put in place at outset to ensure risk (or benefit) is allotted fairly.
	Expectation of delivery beyond that which can be achieved with available capacity.	Roadmap drawn up and agreed, highlighting priority activity and any additional resource requirements. Additional round routing capacity necessary for service redesign projects included in 23/24 budgets.
Build	Leadership capacity to manage an expanding portfolio.	Focus on core environmental services where we are skilled and experienced.
	Expectation of delivering strategic proposals without requisite skills or capacity.	Detailed shareholder consultation and full understanding of shareholder risk appetite and commitment ahead of commencement of any project.

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