

# REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2013-14

The Annual Report of Cotswold District Council



**COTSWOLD**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



# Welcome to Cotswold District Council's Review of the Year for 2013-14

Despite further reductions in central government funding during 2013-14, the Council maintained its customer services, achieved underlying savings of almost £860,000 and we also delivered the top tasks we set for that period. Our efficiency programme is the key to those achievements; it permeates everything we do and relies heavily on joint working across other councils, particularly West Oxfordshire District Council. This and other cost-saving measures enabled us to reduce Council Tax payments for 2014-15 by 3% - the joint biggest drop nationally - after a 'nationwide best' 5% reduction the previous year. We have also been able to freeze charges for car parking, green waste collection and leisure centre/museum entrance for a three-year period.

There has been considerable progress on a range of flood alleviation projects in the Cotswold District, in spite of marked reductions in central government funding for this purpose. Meanwhile on the housing front, we delivered 137 affordable homes in 2013-14 (almost double the target figure of 70) and we should comfortably exceed our goal of delivering 400 affordable homes between 2012-13 and 2015-16.

Thanks to the efforts of our residents, we continue to achieve higher than average levels of recycling in the district (over 58% of all household waste is recycled or composted.) However - as in most of the UK - this figure has dipped slightly over the last year or so, and we are keen to re-engage with the public by injecting more momentum through our future waste reduction campaigns.

As each year goes by, the pressure increases on us to find more savings through efficiencies and innovation. Over the last three financial years (2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14) we have managed to offset government cuts in our funding by making savings worth a combined total of over £3.1 million, all with no noticeable impact on our 'frontline' services.

While we're cutting our costs we're still conscious of our green commitments and we continue to work towards a 25% reduction in our carbon emissions by 2015.

This annual review highlights a few examples of the work that we have done to ensure the taxpayer continues to get value for money from the Council. If you would like to find out more about our achievements and what makes us tick, see [www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk)

Councillor Lynden Stowe  
**Leader**



# Our key priorities

The Council has agreed three key priorities which govern our work:

- Priority 1.** *Freeze Council Tax for the next three years whilst protecting front line services that matter to our residents*
- Priority 2.** *Maintain and protect our environment as one of the best places to live, work and visit*
- Priority 3.** *Work with local communities to help them help themselves*

# Our top tasks

To help meet our priorities, we identified 12 top tasks. Seven were achieved or broadly achieved during 2013-14 and the remaining five top tasks - all with 2015 deadlines - are progressing largely as expected.

The seven tasks that were achieved or broadly achieved during 2013-14 were:

- The implementation of a new website.
- Enabling parishes to contribute effectively to the development site allocation process.
- Achievement of further efficiencies through transfer of additional services to our shared waste company Ubico Ltd.
- Working with other agencies to prepare customers for the implementation of national and local welfare reform changes.
- Providing assistance to communities for warm, energy efficient homes.
- Implementation of a Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.
- Reducing the risk of property flooding in settlements which were severely impacted in 2007.

The five remaining tasks which are progressing on target are:

- Achieving further efficiencies through implementation of a common software project for joint working.
- Reviewing the joint working strategy for Cotswold and West Oxfordshire, District Councils, and delivering savings of £600,000 over a five year period.
- Reducing the cost of our asset holdings.
- Investment in our car parks.
- Production of a robust, well-evidenced Local Plan.



## More details about our top tasks



### **Our new website**

We introduced a new website in November 2013 to provide users with greater access to information through improved navigation and signposting. The new website has already generated higher levels of user satisfaction and it will help us encourage users to do more transactions on line – this reduces costs and facilitates communications with our communities. We also saved a considerable amount of money by undertaking the new website project with our colleagues at West Oxfordshire District Council.



### **Parishes contributing effectively to development site allocation process**

Working with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, we agreed a process for engaging and consulting with those communities that are identified in our Preferred Development Strategy. We then briefed the relevant parishes and facilitated a workshop event which enabled them to contribute effectively to the development site allocation process.



### **Transfer of additional services to our shared waste company Ubico Ltd.**

This is part of a rolling programme which aims to achieve efficiencies from reduced overheads and economies of scale. One service, winter gritting of the Council's car parks, was transferred to Ubico Ltd in September 2013 and we estimate that this will deliver annual savings that could be worth up to £80,000. We are still working on the potential transfer of other services to Ubico Ltd, including the maintenance and cleaning of our public conveniences, and bulky waste collections for both the Cotswold and Tewkesbury Councils. We continue to investigate other potential transfers of services to Ubico, as well as developing a permanent Environmental Services depot for the district.



### **Preparing for national and local benefit welfare reform**

During 2013-14 our Benefits Service worked in partnership with the local voluntary sector, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and others to prepare customers for national and local welfare reforms. We provided assistance to people claiming Discretionary Housing Payments when changes were made to residence size criteria, and signposted them to other sources of assistance; we set up mini conferences with RSLs and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for those affected by the cap on benefits; and consulted the public on revisions to the local council tax support scheme before its implementation in April 2014. Additionally, we developed a Local Support Services Framework with partners (Job Centre Plus, RSLs, CAB, and the voluntary sector) which will support customers when Universal Credit is introduced by the government.



### **Providing assistance to communities for warm, energy efficient homes**

In early 2013 the government launched the Green Deal scheme to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. To ensure there would be adequate provision in the district, the Council became a shareholder in the Green Deal Together Community Interest Company which was launched in April 2014 and started processing applications from customers. This partnership approach secured £2.5 million from the government Green Deal Communities Fund to support the delivery of green deal plans across communities, especially hard to treat properties.

We also provided assistance to communities as part of the Warm and Well Plus service level agreement with Severn Wye Energy Agency. On our behalf, they have provided householders with advice on energy efficiency options and supported them when they took action to install improvements. They have also undertaken District-wide campaigns and promotions to increase awareness and take-up of schemes, and negotiated funding with energy suppliers to finance hard to treat properties.



### **Implementation of a Housing and Homelessness Action Plan**

During the year, a total of 137 affordable homes (against a target figure of 70) were delivered in the District. One hundred homes were built at Moreton-in-Marsh, Upper Rissington, Fairford, and South Cerney, including rented, shared ownership and shared equity homes (70% ownership); an additional 37 homes were delivered under the Government's 'Help to Buy' scheme.

Our new Housing Allocations Scheme, which incorporates changes to eligibility, income, and local connection criteria for accessing affordable housing, was approved by the Council in late 2013 and will be implemented during 2014-15.

We launched a Local Authority Mortgage Scheme in partnership with Lloyds Bank during early 2014. This is aimed at first time buyers who can afford a mortgage but not the initial deposit, and it is helping young people to get their feet on the property ladder.



### **Reducing the risk of property flooding in settlements which were severely impacted in 2007**

As a result of works completed to date throughout the District, there was, thankfully, minimal internal flooding to properties during the heavy rain and flooding during early 2014. Mindful of the need to continue progress, the Council allocated a further £200,000 for flood alleviation works during its budget setting in February 2014.

During 2013-14, flood prevention work was completed in a number of settlements, including the following;

- Weston-sub-Edge (ford at Saintbury brook and installation of extended flood relief pipeline);
- Daglingworth (some watercourse clearance undertaken by the riparian owners);
- Naunton (work to prevent spring water from entering the sewerage system);
- North Cerney (new bridge installed over the River Churn to alleviate a localised flooding problem);
- Bledington (a new clay bund preventing flooding to residential properties – some ground water issues remain to be resolved);
- Avening (a new wall next to the watercourse prevented the school from being flooded);
- Upper Up, South Cerney (a culvert section replacement prevented highway and sewer flooding);
- Moreton-in-Marsh (improvements to highway drainage on Bourton-on-the- Hill Road; construction of a bund in Swan Close; and major flood alleviation scheme planned for late 2014);
- Lechlade (Phase I engineering works were completed, with a second phase of the scheme planned for Summer 2014);
- Fairford – following extensive delays, the final stage of the Environment Agency-led scheme was agreed and completed by the summer of 2014.

In this rolling programme, all major schemes should be completed by March 2015 with the exception of the flood alleviation scheme in Cirencester, which is being led by the Environment Agency and will cost an estimated £2 million.

The Council has played a major role in the establishment of the Cotswold Flood Action Group which now co-ordinates



a multi-agency response to tackling flooding problems. This member-led group has identified key areas based on river catchments which require a collaborative approach to tackling fluvial, sewer and surface water flooding. The group will also be considering the lack of funding for the Cirencester project.



### **Achieving further efficiencies through implementation of a common software project for joint working**

The Land, Environment, Assets and Property system project aims to deliver common software across Development Services, Licensing, and Public Protection for both Cotswold and West Oxfordshire District Councils. It will improve access to services, data and information, resilience and service delivery, whilst delivering efficiency savings.

A significant upgrade to the existing system used by the Development, Licensing and Public Protection Service functions at Cotswold District Council went live in early 2014 which also involved the replacement of desk computers that were at the end of their life and beginning to fail. The remaining module - Public Access - will be live by the autumn of 2014.

Implementation of the new system at West Oxfordshire District Council is scheduled to go live in the autumn of 2014. When completed, this will enable the Development Services functions at both West Oxfordshire and Cotswold Councils to operate on common software. Work on creating a shared Estate Management module is about to begin and a start date for the implementation of the Public Protection and Licensing modules at West Oxfordshire is currently under review as the scope of this project may be widened to include other partners.



### **Reviewing the joint working strategy for Cotswold and West Oxfordshire District Councils, and delivering savings of £600,000 over a five year period.**

In the early part of 2013-14, Cotswold and West Oxfordshire District Councils reviewed our Joint Working Strategy and also assessed the current management structure against future needs. As a result, we restructured our senior management from April 2014 and this is expected to deliver initial joint savings of some £300,000 per year. We will also make further savings through greater sharing of officers and services within individual units. The aim is to align services and functions across both councils, whilst ensuring that structures remain sufficiently flexible to provide further opportunities to reduce overheads in the future.

Both councils are also exploring opportunities with the local authorities in Cheltenham and Forest of Dean to build on the joint work we already do in the fields of financial, human resources, procurement, and payroll services. We have been awarded £900,000 from the Government's Transformation Fund to support this work.



### **Reducing the cost of our asset holdings**

We are reducing the cost of the Council's asset holdings by actively reviewing and rationalising our land and property portfolio. Our aim is to generate increased rental income and/or new capital receipts where possible, whilst meeting service delivery objectives, by March 2015.

One of our properties - the Old Prison, Northleach - was transferred to a community-based organisation in the summer of 2013. Officers are continuing to progress the disposals of another three holdings: the Old Memorial Hospital, Cirencester; the Lorry Park, Cirencester; and land in Bourton-on-the-Water (off Roman Way.) As regards the latter, the Council has an option agreement with Bloor Homes, who intend to develop the site for residential homes. Outline planning permission has already been granted; and Bloor are expected to make an offer in line with the agreement.

Wildmoor Properties has submitted a revised proposal for planning permission to build a new complex (with cinema, retail, restaurants and student accommodation) at Brewery Court, Cirencester. In due course, the Council may need to consider ownership issues at that site.

We are currently negotiating the purchase of a permanent Cotswold depot for the delivery of Environmental Services, which could result in potential cost savings.

Following the senior management restructure and potential for further shared services, we have begun a review of office accommodation requirements at the Council's Trinity Road headquarters.



### **Investment in our car parks**

In line with our parking strategy, we are seeking to improve the quality, access and environment of our car parks and the service we provide.

The overall aim is to create a specific design for the Forum car park in Cirencester; and an 'approved design' which will include generic principles to be applied to all council off-street car parks (for items such as materials, signage and lighting.)

We appointed a contractor in October 2013 to undertake the design work, and have consulted with the Cirencester Parking Partnership, the Cirencester Access Disability Group and Gloucestershire Highways on the proposed layouts for the Forum car park. The generic design and the design of the Forum car park are being finalised and proposals will be submitted to our Cabinet to request the capital funding which has already been identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for this purpose.

Additionally, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council, we appointed a contractor to provide virtual permits and payment for parking using a mobile phone, offering motorists greater choice in payment options. These new arrangements began in late 2013.



### **Production of a robust, well-evidenced Local Plan**

The Local Plan will shape the development of the District until 2031. Within the timetable, minor adjustments have had to be made to certain key milestones but we expect to submit it to the Secretary of State for approval by the end of 2015.

Preparing the Local Plan involves many strands of work and considerable interaction with the public. A six-week consultation on the Preferred Development Strategy included online consultation and drop-in events at our Moreton-in-Marsh and Cirencester offices, and in the Chesterton ward in Cirencester. This generated over 2000 individual comments from 667 individuals and organisations. Due to the large number of representations – which all received detailed responses from officers - the report to Cabinet on the Development Strategy was delayed until December 2013. The response report has since been produced and published on our website.

Community engagement on site allocations began in January 2014, with a facilitated workshop for Town and Parish Councils. Parishes completed their assessments of the relevant sites and reported back to the Council.

An external consultant carried out a refresh of the housing requirement and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Additionally, the Council's Forward Planning officers and Development Services officers reviewed related development management policies.

# Further information about our priorities

## Keeping Council Tax down

By maintaining rigorous controls on budgets, finding efficiencies, and creating more opportunities for joint working, we strive to keep down the cost of Council Tax.

We managed to reduce our share of local residents' Council Tax payments by 3% for the year beginning 2014-15 – the joint biggest reduction in the country. This followed our 'nationwide best' 5% cut in 2013-14, which was preceded by two years of price freezes.



### **Controlling our finances**

We achieved our £858,000 savings target on annual expenditure for 2013-14 following on from savings of £1.4 million during 2011-12 and £850,000 in 2012-13.

We manage our budget carefully. During 2013-14 our outgoings were about £570,000 less than expected. These savings mean that we reduce the risk of dipping into our reserves to fund priority expenditure.

We keep our costs down by sharing services with West Oxfordshire District Council. This began about six years ago and the relationship gets stronger each year. We started at the top with the Chief Executive and we now have shared officers working across a wide variety of services and functions. The recently completed senior management restructure will also help us achieve further combined annual savings.

The Council also acts as the employing authority for a shared financial, human resources, procurement and payroll service serving this Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Forest of Dean District Council, and Ubico Ltd, with some services also provided to Cheltenham Borough Homes and the Cotswold Conservation Board. This represents a combined annual saving in the region of £700,000 and – for Cotswold alone – this is about £125,000.

This transformational four-authority partnership has been awarded a £900,000 worth of government grants to explore more ways to find savings. As a result, the partners have agreed a long term vision for joint working. We are currently investigating proposals to evolve a way of working which would envisage the four authorities retaining their independence and being able to determine their own policies, priorities and decisions. They would be, supported by a small number of expert advisors who would commission and monitor services, either from the private and voluntary sectors or from local authority-owned service delivery companies. If successful, this move is expected to save taxpayers in excess of £55m over 10 years.

Our Internal Audit partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council and West Oxfordshire District Council continues to deliver many financial and operational benefits, providing access to a large pool of shared expertise and resources.





### **Every penny counts**

We collected 98.9% of all Council Tax payments due in 2013-14 and our officers continue to pursue the remainder so they can keep costs down for the following year.

We have reduced our overheads by cutting the average number of days taken to process new claims for Housing and Council Tax benefits. This has improved from 19 days in 2009-10 to about 10.5 days in 2013-14. National rankings for performance on Housing benefit payment show that we are rated as sixth best out of a total of 201 shire district councils.

## Maintaining and protecting our environment

Over 80% of the Cotswold District falls within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and many residents and visitors value the high quality of our environment. Thanks to them, we are recording higher than average levels of recycling with over 58% of all household waste being recycled or composted. However, – as in many parts of the UK - this rate has dipped a little and, as part of the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Partnership and the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Committee, we will be exploring ways to reinvigorate good recycling practices when we mount future waste reduction campaigns.



### **Restricting the landfill tax burden**

Landfill tax continues to rise and it now costs £80 to bury one tonne of waste in the ground. This underlines the need to improve our recycling rates year on year.

Over half of the eligible households in the district subscribe to our garden waste collections, emphasising how the public is working with us to help protect our environment.

Residents in the Cotswolds also have a good track record when it comes to recycling textiles, with an annual total in excess of 110 tonnes of clothing donated to over 20 Salvation Army Trading Company Ltd recycling banks in the area – well above the national average.



### **Improving Waste Collection**

The Council's environmental services company, Ubico Ltd, is jointly owned with Cheltenham Borough Council. Ubico Ltd first began operations in April 2012 and provides both councils with a range of services including waste and recycling, and street cleaning and grounds maintenance. The first year-end trading figures for Ubico showed that the company made savings of £1 million compared with a target figure of £500,000. This time around (2013-14) the company recorded an 'underspend' of almost £350,000 for Cotswold, and is confident that it can save £5 million in costs during its first five years of operations. We continue to look for further efficiencies, and the transfer of the winter gritting service to Ubico in late 2013 is expected to result in further annual savings of up to £80,000.





### **Outlawing litter louts and fly tippers**

Our Environmental Wardens continue to work effectively with the public in combating littering and the illegal disposal of waste. Aside from providing advice on best practice, they organise Fly Tipping Awareness events to enlist public support for their efforts. The word is out on the streets that the Council operates a 'zero tolerance' approach towards fly tipping, as evidenced by several successful prosecutions in court during 2013-14.



### **Reducing carbon emissions**

In line with our Climate Change and Carbon Management Plan, the Council is continuing to reduce its carbon emissions from its estate and operations.

We have established a car pool and this reduced the environmental impact of the Council's business travel in 2013-14 by achieving a saving of 1.3 tonnes of carbon.

A video conferencing link with our main partner council – West Oxfordshire – is now fully operational and well used, reducing the number of journeys required for meetings between the authorities. This saves considerable travelling time, reduces fuel costs and cuts down on harmful emissions.

We improved the energy efficiency of our Trinity Road headquarters in Cirencester by increasing insulation in the roof and around pipes to reduce our energy consumption. Additionally, food waste deposited by staff at Trinity Road is collected and composted, reducing the amount going to landfill.

SLM, the operator of the Council-owned leisure centres at Bourton-on-the-Water, Cirencester and Chipping Campden, is developing energy reduction proposals for those facilities.



### **Working with local communities**

We are committed to providing more homes for local people, promoting health and fitness of all age groups, and supporting resilience in communities to help withstand flooding and other emergencies.

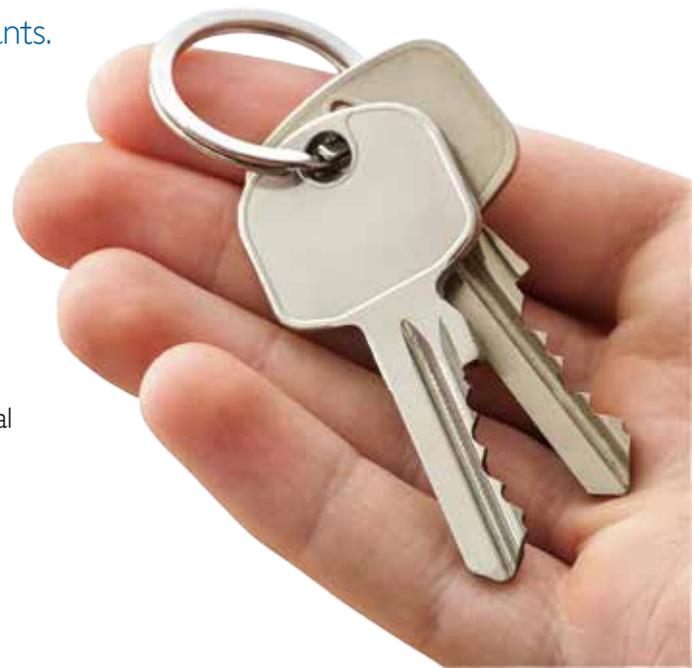


### **Providing homes for local people**

(For details about our provision of affordable homes and progress on our Local Plan see 'More details about our top tasks' above.)

During 2013-14 the Council succeeded in preventing 95 households from becoming homeless and took on the full responsibility for re-housing 17 applicants.

We have modified conditions relating to the resale of properties in the local Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which were originally purchased from the authority under the 'Right to Buy' scheme. This has ensured that local people will have more time to purchase the properties before they can be made available on the open market. Additionally, we have deemed that members of the armed forces should be recognised as local people so that they can take advantage of the enhanced conditions.





## Serving Children and Young People

Young people across the District benefit from many facets of our work.

During 2013-14, there were 2,365 visits to the Council's holiday sports coaching schemes, and children enjoyed a range of sports – including martial arts; lacrosse; hockey; street dance; cricket; football; handball; rounders; dodgeball; gymnastics; tag rugby; basketball; netball; athletics; tennis; and badminton – at venues across the District.

The Council's Summer off the Streets programme attracted about 1,050 children and young people in the 8-14 age bracket; they took part in many events - many of them free of charge - at venues across the district.

As part of its 'Get Active' project, the Council launched 'Boxskills' sessions in 2013-14 which engage children in healthy exercise while also boosting confidence and self-esteem.

Budding young artists from local Cotswold schools were honoured at a 'Painted Cotswolds' prize giving ceremony which the Council organised in September 2013. Award-winning local artist Darren Baker judged a district-wide competition which encouraged local schools to depict the Cotswolds for a Christmas card which was sold to raise money for the CDC Chairman's chosen charities – Gloucestershire Young Carers and the local branch of the Stroke Association. Some 8,170 school pupils visited the Corinium Museum during 2013-14, many of them attending special museum events throughout the year, including 'hands-on' workshops which encouraged them to learn while having fun.

In this District an equal share of an annual £50,000 Gloucestershire County Council fund to promote youth activities is made available to each of our Councillors. This has resulted in financial backing for 29 projects in 2013-14 alone. Some have attracted a contribution of several hundred pounds from a single Councillor while others have secured thousands of pounds by combining funding allocated to several Councillors. Some of the most notable achievements to date include:

- financial support to help local people run youth clubs in Mickleton, Chipping Campden, Down Ampney, Kempsford, Moreton-in-Marsh, Northleach, Weston-sub-Edge, Andoversford, Tetbury, Lechlade, Cirencester and Ampney Crucis
- support for trips and one-off activities such as theatre skills and farm experiences
- funding for holiday activities such as Skate Park sessions in Upper Rissington and Play Rangers in Tetbury
- support for young people to plan and help run the Phoenix Music Festival in Cirencester
- Sports coaching and taster sessions in tennis, rugby, cricket and sailing



We continue to support community-focused activities in local schools. Students have gained work experience, assisting Environmental Wardens, working in Print Services and carrying out Press Officer duties at the Council's headquarters.

An apprenticeship scheme at Cotswold District Council's Revenues and Benefits service has now become a permanent fixture after the service reported its best ever performance, thanks in part to the young recruits.



### **Supporting wellbeing of older people**

Our eight Memory Clubs help to bring together those with dementia and their carers to take part in group activities which offer sociable and stimulating activities. They now offer a longer period in the day for respite time for carers. We have also held events with retail employees in Tetbury and Moreton-in-Marsh to assist them in dealing with customers who have dementia.

We commissioned extensive research into the needs of older people in the District, using funding from the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner. This showed that better local transport and access to community based services, such as social groups and befriending, are prime requirements, and the Council - working with partners in the statutory and voluntary and community sectors - can help to meet these recommendations.

We have helped to extend befriending and good neighbour schemes across the District.

For the last nine years, we have been staging Active and Able classes, principally for older people, to very good effect. The programme comprises six weekly classes in postural stability and Tai Chi at six different venues across the district. The classes are run by professionally qualified instructors and have been devised to help reduce the risk of falls, improve balance and co-ordination in a fun and friendly environment.

During the year, we approved 147 disabled facilities grants, enabling vulnerable residents to benefit from adaptations to their homes so that they can continue living independently. In addition, we have contributed to improved insulation or heating in properties belonging to the elderly to help combat fuel poverty and excess winter deaths.

The Council enjoys close links with the primary health care sector, which makes referrals to our preventive schemes; these assist in providing support and independence for older people.



### **Increasing resilience**

The Council played a leading role in the establishment of the Cotswold Flood Action Group which co-ordinates multi-agency responses to tackling flood problems. This member-led group has identified key areas, based on river catchments, which require a co-ordinated approach to tackling fluvial, sewer, and surface water flooding.

When severe storms battered the Cotswolds during January and February 2014, the Council co-ordinated the response in the district, providing a strategic focus for other agencies, as well as dealing with town and parish councils on local drainage issues. Flood resilience groups in communities across the district, which have been established since the severe flooding in 2007, also played a significant role in tackling these issues.

Officers from the Council carried out door-to-door welfare visits in neighbourhoods which were affected by the winter flooding and the discharge of sewage, helping residents prepare for the recovery process and ensuring they had the support that they needed, including financial help.



We administered government-funded financial support for households and businesses in the district that were affected by the flooding.

In March 2014 the Council's Moreton Area Centre became a one-stop shop for Police, tourism and Council services, when a Police Point was transferred there. Residents have commented on the more convenient town centre location and the easy access ground floor counter service. This builds on the strong working relationship that already exists between Gloucestershire Constabulary and the District Council in areas such as community safety, licensing, enforcement, and emergency planning.

The Council continues to advise communities on identifying places of safety which can be established quickly during an emergency. There are now 77 communities in the district which have identified at least one place of safety in their areas to supplement designated Council rest centres. In addition, working with us, 24 Town and Parish Councils have now developed and published community emergency plans, and more are anticipated. Our officers have also provided communities with advice about how to protect against flooding and how to safeguard their properties, and have encouraged residents to sign up to the Environment Agency's flood warning information service.

We have provided "Battle Boxes" containing essential equipment, such as foil blankets and wind-up torches, which will help people to support themselves and the most vulnerable members of the community during an emergency. These boxes were presented to a number of communities who had developed emergency plans.

Many volunteer groups continued to do valuable resilience work, including the clearance of watercourses, ditches and culverts.



### **At Leisure**

Under the terms of a 10-year agreement, SLM/Everyone Active is now responsible for delivering and managing services in the Cotswold leisure centres at Cirencester, Chipping Campden and Bourton-on-the-Water, and cultural services at the Corinium Museum in Cirencester and a resource centre in Northleach. Responsibility for the 'dual use' leisure facilities based at Farmors School, Fairford and Sir William Romney's School, Tetbury transferred to the schools in early 2014.

By bringing in an external provider to manage and deliver these services, and handing the facilities at Fairford and Tetbury to the schools, the Council is making savings of over £280,000 per year.

The Council has already assured the public that there will be no price increases for both these services over the next three years and a contract with SLM will also guard against any future significant price increases or reduction in opening hours.

According to Sport England's Active People Survey, almost 30% of the adult population in the Cotswold District (age 16 and over) participated in sport and active recreation for 30 minutes or more on at least three days of the week. This is higher than many areas.

The three leisure centres run by SLM welcomed almost 600,000 visitors; and almost 2,400 children and young people aged between 5 and 16 took part in the holiday coaching scheme.

The Corinium Museum continues to collect plaudits. The most notable achievement was a Silver Award in the Small Visitor Attraction category at the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2013 which attracted a field of over 300 entrants.

We provide almost £55,000 to support the visitor information centre at Bourton-on-the-Water, and visitor information points at Chipping Campden, Stow-on-the-Wold and Tetbury.

The tourism sector continues to be a very high earner – about £1 billion per year for the Cotswolds area – and, in partnership with Cotswolds Tourism, we help promote attractions and support accommodation providers. The Cotswolds destination has received extensive favourable media coverage in traditional and emerging markets such as China, Korea, Brazil, Australia, USA, Belgium, France and Germany.

Working on behalf of Cotswolds Tourism, we issue a tourism newsletter which gives local accommodation providers information, guidance and details of events and training courses. This complements a business newsletter which we send to a wide range of local firms.

## And there's more... other news from our services

Our customer services team recorded that over 9 out of every 10 users of our services were satisfied with the service they received.

We've continued to keep down the cost of parking for motorists. We are maintaining an all-day £2 tariff at the Cirencester Beeches car park and the 50p short-stay charge at all of our car parks. We also offer an annual five-hours per day parking permit which reduces the cost of parking to about £1 a day over a five-day week.

We announced a new Sunday half-hour parking charge of 50p and an hourly £1.30 fee for the Brewery Car Park in Cirencester instead of a flat rate £1.50 charge.

Our Food Safety team carried out almost 500 inspections across the district during 2013-14. Overall, 90% of the food establishments visited were 'broadly compliant' with hygiene law.

A high proportion of customers are satisfied with the delivery of Heritage and Design and Development Management services, based on ratings for helpfulness of staff, providing sufficient information, and providing a timely service.

**The Council received 152 Disabled Grant Facilities enquiries during 2013-14 and approved 147 applications.**

The Council can award grants from £1,000 to a maximum of £10,000 for physical (capital) projects which enhance community facilities or develop play and recreation facilities. Over the last six years over 60 projects have benefited from grants worth approximately £400,000. They have been particularly useful in making improvements to accommodate the needs of children, young people, the elderly and those who are disabled, and have enabled many facilities to become more widely usable and financially viable.

Despite considerable pressure to make savings in 2013-14, we continue to provide financial support to voluntary sector partners such as Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, Citizens Advice Bureau, Cotswold Volunteers, Cotswold Volunteers North, Cotswold Counselling, and the Chum Project.

The Council has agreed to designate Stow-on-the-Wold, Tetbury and Lechlade as Neighbourhood Areas. This has given these communities the green light to develop a Neighbourhood Plan which will determine where development can take place in their localities.

We have worked closely with the Cotswold Tree Warden Group for over 20 years to promote and preserve our green heritage, encouraging residents to plant and care for trees.

Our Cabinet provided each Councillor with a one-off allocation of £500 to fund activities marking the centenary of the First World War. This money financed a range of commemorative activities across the District, including restoration of memorials, new benches, exhibitions and concerts.

We staged the first ever Cotswold Crime Prevention Week in October 2013 with the Gloucestershire Police & Crime Commissioner presenting prizes to the winners of a children's competition to design a poster for the event.

We agreed to implement a government-funded rate relief scheme for retail premises which should put about £1.4 million back into the district's economy over the next two years. This will provide rate relief to nearly 1,000 retail premises during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 financial years.

All of our 110 polling stations provide access for the disabled and comply with the recommended standards.

We publish all items of expenditure on our website. This means that all costs - including items ranging from computers and phone bills to bin bags and paper clips – are available to the public for scrutiny.

We have achieved 'Smarter Planning Champion' status which means we promote the online submission of planning applications (which now amount to almost 70% of the total received) and will also encourage the planning community to adhere to best practice guidelines.

We requested the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's to review the number of Councillors required in the district and they have recommended a reduction from 44 to 34 – a cut of about 25%.

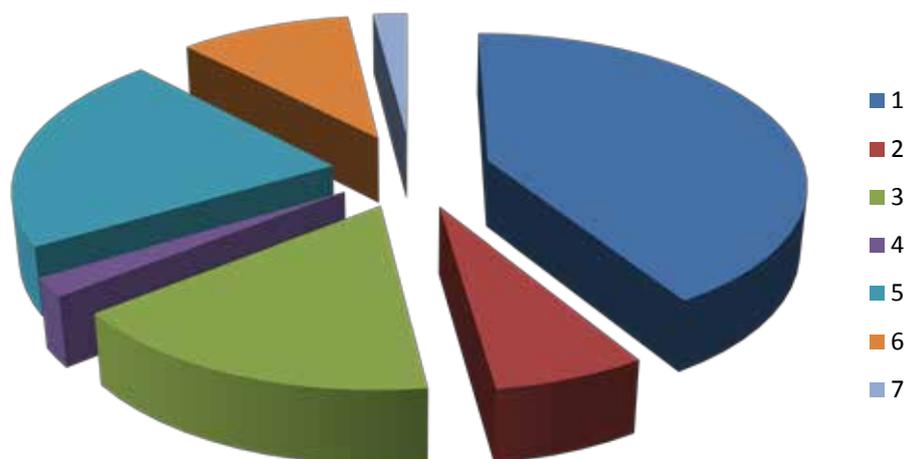
The Gloucestershire branch of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England singled out the new Kingshill Meadow housing development in Cirencester as the best of its kind in the county, and highlighted in public the contribution of CDC planners.



# Our Finances

The Council set a balanced budget for 2013/14 and was able to make efficiencies during the year and report an underspend of just over £497,000 (excluding unbudgeted National Non-Domestic Rates levy and compensation grant) against the budget. The saving 'tops-up' the Council's General Fund reserves and can be spent another day.

## Capital Expenditure



Each year, Cotswold District Council spends part of its capital on one-off projects, which can be anything from improving buildings to buying new computer systems – as long as the benefits are long term. During 2013-14, the Council spent over £1.8 million on the following:

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE		£s
■ 1	Disabled facilities grants	775,272
■ 2	Other private sector housing renewal schemes	123,666
■ 3	ICT equipment and ICT infrastructure improvements	310,313
■ 4	Community Project Fund Grants	37,827
■ 5	Flooding and land drainage schemes	403,880
■ 6	Waste service vehicles, equipment and works	190,778
■ 7	Other minor schemes	37,614
		<b>1,879,350</b>

## Council Tax

Your Council Tax bill does not just cover services provided by Cotswold District Council. Like all district councils, we collect Council Tax from our residents on behalf of ourselves, the county council, the county police and crime commissioner, and town and parish councils.

If you live in a Band D property, your total bill for 2013-14, excluding any payment to your town or parish council, was £1,431. Only £137, or less than 10%, was kept by the District Council. The bulk of your payment went to Gloucestershire County Council, while the remainder went to Gloucestershire Police Authority.

# About the District

The Cotswolds is one of the most pleasant areas in the UK. The countryside is dotted with villages characterised by picturesque stone-built villages, the market towns are vibrant, and the gentle rolling landscape is a walker's paradise.

The Cotswold District is one of the largest in England, covering approximately 450 square miles. It is situated in the eastern half of Gloucestershire. According to the 2011 Census, about 83,000 people live in the district, scattered over 115 Parishes (which are represented by 86 Town and Parish Councils) and nearly 200 settlements. About 80% of the district lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and there are 144 designated Conservation Areas. Additionally, no other district in England contains as many listed buildings and structures – some 6,000 in the Cotswolds. The district is also home to a wide range of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens.

Cotswold District has good transport links, being within easy reach of the M4 and M5, which provide convenient access to London, Bristol and Birmingham. Train stations at Kemble and Moreton-in-Marsh have direct lines to London and other regional centres. Education facilities are very good with many students at secondary schools achieving excellent results, while vocational and further education requirements in land and business-based subjects are met by Cirencester College, and the Royal Agricultural University.

Throughout the recession in the UK, employment levels and economic activity remained encouragingly positive in the Cotswolds. The district's principal town, Cirencester, is one of the main centres for commerce and leisure and there are several other thriving settlements across the district: Bourton-on-the-Water, Chipping Campden; Fairford; Moreton-in-Marsh; Lechlade; Northleach; Stow-on-the-Wold; and Tetbury. The whole area boasts a range of beautiful villages, and it offers many fun-filled tourist attractions, good value accommodation, excellent local services, and superb commercial opportunities. The award-winning Corinium Museum in Cirencester explores the area's Roman heritage, and exhibits some of that era's finest artefacts; the district is also home to Britain's largest water park, with more than 133 lakes providing opportunities to get close to rare wildlife and enjoy many water sports.

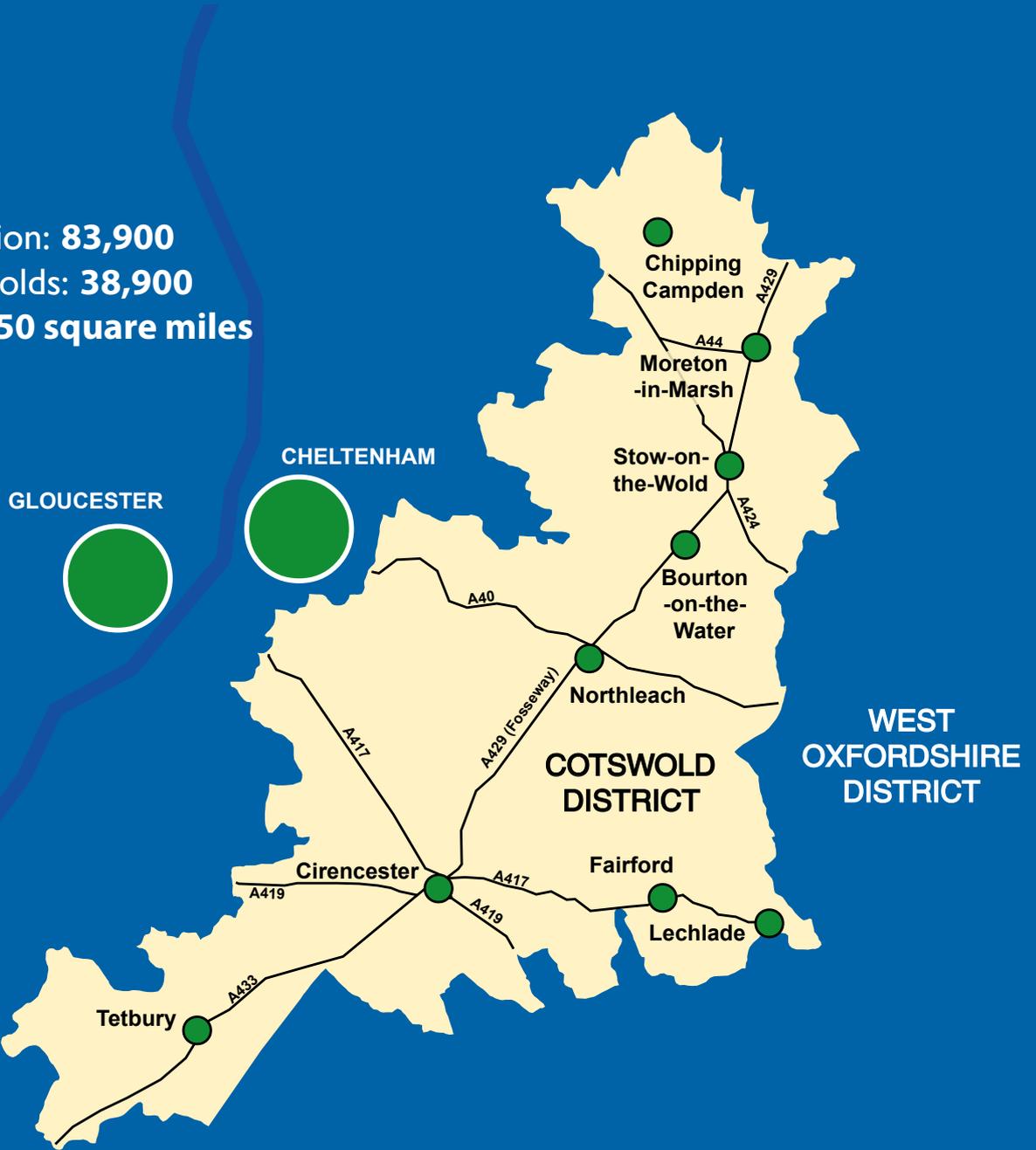
# About the Council

Cotswold District Council has 44 Councillors, representing 28 wards. The Chairman of the Council during 2012-13 was Councillor Sir Edward Horsfall and the Vice-Chairman was Cllr Clive Bennett. Reporting to the Council is a Cabinet (chaired by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Lynden Stowe and six other Councillors) and four Committees covering Planning, Licensing, Audit and Scrutiny, and Appeals. The Council's Chief Executive is David Neudegg. The Council's officers work in twelve service areas, grouped into three Directorates – Environment, Planning and Communities, and Corporate Resources.

Our main offices are in Cirencester, and we have an Area Centre in Moreton-in-Marsh. There are three leisure centres at Cirencester, Bourton-on-the-Water, Chipping Campden which are run by SLM. (Former CDC dual use leisure centres at Tetbury and Fairford are run by the schools in which they are located.) The Council-owned Corinium museum is located in Cirencester and also houses a Visitor Information Centre. Additionally, we have a Visitor Information Centre in Moreton-in-Marsh and provide grant aid to three Visitor Information Points at Bourton-on-the-Water, Chipping Campden and Tetbury.

# About the Cotswold District

Population: **83,900**  
Households: **38,900**  
Area: **450 square miles**



Parishes: **125**  
Town & Parish Councils: **114**

