

## **County Council report February 2025**

### **Climate report reveals reduction in Carbon Emissions**

Gloucestershire County Council aim to have a net zero county by 2045 that provides quality of life for current and future generations.

The recent report outlines the progress made by the county council, including reducing its carbon footprint and expanding a number of community initiatives.

Grants totalling £50,000 have been awarded to support local decarbonisation projects to foster a healthier environment and enhance community resilience.

The Growth Hub Net Zero programme is empowering businesses in the county to adopt sustainable practices. The county council is using insights from this initiative to help adapt its own emissions reduction strategy for suppliers and supply chains.

The county council only purchases green electricity in addition to decarbonising its estate. This year cabinet approved £1 million to spent on solar panels to be installed across the county council's estate.

Over 100,000 trees have been planted across 250 projects in the last year bringing the total to 398,094 since planting began in 2020. Alongside a countywide maintenance programme. The county council remains on target to plant a million trees by 2030.

### **£3M Extra for a new school for those with special needs**

In July 2023, GCC cabinet approved £16.5 million for a new 200-place special school in Gloucester for children and young people aged 4 to 16. Following completion of the detailed design works, to make sure the school has the full range of facilities needed for its pupils and to meet new regulations, including those around biodiversity, the total budget of the new special school will increase to £19.5 million, subject to cabinet approval.

The designs, which were given planning consent in November 2024, include enhanced facilities such as small group and individual therapy spaces, specialist therapeutic play spaces and hygiene suites. These improvements will mean the school can better meet the needs of local children with increasingly complex needs, reducing the need for placements in specialist independent settings or at schools out of county.

The school has also been designed to achieve net zero carbon emissions once it is running, by generating its own green energy through air source heat pumps and solar panels.

### **Ambitious Budget set for 25/26 put to full council in February**

The council is in a good financial position meaning it is able to continue support for existing services as well as make significant investments across the county.

The draft budget for the coming financial year was discussed at a meeting of Cabinet on Wednesday, 29th January.

The proposed spending plans for 2025/26 will see spending rise by more than £32.7 million on 2024/25 levels, to almost £650 million.

The £649.6 million proposed budget includes significant investment into the council's priority areas of Highways, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Adult Services, Infrastructure, and the Environment.

- A further £10 million is proposed to be put towards delivering on the council's £100 million four-year commitment to go on improving Gloucestershire roads, with a greater focus in 2025/26 on tackling rural roads.
- A total of £12.8 million is set to go towards a new £16.5 million 200 place special school.
- Young people with SEND and their families would be supported with an extra £2.1 million.
- £7.5 million towards the future construction of three new adult care homes is being set aside, with further investment planned in future years.
- The council plans to increase capacity and improve school buildings and facilities of other schools across the county with a £12.4 million investment.
- Household Waste Recycling Centres in the county will see improvements with a £1.3 million injection.

The Cabinet meeting follows a public consultation which ran from 5 December until 10th January. The consultation saw 65 per cent of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the council's priorities for the year ahead.

As well as this, 74 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the funding the council are proposing to allocate to Adults Services, Public Health and Communities, and to Children and Families, with 75 per cent agreeing with the money the council plans to spend on Community Safety.

In addition, 61 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the council's funding proposals for the Economy, Environment and Infrastructure. The responses saw a mix of views on whether there should be more or less investment into the county's roads and cycling infrastructure.

The budget proposes raising £16.5 million to help fund services through a council tax increase of 2.99 per cent. The proposals would also see £7.8 million raised specifically to support work with the most vulnerable adults in the county through a further 2 per cent increase in the adult social care precept.

Despite this increase the council still expects to have one of the lowest council tax levels of any county council. Based on a band D property, residents would pay an additional £6.65 each month.

The council continues to challenge itself to work more effectively and as a result has identified £24.5 million in savings, additional income and efficiencies for next year.

### **Conference in Tewkesbury connecting tourism with digital technology**

The digital tourism conferences, funded by the River Severn Partnership Advanced Wireless Innovation Region (RSPAWIR) and delivered by Gloucestershire County Council, will demonstrate how digital and wireless connectivity can enhance the industry across the region. Adam Henson will be the guest speaker in Tewkesbury and Simon Calder will be speaking at the Shrewsbury event.

They will offer expert advice on:

- Improving mobile and broadband connectivity
- Developing an Augmented Reality offer

- Using AI to improve business processes
- Understanding the benefits of wireless technology
- Digital placemaking and wayfinding
- Ask the expert break-out sessions

There will be opportunities for attendees to explore a suppliers' marketplace and hear about how 5G and wireless technologies can support businesses and boost the visitor economy.

Both B2B events are free to attend and are targeted at the tourism and hospitality industry. For more information please go to the Gloucestershire Web site :

If you have any concerns or wish to discuss any local matters, please telephone 01452770928 or e mail me [Susan.williams@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:Susan.williams@gloucestershire.gov.uk)