

Planning, Environment and Sustainability

1.1 Demonstrate climate leadership through achieving ambitious net zero targets

We will take action to reduce our own emissions and attract funding to support our journey towards net zero. This includes further work to lower the carbon footprint from our homes, vehicles, leisure services and land in our management. We will seek support for the adoption and implementation of our Climate Action Plan

- The Council's [Climate Change Strategy](#) 2024-2028 aligns with the Corporate Plan 2024-2028. An annual [Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP) 'roadmap to 2030' complements the Strategy, aiming to deliver corporate net-zero at the soonest opportunity. Early monitoring shows good progress in line with the CAP target to reduce the annual carbon footprint by 360 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e) by 2026.

1.2 Support the district's response to the climate emergency

We will continue to work with and support the implementation of the Devon Carbon Plan and look beyond our borders to exchange experience and find innovative ways of lowering emissions, generate renewable energy and increase sustainable travel options. We will provide leadership and support for communities to build resilience and adaptive capacity. We will work with community groups to share best practice, encourage learning and respond to the climate emergency together through partnership working.

- [Energy Boost Mid Devon](#): A partnership project with charity ECOE Advice, launched in April 2025. Mid Devon residents will benefit from healthier homes thanks to independent advice, workshops and retrofit support funded by £45k from the climate and sustainability budget plus a £15k Energy Efficiency Fund to help those who can least afford the home improvements. More energy-efficient homes will have a lower carbon footprint.
- [Green Enterprise Grants](#): Launched in May 2025, offering grants £500 to £5k for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), the £30k scheme funded by the Council's climate and sustainability budget will drive local investment and attract match funding to help reduce emissions in Mid Devon.
- The Resilience Officer works with communities on emergency preparedness, which helps to support climate resilience. Many key risks and mitigations identified by Towns and Parishes relate to climate change, as extreme events are predicted to become more frequent or more severe.

1.3 We will work with stakeholders to introduce planning policy which reflects the key issues and challenges facing the district

We will work with communities to bring forward the new local plan – Plan Mid Devon based around our top planning priorities, seeking to encapsulate and reflect the planning ambitions of the Council and its communities. As the Government increases its oversight on planning performance, we will ensure our planning decisions are timely, robust and defensible. We will continue to be a considerate planning authority

- The Council approved a new Local Development Scheme on 4th March 2025. This sets out the timetable for preparing a new Local Plan for Mid Devon. The timetable for the production and adoption of the new Local Plan is based on the introduction of a new plan making system under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023) and new regulations expected in the summer 2025. The timetable will be subject to a further review once the new plan making regulations have been introduced.
- Decision making on planning applications within Mid Devon continues to significantly exceed national targets, whilst our record of defending appeals against our decision making remains high reflecting robust decision making.

1.4 We will ensure that biodiversity is increased across the district

We will develop and implement our Biodiversity Duty Action Plan across all Council services. Through the planning system, we will encourage developers to exceed the minimum 10% biodiversity net gain, working with local communities where possible, in order to bring real enhancement to nature and landscapes across the district.

- At a national level, a requirement for most new development to deliver a Biodiversity net gain (BNG) of 10% of the original land condition was introduced in 2024. In response, Mid Devon has approved three biodiversity habitat banks within the district (2 of which are currently delivered on site) which provide an opportunity for development both within the district as well as across Devon to acquire BNG "credits". As such BNG improvements within Mid Devon are currently supporting development in excess of our own requirements resulting in greater than 10% BNG delivery required through development management within the district.
- The Biodiversity Duty Action Plan is in place. Goals being implemented include:
 - Early stage reviews of Council land management and opportunities to enhance nature.
 - Consideration of potential to enhance conservation status for key areas, and liaison with managers of special sites such as Local Nature Reserves.
 - Actions to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Actively involved as the Supporting Authority while the Strategy is in preparation.
 - The Planning team records the number of Consents with BNG secured (and enforcement of action for nature).

1.5 We will value and protect Mid Devon's natural and built environment

We will work with our communities to address environmental damage and will look to prosecute those who cause harm through fly-tipping or littering on public land. We will also challenge those who fail to mitigate environmental impact, liaising with other statutory bodies as required to bring about change. We recognise the importance of the natural and built environment and will work to protect our cultural heritage.

- During 2024/25, The Council increased its planning enforcement resource enabling it to serve enforcement notices/ prosecute landowners and developers that are undertaking unauthorised development in order to protect landscape and heritage interests. Also, Mid Devon has maintained an appropriate level of housing supply allowing it to afford full weight to Local Plan policies intended to protect the countryside from speculative development.

- The work of the Environment and Enforcement service in tackling enviro-crime across the district has resulted in an increase of Fixed Penalty Notice issuance by 75% compared to 2023/24. The service has further built on relationships with external partners to explore tactics to reduce and mitigate environmental crime (partners include the Environment Agency, Devon Authorities and local and rural Policing teams). Social media has been used to encourage community interaction and reporting of key hot spots challenges. In addition, high profile fly tipping prosecutions have been used to highlight impacts and the Council's stance on enviro-crime. A significant level of work has gone into community engagement to resolve local issues, which has seen significant reduction in offences and a greater community stance in supporting the service.

Community, People and Equalities

2.1 We will work closely with town and parish councils

We value and understand the importance and expertise of our town and parish councils. We will seek to develop closer collaborative working relationships through improved communications and engagement, and will measure our performance on this.

- Throughout 2024/25, the Council have been actively working to strengthen relationships with towns, parishes, and local communities to foster greater whole society resilience. These efforts have been implemented through various initiatives, including:
 - State of the District Debate held on 20 March 2024 focused on collaborative working with Towns and Parish Councils
 - Town and Parish Charter adopted by Cabinet (09 July 2024)
 - Annual Meeting of the Parish Clerks held on 20 November 2024, including a presentation on resilience.
 - The Cabinet Member for Parish and Community Engagement has been created, and they have met with those Town and Parish Councils that have requested a meeting to listen to concerns and develop a closer working collaboration
 - Enhancing the communication and dissemination of severe weather alerts to District Councillors and Town/Parishes
 - Participating in Devon Communities Together (DCT) events, such as the Resilience Forum and a local Community Emergency Plan meeting.
 - Engaging with local groups, including attending Tiverton Town Council's Community Engagement Event.
 - Developing a Local Community Risk Register, incorporating risks identified by District Councillors and Town/Parish Councils, scheduled for publication in 2025/26.
 - Supported the development of five community emergency plans by towns and parishes in 2024/25 (Cullompton, Bradninch, Willand, Nymet Rowland and Tiverton)
 - Encouraged Town and Parish Councils to locate and develop an Emergency Hub as a first step towards creating and maintaining an Emergency Plan.

2.2 We value and will work closely with local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations

We recognise the vital role that voluntary, community and social enterprises play in our district. We will continue to support these organisations development including through the use of grant funding. We will support community events across the district and recognise the importance of youth services.

- The adopted local plan promotes healthy communities through the delivery of social, educational, recreational and cultural facilities and services, access to high quality open space, public rights of way, recreational trails, accessible land and other green infrastructure, and opportunities for sport and recreation and the designation of Local Green Space.

- The Community, People and Equalities PDG are organising a "Meet the Funders" event to be held in Summer 2025 for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

2.3 We will support the health, wellbeing, and safety of our residents

We will ensure that our leisure services continue to help improve peoples' health outcomes. We will keep the public safe through our rigorous public health inspections. And we will continue to enable people to stay in their homes by coordinating housing adaptations. We will work to ensure our places are planned to improve health and wellbeing

- Active Mid Devon have expanded the ways in which we reach our residents through a more active outreach programme including activities such as free wellbeing walks, and helping to set up parkruns in the district.
- Update and ongoing delivery of our Food Safety Plan with focus on interventions at highest risk premises and moving towards full Food Standards Agency requirements across all groups of premises. 94.3% of 747 food business in Good (4) or Very Good (5) under Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.
- Wide range of interventions to protect public health and wellbeing across Public Health functions including ASB Community Protection Warnings and Notices, statutory nuisance actions, Licensing enforcement and interventions alongside enforcement of Private Sector Housing standards
- Successful delivery of Housing Assistance Policy with high number of Disabled Facilities Grant approvals and other support grants plus Home Improvement Loans

2.4 We will support our residents and communities through the cost of living crisis

We recognise the challenges facing people brought about by the cost of living crisis. Through administering benefit schemes and applying Council Tax Reduction schemes we will support the vulnerable in our communities. We will draw down grant funding to support businesses in our communities through these challenging times.

- In 2024/25, Council Tax rebate applied totalling £4,582,250 to residents on low income. Also, discretionary housing payments totalling £77,202 were awarded and Exceptional Hardship payments totalling £15,186 applied to council tax debts. Housing benefit caseload reduced from 2024 due to Universal Credit migration.
- Our Revenues and Benefits Service help local businesses understand what business rates reliefs they may be entitled to e.g. small business; charitable; retail, hospitality and leisure; public lavatories; community amateur sports clubs. The value of these reliefs in 2024/25 was: £6,057,866 (mandatory reliefs); £87,187 (discretionary reliefs); £2,899,742 (Fully Government funded reliefs).
- The Economic Development team has supported businesses through running a number of grant schemes and facilitating a number of specialist business networks. Economic Development, working with the Council's Climate and Sustainability Specialist, successfully piloted in 2024/2025 a Green Enterprise Grant scheme to support businesses who wish to take action to reduce their carbon and in doing so reduce their costs. This has been launched again for 2025/26. Through Visit Mid Devon, the Council supports a network of

visitor economy businesses, these being predominantly small and micro businesses and include farm business diversification. Utilising UK Shared Prosperity Funding, and working with Food Drink Devon, Mid Devon's food businesses were able to access this specialist business support network.

2.5 We will listen to and respond to feedback

We value all feedback that the Council receives. We will maintain an effective complaints process and ensure that we respond promptly and appropriately. We will ensure that we consult and engage with stakeholders in an open and transparent manner

- We continue to engage with residents through consultations around Planning, Budget and other areas and provide a digital platform, Let's Talk Mid Devon, to assist with this. The communications team attended the Mid Devon show and supported engagement activities for multiple services. The Customer Services team is also actively embedding a revised code of complaints to meet the requirements of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman to evidence effective learning from resident experiences of our services.
- A drive to improve engagement with our residents has seen our engagement platform Let's Talk Mid Devon utilised further. In the past year the platform has gained 162 registrations, been visited 8,886 times and had an engagement rate of 14%.
- The Council also uses social media as a free communication tool and have a total of 25,002 followers across the platforms.
- GovDelivery is the Council's e-bulletin system which is used to send out news stories and service changes directly to our customers who opt in to receive updates. There are 14,420 subscribers who regularly receive bulletins directly from the Council.
- A resident survey was undertaken in 2024 and was open to residents throughout the district. Although the response rate decreased on previous years the survey showed 59.6% of those who responded felt very or fairly well informed about the Council's work, an increase from 52.8% in 2023. We are continuing to explore ways to improve uptake of the survey across the district.
- Many Council services undertake consultations throughout the year, particularly planning, and these consultations can be viewed on our Let's Talk Mid Devon platform. All consultations are shared on this platform as well as through traditional press releases, with town and parishes and online.

Homes

3.1 We will increase the delivery of quality designed, well built homes across the housing market to meet identified needs

Mid Devon does not have enough homes. We will support the delivery of quality new homes built in the district. We will build and expand our own social housing, and encourage the delivery of new affordable homes built in the district.

- The Council is continuing to secure the delivery of new homes in Mid Devon through policies in the adopted Local Plan and through the determination of planning applications. However, it is not directly responsible for building new homes with the exception of new Council homes through the Housing Revenue Account. The number of affordable homes delivered through the planning process will be subject to development viability. The Council has published a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan which details reasons affecting the delivery of new homes across the district and measures that the Council will take to help improve delivery.
- Review and production of our Housing Strategy post 2025 is underway including a focus on new housing delivery. This includes ongoing commitment to a rolling 5-year 500 unit social housing building programme for Mid Devon Housing.

3.2 We will build, promote, and encourage the building of energy efficient and low carbon homes and communities

We recognise that our homes in Mid Devon need to be fit for the future. We will ensure our social housing meets high energy efficiency standards. Through planning and building control we will act so that homes in the district are energy efficient, low carbon, and resilient to climate change.

- Successful implementation of zero-operational carbon, EPC A modular housing schemes to provide new social rent homes within the Council stock. This includes the opening of the St Andrews House scheme in Cullompton, Shapland Place in Tiverton and Crofts in Sandford which provide 19 new units. Number of live modular schemes across Bampton, Tiverton, Hemyock and Willand which will bring forward an additional 45 such units in 2025/26 alongside several traditional build EPC B rated schemes.
- Planning permission in place for a further 22 zero-operational carbon, EPC A modular housing with additional schemes under progress at feasibility, design or planning determination stage.
- Neurodiversity build standards and benefits also built into modular housing schemes.
- Through the preparation of a new local plan we will investigate the introduction of energy and water efficiency standards in new buildings that exceed the national requirements placed through the current Building Regulations.

3.3 We will invest in our homes

We will upgrade our social housing by installing energy efficiency measures and renewable energy. We will maintain our high standards of maintenance across Mid Devon homes. We will monitor tenant satisfaction with maintenance and act on the feedback received.

- Over 50% of our stock have at least one form of renewable technology installed.

- Over £3m a year planned maintenance budget for home improvements.
- 70% overall tenant satisfaction in Mid Devon Housing homes.
- 72% tenant satisfaction with repairs in Mid Devon Housing homes.
- 73% tenants satisfied that their Mid Devon Housing home is well maintained.
- 79% tenants satisfied that their Mid Devon Housing home is safe.
- 99.52% of Mid Devon Housing homes meet Decent Homes standards – just 14 do not, mainly to do with property access issues with actions in place to resolve these.
- 98.13% of Mid Devon Housing repairs completed on target (target is 95% of urgent and routine repairs and 100% of emergency repairs). Those emergency repairs not completed within 24-hours are a small number of cases, typically impacting on communal areas rather than individual homes where priority is always given to ensure our tenants are safe.

3.4 We will work closely with our tenants to ensure they feel safe, secure and happy in their homes

We will monitor and continue to improve overall tenant satisfaction. We will work to ensure that cases of antisocial behaviour are kept to a minimum. We will work with our tenants through engagement events, and be guided by them to ensure they feel safe, secure, happy and satisfied in their homes

- 2024/25 marked an exciting year of progress and community engagement across the district. Several new initiatives were launched, including our first-ever Rural Roadshow, where Housing Officers visited five rural locations to connect with tenants, address complaints, discuss repairs, and tackle local neighbourhood concerns.
- Our inaugural Damp and Mould Demonstration Day, featured live equipment testing, demonstrations, and the opportunity for residents to report issues first-hand. We also hosted our first Greener Homes event, where expert speakers shared practical advice on sustainable living, the work the Council are doing and the support available to tenants.
- Our regular coffee mornings in Crediton, Cullompton, and Tiverton continued to offer relaxed, accessible spaces for tenant engagement. We also increased collaboration with the Police and completed two successful neighbourhood walkabouts.
- We completed our second round of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), showing improved satisfaction across all areas. To build on this, we introduced Repairs Satisfaction Surveys, now carried out after each job is completed. These complement our ongoing New Tenant, Complaints, ASB, and Planned Maintenance surveys, helping us continuously improve our services.
- Our presence in the community remains strong, with a continued focus on reducing antisocial behaviour (ASB) in partnership with local stakeholders. As part of ASB Awareness Week 2024, we organised a mini walkabout, a Members Briefing, and a special street surgery in collaboration with Cullompton Police.
- We remain committed to amplifying tenant voices and driving positive change. This includes feedback gathered through our downsizing incentive survey, insights from TSM comments and complaints, our ongoing damp and mould survey and learning about our tenants through the 'Getting to Know You' survey. We've also been active in recruiting Co-opted Tenant Representatives to join the Homes

PDG from June 2025 and have consulted on various policies through the Let's Talk Mid Devon platform which we continue to grow as an engagement hub.

3.5 We will support and respond to people presenting as homeless

We will act compassionately to minimise rough sleeping in the district, ensuring people have a safe warm place to sleep. We will maximise homelessness prevention through the use of different types of accommodation, and increase the number of housing options available. We will provide support and guidance for people presenting as homeless.

- 100% of all homelessness presentations into the Council receive full support and guidance
- All homeless presentations are determined against different duties and temporary accommodation is provided as required
- Meet the requirement to ensure no families are in hotel temporary accommodation after 6-weeks
- Using Local Authority Housing Fund funding to successfully acquire and convert existing empty properties in high-quality temporary accommodation for homeless use. Belmont Rd scheme is complete and fully occupied, St Pauls scheme is acquired and pending planning permission for conversion and Cabinet decision obtained to purchase a further property for conversion in Tiverton (current under acquisition)
- Trailing dedicated care leaver learning accommodation with a modern self-contained 1-bed unit with further three 1-bed units planned.

Economy and Assets

4.1 We will work with local businesses, stakeholders and residents to regenerate our town centres

We will act to secure and distribute grant funding to support our town centres. Events and projects will be used to encourage increased footfall and ensure vibrant high streets

- Using Council funding, along with UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funding, the Council was able to offer an enhanced package of grant schemes under the Love your Town Centre umbrella. This has supported local businesses and organisations to bring forward town centre enhancements and improve vibrancy. These include the Shop Front Enhancement Scheme, Business Growth Fit-out grants and Digital High Streets (to support business to take up the latest Point of Sale technology and to connect digital to physical sales (driving sales through e-commerce e.g. website, social media etc.)). The Vibrant Town Centres scheme also supported a portfolio of events to drive footfall and dwell time in the town centres. In addition, grants supported improvements to public realm and refreshed wayfinding infrastructure.

4.2 We will build on successful commercial activity, working with our communities to ensure its success

We will continue with prudent commercial ventures. This includes letting industrial units to local businesses, expanding electric vehicle charging points on council assets, and ensuring Tiverton Pannier Market continues to be a success.

- We continue to have excellent take up of our commercial property, with only one void. This continues to provide a steady yield to the Council, supporting vital service provision.
- At the Tiverton Pannier Market a number of new regular traders have started trading, including on the traditional Tuesday market day which has been less successful in recent years than the Friday and Saturday markets. The market team has continued to run a variety of initiatives to encourage use of the market. Examples of these activities include: The Annual Christmas Craft Fair (run by the Market team for the first time), Market Hamper event – where anyone spending over £5 from any Market Stall had a chance of winning a market hamper donated by traders. The Hamper being worth over £250 there were 400 participants. The Electric Night events have continued with an increase in events planned for 2025. The team continues to run the market successfully following a restructure of the team to delivery greater efficiencies.

4.3 We will support local businesses set-up, develop and grow

We will fully investigate the potential of establishing a co-working space for small businesses through the work hub project. We will drawdown and administer grants for local businesses to set up, develop and grow in the district.

- The Tiverton Work Hub project was successfully delivered through the Shared Prosperity Programme. The Work Hub will be launched in 2025/26. We also supported Petroc with its creation of a state-of-the-art Cotie Business Innovation Centre which provides advanced

technology-based facilities also funded through the Shared Prosperity programme. This includes access to innovation space for businesses to meet and work and access the latest technological equipment. Through the Prosper programme, project managed by Devon County Council on behalf of Mid Devon, a broad package of business advice and support has been provided. This support has included: pre-start up advice, training opportunities, general support to small businesses and dedicated tailored advice to businesses on recruitment and employment issues.

4.4 We will support business and economic development across Mid Devon, enabling job creation, and supporting sustainable tourism growth

We will build on our excellent track record of securing funding to support economic development projects and will support businesses develop into new markets. We will work to develop events and festivals in Mid Devon to encourage footfall into our communities to benefit our businesses, making Mid Devon a destination in its own right.

- Using funding allocation through the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funding a number of business support programmes were established as well as business grant schemes. These included the Prosper Business support programme that offered free to access one to one business support as well training events; “Prosperity” business grants; specialist business network events and training for Farm businesses; food and drink business and visitor economy businesses.
- The Economic Development team, working with the Council’s Climate and Sustainability Specialist, has launched a Green Enterprise Grant scheme to support businesses who wish to take action to reduce their carbon footprint and in doing so reduce their costs. Through Visit Mid Devon, the Council supports a network of visitor economy businesses these being predominantly small and micro businesses and include farm business diversification. Utilising UK Shared Prosperity Funding, and working with Food Drink Devon, Mid Devon’s food businesses were able to access this specialist business support network. Similarly Farm businesses were also able to access the Devon Agri-Tech Alliance(DATA) support programme through the SPF programme.
- Importantly the Economic Development Officer is liaising with businesses throughout the District having valuable conversations to assist in enabling businesses to access support and funding opportunities. This also includes facilitated access to networks, a recently launched e-newsletter (to connect businesses with latest opportunities) and continuing to champion the needs of our businesses with other agencies.

4.5 We will work with partners to ensure that Mid Devon has the infrastructure it requires to meet its potential

We will play a key role in realising the major infrastructure the district requires to help it meet its potential. This includes the upgrade to J28 of the M5; the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road; Cullompton Station; Culm Garden Village; upgrading J27 of the M5; and the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension.

- Funding has been secured for the provision of the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road from Homes England. There has been significant progress since the announcement of funding particularly with regard to land assembly. The Outline Business Case for Junction 28 improvements has been submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) and awaiting a decision from Government. A Final Business Case was submitted to DfT Rail last year for the Cullompton Railway Station but the Restoring Your Railway programme has

now been stopped by the new Government. It is hoped that there will be more positive news announced with regard to funding for Junction 28 improvements and the Railway Station at the June 2025 Comprehensive Spending Review.

4.6 Work with our communities and stakeholders to ensure our car parks meet the parking requirement needs of our communities

We will continue to work in a collaborative manner with key stakeholders to review the use of our car parks. We will ensure that our parking charges are fair whilst maintaining a sustainable business model

- The Council set up a Car Parking Consultation Group in 2023 to gather feedback and views from town and business representatives to help steer future tariff setting and also look at key issues of community value including enforcement and free Christmas Parking. Several papers have been taken on to the Economy and Assets PDG for member debate before formal recommendations have been made to Cabinet. The representatives who make up the Car Parking Consultation Group are very positive about the Group's discussions and positive impact on the local community.

4.7 The Council is able to maintain its property and land and maximise the benefits of these assets to the Council and to the public

It is vital that we maximise income streams from our assets. We will explore opportunities for partners becoming commercial tenants in our existing properties.

- Our asset base continues to benefit from enhancements, with new heat and power sources being implemented, and refurbishments to dance studios, offices and the flooring surrounding the swimming pools and changing rooms within our leisure centres. Our whole property estate have had detailed condition surveys to inform the future maintenance and investment programme. The announcement of Local Government Reform in Devon has put the possibility of letting to commercial tenants on hold.

Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement

5.1 We will ensure that the Council remains the employer of choice in Mid Devon

Against a set of challenging circumstances, we will ensure that our staff remain motivated and satisfied. We will ensure that staff development opportunities are available and that people choose to have long, productive, and happy careers with us.

- We have developed our course catalogue to provide all staff at the Council with broad opportunities for development in addition to development offered within their service and by their manager/ immediate team. This runs in parallel with the development of the Learning Partnerships Group at the Council, which allows for a broad representation of services to contribute to and comment on learning and development plans. There has been a reduction in staff turnover and an increase in staff employed (full time equivalents) at the Council and planning has begun for the next all staff survey. We continue to review the benefits available, with 6 monthly health checks the latest inclusion.

5.2 We will further increase our recycling services, enabling our communities to achieve even higher levels of recycling

Through education and enforcement, we will continue to reduce residual waste collected. Alongside this we will strive to have one of the highest recycling rates in England, and consider additional waste streams we can collect as recycling. Our services will remain excellent, with minimal missed bin collections, and a high opt-in rate to our garden waste service.

- Education and enforcement is a key part of our strategy to reduce waste which is being supported with extra temporary resource. Our national performance for 2023/24 was a 57.9% recycling rate (12th nationally, top 6%) and residual household waste collected per household reduced to 307.8kg (9th nationally, top 5%). For 2024/25 the recycling rate increased slightly to 58% and the residual waste collected decreased to 300.3kg/household. Missed bin collections have remained at 0.03% and around 12,000 households have opted-in to our garden waste collections. A trial of pots and pans collections is currently taking place along with a review of how nappies, coffee pods and blister packs are collected. A review of soft plastic collections will take place with a view of implementation by 2027.

5.3 We will maintain our leisure services and ensure they are fit for the future

We recognise the need to continue to reduce the environmental impact of our leisure services and will work to reduce the carbon emissions of our leisure centres. We will also strive to move the service to having less financial dependence on the Council, whilst ensuring our leisure users are satisfied.

- The service continues to improve and invest in reducing its carbon footprint with technology such as Combined Heat and Power, battery storage and more. The target to reduce subsidy is going in the right direction with significant improvement, while continuing to invest in improving facilities and offering the community more ways to be active.

5.4 Council finances remain sustainable despite difficult financial conditions

Prudent financial management is critical in the testing financial environment. We will build up our financial reserves, maximise income collection, and ensure that debt remains at an appropriate level

- A balanced budget for 2025/26 has been agreed. The future year estimated deficits remain at over £3m with significant uncertainty around Local Government funding following announcements of fundamental changes to grant funding formulae and the Business Rates retention scheme. Medium Term Financial Plan discussions are in progress with a strategy being developed that will mitigate longer term shortfalls.
- 2024/25 Outturn shows a healthy underspend position for the General Fund which will be placed into Earmarked Reserves to help mitigate the implications of future funding uncertainties. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturn position was an overspend, this was due to a number of one-off year-end adjustments. On an ongoing day-to-day basis the HRA remains financially healthy.

5.5 We will continue to improve and transform our services

We will continue to take the opportunities that arise from digital transformation to improve our services. Where appropriate we will consider opportunities for shared services or new ways of working with our partners. We will seek to improve our overall productivity to ensure value for money

- The Digital Services team are busy rewriting online forms to improve self-service options, reviewing website content, and working with Waste to further improve waste collection efficiency through improved real-time response to collection issues.
- The announcement of Local Government Reform in Devon has delayed the possibility of collaborative or partnership working in the short term whilst the future vision is identified. Once agreed, the pace of joint working will increase significantly as we form the new entity.

5.6 Ensure that the public have a good understanding of council services, and that they are satisfied that the services are efficient and effective

We will strengthen our public communications to ensure clarity on the services that we are responsible for. We will measure public satisfaction and act on the results to ensure residents are satisfied with our performance

- Our Communications team continues to support services with sharing positive news about the council, and any changes to service delivery, to our residents and businesses. Over the past year there has been a focus on highlighting the continued success of the waste and recycling service, the benefits of the new CRM system and more recently communication support for the launch of Active Mid Devon. The Communications team ran a public satisfaction survey at the end of 2024 and this was open to all residents, both in digital and paper format. While the response rate was down on previous years, the satisfaction rates showed improvement with overall satisfaction with the council increasing from 41% the previous year to 52% in 2024. The Communications team is continuing to look at how we can increase the response rate for future surveys.