



# Gloucester City Council

## Cabinet

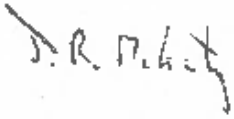
**Meeting: Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at 6.00 pm  
in Civic Suite, North Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EP**

<b>Membership:</b>	Cllrs. Cook (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment) (Chair), Norman (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources) (Vice-Chair), S. Chambers (Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy), Lewis (Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure) and Padilla (Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods)
<b>Contact:</b>	Democratic and Electoral Services 01452 396126 <a href="mailto:democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk">democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk</a>

## AGENDA

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>  To receive any apologies for absence.
<b>2.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>  To receive from Members, declarations of the existence of any disclosable pecuniary, or non-pecuniary, interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any agenda item. Please see Agenda Notes.
<b>3.</b>	<b>MINUTES (Pages 7 - 12)</b>  To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2023.
<b>4.</b>	<b>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)</b>  The opportunity is given to members of the public to put questions to Cabinet Members. A question may be rejected if it:  (i) Is not about a matter for which the local authority has responsibility or influence; or (ii) Is illegal, improper, defamatory, frivolous or offensive; or (iii) Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council, Cabinet or Committee in the past 6 months; or (iv) Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information; or (v) Is related to confidential staffing matters; or (vi) Is relating to the personal affairs or conduct of individual Members or Officers.  To ask a question at this meeting, please submit it to <a href="mailto:democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk">democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk</a> by 12 noon on Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 or telephone 01452 396203 for support.

<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)</b></p> <p>To receive any petitions or deputations provided that no such petition or deputation is in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matters relating to individual Council Officers, or</li> <li>• Matters relating to current or pending legal proceedings</li> </ul>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)</b></p> <p>Any Member of the Council may ask the Leader of the Council or any Cabinet Member any question upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any matter relating to the Council's administration</li> <li>• Any matter relating to any report of the Cabinet appearing on the summons</li> <li>• A matter coming within their portfolio of responsibilities</li> </ul> <p>Only one supplementary question is allowed per question.</p> <p>Questions must be submitted to <a href="mailto:democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk">democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk</a> by 12 noon on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Responses to questions will be published in an addendum to the agenda by 12 noon on the day of the Cabinet Meeting.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>2022-2024 END OF YEAR COUNCIL PLAN UPDATE (Pages 13 - 34)</b></p> <p>To consider the report of the Leader of the Council providing an update on the delivery of the activities as outlined in the Council Plan 2022-2024 intended to build a greener, fairer, better Gloucester.</p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER POLICY (Pages 35 - 52)</b></p> <p>To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources seeking the adoption of a policy to establish a framework and a process that would enable assets to be transferred to community organisations where appropriate.</p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE - ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 (Pages 53 - 64)</b></p> <p>To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources and Resources seeking Members to note treasury management activities for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, prudential indicators, interest rate forecasts and an overview of the financial year 2022-23.</p>
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>BLACKFRIARS PRIORY BUSINESS PLAN 2023-2028 (Pages 65 - 96)</b></p> <p>To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure presenting the 2023-2028 Blackfriars Priory Business Plan and seeking support to enter the next lease agreement with English Heritage.</p>



**Jon McGinty**  
**Managing Director**

**Date of Publication: Tuesday, 6 June 2023**

## NOTES

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

The duties to register, disclose and not to participate in respect of any matter in which a member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest are set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Disclosable pecuniary interests are defined in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 as follows –

<u>Interest</u>	<u>Prescribed description</u>
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided within the previous 12 months (up to and including the date of notification of the interest) in respect of any expenses incurred by you carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between you, your spouse or civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner (or a body in which you or they have a beneficial interest) and the Council (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the Council's area.  For this purpose "land" includes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for you, your spouse, civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the Council's area for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) – (a) the landlord is the Council; and (b) the tenant is a body in which you, your spouse or civil partner or a person you are living with as a spouse or civil partner has a beneficial interest
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where – (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the Council's area and (b) either – i. The total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or ii. If the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, your spouse or civil partner or person with

whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

For this purpose, "securities" means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

NOTE: the requirements in respect of the registration and disclosure of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and withdrawing from participating in respect of any matter where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest apply to your interests and those of your spouse or civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner where you are aware of their interest.

### **Access to Information**

Agendas and reports can be viewed on the Gloucester City Council website: [www.gloucester.gov.uk](http://www.gloucester.gov.uk) and are available to view five working days prior to the meeting date.

For enquiries about Gloucester City Council's meetings please contact Democratic Services, 01452 396126, [democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk).

If you, or someone you know cannot understand English and need help with this information, or if you would like a large print, Braille, or audio version of this information please call 01452 396396.

### **Recording of meetings**

Please be aware that meetings may be recorded. There is no requirement for those wishing to record proceedings to notify the Council in advance; however, as a courtesy, anyone wishing to do so is advised to make the Chair aware before the meeting starts.

Any recording must take place in such a way as to ensure that the view of Councillors, Officers, the Public and Press is not obstructed. The use of flash photography and/or additional lighting will not be allowed unless this has been discussed and agreed in advance of the meeting.

### **FIRE / EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

If the fire alarm sounds continuously, or if you are instructed to do so, you must leave the building by the nearest available exit. You will be directed to the nearest exit by council staff. It is vital that you follow their instructions:

- You should proceed calmly; do not run and do not use the lifts;
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings;
- Once you are outside, please do not wait immediately next to the building; gather at the assembly point in the car park and await further instructions;
- Do not re-enter the building until told by a member of staff or the fire brigade that it is safe to do so.

This page is intentionally left blank



## CABINET

**MEETING** : Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023

**PRESENT** : Cllrs. Norman (Vice-Chair), S. Chambers, Lewis and Padilla

**Others in Attendance**

Cllrs. Field, Hilton and Radley

Managing Director

Monitoring Officer

Head of Place

Head of Culture

Accountancy Manager

David Rice, Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

**APOLOGIES** : Cllr. Cook

### 100. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 101. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023 are confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chair.

### 102. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

### 103. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

### 104. LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

In respect of question 2 Councillor Hilton stated that the £86,000 business rates liability probably arose because the intended conversion of the warehouses to a hotel had not materialised. He queried whether the cost could be recovered from the developer. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources confirmed that there was no legal route to do so.

**CABINET**  
**03.05.23**

In respect of question 3 Councillor Hilton asked if the Cabinet Member was confident that bids would be received that could deliver the quality hotel as originally planned for the site. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that the wider climate had changed since the original proposals. She advised that she was confident bids would be received for a range of uses and that nothing would be ruled in or out.

In respect of question 4 Councillor Hilton enquired whether it was thought right that zero business rates allow a company to hold onto a decaying building in a conservation area. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised that the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) had deemed the building 'beyond economic repair' with zero rateable value. She commented that if central government could be lobbied to change the regulations, then it would right to do so.

In respect of question 5 Councillor Hilton asked what the income from business rates would be if Spread Eagle Court and 67/69 London Road were fully occupied. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources noted that officers were doing what they could to encourage those premises to reopen. She gave assurance that the Revenues and Benefits Team would provide a response as best they can without spending an onerous amount of time on the matter as Spread Eagle Court had been divided into 37 units of varied rateable value.

In respect of question 6 Councillor Field sought further clarification on when the issues referred to would be resolved. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources reiterated that they were in the hands of the developer. She recommended that additional pressure on the developer from the Ward Member would be beneficial to expediting the process.

In respect of question 7 Councillor Field advised that he believed the success of the Blackbridge project would be part dependent on the new houses in the northern portion of the site and enquired whether the Cabinet Member was disappointed that the County Council had objected to the proposal. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that it was a live planning matter and that he could comment no further.

In respect of question 8 Councillor Radley asked how many residents would need to contact officers, and in what format, for action to be taken. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources invited the Managing Director to respond. The Managing Director gave assurance that a written answer would be provided and stated that he believed, subject to confirmation, that the determining factor was the risk assessment rather than the number of residents raising concern. He informed Members that there was already a plan to install air quality monitors for an initial survey period and that the officer responsible is the Community Wellbeing Manager.



**105. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE - REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**

Cabinet considered the report of the Leader of the Council that shared the report and recommendations resulting from the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) undertaken in November 2022 and sought the publication of the Council's response in the form of an Action Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources highlighted the key features of the report including the positive comments on the Council's organisational and place leadership (Appendix 1 4.2). She drew Members' attention to the challenges and recommendations addressed in the action plan (Appendix 2). The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources expressed gratitude to the Senior Management Team, Corporate Support officers and everyone who had been interviewed by the peer team. She commented that Members should be proud of the peers' conclusions.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure noted that the report helped give residents confidence that their money was being well spent and that it was a compliment to both officers and the administration. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy emphasised the reported strength of creative work being undertaken within the authority. She took the opportunity to thank officers, especially the IT teams, and those within her own portfolio for their achievements despite recent challenges. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods stated that the Council was fortunate to have such passionate and well-led staff. He informed Members that he looked forward to the planned improvements in communication (Appendix 2 No.2) as people needed to be aware of the Council's successes. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources advised that she and the Managing Director had already started work on a strategy to drive outcomes in this area.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) the Corporate Peer Challenge report and recommendations is welcomed
- (2) the report is circulated to Members, officers and partners involved in the Corporate Peer Challenge and made available to the public via the council's website.
- (3) the Action Plan prepared in response to the recommendations is approved.

**106. SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY**

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure that presented a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for the City of Gloucester.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure outlined the background to the report and noted the rigorous process undertaken by Active Gloucestershire to produce it (3.2). He advised Members that he believed the proposed strategy formed an

**CABINET**  
**03.05.23**

excellent first step towards the vision of a healthier stronger and more active Gloucester for the years to come.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy noted that working with the third sector was to be prioritised (Appendix 1 Priority 4). She informed Members that she had observed in her own ward the great value third sector organisations, such as Quedgeley Wanderers Football Club, brought to the wider community which could not be underestimated. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources asked if the strategy would be sent to all interested parties should it be adopted. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure confirmed that the final strategy would be available to everyone in a more accessible form than the current draft (Appendix 1). The Managing Director reminded Members that a primary purpose of the strategy would be to inform the procurement of future leisure management services (7.3).

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods drew Members' attention to the importance given to achieving positive health outcomes (Appendix 1 Priority 1). He advised that he would like to see a focus on communities particularly affected by health inequalities such as the South Asian population.

**RESOLVED** that the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy 2023-2028 is adopted.

**107. DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy that sought endorsement of the draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) relating to planning documents and applications and recommended that Members approve to undertake a public consultation.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy summarised the report. She emphasised the importance of including all stakeholders, especially young people, in planning policy as it looks to the future. She encouraged all Council Members and the public to engage with the proposed consultation. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that consultation was necessary to gather diverse views and contribute to getting community decisions. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods reiterated the value of empowering communities to become involved in developments in their local areas.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) the content of the draft Statement of Community Involvement is endorsed
- (2) the draft Statement of Community Involvement for public consultation is approved
- (3) authority is delegated for the correction of any errors such as spelling, grammar, referencing and formatting to the Planning Policy Manager, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing and Planning.

**CABINET**  
**03.05.23**

**108. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - FEBRUARY 2023**

Cabinet considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources that sought Members to note the year-end forecasts, and the financial pressures on the Council during the 11 months ended 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources placed the report in the context of wider financial pressures such as cost inflation. She commented on the need to consider it before the outturn report comes before Cabinet. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources thanked the Finance Team for their hard work to get into a position to report despite the challenges of the past year.

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure stated that he believed the services within his portfolio had started to turn a corner on their journey to becoming profitable. He highlighted recent positive developments such as Gloucester Guildhall's achievement of National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status and awards won by Blackfriars Priory. The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure thanked staff for their hard work. The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources reminded Members that although the refurbishment of the Guildhall had created an adverse budget variance in the short term (5.13), it had placed it in a good position for the longer term. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy pointed to the government consultation reviewing planning processes (5.16) and hoped that it would eventually enable the Council to cover its costs.

**RESOLVED** that it is noted that the:

- (1) forecast year-end position for the financial year is currently a decrease to the General Fund balance of £287k against a budgeted net zero position;
- (2) details of specific budgetary issues identified by officers and the actions being taken to address those issues;
- (3) current level of Capital expenditure as shown in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (4) work to reconstitute the large volume of data from the manual transactions processed following the cyber incident in December 2021 into the system is in progress. The volume of manual data being analysed and reconciled means that there will be movements between the outturns forecast for the detailed categories, and that the figures provided are the best estimates based on current analyses.

**Time of commencement: 6.00 pm**

**Time of conclusion: 6.28 pm**

**Chair**

This page is intentionally left blank



<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>14 June 2023</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>2022-2024 End of Year Council Plan Update</b>		
<b>Report Of:</b>	<b>Leader of the Council</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Budget/Policy Framework:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Liam Moran, Policy &amp; Development Officer</b>		
	<b>Email: liam.moran@gloucester.gov.uk</b>	<b>Tel:</b>	<b>396049</b>
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>1. End of Year Progress Report on Council Plan Actions and Projects 2022-2024</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

1.1 To provide an update on the delivery of the activities as outlined in the Council Plan 2022-2024, to build a greener, fairer, better Gloucester.

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that progress on delivery of the Council Plan 2022-2024 be noted.

**3.0 Background and Key Issues**

3.1 The Council Plan was approved unanimously by Council in January 2022. It set out the vision for the Council, its partners, and residents to “build a greener, fairer, better Gloucester”. The Plan details the Council’s planned projects and activities between 2022 and 2024, to achieve its ambition of improving the lives of everyone who lives in, works in and visits Gloucester.

3.2 There are three priorities that set out how we will achieve our vision:

- Building greener, healthier, and more inclusive communities
- Building a sustainable city of diverse culture and opportunity
- Building a socially responsible and empowering Council

3.3 The Plan set out 45 actions, split equally across three priorities, with 15 actions in each priority area. It should be noted that some of the actions represent activity that will become business as usual, but for the purposes of the action tracking will have a completion date of the end of the Plan period.

3.4 Delivery of the Council Plan in the first year is encouraging across all priorities. Of the 45 actions that are listed in the Council Plan:

- 9 actions (20%) are completed
- 27 actions (60%) are currently expected to complete on time
- 8 actions (17.8%) are currently delayed

- 1 action (2.2%) is not expected to be completed

3.5 Appendix 1 provides an update on each action. Attention is drawn to the following significant achievements:

- The Barton and Tredworth Task Force completed its work in Q3 and, based on the positive impact of this work in the project area, the Council will continue to maintain the same level of environmental-crime resource in the ward and expand this resource to include the entire ward area. Daily inspections of all the fly-tipping hotspots are carried out, along with checks for any potential 'bin on the highway' offences within the ward. Regular Trade Waste checks-ins are also undertaken with all businesses in the ward.
- Kier Construction set up the Learning Hub in NEM House in 2021, employing a person dedicated to running the centre and engaging with stakeholders. The centre engages actively with schools and other learning providers and acts as a brokerage to encourage local people to secure jobs in the construction industry, particularly in the development of The Forum.

As of November 2022 the Learning Hub reported that, through Kier and its subcontractors, it had provided:

- 9 FTE jobs for local people
  - 220 hours of careers support to young people
  - 70 formal training hours
  - 15 apprenticeships
- Consultants have been appointed as a partner in the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and accompanying Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment. The two documents are crucial to the Council's efforts to reach Net Zero emissions across its own functions by 2030 and carbon neutrality across the wider district by 2045. The project commenced in April 2023 and is expected to take six months to complete.
  - Work at the Forum has been largely progressing as planned on site, and construction of the two office buildings is now well underway. The hotel slab has been laid and works will commence shortly. IHG has been selected as the hotel operator and Reef have taken a lease on 1.5 floors of the office space. Our next office occupier and carpark operator will be announced in due course.

#### **4.0 Social Value Considerations**

4.1 Several actions relate directly to the Council's objective of generating social value from its activities.

#### **5.0 Environmental Implications**

5.1 Tackling climate change is one of the key themes embedded throughout the Council Plan and actions have been developed with this in mind.

#### **6.0 Alternative Options Considered**

6.1 This is a progress report therefore alternative options are not applicable.

#### **7.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

7.1 This update on the delivery of the Council Plan 2022-2024 enables Members, partners, and residents to hold the Council to account for the delivery of its planned actions.

## **8.0 Future Work and Conclusions**

8.1 Work will continue towards achieving the actions, with activity built into 2023-24 Service Plans. Monitoring is continuous and the next progress report will come forward in six months.

## **9.0 Financial Implications**

9.1 None arising directly from this report.  
(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

## **10.0 Legal Implications**

10.1 Officers will continue to work together with One Legal to implement the delivery of the activities as outlined in the Council Plan 2022-2024.  
(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

## **11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications**

11.1 Management of risk and opportunity is overseen by those with responsibility for leading on each action.

## **12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:**

12.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact; therefore a full PIA was not required.

## **13.0 Community Safety Implications**

13.1 One of the Council Plan priorities is 'Building greener, healthier, and more inclusive communities' and actions within this priority have been developed with the aim of having a positive impact on community safety.

## **14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications**

14.1 None arising directly from this report.

**Background Documents:** None

This page is intentionally left blank



End of Year Progress Report on Council Plan Actions and Projects 2022-2024			
Council Plan Key Action/Project	Action Deadline	Comment/Update	Expected Outcome
<b>Building greener, healthier, and more inclusive communities</b>			
<b>Leading A Healthy Lifestyle</b>			
Recruit and manage a Food Inclusion Officer for Gloucester for two years and report on the outcomes of that work.	March 2022	The objectives associated with the Food Inclusion Officer role have been brought into the wider work of the Community Wellbeing Team and a draft Food Strategy is currently being prepared. The strategy will set out how the Council will work with partners to deliver coordinated and holistic solutions to food insecurity by developing capacity and sustainability within our communities, supporting the network of trusted organisations and finding opportunities to use food as a mechanism for bringing people together.	Completed
Ensure delivery of a quality leisure offer for residents through conducting an options appraisal for seeking the best operational model for the city.	September 2023	The Council is working towards commissioning a procurement consultant and scoping options for future leisure provisions. We now expect the process to take until 1 June 2024.  In the meantime, the contract with the current provider will be extended until the end of March 2024 and a Sports and Physical Activity Strategy is being prepared. The aims of the strategy are to increase the health and wellbeing of residents, reduce inactivity and increase participation, provide quality facilities, and work with local clubs and groups. A suite of Key Performance indicators has been identified to monitor progress against the priorities.	Delayed
Provide a grant of £10k per year to 'We Can Move', as part of the partnership delivery of the project.	Annual commitment	The grant was provided to We Can Move earlier in the year and, along with contributions from other partners, it has helped to fund various initiatives aimed at getting more people to enjoy an active life. This includes continued support for the development of Blackbridge	Completed

		Sports & Community Hub, which seeks to create a range of sport, physical activity and community activities provided through indoor and outdoor facilities at Blackbridge Playing Fields in Podsmead. We Can Move also provides training and resources to individuals promoting physical activity in communities and has a referral programme that links young people to activities that will support their mental health.	
<b>Tackling Inequalities</b>			
Deliver the Barton and Tredworth Task Force, reporting on and embedding learning from this work.	March 2023	<p>The Task Force completed its work in Q3 and, based on the positive impact of this work in the project area, the Council will continue to maintain the same level of enviro-crime resource in the ward and expand its remit to the whole ward.</p> <p>Daily inspections of all the fly-tipping hotspots are carried out, with more than 60 fines issued in the first three quarters of 2022/23. Checks are carried out for any potential 'bin on the highway' offences within the ward, along with regular Trade Waste with all businesses in the ward.</p>	Completed
Review and update the People Impact Assessment process to ensure equality is reflected in council decision-making and ensure that the Equalities Working Group action plan is delivered across our teams by integrating into team service plans each year.	March 2023 and moving into business as usual	<p>People Impact Assessments are being completed and retained for all relevant decisions.</p> <p>The new ED&amp;I Action Plan, along with the annual progress report on ED&amp;I work, were approved in April 2023. The ED&amp;I Action Plan is subject to formal monitoring, and will be distributed to ED&amp;I Working Group members in May 2023. The Action Plan is focused on a smaller number of actions that will seek to generate a larger impact overall with a continued focus on People Impact Assessments.</p>	On time completion expected

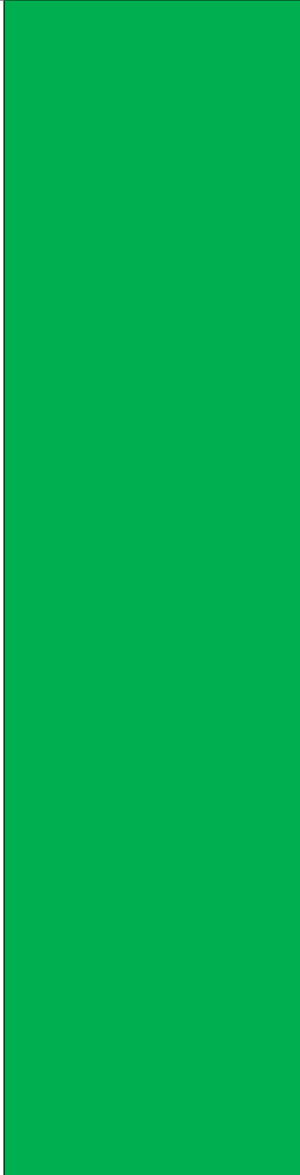
		Service Plans have been completed, with managers asked to indicate how the work of their team will contribute tackling inequalities.	
Support the Commission to Review Race Relations and formally consider any recommendations that are relevant to the council – reporting on progress and further activity in 2023.	March 2023	Officers continue to meet with GREAG (Gloucestershire Race Equality Action Group) in order to discuss progress to date on the work the organisation is undertaking, and a soft launch event for GREAG took place in April 2023. Wider work on implementing the Calls to Action of the Commission to Review Race Relations continues, with engagement focused on how the Council can support GREAG and while simultaneously progressing implementation of the recommendations of the Race Commission report.	On time completion expected
<b>Keeping Our Streets Safe</b>			
Develop policy to increase the use of Community Protection Notices by January 2023.  <i>(Going forward, this action will focus on the 'appropriate' use of CPNs alongside the other tools available for tackling antisocial behaviour.)</i>	January 2023	A policy setting out the arrangements and threshold for the use of Community Protection Notices (CPN) to tackle ongoing antisocial behaviour was approved in March 2022.  CPNs are part of a wide range of enforcement powers available to the Council, our restorative approach (Engage, Support, Enforce) to intervention has worked successfully, avoiding the need to utilise the enforcement provisions of the policy. It is an important addition to the tools available, and a positive step that demonstrates the Council takes antisocial behaviour in its communities seriously.	Completed
Secure the continuation of Solace, our antisocial behaviour service, as a partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner and Cheltenham Borough Council by December	January 2023 moving into business as usual	Solace has continued its important work in the City. It measures its success by prioritising work that minimises the impact of the antisocial behaviour on victims and, where possible, takes a public health approach to intervene before matters escalate. Solace works closely	On time completion expected

2022, and monitor interventions.		<p>with other organisations and support agencies to identify the appropriate approach in each case.</p> <p>Solace undertook 141 interventions in 2022/23 compared with 88 in 2021/22 and, following the introduction of new monitoring processes, it is positive to see that 35% of interventions in Q3 and Q4 were resolved informally.</p>	
Deliver Annual Asset Based Community Development training to staff, building on the learning from COVID-19 and community recovery.	Annual commitment	Training on ABCD was delivered in March 2023 and further training is planned for later in the year.	On time completion expected
<b>Reducing Homelessness</b>			
Develop Wessex House.	March 2024	The site is being used as a compound for the railway station works until September 2023 and The Forum development until summer/autumn 2024. This usage reduces costs to Council arising from these developments, but does prevent development of the site until such time as the compound use ceases.	Delayed
Reduce the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for temporary accommodation by 20%.	March 2024	With the exception of Q4, where a significant increase in presentations requiring alternative accommodation has been seen, the average number of households placed in B&B accommodation has remained below the challenging target set. However, the pressure on the local housing market has both increased the Council's need for temporary accommodation and reduced opportunities to source alternative temporary accommodation solutions, meaning that progress against reducing reliance on B&B accommodation by the 20% target has been limited. To respond to the challenge we are seeing we are working with registered providers to look at opportunities to secure further Temporary Accommodation units, which will reduce the need for B&B use. We are also looking at	Completion not expected

		ways to secure accommodation to move people out of temporary accommodation where they can stay for longer/ as a permanent placement. Exit from temporary placements is critical to reducing the use of B&B. Due to the availability of units in the City and the complexity of delivering in partnership with others, such as registered providers, we do not expect to see these solutions materialise quickly.	
Set up an in-house Home Improvement Agency to support vulnerable and disabled residents to remain in their homes.	March 2023	Preparatory work has been undertaken to review processes and procedures in preparation for setting up the Home Improvement Agency. Work has been delayed due to the impact of the cyber incident that has reduced staffing capacity to progress this work.	Delayed
<b>Combatting Environmental Crime</b>			
Reduce reported incidences of flytipping by 30% by March 2024.	March 2024	The number of reported incidences of flytipping has reduced from 377 in Q2 to 200 in Q3 and then remained at a similar level for Q4. Over this period, it would appear that the reduction is sustaining, however, while it is too early to confirm the downward trend, it appears that the systematic enforcement (warning letters, FPNs, and prosecutions), coupled with regular engagement with stakeholders/residents (stickers, posters and leaflets) are starting to have an impact on the ground. We will continue to monitor the data over a longer period of time to determine whether this is a permanent trend. The reported incidences have resulted in 740 FPNs being issued in 2022/23.	On time completion expected
Continue to tackle littering through the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) – stabilise in year 2022-23 and reduce FPNs in 2023-24.	March 2024	At times, enforcement activity has been affected by recruitment and retention issues in 2022/23. While the number of FPNs issued has fallen just short of the target for the year as a whole, when the team has been at full capacity, targets have been comfortably exceeded.	On time completion expected

		The aim for 2023/24 is to reduce the number of FPNs issued.	
Report on the actions and learnings from taking a place-based task force approach in September 2022, with recommendations to embed within business as usual.	March 2024	The learning has been embedded within business as usual within the Private Sector Housing Team.	On time completion expected
<b>Building A Sustainable City of Diverse Culture and Opportunity</b>			
<b>Advancing Regeneration Schemes</b>			
Complete construction of the Forum with Hotel open and offices 50% occupied or pre-let by December 2024.	December 2024	Work has been largely progressing as planned on site and construction of the two office buildings is now well under way. The hotel slab has been laid and works will commence shortly. IHG has been selected as the hotel operator and Reef have taken a lease on 1.5 floors of the office space. Our next office occupier and carpark operator will be announced in due course.	On time completion expected
Deliver and complete the Kings Square regeneration project by Spring 2022.	30 June 2022	The square is open, and works are complete. Many events and programmes have already taken place in the square, including Arboria II as part of the Luminaria series, as well as hosting dance performances and a high-wire act. Community-led initiatives have included a celebration of Polish Heritage and, Filipino Heritage Day.	Completed
Continue to work with Gloucester City Homes to achieve the regeneration of Matson and Podsmead.  <i>(Reporting on this action will focus on the Podsmead scheme as the regeneration of Matson is</i>	March 2023	Negotiations to draft an agreement to transfer three sites currently used for recreation in Podsmead to Gloucester City Homes are ongoing.  The Council is also liaising with GCH over the drafting of a Housing Needs Assessment to inform the provision of new homes by the housing association following the transfer.	Delayed

<i>now likely to extend beyond the period of this plan.)</i>			
<b>Growing Gloucester's Economy</b>			
Further develop the model of Skills Academy at the Forum using the Social Value model to provide appropriate placements/skills for Gloucester residents.	November 2024	<p>The Learning Hub continues to provide valuable resources to encourage and enable local people to secure employment in the construction sector. As the focus of attention has shifted in recent months towards securing occupants of The Forum, so the support available from the Learning Hub has similarly shifted, and the Hub is now discussing with Hotel Indigo the provision of learning services to support recruitment to the hotel industry.</p> <p>Officers are also discussing with Kier the legacy of the Learning Hub, and particularly how to ensure continuity of its services beyond the construction of The Forum.</p>	On time completion expected
Actively support the BID re-ballot in 2022.	July 2022	The BID second term ballot was carried out in June 2022 and was successful, with the BID being elected for a further 5 year term.	Completed
Promote the City as a place for businesses to invest using the Invest in Gloucester channel with messaging consistent with the Tourism and Destination Marketing Plan and emerging new City branding.	Business as usual	<p>Activities to market the city to investors continue, working alongside the GFirst LEP and other County partners to promote the County internationally.</p> <p>The GFirst LEP continues to promote the County to investors, and officers work closely with the other districts and the LEP accordingly. In March, Gloucester hosted a visit by a delegation of 12 Canadian tech businesses who spent a morning viewing The Forum and other city centre developments.</p>	On time completion expected
<b>Strengthening Our Cultural Offerings</b>			
Implement Years 1, 2 & 3 of the Museum Development Plan by	March 2024	Notable achievements from the Museum Development Plan this year include:	On time completion expected

<p>the end of 2023, secure Blackfriars Priory future management with Historic England by 2023 and secure funding to implement improvements (ie. bar expansion, dance floor refurb, live-streaming performances) at Gloucester Guildhall by the end of 2024.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A successful second year in the Royal Photographic Society Partnership with IPE163 Exhibition.</li> <li>▪ Delivery of the Wild Escape Project, a national campaign in partnership with Art Fund.</li> <li>▪ Submission of two funding bids to support the autumn 2024 exhibition and an archaeological engagement and archiving project.</li> <li>▪ Remodelling of the Museum first floor, opening spaces to increase the visitor experience.</li> <li>▪ Meeting commercial income targets in the shop, cafe and exhibition.</li> <li>▪ Investment in new blinds to protect the Museum Collection for future years and transforming the 1st floor space.</li> </ul> <p>The Council is currently negotiating terms with English Heritage to extend the Blackfriars Priory lease for the next 25 years and a 5 year Business Plan is currently being prepared.</p> <p>Following a 10-week closure and £260k investment from Arts Council England and the Council, the following improvements have been completed at the Guildhall to enable it to compete with similar venues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Installation of state of the art projector and amplifier.</li> <li>▪ Ugraded stage lighting.</li> <li>▪ Refurbished floor in the main hall.</li> <li>▪ New dance studio with sprung flooring, new lighting, and audio.</li> <li>▪ Super-fast Wi-Fi with download speeds matching those of large-scale exhibition centres and live streaming capabilities.</li> <li>▪ Remodelled kitchen/bar area.</li> </ul>	
---	---	--



<p>Work in partnership with Gloucester Culture Trust and others to ensure that the Cultural Strategy action plan is delivered to ensure that culture is accessible to all, reporting progress to council on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Business as usual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Upgraded air cooling in the cellar.</li> </ul> <p>The Council continues to work with Gloucester Culture Trust and others to ensure the Cultural Strategy drives change within the city. Meetings are held regularly with GCT, The Music Works, Strike A Light, Your Next Move and the University of Gloucestershire.</p> <p>Directors of GL4 will sit on the Steering Group for Gloucester Guildhall along with local artist George Moorey and Gloucester young entrepreneur Kobe Francis.</p> <p>For the Light Games produced in February in Matson as part of the Bright Nights Festival in partnership with Strike A Light, 2400 people registered for free tickets and of those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 43% were living in a GL4 postcode</li> <li>▪ 61% were living in a postcode in Gloucester in the top 20% areas of deprivation</li> <li>▪ 78% new audience</li> <li>▪ 21% identified as a deaf or disabled person or had a long term health condition or mental health condition</li> </ul>	<p>On time completion expected</p>
<p>Using the opportunity offered by Gloucester being identified as a Priority Place by Arts Council England, encourage our cultural partners to be ambitious, demonstrate best practice and seek national recognition from the arts, heritage and cultural sectors. Increase the number of National Portfolio Organisations in the</p>	<p>Business as usual</p>	<p>Meetings have been held with all recipients of National Portfolio Organisations funding in Gloucester to discuss how we can partner with and support the sector. Programming has included some nationally significant work to position the City as a cultural hub e.g. Kings Square launch – Cirque Bijou and Bullzini, Avant Garde Dance.</p> <p>Meetings are held regularly with cultural leader Marcus Davey to discuss plans and best practice, and best practice is shared with local partners e.g. plans to work with Strike</p>	<p>On time completion expected</p>

city and retain accreditation status for the Museum of Gloucester. Encourage co-creation with our communities and ensure that culture is embedded in the city's future plans, policies and strategies.		A Light on setting up our artist residency programme for Gloucester Guildhall.	
<b>Promoting Our City</b>			
Working with our partners to support the Festivals and Events sector we will provide advice, guidance and funding to ensure a quality and engaging programme of events across the city including Kings Square, with an annual report on activity and planned future activity.	Business as usual	<p>The Council continues to provide support for the sector. Outdoor Events Fund contributions have been confirmed for 2023-24:</p> <p>Voices Gloucester, Three Choirs Festival, Jamaican Independence Day, Gloucester Pride and Gloucester History Festival</p> <p>Three awards were granted for the New Projects and Commissions Fund in round 2:</p> <p>The Music Works, Canal and River Trust and Strike A Light.</p>	On time completion expected
Deliver the city's Tourism and Destination marketing plan to increase the number of visitors into the city on an annual basis, with increased emphasis on digital channels to attract identified priority visitors and reduce carbon impact.	March 2024	The Council continues to work through the remainder of the marketing plan. Key objectives including digital growth are still exceeding targets , with ambitious new targets to double the number of unique visits to the Visit Gloucester Website in 2023/24. In the past quarter alone, there has been an increase from 24,000 to nearly 30,000 visitors a month.	On time completion expected
Brand, capture and promote the rich and diverse story of Gloucester in order to attract national and international audiences to the city. Encourage responsible tourism through	Business as usual	The branding roll-out will evolve into a rebrand of Visit Gloucester in 2023, and the creation of a kitemarking system for businesses who interact with Visit Gloucester. Over summer 2023, the Council aims to create a cohesive 'core campaign' for the city using existing assets so we have a continual presence in front of both businesses and	On time completion expected

providing information and advice on our website and through targeting eco-travellers by the end of 2023. Work with partners to use and embed the new city branding by the end of 2022.		consumers year-round. Recently, there has been a focus on encouraging sustainable transportation options when visiting our cultural venues and events within the city.	
<b>Enhancing Our Green Spaces</b>			
Report on the progress of the Open Space strategy.	March 2024/ Business as usual	<p>The Council continues to make progress against the objectives set out in the Open Spaces Strategy. Notable activity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A new orchard at Hempsted.</li> <li>▪ New trees have been planted to replace those lost during the drought last year.</li> <li>▪ A further £80,000 has been spent on playground repairs, in addition to the two additional outdoor gyms provided at Milton Avenue and Armscroft Park.</li> <li>▪ Habitat creation schemes and management plans have been introduced on 25 sites.</li> <li>▪ Grant funding of £100,000 has been made available to sports clubs for grass pitch improvement works.</li> <li>▪ Additional support in the form of training and insurance cover has been given to Friends groups.</li> <li>▪ Green flags have been retained for existing sites and work is underway on Green Flag management Plan for Gloucester Park.</li> </ul>	On time completion expected
Increase the number of Green Flag parks to 4 by 2024.	March 2024	Green flags for Barnwood Arboretum, Saintbridge Pond and Robinswood Hill have been retained. This is testament to the dedication of the communities and officers involved. Work is well underway on a Green Flag Management Plan for Gloucester Park, set to be completed for January 2024, with the aim of attaining a Green Flag in 2024. This work has included communication	On time completion expected

		with community groups involved in supporting the park, along with wider work to improve safety in Gloucester Park, including through additional lighting.	
Develop a Green Infrastructure Plan.	March 2023	This continues to be a work in progress and will be discussed as part of the Climate Change Strategy.	Delayed
<b>Building A Socially Responsible and Empowering Council</b>			
<b>Our Promises Becoming A Smart City</b>			
Agree a suite of projects that will comprise the second phase of the Gloucester Digital Strategy by summer 2022. The projects will be ambitious and collaborative, aiming to set the agenda for combined action over the next 5 years.	March 2024	In the light of the Council's cyber incident in December 2021, IT resources have been focused on the repair and replacement of essential IT systems and servers, instead of taking forward the Digital Strategy.	Delayed
Establish a Gloucester Digital Steering Group to comprise Gloucester organisations that are committed to driving forward the Digital Strategy and to put Gloucester on the map as a smart, digital city.	March 2024	In the light of the Council's cyber incident in December 2021, IT resources have been focused on the repair and replacement of essential IT systems and servers, instead of taking forward the Digital Strategy.	Delayed
Continuously improve and expand our end-to-end digital services in line with best practice, ensuring that they are as accessible as possible.	Business as usual	Throughout 2022/2023, promotion, monitoring and improvement of self-service and online options has continued, along with the introduction of new online services, such as the addition of missed bins to the Report It functionality. An improved container ordering process and "Check you Bin Day" process have been implemented.  The total number of customer service interactions has decreased by 10%, indicating that our focus on improving	On time completion expected

		<p>the customer journey is moving in the right direction. We have seen real channel shift this year, with a 187% increase in the use of Report It, which has in turn led to an 11% reduction in phone calls and a 21% reduction in emails to Here to Help. With more residents choosing to use Report It instead of telephoning the Council, we have been able to reduce average call waiting times by 42% compared to 2021/22, thereby providing an improved standard of service to those who prefer to speak to us.</p> <p>While most residents are still choosing to contact the Council by phone, we hope to see these trends continue as more online options become available.</p>	
<b>Embedding Social Value</b>			
Increase the social value generated through the Social Value Policy for the City by 2024.	March 2024	<p>The value generated by the Social Value Policy has increased throughout the course of the year. The end year total is £1,142,629 of delivered social and local economic value.</p> <p>£687k of value was generated by spending in the local supply chain as a direct result of our contracts and £412k of value was generated by employing local people on contracts or retaining them for the delivery our contract. The main contracts which have delivered this level of social value are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kings Square - completed</li> <li>▪ Housing- Somewhere Safe to Stay Hubs- current</li> </ul>	On time completion expected
Enhance the Social Value Policy to include wider purchasing by the Council.	March 2024	The review of the policy has commenced and will continue in the next financial year. Options being explored include incorporating contract extensions, purchases on frameworks and purchases via delivery partners into the policy.	On time completion expected

Deliver the Social Value plan for the Forum.	Summer 2024	<p>Kier Construction set up the Learning Hub in NEM House in 2021, employing a person dedicated to running the centre and engaging with stakeholders. The centre engages actively with schools and other learning providers and acts as a brokerage to encourage local people to secure jobs in the construction industry, particularly in the development of The Forum.</p> <p>As of November 2022 the Learning Hub reported that, through Kier and its subcontractors it had provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 9 FTE jobs for local people</li> <li>▪ 220 hours of careers support to young people</li> <li>▪ 70 formal training hours</li> <li>▪ 15 apprenticeships.</li> </ul>	On time completion expected
<b>Delivering Quality Waste and Street Care Services</b>			
Transition successfully to the new waste partnership by 1st April 2022.	April 2022	The contract was successfully migrated with a seamless transition for residents. The service remains as it was and collection days have also remained the same. As we move forward, we look to digitally transform our systems bringing greater efficiency and improving performance.	Completed
Maintain a minimum recycling level of 45% and develop a waste strategy to enable an increase.	March 2024	The Gloucestershire Resources Waste Partnership interim strategy 2023-2026 has been recommended for adoption this week and all District partners commit to the strategy in the spirit of partnership working. It is recognised that due to delay in new waste legislation from government any major change to service would be fool hardy, however there is still desire to move things forward within our partnership to increase recycling, reduce residual waste with our climate agenda in mind. This interim strategy is flexible and it is accepted it may need to change to adapt as new legislation becomes clear in the coming months. The cost of living crisis is starting to affect tonnages across all waste streams and it is expected that both residual	Delayed

		waste and recycling tonnages will fall this year. The percentage of total waste recycled across 2022/23 is 41%, and to reach 45% a step change will be required which may involve collecting less residual waste either with less frequent collections or a smaller container.	
Deliver a community consultation to get feedback on our plans to increase recycling and reduce waste.	March 2024	As part of work on their wider waste plan, Gloucestershire County Council carried out a consultation on waste management. The results from this have been made available, and the City Council is looking to use these findings to develop an action plan to increase recycling and reduce waste in the near future.	Completed
<b>Addressing Climate Change</b>			
Work towards the delivery of net zero emissions across the City Council's functions by 2030 and district-wide net zero emissions by 2045.	March 2024/ Business as usual	Consultants have been appointed as a partner in the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, and accompanying Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment. The two documents are crucial to the council's efforts to reach Net Zero emissions across its own functions by 2030 and carbon neutrality across the wider district by 2045. The project commenced in April 2023 and is expected to take six months to complete.	On time completion expected
Energy use in council properties will be continuously monitored and reported on annually, with a view to utilising available funding and grants to reduce consumption.	Business as usual	A report was delivered to Cabinet in January, and annual updates will continue. The report showed energy consumption (gas and electric) and gave an overview of the success of the ground source heat pump and solar panels at Plock Court and the bus station roof and the impact this has had on reducing our carbon output (and cost). We continue to work with our tenants to help secure possible climate sensitive retrofits, such as LED's, EV's and solar panels and investigate grant funding opportunities to deliver future projects.	On time completion expected
All capital projects being funded by the Council to be net carbon zero in operation with the	March 2024	The major capital project funded by the authority at present is The Forum development. This project started prior to this target, however there are a range of carbon	On time completion expected

ambition to be net carbon zero in construction.		initiatives built into that scheme. Examples of carbon reduction at The Forum include solar provision on the roof, a green wall on the carpark, electric parking provision, thermal efficiency and construction materials designed to reduce carbon footprint.	
<b>Serving Our Residents</b>			
Increase online options and monitor customer feedback quarterly.	Business as usual	<p>Details of work to increase the options available through the Report It functionality are set out above and work is currently focused on a project to support refuse vehicle in cab technology and make reporting of missed bins easier through the provision of a real-time view of the completion of rounds. In 2023/34, digital processes for assisted collections and bulky collections will be implemented.</p> <p>With regard to customer satisfaction, data from online self-feedback is now included with the results of emailed feedback surveys and this has provided a much higher volume of responses. Based on the feedback received there has been a significant increase in customer satisfaction. In 2021/22, both pre and post cyber incident, satisfaction levels were below the 75% target and in 2022/23, satisfaction levels have reached 88% across the year as a whole, including 7 months at 90% or above. There has also been a 35% drop in the number of complaints and the number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 has remained consistently below the 10% target, ending on 3.62% for the year as a whole.</p> <p>In 2022/23, residents were consulted on their preferred options for contacting the Council and this was also promoted to voluntary and community services. The</p>	On time completion expected



		results will be used to inform the provision of services in the future.	
Set a balanced budget each year and monitor income and expenditure to ensure value for money in the delivery of services, and report on this quarterly.	Business as usual	A balanced budget was set for 2023/2024 and approved by Council in February 2023.	Completed
Benefits, council tax support and grants for local businesses will be delivered in a timely manner and reported on quarterly.	Business as usual	<p>In 2022/23 work has continued to recover and restore all aspects of the Revenues and Benefits Service following the cyber incident. Good progress has been made, though some workarounds remain in place.</p> <p>In the last three months of the year, the time taken to process of new housing benefit claims has been much closer to the target and additional resource has been put in place to clear the backlog of Universal Credit notifications.</p> <p>Administration of the Energy Bills Support Scheme AFP and AF to help households faced with rising energy costs is well underway, and at the end of March 2023 a total of 251 households had received a payment.</p>	On time completion expected

This page is intentionally left blank

# Gloucester City Council

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>14 June 2023</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Community Asset Transfer Policy</b>		
<b>Report Of:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Budget/Policy Framework:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Abi Marshall, Property Commissioning Manager</b>		
	<b>Email:</b>	<b><a href="mailto:abi.marshall@gloucester.gov.uk">abi.marshall@gloucester.gov.uk</a></b>	<b>Tel:</b> 396212
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>1. Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy</b>		

## FOR GENERAL RELEASE

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Council are regularly approached by Community Organisations/ Third Sector Organisations (CO/TSO) who wish to take on land or buildings, to support their organisational aims. There are over 10 organisations currently actively hoping to engage the Council into transferring an asset.
- 1.2 Empowering a CO/TSO to be independent has many benefits, if approached in the right way. It is equally important that the asset is protected for future generations and communities and the proposals are viable.
- 1.3 The Policy seeks to establish a framework and a process to help establish if a community organisations proposal is viable and how the Council can consider supporting an approach within verifiable parameters.

### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy be adopted.

### 3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The Council is often approached by CO/TSOs to transfer an asset (land or building) to them at nil value.
- 3.2 CO/TSOs are predominately community groups, often run entirely by volunteers or with a few paid employees. They may either currently be in occupation of a Council asset or wish to take occupation of a Council asset. However, due to their constrained financial resources they are not in a position to pay full commercial rents and still be able to meet their desired goals. They often rely heavily or in part on external funding, grants, or appropriate loans, balanced with significant contributions from their volunteers.

- 3.3 The Council must ensure that the buildings owned by it are properly managed and maintained so that they continue to be available for use to meet Council objectives. In order to meet these requirements, rental income can be collected and reinvested into the assets with the burden of repair and maintenance remaining with the Council. Alternatively, where the burden of managing and maintaining the asset can be passed to a CO/TSO that has objectives similar to those of the Council, the value of the rental income may be offset by social value considerations.
- 3.4 Where the onus to keep the property in repair, so that it remains a safe and useable asset passes to the CO/TSO, the Council must consider if:
- The CO/TSO has the skill set and ability to look after the asset and understand relevant property legislation and requirements.
  - Does the CO/TSO understand the potential financial burden of these works.
  - Are the CO/TSO going to undertake relevant due diligence prior to their approach to the Council to know that their request is feasible:
    - Legally – for example planning and building regulation requirements, public open space legislation, landlord and tenant laws, energy performance certificates etc, etc
    - Financially – do they understand the condition of the property, potential upcoming repairs or works, the cost of meeting legislative changes to building and climate regulations. Potential funding opportunities. Ability to pay for or find expert help or advice.
    - Physically – does the building or land meet their space requirements. Is it safe, is there room for expansion. Does it meet funders requirements.
- 3.5 The Council currently have over 10 CO/TSOs looking to take on land or buildings. Many of these approaches would not be able to demonstrate that their proposals would be viable, creating the risk that the CO/TSO would fail both operationally and financially. In these circumstances it is often the case that appropriate repairs and maintenance are not performed due to their cost leaving the Council owned buildings at high risk of accruing significant remedial repair costs for the Council, and a risk of obsolescence leading to an unusable building. This risk can be minimised where the CO/TSO comes to the Council with a considered and reasoned business case.
- 3.6 The Councils priority is protecting the longevity of the Community opportunity for the use of future communities. Therefore, an exit strategy is also an important consideration that needs to be included in any potential CAT. i.e. What happens to the asset if the CO/TSO fails?
- 3.7 Each asset adoption proposal made by a CO/TSO will be considered on an individual basis. The purpose of the Policy is so that we are given sufficient information on which to base a decision and how we manage the workflow and the decision making process is clear. The applicant is given a process to follow and is given an indication of when they will hear back from us.
- 3.8 The CAT policy will:
- Set expectations as to what the Council need to consider an application.
  - Give an indication of the process and timeframes, manage the process.
  - Make clear supported decisions.
  - Allow clubs to help themselves by better understanding the implications of their request, which better helps the Council understand the viability of the proposal.

- Allows the Council to better support our CO/TSOs, applications will be considered on an individual basis.
- More productive conversations and an equalised opportunity.
- More transparency around decision making.

#### **4.0 Social Value Considerations**

- 4.1 CO/TSO's provide important hubs across Gloucester that **give people an opportunity to socialise, learn and access key services** and can perform vital functions in communities.
- 4.2 The Council want to support our CO/TSO's but in a way that ensures longevity and success, and that does not put the Council's assets at risk.
- 4.3 Social considerations will also form an important element of any CO/TSO's applications for a CAT.

#### **5.0 Environmental Implications**

- 5.1 Having options on the doorstep in terms of community provisions will lessen the need to travel.
- 5.2 Buildings will have Energy Performance (EPC) ratings which we will seek to improve with any successful CAT application. We will work with the CO/TSO.
- 5.3 Any 'new build' proposal will have to demonstrate sustainable community design practices.

#### **6.0 Alternative Options Considered**

- 6.1 Do nothing.

We already have tenants who have benefited from preferential terms due to their CO/TSO status and what they deliver for our communities. Many of these tenants are what is know as protected tenants. This means they have an automatic right to renew their tenancies on the same terms, apart from the rent. To meet other legislative requirements the rent would have to go up and a 'market rent charged' unless we could apply a standardised policy. Therefore, doing nothing is not an option due to the legal status of our tenants we have to do something to help protect the services and benefits they deliver.

- 6.2 Continue as we do now.

This is causing confusion, organisations are unclear how best to meet their objectives and often CO/TSO's are made promises, or making demands on the Council that legislatively, financially, physically impossible to deliver. This leads to frustration, and reputational damage. By having a clear policy, we can treat every CO/TSO on their own merits and manage their expectations. We can forge stronger and better relationships benefiting the communities we serve.

#### **7.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 7.1 We need to provide a clear framework and process to empower our CO/TSO's and help forge stronger, more positive relationships and enable more success stories and increase what we can do to best serve our communities together.

7.2 We can be more robust and reasoned in our decision making and increase transparency around the decision making process.

## **8.0 Future Work and Conclusions**

8.1 The Policy should be kept under review and adapted to reflect and learn from the process. The Policy recommends that it is reviewed at least once every three years.

8.2 We should share the policy with our current CO/TSO tenants and allow sufficient lead in times to best support their requirements. We should share the Policy with the many hopeful CO/TSO's who are keen to engage with the Council.

8.3 We should do a lunch and learn and share the policy contents more widely with internal staff (and Members) so they are able to understand the benefits, and signpost relevant organisations.

## **9.0 Financial Implications**

9.1 The adoption of the proposed CAT Policy leads to a protection of the Council assets and therefore if applied appropriately should safeguard the finances of the Council. Regular dialogue with the CO/TSOs and monitoring of assets subject to CAT would be required to ensure the obligations accepted in their business plans and follow-on agreements are being adhered to.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

## **10.0 Legal Implications**

10.1 A sale or a lease of land of more than seven years is regarded as a disposal. Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with the power to dispose of land in any manner provided that such a disposal is for the best consideration reasonably obtainable.

10.2 The disposals under the CAT Policy are in most cases likely to be granted at less than best consideration. The Council will therefore need to carry out a cost benefit assessment in each case to consider its powers to dispose under the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003. This applies where the Council considers the disposal will help to promote or improve the 'social, economic or environmental well-being' of the Council's area or residents.

10.3 A short term lease does not fall under the best value provisions of Section 123 of the LGA 1972. Whilst leases for a term of less than 7 years do not have to be for the best consideration reasonably obtainable, the Council must still have regard to its general fiduciary duty to obtain best value.

10.6 Heads of Terms will be agreed in advance by the Asset Management Team outlining the terms and type of the occupancy together with appropriate restrictions on use and subject to the appropriate approvals/consents being obtained.

10.9 In the event that the proposed disposal includes land held as public open space, under Section 123 LGA 1972 the Council has a statutory duty to advertise this disposal for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper circulating in the area, and to consider any objections raised.

- 10.2 The Community Asset Transfer Process may overlap with the statutory process for disposal of assets listed as of community value in circumstances where an asset is both listed as an asset of community value and identified as being suitable for community asset transfer. However, the fact that an asset has been listed as of community value does not of itself indicate that it is suitable for community asset transfer. The two procedures are quite separate.
- 10.3 All disposals also need to comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. When disposing of land at less than best consideration the Council may be providing a subsidy to the owner/ occupier. Where this occurs, the Council must undertake an evaluation of the proposed transaction to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Act. Officers should contact One Legal for advice on undertaking this evaluation.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

### **11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications**

- 11.1 The main risk would be for a spoof CO/TSO organisation to try to claim a building or land for free. The robust stages being proposed in the CAT and vetting required would help limit this risk. Also, freehold interests are not likely to be offered. Where there is still doubt a commercial tenancy (on market terms) can be offered.
- 11.2 There is insufficient land and buildings to meet demand. The CAT process puts the onus on the CO/TSO's to identify the potential opportunity, working with the Council. If we do not have it within the portfolio, and there is no viable mechanism to obtain an asset then the Council will not be able to move forward. All opportunities are 'subject to contract'.

### **12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding**

- 12.1 The CAT considered the groups that would qualify for consideration under the policy. CO/TSO's often specifically designed to fulfil those criteria and to provide for those in the community, who are disadvantaged, or marginalised, they create inclusivity.
- 12.2 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.
- 12.2 CO/TSO's if the CAT Policy is adopted will have to demonstrate high levels of inclusivity to be a success. Many CO/TSO's specifically target characteristics identified in the PIA.

### **13.0 Community Safety Implications**

- 13.1 N/A

### **14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications**

- 14.1 N/A

**Background Documents:** Draft CAT Policy attached in appendix 1.

This page is intentionally left blank



Gloucester  
City Council  
*Transforming Your City*

GLOUCESTER CITY  
COUNCIL

COMMUNITY  
ASSET TRANSFER

GLOUCESTER

## 1. Statement of Commitment:

1.1 Gloucester City Council is committed to Community Asset Transfer ('CAT') where that will bring benefits to our communities and contributes towards the Council's aims and objectives. This draws through from our recent Social Value Policy (2020 - 2023).

1.2 We recognise that CAT can be a valuable part of supporting and sustaining the Third Sector in Gloucester and we wish to ensure Council assets are managed by the people who regularly use them.

1.3 We are fully committed to using Council assets to form long-term partnerships with Voluntary and Community Sector Enterprises (VCSE) that meet the Council's criteria, in order to create stronger, more cohesive and more sustainable communities.

1.4 We will proactively consider potential opportunities for CAT to local communities and social enterprises.

1.5 We will follow a transparent process for CAT and will adopt an agreed method of assessing all requests for CAT.

1.6 We will review this policy at least once every three years.



## 2. What is Community Asset Transfer?

2.1 Definition: "The transfer of land or buildings from the Council's freehold ownership into the stewardship and/or ownership of Third Sector Organisations."

2.2 CAT can take place in different forms:

- Management agreement
- Licence to occupy
- Short lease
- Long lease

2.3 CAT can also apply to giving a TSO 'first refusal' on a commercial disposal, e.g. by protecting the asset from the open market for an agreed period, which may be particularly appropriate for social enterprises and development trusts.

2.4 CAT usually involves a transfer at less than market value, either at a reduced cost, or free of charge. The level of subsidy will be determined by the social, economic or environmental benefits generated by the transfer. A transfer can be by lease.

2.5 CAT can apply to community buildings (see definition at Appendix A) and also to other Third Sector uses, such as social enterprises or arts venues. Examples of CAT type

agreements that have already been granted in Gloucester in the past include community/ social centres, advice centres, youth clubs, city farms, nurseries, social clubs, arts premises, museums, tourist attractions, etc.



### 3. Why does the council transfer assets to third sector organisations?

3.1 We believe that TSOs are often best placed to manage facilities in their local communities. They make extensive use of volunteers and their local knowledge, and their hands-on management of the asset is likely to result in lower overheads and deliver value-for-money, as well as a more intensive use of the asset.

3.2 Community management and ownership of assets directly supports the Council's new, devolved decision making process. It empowers local communities, puts local organisations in control, encourages pride of place and generates wealth in Gloucester's communities.

3.3 An asset can also provide a TSO with greater financial viability and reduce its dependency on the Council and enable them easier access to grants. The asset will enable it to apply for external funding that may not be available to the Council, or even to secure loan finance on the value of the legal arrangement in place (such as the lease).

3.4 Better use of its assets can help the Council achieve improved outcomes and efficiencies. We will strive to ensure as part of the negotiation process that the TSO has the required skills and knowledge to undertake the ongoing operational running of the asset as well as their activities to ensure statutory compliance throughout the term and reducing the risk of a financial risk as the term comes to a close. We will include triggers in the occupational agreements to allow for partnership working in this regard.



#### 4. Which organisations can be considered for CAT?

##### 4.1 TSOs or organisations that are not for private profit:

- Unincorporated charitable organisation
- Company limited by guarantee with charitable status
- Community Interest Company (CIC) limited by guarantee
- Community benefit Industrial & Provident Society with an asset lock
- CIC limited by shares

##### 4.2 CAT recipients can be of any size but need to:

- Generate social, economic, or environmental benefits
- Directly benefit the people of Gloucester
- Benefit as wide and diverse a range of local people as possible



4.3 Privately owned or commercial organisations can only be considered if their main aim is to deliver social, economic, or environmental benefits and they have significant ‘not for profit’ elements. Private companies or organisations that use the asset, (either physically or as a registered address) that do not fall into the above categories will be treated as private commercial enterprises.

4.4 National organisations whose remit is regional or nationwide are not normally considered for CAT.

## 5. What are the criteria that TSOs need to meet to be eligible for CAT?

5.1 They will:

- need to have a well-prepared business case
- need to demonstrate a clear community/social demand for the proposed CAT
- need to have the capacity to manage the asset and have directors or management committee members who have the necessary experience and skills. This will need to be documented as a contractual obligation either in the lease or management agreement to ensure compliance throughout the term.
- need to have good governance, robust financial systems, and all necessary policies expected of a community organisation; this can be evidenced by having a recognised quality mark, or by meeting all the basic requirements for a good community organisation as listed in Appendix B
- need to contribute towards the Council’s corporate and strategic objectives and Gloucester’s City Plan
- must not duplicate activities, services or facilities already provided in the local community, or it must help support those activities and provide additionality.

## 6. For how long will leases be granted?

6.1 We will carefully consider the specific needs of the TSO on a case by case basis, the condition of the asset and the requirements of potential funders or lenders. We will base the length of the lease term on the needs that are clearly supported by the TSOs business plan, and on the TSOs capacity to manage the asset. In certain case we may offer a phased transfer, depending on the TSOs resources.

6.2 Proposals from community anchor organisations (“independent, community-run and led organisations, rooted in a sense of place, and with a mission to improve things for the whole community”) and those which include the co-location of several services (a ‘community hub’) will be encouraged in this context.

6.3 The following is a guide to the length of term that may apply to new CATs, based on the anticipated requirements of most charitable funders:

- A management agreement or licence will normally be granted for up to 12 months
- A lease of up to 10 years
- A lease of up to 35 years
- In exceptional cases, a lease longer than 35 years may be appropriate if supported by a business case that demonstrates special circumstances or requirements from funders or lenders.

6.4 We will be as flexible as possible when designing lease clauses, so that maximum benefit is achieved for both the TSO and the Council. This will enable the asset to be used imaginatively, e.g. through the ability to sub-let and through flexible user clauses.

6.5 Once granted, leases can usually be extended or restructured at a future stage, to meet changes to the activities or circumstances of the TSO, or to meet the requirements of potential funders or lenders (if supported by an appropriate business case). We can enter into negotiations before lease end dates to ensure that funding applications can take into account what is being discussed for occupation beyond agreement end dates.

6.6 Leases will take steps to ensure the protection of the asset for use for the community for future generations and help support the longer term benefits of the CAT. Therefore, the Heads of Terms will set out the agreed minimum standards such as, opening hours and activities, user clauses, restrictions on use, subletting, and assignment and potentially even break clauses, and refer to service level agreements if deemed appropriate. Occupiers will be required to agree a schedule of condition before taking an agreement and any changes to the asset will need to be agreed with Council in advance and a licence to alter entered into. A full schedule on ongoing repairs and maintenance will also need to be agreed as part of the agreement. It will also ensure that the TSO meets all necessary requirements to achieve optimum community benefit and use of the asset. The TSO must show that it understands Social Value, and how it might adapt these principles, although predominantly used for procurement, it is a significantly important set of principles that can be applied to considering CAT applications. [gcc-social-value-toolkit.pdf \(gloucester.gov.uk\)](#).

6.7 Leases longer than 7 years will normally only be granted to organisations that have an 'asset lock' and will contain clauses that prevent the asset being assigned or sold on for unintended financial gain and the loss of the agreed benefits. Leases of longer than 7 years are classed as a disposal under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 therefore the Council will need to carry out a cost benefit assessment on each application to consider its powers to dispose under the General Disposal Consent (England) 2003. This applies where the Council considers the disposal will help to promote or improve the 'social, economic or environmental well-being' of the Council's area or residents.

6.8 All disposals also need to comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. When disposing of land at less than best consideration the Council may be providing a subsidy to the owner/ occupier. Where this occurs, the Council must undertake an evaluation of the proposed transaction to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Act. Officers should contact One Legal for advice on undertaking this evaluation.

6.9 Leases will contain suitable clauses to ensure the return of the asset to the council if the terms of the service agreement are not met, or in the case of dissolution, insolvency, or corruption.



## 7. What should the business case for CAT contain?

7.1 A business case for a CAT should include:

- Full details of the identified needs that will be met by the CAT
- Clear evidence of the capacity and experience of the TSO to manage and develop the asset
- Detailed evidence that the CAT is financially sustainable over the life of the business plan and will not incur future financial liabilities for the Council, e.g. cash flow forecasts, projected utilisation rates, and details of any financial support secured from or pledged by funders and lenders; the Council will assist by making relevant information and data available
- Details of the anticipated benefits that the CAT will produce and how these will be measured
- Details of the type of CAT and lease terms sought
- Evidence of support from council, other TSOs, other local stakeholders and potential funders
- A robust risk assessment of the CAT and details of alternative arrangements in the event that the CAT proves unrealistic or not sustainable

## 8. What is the assessment process for CAT applications?

8.1 The following table is intended as a guide and the suggested timescales may be subject to variation. Steps Elements Assessors / decision makers Timescales. Clarity on these elements can be obtained from the Asset Management team at Gloucester City Gloucester.

### **Stage 1:**

- TSO Presentation (business case and feasibility assessment)
- Why the asset is needed
- Aims & objectives
- Support from others
- Demonstrate effective management of the asset (for cases where the TSO already occupies the property)
- See appendix C for framework on decision making when one more than one suitable applicant submits a proposal for an asset

The Council will then undertake a desktop assessment - max 1 month

**Stage 2: If successful at Stage 1**, the TSO submits a detailed business plan for the whole organisation providing evidence of:

- Product/service delivery
- Partnership working
- Experience
- Track record
- Capacity
- Needs analysis
- Alignment with the Council's corporate plan, aims and objectives
- Clarification on how the TSO will meet social value objectives.
- Will be required to undertake a Subsidy Control test

The Council will then undertake:

- 1) Desktop assessment by council officers
- 2) Meeting(s) with TSO and supporters
- 3) Site visit
- 4) Outline next steps, which may include
  - Public Open Space consultation requirements
  - Broader stakeholder engagement, or further consultation proposals
  - Introduction to other TSOs undertaking a similar journey to allow TSOs to pull resources and benefit from savings
  - Ask for further information
- 5) Using the information the Council has received from the TSO, if appropriate, it will prepare a written report, outlining options and making recommendation - max 3 months (longer if information is missing)
  - Projected utilisation
  - Cash flow forecasts
  - Projected income & expenditure
  - Risk assessment
  - SWOT analysis
  - Professional advice obtained
  - 'In principle' decision by Head of Finance and Resources or Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources.

**Stage 3: If approved 'in principle' at Stage 2**, a full assessment of the proposed CAT will be undertaken by Gloucester City Council including a detailed evaluation of:

- Value/worth of the CAT's benefits to the community
- Benefits to the Council
- Test against existing facilities (duplication) looking for betterment and additionality
- Test against Council and local policies
- Test against National policies and relevant legislation, including State Aid regulations, Local Government Act, Social Value delivery etc
- Start drafting Heads of Terms:
  - 1) Detailed assessment by council officers
  - 2) Consultation with other stakeholders
  - 3) Consultation with departmental managers (SMT and GMT)



- 4) Obtain legal advice and professional support
- 5) Written report by council officers
- 6) Put the matter on the 'forward plan' (SMT/ Cabinet etc)
- 7) Circulate at SMT and seeking approval of Cabinet if it is a lease longer than 35 years, a key decision or on the request of the Cabinet Member for Performance.
- 8) Written notification of the Council's decision max 4 months

**Stage 4:** Completion, following an appropriate decision process

- Agree support plan and investment plan
- Issue draft heads of terms for agreement
- Draft lease and service agreement issued and this final stage requires council officers, the TSO and the TSO's solicitors to work closely together, so that unnecessary delays are avoided max 1 month, 3 months and 6 months, respectively
- All necessary statutory consents obtained such as s.123 Local Government Act or Secretary of State's consent applied for (where necessary)
- Completion of all agreements and documentation

## 9. What happens after a CAT has been completed?

### 9.1 Once a CAT is completed:

- An organisational development plan will be agreed with the TSO, based on a skills audit and the support plan
- Ongoing support from the council's Community Wellbeing team and signposting to other sources of advice and support
- Annual review of the service agreement targets: measure benefits
- Where applicable, 5-yearly renewal of the service agreement

## 10. Appendices:

- Appendix A: definition of a community building
- Appendix B: organisational requirements
- Appendix C: Framework for decision making when more than one suitable applicant

### **Appendix A Definition of a community building:**

"A free-standing building that is managed, occupied or used primarily by the voluntary and community sector and where community-led activities for community benefit are the primary use of the building."

### **Appendix B - Community Asset Transfer Policy**

Requirements for organisations wishing to apply for CAT: We will be using the 'pre-VISIBLE' quality standard developed by Community Matters, or an equivalent, nationally recognised standard. The main elements are listed below:

- a) Have an up-to-date governing document
- b) Have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for management committee members as directors and/or charity trustees
- c) Have elected officers, elections, and regular meetings in accordance with its governing document
- d) Comply with all Charity Commission and Companies House requirements
- e) Policies for the management of conflicts of interest
- f) Understand its community and its current needs, monitor the quality and relevance of its services, seek feedback, and ensure that its services are fully accessible and appropriate to its community
- g) Have regular financial updates for the organisation and its Trustees/Directors/Management Committee Members understand their legal obligations
- h) Produce annual accounts, appropriately examined or audited, and containing the Annual Report
- i) Have written policies covering payment of Trustees/Directors/Management Committee Members and volunteers, have a Reserves Policy, have procedures for paying/reclaiming the correct amounts of tax, NI and VAT
- j) Operate a consistent charging and lettings policy that balances the needs of the organisation with the needs of local groups
- k) Have a separate trading company with a clear legal relationship, where applicable
- l) Have a clear recruitment policy and written procedures for the recruitment, induction and support of employees and volunteers
- m) Have contracts of employment and written conditions of service for all staff
- n) Comply with relevant equal opportunities legislation in its work and recruitment/employment of staff
- o) Have the correct licences, permissions and insurance cover, where applicable
- p) Comply with good health and safety practice and legislation
- q) Comply with The Children's Act and The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 Community Asset Transfer Policy

For more information about the CAT Policy or to make enquiries about whether Community Asset Transfer could be appropriate for your organisation please contact the Asset Management Department at Gloucester City Council.

### **Appendix C – Framework for decision making when more than one applicant per asset**

In circumstances where two or more CO/TSOs submit a Stage 1 application which demonstrate sound reasoning as to why they required the identified asset, their need aligns with the Gloucester City Plan and has support from others the interested CO/TSOs will be invited to submit a draft framework asset management plan (this should normally be

submitted within a month of the date the draft framework asset management plan is requested).

On receipt of the draft framework asset management plans the Asset Management Team will report on the proposal to Cabinet. Cabinet will consider the report of the Asset Management Team and make the final decision as to which proposal is invited to progress to Stage 2.

If the Cabinet selected proposal does not gain approval at Stage 2 or Stage 3. The next best proposal identified by Cabinet will be invited to submit the information and documentation required for Stage 2.

DRAFT

This page is intentionally left blank



<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet Audit and Governance Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>14 June 2023 17 July 2023</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Treasury Management Update – Annual Report 2022/23</b>		
<b>Report Of:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Budget/Policy Framework:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Greg Maw, Head of Finance and Resources</b>		
	<b>Email: greg.maw@gloucester.gov.uk</b>		<b>Tel: 396422</b>
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>1. Prudential and Treasury Indicators</b> <b>2. Interest Rate Forecasts</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for Treasury Management recommends that members be updated on treasury management activities regularly (TMSS, annual and midyear reports). This report covers the six months 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and therefore, ensures this Council is implementing best practice in accordance with the Code.
- 1.2 This report will highlight issues specific to the Council and also highlight interest rate forecasts as provided by the Council’s treasury advisors Link Asset Services.
- 1.3 The body of the report provides an overview of the Councils performance for the financial year 2022/23;
  - **Appendix 1** highlights the key performance indicators in line with the Councils Treasury Management Strategy.
  - **Appendix 2** Interest Rate Forecast.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Audit and Governance Committee is asked, subject to any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet, to note the contents of the report.
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that the contents of the report be noted.

### 3.0 Annual Investment Strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2022/23, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Council on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022. It sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital;
- Liquidity; and
- Yield

3.1 The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. In the current economic climate it is considered appropriate to keep investments short term to cover cash flow needs, but also to seek out value available in periods up to 12 months, with highly credit rated financial institutions, using our suggested creditworthiness approach, including a minimum sovereign credit rating, and Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay information.

3.2 The average level of funds available for investment purposes during the year to was £22.4m. These funds were available on a temporary basis, and the level of funds available was mainly dependent on the timing of precept payments, receipt of grants and progress on the Capital Programme.

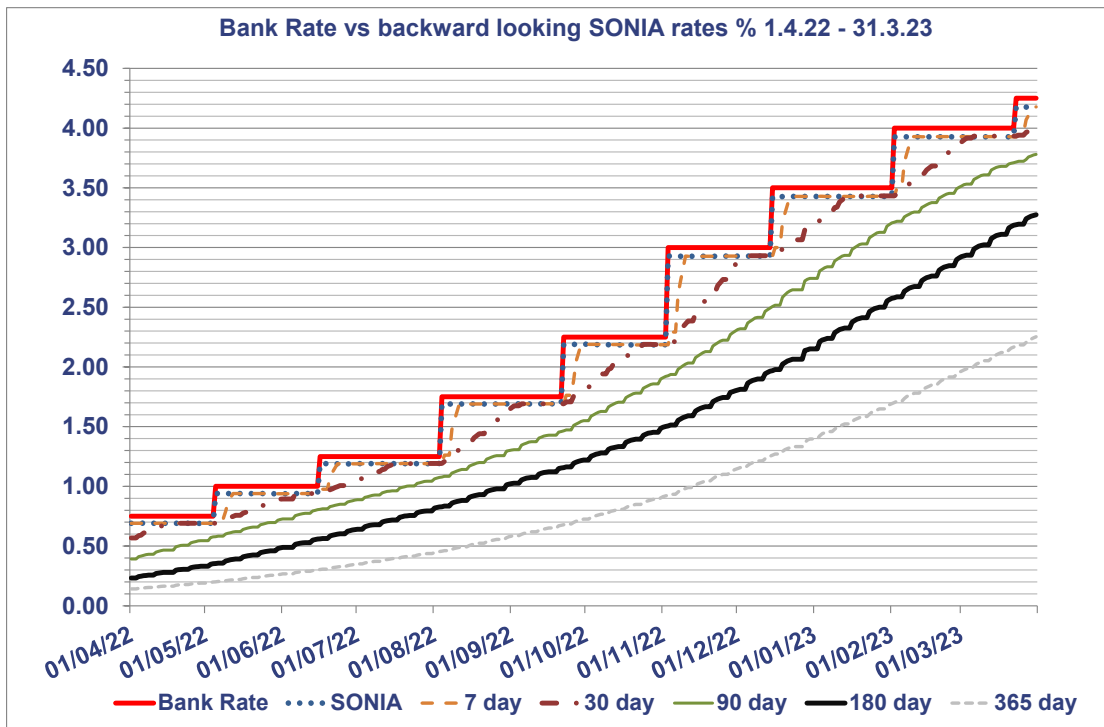
3.3 The Council holds £11.3m core cash balances for investment purposes (i.e. funds available for more than one year), the majority of these funds are held with the CCLA and have delivered £332k in dividends for the year.

#### Investment performance for the financial year to date as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

Benchmark	Benchmark Return	Council Performance	Investment Interest Earned
7 day	2.20%	2.11%	£473,992
1 month	2.09%	N/A	N/A
3 month	1.81%	N/A	N/A
6 month	1.42%	N/A	N/A
12 month	0.90%	N/A	N/A

As illustrated, the Council underperformed the benchmark by 0.09 bps on 7 day investment returns.

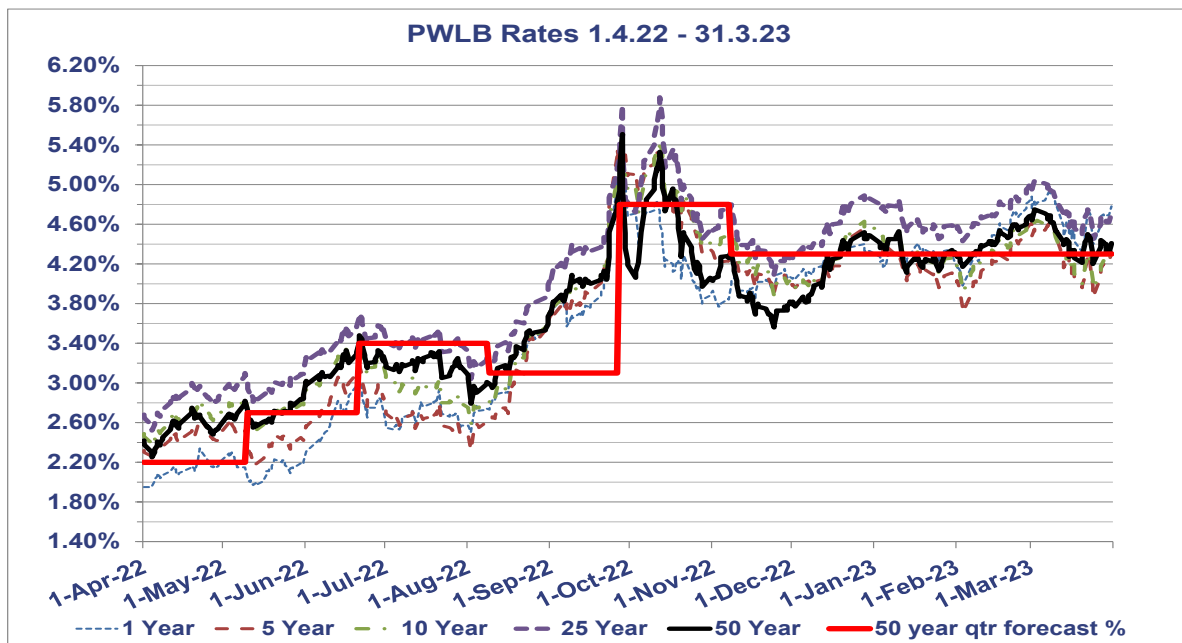
## Interest Rate Profile - year ended 31 March 2023



FINANCIAL YEAR TO QUARTER ENDED 31/03/2023							
	Bank Rate	SONIA	7 day	30 day	90 day	180 day	365 day
<b>High</b>	4.25	4.18	4.18	4.00	3.78	3.27	2.25
<b>High Date</b>	23/03/2023	31/03/2023	31/03/2023	31/03/2023	31/03/2023	31/03/2023	31/03/2023
<b>Low</b>	0.75	0.69	0.69	0.57	0.39	0.23	0.14
<b>Low Date</b>	01/04/2022	28/04/2022	29/04/2022	01/04/2022	01/04/2022	01/04/2022	01/04/2022
<b>Average</b>	2.30	2.24	2.20	2.09	1.81	1.42	0.90
<b>Spread</b>	3.50	3.49	3.49	3.43	3.39	3.04	2.11

## 4.0 New Borrowing

- 4.1 No long term borrowing was undertaken during the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- 4.2 Interest rate forecasts were initially suggesting only gradual rises in short, medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates during 2022/23 but by August it had become clear that inflation was moving up towards 40-year highs, and the Bank of England engaged in monetary policy tightening at every Monetary Policy Committee meeting during 2022, and into 2023, either by increasing Bank Rate by 0.25% or 0.5% each time. Currently the CPI measure of inflation is still above 10% in the UK but is expected to fall back towards 4% by year end. Nonetheless, there remain significant risks to that central forecast.



	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
<b>Low</b>	1.95%	2.18%	2.36%	2.52%	2.25%
<b>Date</b>	01/04/2022	13/05/2022	04/04/2022	04/04/2022	04/04/2022
<b>High</b>	5.11%	5.44%	5.45%	5.88%	5.51%
<b>Date</b>	28/09/2022	28/09/2022	12/10/2022	12/10/2022	28/09/2022
<b>Average</b>	3.57%	3.62%	3.76%	4.07%	3.74%
<b>Spread</b>	3.16%	3.26%	3.09%	3.36%	3.26%

## 5.0 Debt Rescheduling

- 5.1 Debt rescheduling opportunities have been very limited in the current economic climate given the consequent structure of interest rates and following the increase in the margin added to gilt yields which has impacted PWLB new borrowing rates since October 2010. No debt rescheduling has therefore been undertaken to date in the current financial year.



## **6.0 Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits**

- 6.1 It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators (affordability limits) are included in the approved TMSS.
- 6.2 During the financial year the Council has operated within the treasury limits set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and in compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices.

## **7.0 Other**

- 7.1 The 2018 CIPFA Codes and guidance notes have placed enhanced importance on risk management. Where an authority changes its risk appetite e.g. for moving surplus cash into or out of certain types of investment funds or other types of investment instruments, this change in risk appetite and policy should be brought to members' attention in treasury management update reports.
- 7.2 The Council will continue to monitor its approach to short term borrowing in accordance with our treasury advisor forecasts and future Council events which impact on the Council borrowing requirement.

## **8.0 Social Value Considerations**

- 8.1 This report notes the treasury management performance of the Council. There are no anticipated Social Value considerations from this report as it is reporting performance and not making investment decisions.

## **9.0 Environmental Implications**

- 9.1 This report notes the treasury management performance of the Council. There are no anticipated environmental implications from this report.

## **10.0 Financial Implications**

- 10.1 Contained in the report

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

## **11.0 Legal Implications**

- 11.1 The legal implications are detailed in the body of the report

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

## **12.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications**

12.1 There are no specific risks or opportunities as a result of this report

## **13.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):**

13.1 A PIA screening assessment has been undertaken and the impact is neutral. A full PIA is not required.

## **14.0 Other Corporate Implications**

### Community Safety

14.1 None

### Sustainability

14.2 None

### Staffing & Trade Union

14.3 None

Prudential and Treasury Indicators as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

Prudential Indicators 2019/20	2022/23 Budget £m	31.3.23 Actual £m
Authorised limit for external debt	£265	£265
Operational Boundary for external debt	£245	£245
Gross external debt	£230	£154
Investments	N/A	£20.4
Net borrowing	£135	£133.6

Maturity structure of fixed and variable rate borrowing – upper and lower limits		
Under 12 months	0%-100%	33.78%
12 months to 2 years	0% - 100%	0.06%
2 years to 5 years	0% - 100%	0.19%
5 years to 10 years	0% - 100%	27.22%
10 years to 20 years	0% - 100%	14.17%
20 years to 30 years	0% - 100%	13.83%
30 years to 40 years	0% - 100%	10.75%
40 years to 50 years	0% - 100%	0%
Upper limit of fixed interest based on net debt	100%	95%
Upper limit of variable interest rates based on net debt	100%	5%

This page is intentionally left blank

## INTEREST RATES FORECASTS

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

Link Group Interest Rate View	27.03.23											
	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26
<b>BANK RATE</b>	4.50	4.50	4.25	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.50	2.50	2.50
3 month ave earnings	4.50	4.50	4.30	4.00	3.50	3.30	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.50	2.50	2.50
6 month ave earnings	4.50	4.40	4.20	3.90	3.40	3.20	2.90	2.80	2.80	2.60	2.60	2.60
12 month ave earnings	4.50	4.40	4.20	3.80	3.30	3.10	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70
5 yr PWLB	4.10	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.20	3.20	3.10
10 yr PWLB	4.20	4.20	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.30	3.20
25 yr PWLB	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.40
50 yr PWLB	4.30	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.20	3.20	3.10

Against a backdrop of stubborn inflationary pressures, the easing of Covid restrictions in most developed economies, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and a range of different UK Government policies, it is no surprise that UK interest rates have been volatile right across the curve, from Bank Rate through to 50-year gilt yields, for all of 2022/23.

Market commentators' misplaced optimism around inflation has been the root cause of the rout in the bond markets with, for example, UK, EZ and US 10-year yields all rising by over 200bps in 2022. The table below provides a snapshot of the conundrum facing central banks: inflation is elevated but labour markets are extra-ordinarily tight, making it an issue of fine judgment as to how far monetary policy needs to tighten.

	UK	Eurozone	US
<b>Bank Rate</b>	4.25%	3%	4.75%-5%
<b>GDP</b>	0.1%q/q Q4 (4.1%y/y)	+0.1%q/q Q4 (1.9%y/y)	2.6% Q4 Annualised
<b>Inflation</b>	10.4%y/y (Feb)	6.9%y/y (Mar)	6.0%y/y (Feb)
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	3.7% (Jan)	6.6% (Feb)	3.6% (Feb)

Q2 of 2022 saw UK GDP deliver growth of +0.1% q/q, but this was quickly reversed in the third quarter, albeit some of the fall in GDP can be placed at the foot of the extra Bank Holiday in the wake of the Queen's passing. Q4 GDP was positive at 0.1% q/q. Most recently, January saw a 0.3% m/m increase in GDP as the number of strikes reduced compared to December. In addition, the resilience in activity at the end of 2022 was, in part, due to a 1.3% q/q rise in real household disposable incomes. A big part of that reflected the £5.7bn payments received by households from the government under the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

Nevertheless, CPI inflation picked up to what should be a peak reading of 11.1% in October, although hopes for significant falls from this level will very much rest on the movements in the gas and electricity markets, as well as the supply-side factors impacting

food prices. On balance, most commentators expect the CPI measure of inflation to drop back towards 4% by the end of 2023. As of February 2023, CPI was 10.4%.

The UK unemployment rate fell through 2022 to a 48-year low of 3.6%, and this despite a net migration increase of c500k. The fact remains, however, that with many economic participants registered as long-term sick, the UK labour force shrunk by c500k in the year to June. Without an increase in the labour force participation rate, it is hard to see how the UK economy will be able to grow its way to prosperity, and with average wage increases running at over 6% the MPC will be concerned that wage inflation will prove just as sticky as major supply-side shocks to food (up 18.3% y/y in February 2023) and energy that have endured since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 22 February 2022.

Bank Rate increased steadily throughout 2022/23, starting at 0.75% and finishing at 4.25%.

In the interim, following a Conservative Party leadership contest, Liz Truss became Prime Minister for a tumultuous seven weeks that ran through September and October. Put simply, the markets did not like the unfunded tax-cutting and heavy spending policies put forward by her Chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, and their reign lasted barely seven weeks before being replaced by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Chancellor Jeremy Hunt. Their Autumn Statement of the 17th of November gave rise to a net £55bn fiscal tightening, although much of the "heavy lifting" has been left for the next Parliament to deliver. However, the markets liked what they heard, and UK gilt yields have reversed the increases seen under the previous tenants of No10/11 Downing Street, although they remain elevated in line with developed economies generally.

As noted above, GDP has been tepid throughout 2022/23, although the most recent composite Purchasing Manager Indices for the UK, US, EZ and China have all surprised to the upside, registering survey scores just above 50 (below suggests economies are contracting, and above suggests expansion). Whether that means a shallow recession, or worse, will be avoided is still unclear. Ultimately, the MPC will want to see material evidence of a reduction in inflationary pressures and a loosening in labour markets. Realistically, that is an unlikely outcome without unemployment rising and wage settlements falling from their current levels. At present, the bigger rise in employment kept the ILO unemployment rate unchanged at 3.7% in January. Also, while the number of job vacancies fell for the ninth consecutive month in February, they remained around 40% above pre-pandemic levels.

Our economic analysts, Capital Economics, expect real GDP to contract by around 0.2% q/q in Q1 and forecast a recession this year involving a 1.0% peak-to-trough fall in real GDP.

The £ has remained resilient of late, recovering from a record low of \$1.035, on the Monday following the Truss government's "fiscal event", to \$1.23. Notwithstanding the £'s better run of late, 2023 is likely to see a housing correction of some magnitude as fixed-rate mortgages have moved above 4.5% and affordability has been squeezed despite proposed Stamp Duty cuts remaining in place.

As for equity markets, the FTSE 100 started 2023 strongly, rising to a record high of 8,014 on 20th February, as resilient data and falling inflation boosted earnings. But global equities fell sharply after concerns over the health of the global banking system emerged

early in March. The fall in the FTSE 100 was bigger than the drop in the US S&P 500. Indeed, at around 7,600 now, the FTSE is 5.2% below its record high on 20th February, while the S&P 500 is only 1.9% lower over the same period. That's despite UK banks having been less exposed and equity prices in the UK's financial sector not falling as far. It may be due to the smaller decline in UK interest rate expectations and bond yields, which raise the discounted value of future earnings, compared to the US.

USA. The flurry of comments from Fed officials over recent months suggest there is still an underlying hawkish theme to their outlook for interest rates. Markets are pricing in a further interest rate increases of 25-50bps, on top of the current interest rate range of 4.75% - 5%.

In addition, the Fed is expected to continue to run down its balance sheet once the on-going concerns about some elements of niche banking provision are in the rear-view mirror.

As for inflation, it is currently at c6% but with the economy expected to weaken during 2023, and wage data already falling back, there is the prospect that should the economy slide into a recession of any kind there will be scope for rates to be cut at the backend of 2023 or shortly after.

EU. Although the Euro-zone inflation rate has fallen below 7%, the ECB will still be mindful that it has further work to do to dampen inflation expectations and it seems destined to raise rates to 4% in order to do so. Like the UK, growth has remained more robust than anticipated but a recession in 2023 is still seen as likely by most commentators.

This page is intentionally left blank





<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>14 June 2023</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Blackfriars Priory Business Plan 2023-2028</b>		
<b>Report Of:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Budget/Policy Framework:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Lucy Chilton, Visitor Experience Manager</b>		
	<b>Email: lucy.chilton@gloucester.gov.uk</b>	<b>Tel:</b>	<b>396570</b>
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>1. Blackfriars Priory Business Plan 2023-2028</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To share the 2023-2028 Blackfriars Business Plan
- 1.2 To gain support to enter the next lease agreement with English Heritage.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:
  - (1) the interim Head of Finance and Resources and Head of Culture, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture, be delegated to enter into negotiations for a new lease agreement with English Heritage
  - (2) the aims of the business plan and continues to be an advocate for the Blackfriars programme be endorsed
  - (3) a continued financial contribution by the authority for the next 5 years to develop Blackfriars Priory be committed to.

**3.0 Background and Key Issues**

- 3.1 Gloucester City Council took on the management of Blackfriars Priory in 2012 through a 10-year lease agreement with English Heritage. The lease expired in 2022 and Gloucester City Council are now operating the business outside of a lease agreement.
- 3.2 A 5-year business plan has been produced to gain support from Gloucester City Council to continue to run Blackfriars Priory under a new lease arrangement. The plan articulates two main aims – commercial activity and cultural activity, broken down into weddings, public programme and hires, education and history and heritage.

- 3.3 Continued financial support is required from the authority for the next 5 years, but the level of subsidy will reduce annually until the business turns a profit.
- 3.4 It would be preferable for the city to negotiate a longer lease of up to 25 years in future, in order that the council may consolidate and build the brand whilst simultaneously growing the business model and increasing the heritage impact of Blackfriars Priory. This may also support future ambitions for capital investment through the development of funding bids for development of the site. This would be done with agreement from English Heritage.

#### **4.0 Social Value Considerations**

- 4.1 Blackfriars is an important site for cultural activity within Gloucester. The internal programme, public hires, engagement activity and opening as a visitor attraction supports social value. Without Blackfriars being an accessible site, residents and visitors to Gloucester will miss out on the important role that Blackfriars plays in Gloucester.
- 4.2 Blackfriars is a venue for the Holiday Activity Programme. In partnership with the Museum of Gloucester, Blackfriars delivers vital activities for those in need. Blackfriars is a great space to offer this type of activity and will continue to do so in the next 3 years.

#### **5.0 Environmental Implications**

- 5.1 Blackfriars offers a city centre green space and is perfectly located to enjoy an outside space, in historical surrounds in the centre of Gloucester.
- 5.2 Blackfriars city centre location means that it is served well by all modes of public transport.

#### **6.0 Alternative Options Considered**

- 6.1 Gloucester City Council could end its agreement with English Heritage. A financial saving would be made but would negatively affect the cultural offer within Gloucester. This is not recommended as the business plan shows substantial growth over the next 5 years.

#### **7.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 7.1 Blackfriars is an asset to Gloucester City Council. The commercial arm of the business is strong and once it reaches a profit, the business can support other cultural activity across the Councils remit.
- 7.2 Blackfriars is an important heritage venue in Gloucester. Gloucester is an historic city and Blackfriars plays a significant role – if Gloucester City Council does not extend the lease arrangement, then the doors will close to the public.

## **8.0 Future Work and Conclusions**

- 8.1 Gloucester City Council officers will need to enter negotiations with English Heritage to agree the annual sum payable to English Heritage.

## **9.0 Financial Implications**

- 9.1 Financial implications are captured within the Business Plan. The five-year plan forecasts a net income position in year five. All annual figures are within the current budget parameters for Blackfriars. Expenditure and Income targets should continue to be reviewed annually throughout the life of the Plan to ensure successful delivery of the site over the lease agreement.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

## **10.0 Legal Implications**

- 10.1 The Business Plan refers to Gloucester City Council investing in Blackfriars which may include funding for improvements to the structure and facilities at the venue. Under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 the Council will need to consider whether the funding amounts to a Subsidy. Once a potential scheme has been identified, officers should contact One Legal for advice on undertaking this evaluation.
- 10.2 Gloucester City Council will also need to ensure that the lease allows for any proposed improvements and that they have all the necessary consents to undertake any works.
- 10.3 Under section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972, a local authority may acquire land by agreement for any purposes connected with the carrying out of its functions as a local authority as defined by that Act or for the benefit, improvement, or development of the area. It is clear from the Business Plan that the lease of the premises will benefit the area and therefore there is nothing to prevent Gloucester City Council from taking the lease.
- 10.4 As Gloucester City Council will be taking a 25-year lease, it will need to ensure that sufficient funds will be available to cover all rents and other moneys payable under the lease for the full 25-year period.
- 10.5 The Business Plan is for a period of 5 years. As the lease is for a period of 25 years, it would be prudent to negotiate a 5 yearly break option in favour of Gloucester City Council to enable the Council to terminate the lease early in the event that the business does not progress as expected.
- 10.6 Before entering into the lease, agreement should be reached with English Heritage as to who will be responsible for repairs and maintenance of the premises, and this should be appropriately documented in the lease in terms that are clear and unambiguous.
- 10.7 It is noted that there is an intention to sell spaces for private hire use, to increase the number of hires on an annual basis and to hire out multiple spaces concurrently to maximise income. Gloucester City Council should ensure that:

- (a) there are appropriate provisions in the lease to permit the Council to hire out parts of the premises on that basis; and
- (b) all such hires are appropriately documented to ensure that no relationship of landlord and tenant is created, which could potentially result in the Council being unable to take back occupation of the relevant part of the premises.

Legal advice should be sought in relation to points (a) and (b).

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

## **11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications**

- 11.1 The lease arrange will have a break clause every 5 years.
- 11.2 The plan asks to take on the South Range in addition to the spaces in the current lease arrangement. English Heritage has a maintenance plan for each part of the site and will continue to maintain the spaces. Taking on the additional space comes at a low risk due to English Heritage taking a percentage of the programme turnover.
- 11.3 The financials are ambitious, and although they are stretching, with careful management and creative programming, they can be reached.

## **12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:**

- 12.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact; therefore, a full PIA was not required.

## **13.0 Community Safety Implications**

- 13.1 Blackfriars opens to the public for private hires and is staffed by adequately trained staff. Where additional security requirements are needed, the business has an agreement with a security provider.

## **14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications**

- 14.1 As the business grows, additional staff will be required where a fair recruitment process will take place.

**Background Documents:** None

# Blackfriars Priory Business Plan 2023-2028



---

# CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	3
Introduction .....	4-5
Mission, vision, and values .....	6
Aims.....	7-15
External Environment .....	16
SWOT and PESTLE .....	17
Business Structure .....	18
Financial Analysis and Projection .....	19-23
Risk Assessment .....	24
Monitoring and Evaluation .....	25
Final Word .....	26

DRAFT

---

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*“Blackfriars is one of the most complete surviving friaries of Dominican ‘black friars’ in England.” – English Heritage.*

In 2012, Gloucester City Council saw an opportunity to add to Gloucester’s cultural offer and took the bold step in taking on the management of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century priory. With no immediate plan, and little resource, the only way was up... right?

Fast-forward and 10 years later, Blackfriars is a venue offering weddings, concerts, exhibitions, guided tours, filming, educational events, and private hires. Blackfriars continues to dominate the wedding industry with local, regional, national, and international accolades, more recently winning ‘Wedding Venue of the Year 2023’ at the South-West Tourism Awards.

## THE PLAN

The aim of this plan is to describe the growth journey for Blackfriars for the next 5 years. It will:

- Set out the aims and objectives for the next 5 years from 2023-2028.
- Describe how Blackfriars will meet the aims and objectives.
- Outline the resource needed to deliver the aims and objectives.
- Provide a financial overview of each year.
- Share our ambition and raise the profile of Blackfriars.

## OUR FUTURE

Following a successful 10-year lease, Gloucester City Council is about to embark on a 25-year tenancy of Blackfriars, an important step for partners, stakeholders, visitors, residents, and the city.

Commercial activity continues to be essential for financial sustainability of the venue. We will raise our income and tackle our costs. We will be ambitious, creative, innovative, and ethical in diversifying our income streams, balanced with our environmental responsibilities. Cultural activity opportunities are endless, with our commercial grip allowing for increased cultural engagement.

Blackfriars is ready for the next stage of its development. It is ready to enter its next phase of its journey – one that is focused on building audience and customer-base, commercialisation and future sustainability leading to a business model that will see a reduction of public subsidy annually.

We must acknowledge our past but focus on our future.

---

# INTRODUCTION

## HISTORY

Blackfriars – where did it begin?

Gloucester Blackfriars was founded in 1239 on a site that had once been part of a Norman Castle. The friars were of the Dominican order and acted as teachers and evangelists, and they would travel around the countryside or live together in urban friaries. The monks that lived at Blackfriars had to take on traditional monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and attended church nine times a day. King Henry III then became a major benefactor and patron of the friary and made the decision to grant timber for the roofs from the nearby Forest of Dean and royal forests in Shropshire and Dorset. Much of the original scissor-braced roof trusses and timber for the floors in the South Range can still be seen today.

The friary continued throughout the next two centuries. A cemetery was discovered in 1991 indicating that Blackfriars may have been operating as a hospital.

The South Range floor is said to have 'outstanding significance' and is the only building in England to demonstrate construction by the friars of how they made their houses into centres of study and learning. The South Range remains largely intact. The library was built on the first floor where study cubicles were lit by small windows. The building is regarded as the oldest surviving purpose-built library in the country.

In the early sixteenth century, the house was in decline. It was bought by Thomas Bell who was the mayor of Gloucester and a wealthy Gloucester capper and clothier. He remodelled the church, converting it into a cloth manufactory, creating 300 jobs.

1960 saw the building restored by English Heritage and has since been under their care.





DRAFT

## CURRENT DAY

Blackfriars operates as a commercially run business and is an important cultural asset to Gloucester. Before 2012, the site was closed to the public except for private tours provided by the Civic Trust. Since 2012, visitor numbers have grown significantly with increases in footfall seen annually.

Blackfriars offers a banqueting capacity of 150 with the North Range accommodating up to 300 standing and 230 seated. The East Range can accommodate up to 80 people and the enclosed private cloister garden offers a relaxing, tranquil outdoor space. The Scriptorium has been used as an event space for several events which has allowed spaces of the site to be opened and utilised that aren't generally open to the public. The availability of multiple hire spaces has been attractive for larger events with varying logistics.

The historical nature, mixed with the flexibility of spaces and stunning architecture has allowed Blackfriars to become a multi-use venue, attracting a range of visitors to the site through weddings, private hires, internally programmed events, as a visitor attraction and for educational engagement.

Blackfriars has played host to several annual large events:

- Gloucester History Festival, the city's flagship event attracting high profile speakers.
- CAMRA Beer Festival attracting a varied demographic.
- Underground Festival location attracting a younger audience.
- Lantern procession base for schools and community groups.

Blackfriars has really started to consider where it is positioning itself in the event space industry which has seen the team embark on new marketing initiatives and working with influencers to bolster the venues reputation.

As an important cultural asset to Gloucester, Blackfriars relies on its commercial activity to enable it to increase its level of creativity and engagement – a area that will see growth in the next 5 years.



---

# MISSION, VISION, & VALUES

## MISSION

Blackfriars will build on its fantastic reputation as a stunning historical site, to educate, engage, and inspire whilst becoming a financially viable and sustainable venue.

## VISION

The jewel in Gloucester's heritage crown.

## VALUES

As a Gloucester City Council managed venue, it's important to recognise the values that are embedded in day-to-day activity:

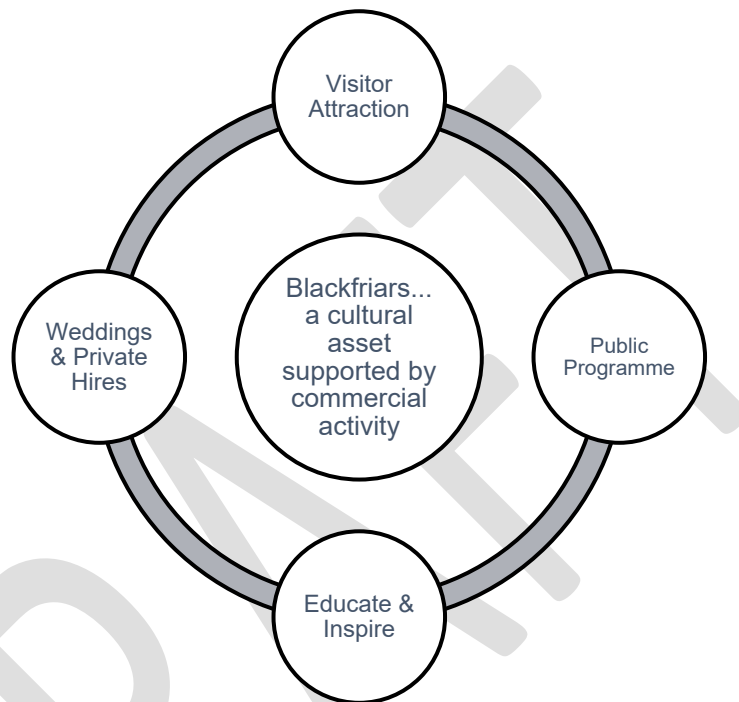
- Efficiency and value for money
- Forward thinking with innovation
- Making residents lives better
- Passionate about the City
- Working together to make it happen

Blackfriars - we only deliver **excellence**. We think and dream big, we are bold, creative, **innovative** and embrace new opportunities. We don't take for granted the stories hidden within the walls. We will share, **inspire**, and champion Blackfriars as a place to learn. We will continue to grow, this only being possible with the right **passion** and talent.

---

# AIMS & OBJECTIVES

This business plan is about the future ambitions of Blackfriars and is built around 4 keys areas of work. They are designed to work together to achieve our mission of educating, engaging and inspiring, whilst protecting the financial viability of the venue. Each of these 4 keys areas will contribute to the financial sustainability of the venue.



## **AIM 1 – Blackfriars will be the first choice when tying the knot**

*Blackfriars will be the wedding venue that couples dream of for their special day and will be known for providing a high-end, luxurious, quality offer – allowing the history of Gloucester to play a special part of their day.*

## **AIM 2 - We will turn up the volume on Blackfriars profile and position locally, regionally, and nationally**

*Blackfriars will be the sought-after backdrop for hosting and programming a diverse range of local, regional, and national events at the highest level of quality and will spark curious audiences into the venue.*

## **AIM 3 - Blackfriars will become a site of hands-on learning, storytelling, and reflection**

*Blackfriars will help young people understand their roles as citizens, the importance of heritage buildings and the history of Gloucester.*

## **AIM 4 – Blackfriars is a space to enjoy Gloucester’s history and heritage**

*Everyone will be able to access Blackfriars and enjoy new experiences through its visitor attraction offer*

## AIM 1 – Blackfriars will be the first choice when tying the knot

*Blackfriars will be the wedding venue that couples dream of for their special day and will be known for providing a high-end, luxurious, quality offer – allowing the history of Gloucester to play a special part of their day.*

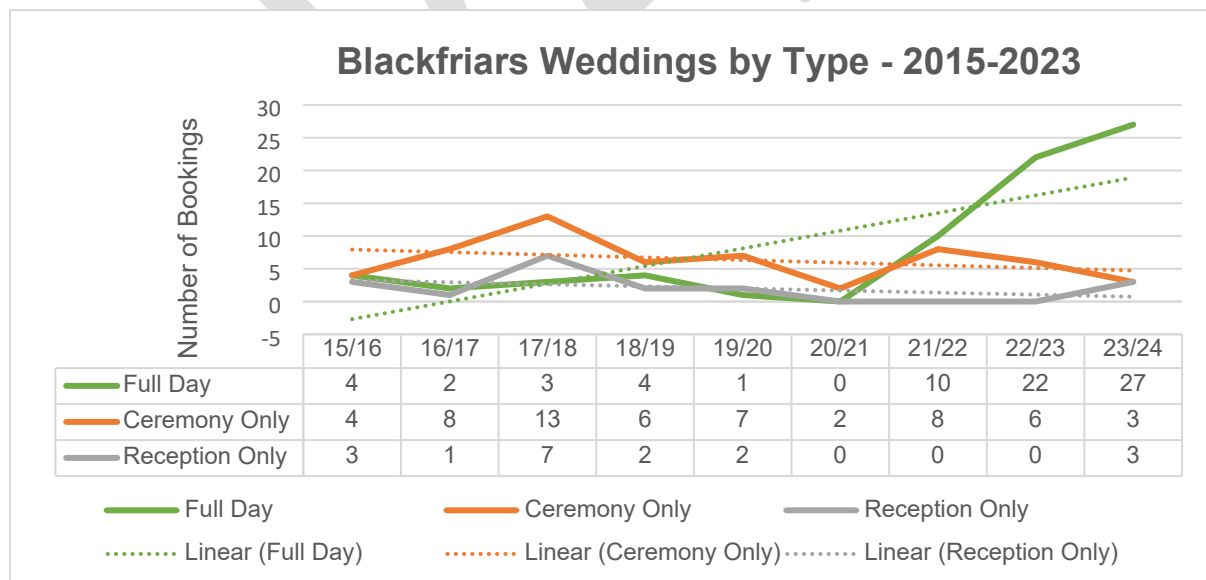
### REFLECTING...

2012 saw the very first couple tie the knot at Blackfriars. With little experience in the wedding industry and a lack of internal catering facilities, along with no dedicated resource, it was a risk, but Blackfriars did have one obvious USP – the unrivalled features of the 65ft scissor-braced ceiling, displaying its original 13<sup>th</sup> century oak beams – the wow factor that captivates you the moment you enter.

The first ceremony only wedding was a success and there was soon greater interest in Blackfriars as a venue. Ceremony only bookings started to increase, leading to wedding receptions and eventually full day weddings.

During the earlier years of the lease agreement with English Heritage, the team were still understanding how to best utilise the different spaces and focused on smaller scale weddings and events. Partnerships were soon created with local catering companies and a bar was built. A small, dedicated team was formed in March 2020, just before the worldwide pandemic which saw weddings cancelled, eventually returning with a smaller number of guests in summer 2020 until social distancing was removed in July 2021, which is when the venue started to recover.

Full day wedding bookings have since seen a significant increase, with ceremony and reception only bookings reducing in number.



Blackfriars as a wedding venue has come a long way since 2012 and the level of growth at the venue has been demonstrated by achieving the gold award for **‘Wedding Venue of the Year’** at the South-West Tourism Awards in 2023, beating Cornish castles, luxury hotels and historical properties across the region.

## **THE NEXT 5 YEARS...**

Weddings are currently the most lucrative strand of the business and generates the highest level of income. We need to exploit Blackfriars USP to continue to generate the vital income that is needed to bring down the level of investment currently provided by Gloucester City Council. 2023 is the turning point in creating a sustainable business model that allows the venue to start the journey of breaking even, with ambitions of becoming a profitable business in the future.

Blackfriars will continue to grow its wedding offer, maximising peak periods to generate maximum income. Benchmarking with other local wedding venues is essential in setting the right price to remain attractive and competitive, whilst also acknowledging that Blackfriars is in the middle of a city, next to a busy public car park – different to many other scenic venues.

Membership of online directories has proved successful with enquiries coming in faster than they can be dealt with. Online partnerships with Hitched, Bridebook, UK Bride and Coco to name a few has put Blackfriars alongside some of the best wedding venues in the UK. By continuing to work with online partners and ensuring that our selected suppliers align with our values and vision, bookings will increase year on year.

Moving into the next 5 years, Blackfriars will focus on increasing the number of full day weddings as the financial return is higher than ceremony-only weddings. Blackfriars continues to be perfectly based to hold wedding receptions for those who want a religious based ceremony. By the end of 2028, Blackfriars has a stretch target of delivering 50 weddings a year but will need to react to the local and regional landscape as well as industry-trends. Blackfriars will continue to deliver a customer focused experience that exceeds all expectations.

Weddings leads the commercial strand of the business, enabling the venue to open to the public as a visitor attraction, to attend events and be a place to learn and will therefore continue to be the primary source of income.

## **KEY ACTIVITY...**

- Analysis of the return on investment of our online directory partnerships is essential, understanding where leads are coming from, how Blackfriars is being portrayed and the conversion rates.
- Increase the use of digital tools to allow couples to immerse themselves in the early stages of their planning and how digital technology can allow couples to invite a greater number of guests – i.e., use of live streaming, virtual reality, drone footage and online booking.
- Partner with authentic, customer focused caterers whose values aligns with those of Blackfriars – specifically those around innovation and excellence.
- Identify new partners within the accommodation and experience sectors to further enhance the Blackfriars weddings offer.
- Undertake a customer journey mapping exercise to understand the touch points, ensuring that Blackfriars screams quality at every point.

## **AIM 2 - We will turn up the volume on Blackfriars profile and position locally, regionally, and nationally.**

*Blackfriars will be the sought-after backdrop for hosting and programming a diverse range of local, regional, and national events at the highest level of quality and will spark curious audiences into the venue*

### **REFLECTING...**

The Blackfriars team have been creative with the spaces available within the lease arrangements. Each space individually tells a story but being able to combine spaces for breakout sessions, green rooms, for different aspects of an event or wedding enables greater flexibility and is an attractive offer for those events requiring multiple spaces. The garden is a surprise to anyone visiting the site, with infrastructure in place to successfully deliver outdoor events as previously seen with the Guildhall Presents programme.

Blackfriars is a sought-after location. It's story, setting and historical significance continues to attract large scale events. Blackfriars is home to the annual Gloucester History Festival which attracts nationally known literary speakers. The Gloucester CAMRA Beer Festival has been a resident of Blackfriars for several years and is the perfect location for ale and cider tasting with live music taking place outdoors. Vegan Markets, Music Festivals, Gin Festivals and Wellbeing events will regularly be seen taking place at Blackfriars. Christmas parties are also increasing in number with all peak dates selling out each winter. Blackfriars has quickly become a year-round sought-after venue.

Blackfriars is seen as an exclusive, high-end film and photoshoot location. Collaboration with national businesses and award-winning photographers has exposed Blackfriars to the world. Powerful, professional imagery has put Blackfriars in the best possible place to position itself amongst the best.

There have been many successes with the internal programme. Partnerships with the Glevum Big Band, Museum of Gloucester and 'Don't Go Into the Cellar' Theatre Company has allowed spaces to be tested, demand to be assessed and partnerships to be built to allow future growth. The team aren't afraid to take risks with the Scriptorium being used to trial new events. 'Scriptorium – A Medieval Cocktail Emporium' allowed for visitors to be transported back in time to the 13thC for a Medieval themed cocktail bar. Teaming up with local caterers and marketed as an exclusive, not to be missed unique event attracted new audiences and allowed us to test the Scriptorium as an events space. These events have screamed quality but testing out spaces hasn't generated significant income but has increased audiences to Blackfriars. With such a small team whose resource has been directed at weddings and hires, the number of internally programmed events have been low with 7-8 events taking place each year over the last couple of years.

There is significant room for growth of the internal programme. The demand for corporate hires and weddings draws on the limited resource available but the potential of the internal programme is exciting. A passionate and creative team, the stunning spaces available and investment in equipment and furniture to support the internal programme, shows there is great potential.



## **THE NEXT 5 YEARS...**

Blackfriars will continue to sell its spaces for private hire use. The venue is perfectly located in the city centre with excellent transport links and adjacent car parking. Individual meeting spaces, allows the team to generate essential income whilst continuing to maintain and set up the site for other events. Building relationships with the meetings and conference industry, provides regular income through repeat bookings which can even lead on to Christmas party bookings.

Building relationships with larger festival and event organisers is critical as creating new partners at a local, regional, and national level will increase activity at Blackfriars and will showcase Blackfriars as a national venue to hire. Although larger events require increased resource during the period of activity, multi-day events require far less resource in the set up and breakdown periods therefore increasing profit margins.

Private hires can generate a good level of income over the space of a year and can contribute significantly to the year-end position. Blackfriars will increase the number of hires on an annual basis and will start to hire out multiple spaces concurrently to maximise income.

With weddings and hires generating vital income, the internal programme will become a priority. Experimenting with different types of events has allowed Blackfriars to understand the capabilities of the venue and identify the types of events that are profitable versus those that increase awareness of the venue.

Our public events programme will become stronger with a focus on quality and uniqueness. There are opportunities for growth in widening the level of engagement with the internal programme. We want our visitors to return and take part in the programme more regularly so building the audience is a critical part of this aim. Growth in this area will take time but will increase each year. Cultivating relationships with theatre groups and circus companies will attract a wider audience and continuing to identify new partners that aligns with Blackfriars slightly more edgy programming aspirations, will continue to attract a broader audience. Visitor attraction open days will start to see more regular programmed activity to draw in more visitors to the site.

These activities will drive us to understand and develop our audiences and to target those who have limited access to cultural experiences in Gloucester.

## **KEY ACTIVITY...**

- Produce an audience development plan to widen participation through the Blackfriars programme.
- Programme a vibrant and diverse range of events based on current testing to date whilst taking bold decisions to expand the number of internally programmed events.
- Include the Scriptorium and rear courtyard into the lease to enable a year-round programmable space, acknowledging the sensitivity and importance of the Scriptorium.
- Expand the footprint of Blackfriars to the south to include the side alley, enabling an additional access point to the site to allow multiple events to take place successfully.
- Increase the number of private hirers year-round, creating Christmas party packages and promoting quieter periods to increase footfall onsite.
- Build national partnerships to bring higher profile events to Blackfriars – boosting the local economy.



### **AIM 3 - Blackfriars will become a site of hands-on learning, storytelling, and reflection.**

*Blackfriars will help young people understand their roles as citizens, the importance of heritage buildings and the history of Gloucester.*

#### **REFLECTING...**

Blackfriars is an important asset in the teaching of medieval history in Gloucester. We know that Blackfriars can enhance the learning of our local schools and educational institutes.

The creation of an education programme was always important but taking on a site with limited resource, limited infrastructure and limited skills in this area resulted in other activity taking precedence. However, with a small level of resource, in 2013, several education sessions were designed:

- Life in a Medieval Priory
- Archaeological Detectives
- Tudor Life at Bell's Place

These sessions were aimed at schools, home learning groups, brownies, guide, and scout groups as well as youth and church groups. Educational sessions were booked, and feedback was positive. As staffing changed, and resource continued to be limited in the earlier part of the lease agreement, education bookings were more reactive rather than taking a proactive approach. The ambition was always to do more and do better and although activity did take place, it wasn't growing to the level that we had originally aspired it to be.

Following the pandemic, Cultural Recovery Funding allowed for the creation of several resources to support our educational obligations. These resources include:

- Creation of the 'Blackfriars Priory Education Box' with an associated object guide
- Key stage 1 – Local History Study / Key stage 2 – Medieval Blackfriars
- Activity sheets for all key stages and a teacher self-guided tour

These resources have been developed by a learning outside the classroom educator in partnership with the Museum of Gloucester and are currently available however, due to limited engagement resource, these assets have not been utilised as originally planned although they do provide a good foundation for development of the educational offer.

Blackfriars has also previously struggled to take pro-active action to engage with schools and other education providers and fulfil the needs of the lease agreement. If the team aren't coordinating weddings, setting up for hires and working events, they are assisting with the essential upkeep of the building.

In partnership with the Museum of Gloucester, Blackfriars has been the location for Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF), ensuring that children and young people are entertained, active, educated, safe and fed through the school holidays. This has been successful, drawing new younger visitors to Blackfriars whilst supporting the community.

Blackfriars has so much potential to inspire the younger generation and has many exciting stories to tell. The foundations are in place, the building is available, the English Heritage website has a wealth of suggested activities that could be utilised to compliment the educational programme, the one thing missing is the resource – someone to manage and coordinate the activity.

## THE NEXT 5 YEARS...

Gloucester City Council is committed to delivering the educational strand of the agreement. The foundations are in place and with the archive full of historical assets, Blackfriars can become a safe space to learn and inspire future generations.

Blackfriars is an important asset in the teaching of medieval history in Gloucester. Medieval learning takes place across KS1, KS2 and KS3, and covers a lengthy historical era between 1066 and 1485 which is where Blackfriars can play a key role in Gloucester in educating our young people.

Blackfriars links to the quality mark under Ofsted for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development and requires schools to think about the kind of people we aspire to be, the kind of world we aspire to create and the kind of education we aspire to provide.

We want to build better connections with schools in Gloucester and further afield and we want to see Blackfriars filled with children who are here to learn. Sharing the history of Blackfriars is important. We want to tell future generations that they are standing on a site with thousands of years of recorded human history, that where Blackfriars now stands was once a Norman Castle, that they can still see evidence of the use of the building after the Friars had left and most significantly, that we hold the keys to the oldest library in the country.

It's not just schools that we need to engage with, all the groups we previously engaged with are important.

## KEY ACTIVITY...


- Undertake a feasibility study to employ a part time staff member to host heritage visits and develop community programmes.
- Direct educational activity to Mondays and Tuesdays to allow for commercial activity to take place later in the week, enabling a consistent and safe space.
- Deliver activity to Church of England schools, secular schools, and Beaver/Scout groups. This will increase annually as relationships are formed.
- Through the Museum of Gloucester partnership, Blackfriars will be a location for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF), and a safe outdoor space for Museum engagement.
- Research and identify funding opportunities to further enhance the education offer.
- Open discussions on offering all age public learning including research projects and academic interest.

**M**  
MUSEUM OF  
GLOUCESTER

### FRIAR WILLIAM

Friar William is a Dominican Friar at Blackfriars Priory in Gloucester. Today he is going on a journey to preach to the people in the villages. What does he take with him? Colour in Friar William and write down what you think he will need.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



Created by The Ha'penny, the Ha'penny Education Partnership

## AIM 4 – Blackfriars is a space to enjoy Gloucester’s history and heritage

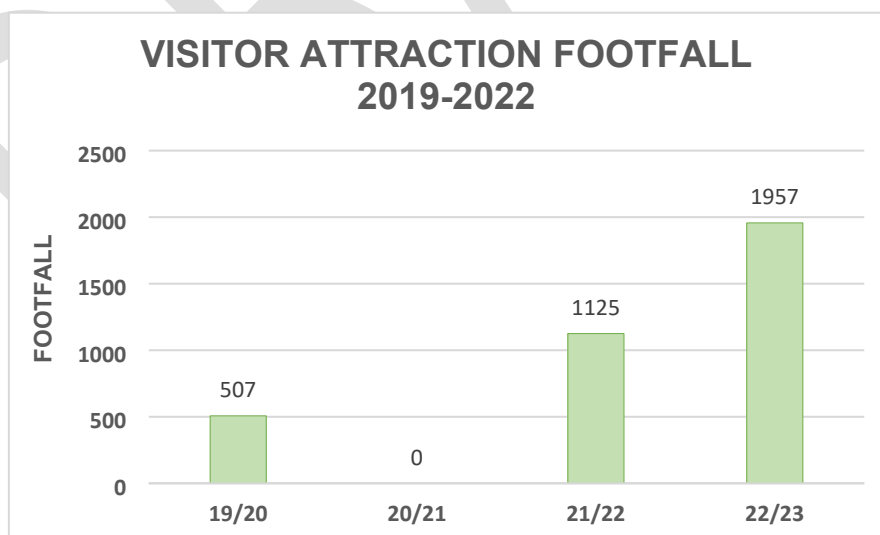
*Everyone will be able to access Blackfriars and enjoy new experiences.*

### REFLECTING...

In the earlier days of the lease arrangement, Blackfriars opened on Sundays from April to September for bookable tours only through a partnership with the Gloucester Civic Trust who delivered tours to the public. The venue didn't have any other public access and the only way to see the beauty of the site was if you were attending an event that an external hirer has organised.

The visitor attraction side to Blackfriars was always the exciting part of the venue. Telling the stories of the monks, showing the engravings in the Scriptorium and the yearning to see jaws drop in the North Range was the desired ambition but always ended up further down the list of priorities due the commercial activities taking precedence. Mid-2017 saw a change where capacity grew, and Blackfriars was able to open every Sunday and Monday between April and September. 2020 saw no visitors to Blackfriars due to the pandemic with the doors reopening in April 2021. At the end of the 2021 season, a commitment was made to open Blackfriars year-round on a Sunday and Monday, extending to Tuesdays in January 2022. The introduction of the core Blackfriars team in 2020 enabled increased opening as staff were present onsite.

Visitor numbers on attraction days have been low, with a maximum of 20 people on a day without any planned activity. Those days where there has been programmed activity, visitor numbers have increased significantly. Except for the pandemic, visitor numbers to the site have increased over the past 4 years.



Although growth in this area has been lower than originally hoped, the introduction of a donation station, a visitor guidebook and the development of an audio tour has set some good foundations for future growth of this part of the business.

## THE NEXT 5 YEARS...

Blackfriars will continue to be an accessible facility for residents and visitors to enjoy. It is vital that everyone can see Blackfriars. Blackfriars plays a key role in telling the story of Gloucester and its medieval history.

Blackfriars will open every Sunday to the public. One Sunday a month will see programmed activity taking place to encourage footfall into Blackfriars. Programmed activity has seen footfall numbers quadruple and has proven to be successful. Activity could include music, family crafts and entertainment and seasonal events to name a few. Bookable products including tours and events will generate necessary income and the audio tour and refreshments will enhance the visitor experience.

Guided tours will be reintroduced in conjunction with city partners and will be an important partnership in delivering our visitor attraction ambition. Private tours will be offered for a nominal fee and will act as an educational tool for visitors to Gloucester.

Blackfriars will continue to provide essential access to Gloucester's rich history and will encourage more local engagement with partners whilst diversifying its reach with more activities targeted at young people.

The centre courtyard of Blackfriars is a green open space that has been used for outdoor events but is the ideal location to sit and relax on one of the bespoke picnic benches designed by a local carpenter. This space, along with the onsite catering facilities means that there is an opportunity to increase awareness of the site by becoming a place to meet friends.



Consistency in the visitor attraction offer is essential. Having tested the site, changed opening hours on numerous occasions, and seeing how the business has developed, the visitor attraction side of the business is now being prioritised and Blackfriars will now see increased footfall on Sundays throughout the year.

## KEY ACTIVITY...

- Undertake a visitor journey mapping exercise to understand the flow of our visitors, in advance, during and after their visit.
- Develop an interpretation plan to enhance the visitor experience and to help educate those visiting Blackfriars.
- Develop a Blackfriars audio tour to bring the history of Blackfriars to life whilst also considering all access needs to attract a wider audience.
- Increase the commercial activity onsite to include upselling of the guidebook, refreshment availability and bookable add-on packages.
- Recruit a group of volunteers to support activity on visitor attraction days.
- Re-introduce a programme of guided tours of Blackfriars with city partners.
- Develop marketing activity around the new offer to engage new audiences.

---

# EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

In creating the Blackfriars Business Plan, consideration has been given to the wider national, regional, and local context. Below are the summaries of key strategic documents that inform direction of travel and priorities contained within this plan:

## **Historic England Future Strategy 2021**

- Work collaboratively with people and partners to secure vibrant and sustainable futures for historic places.
- Bring communities together by discovering and celebrating local heritage, and by protecting the character of historic places.
- Inspire and equip people to take action in support of the places they care about.

## **Gloucester Heritage Strategy 2019-2029**

- To achieve effective and sustainable conservation, regeneration, and management of Gloucester's heritage, to realise fully its economic, community and cultural potential.
- A coordinated approach will be taken in areas subject to significant development and regeneration, such as Blackfriars and Greyfriars.
- Creation of business development plans to guide the future development of key venues including Blackfriars Priory.

## **Gloucester Cultural Strategy 2021-2026**

- Embed culture in the city's future plans.
- Build the cultural and creative industries by developing artists and arts organisations.
- Broaden the Cultural offer to support social and economic development.
- Develop a vibrant city centre, full of cultural activity and things to do.
- Develop audiences for all the cultural opportunities being created.
- Put Gloucester on the cultural map by developing high profile events.
- Make things happen and continue a momentum for change.

## **Gloucester City Centre – Our 5 Year Vision – 2023-2028**

- The City Council will commission city centre user research in 2024 to obtain local views of the city.
- A space for people to be innovative and creative, with an environment that fosters and nurtures talent and enterprise.
- The city centre is inclusive and has people at its heart.

# SWOT & PESTLE

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Iconic building with historic importance.</li> <li>- Offer a blank canvas, enabling creativity and flexibility.</li> <li>- An attractive, enclosed cloister garden.</li> <li>- Established catering partners whose values align.</li> <li>- Unique offer in a city centre location.</li> <li>- High-end / luxurious wedding venue.</li> <li>- Committed and passionate staff with a strong sense of mission.</li> <li>- Stand-alone business without relying on other venues for support.</li> <li>- Strong and regionally/nationally recognised brand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No accommodation available onsite.</li> <li>- Spaces are cold in the autumn and winter.</li> <li>- Lack of onsite storage, often causing logistical issues.</li> <li>- No onsite interpretation.</li> <li>- No onsite kitchen facilities.</li> <li>- No office/welfare space for staff.</li> <li>- Small amount of designated parking.</li> <li>- Limited education offer.</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With investment, improved heating will allow a year-round programme.</li> <li>- Utilising all spaces will allow for growth and increased income.</li> <li>- Improve accessibility with inclusive interpretation.</li> <li>- No volunteer pool to support activity.</li> <li>- Creative partnerships and new activities to attract new audiences and develop our brand identity.</li> <li>- An educational offer for all ages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inflation and increase in energy costs.</li> <li>- Venues with in-house catering.</li> <li>- English Heritage has many venues to maintain – how will Blackfriars compete with flagship properties?</li> <li>- Ongoing maintenance needs of the historic property.</li> <li>- Other venues located in more luxurious surroundings.</li> <li>- Risk around the lease being withdrawn.</li> </ul>

Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ National elections, all out elections 2024 – may filter through to local government funding.</li> <li>➤ Culture is not a statutory service</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Opening of University of Gloucestershire Gloucester campus in September 2024</li> <li>➤ Completion of the Forum (Digital Forge) including a 4-star hotel in summer 2024.</li> <li>➤ Cost of living crisis – with no short-term end in sight.</li> <li>➤ Gloucester is an Arts Council England priority place from 2021-2024.</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 2021 census data details an increase in population size by 9% since 2011 – higher than the overall increase in England (6.6%).</li> <li>➤ Gloucester is the most deprived district in the county, ranked 138 of 317 in England.</li> <li>➤ Population change - 2011-21: +22.3% (age 65+) &amp; +6.8% (age 15-64)</li> </ul>
Tech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Customer journey expectations are much higher due to evolving technological advancements.</li> </ul>
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Blackfriars is run by Gloucester City Council.</li> <li>➤ A lease arrangement is in place with English Heritage.</li> </ul>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Recognise the climate emergency – aim for net zero 2030</li> <li>➤ Electrical vehicle usage and the pressure to decarbonise.</li> <li>➤ Ethical purchasing and values are more prominent.</li> </ul>

---

# BUSINESS STRUCTURE

Blackfriars is owned by English Heritage. Gloucester City Council leased the building in 2012 on a 10-year term. Gloucester City Council sees Blackfriars as an important cultural asset and is looking to renew the lease but for a longer period of 25 years to maximise its potential.

Blackfriars being a building with such historical importance needs a solid business structure that can support the programming and delivery of a world-class venue. The passion and excitement we hold internally needs to be shared with anyone and everyone we meet. We are committed to only hiring the very best people who will hold the vision, mission and values close to their heart.

Blackfriars sits within the Cultural Services team and sits alongside Gloucester Guildhall and the Museum of Gloucester. Staff can work across the different venues but only providing basic support due to the knowledge needed to operate each venue.

## Current Structure

The current staffing structure for Blackfriars is small with just one Events & Marketing Officer and one Team Leader being the only full-time staff. A total capacity of 5.4FTE delivers the year-round programme of activity. The team are supported by the Visitor Experience Manager and Cultural Development Manager who reports through to the Head of Culture.

CORE STAFF	SUPPORT STAFF
Events & Marketing Officer – 1xFTE	Senior Operations Officer
Team Leader – 1xFTE	Technical Coordinator
Wedding Coordinator – 1x0.8FTE	Business Administration Officer
Duty Manager – 1x0.6FTE	Casual/Agency Bar Staff
Visitor Experience Assistant – 2x0.6FTE	Engagement Officer
Events Apprentice – 1xFTE	

## Resource Needs

All staff work to flexible contracts where they work to the needs of the business. With the forecasted growth and to deliver the ambitions of this plan, additional resource is required.

Resource will be needed in the following areas:

- Wedding Coordination – increasing to a full-time position
- Duty Manager – increase to manage weddings and events
- Visitor Experience Assistant – to support the delivery of the programme
- Administration Support – to support with the high volume of enquiries and bookings
- Engagement Officer – a part time role to support our learning objectives

Resource requirements will be continually monitored, and a business case will demonstrate the need for additional resource as the business grows. Gloucester City Council has demonstrated its commitment to Blackfriars with the creation of a dedicated team in 2020, the introduction of an apprentice and increasing the resource to support weddings.

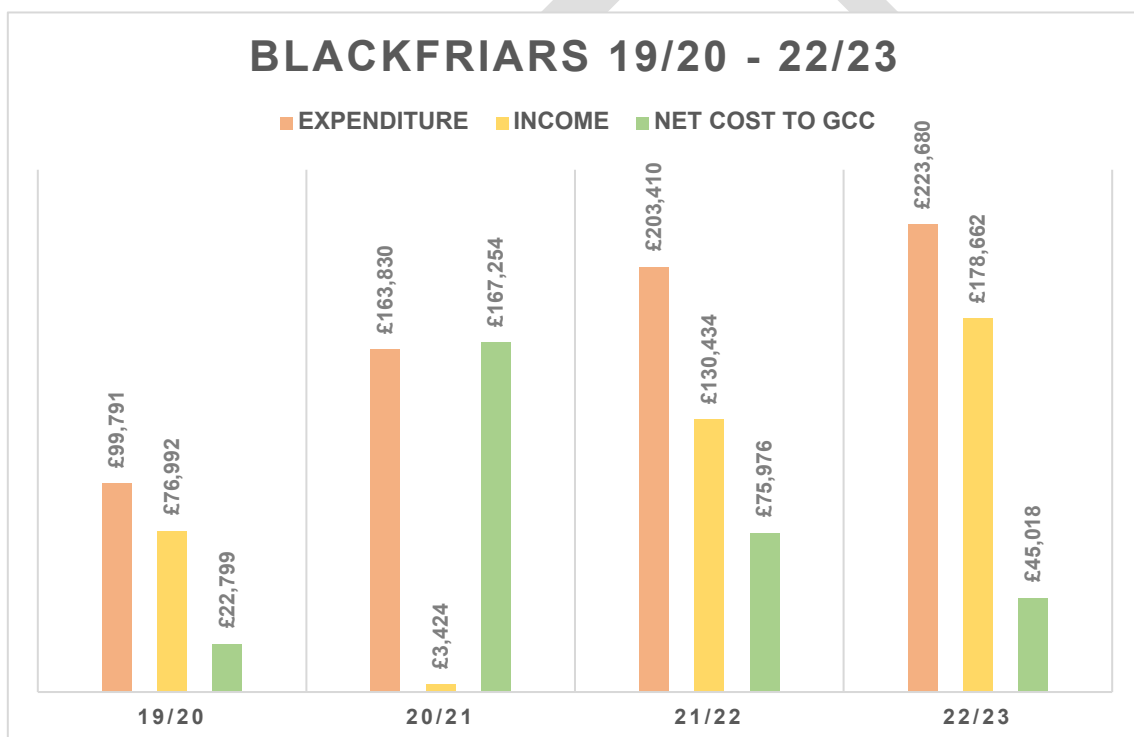
To run Blackfriars effectively, we need the right talent to support us in the next 5 years... and beyond.

# FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Gloucester City Council funds the delivery of Blackfriars. Our aims and objectives will be achieved by utilising available resources as efficiently as possible. This will enable us to provide services for customers and stakeholders that demonstrates good value for money.

We are committed to reducing costs to the authority, with the longer-term aim of creating a cost-neutral venue, with aspirations of turning a profit in the future. Local authority funding remains vital to us over the next 5 years, but we will enhance that funding through commercial activities and identifying grant funding to support activity. Increasing our financial resources will enable us to do more, deliver better value for money and have a greater impact.

Below, looks back at the financial performance of Blackfriars over the past 4 financial periods:



*Please note, at the time of writing this document, the 22/23 figures are a forecast.*

An internal restructure in 2020 saw the creation of the Blackfriars team – a dedicated team who would manage the venue and deliver the activity, something it had lacked for years. The increase in expenditure in 20/21 was not an increase in costs on the authority, simply allocating the right resource into the right areas across the culture portfolio, a true reflection of the Blackfriars operating costs. Income in 20/21 was low due to the implications of the worldwide pandemic.

Please note that all historical and projected figures do not account for the support provided by Gloucester City Council, including HR, finance, recruitment, legal and IT.



## BUILDING INVESTMENT

We recognise the need to invest in our facilities to ensure that our visitors experience a safe, memorable, accessible, high-quality experience.

Working in partnership with English Heritage, our internal Asset Management service and other funding bodies, Gloucester City Council is committed to investing in Blackfriars. The condition of the historical buildings needs to remain fit for purpose and operate in line with the service needs.

By allowing the venue to strive to its absolute best, having the right facilities, in the right place, designed with the customer in mind whilst utilising the historical assets of the site but being aware of its sensitivity, will lead to increased participation.

As we do not own the building from which we deliver our services, it is critical to our success that the building we operate from has high quality facilities which are attractive to our customers. The authority will continue to investigate how we can bring in funding to enhance the quality of services across the venue.

Any investment will be subject to a rigorous business planning process to support the aims and objectives and that it is sustainable into the future. It will be governed appropriately and will follow these key principles:

- Will demonstrate a robust return on investment and cost-effective operating solutions.
- Enhancing the visitor experience
- Being inclusive
- Reduction of the organisations carbon footprint

There will continue to be a reliance on English Heritage to maintain elements of the site as per the lease agreement and to work in partnership with the Blackfriars team to seek funding to maximise the assets of the site. Investment is needed to continually improve; it's about constantly doing better.

With ambitions of activity taking place year-round, investment is needed to ensure that the spaces are warm and comfortable for visitors. The East Range has good heating to allow for year-round bookings. The North Range can become extremely cold during Autumn and Winter and customers are warned of this prior to booking, leading to a lower conversion rate. Portable space heaters have been purchased to warm up the spaces but can be costly to run and negatively impacts the authorities plans to achieve net-zero by 2030. Investing in a permanent heating solution will allow the building to successfully operate year-round, leading to increased income. Fundraising or an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund or other funding bodies will be needed to support the installation of a heating system.

Over the duration of this 5-year plan as well as the 25-year lease, Gloucester City Council will lease all existing areas in the lease dated the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012 but in addition, will include the Scriptorium along with the rear courtyard adjoining the Scriptorium and the rear access point which will be solely used by the Blackfriars team to maximise the use of the Scriptorium.

In future years and subject to business growth, the authority would like first refusal on all potential areas for expansion. Blackfriars lacks onsite accommodation for its couples and has a partnership with a local accommodation provider. Onsite accommodation would result in increased bookings as a lack of onsite accommodation has resulted in losing bookings. Being alerted to new opportunities at the earliest possible time would allow Gloucester City Council to explore the feasibility of spaces and take forward as necessary.

The site does not have a comfortable working space for staff working on-site. Delivery within a culture and events space can be challenging, it's a physically demanding industry to work in and our staff welfare is important. Opportunities for expansion to provide a space for the team to breathe and take time out is critical.

Blackfriars has limited storage onsite and therefore requires constant movement of equipment and furniture around the hireable spaces. Utilising existing spaces and new spaces will allow increased efficiencies and will allow the venue to invest in further equipment to deliver the activity.

## **TALENT INVESTMENT**

Blackfriars has an excellent team of staff who have continued to deliver to a high level. To deliver the ambition and vision set out in this business plan, we need to invest in our people. Systems and processes will be continually reviewed and refreshed, and staffing resources assessed to make sure that Blackfriars is as strong as possible for the future. Boosting our staff's confidence, skills, experience, and networks will deliver benefits for individuals, our team, and the whole organisation.

## **FUNDRAISING**

Blackfriars has not approached any external funders for support to develop Blackfriars. There are several national funders who offer capital funds and project grants to support the development of cultural activity. Investing and committing to educational and engagement activity will open the gates to cultural funding.

As part of this 5-year plan, we will start to use our established contacts through other projects across the culture portfolio to start to build the case for support for Blackfriars. Partnering with the English Heritage team to attract funding is vital.

## FINANCIAL PROJECTION

Below provides a financial forecast based on the aims and objectives of this 5-year plan.

EXPENDITURE	FORECAST					
	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Employees	215,888	262,441	278,645	287,071	295,949	304,889
Premises	38,650	44,575	45,704	47,006	48,180	49,377
Third Party Payments*	5,000	5,250	5,381	5,516	5,654	5,795
Supplies & Services	47,000	48,200	53,400	61,600	69,800	80,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>306,538</b>	<b>360,466</b>	<b>383,130</b>	<b>401,192</b>	<b>419,583</b>	<b>440,060</b>

INCOME	FORECAST					
	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29
Commercial Activity	(165,000)	(181,500)	(203,000)	(231,500)	(264,000)	(298,500)
Cultural Activity	(500)	(1,100)	(1,800)	(2,500)	(3,500)	(4,500)
Bar Sales	(75,000)	(90,000)	(108,000)	(130,000)	(155,000)	(185,000)
Grants	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(240,500)</b>	<b>(272,600)</b>	<b>(312,800)</b>	<b>(364,000)</b>	<b>(422,500)</b>	<b>(488,000)</b>

<b>PROFIT/LOSS</b>	<b>66,038</b>	<b>87,866</b>	<b>70,330</b>	<b>37,192</b>	<b>(2,917)</b>	<b>(47,940)</b>
--------------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------	----------------	-----------------

\*Subject to negotiation with English Heritage

## FINANCIAL PROJECTION NARRATIVE

Historical financial information does not show the true growth of Blackfriars. It shows resource coming from the wider culture portfolio, a service that was affected by the pandemic and a business that was still finding its feet.

Blackfriars has become the commercial arm of the wider cultural offer that Gloucester City Council is committed to support. Inflation has driven an increase across all operational costs which puts additional pressure on income generation.

Projected employee costs increase significantly in 24/25 due to additional resource needs, in conjunction with increased salary costs. Additional staffing needs will be monitored closely and only utilised if there is demand. Proposed additional staffing needs are extracted below to demonstrate the additional cost that affects the bottom line.

### 2023/24

Wedding Coordinator	Increase from 0.81 to 1FTE	£6,863 pa
Events Administration Support	New 0.4FTE	£12,622 pa
Bar Staff	New 0.6FTE (casual / agency)	£12,600 pa

### 2024/25

Duty Manager	New 0.6FTE	£21,207 pa
Visitor Experience Assistant	New 0.6FTE	£18,764 pa

### 2025/26

Engagement Officer	New 0.2FTE	£8,160 pa
--------------------	------------	-----------

It's hard to forecast at this stage when the additional resource is required so these figures reflect the potential resource needs over the next 5 years subject to activity onsite and are included in the financial forecast for the next 5 years. If the budgeted resource isn't required, then Blackfriars is likely to turn a profit by 26/27.

Our team are attuned to financial imperatives as part of their work, but we can do better. Robust charging models for weddings will be developed, maximising financial return whilst remaining competitive. Every visitor has the chance to contribute to a more sustainable Blackfriars. Our bookable products, food and beverage and new initiatives must exceed our visitors' expectations. We need to do more to understand what our visitors enjoy, what new initiatives they might respond to and how they will support us. Better plans for retail, licensing and catering sit alongside our projected visitor increases.

In an environment that is financially constrained, we recognise that we need to think big, take bold moves and provide greater value for money. It will necessitate strong cost control to stand more firmly on our own two feet.

By the end of this 5-year plan, Blackfriars will turn a profit.

---

# RISK ASSESSMENT

We recognise the importance of managing strategic risk across the organisation and there are systems in place to manage these risks. Risk management is an ongoing process which will be rigorously reviewed at appropriate levels throughout the organisations. All risks are tracked and monitored in the Blackfriars Risk Register. The key risks identified and summarised include:

## Financial Risk

Blackfriars is currently funded by Gloucester City Council. Although Blackfriars has continued to demonstrate a successful operating model, it does remain a cost to the authority. With government funding reducing, there is risk of funding to Blackfriars also reducing. The impact of the economic downturn will see a decrease in disposable income and could see a decline in our chargeable services. To safeguard, we will:

- Continue to push Blackfriars to reduce the financial burden annually to the authority.
- Review fees and charges annually to ensure value for money whilst also considering the increase in operating costs e.g., energy and cost of living costs.

## Competition Risk

Gloucester is a historical city and does have a notable number of historical venues who provides a similar offer to that of Blackfriars. Within Gloucestershire, there are a large amount of wedding venues in secluded countryside locations whereas Blackfriars is in Gloucester City Centre surrounded by busy roads. To safeguard, we will:

- Continue to provide the benefits of a city centre location, using the 'hidden gem'.
- Keep abreast of trends in the industry to ensure that the venue meets the needs of its customers and visitors.

## Reputational Risk

The Blackfriars team is very small when you compare the programme of activity that is delivered. If Blackfriars continues to grow at the pace it has since the pandemic, then additional resource will be needed. Due to the team being so small, there is a risk around losing key staff who hold significant knowledge: To safeguard, we will:

- Closely monitor the number of enquiries and bookings and use a forecasting tool to assess the future resource needs of the venue.
- Use business cases to demonstrate the need for additional resource.
- Identify individual team members career aspirations and support development to ensure retention.

## Property Risk

By its nature, Blackfriars is an old building and will naturally face building maintenance issues. The occurrence of building defects will need to be addressed immediately as any delay will have an effect on reputation and income. The business needs to comply with statutory health and safety obligations which is not obeyed can result in financial penalties. To safeguard, we will:

- Ensure there remains to be clear lines of responsibility between the authority and English Heritage and that the quarterly meetings between partners identify any property issues along with timescales for completion.
- Ensure that the authorities Asset Management service in conjunction with the building management system conducts the necessary compliance actions.

---

# MONITORING & EVALUATION

Our business plan is a vital part of the 'golden thread' that links both Gloucester City Council and English Heritage to Blackfriars.

The business plan is owned by the cultural management team with the Events and Marketing Officer and Senior Operations Officer taking responsibility to ensure that the business plan aims, and objectives are met when making decisions.

To ensure all key outcomes and priorities are achieved, the business performance will be monitored and reviewed in the following ways:

- Quarterly performance updates will be provided to the management team. These updates will highlight performance against targets alongside an overview of the income and expenditure associated with each business area.
- Quarterly financial meetings will take place with the authority's accountant.
- The business plan will be reviewed annually to determine its effectiveness and to update and agree the delivery plan for the following year.
- The Blackfriars site team will use this plan to form individual priority and performance plans which will be reviewed monthly.
- Feedback through the annual staff survey.
- Online reviews through tourism, event, and wedding industry related platforms.

Included in the measures of success would see several social and economic benefits:

- Increased participation.
- Increase in the number of volunteers and volunteering hours.
- Increased spend in Gloucester and the local area.

We will use this data intelligently and dynamically for advocacy, resource deployment and to give visitors the best possible experience.

---

## FINAL WORD

Blackfriars, one of the most complete surviving friaries of Dominican 'black friars' in England ... a space that residents of Gloucester should be proud of, visitors are in awe of, and a team that embrace the historical surrounds and are inspired to promote. We will inspire such passion in others by opening the gates to Blackfriars.

The 13th Century priory, stunning backdrops, scissor-braced roof, the oldest surviving library... mixed with an eclectic and quirky programme, the increased desire to tie the knot somewhere with character whilst being part of history allows Blackfriars to become a leader in its sector and will continue to push boundaries over the next 5 years.

DRAFT

---

# APPENDICES

1 – Management arrangement. Confidential.

DRAFT