

Annual Leader's address

2025/26

A message from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Stanley

Over the past year, I have been proud to see the council continue to deliver for our communities while preparing for one of the biggest changes local government has seen in decades.

Despite increasing financial pressures and growing demand for services, we have remained focused on what matters most: supporting our communities, helping local businesses thrive, and protecting the services residents rely on every day.

Our vision is simple: 'Supporting people, strengthening communities.'

We've made real progress across the borough and the highlights below showcase some of the achievements that have been made over the last year. From supporting economic growth and improving access to council services, to strengthening our environmental commitments and helping residents through the ongoing cost-of-living pressures, we continue to focus on delivering practical improvements for our communities.

At the same time, we are preparing for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the move to a new unitary council model in 2028. This is a significant change, but it also brings an opportunity to shape better, more efficient services for the future.

“ **Change is coming, but our commitment to residents remains unchanged.** ”

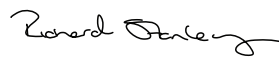
Through our Future Ready Programme, we are ensuring our officers are prepared, the way we work is improved, and that the council is ready for the future while maintaining stable and reliable services.

As we look ahead, we will continue to champion the interests of Tewkesbury Borough, protect the services, and work with our partners and communities to build a stronger future for everyone.

“ **Strong communities are built when local people remain at the heart of every decision.** ”

The hard work and dedication of staff, councillors, partners and volunteers continue to make a real difference across our communities.

Thank you for your continued support.



Richard Stanley
Leader of the Council



Our achievements through the Council Plan

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Climate and ecological emergency

Why is this important?

Together, these actions show real progress in tackling the climate and ecological emergency while protecting and enhancing the environment for current and future generations. By reducing emissions, improving biodiversity, supporting greener travel and investing in sustainable communities, we are helping to create a healthier, more resilient borough. This work also ensures resources are used efficiently, supports local facilities and businesses, and gives residents confidence that meaningful action is being taken to address climate change at a local level.

Cutting carbon emissions

Since declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019, we have **reduced greenhouse gas emissions** at the Public Services Centre (PSC) **by 60 per cent**.

We have also been recognised as a **Carbon Literate Organisation** from The Carbon Literacy Project, reflecting our commitment to embedding climate awareness into the way we work.

A clear plan for climate action

We have adopted a **borough-wide Climate and Ecological Emergency Framework**, setting out a shared approach to reduce emissions and protecting the environment across Tewkesbury Borough.

Protecting nature and biodiversity

We **introduced new policies** including a Pesticide Policy and a Peat-Free Policy to support nature recovery and biodiversity.

National recognition

Our performance in the Climate Action Scorecard has improved significantly, **rising from 10 per cent in 2021 to 44 per cent in 2025** and placing us among the top-performing district councils nationally where the average score was 36 per cent.



Photo: Tewkesbury Borough wildflower meadow



Climate and ecological emergency

Investing in community buildings

Through our Community Centre Energy Efficiency Capital Fund, **we awarded almost £70,000 to community facilities**, including Maisemore Village Hall, The Roses Theatre and Winchcombe Arts and Community Hub for energy efficiency improvements.

Small on waste, big on recycling

We began rolling out **smaller 140-litre household bins** alongside a borough-wide **campaign encouraging residents to reduce waste and recycle more**.

Supporting greener travel

Eight new electric vehicle charging points have been installed in three council car parks across the borough, allowing up to 16 vehicles to be charged at any time. We have also worked with Gloucestershire County Council to install secure cycle storage facilities at our Tewkesbury car parks at Station Road, Gloucester Road and Tewkesbury Leisure Centre.

Improving air quality

A refreshed Air Quality Strategy was approved for public consultation by Council in March 2026. The strategy sets out how the council will work with Gloucestershire County Council, local businesses, community groups and other partners to **continue improving air quality across Tewkesbury Borough**.





Flood resilience

Why is this important?

These actions are strengthening how we prepare for, respond to and recover from flooding across the borough. By improving coordination, investing in local resilience, working with partners and supporting communities to develop their own plans, we are reducing the impact of flooding on homes, infrastructure and daily life. This proactive, joined-up approach helps ensure communities are better protected, more informed and more resilient in the face of future flooding events.

A stronger, coordinated response

In October 2025, we approved a **new Flooding Response Policy and Sandbag Policy**, setting out a clearer, more coordinated approach to managing flooding events across the borough.

Investing in community resilience

We **secured £15,000 from the Local Resilience Forum** to strengthen local community flood resilience. This funding will support the creation of community sandbag delivery hubs, and help deliver the Tewkesbury Flood Warden Scheme.

Targeted flood prevention work

We continue to work with Tirley Parish Council, Gloucestershire County Council and partners to better understand where surface water flooding is likely to occur and assess its impact, review pump performance, and **explore natural flood reduction measures**. This work is helping to reduce the impact of flooding on homes, infrastructure and the wider community.

Stronger partnerships with emergency and voluntary services

We have **strengthened joint working** with key emergency and voluntary organisations - including Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), RAYNET (Volunteer radio support for emergencies) - to provide critical emergency communications, as well as the British Red Cross.

Supporting parishes to prepare

Significant **progress has been made on Community Emergency Plans**, with several parishes developing plans over the past year.

These plans help parish and town councils and their communities prepare for, respond to and recover from flooding, in collaboration with Gloucestershire County Council and emergency services.



Photo: Tewkesbury Borough Council Environmental Health Officer 2025



Place

Why is this important?

We are helping to ensure that communities are well connected, vibrant, and responsive to local needs. By strengthening community voices, investing in facilities and infrastructure, and celebrating our culture, heritage, and shared pride, we are supporting thriving places and promoting wellbeing and sustainable growth.

Shaping the future of local services

Through the LGR programme, the Neighbourhood and Communities workstream is **helping to develop and agree a county-wide Place Model**. This ensures that neighbourhood engagement, local identity and community-level service delivery remain at the heart of the new arrangements.

Supporting culture and creativity

We **continued to support borough-wide cultural ambition**, including engagement activity for Tewkesbury's Town of Culture bid, strengthening partnerships across the cultural and heritage sector.

Celebrating our heritage

Working with the John Moore Museum, we delivered the first **Tewkesbury History Festival, launched in June 2026**. The festival welcomes some of the world's most celebrated historians, authors and broadcasters.

Investing in community facilities

Working with developers at Vistry Group Plc, we secured the **successful handover of the Homelands Community Centre**, a purpose built facility supporting community use and wellbeing in Bishop's Cleeve.

Improving local infrastructure

We **approved £200,000 to replace the Mitton footpath bridge**, a vital route used by around 500 people every day, including pupils travelling to Tewkesbury Academy and workers accessing the Northway industrial area.

Honouring local history in new developments

We **supported the opening of the new Heritage Trail in Coopers Edge**, featuring seven interpretation boards which celebrate the area's aviation history.





Managing growth

Why is this important?

To ensure that growth across the borough is well planned, sustainable and supported by the right infrastructure, we are investing in key projects, maintaining strong planning performance and protecting the character of our communities. We are supporting economic growth while safeguarding the unique aspects of our borough. This balanced approach helps provide certainty for residents and businesses, ensures development is delivered responsibly, and creates well-designed, resilient communities for the future.

Planning for the future

We worked with infrastructure providers, including Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board and Severn Trent, to develop the draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan. We will continue this work to ensure this important evidence-based document informs the Strategic and Local Plan, supporting the borough's long-term growth and development.

Investing in strategic infrastructure

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Joint Committee allocated around **£6.6 million for local strategic projects** and confirmed £4,054,141 to support Gloucestershire County Council's M5 Junction 10 improvements scheme.

Protecting local character

New planning rules were introduced for Snowhill in October 2025, helping to preserve the unique character and heritage of this picturesque village.





Managing growth

Maintaining strong planning performance

In 2025, we considered 585 minor planning applications, issuing **91 per cent within time**. Helping residents and businesses progress with their projects without unnecessary delays.

We reduced the proportion of major applications overturned at appeal from 9 per cent in 2024/25 to 3.8 per cent in 2025/26, well below the government's threshold of 10 per cent, demonstrating strong decision-making and minimising the risk of external intervention through planning appeals.

We have collected £1.6m in developer contributions through Section 106 agreements, helping to fund essential infrastructure, services, and community facilities linked to new development

Upholding planning law

In January 2026, **the council secured a High Court ruling** following repeated planning breaches at Warren Fruit Farm, Winchcombe. The ruling imposed a suspended six month prison sentence, required removal of all unauthorised works and **awarded £75,000** in costs to the council.

Strengthening Garden Communities stewardship

Engagement with Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) **secured additional funding** of £10,000 in 2025/26, £30,000 in 2026/27 and £30,000 in 2027/28. This funding strengthens our ability to progress the Garden Communities Stewardship Strategy, providing access to specialist expertise.





Housing and homelessness

Why is this important?

A home isn't a privilege, it's a basic right, and everyone deserves to feel secure, protected, and able to call it home. We support residents at risk of homelessness and improve access to safe, stable housing across the borough. By investing in prevention, increasing housing supply, and providing high-quality temporary accommodation, we are helping people maintain independence, stability and dignity during times of need. This proactive approach also ensures better use of resources, supports stronger communities, and helps local people continue to live and thrive in the areas they call home.

Delivering affordable homes

Working with registered housing provider partners, **we delivered 395 affordable homes** this year, 109 of these were social rent. The remaining 286 were affordable rent and shared ownership properties. This **exceeds our target** of 129 homes per year.

A new strategy for prevention and support

In March 2026, we approved a **new Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2026–28**, setting out our priorities for tackling homelessness, increasing housing options and improving support for those at risk.

Investing in temporary accommodation

We secured £648,200 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) through the Local Authority Housing Fund. This funding enabled us to deliver one resettlement home and five new temporary accommodation units. These homes reduce our reliance on bed and breakfast placements and provide better, more stable options for families in need.

Preventing rough sleeping

We maintained a **rapid response to rough sleeping**, meaning we acted quickly to identify and support individuals through regular outreach, multi-agency working and additional welfare support during severe weather.

Bringing empty homes back into use

A full review of the council's Empty Homes Register was completed. A report highlighting the work carried out and how many properties can be identified where support can be provided and then brought back into use. This will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



Photo: New housing development in Tewkesbury Borough



Economy

Why is this important?

We're helping to build our local economy by supporting businesses, attracting investment, strengthening our communities and keeping council tax low. This helps households manage rising costs while encouraging growth, innovation and long term resilience.

Keeping council tax low

Despite the financial pressures facing councils nationally, **we remain in the lowest quartile for Council Tax**, and the ninth lowest charging borough council in England.

Connecting and supporting local businesses

We **delivered five successful Business Voice Network events** across the borough. These were hosted at venues including Hatherley Manor, 270 Climbing Park, Sherdons Golf Centre and Adnet Precision Engineering in Brockworth. More than 160 business delegates attended overall, receiving updates on council activity, LGR developments, business growth opportunities and available funding.

Investing in local prosperity

The council was allocated £331,065 through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and £121,261 through the Rural England Prosperity Fund. This **supported a wide range of projects** including business support, EV charging points, community centre energy efficiency grants, tourism campaigns and community safety initiatives.

Boosting jobs, skills and innovation

Using UKSPF funding, we **commissioned specialist business support for Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing (AEM) businesses** through The Growth Hub, Tewkesbury. This programme delivered tailored one-to-one support and practical help to develop and implement growth plans.

Direct outcomes include supporting growth for 46 businesses, four successful grant applications, six new jobs created, 24 jobs safeguarded, and three businesses adopting new technologies.

Understanding future economic potential

An **Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing (AEM) study** was produced by The Growth Company (GC Insight), helping identify opportunities to grow this strategically important sector within the borough.



Photo: Tewkesbury Borough Council - Business Voice Event, Sherdons



Young people

Why is this important?

By reducing barriers, investing in early support and listening to young voices, we are helping young people feel valued, develop essential skills and shape the future of their communities. This approach also helps prevent crisis situations, supports wellbeing and ensures young people can thrive and reach their full potential.

Reducing barriers to opportunity

Through the Household Support Fund (round 7), **£20,000 was approved to support transport costs for young people**. This funding was allocated to Gloucestershire County Council to distribute, and we continue to actively promote the scheme.

Supporting wellbeing and personal development

We continued to work with the Integrated Locality Partnership, **helping young people access mentoring programmes** that build confidence, resilience and life skills.

Listening to young voices

A total of **122 people responded to our consultation** on the redevelopment of the Wheatpieces play area. Feedback from parents, young people and residents is helping shape equipment choices and accessibility improvements as part of the tender process.

Engaging young people in shaping future communities

We led a session for **180 Year 9 students from Tewkesbury Academy** to take part in interactive workshops exploring the future of the Garden Communities programme. Their ideas, aspirations and feedback are being captured to help inform the development.

Preventing youth homelessness

We launched a new partnership with Gloucestershire Nightstop to introduce 'Firststop', a service aimed at preventing youth homelessness by addressing family breakdown before it reaches crisis point.

Supporting care leavers

With 44 care leavers living in our borough, we have **strengthened our Care Leavers' Covenant**. By enhancing the support we offer, including council tax discounts until age 25 and working with Gloucestershire County Council to remove barriers and improve access to employment.



Photo: Tewkesbury Youth Club - soft shot archery



Health and wellbeing

Why is this important?

We have continued to support the health, wellbeing and resilience of communities across the borough, particularly for those most in need. By investing in grassroots initiatives, supporting community organisations and providing targeted financial assistance, we are helping residents stay healthy, connected and better equipped to manage the cost of living. This approach reduces inequalities, strengthens community support networks and ensures people can access the help they need to live well and thrive.

Investing in active, healthy lifestyles

Five grants were awarded through the Active Communities Grant Scheme, with organisations such as Tewkesbury Junior Anglers and the Roses Theatre each receiving £2,500. These projects help residents and young people **increase physical activity and reduce health inequalities across the borough.**

Supporting community groups through cost-of-living pressures

We **helped community organisations access funding** through multiple grant schemes and external bids. This support enabled warm spaces, food pantries and community services to continue operating during a period of rising costs.

Helping households with essential support

We supported **1,217 households** through the Household Support Fund, by providing **£57,455.65 in grants** to food pantries, foodbanks and Severn Wye. A further £132,000 for supermarket vouchers was issued to 4,881 households in Council Tax Bands A–D.

Warm spaces support for winter

Through the UKSPF Warm Spaces Fund for winter 2025/26, **14 community groups received support.** All applicants were offered links to Citizens Advice, first aid training, Severn Wye Warm and Well, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council digital inclusion services and local foodbanks and pantries.

Supporting the armed forces community

The council was awarded the **Armed Forces Covenant Bronze Award**, recognising our commitment to fair and inclusive employment practices for serving personnel, veterans, reservists and military families. We have strengthened our support for the Armed Forces community by improving awareness and signposting to services, developing a dedicated webpage, and providing targeted support in employment, housing and wellbeing. We are now working towards achieving silver accreditation under the Employer Recognition Scheme.

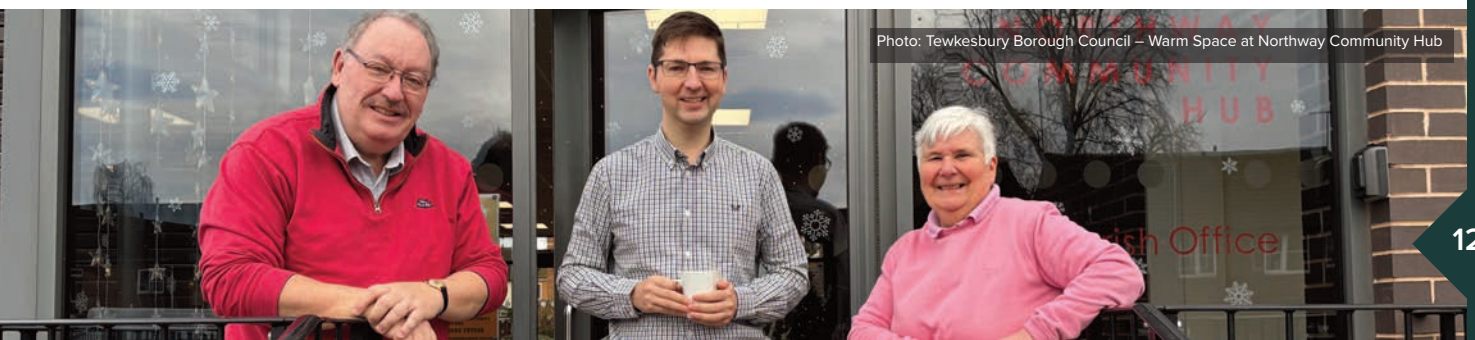


Photo: Tewkesbury Borough Council – Warm Space at Northway Community Hub



Additional achievements

These additional achievements, delivered outside of the Council Plan priorities, demonstrate our ongoing support to the health, wellbeing and resilience of communities across the borough. By investing in grassroots initiatives, improving digital access, embracing innovation and supporting community organisations, we are helping residents stay connected, access essential services and adapt to changing needs.

Transforming customer services

We were awarded the **IESE CIC Certificate of Excellence** for transforming how customers access support through our new AI powered contact centre. This innovation has improved customer access, **reduced telephone waiting times by 50 per cent** and enhanced the overall customer experience.

Digital innovation

We launched the Cemetery Viewer app, nationally recognised through a nomination for the **APSE Cemeteries and Crematoria Innovation Award 2026**. The app provides mobile access to 14,000+ burial records and mapping of 3,789 headstones. A simple way for residents to explore local heritage and locate loved ones' graves.

We also launched a new **online licensing portal**, enabling digital applications for taxi, private hire and other licences, improving efficiency, reducing manual handling and making it easier for customers to apply and track progress.

Communications and community protection

Our Communications and Graphics team was shortlisted for **Team of the Year at the C2S Awards**, recognising their exceptional response to the council's cyber incident and the recognition this response received across the South West and Midlands.

We collaborated with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit (CFEU) to launch **GLASSJAR (Gloucestershire Against Scams Joint Agency Response)**, a new website helping residents report fraud, access support and stay informed.

We also successfully defended a major licensing enforcement case, with the Magistrates' Court, upholding our decision to revoke a premises licence due to illegal working.

Photo: Tewkesbury Borough Council – Communications Team May 2026





Additional achievements

Protecting public money

Housing benefit and council tax fraud investigations led to a successful prosecution, **recovering over £12,500 in public funds.**

Strong financial management

We approved a **balanced 2026/27 budget** with cross party support, maintaining one of the **lowest council-tax rates in the country** while protecting frontline services and enabling continued investment in key areas such as Revenues and Benefits, Environmental Health, Planning and flood response.

Preparing for Local Government Reorganisation

Significant progress has been made in preparing for LGR, including submission of the council's interim plan, proposals for the future unitary structure, extensive officer engagement and programme development, and data gathering and partnership working across Gloucestershire. This was all achieved while continuing to deliver day-to-day services and key priorities.

“ Significant **progress** has been made in **preparing for LGR**, including submission of the council's interim plan...”