

Vale of White Horse District Council

Corporate plan 2020-2024

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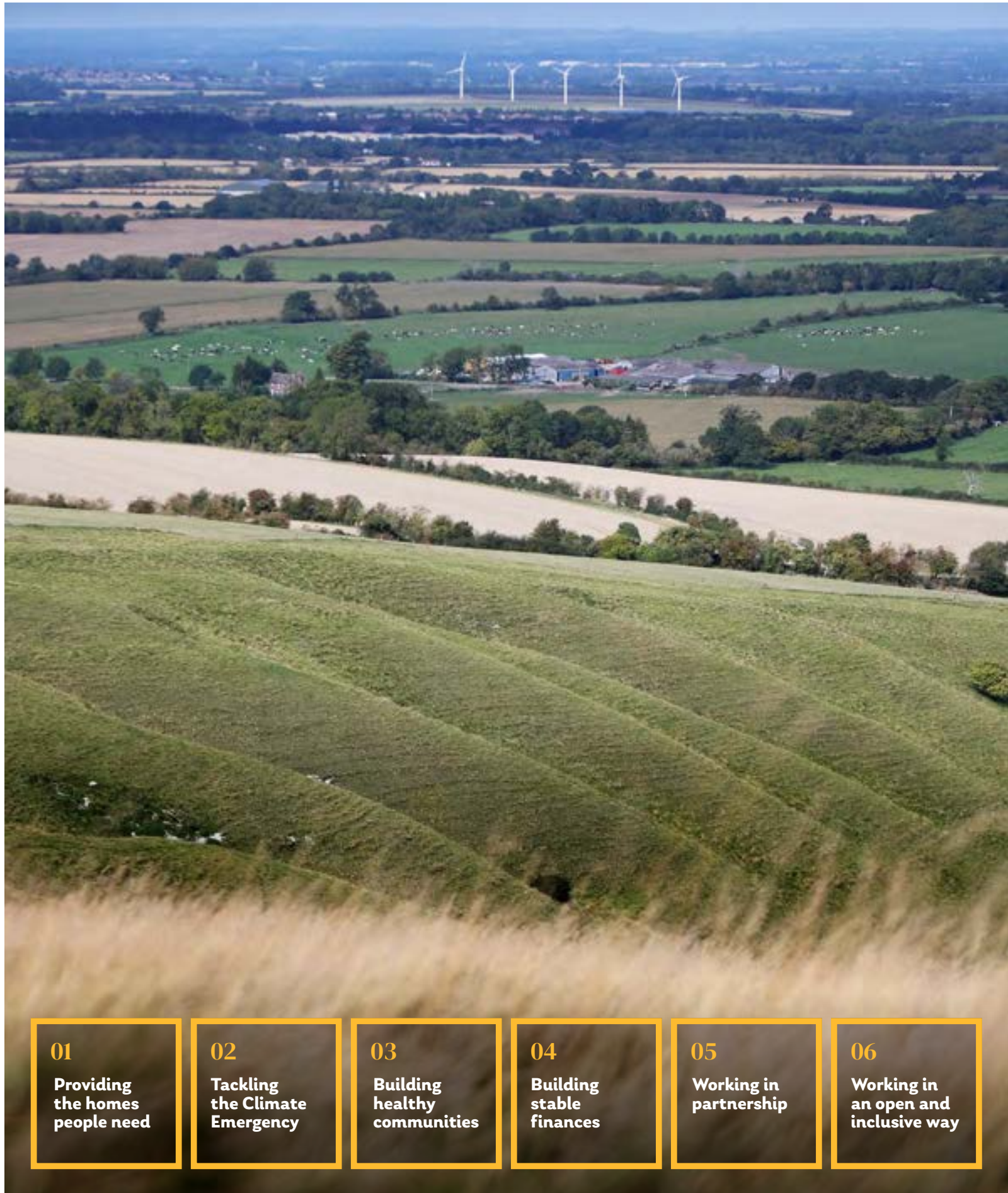
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Vale of White Horse District Council Vision

Vale of White Horse District Council aims to help build and support thriving local communities, where everyone can enjoy the opportunity to live a happy and fulfilling life. We will do all we can to contribute to making that a reality in the Vale, within the ecological constraints of our physical environment. We will ensure that our council and our district play their part in tackling the Climate Emergency.

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce the Vale of White Horse's Corporate Plan for 2020-24, setting out our priorities to help communities and people across the Vale of White Horse thrive.

We had an impressive response from you, the community, to our consultation exercise, and we have taken on your ideas and incorporated them where we could.

Our council has been on the front line during the Covid-19 pandemic. We have had to act quickly to find new ways of working to support local businesses and provide new services for residents and community groups, as well as maintain our key services such as waste and recycling, planning and environmental health.

Our responsibilities are increasing as Covid-19 cases increase, and the impact of the pandemic will inform the types of services we need to provide in the coming years. Our approach will be guided and shaped by the themes set out in this Corporate Plan.

The concept of 'Place' is key to our approach. For everyone in our communities to thrive and be healthy we need to create places with a strong sense of identity. Places with access to services and employment. Places with access to opportunities

to socialise and exercise. Places with good quality homes that people can afford to rent or buy. Places with sustainable transport, utilities, and social infrastructure. Places with access to the natural environment for the sake of our health and wellbeing as well as the planet.

We take our responsibility to meet national and local carbon reduction targets seriously and tackling the Climate Emergency is central to our plan. We will consider the impact on the climate and on the environment in all our decision making. We will continue to engage with partners to influence county-wide, regional, and national decision making to keep the climate and environment on the agenda at every opportunity.

We will continue to nurture existing local partnerships and develop new connections with people, groups and businesses across the Vale. We will engage with residents as this plan progresses to ensure our work remains rooted in the communities we serve.

To achieve all this, it is fundamental that we stabilise the council's finances. We are taking a pro-active approach to income generation, as well as making the case to government for sufficient funding to ensure we have the resources to

maintain our existing services and invest in improvements. Despite the lost income and unanticipated new expenses brought about by the COVID-19 crisis, we will do all we can to balance our spending to our available income, even when it means making tough choices.

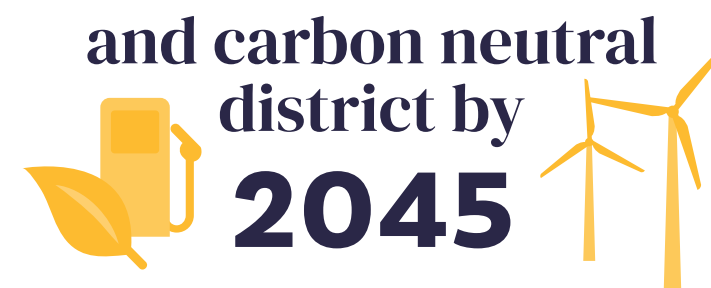
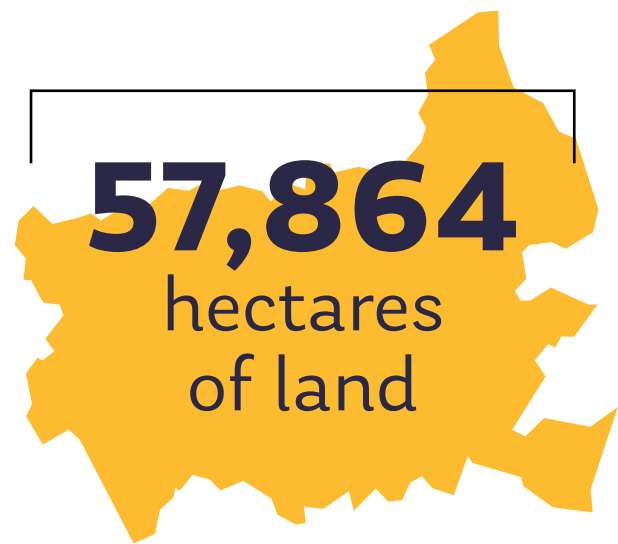
Whilst there are significant challenges to overcome, this forward-looking plan is the start of a positive new direction for our council, and I am very pleased to present it to you.



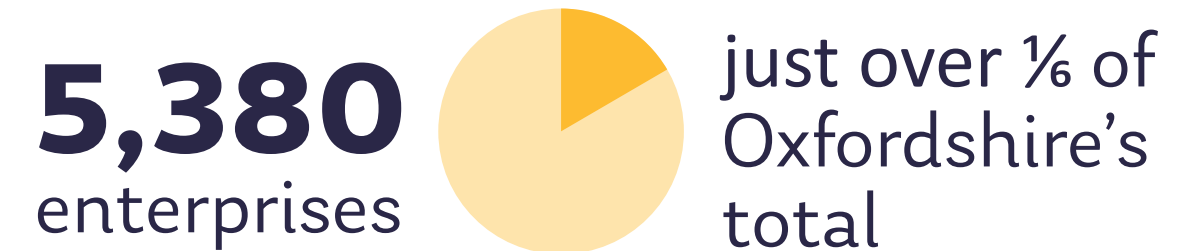
Cllr Emily Smith

Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council

The district at a glance



Estimated population



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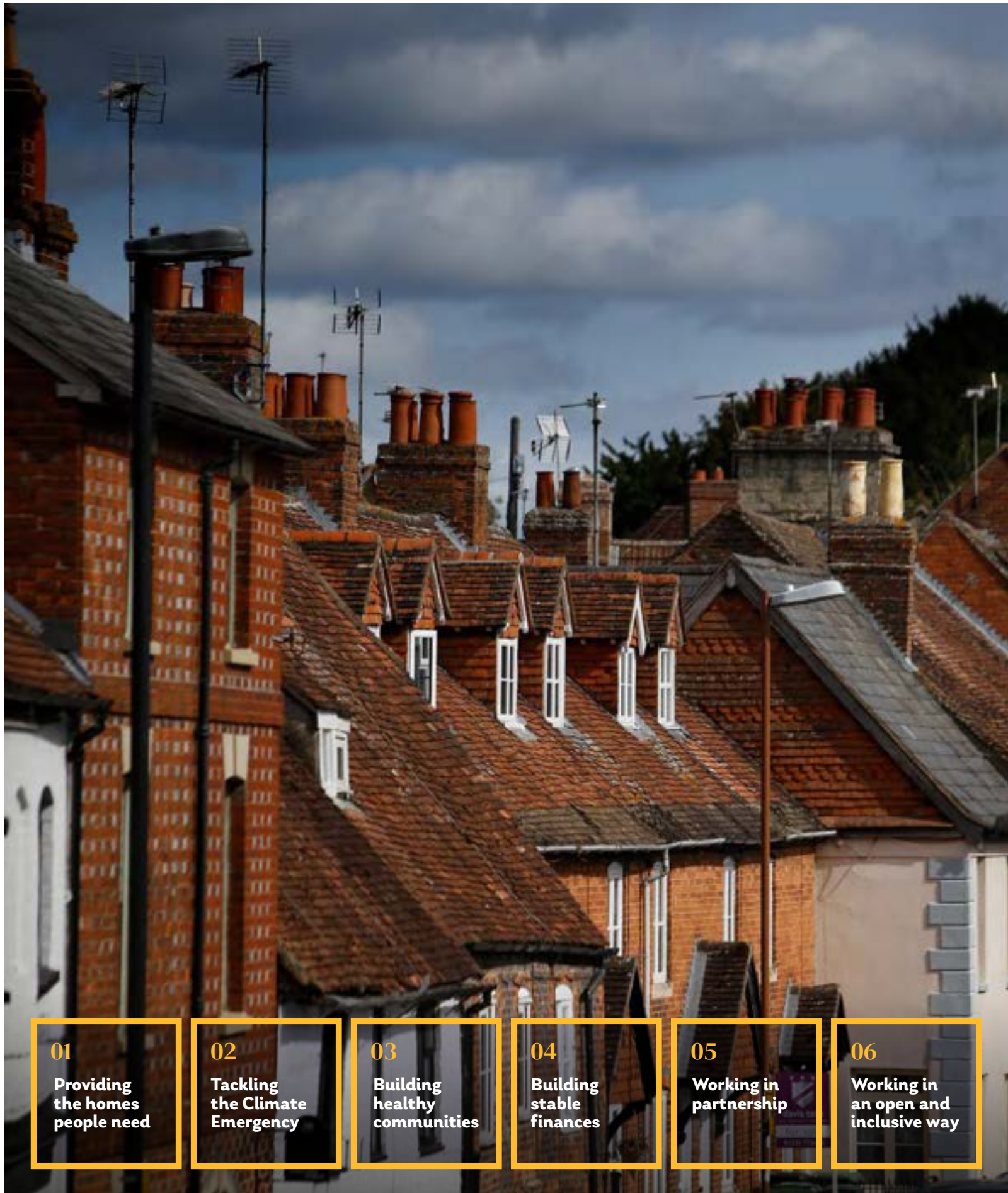
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There are **1,816** hectares of wildlife sites boasting **136** priority species





1. Providing the homes people need

We will:

- find ways to provide more genuinely affordable housing, including housing for social rent, to better provide for the needs of the Vale residents
- aim to provide a mix of tenures in each development to build sustainable homes in balanced and sustainable communities
- use our influence on decision makers, where the responsibility lies outside of Vale.

We will do this by:

- exploring and considering opportunities to bring forward the delivery of homes people can afford
- adopting a policy framework that ensures those homes could be delivered in a way that supports the environment and people living healthy lives.

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1. Providing the homes people need

We will explore and consider opportunities to bring forward the delivery of homes people can afford:

Explore a council-owned holding company/ vehicle, to focus on delivering a wide range of regeneration and community benefits including housing, community facilities, land maintenance and health.

Explore how the council can provide low-cost sustainable housing. Include working with developers, registered providers, community trusts, as well as new partnerships. Include council owned housing. Include a definition of affordability relative to ability to pay, not to market value, and social rent definitions.

Review our affordable housing planning policies and ensure they are providing what's needed in the Vale.

Review our strategy for spending Section 106 sums paid in lieu of onsite affordable housing and identify how earmarked funds, including retained Section 106 monies, can be best utilised to deliver affordable homes.

Explore how mobile homes might be better used as affordable homes, reviewing sites and policies to ensure good use of available space.

Use Garden Villages and Towns designation as a mechanism to introduce innovative housing to meet our need for high quality, low energy, zero-carbon homes.

What we'll measure:

- Percentage of planning applications determined within the timescale
- Successful planning appeals
- Homelessness and temporary accommodation – numbers and length of stay
- Affordable homes delivered
- Feedback through resident engagement.



1. Providing the homes people need

We will adopt a policy framework that ensures those homes could be delivered in a way that supports the environment and people living healthy lives:

Develop a Section 106 obligations strategy to inform negotiations between planners and developers.

Update the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending strategy and associated procedures to accelerate the delivery of local infrastructural improvements for our communities both in line with our corporate objectives and, where appropriate, to support current spending on existing infrastructure.

Consider ways we can encourage lower-carbon construction in the Vale.

Develop an affordable housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Evidence of housing needs, housing mix, self-build, rural exception sites. Include definition of affordable.

Develop a land-use strategy to inform and guide OxPlan2050 and Vale Local Plan with proposed need for housing, retail, employment, leisure and open spaces.

Update the Local Development Plan to reflect the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) and connect our strategic housing sites with employment land.

Update Vale's Local Plan and OxPlan2050 with modern environmental policies in support of government's and the vale's goals.

Develop a Housing Policy that outlines the types of housing we are going to provide, in what mix of design and for what demographic and tenure, to inform our Local Plan and future work. Include affordable housing aspirations, consideration of an aging population, and environmental policies for housing.

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1. Providing the homes people need

We will adopt a policy framework that ensures those homes could be delivered in a way that supports the environment and people living healthy lives (continued):

- Carbon emissions baseline for the district/council and sources of emissions
- Active travel and participation levels.

Work with partners to produce an Active Travel Network map of current and required coverage across the Vale to include commercial and community buses, cycle paths and storage facilities, pavements and footpaths, green and blue infrastructure, and local taxi firms.

Encourage systems that increase use of the Active Travel Network.

What we'll measure:

- Community Infrastructure Levy collected and spent
- Affordable homes delivered
- Travel time to key services by driving, cycling or walking

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An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are rolling green and brown fields. In the middle ground, a small town or village is visible with several buildings. In the background, a line of five white wind turbines stands on a ridge. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds.

2. Tackling the Climate Emergency

We will:

- do everything we can to help tackle the Climate Emergency
- reduce council emissions by 75% by 2025
- become a carbon neutral council by 2030
- reduce all emissions across the Vale District by 75% by 2030
- aspire to be a carbon neutral Vale district by 2045.

We will do this with:

- a Climate Emergency programme, focussed on what the council has control over, working towards our own targets for our own buildings, vehicles, leisure and arts centres
- a Climate Emergency programme focussed on encouraging the wider district community to reduce its carbon footprint in order to meet the Climate Emergency targets
- a programme around exercising our influence with partners on wider policy, working with neighbouring authorities, lobbying Government and identifying environmental policy gaps.

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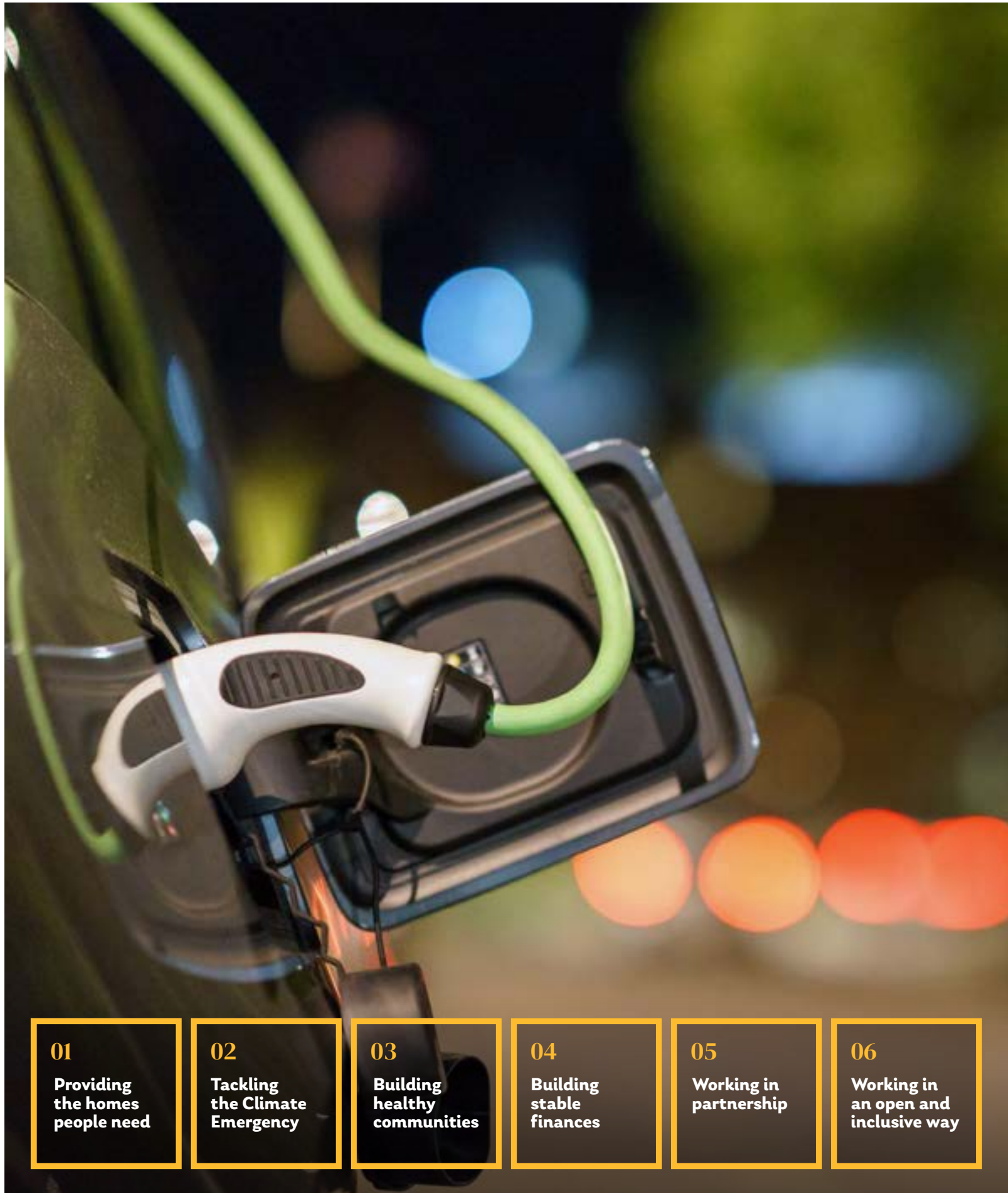
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2. Tackling the Climate Emergency

We will implement a Climate Emergency programme, focussed on what the council has control over, working towards our own targets for our own buildings, vehicles, leisure and arts centres:

Develop a Climate Emergency Strategy for the council, setting out how we will reach Zero Carbon for all Vale assets by 2030. Identify energy saving opportunities in council-owned buildings and fleets.

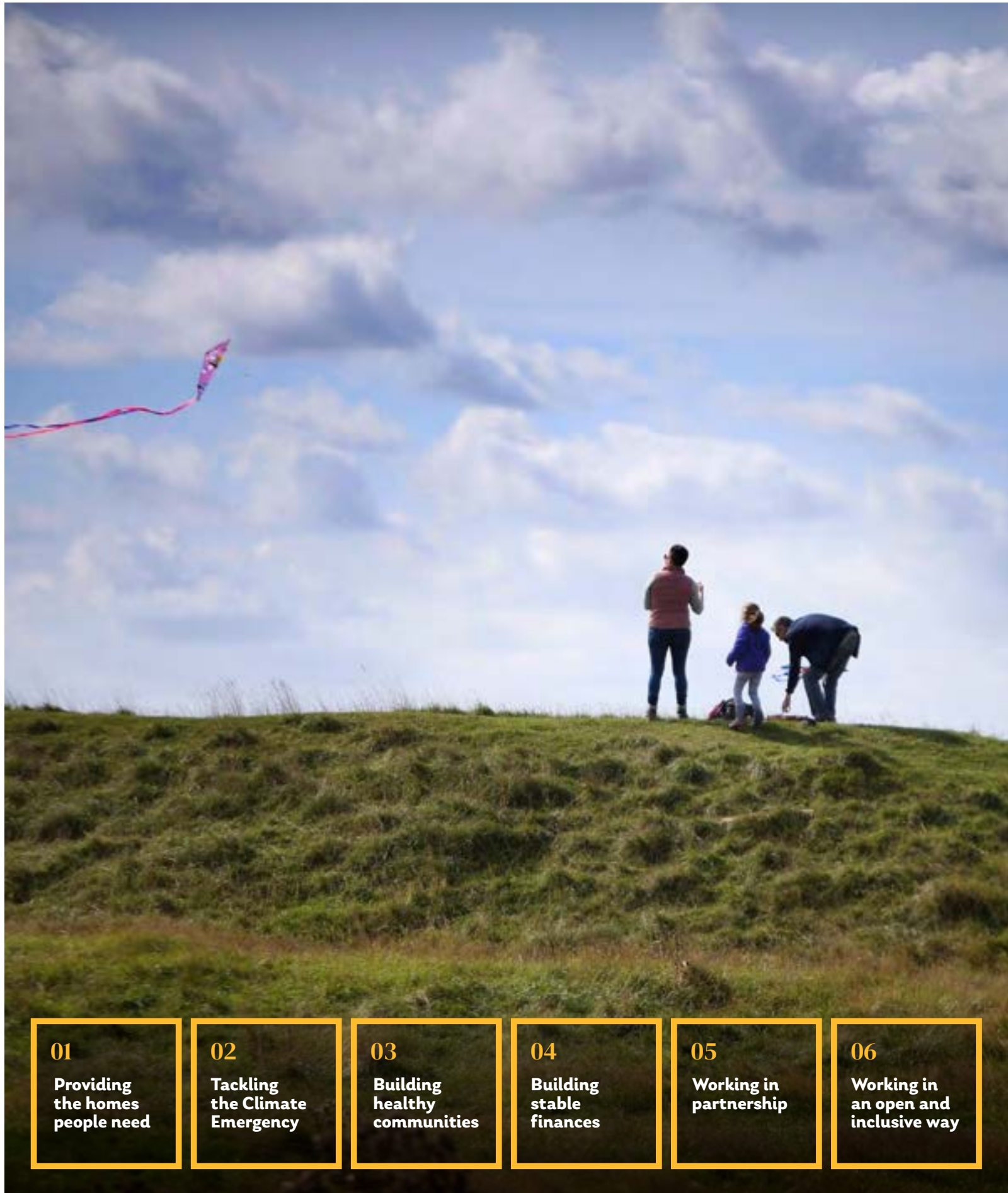
Complete the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) Year One Climate Action Plan and plan for future years.

Include in the council's Open Space Strategy opportunities to increase biodiversity, increase tree cover, and consider carefully the use of our open spaces.

What we'll measure:

- Carbon emissions baseline for the district/council and sources of emissions
- Reduction in single use plastics in council
- Residual waste to landfill
- Recycling rate
- A count on green spaces - percentage hectare of total green space
- Distance of developments from open publicly accessible green space
- Electric Vehicle charging points installed/ expressed as a proportion of the number of homes delivered on a development.

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2. Tackling the Climate Emergency

We will implement a Climate Emergency programme focussed on encouraging the wider district community to reduce its carbon footprint in order to meet the Climate Emergency targets:

Complete tasks that are to do with reducing carbon in the wider district in Year One of the Climate Action Plan.

Introduce policies for zero carbon construction requirements.

Introduce sustainable growth and environmental policies to our Local Plan.

Ensure our Local Plan contains polices to make new buildings carbon zero.

Develop a year two plan with Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) for meeting our Climate Emergency goals.

Improve how we measure air quality. Explore particulate measurement in our sensitive areas. Explore ways to publish air quality measurements in live time, so people can make decisions on whether it's healthy outside for them today.

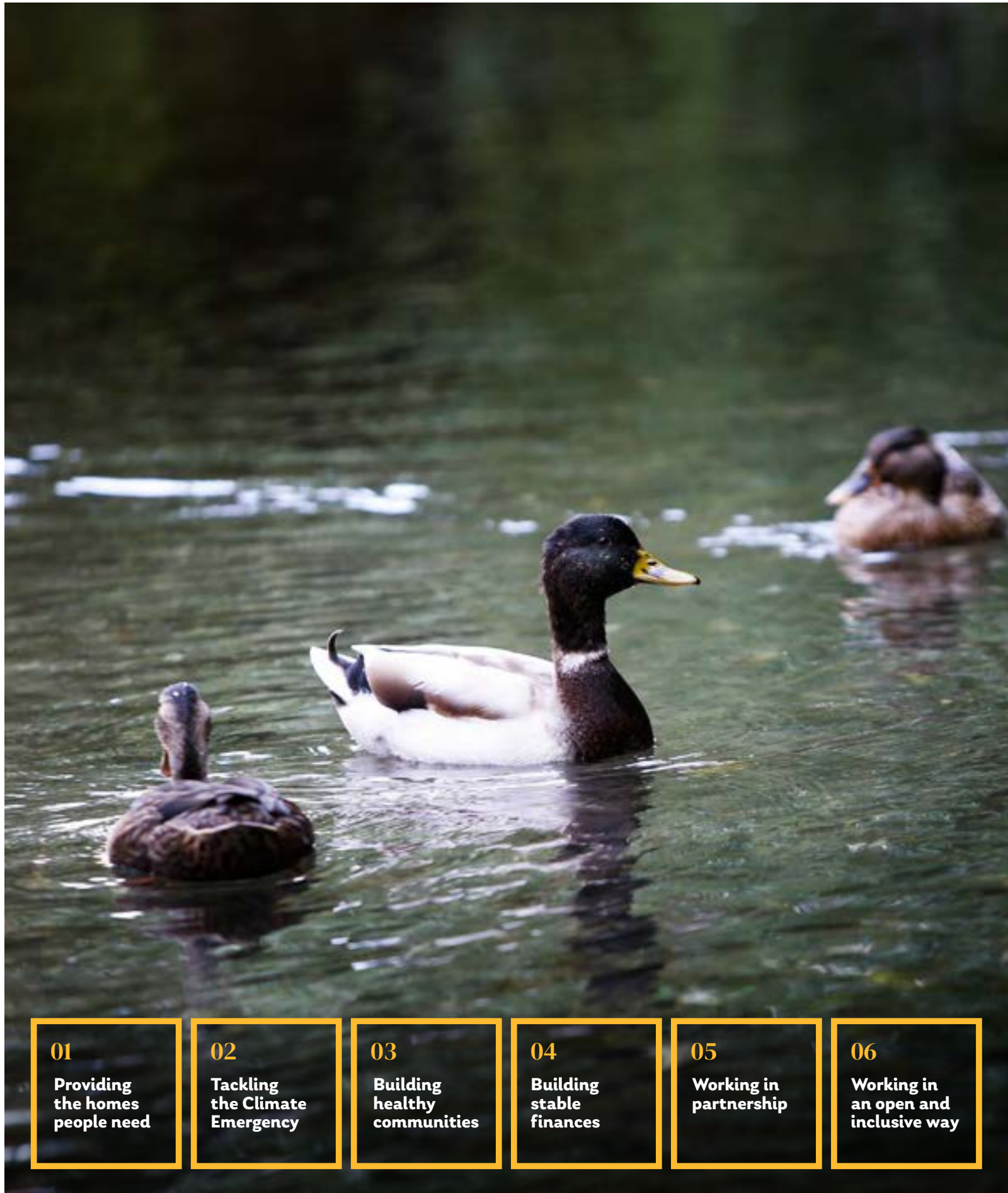
Update the Air Quality Action Plans for our Air Quality Management Areas.

Explore setting up a Habitat Bank to deliver biodiversity offsetting requirements and facilitate tree planting.

What we'll measure:

- Carbon emissions baseline for the district/council and sources of emissions
- Reduction in single use plastics in council
- Residual waste to landfill
- Recycling rate

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2. Tackling the Climate Emergency

What we'll measure (continued):

- A count on green spaces - percentage hectare of total green space
- Distance of developments from open publicly accessible green space
- Electric Vehicle charging points installed/ expressed as a proportion of the number of homes delivered on a development.

We will implement a programme around exercising our influence with partners on wider policy, working with neighbouring authorities, lobbying the Government and identifying environmental policy gaps:

Complete the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee Year One Action Plan and plan for future years.

Work with partners to define a waste reduction scheme including ways to reduce bulky waste headed to landfill and recycling contamination.

Develop a tree-planting strategy and work with partners to plant more trees across the district.

Develop a Biodiversity Net Gain Targeting Strategy and contribute to a Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire.

Work with partners to provide electric charging points in our car parks and at our buildings.

Take an active role in the Oxford-Cambridge arc to influence the inclusion of sustainable growth and environmental policies.

Take an active role in the Growth Deal and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 to influence the inclusion of sustainable growth and environmental policies.

Work with local partners and Government to encourage retrofitting houses with sustainable energy schemes; help residents take advantage of schemes that come along to help with costs.

2. Tackling the Climate Emergency

What we'll measure:

- Carbon emissions baseline for the district/council and sources of emissions
- Reduction in single use plastics in council
- Residual waste to landfill
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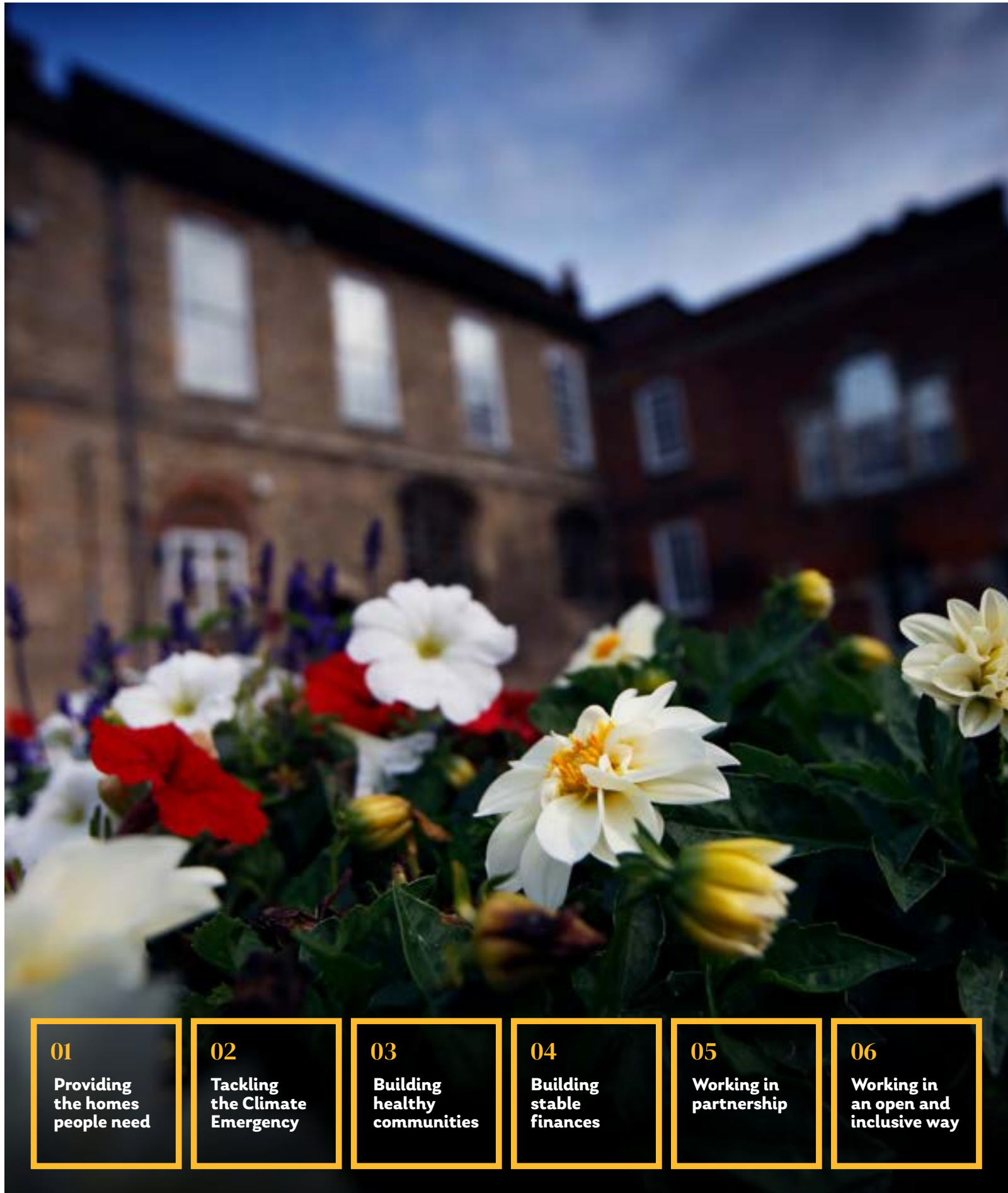
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3. Building healthy communities

We will:

- contribute to making people's lives healthier by encouraging the switch to more active travel, improving air quality where people work and live, and providing active opportunities.

We will do this by:

- building strong communities and connections with a sense of place and strong community identity
- promoting healthy place shaping and active communities for everyone
- safeguarding and supporting our vulnerable residents.

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3. Building healthy communities

We will build strong communities and connections with a sense of place and strong community identity:

Review the use of community buildings and other facilities owned or managed by the council to maximise usage, income for the council and ensure communities have spaces in which to come together.

Establish a Public Arts policy.

Maintain and develop the council's Community Enablement function to respond to changing needs because of Covid-19.

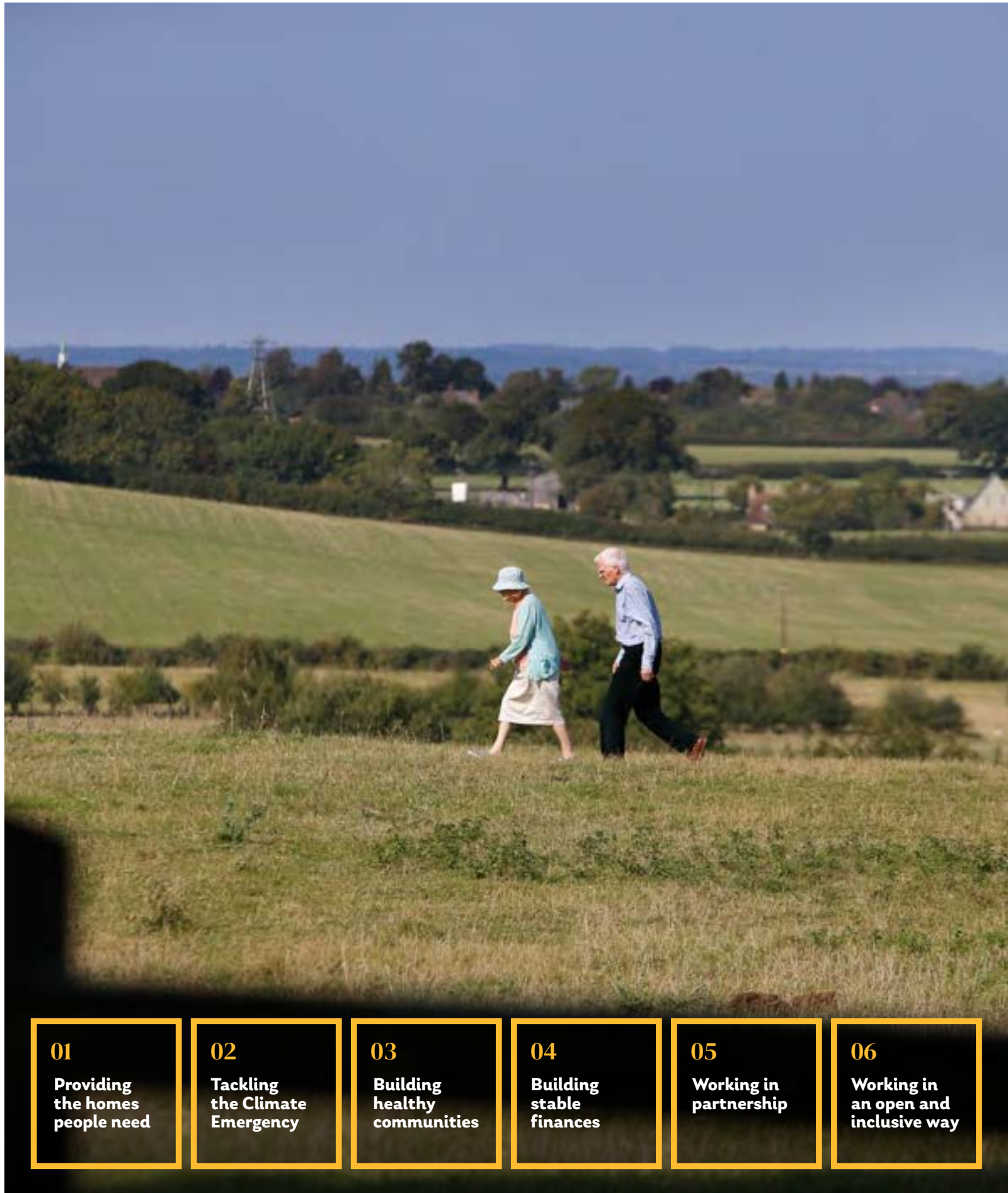
Work with others to promote Active Travel and support the development of Local Cycling and the Walking Infrastructure plans to help shape new developments that link homes to work, recreation and social spaces within communities.

Develop planning policies to ensure careful consideration of the effect of air pollution on the lives of people who will live there.

Update the Air Quality Management Action Plans for the Vale's air pollution hotspots; Work with Oxfordshire County Council to improve how we measure and report air pollution and how we will work with schools and community groups to raise awareness of our clean air campaigns.

What we'll measure:

- Active travel
- Participation in volunteering/community groups
- Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board measures
- Air quality in our Air Quality Management Areas
- Number of visits to leisure centres/ classes attended
- Number of visits to arts centres
- Resident satisfaction with their area as a place to live.



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3. Building healthy communities

We will promote healthy place shaping and active communities, for everyone:

Produce an Active Communities strategy; setting out how the council will work with our communities and partners and enable everyone to participate in physical activities.

Work with Active Oxfordshire to target Get Active projects in our most deprived communities.

Promote use of the council’s public green spaces for exercise and activity.

Identify council owned land for community gardening and allotments projects.

Active engagement with the Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure the Vale has strong representation in countywide health forums.

What we’ll measure:

- Monitoring of all Health Improvement Board measures and indicators.

We will safeguard and support our vulnerable residents:

Work as part of the South and Vale Community Safety Partnership on the agreed priorities: tackling domestic abuse; exploitation of vulnerable people and children (including modern slavery, county lines); and reducing knife crime, harm and vulnerability cause by drugs and alcohol.

Develop a new framework on vulnerability, responding to needs arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Refresh Taxi Licensing Policy.

Take a key role in countywide homelessness prevention and provision for young people, those with mental health conditions and a review of the adult homelessness pathway.

3. Building healthy communities

What we'll measure:

- Community Safety Partnership measures and direction of travel indicators
- Equalities data
- Covid-19 community hub referrals/shielded residents
- Homelessness and temporary accommodation - numbers and length of stay.

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4. Building stable finances

We will:

- manage the council's resources responsibly and make effective use of the council's assets
- do our best to build financial resilience to protect the council against future uncertainties
- work across the public sector to influence and maximise funding for local government, in order to continue to invest and provide the services residents and businesses need.

We will do this by:

- exploring and actively considering all avenues to deliver financial stability, including maximising income available to the council
- making effective use of the council's assets acting in a manner that ensures the long-term financial viability for the benefit of our residents and the environment.

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4. Building stable finances

We will explore and actively consider all avenues to deliver financial stability, including maximising income available to the council:

Introduce an Investment Strategy and associated Investment Policy which gives the council greater ability to invest in a wider range of assets to maximise its return on capital and therefore improve its income.

Commit resources to identify more third-party income, including government and other grants, to help pay for our services.

Identify opportunities to generate additional income from our services and assets and review these annually as part of the budget setting process.

Review the schedule of existing contracts to identify opportunities for rationalisation and savings.

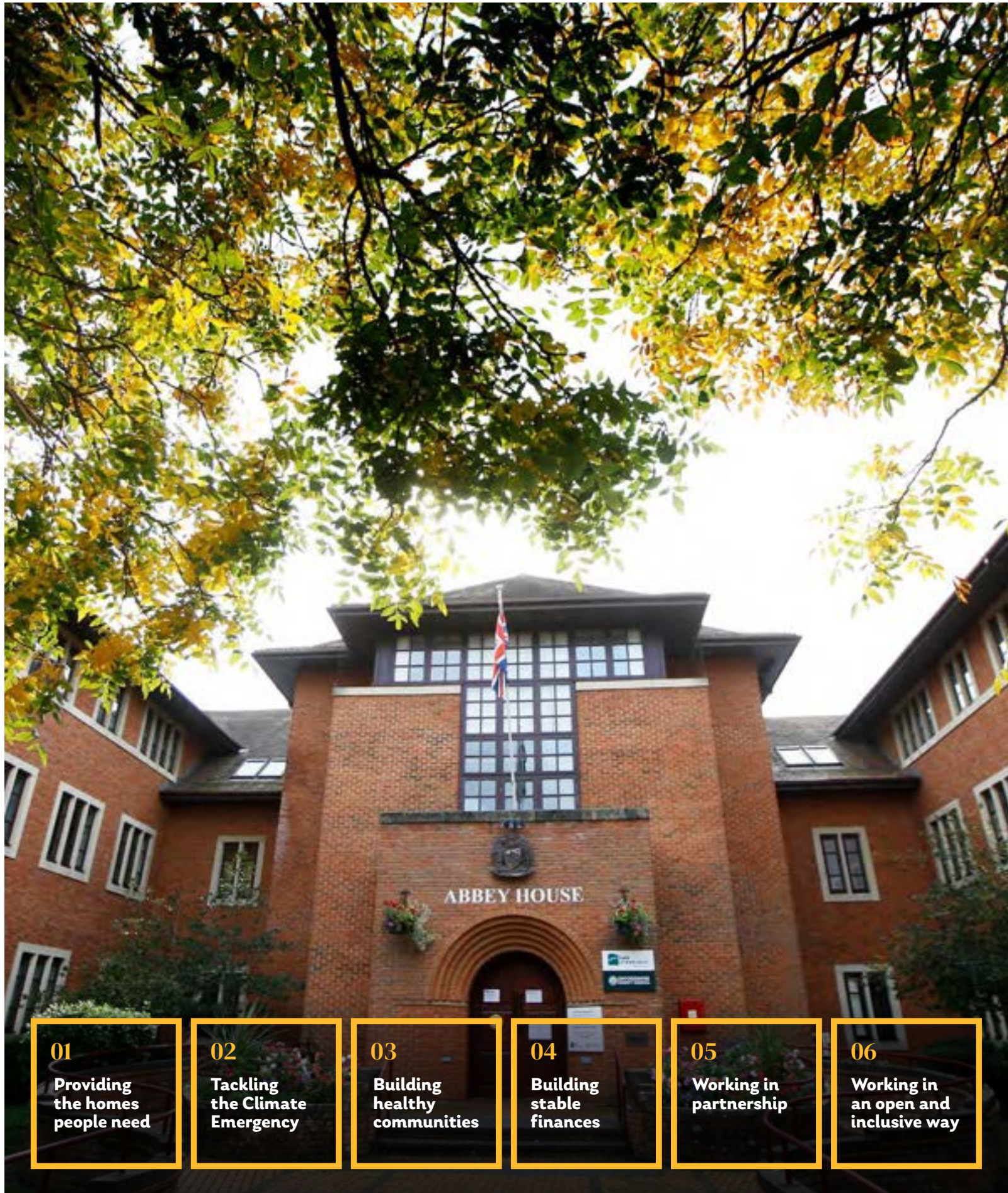
Upgrade the council's finance IT systems to improve functionality and support in-year budget monitoring.

Lobby for the ability to set our council tax at a level that can sustain council services while seeking opportunities to reduce council tax for those on the lowest incomes.

Lobby for a fairer distribution of government funding and more devolution of funding to councils to sustain essential local services.

What we'll measure:

- Delivery of the council's cost savings and income targets
- Total income from service fees and charges
- Amount of external funding secured to support the delivery of projects and programmes.



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4. Building stable finances

We will make effective use of the council’s assets acting in a manner that ensures the long-term financial viability for the benefit of our residents and the environment:

Develop a comprehensive and ethical Procurement Policy that reflects our corporate goals and aims.

Conduct a Strategic Property Review to identify opportunities to enhance, redevelop and transfer the council’s assets to maximise income and/or benefit to the district.

Complete an asset management plan to provide a comprehensive policy to inform how assets may be most efficiently maintained.

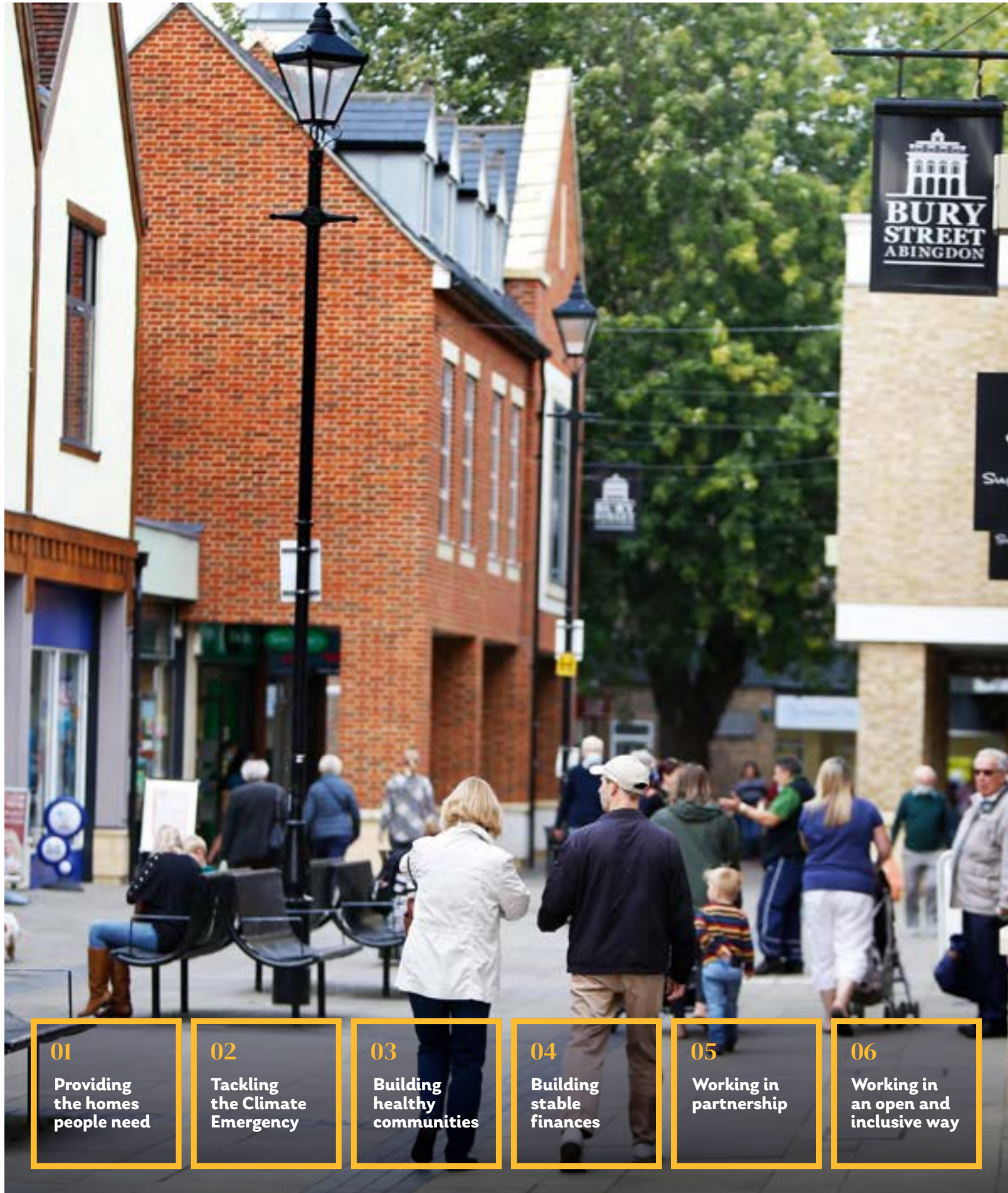
Undertake a full review of all leases and licences to ensure council income is collected when due and maximised.

Undertake a detailed review of the financial position of the Beacon in Wantage and determine what changes to its operations can be made to improve its viability.

Insourcing our grounds maintenance and public conveniences contracts to save funds and increase flexibility over how our public spaces are used and managed.

What we’ll measure:

- Delivery of the council’s cost savings and income targets
- Total income from service fees and charges
- Amount of external funding secured to support the delivery of projects and programmes
- Income from new sources
- Net cost of arts facilities to the council per year.



5. Working in partnership

We will:

- work in partnership with other councils, authorities and businesses, non-profit organisations, community and residents' groups, to achieve our aims and objectives effectively, efficiently and fairly
- provide support to residents and organisations to effect and drive change in the community
- provide all the support we can to businesses in the Vale to help them succeed.

We will do this by:

- working in partnership to influence and shape regional and national agendas to maximise opportunities for our communities and businesses
- working with and supporting our residents, businesses and communities to effect and enable change.

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5. Working in partnership

We will work in partnership to influence and shape regional and national agendas to maximise opportunities for our communities and businesses:

Create a partnerships protocol. Map our current partnerships and assess the effectiveness of each. Clarify which local, regional, and national partnerships Vale needs to have an active presence in and focus resource accordingly.

Develop an enhanced consultations strategy and process to ensure we respond to consultations and proactively lobby national government and other bodies on matters that impact our corporate priorities.

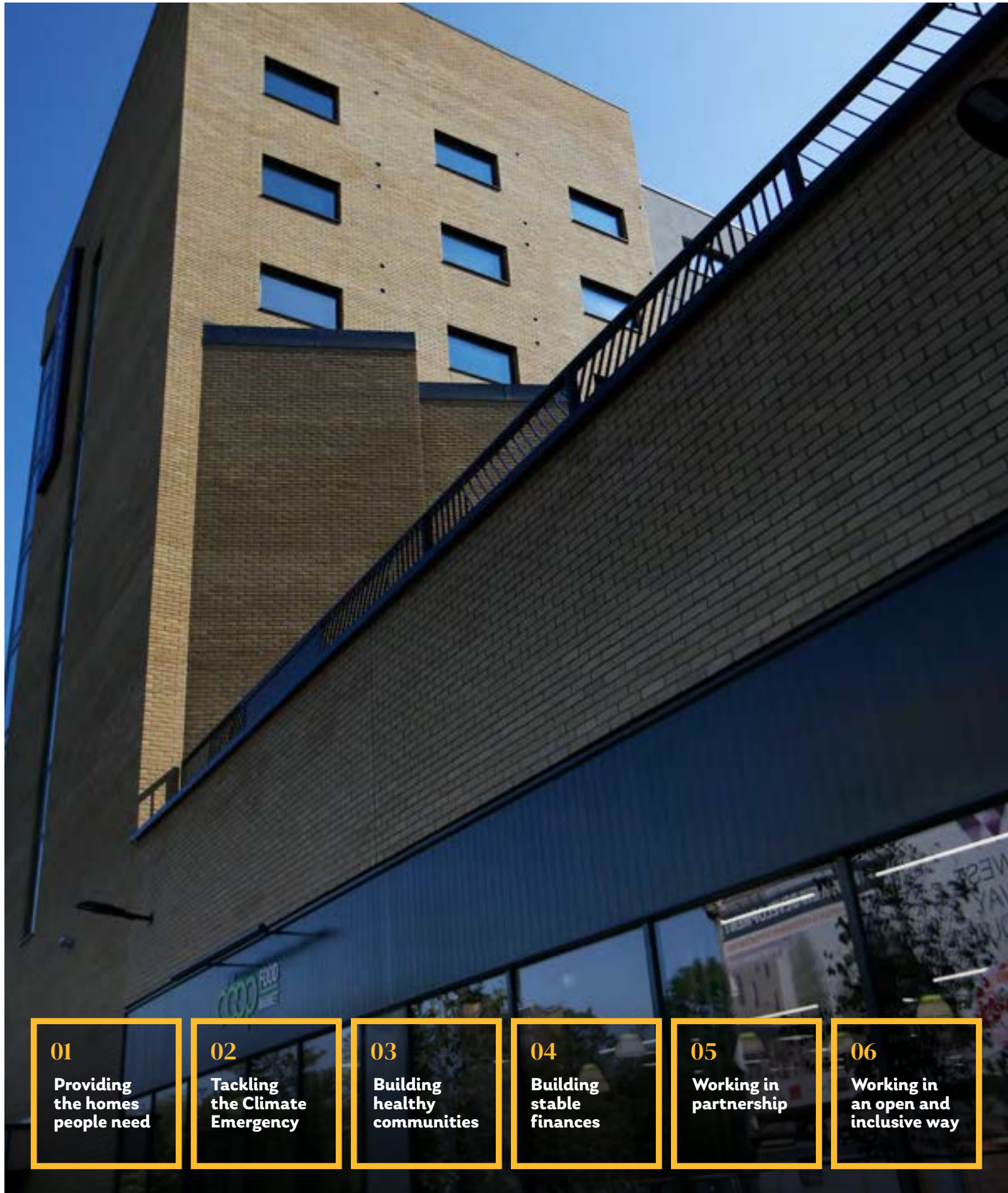
Create a framework that sets out how we will engage with developers, other councils, and members to maximise opportunities for our priorities to shape development.

Work with businesses to undertake an economic development review to ensure that the council is providing support to small to medium enterprises, homebased businesses, supporting skills development, and ensuring that businesses are playing a role in place making.

Input into countywide and Arc-wide economic recovery plans to maximise understanding of the local impact of Covid-19 and to help shape the support available to our local economy.

Strengthen any existing network of local business groups to increase awareness of the council's economic development programmes and communication throughout the district.

Work with Oxfordshire County Council to introduce civil parking enforcement for the Vale.



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5. Working in partnership

What we'll measure:

- Vacant commercial/office premises in district
- Newly incorporated businesses
- Unemployment rate
- Percentage of working age population in employment
- Number of businesses supported by economic development
- Number of active partnerships and annual report on effectiveness
- Number of consultations we respond to and impact narrative
- £ in community grants and impact narrative.

We will work with and support our residents, businesses and communities to effect and enable change:

Support new business start-ups and support schemes for businesses and residents through post Covid-19 economic recovery initiatives, by implementing the *Opening Up High Streets Safely Fund* and associated schemes.

Find ways to elevate the understanding of and promote Neighbourhood Plans in planning decisions with a review of development appraisal and communications with all parties prior to an application coming to committee.

Review the planning committee process to identify ways to maximise public understanding, engagement and participation as well as supporting member input into the committee meetings with opportunities for training and development.

Review developer contribution collection and spend policy and improve ward member and parish council involvement with a clear timetable that is triggered by officers, with improved communication from the council.

Refresh our community grants scheme and introduce a Community Lottery to raise funds for groups to develop in line with our corporate objectives.

5. Working in partnership

What we'll measure:

- Vacant commercial/office premises in district
- Newly incorporated businesses
- Unemployment rate
- Percentage of working age population in employment
- Number of businesses supported by economic development
- Number of active partnerships and annual report on effectiveness
- Number of consultations we respond to and impact narrative
- The amount awarded in community grants and their impact
- Income from new sources
- Net cost of arts facilities to the council per year.

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6. Working in an open and inclusive way

We will:

- work openly and transparently, promoting a world in which all can participate equally
- listen to feedback from local residents, communities, businesses, partners and our own officers
- ensure our work particularly aims to include those groups that have historically been marginalised or those that have been hard to reach
- ensure we are accountable and that our decisions are open to appropriate scrutiny, and we will admit when we get things wrong.

We will do this by:

- improving our use of technology to increase understanding and access to what we do, how we work and the decisions we make
- increasing meaningful engagement and communication with everyone
- strengthening our governance framework and address our policy gaps, improving transparency.

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6. Working in an open and inclusive way

We will improve our use of technology to increase understanding and access to what we do, how we work and the decisions we make:

Provide and maintain a new Vale website with increased accessibility to services and information, on multiple devices.

Develop our use of social media platforms to reach and engage with more residents and local businesses.

Introduce live streaming and recordings of public meetings to increase accessibility and understanding of the democratic process.

Review the current use of online surveys assessing their take up over time, and by subject, as well as reviewing survey design.

What we'll measure:

- Levels of access to online and digital services
- Number of transactions carried out online/digitally
- Overall residents' satisfaction
- Calls to contact centre resolved first time
- Average call time/number received
- Equalities data
- FOI queries answered in timescale
- Complaints answered in timescale
- Number of streams of live meetings/ viewing analytics
- Number and value of opportunities for public engagement
- Staff satisfaction/turnover.

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6. Working in an open and inclusive way

We will increase meaningful engagement and communication with everyone:

Seek to ensure the creation of community liaison groups form part of all early stages of development planning, to understand local infrastructure needs and support community cohesion.

Refresh town and parish forums so they are more interactive and useful for communities and develop the Connecting Communities Policy.

Work with communities, schools and other local organisations on shared campaigns and initiatives that help further our corporate objectives.

Reinstate residents surveys in a refreshed form to deliver effective ways for the public to have their say, to reach more people, mechanisms for feedback, more timely dialogue, educate

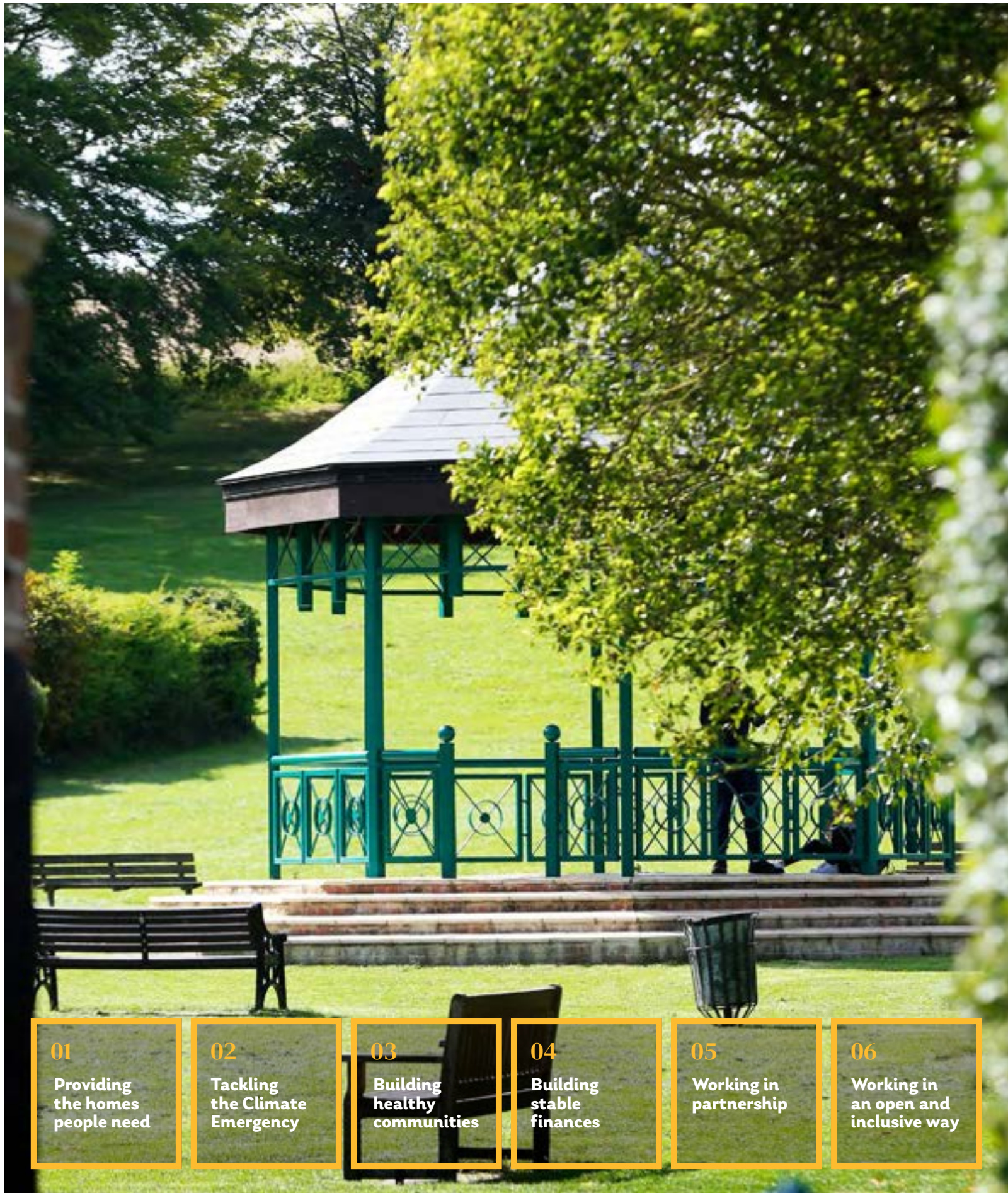
and provide subject matter information to facilitate opinions being more informed.

Explore initiatives to increase voter registration and turnout levels at elections, especially among young people.

Ensure the council's consultations engage specifically with young people and other under-represented groups.

What we'll measure:

- Levels of access to online and digital services
- Number of transactions carried out online/digitally
- Overall residents' satisfaction
- Calls to contact centre resolved first time
- Average call time/number received
- Equalities data.



6. Working in an open and inclusive way

What we'll measure (continued):

- FOI queries answered in timescale
- Complaints answered in timescale
- Number of streams of live meetings/ viewing analytics
- Number and value of opportunities for public engagement
- Staff satisfaction/turnover.

Review the council's constitution and scheme of delegation annually.

Increase and improve publicly available information – e.g.- code of conduct complaints (decision noted) FOIs (responses), corporate complaints (data). Improve accessibility of corporate information through publishing on our website.

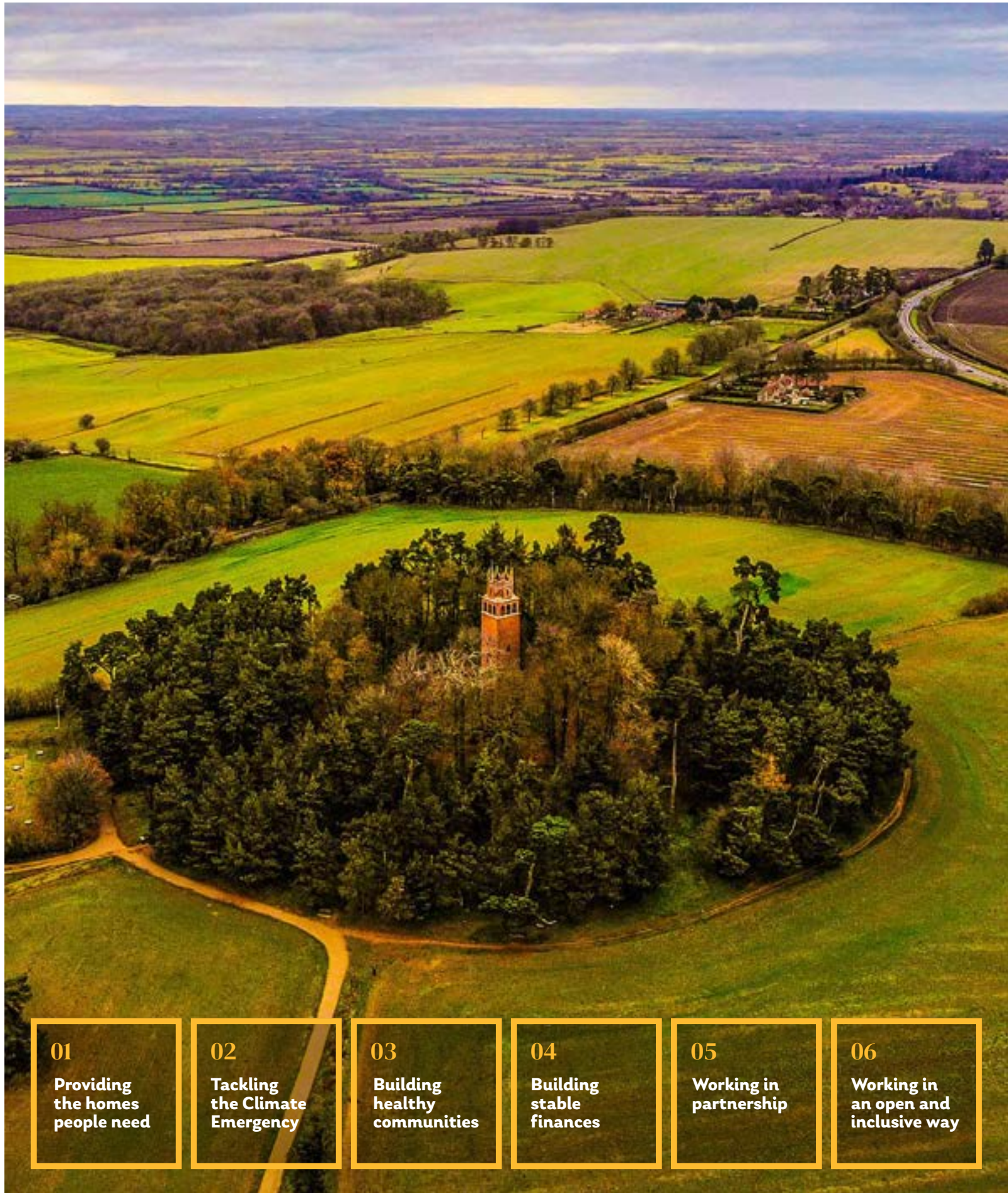
We will strengthen our governance framework and address our policy gaps, improving transparency:

Work to adopt new CIPFA financial management code to enhance our financial governance.

Council reporting and decision-making templates to include impact on the Climate Emergency.

What we'll measure:

- Number of postings published in FOI response area, code of conduct complaints, etc.
- Progress of Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) financial management code implementation.



Thank you

We hope that our Corporate Plan outlines our commitment to working with residents, businesses and partners to continue to improve our district. We welcome your feedback.

To find out more email insightandpolicy@southandvale.gov.uk

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