

## **Christmas Message from Cllr Mark Annett, Leader Cotswold District Council**



2017 will always be a very special year for me because I was elected as leader of the Council, taking over from Cllr Lynden Stowe who carried out the duties with great success for over eleven years.

Like my predecessor, I am learning to cope with the challenge of maintaining our wide range of services and providing the best value for money against a backdrop of continuing reductions in our funding from central government - and I am well aware of the need to keep on looking for more efficiencies year on year. With this in mind, I am very pleased to tell you that in the 2016/17 financial year, Cotswold District Council achieved planned savings of over £1.2 million, largely because we continued to increase joint working with other Councils - West Oxfordshire, Forest of Dean and Cheltenham. – as well as reaping the benefits from our joint-ownership of the environmental company Ubico Ltd. Through a range of efficiency measures, we managed to avoid increasing charges for car parking and our green waste collection service for 2017/18, and we also froze our portion of the Council Tax bill for that period at a time when the vast majority of authorities increased costs. On that last point, I am very proud of the fact that reductions and freezes in Council Tax over the last six years means that a resident in a Band D property would have seen a real terms cut of 25% in Council Tax owed to CDC.

Partnership is the major enabler to achieving further cost savings, and we took a giant leap forward recently when CDC, together with Cheltenham Borough Council, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Council created the new company Publica to deliver more efficient and improved services. Most of the employees from the four partner councils transferred into Publica on 1 November but the important point to note is that CDC will retain its independence and will continue to be responsible for the standard of services provided in the Cotswolds, as well as setting strategy, policy and making decisions which

affect the District. What this means is that residents shouldn't see any difference in the way that services are delivered, who they contact and how they contact us. Trinity Road and Moreton Area Centre will still be the places to go for all our normal services, advice and support.

Creating one company with staff from each council will reduce the cost of management and administration and provide more opportunities to share workloads, learn from each other and benefit from shared expertise and knowledge. Ultimately, the aim is to deliver a better more cost effective service, and the partner councils in Publica are expecting to make savings of around £5.6 million each year by 2020, and £41 million in total over the next ten years.

Looking back over the year, I must mention the further progress we have made on many flood alleviation projects in the District – especially in the Moreton area - and I am pleased to tell you that we delivered 262 affordable homes during 2016/17, comfortably ahead of our goal of delivering a minimum of 150 homes each year during 2016/17 and 2017/18. I should also mention that our cross-party Parking Board is working hard to improve future car parking provision in Cirencester, with plans for a decked car park at Waterloo and the necessary overflow arrangements during construction well underway.

Additionally, thanks to the efforts of you our residents, we continued to achieve the highest levels of recycling in Gloucestershire (almost 60% of all household waste is recycled, reused or composted.) We undertook a number of measures this year to maintain momentum on recycling best practice, including a campaign to encourage more recycling of 'unusual suspects' such as bathroom products. With Christmas coming soon we are also supporting the current seasonal campaign to encourage a wider range of 'recycling, reuse and reduce' initiatives.

I hope that this snapshot of the year at CDC has given you a taste of what we have achieved – please visit our website [www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk) to find out more, including our [Review of the Year for 2016/17](#).

Finally, on behalf of everyone at the Council, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark Annett', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Cllr Mark Annett**  
**Leader Cotswold District Council**