

Cirencester Engagement Plan 2026-28



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Introduction

This Community Engagement Plan is specifically written for the former customers of Cirencester Housing and aims to set out a framework for using the Cirencester Legacy Fund to meet your needs and to give you more information on Cottsway, how you can be involved and how we can support you.

This plan has taken on board feedback we have received from residents and Cottsway staff members who work in Cirencester and the surrounding areas. We are also looking at the bigger picture and accessing key data on important issues like employment, health and wellbeing, family support and access to local services.

We are using this information to help identify the main challenges in your neighbourhood and how we can work with local partnership organisations to make improvements and bring people closer together.

Your Neighbourhood Housing Officers

With the transfer of Cirencester Housing into Cottsway on 1 December 2023 we took over the management of 176 homes across a wide area including:

- Bibury
- Cirencester
- Cricklade
- North Cerney
- Southrop

Your Neighbourhood Housing Officer (NHO) for most areas is Emma Walker, with Liz Frost (NHO) looking after Cricklade. They are on-hand to help with any issues you may have with your tenancy, your home or if there's something affecting your street or local community.

Cirencester Legacy Fund

One of the 'promises' made on transfer was to set aside £10,000 in a Legacy Fund to honour the legacy of Cirencester Housing. In 2024 we sent a survey to all residents asking how you'd like us to prioritise spending the money and received 50 responses. The priorities identified for the £10,000 Legacy Fund were:

- Community Clear-up days
- Improving green spaces
- Other (various suggestions received)
- Community events and trips

We also invited residents to get involved as a group to allocate how and where the funds should be spent and have now established the Cirencester Legacy Fund Customer Panel. The group meet monthly with Cottsway staff and choose which projects to spend the Legacy Fund on. If you'd like to join the group to prioritise how the Legacy fund is spent, please call us or email: communities@cottsway.co.uk

Activities in 2025

In 2025 we held two community clear-up days, one in Vyners Close and one in Shepherds Way and Bowling Green Road, which were funded partly by the Legacy Fund and partly by Cottsway.

We also attended the free Heart Safe Family Fundraiser held in Cirencester in August, providing free children's craft activities- this was a great opportunity to meet more of our customers within the area.

We have investigated the various suggestions received for 'other' projects, including the installation of defibrillators and water butts for customers and the customer panel is working on delivering these, and other priorities, in 2026. We have also completed a few suggestions from the survey using existing budgets, with no impact on the Legacy Fund or on service charges to customers.



Looking ahead

Looking ahead, we're going to take a close look at communal areas to make sure they are fit for purpose and hopefully make some improvements. We're also mapping the land that has transferred over to Cottsway to make sure maintenance contracts and service charges are correct.

We know car parking is an issue but can't address this from the Legacy Fund due to cost, but we are looking at this and are investigating ways we can help, including parking permit schemes or allocated parking.

We would now like to identify any areas that would benefit from other small environmental improvements such as bin stores and cycle racks at blocks of flats, wildflowers and bulbs, bird and bat boxes, and plan some day trips for customers of all ages and abilities. The customer panel would love to hear your ideas for a great day out!

How we can help

As well as the Legacy Fund, there are various ways we can help:

Priority	How we will help
Working with partners to tackle ASB	Providing community drop-in events so you can meet your NHO and the local police to raise any concerns you may have.
Maintaining your tenancy	If you're struggling and need support to maintain your tenancy, get in touch with our Tenancy Support Team.
Improve communication – not everyone is online.	We can fit more noticeboards in blocks of flats and keep them updated with useful information.
*Improve facilities in blocks of flats.	We can install more washing lines, bin sheds and cycle racks where residents want them (subject to consultation).
Food bank referrals	Food banks provide emergency help to people in need. Cottsway's Communities Team can make referrals to Trussell Trust and other food banks in your area.
Support and advice on anti-social behaviour (ASB)	We take reports of ASB seriously and will do our best to help. For advice and more information see our website: www.cottsway.co.uk/ASB
Respect ASB hotline	You can report ASB at any time of day or night by calling 01993 890000.
*Keeping neighbourhoods clean and tidy.	The Communities Team will host at least one clear-up / litter picking day a year in the Cirencester area or surrounding villages to enable customers to get rid of rubbish and unwanted items. Customers can also request a clear-up day via: www.cottsway.co.uk/cleanup
Domestic abuse	If you need help and support because of domestic abuse please get in touch, we can help. You can also contact Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) on 01452 726570, email support@gdass.org.uk or visit their website at www.gdass.org.uk
*Maintaining green space and encouraging wildlife.	If you'd like to increase biodiversity in your area, you can suggest wildlife improvements online via: www.cottsway.co.uk/groundsmaintenance
Setting up a Residents' Association or action group	If you want to set up a Residents' Association, we can help with funding and support. Contact the Communities Team for more information.
Coaching and mentoring	For more information on free coaching and mentoring see: www.cottsway.co.uk/coaching
Borrow a laptop or tablet and access free IT skills support.	We have a limited number of laptops, tablets and dongles to loan and can offer access to IT training, see: www.cottsway.co.uk/tabletloan

**These projects may be funded by a combination of the Legacy Fund and Cottsway's existing budgets.*

Help and support

Community fund

We offer funding for community projects and personal development through the Cottsway Community Fund. We are proud to be making a difference in our community and welcome applications. Each year we have £30,000 available which is accessible to individual customers as well as groups and projects.

There are four different levels of funding available:

- Individual learning (up to £250)
- Neighbourhood activities (up to £500)
- Community projects (up to £2,500)
- Environmental projects on Cottsway land (up to £5,000)

All applications which meet the eligibility criteria will be reviewed and assessed by our customers. This ensures that funding is used to support worthy projects. For more information see:

www.cottsway.co.uk/fund

As one of our customers you can also have a say on which projects should get funding - join our closed Facebook group at: www.facebook.com/groups/cottswaycommunities

Money matters

Rent arrears are 'priority debts' which means the consequences of not dealing with them are serious – there is the risk of eviction.

We are committed to supporting you to take control of your finances and keep on top of your rent. We can make referrals to other agencies such as Citizens Advice, to help you deal with debt and keep your tenancy if you do find yourself in a difficult situation.

To work towards resolving rent arrears we'd encourage customers to speak to their Neighbourhood Housing Officer or their Income Officer if they have concerns. Alternatively, call our Customer Services Team on 01993 890000. You can also find help and information on our website: www.cottsway.co.uk

Citizens Advice Oxfordshire

Cottsway work in partnership with Citizens Advice Oxfordshire and as a Cottsway customer (even though not living in Oxfordshire) you can contact them for free, independent and confidential advice on a wide range of issues such as debt, welfare benefits, housing matters, consumer rights, court proceedings, child support maintenance, pension guidance if you're over 50 and employment.

- Visit: www.caox.org.uk
- Email: cottswayhousing@caox.org.uk
- Call: 0300 303 8618

Coaching and mentoring

If you're dealing with a change in work circumstances, you could benefit from coaching and mentoring to help you learn new skills, build confidence and get back on track. The sessions are led by an independent consultant specialising in employment support and mental health issues. For more information see:

www.cottsway.co.uk/coaching

Get involved

Join our mailing list

Sign up to our quarterly ezine for updates on activities and engagement opportunities, email: communities@cottsway.co.uk

Closed Facebook group

You are welcome to join our closed Facebook group for Cottsway customers. You can find out what's going on in the social housing sector, ways you can be involved as well as the chance to vote on our community fund applications!

All you need to do is:

- Visit: www.facebook.com/groups/cottswaycommunities
- Request to join the group and confirm your Cottsway address.

Scrutiny Group

If you live in a Cottsway home and are interested in working with us to make a real difference, you might want to consider joining our customer scrutiny group when we have a vacancy. As a scrutiny group member, you would be part of a team of customers who monitor performance, identify improvements and bring about change. For more information see: www.cottsway.co.uk/scrutinygroup

TPAS

As a Cottsway customer you are able to join TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) and they have loads of great resources, workshops, webinars and courses that are available to you as a resident of social housing.

Types of courses they run are volunteering, building safety, running resident association groups and loads more. See: www.tpas.org.uk

Most courses are free but if there are any with a cost please let the Communities Team know and we may be able to help.

Useful contacts

Cirencester Town Council	www.cirencester.gov.uk 01285 655646 info@cirencester.gov.uk
Cotswold District Council	www.cotswold.gov.uk 01285 623000 customer.services@cotswold.gov.uk
Gloucestershire County Council	www.gloucestershire.gov.uk 01452 425000

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