



Matson, Robinswood & White City
Community Partnership

Common Ground

A Plan for Matson,
Robinswood and White City
Community Partnership

2025-2030



Forward from Bob Allen, Chair of the Matson, Robinswood and White City Partnership:

Welcome to the 2025-30 Matson, Robinswood and White City Community Plan: Common Ground.

It's a follow up to two previous plans building on the strength and experience of our strong Partnership. All our partners came together during 2024 to record our 'Community Voice', to celebrate our mutual trust and proven ability to deliver positive change in our community. You can see this illustrated in our timelines looking back over 2020-2024 (pages 9-13).

However this new plan looks to the future, with clarity on our priorities. It doesn't set out a step-by-step delivery plan, but we look forward with the knowledge that by collaborating and working together we will deliver locally far more than if we work alone.

During 2025 new opportunities have arisen, particularly with new contracts for Youth Support Services and Children and Family Hubs, both of which focus on community delivery. In the next five years we need to be prepared for more change, for example the reorganisation of local government.

This new plan gives us the common ground of shared priorities for our future. Together we can maximise the benefit of new opportunities, building stronger and more cohesive communities across the ward. I recommend it to you!

Bob Allen

Chair

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Introduction

We have been a Partnership for a long time now. We developed our first Community Economic Development Plan as a neighbourhood project in 2015, updated it in 2019 – and published it as the pandemic hit – and here we are ten years later with the third iteration of our shared Plan. We have a lot to show for that time, and of course a lot more still to do.

Our brief for this Plan was for it to be something that feels like 'us': reflecting our character, strengths and experience, and pointing our attention and energy towards those things that matter most to us and are best addressed together.

We have taken our time with this review, deliberately focussing on the process. Myron's Maxim says **the process you use to get to the future is the future you get**. By taking our time we prioritised relationships and learning, and made more space for each other. We didn't rush to conclusions to get the thing done and move on.

This document is an outcome of that process, but unlike many Plans it is not **the** outcome.

Spending time together, paying attention to how we meet, when we meet and what comes up when we talk to each other has refocused our partnership.

That process is probably more important than a document that many people will never read, however, this document has two main roles:

Firstly, it is a reference guide to what happened during the process – a place we can come back to and retrace the outputs, links, information, guidance, data and inspiration that we need, or elements we want to share with others.

Secondly, this Plan is the scaffolding for the next five years of our Partnership. It marks out the things we care about collaborating on, but it doesn't set them in concrete, or restrict us to doing specific things in a certain order – or to a certain specification. Having a framework gives us a focus and common ground. What we build on it is up to us.



About us from outside

We are used to people looking at data about Matson, Robinswood and White City and drawing conclusions about what we must need, how we must live, and what we must be like. This is where most community plans (about us) would start.

Unfortunately the data often paints a one-sided picture about the people who live here. Our reputation precedes us: we are sometimes labelled as deprived, under-privileged, under-educated or unhealthy.

One of us recalls a childhood memory of arriving to swim with a group of friends at a local leisure centre and hearing a member of staff say “look out, here come the White City kids”. What a way to start out in life.

**Needless to say
we don't find these labels
flattering or particularly helpful.
Even if they are grounded in facts and figures,
they don't tell a rounded story about who
we are and how we live our lives.**

**You can find the information about us by
others in our separate data supplement,
but we will tell our story in this Plan
in our own words.**



"They call us deprived – it doesn't make you feel good. We never talk about ourselves like that. There is richness in the stuff that happens here." Resident, Organiser

One of our core values is to 'start with what's strong, not what's wrong'. So it makes sense to start this section with all the positive ways community organisers and leaders described our neighbourhood during this process:



Who are we?

The Matson, Robinswood and White City Partnership combines local voluntary, faith and charitable organisations with residents' voices.

Here are the organisations who played a part in developing this new Plan for Matson, Robinswood and White City. Many others are organisations and individuals with no logo – who are just as much a part of the picture.



What do we do?

While we were creating this plan – the next section tells this story – we created a timeline of what we have done since 2020:



Don't worry, you don't need to grab a magnifying glass!

You probably see a blurry mass of colour with a line through it, at best. Here's what you're looking at:

The timeline runs from January 2020 on the left to December 2024 on the right. Along the top of the line are post-its of individual events (yellow), new capacity, groups or assets (green) and grant/funding streams (purple). Underneath we included our positive (blue) and hard (pink) feelings at the time.

This is obviously too detailed to read here, but even at a glance it paints a picture about the last few years, and what makes our community so special. To save your eyesight and to do our work justice we asked freelance artist Ella Daniel-Lowe (Luna Lotus UK) to bring this to life with her illustrations. These are included on the following pages and show what it means to be part of our community and partnership.

Partnership members have access to the more detailed version if they wish to view it.

GLOUCESTER SERVICES



2020

APRIL

OCT

JAN

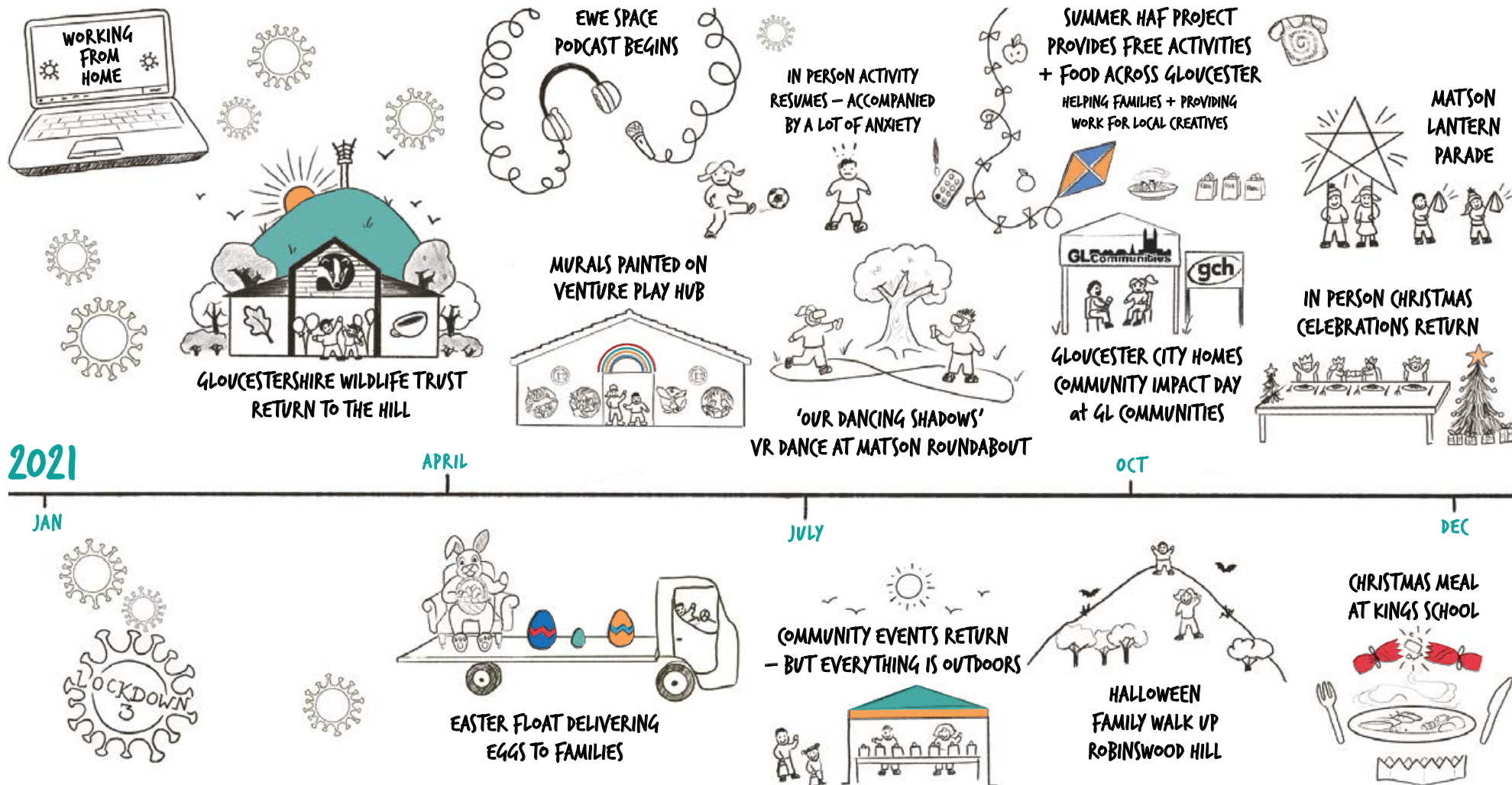
JULY

DEC



MATSON BAPTIST CHURCH RAIN GARDEN



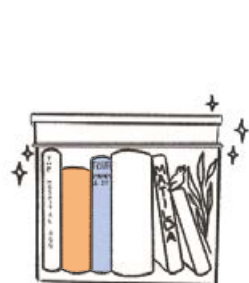


2022

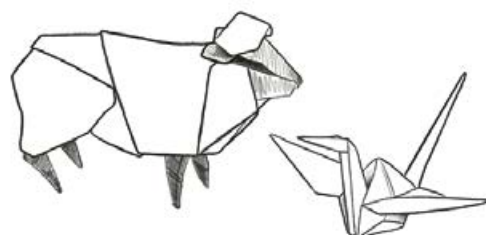
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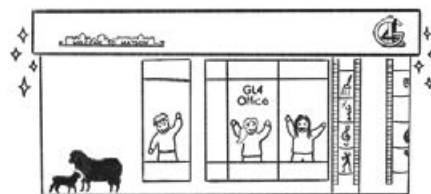
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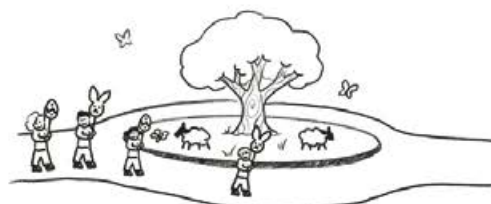
MATSON LIBRARY ORIGAMI CLUB



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JULY



MATSON EASTER PARADE

OCT



VENTURE ACQUIRES
EAT WELL WAGON



WARM
SPACES



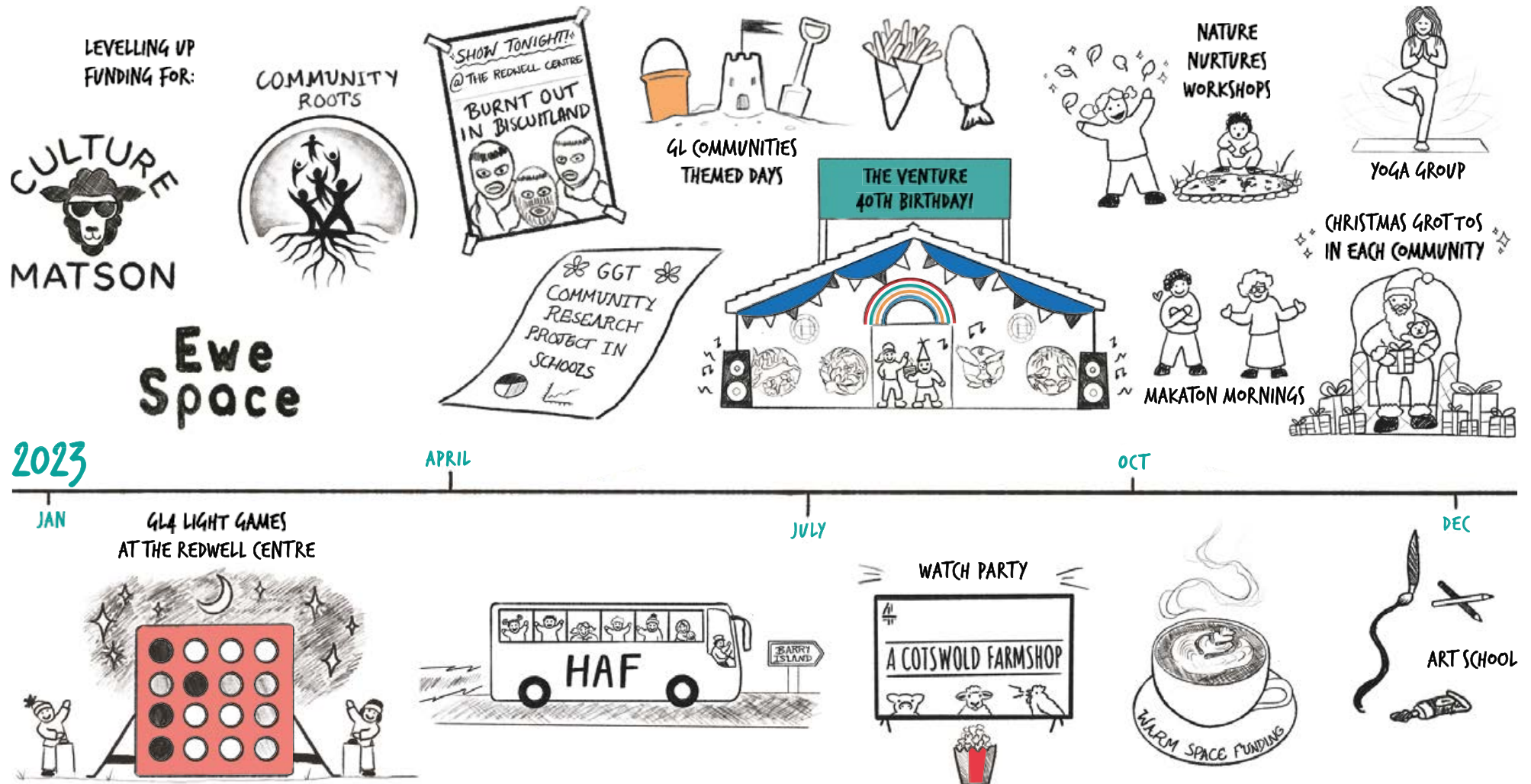
MATSON CHRISTMAS
TREE FESTIVAL



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WINDOW WANDERLAND





MATSON & ROBINSWOOD
GARDENING GROUP



NEW CONTRACT FOR
GLOUCESTER FOOD BANK

HAF TRIP TO
NATIONAL GALLERY



OUTDOOR CINEMA

HAF CELEBRATION AT



10TH ANNIVERSARY OF
GLOUCESTER SERVICES

IGLOO
SENSORY PLAY
PERFORMANCE



FIRST BLAST
FUN DAY



CIRCUS SHOW AT ROBINSWOOD SCHOOL

GL COMMUNITIES
WELLBEING
CUP INCLUSIVE
FOOTBALL
TOURNAMENT



2024

APRIL

OCT

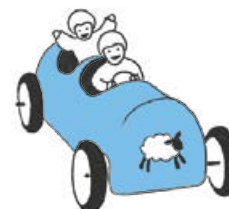
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FUNDING FOR RISKY DRINKING
TRAINING + COMMUNAL ACTIVITY



ACTIVE GLOUCESTERSHIRE FUNDING
FOR HEALTH + WELLBEING

NEW LABOUR
GOVERNMENT



SOAP BOX RACE
SUPPORTED BY MENS SHED



There is no way we have captured everything that has happened in our community – day in, day out – over the last five years thanks to individual, group and collective action. We didn't set out to do this. What matters is that there is a powerful story to be told about the strength and capacity of our neighbourhoods, and we are rightly proud of the legacy we have built.

So, who are we?

We're from Matson
We're from Robinswood
We're from White City
This is our community,
And we're proud
to call it home.



When we get together and share our places, energy, resources and ideas we are part of building a community we can all be proud of, where everyone matters and nobody is left behind. The proof: we live and breathe it in all we do, every day.

How we developed this plan

We developed our first Plan in 2015. This was reviewed in 2019 and a second Power of Three Plan for 2020-2024 was produced.

We wanted this third review to reflect our history, experience and confidence as a Partnership and took a collaborative approach to producing a Plan that reflects all that is strong about our communities, and our capacity to do great things together. These great things are only possible thanks to over a decade invested in preparing the ground and nurturing our partnership.

One of the things we wanted was to really get involved in the process of planning: to make sure it was visible to us and therefore something we could use in future. The next section describes this process so we can retrace our footsteps at any time. If you're not really interested in how we developed this plan we're not offended – skip to [Page 25](#) to see the Plan itself.



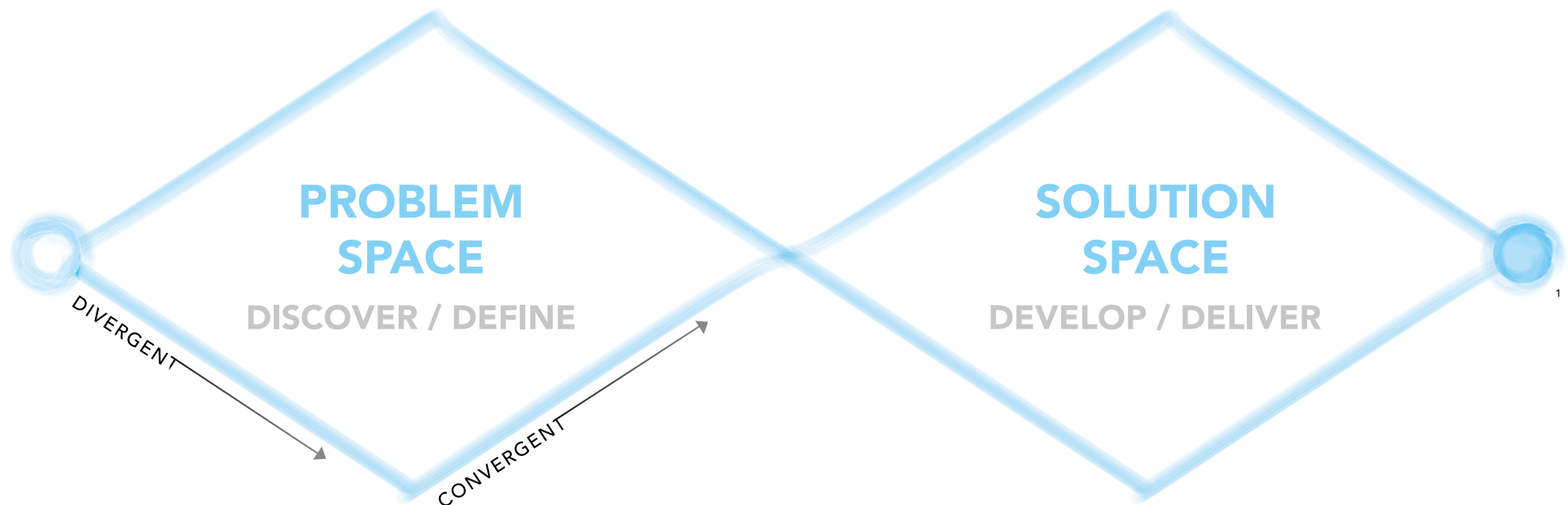
The theory

"The process you use to get to the future is the future you get."

(Myron Rogers)

We used design theory, or 'double diamond' thinking to get to this Plan. Many of us find planning and strategy daunting and are often unsure where to begin and whether we are doing it 'right'. The Double Diamond is an intuitive process most of us follow when we have to do something and we don't already know the answer.

The approach works through two 'diamonds' of thinking. In the first diamond we 'go wide' – gather information, talk and think. This helps to narrow down the activities and conversations to focus on next so we can develop the Plan. In the second diamond we 'go wide' again to find out what matters most, finally homing in on what we want to say/do and how:

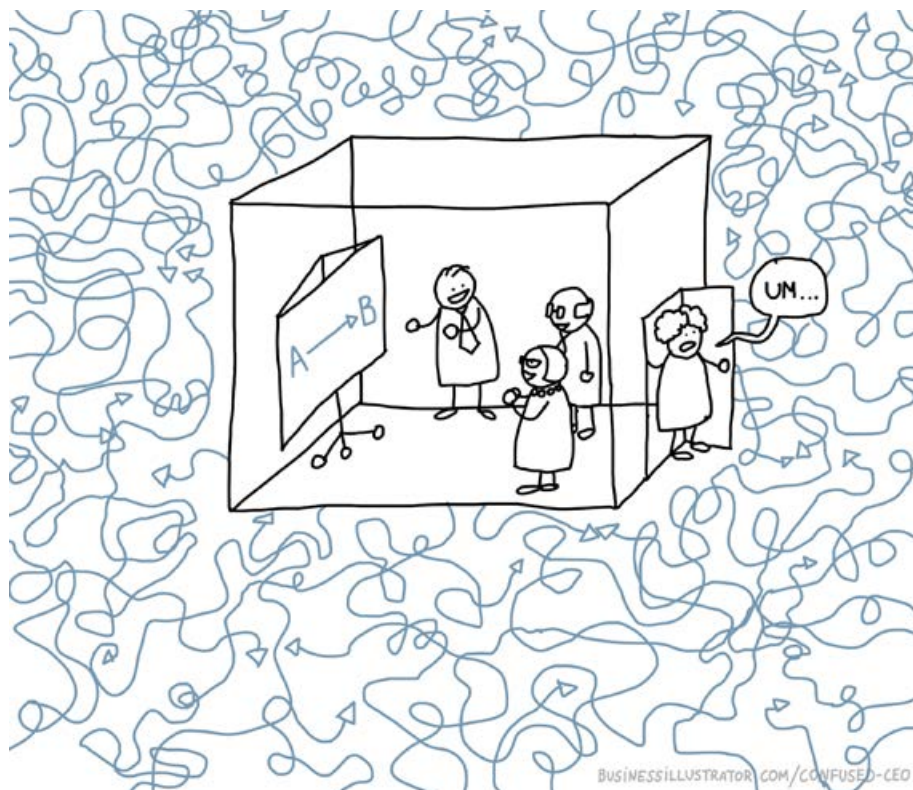


There are other helpful theories, principles and approaches that guide this work and anything the Partnership approaches together.

Firstly, Myron's Maxims² – simple rules for complex change:

- People own what they help create
- Real change happens in real work
- Those who do the work, do the change
- Connect the system to more of itself
- Start anywhere, follow everywhere
- The process you use to get to the future is the future you get.

The final maxim is really important when thinking about how to hold a **collective, shared process** and can guard against a small number of people setting the agenda or holding all the power.



Secondly, local partnerships like ours are trying to effect social change in complex systems. It helps to remember this because neat problem-solving techniques don't always work in this situation. 'Complex' means we can't control everything in everyone else's organisations and lives – just like we can't control the weather or politics or current affairs, but it can often feel like we are trying to:



The good news is that there are complexity-informed approaches to collaborative impact we can draw on. And the other good news is that they aren't complicated. For more information have a look at **Human Learning Systems Theory, Collective Impact, The Relationships Project** (relationshipsproject.org/) and **Healthy Communities Together Gloucestershire** (hctgloucestershire.co.uk/) – all are thinking about how to collaborate when the world is like a big bowl of spaghetti.

² Myron Rogers is a leader in translating Living Systems Theory for large-scale social systems change. He co-wrote A Simpler Way (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1996) with Margaret Wheatley. Cartoon above by: Virpi/Businessillustrator.com.

Thirdly, what all of these (and more) have in common is that they pay attention to the **practice** of partnership. We are not just trying to make change happen in Matson, Robinswood and White City, we are **being** social change when we come together as a Partnership. Therefore it helps to remember partnership is a muscle that needs working out! See The King's Fund **A learning framework for partnership** (kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/learning-framework-for-partnering).

Finally, this type of approach only works if we are prepared for learning to be the goal. It allows for creativity, diversity, divergence and – most importantly – iteration. During this phase of renewal for our Plan we have paid attention to the processes: making the tools, tricks and experience of doing it ourselves visible, accessible, relatable and repeatable within our community. Life never stands still, and neither should our plans. Holding learning as a goal allows us to recognise what is really happening, including letting go of anything that is no longer serving us.



The process

Diamond 1: Discover/Define

The initial discovery took the form of eleven semi-structured interviews. Some of the interviews were with established members of the Partnership, some with people who rarely attend, and some with people who had never heard of it. In addition there were four conversations with other people who had a background in social research in general, or specifically with this community. Everyone was asked these questions.

People's responses were gathered together in a report to the Partnership Board. A proposal was developed for the next diamond based on these conversations and was agreed at a Partnership meeting in February 2024. This proposal included the following Principles for the next phase of work:

- People own what they help create
- The process you use to get to the future is the future you get
- Respect people's time – and all that has already been said and done

The proposal recommended working with a Design Group from the community representing different voices: new perspectives alongside established leaders. The Design Group would think about how to develop the main themes from the discovery work: 1. Look back, 2. The act of partnership, 3. Look forward.

This was the focus of work for the second diamond, leading towards the revised Plan.

Diamond 2: Develop/Deliver

The Design Group became the 'Party Planners' – ten individuals who met five times between May and October 2024. Tasked with thinking about what was needed to help us look back, look forward and think about how we work together, the group designed a half-day 'Collaboration Celebration'. This could have been anything, but we wanted it to offer dedicated time for people working for voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise groups in the area to be together.

ORIENTATION

1. **Place:** Do you consider yourself to be working in Matson, Robinswood, White City and/or all/more?

LOOK BACK

2. **Data:** How do you 'know and show' the work that you do with communities makes a difference. What do you value as 'data', 'impact'? (How) does that differ from what you have to collect for funders?
3. **Pride:** What do you look back on with pride over the last 4 years? Have you captured that?

PARTNERSHIP

4. **Partnership:** To what extent do you identify with the Power of Three Plan and Matson, Robinswood and White City Partnership? What does it mean to you? What does partnership feel like to you?
5. **People:** What relationships do you value and how are the relationships between partnership members? What other relationships are important?
6. **Leadership:** What is it, who shows it, what is the impact?

LOOK FORWARD

7. **Vision:** What dreams or ambitions do you have for the neighbourhood?

Collaboration Celebration

9th October 2024

There were four aims for the day:

- **Be:** spend some time together: get to know new faces and reconnect with familiar ones
- **Share:** what we do, what we're proud of, what has worked about working together, what hasn't
- **Dream:** think about what we want to achieve in our communities and talk about what that could look like
- **Catalyse:** share tools/techniques/approaches to connecting and having different conversations

69 people attended a morning designed for accessible involvement and participation. Here is what we did:

- **Be:** we used an interactive check-in to get to know each other better, spent time on collaborative activities, had a photobooth for memory-making, and put on a delicious lunch – locally sourced – for people to enjoy together at the end;
- **Share:** we spent time developing the timelines illustrated here, sharing our stories and feelings about the past five years;
- **Dream:** we held an Open Space session to talk about the things that matter to us most about the future, and what to do about them;
- **Catalyse:** The Open Space format gave us time to talk and think about the future – several ideas came into being! We also talked about the tools and techniques we used and shared open access guidance and templates after the event so that everyone could download and use them.



Ideas for the future

During the Open Space session we generated ten ideas for the future:

Wellbeing

- Food
- Mental health
- Movement and exercise

Social activity and integration

- Integrating new/old residents
- Young people
- People with English as a second language

Resources

- Our community buildings
- Learning/knowledge
- People (succession planning)

Collaborating

- Getting together more, working together better

As they left, some people shared their dream for the future:





Partnership Workshop

19th November 2024

Next, eleven people attended a Partnership workshop. This was the normal Matson, Robinswood and White City Partnership meeting but it took place on a cold snowy winter's evening so the attendance wasn't as high as usual!

We used the time to look at the six priorities we set during the 2019 phase 2 review and talk about:

What happened?

What didn't happen?

What did we learn?

What next?

For the final part of the conversation we added in the Open Space future topics raised at the Collaboration Celebration.

Bringing it back together again: What do we focus on?

We gathered a lot of information during this process. There is so much to do, and so much interest, motivation, passion and commitment for doing it. What's more, we have a track record of delivering so we are confident in our power as a community to get stuff done.

As a Partnership, it's really important to value the work that each person and organisation is already doing: a huge amount of the change people want to see is already being delivered in the day to day projects and interactions around the neighbourhood, there is no need to 'get in the way' of that:

"Real change happens in real work"

Myron Rogers

So what is the point of the Partnership? The point is being greater than the sum of our parts: focusing on what we need to do together and how we do it collaboratively. In our last plan we aimed to reach out to wider stakeholders through six priorities.

This time, we are narrowing this down to three themes where we can be stronger together, and one 'how' theme about the way we do this. These are:

- 1. Education, skills and lifelong learning**
- 2. Places and spaces: where we live, meet and play**
- 3. Nurturing connected, healthy communities**
- 4. Working in partnership and growing our collective voice and power (=how)**

This Plan is for us, in our communities. In our clarity and strength of purpose we will continue to be strong partners with everyone in the county and further afield who is willing to support and work with us.

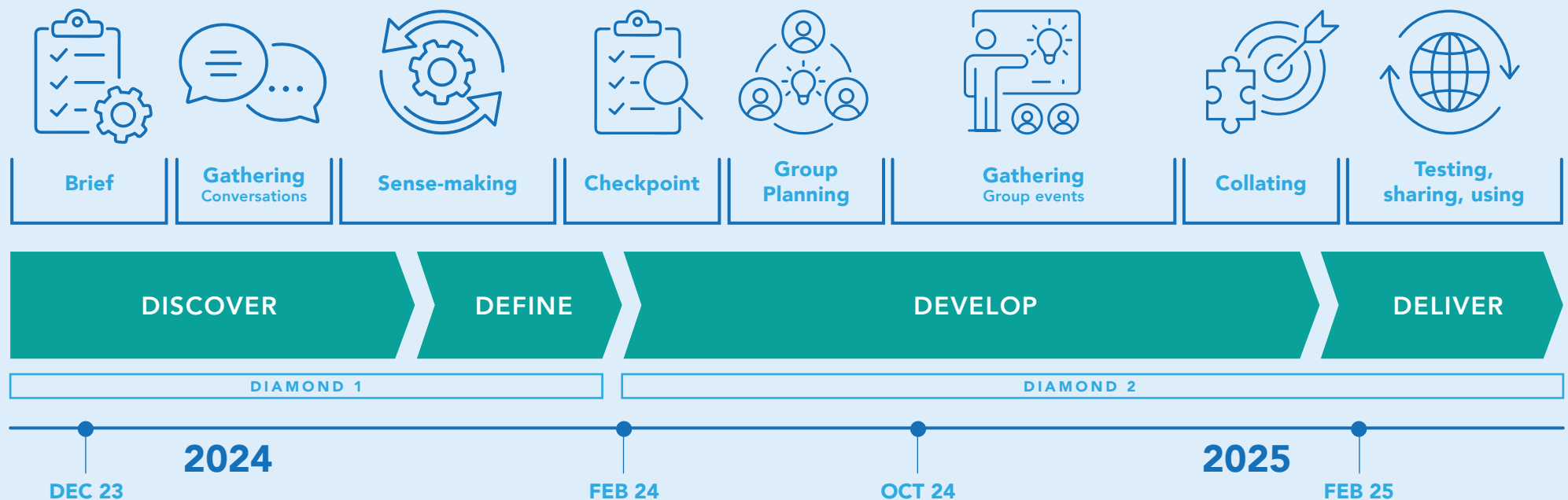
The next section looks at our four themes in more detail. The process we used to get here is illustrated in the diagram overleaf.



Developing our new partnership plan...

"The process you use to get to the future is the future you get"

Myron Rogers



our Plan 2025-2030

Here's where we start to talk about the future: what matters to us, and how we want to work together to be the change we want to see where we live. This is not a plan that crosses every 'i' and dots every 't'. Think of it more as a framework, or scaffolding.

It marks out the things we care about collaborating on: it doesn't set them in concrete, or restrict us to doing specific things in a certain order – or to a certain specification. Having a framework gives us a focus and common ground. What we build on it is up to us.

Our common ground

- People should be able to live a life of opportunity and choice
- We are better and stronger together
- Start with what's strong, not what's wrong
- Love and respect for each other and our neighbourhoods
- Value diversity and difference
- Community connection to combat 21st Century crises
- People who live here are welcome and belong here



Our four priorities

PRIORITY 1

**Education,
skills and
lifelong
learning**

PRIORITY 2

**Places and
spaces: where
we live, meet
and play**

PRIORITY 3

**Nurturing
connected,
healthy
communities**

PRIORITY 4

**Working in
partnership
and growing our
collective voice
and power**

In the following sections we will talk about the four priority areas where we want to focus our partnership effort over the next five years.

These sections are not prioritised or mapped out – we still have work to do on this. However, for each element we will need to prioritise the things we most want to make progress on, and ask:

What measures matter enough to us to collaborate to collect them?

What learning questions might we want to focus on?

Who are the external partners and agencies we need or want to work with?

Priority 1: Education, skills and lifelong learning

Why it matters

In 2010, the Marmot review into Health Inequalities in England began by saying:

Under 20% of our population have a degree, compared with over a third nationally. Although degrees in themselves are not necessarily a factor for success, when a quarter of our population report no qualifications at all, the odds are less favourable.

If our vision is that people from Matson, Robinswood and White City can live a life of opportunity and choice, then education, skills and learning are the foundation of those opportunities and choices.

We want to focus on lifelong learning: incorporating early years, compulsory school-age education and adult learning. This includes the early-years and childhood support necessary to support and enable parents and carers to access work and education.

A strong focus for learning in this theme is the hard-won* Children and Family Centre contract. These contracts are important not just for the services they provide, but for the opportunity to demonstrate that community-led delivery is an effective way to make investment of state resources work hard in communities for the greatest possible public benefit.

We are at the leading edge in Matson, Robinswood and White City and want to use this opportunity to show what we know: that resources are safe in our hands, and services and people can flourish when we are given the opportunity to invest in what we most need.

“People with higher socioeconomic position in society have a greater array of life chances and more opportunities to lead a flourishing life. They also have better health.”³

³ The Marmot Review: Fair Society, Healthy Lives, 2010 https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review/fair-society-healthy-lives-full-report-pdf.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

* This contract was won by a unique consortium of over 40 community organisations who came together to form Gloucestershire Gateway Partnership and bring these public sector contracts into community management.

What can we do about Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning?

FOCUS AREA	PARTNERS (INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATION)	PARTNERSHIP (TOGETHER)	BEYOND/OUTSIDE
Childcare (and adult access to work and education with childcare in place)	Support to access childcare vouchers / tax-free childcare for all who are eligible	Revisit opportunities for provision of OFSTED-approved local childcare including for parents attending courses	Support for local provision of registered childcare
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision	- SEND-focussed clubs and activities - Support to parents with SEND / school attendance difficulties	Gathering and holding data on SEND in our area including children not regularly accessing mainstream school and what's happening to them	Sharing insights about what is happening and how children and families can be better supported
Primary school provision and primary-age activities	- Existing and new clubs, groups, play sessions - Support for young people out of school	- Supporting community response to changes, e.g. to Moat Primary - Focal point for dialogue. Continuing to foster links between community and schools	Advocating for local interests and rights
Secondary age provision	- Safe youth spaces and youth workers for 10-16 year olds - Support for young people out of school	- Youth leadership and actions/ideas from the 2023 GGT research - Youth membership and voice in the Partnership	Countywide mentorship/support of young leaders e.g. Musicworks and Create Glos schemes
Children and families (including services and hubs)	- Clubs and activities - Holiday Activities Fund - Cultural visits - Partners in services / hubs contract delivery (See built environment for leisure spaces and facilities)	- Holiday Activities Fund, Children's Services and Family Hubs: coordinate delivery, resources and learning - Class-divide: shared funding to subsidise/ resource activities	- Resourcing learning and sharing of community-held contracts - Demonstrate case for longer funding cycles – does the Partnership have the resources to learn and share?
Adult learning: employment and skills	- ESL/ESOL and support to non-English speakers (GLC starting 2025) - International cooking, music, film - Information in different local languages	- Neighbourhood curriculum - Support for new and small micro-businesses - Build on success of Gloucester Services relationships and engage with employers	Access to funding for adult education including integration education (ESL/ESOL) and translation costs

Priority 2: Places and spaces – where we live, meet and play

The map below was produced by local artist Ella Daniel-Lowe during a piece of community research in 2023 and shows places young people talked about as locations in 'a good day'. It covers Tuffley and Podsmead as well as Matson, Robinswood and White City and, although it doesn't include everywhere, it is a helpful illustration of the places (beyond our homes) that make this our home.



This theme encompasses the places we live (homes, housing), the buildings where we meet (community centres, public spaces) and the outdoor spaces we use for leisure. It is about those places and spaces supporting our wellbeing by being safe, stable and sustainable.



⁴ Mary Brydon-Miller and Jason Dunsford: *Our communities: The voice of young people 2023 research report* commissioned by the Gloucestershire Gateway Trust. Artwork by Ella Daniel-Lowe.

Why it matters

The history of the neighbourhood has been shaped by the decisions of outside planners and agencies: decisions made about estates and infrastructure which ripple across generations. Time and time again during this process people spoke about their hopes for regeneration alongside their disillusionment with planning processes that don't collaborate with residents. People who don't have a long-term stake here can call the shots that set up challenges for the coming generations. A Partnership Plan that doesn't consider regeneration and sustainability is not looking at the real issues for our community.

This isn't just about our homes. It is also about our public places, our leisure spaces, our hubs and meeting points. In many cases we are blessed with beautiful nature on our doorsteps, but many of our community buildings are old and costly to maintain. Some are environmentally unsustainable and we worry that, without concerted action, our future meeting spaces will not be fit for purpose.

What do we want to change, improve or learn?

As with the previous theme, this one can sometimes feel bigger than us – big investments, big decisions, beyond our scope to influence.

The main things we want to change are:

- the quality and sustainability of our built environment;
- the preservation of our natural environment; and
- our ability to advocate successfully for our priorities with planners and developers.

This particular theme may require external/dedicated and/or specialist support.

The table overleaf summarises some of the things we feel we can do about regeneration and sustainability of our buildings and environment: individually, as a Partnership, and beyond our own community.



What can we do about regeneration and sustainability of our buildings and environment?

FOCUS AREA	PARTNERS (INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATION)	PARTNERSHIP (TOGETHER)	BEYOND/OUTSIDE
New community organisation buildings	• Share spaces where possible and talk to each other when considering new buildings / improvements • Consider joint review of community building estate, and strategic options for repair / replacement including shared spaces	• Shared support of fundraising and activities for both the Venture Hub, Blackbridge and other community-owned capital projects • Capture and share the experience of the Venture: making the case, generating interest and funds, planning consent, project delivery to inform the next community building project(s) • Develop local register of community assets (age, lifespan, ownership, use etc) • Capacity / support for joint strategic plan for community assets	• Collective support of inward investment
Robinswood community spaces	• Ideas from local residents	• Look at the relative lack of community spaces and buildings in Robinswood. Consider environmental factors (flooding) and sustainability in coming up with a plan for Robinswood residents to have spaces to meet • Gather ideas from local residents and community organisers	
Housing estate planning	• Integrate new neighbours and incoming residents in activities and offers	• Collaborate on liaison with Housing agencies to improve plans/influence planning decisions etc. • Winnycroft – think about what we can do to understand how it happened, capture the lessons learnt and prevent the situation happening again (where development is not engaged with the community) • Consider resourcing development of a Neighbourhood Plan to set out planning boundaries, locations and processes that are locally owned	• Stronger links with Bromford Housing as well as Gloucester City Homes on the partnership • Research / report on the planning experience jointly with council/building partners and recommend improved engagement practice.
Sustainability	• Building-specific improvements, e.g. Ewe space	• Pool resources as a partnership to access community grants / funding for both public and private building sustainability improvements	
Environmental future-proofing	• Consider environmental implications of replacement or renovation of current places and spaces. Access partnership support/resources to do so.	• Pool resources as a partnership to access data and skills to find out more about the implications of climate change for Matson, Robinswood and White City. Incorporate this into our plans and priorities over the next 5-10 years. Be informed. Build it into our plans.	• Data, expertise, resources to support a climate action plan

Priority 3: Connected, healthy communities

Why it matters

Community connection is what we do: look back at the activities in our timeline of the last five years to see we really mean it and live it. We excel at bringing people together to connect, create, collaborate and celebrate. This is because it is nice to do, but of course there is much more to it and we take that seriously.

We are not all in the best of health. There is a higher rate of obesity, depression, smoking, hypertension and diabetes here than in the county as a whole. Just over a quarter of the neighbourhood's population is listed as obese (25.4%)[†] and almost a fifth experience depression (18.6%). Root causes of health-adverse behaviour (e.g. smoking, poor diet, lack of exercise) are not simple to get to and address in 'one size fits all' programmes and we know that better than most because we're targeted with a lot of them!

"Community Connection to combat 21st Century crises" is a core belief, and it couldn't be clearer that connection matters for our health and wellbeing:

"Loneliness is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, depression, and anxiety. It is also linked to a shorter lifespan, similar to the impact of smoking 15 cigarettes a day."⁵

Health problems and their root causes may be vast and complex, but our community organisations have decades of experience creating connection, meaning and purpose with residents. We're on solid ground but that doesn't mean there isn't work to be done.

What do we want to change, improve or learn?

The point of the Partnership here isn't actually (often) a direct delivery one ("the people who do the change do the work") and there is no need to get in the way of the many organisations who do the work so well. The table overleaf summarises some of the things we feel we can do about **connected, healthy communities**: individually, as a Partnership, and beyond our own community.

What can we do about connected, healthy communities?

FOCUS AREA	PARTNERS (INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATION)	PARTNERSHIP (TOGETHER)	BEYOND/OUTSIDE
Collective communication: community calendars / virtual and actual notice boards / shared promotion	Contribute information to this via Partnership meetings / other methods	- Develop a community calendar function / approach and resources for promotion / sharing - Ensure this is available in community languages and accessible formats	
Collaborative funding: brokering partnership projects, fiscal hosting options for shared grants	Share ideas, develop ideas together, find ways to collaborate	- Capture experience and learning from where you already do this: Culture Matson, Risky Drinking, HAF, Family Hubs and Children's services - Collaborate with VCS infrastructure organisations in the county to understand what works well (and doesn't) for shared funding (e.g. Create Glos, Glos Funders / Barnwood)	Share our learning about community-held collaborative funds. Find people who want to see more of this and think about how you could work with them (e.g. Esmee Fairburn, the National Lottery)
Inclusion and integration: who is / isn't included and ensuring people are represented in the options available, and able to access	- Continue to build links with the diverse community and plan / deliver activities that are relevant, accessible and enjoyable - Celebrate with inclusive activities	- Source financial support with translation / interpreting costs so that community information is accessible to non-English speakers - Collect data to understand whether people accessing community assets map across to the protected characteristics of the population	Support from Public Health / healthcare bodies to interpret Diversity and Inclusion access and data – who isn't here / represented that we would expect to see?
Community health and wellbeing strategy: co-ordinating agreement of health / wellbeing focus areas across the whole community e.g. risky drinking, and liaising with local health and public health organisations to collaborate e.g. community food strategy	Contribute ideas / data / feedback on a focus area that would most benefit the health and wellbeing of people you work with	- Host conversations to identify health and wellbeing priorities. - Work with local primary care network(s) and health / public health agencies to understand if health priorities align. Do what matters most (even if they don't align!) and agree what data will help us understand if things are getting better.	Collaborate with Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board, neighbourhood health and care partnerships and providers, and County and District Councils

Priority 4: Partnership – how we grow our collective voice and power

Why it matters

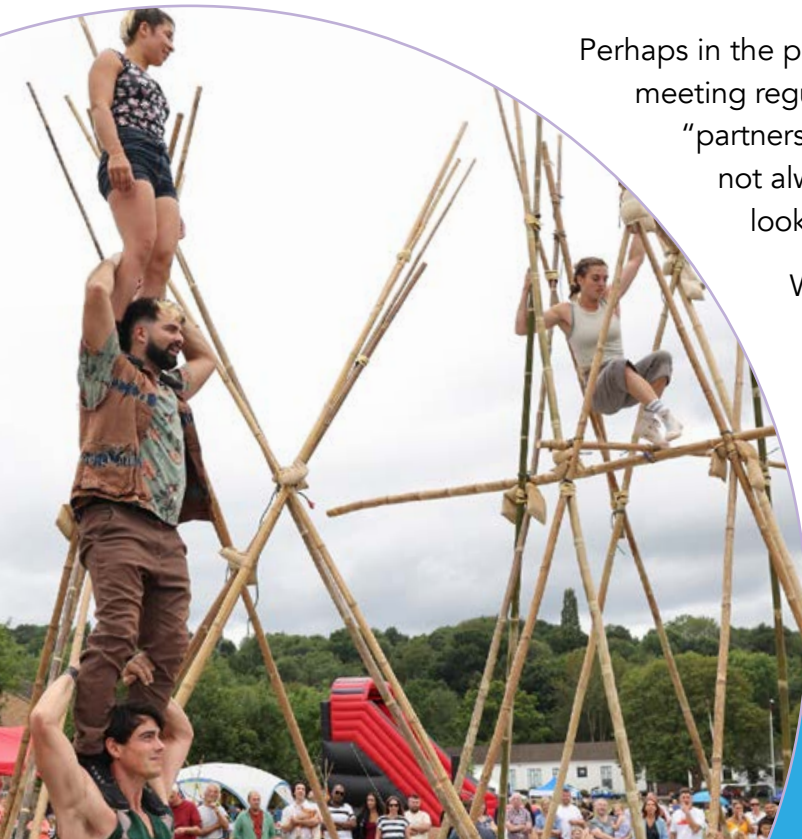
The new theme to come out of this planning process was how much it matters to us to be connected – and how much work there is to do to create and maintain the connections that keep us strong.

We sometimes take partnership for granted, focusing instead on what we want to achieve. This process has reminded us that our Partnership needs focussed attention to be a strong, connected, consistent and caring influence in our community. It has shown us that how we work together matters as much as what we do, and so it is worthy of a theme of its own.

Perhaps in the past we have considered Partnership to be a noun: the Partnership. A group of people meeting regularly. But what if we think of partnership as a verb? It is something we do: we are continually “partnershiping” – developing and growing bonds and creating opportunities with what we have. It is not always about who has a seat at the table, although that matters and needs attention. We cannot look away from the ongoing work of being good partners.

We are a fantastically productive community but we are not always the best of friends. There are issues with trust and territories between organisations with roots in founding, funding and personalities. This is fine: it is life, and diversity and difference keep us relevant and thoughtful and this is one of our shared values.

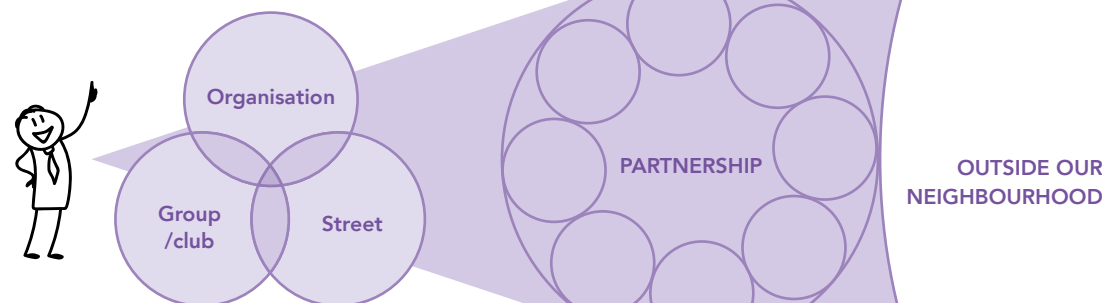
Another important value that became clear through this process is our shared love and respect for each other and our neighbourhoods. We actually enjoyed talking to each other more about what we do and what matters. We realised we spend less time together than we would like to. What unites us is greater (and more important) than any differences we have.



Another key reason to focus on the processes and strength of our Partnership is that it offers us potential to amplify our voice, supporting collective action and stronger influence on a bigger stage.

This diagram came out of the First Diamond interviews and has come up consistently during the process: the desire for our Partnership to be the way we interface (on specific shared issues) with people and organisations outside of our area:

The role of the partnership in amplifying voice and impact



It does not replace direct connection with individuals, groups and parties outside of our neighbourhoods (those who do the work do the change), but where we have a collective ambition to be heard, e.g. our voice in housing and regeneration decisions, our Partnership needs to be our amplifying mechanism and so we need to pay attention to how we do that.

What do we want to change, improve or learn?

There are several elements to this theme:

- Our Partnership processes and resources
- How and what we communicate
- Leadership
- Lobbying and advocacy

The table overleaf summarises some of the things we feel we can do to **take care of our Partnership and grow our collective voice.**

What can we do to take care of our Partnership?

FOCUS AREA	PARTNERS (INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATION)	PARTNERSHIP (TOGETHER)	BEYOND/OUTSIDE
Relaunch and resource	• Participate in reviewing the Partnership and Plan • Participate in the partnership actively	• Share the Plan, review terms of reference and membership, considering the voice of the children and young people • Expand and extend who we are connected with and keep doing so • Think about resources – what do we want to do, and do we have the people / knowledge / time to do it?	• Consider who might be able to support (existing and new partners)
Prioritise/Plan	• Maintain participation in partnership planning	• Do some strategic scanning – e.g. a participative PESTE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental) process to identify factors coming up over the timespan of this plan (5) years that will or might impact the community • Talk about all the possible actions / areas of focus in this Plan and undertake work together to prioritise attention and resources	
Sharing resources	• Maintain / build a focus on pooling and sharing our resources and become confident that we can do this without undermining each other or outcomes for our population	• Use recent/current examples (Culture Matson, Risky Drinking, Youth Services and Family Hubs) to think about what we know about collaborative bidding, shared funding and joint delivery • Pay attention to what we learn and how we do it more/better as our Partnership develops	• We believe we have experience and information already that is useful at a national level and there may be external partners willing to work with us on this
Sharing learning	• Keep collecting and sharing our story	• Agree a place (shared access, easy to download/upload) where we can share digital resources (documents, images, videos etc) • Ours is a story which spans decades. It is a story of collaborative empowerment and the slow journey of social change and it is worth telling and sharing. The Partnership can play a role in considering how we capture and store our collective story and memory: the key to understanding where we have been, how far we have come and what we have learnt along the way (the timelines art is one example of this). At a time when key community figures are set to step down, this is our gift to those who follow in their footsteps.	• Engage with external partners who are interested in social history, archiving and story-telling (e.g. Glos library, Create Glos)



FOCUS AREA	PARTNERS (INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATION)	PARTNERSHIP (TOGETHER)	BEYOND/OUTSIDE
Communication	• This planning process was done with organisations and individuals who work with / represent residents (many of whom are residents too). • Consider how residents have a voice in the partnership and the process of planning and agreeing priorities.	• Keep doing existing cross-organisational diary coordination work • Social media presence: a visible and relatable partnership • Community organisation WhatsApp Group • Keep spending time together: formally in review and planning events like the Collaboration Celebration, other informal celebrations (e.g. meals, games and awards ceremonies), and informal contact (coffee meet ups, shadowing, etc)	• Consider participating in Create Glos collaborative chords programmes (Catalyst / Co-Lab or similar): which develop the skills that support collaborative action
Leadership	• Support new and emerging leaders to work across organisations • Support residents to become involved	• Actively work together to identify the leadership talent in the neighbourhood, and back them (with support, encouragement, resources, time, mentorship, etc) • Young leaders support and opportunity	• As above, focusing on young leaders
Amplifying our voice	• Stay in touch with what matters most to residents and make sure this is what is talked about and given time by the Partnership	• Agree what matters enough to raise our voice about (Winnycroft redevelopment, childcare, schools?). Depending on the focus, spend time together understanding the issues, who is involved, what we want (and why) and planning how we want to engage.	• External agencies dependent on the topic (includes specialist experts / lobbyists / support organisations to work with us)

So what?

This new iteration of our Plan is about us, by us and draws on the legacy and learning from the previous two plans and our collective experience and wisdom.

We recognise that we can, and do, achieve the things we set out to achieve for and with our communities. We don't just act in our communities but our reach extends wider into Gloucester City and beyond. People look to us from far away to see how community-led action works. We believe in ourselves, and this is the basis for a new Plan that provides a shape and direction for our collective action in the coming years and which starts with what's strong: us.

Of course we are not alone. We recognise the legacy of deficit as part of our story, and we realise that we alone cannot turn the tide against the multiple factors that create disadvantage here. **But rather than seeing ourselves as a place to be 'helped', we present ourselves, through this Plan, as experienced, trusted and competent partners: willing and able to collaborate with external agencies and organisations who respect us and who share our values and ambitions for where we live.**

Equally, we are not alone as community organisations. We are only as strong as the residents we work for and our Partnership is only relevant if our ambitions are the ambitions of residents. So this Plan cannot stand untested and static – it needs to stay alive through conversation and learning, and must help us to tolerate difference, challenge, disagreement and setback as well as collective strength of agreement and success.

The process we use to get to the future is the future we get. In developing this Plan we chose a collaborative, collective process which doesn't end here in these pages but continues as we consider what matters enough that we will spend our time and resources collaborating on it in partnership.



What next?

We don't have a ten-point delivery plan, or a blueprint for what it will look like when we 'get there'. Community Partnership isn't that straightforward.

What we do have is the scaffolding of this Plan:

- Four priorities and some suggestions and ideas we came up with during the process for what to do about them;
- The explicit and visible processes of collective learning and decision-making; and;
- A strong legacy of delivery.

They are all the things we need. What happens next is the work of the next five years. This depends on where our energy is – who has the capacity and willingness to collect around a theme or action and come together to make a start.

To begin with there are some structural ideas in our fourth (Partnership) theme: review the Partnership terms of reference and membership, consider resources and time for the priorities and actions mentioned here, and hold more conversations about what is happening now, what is coming on the horizon and what the most important actions will be.

This is as good a place to begin as any: *start anywhere, follow it everywhere.*

This has been a Plan of conversations, sharing, coming together and ideas and it needs to keep reflecting the energy of our neighbourhood: what happens next is that we will keep having conversations, sharing and coming together to have ideas and collaborating to bring them to life.

We have built the scaffolding for the next phase of our story on Common Ground. Our story is decades old, and our history is yet to be told.





Matson, Robinswood & White City
Community Partnership

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