

General Members Meeting November 2025

Developing the ADEPT Strategic Plan 2026-29

Recommendation

A Task & Finish Group drawn from the Leadership Team is preparing ADEPT's Strategic Plan for 2026-29. They would value your thoughts on proposed priorities set out below – are they the right ones? Is anything important missing from the list?

1. Background

The current three-year Strategic Plan [Placing Communities First](#) was adopted in May 2023. It underwent a minor refresh in April 2025 to remove some outdated references and to make the language more contemporary (for example, replacing 'levelling up' with 'growth, inclusion and resilience').

To lead the process for producing our next Strategic Plan, the Leadership Team established a small Task & Finish Group including the President and 1st Vice President and 2nd Vice President. The aim is to consult members and partners on the proposed shape and priorities of the new Plan before completing a first draft; a final draft endorsed by the Leadership Team will be presented to the AGM in May 2026 for approval.

2. Proposals

The Task & Finish Group has considered the broad format and structure of the Strategic Plan, the main areas of focus and headline priorities for the next 3 years, and the balance of ADEPT's different activities. Initial conclusions are that:

- We want a refresh of the content of the Plan, not wholesale change – the existing structure works well but the content needs to reflect the language and priorities of the new government, particularly around devolution and local government reorganisation (LGR) as these will be so significant for Place.
- We want to add a section on our ADEPT's values as an organisation as these are not explicit in the current Plan.
- The presentation of the document can be made more accessible and interesting by using infographics with statistics, to showcase successes. It needs to be user-friendly and practical for use in leadership programmes and other events.
- The key messages need to stand out at the front of the document, including on the website version which will have an overview page with links to drill down into the detail.
- Our priorities going forward should reflect the major environmental, social and political context changes since 2023 that need to be recognised including:
 - data/technology/AI are moving very quickly and having radical effects.

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- climate impacts are a lot more real now, so we need greater emphasis on adapting services and assets.
- the public's lack of trust in politics has continued to grow.
- political consensus on net zero/climate change has broken down.
- the international context is more challenging with overseas conflicts and tensions impacting our communities in different ways.
- the rise of populism leading to divisions within communities.
- the wider agenda of the government elected in 2024.

The Plan also needs to reflect those known and anticipated strategic challenges in local government over the coming period including:

- continuing severe financial pressures and the potential impacts of funding reform
- the implementation of devolution and LGR – the creation of new strategic and unitary authorities, and the end of two-tier county and district councils by 2028
- the rise of Reform UK as an important player in local politics, alongside a surge in popularity of parties such as the Green Party.

These changes and wider challenges bring some specific challenges for ADEPT. Devolution and LGR will be major issues for some authorities while others are already unitary and/or part of a combined authority. We need to recognise the differing perspectives of Place Directors in strategic authorities and unitary councils and have a membership offer that meets the needs of both. We will need to ensure that the structure of subject and regional boards remains relevant.

3. Values

Our values are the set of core beliefs and principles that underpin and guide the way that we operate and behave. They describe the culture that we want to create and sustain, the way that we collaborate with one another, make decisions, and build relationships with our partners and others. We propose that the following are set out as ADEPT's values:

- Equality diversity & inclusion – we are committed to promoting a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across our membership and beyond in all aspects of our work. Our commitment and actions are set out in our [EDI Charter](#).
- Collaboration – we are committed to building mutual trust and working collaboratively across our membership, with our partners and other organisations. Our collective impact is greater than working alone.
- Influence – we use the knowledge and experience of our members to help shape public policy and drive its delivery. We bring a positive approach based on a belief that the future of place making can and should be hopeful. We work with the other professional membership bodies in local government to maximise our collective influence.
- Innovation – we encourage innovation in all our activities and aim to add value wherever we can. Our commitment is exemplified in the Place Leaders' [PACE](#) thought leadership programme – Pioneering, Action-orientated, Creative and Entrepreneurial.

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4. Priorities

We propose that the new Plan should retain the format of having six strategic priorities for the coming period - four outward-facing ambitions and two organisational. The proposed priorities are:

- 1) **To deliver effective devolution and successful LGR in order to enable local growth and prosperity** – our focus for the next three years is supporting place directors and services through the processes of becoming a unitary council and/or strategic authority, supporting and learning from those who have already done so and are trying to make the new structures work effectively, and lobbying government to provide the right powers, resources and capacity.
- 2) **To build resilient places** – building and maintaining resilient infrastructure and services in the broadest sense – highways, transport, housing, connectivity, flood protection, energy, water – to support local growth and make it resilient to the impacts of emergencies and external shocks (climate, nature, pandemics, wars, etc.).
- 3) **To build inclusive and cohesive communities** – providing inclusive spaces, supporting EDI. We will give weight to community voices and engage at a neighbourhood level so that decisions are made as locally as possible.
- 4) **To tackle the climate and nature emergencies at a local level** – to ensure that local growth and prosperity is built on green, sustainable foundations and that the wider benefits of climate and nature action are realised.
- 5) **Our most valuable asset is our people** (no change from current plan). There are significant workforce and skills shortages across the country. Staff recruitment and retention are key challenges. Improving the diversity of the public sector workforce remains critical, along with developing the skills that we need over the coming years to deliver place services. We want to see working in place as the career of choice, and a pipeline of diverse place and thought leaders of the future.
- 6) **Being the best we can be** (no change from current plan). Organisational development – we will continue to act as good advocates for our members throughout the period of political uncertainty and structural change that they face. We need to refine the membership offer to reflect the needs of place directors in both local and strategic authorities. We will continue to review the offer to our corporate partners to ensure that it is attractive and gives them added value and enables them to contribute to ADEPT's development.

We would value your thoughts on these proposed priorities – are they the right ones? Is anything important missing from the list?

David Dale, ADEPT policy officer

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