



Supplement for

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH 2026

Agenda No Item 7 Member questions

The responses to Member questions are attached at Annex A.

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Member Questions for Full Council – 18 March 2026

#	Questioner	Question	Response
1	Cllr Tom Stowe to Cllr Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning	Please could you confirm the current number of open Planning Enforcement cases and does the current level of staffing and resources within the Planning Enforcement team allow Cotswold District Council to deliver an effective and timely service?	<p>There are currently 684 live planning enforcement cases as of 09/03/2026, with 420 of these designated as backlog, originating from 31/12/2024 or earlier.</p> <p>The team has recently been re-structured, including the creation of 2 additional roles, resulting in a team of 6. Four of the six roles are currently filled following recruitment in January (including 2 agency staff). A further role will be filled on 30/03/2026 following a successful recruitment campaign and we anticipate the final role to be filled when an officer returns from long term sick in late March/early April. As such, it is hoped in the coming months the team will return to 100% staffing and will have capacity to tackle the backlog.</p> <p>It should be noted that the nature of planning enforcement means that there will always be cases outstanding as formal action may be required if matters cannot be resolved through negotiation or a new planning application. Formal action, by its nature, is often lengthy and usually comes at the end of an unsuccessful dialogue.</p>



			Together with officers, I will be attending a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the coming months to discuss and answer questions about planning enforcement
2.	Cllr Tony Slater to Cllr Mike Evely, Leader of the Council	<p>Following the O&S briefing on the latest LGR position I am concerned that the LGR work is taking too much time from our senior officers, who as a result cannot dedicate their service to Cotswold District Council. CDC seems to have more of its officers leading workstreams and programmes of work than other district and city councils. While it is pleasing that our officers have the advanced skills to be picked for this important work, it distorts the fair share of costs between the other contributors.</p> <p>As with the Publica transition, the estimated costs of £1.5m (already equivalent to around 900 band D taxpayers) do not account for the significant officer time, and the taxpayers of the Cotswolds are</p>	<p>Members will be aware that three of our officers (Matt Abbot, Helen Martin, and David Stanley) were appointed as programme leads supporting the LGR transition work across Gloucestershire over the next 24 months.</p> <p>50% of each programme lead's time will be spent on LGR activities. The LGR Transition budget will reimburse host Councils on this basis (i.e. 50% of the salary cost of each officer will be claimed back from the LGR Transition budget) and this was agreed by Leaders of all the Gloucestershire Councils. This funding will be available to support any backfill arrangements that are required.</p> <p>The Council has also established two specific earmarked reserves to support LGR and to ensure residents will continue to receive the vital/valued services right up until the end of March 2028:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £1m has been allocated to the Council Priority: Capacity Building reserve• £2m has been set aside in the Council Priority: LGR Transition reserve.



		<p>therefore paying more than their fair share for the reorganisation, and at the same time losing out on service that should be provided.</p> <p>Please can you explain how these role allocations are weighted for fairness, and what additional backfill costs are envisaged to fill the void when officers are working on LGR?</p>	<p>On a wider point, the cost associated with LGR and the transition are shared across all the Councils in Gloucestershire. As set out in Section 5 of the Budget report to Council in February, the County Council is funding 55% of these costs with each District Council funding an equal amount of the remaining 45%.</p> <p>I therefore don't agree with you that these arrangements are in any way unfair to Cotswold DC. Indeed, the prominent role played by the three officers together with our CEO in this work means that our officers will be playing a big role in developing the new council(s) which in my view is advantageous for the Council and Cotswold residents. The CEO will be monitoring the arrangements and I'm confident she will ensure that the interests of this Council will be safeguarded.</p>
3.	Cllr Tom Stowe to Cllr Mike Every, Leader of the Council	<p>Does Cotswold District Council own a camera drone? If so, how much did it cost and what ongoing/recurring costs to the council are there?</p>	<p>The council does own a drone. This was purchased in January 2023 by the shared Communications team (Publica), at a cost of £764. The Communications team and the drone transferred to the Council in November 2024 as part of Phase 1 of the Publica Review.</p> <p>The drone was purchased to assist in delivering better quality and more engaging communications for residents, and to avoid the</p>



			<p>cost associated with hiring drone operators. Since then, the Council has been able to undertake certain video work in-house, saving significantly more in outsourcing than it paid for the drone. Much of this footage has been used on multiple occasions. The drone was fully insured and operated in line with Civil Aviation Authority guidance, including having the relevant internal policy, operating procedures and privacy notice.</p> <p>However, in January 2026, the CAA further tightened regulations around drone use. This included requirements around every user/pilot obtaining a flyer ID, the council being registered as a drone operator, remote ID being retrofitted to the drone and more. The Council is in the process of fully understanding what steps it needs to take to ensure full compliance with these new regulations and what investment this might require. This isn't considered a priority for the communications team at this time, and until such time that the Council has taken the various and significant steps to be fully compliant, the drone is not in use for any form of council work. This means there are currently no recurring costs to the Council.</p>
4.	Cllr Tony Slater to Cllr Andrea Pellegram, Cabinet Member for	Litter along our roads and lanes has become intolerable and is particularly visible in the winter months when the	The district covers a large geographical area with an extensive road network, including highspeed routes. This means that litter-picking must be carefully planned and delivered by Ubico, our



	<p>Environment and Regulatory Services</p>	<p>vegetation is dormant. Please can the Member outline what steps are being taken to rid our beautiful countryside of this menace, as it is a poor advertisement for the Cotswolds?</p>	<p>environmental services partner, with appropriate traffic management and safety measures in place to protect crews while they work.</p> <p>Coordinating litter-picking with the mowing schedule is another operational challenge, as both activities need to be timed to ensure maximum effectiveness while minimising disruption.</p> <p>Alongside routine cleansing, we are considering preventative steps to reduce the problem at its source, for example the installation of targeted signage to discourage littering, particularly in known hotspot areas.</p> <p>We are developing closer ties with volunteer groups across the district, supporting them with equipment and logistics to help facilitate community litter-picking activities, where it is safe to do so.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Cllr Jeremy Theyer to Cllr Andrea Pellegram, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regulatory Services</p>	<p>There will soon be an order being placed for the new bin truck fleet – what flexibility is there with these new vehicles once they are in operation to adapt for changes in recycling and waste collection legislation which may</p>	<p>There are two types of changes that could impact the design of vehicles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An increase to the range of recycling materials collected at the kerbside. This change is currently in effect and is being planned for. The change stems back to the Resource and Waste Strategy 2018 which led to Simpler Recycling



		<p>be imposed in the future by government?</p>	<p>requiring a set range of materials to be collected from 1st April 2026 (The Council is compliant) and the additional collection of flexible/ soft plastics by 1st April 2027 (this is being planned for in the specification of the replacement recycling vehicles). Future changes are likely to have a similar long lead time or reflect the constraint of vehicles having a long operational life.</p> <p>2. Changes to the composition of waste. This is a change that happens not in a step change way, as is the case with Simpler Recycling, but due to long-term behaviour change (e.g. reduced distribution and therefore recycling of newspapers, or increased cardboard due to home deliveries), or legislation hitting the supply chain. Extended Producer Responsibility and Deposit Return Schemes are both examples of these changes. We are modelling potential impacts of these to inform vehicle design and understand risk. And we are carrying out sensitivity analysis on the projected levels of materials we may get in the future. Ultimately, where levels of recycling go beyond expectations in the future, this could lead to a requirement for more recycling vehicles. The cost of which would be offset, to some extent, by a potential reduction in refuse vehicles, an increase in revenue for recyclables, and a decrease in the cost of disposal of waste (which would be a direct cost</p>
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			<p>saving in a unitary authority structure, with combined collection and disposal responsibilities)</p>
6.	<p>Cllr Len Wilkins to Cllr Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance</p>	<p>Cotswold residents have supported CDC and its predecessors for over 50 years. During this time reserves have accrued, we have a duty to ensure that Cotswold Council Taxpayers get the best return and value for money from these reserves. Could our representatives during the negotiations on LGR ensure our residents' assets are protected and not lost to bail out other local councils involved in the transition?</p>	<p>The Council has a legal duty to agree and set a balanced budget for the forthcoming financial year. This was the case in February when the Council set the 2026/27 revenue budget.</p> <p>The budget report to Council outlined the way in which earmarked reserves would be used to support the Council's priorities (Section 7) and the longer-term considerations associated with LGR (Leaving a Legacy/Preparing for the future).</p> <p>I can assure members that as an administration we are mindful of the need to continue to support our residents and deliver high quality services, but also to leave our residents in the best possible position ahead of the establishment of a new unitary council. Part of this will be to pass over fully funded services and to leave the Council on a financially sustainable footing.</p> <p>As Cllr Wilkins will recall, the seven councils in Gloucestershire committed to handing over balanced revenue budgets to the new authority/ies due to start on 1 April 2028 in the proposals for a single unitary council and for east and west unitary councils. Those budgets will need to be balanced without the use of</p>



			<p>revenue reserves. Despite its budget difficulties, Gloucester City Council has recommitted to this.</p> <p>All of the assets and liabilities for all seven councils in Gloucestershire will transfer to the new council(s) when they are established. Whilst Cotswold DC is almost completely debt-free and has capital receipts and revenue reserves, its asset holdings are considerably lower than several of the other councils in the county. All of these will be brought together in the new council(s).</p>
7.	Cllr Laura Hall-Wilson to Cllr Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for	<p>The report from the Town Centres Initiative has recently been published and for Tetbury one of the key recommendations is parking improvements. I hear from businesses and residents on almost a daily basis how they struggle with parking in Tetbury. Please confirm what measures you will be taking in reaction to this report, to improve the flow of cars and look at how to make parking easier for visitors to our town?</p>	<p>The Councils approach to supporting and improving parking provision across the district is set out in the Parking Strategy 2025 – 2028, which includes an Action Plan that sets out the measures that will be taken in each town. Whilst car park design and capacity considerations seek to improve flow of traffic within car parks, the flow of traffic through towns is a matter for GCC Highways.</p>



8.	Cllr David Fowles to Cllr Mike Every, Leader of the Council	<p>When the decision was taken to sell the memorial cottages in Cirencester, the Council gave notice to one of the tenants - the Living Memorial Historical Association - who ran their WW2 museum from one of the Cottages.</p> <p>A promise was made that we would help the Association to store their collection and find a new home. Since when nothing has happened.</p> <p>Given our armed forces are once again embroiled in another conflict, finding a home for this museum is even more relevant. Please could you update us on the current position?</p>	<p>The Council has supported the Living Memory Trust with time-limited funding to cover storage costs for their collection.</p> <p>The Council has also supported the Living Memory Trust since the decision was taken to dispose of/sell the Memorial Cottages by facilitating conversations with local agents and directly with landlords to try and seek suitable alternative space for the collection but has never promised to 'find them a new home' As far as we are aware, the Trust is continuing to look for a new home for the collection.</p> <p>Members may recall that the Corinium Museum hosted an exhibition in September and October 2025, commemorating the second world war. This included items from the Living Memory Historical Association.</p>
9.	Cllr David Fowles to Cllr Tristan Wilkinson, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation.	<p>Under the last Conservative government, Gloucestershire received considerable Government funding to invest in Growth hubs including the Growth hub at the RAU.</p>	<p>The Council has funded the Cirencester Growth Hub through the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund since the 2022-23 financial year. This funding runs out at the end of the current financial year. The Cirencester Growth Hub is based in the Alliston Centre building on the RAU Campus, alongside the Farm491 agritech incubator.</p>



		<p>This funding has now disappeared, and the centre is now known as The Alliston Centre.</p> <p>This site was intended to be the beginning of a £100m investment announced in January 2023 to create an Innovation Village on a 12-acre site at the RAU. Planning was applied for 'phase 1' in October last year.</p> <p>Please could you update us on when work is going to start on phase 1, the status of the Growth Hub and the overall status in terms of investment funding for the Innovation project?</p>	<p>The Growth Hub network in the county has been awarded funding from the Gloucestershire Strategic Economic Development Fund for the 2026-27 financial year, which will enable it to continue, albeit at a reduced level. The service will continue to be known as the Growth Hub.</p> <p>From a planning perspective, there is a live outline planning application (ref: 24/01143/OUT) relating to the development of the Innovation Village. Officers are currently waiting on further information to be submitted by the developers before making a final assessment and presenting the application to the Planning and Licensing Committee. It is not possible to comment on when works may commence at the site.</p> <p>The Innovation Village project will be financed through external funding. As the promoters of the scheme, it is for the RAU to secure that investment, although the Council, through its economic development function, will continue to support the university in doing so. Securing outline planning consent is critical in terms of providing the level of certainty required by potential investors.</p>
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