



Supplement for

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 29 JUNE 2026

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29 JUNE 2026
Subject	FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT – OUTTURN 2025/26
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance Email: patrick.coleman@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Email: david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Michelle Burge, Chief Accountant and Deputy Section 151 Officer Email: michelle.burge@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report sets out the full year budget monitoring position for the 2025/26 financial year.
Annexes	Annex A – Capital Programme Outturn Annex B – Non-Treasury Management Prudential Indicators Annex C –Summary of Earmarked Reserves
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Review and note the outturn financial position set out in this report. 2. Approve the transfer to and from reserves as set out in Section 6 and Annex C. 3. Approve the carry forward of unspent capital budget included in paragraph 7.5 of £0.858m into the 2026/27 Capital Programme.
Corporate priorities	• Delivering Good Services
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO



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Consultees/ Consultation	None
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** This report presents to members the full outturn and monitoring position statement for the 2025/26 financial year and should be viewed in the context of the [2026-27 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy report](#) approved by Council in February 2026.
- 1.2** This report updates members on the significant budget variations identified in the quarterly financial reports considered by Cabinet during the 2025/26 financial year.
- 1.3** Section 6 of this report proposes transfers to and from earmarked reserves, with Section 7 requesting approval of capital slippage to be carried forward and included in the 2026/27 capital programme.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1** This report sets out the outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year and will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 29 June 2026.
- 2.2** The revenue outturn position is a positive variation of £0.251m. This represents an improved financial position for the year and an improvement on the Q3 forecast (favourable movement of £0.206m). This strengthens the Council's financial resilience and provides additional flexibility over the MTFS period. The outturn includes the planned transfer to the Financial Resilience Reserve (FRR). It is also proposed that the additional General Fund surplus of £0.251m is transferred to the Capacity Reserve.
- 2.3** This position is consistent with Council's strategy to utilise improved in-year financial performance to mitigate future financial pressures. The outturn includes proposed transfers of several underspends, as set out in section 4.16-4.17 and 4.40 below, thereby supporting financial sustainability over the MTFS period.
- 2.4** The outturn also includes a transfer of **100% of net planning income more than budget** to the Planning Appeals Reserve, as set out in the Q3 budget monitoring report. In addition, **£0.165m of car park income in excess of budget** is allocated to fund the replacement of pay-and-display machines within the Council's 2026/2027 Capital Programme, thereby maximising internal resources available for capital expenditure.



Table ES1 – Revenue Budget Outturn (Q4)

	2025/26 Latest Net Budget (£'000)	2025/26 Actuals to Q4 (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Q3 2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3
Revenue Budget						
Subtotal Services	18,401	18,124	19,293	(277)	(1,356)	1,078
Less: Reversal of accounting adjustments	(1,939)	(1,948)	(1,925)	(9)	0	(9)
Revised Subtotal Services	16,462	16,175	17,369	(287)	(1,356)	1,069
Corporate Income & Expenditure	774	803	(1,663)	29	1,491	(1,462)
Provisions and Risk Items	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net Budget Requirement	17,235	16,978	15,706	(258)	136	(393)
Funded by:						
Council Tax	(7,065)	(7,065)	(7,065)	0	0	0
Retained Business Rates	(6,468)	(6,468)	(5,117)	(0)	0	(0)
Government Funding - Grants	(2,527)	(2,520)	(2,527)	7	0	7
Government Funding - NHB	(820)	(820)	(820)	0	0	0
Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)	(1,683)	(1,683)	(1,683)	0	(181)	181
Collection Fund (surplus) / Deficit	689	689	689	0	0	0
TOTAL Funding	(17,874)	(17,867)	(16,523)	7	(181)	188
Budget shortfall/(surplus)	(638)	(889)	(817)	(251)	(45)	(206)



Table ES2 – Revenue Budget – Reconciliation of variations (Q4)

	Positive variation (£'000)	Adverse Variation (£'000)	Net Variation (£'000)	Q3 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3 (£'000)
Variations at a glance					
<u>Service Variations</u>					
Fees & Charges - Cemeteries		43	43	39	4
Fees & Charges - Licensing	(44)		(44)	(30)	(14)
Fees & Charges - Building Control	(38)		(38)	(44)	6
Fees & Charges - Bulky Waste	(25)		(25)	(31)	6
Fees & Charges - Environmental Protection		15	15	15	0
Fees & Chages - Land Charges	(38)		(38)	(29)	(9)
Trinity Road - Utilities	(22)		(22)	(21)	(1)
Car Park fees, permits and penalty charges	(382)	0	(382)	(256)	(126)
EVCP income	(23)	0	(23)	0	(23)
Car park expenditure	(54)		(54)	(24)	(30)
Commercial Property - Rental income shortfall/void costs		82	82	64	18
Tenant Area of Trinity Road	(17)		(17)	(20)	3
Development Management Fees	(710)		(710)	(674)	(36)
Recycling - Minor Contracts	(35)		(35)	(30)	(5)
Recycling - Income	(23)		(23)	(33)	10
Card payment processing charges		25	25	5	20
Net Homeless Expenditure (Flexible Homeless Grant higher than budgeted)	(72)		(72)	(70)	(2)
Postage and Printing		51	51	47	4
Communications - Cotswold News	(20)		(20)	(20)	0
Members Allowance increases (Council, 26 November 2025)		43	43	36	7
Court Cost income (Council tax and Business Rates)	0	0	0	(30)	30
Valuation (professional fees)	(10)		(10)	(10)	0
Dual Use Agreement (Chipping Campden School)		10	10	10	0
Legal vacancies	(31)		(31)	(31)	0
ICT	(60)		(60)		(60)
Housing Benefit	(40)		(40)		(40)
Vacancy management	(235)	0	(235)	(165)	(70)
Ubico contract overspend (net of contingency)		75	75		75
Other service variations		(75)	(75)	54	(129)
Subtotal	(1,879)	269	(1,610)	(1,248)	(362)



<u>Non-Service/Corporate Variations</u>					
Contingencies and Savings	(173)	0	(173)	(222)	49
Street Service savings	0	300	300	300	0
Development Management Fees - Appeals Risk	0	710	710	674	36
Impact of Publica Phase 2	(262)	0	(262)	(328)	66
New Posts not recruited	(239)	0	(239)	(240)	1
Transfer Vacancy and phase two service and recruitment saving to Capacity Building Reserve	0	736	736	733	3
Treasury Management income	(300)	0	(300)	(376)	76
Transfer to Treasury Management reserve	0	300	300	376	(76)
Transfer underspend to 'Cotswold News' Reserve		20	20	20	0
Transfer underspend to 'Homeless Reserve'		72	72	70	2
Transfer legal salary underspend to 'Legal Resource' Reserve		31	31	31	0
Additional EPR Grant (DEFRA), transferred to EPR Reserve	(181)	181	0	0	0
Transfer Car park surplus to 'Earmarked Capital Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay' (RCCO)		165	165	165	0
Subtotal	(1,155)	2,515	1,360	1,203	157
Net Outturn Variation	(3,034)	2,784	(251)	(45)	(206)

- 2.5** The Council must ensure it can address the financial challenges arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement and Local Government Reorganisation ("LGR") over the MTFs-period.
- 2.6** Oversight of the Vacancy Management process has been strengthened by the Corporate Leadership Team ("CLT"), with CLT authorisation required to fill a vacancy, either on a short-term or long-term basis. CLT have also reviewed the process for assessing requests for additional resources to ensure a single and consistent approach is taken to the development and appraisal of proposals and business cases.
- 2.7** As set out in paragraph 2.2 and Table ES1, the Q4 outturn for the year is favourable with an improved financial position and additional surplus at the end of the financial year.
- 2.8** The revenue budget will come under further pressure in 2026/27 from the wider economic environment (inflation, fuel and energy prices) and as the Council maintains service provision to residents whilst mitigating the service delivery risks from reorganisation of Local Government in Gloucestershire. There will be a demand on key staff to support the assessment of final proposal and plan for a new unitary structure in Gloucestershire, and implementation of the proposal from mid-2026 following the Government's decision.
- 2.9** Additional capacity will be needed to support the emerging Corporate Plan, ensure services continue to be provided to residents, and support LGR. Therefore, it is proposed to maximise the level of resources available over the next 2 years, any additional budget surplus or one-off benefit is transferred to earmarked reserves (Capacity Building).



- 2.10** Council approved the 2026/27 Budget at their meeting on 23 February 2026. Included within the [2026-27 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy report](#) was a Reserves and Balances forecast (Section 7). This set out the recommendation that a balance of £1m is maintained to support the Council over the next 2 years.
- 2.11** With a more favourable outturn and allowing for the (potential) increased cost/reliance on interim staff recommendation is to increase the reserve balance to £1.1m.
- 2.12** The Q4 outturn reflects a total underspend of £0.736m within employee-related budgets for 2025/26. This is due to the Vacancy Management approach set out in the Q1, Q2 and Q3 Financial Performance report:
- **Vacant** posts not yet filled, resulting in savings of £0.235m plus positions included in the 2025/26 budget for Transformation, Learning & Organisational Development and Strategic Housing have not been appointed, generating revenue savings of £0.239m.
 - Lower anticipated expenditure on **recruitment** contributing £0.100m.
 - Lower costs of Phase 2 of **Publica Review** against the prudent estimate resulting in an underspend of £0.162m

In line with the strategy agreed within the Q2 and Q3 report, these savings are to be transferred to earmarked reserves (Capacity Building). Consequently, the underspends have a net nil impact on the variance to budget.

- 2.13** The material variations are listed below with further details in Section 4 of this report.
- **Income variations** – underachievement: Cemeteries (£43k), Environmental Protection (£15k). Additional Income: Development Management Fees (£0.780m) Licensing (£45k), Building Control (£38k), Bulky Waste (£25k), Recycling income (£23k), Car Park fees (£341k), Car Park Permits (£17k), Car Park penalty charge notices (£24k), EVCP income (£23k)
 - Income from court costs (Council tax and Business Rates) reported an overachievement of £30k at Q3 which has reduced to a net nil position at year end following the reassessment of the required increase in bad debt provision.
 - **Trinity Road Utility costs** - £22k underspend due utilising energy generated from the Solar PV at Trinity Road. This reduced the external energy costs and cost in 2025/26.
 - **Post and Printing** – costs exceed budget by £55k, predominantly within the Revenues and Benefits service in support of the LFT project.



- **Recycling contracts** – Kerbside collection of cans and plastics, 'bring banks' and Waste electrical electronic equipment (WEEE) undertaken by contractor (£35k favourable)
- **ICT** - £69k underspend in 2025/26, primarily due to lower-than-anticipated IT licence and equipment costs. Considering underspends over the past two financial years, the adequacy of the current expenditure estimates will be reviewed as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process.
- **Housing Benefit** - Positive variation of £41k as greater level of HB overpayments (Fraud & Error) identified with robust recovery process in place.
- **Commercial Property rental income and vacant property costs.** Net pressure driven by void costs from empty properties and income adjustments. This includes £78k of void costs for the former Wilkinson unit (now occupied by Warley Stores), rental income shortfalls of £8k from Superdrug (due to prior-year rent calculation corrections) and £16k from Dyer Street properties (Q4 voids). These pressures were partly offset by unbudgeted rental income of £20k from office space leased to the DWP at the Trinity Road South Wing.
- **Ubico Contract** - The 2025/26 outturn shows an adverse variance of £0.166m against the £8.863m budget, an increase from £0.065m reported at Q3. This deterioration reflects late-year cost pressures identified between Periods 11 and 12 in respect of vehicle hire and repair costs and agency employee costs for sickness cover. Officers have engaged with Ubico to address the late forecast deterioration and emphasise the need for improved financial forecasting in 2026/27 and early engagement for the 2027/28 budget.
- **Street Services a £0.300m adverse variation.** As previously reported, the savings target was removed from the budget following the APSE-led review. Whilst options are being considered as a result of the review to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the service, it is unlikely these measures will result in material cost reduction.
- **Treasury Management and interest receivable** outperformed budget, generating a positive variation of £0.300m (a decrease of £0.076m from Quarter 3). This reduction reflects the timing of interest receipts relating to the loan to Cotsway Housing Association, which was secured in Quarter 1 of 2026/27, resulting in an interest receipt of £0.106m being recognised in 2026/27. The full £0.300m will be transferred to the Treasury Management Reserve.
- **Members Allowances** – Increases to Members' Special Responsibility Allowances, as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel in March 2026 have resulted in an adverse variance of £0.046m against the 2025/26 budget.



2.14 A summary of the Capital Programme outturn is shown in the table below.

Table ES3 – Capital Programme Outturn

Capital Programme	2025/26 LAB (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Q3 2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3 (£'000)
Leisure & Communities	244	218	(26)	0	(26)
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing	1,845	1,608	(237)	(345)	108
Environment	651	372	(279)	(176)	(103)
ICT, Change and Customer Services	150	144	(6)	2	(8)
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	229	195	(34)	0	(34)
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	60	52	(8)	0	(8)
Land, Legal and Property	200	0	(200)	(200)	0
Transformation and Investment	0	0	0	0	0
S106 Refcus (NHS)	0	15	15	0	15
TOTAL Capital Programme	3,379	2,604	(775)	(719)	(56)

2.15 The capital programme outturn is an underspend of £0.785m. Further details are provided in Section 6 of this report.

2.16 The 2026/27 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy report approved by Council in February 2026 provided members with an updated capital budget for the financial year and is shown in the table above.

2.17 Movements from **Q3** includes the following:

- **Ubico Vehicles** – As set out in the report to Cabinet in January 2026, budgeted expenditure relating to the replacement of five 3.5 tonne cage vehicles (£0.273m) will be reprofiled within the Fleet Replacement Programme. Procurement has been completed, and the vehicles are now scheduled for delivery in Q1 2026/27. Expenditure of £0.254m was forecast at Quarter 3
- **On Street Residential Charging Scheme (ORCS)**, expenditure of £0.065m (previously reported at Q3 as £0) delayed to Q1 of 2026/27. Whilst 5 charge posts were installed at Brewery Road Car Park, one post has not been commissioned to address a potential Health and Safety risk associated with the proximity of the charging post to street lighting. The expenditure will be funded through the ORCS grant.



- **Private Sector Housing Renewal Grants** (Disabled Facility), budgeted expenditure of £167k to be carried forward to the 2026/27 capital budget. (£0.275m reported at Q3).
- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity** fund projects balances of £0.008m and £0.034m respectively are expected to be spent in 2026/27 following an extension of the use of funding deadline to 30th September 2026.

3. EXTERNAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

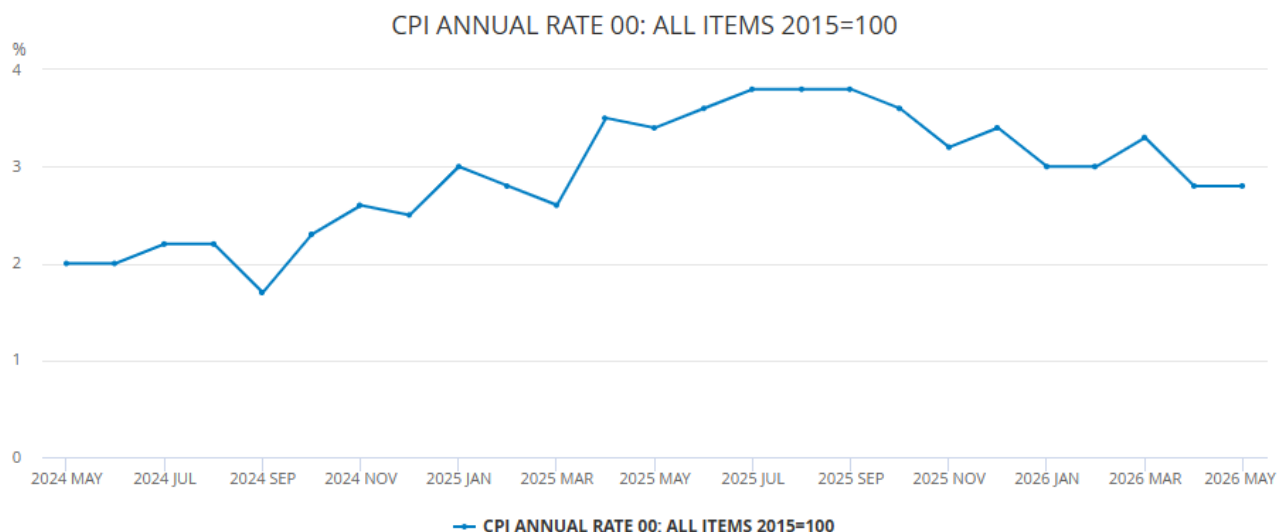
Inflationary Pressures

- 3.1** The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) increased to 3.3% in March 2026, up from 3.0% in February. The Retail Prices Index (RPI), although not the Government's preferred measure, rose to 4.1% from 3.6% over the same period. Core inflation, as defined by the Office for National Statistics (excluding energy, food, alcohol and tobacco), decreased to 3.7%, compared to 4.9% in February.
- 3.2** In April 2026, CPI fell to 2.8%, a reduction from 3.3% in March. RPI also declined to 3.0% from 4.1%, while core inflation decreased further to 2.5% from 3.1%. These movements suggest a general easing in inflationary pressures at the start of the 2026/27 financial year. The May 2026 statistical release (17 June 2026) came in below market expectations with CPI inflation holding firm at 2.8%. Commentary from the Council's Treasury Management advisors Arlingclose is below:
- *CPI inflation stands at 2.8% in May, unchanged from April but lower than March. The downside surprise was broad-based across food, core goods and services, although higher fuel prices from the energy shock have already contributed to inflation.*
 - *Inflation is expected to remain close to 3% in Q3 before rising to a little over 3.25% in Q4 as higher energy prices continue to pass through.*
 - *The MPC voted by a majority of 7–2 to maintain Bank Rate at 3.75%. For the majority, the decision to hold reflected further evidence that underlying disinflation had been on track before the Middle East conflict, while tighter financial conditions were already helping to reduce inflationary pressure.*
 - *The two members voting for a rate rise were more concerned about the risk of second-round effects, particularly given higher household and business inflation expectations. They judged that a modest increase in Bank Rate would provide insurance against inflation becoming more persistent.*



- 3.3** Current macroeconomic conditions continue to present financial risk to the Council. While the recent Memorandum of Understanding in the Middle East has eased immediate pressures on global energy markets, prices remain volatile and above pre-conflict levels. The UK remains exposed as a net importer of energy, and inflation is expected to fluctuate during 2026 as earlier increases in energy costs continue to feed through before easing towards target. This ongoing uncertainty increases the risk that cost pressures exceed budget assumptions, placing additional strain on the Council's financial position in 2026/27.
- 3.4** Interest rate expectations have also shifted materially. Financial Markets, which had previously anticipated one or two Bank of England rate cuts in 2026, have become more volatile, with some periods of pricing in potential rate increases in response to rising gilt yields and renewed inflationary pressures. However, the outlook remains uncertain and highly dependent on the evolution of energy prices and inflation.
- 3.5** These developments create additional cost and demand pressures across Council services, increased uncertainty in financial and investment planning and may lead to volatility in borrowing costs (if undertaken).

Graph A – CPI Inflation (May 2026 release)



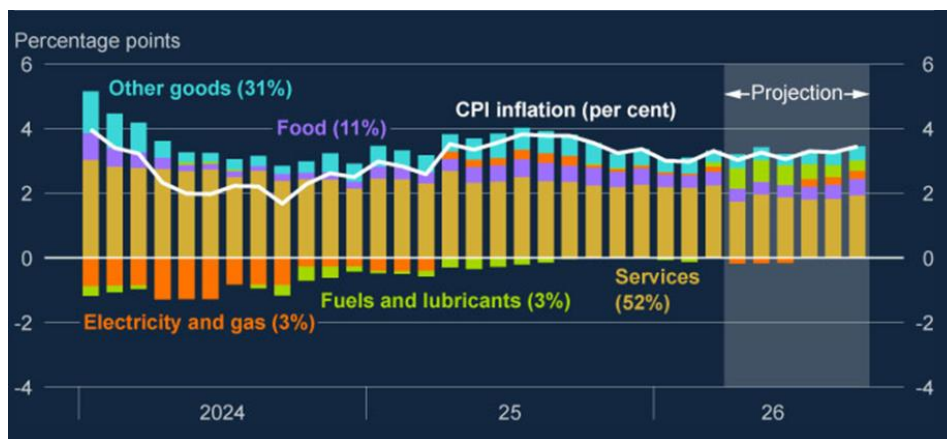
- 3.6** Although there has been substantial disinflation over the past two years, the Council is subject to specific inflationary pressures within key service areas (e.g., fuel costs



within the waste and recycling service). These cost pressures have historically exceeded CPI and RPI, although they fell below CPI during 2025. Despite this recent easing, there remains a risk that volatility in energy markets, particularly arising from geopolitical events, could reverse this trend and place renewed upward pressure on costs and headline inflation.

- 3.7** In its April 2026 Monetary Policy Report, the Bank of England highlighted a more uncertain and volatile outlook for inflation. CPI is now expected to increase in the near term, reflecting higher energy prices, before easing back towards the 2% target over the medium term. The Bank has emphasised that the future path of inflation is highly dependent on the scale and duration of energy price pressures, with a range of potential scenarios rather than a single central forecast. The graph below illustrates the CPI trajectory based on the Bank of England's published projections.

Graph B – Bank of England Monetary Policy Report (April 2026) – Inflation



Interest Rates

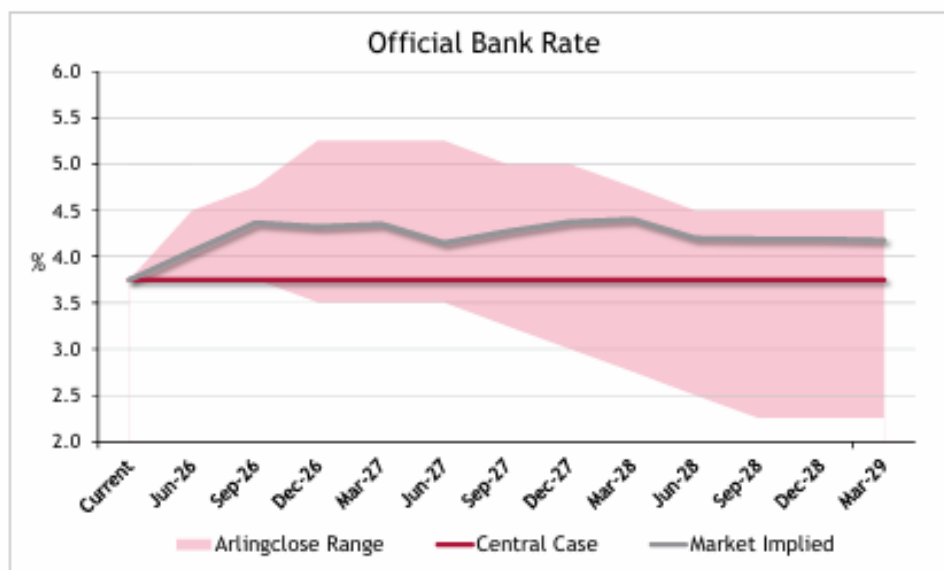
- 3.8** The Bank of England reduced the Base Rate to 3.75% earlier in 2026 as inflationary pressures eased from previous highs. However, the Bank has taken a more cautious stance in recent months, noting that while inflation had begun to fall, the outlook has become more uncertain. In its April 2026 Monetary Policy Report, the Bank emphasised that monetary policy is now finely balanced, with future decisions dependent on the persistence of inflationary pressures, particularly those arising from energy markets.
- 3.9** Although inflation remains above the 2% target, recent geopolitical developments have led to renewed upward pressure on energy prices. Disruption to global oil and gas supply has contributed to a rebound in near-term inflation expectations, which



may limit the scope for further interest rate reductions in the short term. As a result, the anticipated path of interest rates has become more uncertain, with markets no longer assuming a steady sequence of rate cuts.

- 3.10** At its recent meetings, including March and April 2026, the Bank of England has held the Base Rate at 3.75%, while assessing the impact of higher energy prices on inflation and economic activity. The Monetary Policy Committee has indicated that it will respond as necessary to ensure inflation returns sustainably to the 2% target, with future decisions remaining data driven.

Graph C – Interest Rate Forecast (Arlingclose March 2026)



- 3.11** Whilst there is no underlying need to borrow with the Capital Programme financed through internal resources and external grants and contributions, any additional capital expenditure proposed during the year will need to consider the availability and cost of capital financing including prudential borrowing.

4. 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN

- 4.1** There have been largely marginal changes to the overall forecast since Q3; however, several movements are worth noting, particularly within Planning and Car Parks, where updated income and activity levels have resulted in larger than planned transfers to earmarked reserves. Planning fee income has overachieved by £0.779m



as at 31 March 2026 (an increase of £0.105m since Q3), of this, net additional income of £0.710m will be transferred to the 'Planning Appeals Reserve'.

- 4.2** Net car park income has improved by £0.126m, leading to a total of £0.165m above budget being allocated to fund the replacement of pay-and-display machines within the Council's Capital Programme. Underspends within Homelessness (£0.072m) and Legal Service salaries (£0.031m) have also resulted in amounts being earmarked for use in future years.
- 4.3** Savings from vacancies and from the implementation of 'Publica Phase Two Review' have resulted in a total transfer of £0.736m to the Capacity Building earmarked reserve (compared to £0.733m forecast at Q3).
- 4.4** Recent global events – particularly the conflict in the Middle East which has driven sharp increases in oil and gas prices – have added renewed pressure on inflation and certainty around future energy and fuel costs. However, this has not had a material effect on the Council's 2025/26 position, as inflation had already been easing and was expected to return close to target in early 2026. The greater concern relates to 2026/27, where sustained disruption to energy markets and market expectations of higher inflation and fuel price volatility may lead to increased cost pressures including for diesel, HVO and electricity.
- 4.5** The Revenue Budget was approved by Council at their meeting on 24 February 2025 with no adjustments made during the financial year to date.

Table 1 – Revenue Budget reconciliation

Budget Item	(£'000)
Original Budget (Council, 24 February 2025)	15,704
Adj:	
Adj:	
Adj:	
Adj:	
Latest Budget	15,704

- 4.6** The revenue budget was adjusted during Q2 as budgets are amended to reflect the transfer of services from Publica to the Council in Phase 2 of the Publica Transition. Whilst the net budget position (£15.704m) did not change, the composition of the budget (i.e. subjective split between Pay and Non-Pay budgets) and net service budgets has been amended. The budget is adjusted during Q4 to reflect technical accounting adjustment such as depreciation and movements to/from reserves. These adjustments have no overall impact on the net budget.



- 4.7** As of 31 March 2026, the Council's net expenditure (excluding Funding and Parish Precepts) was £16.978 against the budget of £17.235m. Including funding, this results in a net favourable variance of £0.258m against the net budget.
- 4.8** Table 2 provides Members with an overview of the material outturn variations across services, while Table 3 details the non-service revenue expenditure and income budgets.

Table 2 – Revenue Budget Outturn Summary

	2025/26 Latest Net Budget (£'000)	2025/26 Actuals to Q4 (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Q3 2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3
Revenue Budget					
Environmental & Regulatory Services	660	589	(71)	(61)	(9)
Business Sup. Svcs - Finance, HR, Procurement	1,439	1,399	(40)	3	(43)
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,477	2,432	(45)	(14)	(32)
Assets, Property & Regeneration	880	711	(170)	(251)	82
Publica Executives and Modernisation	104	104	0	0	0
Revenues & Housing Support	766	684	(82)	(71)	(11)
Environmental Services	4,629	4,502	(127)	(313)	187
Leisure & Communities	2,280	2,193	(87)	(85)	(2)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,084	1,090	6	(689)	695
Democratic Services	1,286	1,327	41	(14)	55
Retained and Corporate	2,796	3,093	297	140	157
Subtotal Services	18,401	18,124	(277)	(1,356)	1,078
Less: Reversal of accounting adjustments	(1,939)	(1,948)	(9)	0	(9)
Revised Subtotal Services	16,462	16,175	(287)	(1,356)	1,069
Corporate Income & Expenditure	774	803	29	1,491	(1,462)
Provisions and Risk Items	0	0	0	0	0
Net Budget Requirement	17,235	16,978	(258)	136	(393)
Funded by:					
Council Tax	(7,065)	(7,065)	0	0	0
Retained Business Rates	(6,468)	(6,468)	(0)	0	(0)
Government Funding - Grants	(2,527)	(2,520)	7	0	7
Government Funding - NHB	(820)	(820)	0	0	0
Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)	(1,683)	(1,683)	0	(181)	181
Collection Fund (surplus) / Deficit	689	689	0	0	0
TOTAL Funding	(17,874)	(17,867)	7	(181)	188
Budget shortfall/(surplus)	(638)	(889)	(251)	(45)	(206)



Table 3 – Corporate Income and Expenditure

	2025/26 Latest Net Budget (£'000)	2025/26 Actuals to Q4 (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Corporate Income and Expenditure			
Savings & Contingency and non service income and exp	52	92	41
Treasury Management - Interest Payable	5	9	4
Treasury Management - Interest Receivable	(1,603)	(1,604)	(2)
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	9	4	(5)
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO)	0	0	0
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	2,311	2,302	(9)
	774	803	29

- 4.9** As outlined, the outturn position is a net underspend/favourable variance of £0.251m, an increase in the reported forecast outturn since Q3 and includes proposed transfers of a number of underspends outlined in 4.16 – 4.17 and 4.40 below.
- 4.10** The Council must ensure it can address the financial challenges arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement and Local Government Reorganisation ("LGR") over the MTFs-period.
- 4.11** Oversight of the Vacancy Management process has been strengthened by the Corporate Leadership Team ("CLT"), with CLT authorisation required to fill a vacancy, either on a short-term or long-term basis. CLT have also reviewed the process for assessing requests for additional resources to ensure a single and consistent approach is taken to the development and appraisal of proposals and business cases.
- 4.12** As set out in paragraph 2.2 and Table ES1, the Q4 outturn for the year is favourable with an increased surplus at the end of the financial year.
- 4.13** The revenue budget is likely to come under further pressure in 2026/27 and 2027/28 as the Council considers the impact from LGR and ensures services continue to be provided to residents as usual. There will be a demand on key staff to support the assessment of final proposal and plan for a new unitary structure in Gloucestershire, and implementation of the proposal from mid-2026 following the Government's decision.
- 4.14** It is anticipated that additional capacity will be required to support delivery of the emerging Corporate Plan, maintain continuity of services for residents, and prepare for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). To achieve this, it is proposed to maximise the resources available over the next two years by transferring any additional budget



surplus or one-off benefits to earmarked reserves (Capacity Building) at year-end, subject to the final outturn position.

- 4.15** Council approved the 2026/27 Budget at their meeting on 23 February 2026. Included within the [2026-27 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy report](#) was a Reserves and Balances forecast (Section 7). This set out the recommendation that a balance of £1m is maintained to support the Council over the next 2 years.
- 4.16** Due to the more favourable outturn and allowing for the (potential) increased cost/reliance on interim staff recommendation is to transfer the additional surplus of £0.262m to the Capacity Building reserve providing a revised balance of £1.1m to provide funding for expected workforce pressures in 2026/27 and 2027.
- 4.17** This report includes the following underspends being transferred to the Capacity Building earmarked reserve:
- £0.235m savings from vacancy management plus £0.239m new posts included in the 2025/26 budget
 - £0.262m underspend against the forecast impact of Publica Phase 2

This results in a total transfer of £0.736m to the Capacity Building earmarked reserve.

Key Variations

- 4.18** The material items which have had an impact on the Council's revenue budget are summarised below with narrative explaining the reasons(s) for the variation in the paragraphs that follow.
- 4.19** The £0.300m cost reduction included in the 2025/26 revenue budget for **Street Cleaning** was not achieved in the current financial year. As previously reported, the savings target was removed from the budget following the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE) led review. Whilst options are being considered as a result of the review to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the service, it is unlikely these measures will result in material cost reduction.
- 4.20 Cemetery fees** – the shortfall in income of £43k (£39k Q3) due to continued lower service use in Q4.
- 4.21 Licensing income** – is exceeded budget by £44k largely in respect of taxi drivers' licences. (£30k at Q3)
- 4.22 Development Management fees** - overachievement of planning fees by £0.744m (£0.624m at Q3). This includes £1.613m of Planning Fees (37 Major, 277 Minor, 940 Other) (budget of £0.875m) £0.147m of pre-application fees (448), (budget of £0.142m).



- 4.23** During 2025/26, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has experienced a significant increase in major housing applications being received, rising from 20 applications in 2023 and 2024, to 45 applications in 2025/26. As a result, the service has significantly overachieved in planning application fee income. This has primarily arisen from a number of speculative housing and other developments coming forward.
- 4.24** The team have received a number of pre-application enquiries relating to other potential future developments and the emerging Local Plan is likely to encourage early submission of potential site allocations with a number of these pre-applications progressing to full application stage.
- 4.25** This increase in planning applications (and associated income from fees) for major housing developments continues to bring additional risks. As a large number of these schemes are speculative, it is likely that a number will be refused permission and will therefore result in appeals or, where granted, could also be subject to judicial review. Given the scale of development, there is a high chance appeals are dealt with as informal hearings or inquiries which bring greater costs to the Council.
- 4.26** At the September 2025 Cabinet meeting, it was approved in principle that 50% of forecast additional income would be set aside as a risk provision during the financial year, thereby reducing the reported net variation. Following the favourable position reported at Quarter 2, it was subsequently approved that, where the final outturn for Development Management Fees remained positive (i.e. income exceeded the budgeted level), 100% of the net variation would instead be transferred to the Planning Appeals Reserve. On this basis, £0.710m (representing the net underspend after allowing for associated cost increases) will be transferred to the Planning Appeals Reserve.
- 4.27** The Council has spent £0.366m (£0.300m forecast Q3) on the **Local Plan** in 2026/27, including staff, consultancy and IT licence costs. This will be fully funded from the **Local Plan reserve** and will therefore have no impact on the Council's forecast outturn position.
- 4.28** The Council has not as forecast achieved the budgeted level of commercial rental income from its **Investment Properties** due to ongoing economic challenges in the retail and office sectors, which are exerting downward pressure on rents. A net income shortfall of £0.082m is reported primarily related to the out-of-district investment property (former Wilko's store in Great Bridge, Tipton). A lease agreement with a new tenant was agreed earlier in the calendar year, with occupation commencing in July 2025 following completion of fit-out. In common with most commercial lettings, the lease agreement includes a six-month rent-free period. The variation arises due to the



new lease commencing later than anticipated than the budget assumption, and additional empty property costs over the time period.

- 4.29** Following the installation of Solar PV at Trinity Road and rental income from the **tenanted areas of Trinity Road Offices**, the Council achieved £0.043m, in income for 2025/26. This represents an excess of £0.017m above the budgeted target of £0.025m. Live data dashboards provide updates on occupancy and enquiries supporting proactive management. Formal quarterly performance meetings continue to monitor process. Current occupancy: 50% of offices let and 53.3% of available desks occupied.
- 4.30** Income from the Council's **Car Parks** has continued to perform positively in 2025/26 with income exceeding budget by £0.341m. Income from Car park permits also exceeded budget by £0.018m whilst Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) is £0.024m above target, income budgets for 2025/26 were reduced to reflect current financial performance and ensure the budget estimates approved by Council in February 2025 were robust. The Council's Car Parking Strategy 2025-2028 and action plan, approved and adopted by Cabinet in November 2025 included a recommendation to consider strengthening enforcement resources to match the needs of the district.
- 4.31** The car park expenditure budget includes an underspend of £0.054m, primarily relating to costs such as repairs and maintenance, business rates and parking and permit software charges.
- 4.32** Income from EV charging points across the district totalled £42k, representing an overachievement of £23k against the approved budget.
- 4.33 Building Control** – 2025/26 has seen a notable improvement in performance compared to 2024/25. Market share is averaging 67% during 2025/26, with 558 applications processed, representing a 10% increase in market share compared to last year. Application volumes remain steady, with a year-on-year increase of 28 applications. Building regulation fees were increased for the 2025-26 financial year to better reflect the cost of running the service. Income outturn is reported as being £0.069m above budget. Expenditure is overspent by £0.026m due in part to audit fees arising from the Building Safety regulator. Despite this expenditure pressure, the service has a net favourable variance of £0.038m (£0.44m Q3).
- 4.34 Public Conveniences** – Income from public conveniences charges is in line with the approved budget. Charging has been implemented at ten of the eleven public conveniences across the district, including Chipping Campden, Tetbury and Lechlade from August 2025. Further options will need to be explored during 2026/27 to minimise or eliminate entirely the net subsidy required to operate these facilities of £0.164m for 2025/26 (excluding depreciation and assumes income of £0.110m from fees). The public conveniences in Northleach where no charge is currently applied, are



to be transferred to Northleach and Eastington Town Council in 2026/27 subject to an agreement and the provision of a one-off grant of £0.008m

4.35 Land Charges – income is above target at the end of the financial year (£0.038m favourable) Application volumes have seen a notable increase in 2025/26, with 1,809 searches received, compared to 1,494 in 2024/25. This represents a 21% year-on-year rise. 565 searches were received during Q4 of 2025/26 (compared to 395 in the last quarter and 411 in the same period last year). These included a large multiple plot search from a local housing association.

4.36 Green Waste income totalled £1.588m, in line with the approved budget.

4.37 Despite an increase in budget of £0.030m in 2025/26, Expenditure in respect of **postage and printing**, predominantly within the revenues and benefits and garden waste service is overspent by £0.051m by the end of the financial year. This includes 6,374 letters sent out as part of the LIFT project and increases in pricing. The 2026/27 budget has been adjusted to reflect increased costs and demands and will be monitored during 2026/27.

4.38 Members' Allowances – Increases to Members' Special Responsibility Allowances, as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel in March 2026, to reflect the workload and leadership responsibilities of Members holding special responsibility posts (Leader, Deputy Leader, Chair, Vice Chair, Committee Chairs/Vice Chairs, Leader of the opposition). These changes have resulted in an adverse variance of £0.043m against the budget in 2025/26.

4.39 ICT – £60k underspent during 2025/26 predominantly because of lower than budgeted IT licence and equipment costs following careful management and negotiation of licence renewals. Considering underspends over the past two financial years, the adequacy of the current expenditure estimates will be reviewed as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process.

4.40 Underspends relating to **Homelessness**—arising from higher than forecast grant income (£72k)—together with underspends relating to **Legal Services team vacancies** (£31k) and the delayed publication of **Cotswold News** (£20k), which will now be issued early in 2026/27, were transferred to earmarked reserves as part of the closure of the 2025/26 financial year. These funds will be drawn down for use in 2026/27.

4.41 Ubico Contract – The Council's environmental services—comprising grounds maintenance, street cleaning, domestic waste collection, and recycling collections—are delivered by Ubico Ltd. The 2025/26 contract budget is £8.863m; however, actual costs totalled £9.029m, resulting in an adverse variance of £0.166m (Q3: £0.065m adverse).



- 4.42** The forecast reported by Ubico deteriorated by £0.101m between period 11 and period 12 of the 2025/26 financial year. Officers have met with Ubico to discuss this movement and to emphasise the importance of robust and timely forecasting.
- 4.43** This variance is primarily driven by higher-than-anticipated vehicle hire and repair costs, totalling £0.176m. This includes the hire of five additional vehicles in March due to increased downtime and repairs across the ageing fleet. Employee-related costs also exceeded budget by £0.144m, largely due to increased agency usage required to cover high levels of sickness within the waste and recycling service.
- 4.44** These pressures have been partly offset by savings from staff vacancies across street cleaning, grounds maintenance, and cemeteries (£0.112m underspend), as well as lower diesel costs due to favourable pump prices throughout most of the year (£0.095m underspend).
- 4.45** In addition, the overall increase in contract costs has led to a higher corporate overhead recharge of £0.023m, which was not identified at Quarter 3.
- 4.46** Table 4 provides Members with an overview of the financial performance of the Ubico contract.

Table 4 – Ubico Contract Monitoring

Waste, Recycling, Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance Services	Ubico Contract Costs OB (£'000)	Ubico Contract Costs CS (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Car Parks GM [CTW668]	68	68	57	(11)
CCM001 Cemetery/Churchyards GM [CTW688]	166	166	138	(28)
RYC002 Garden Waste Collection [CTW634]	1,310	1,310	1,308	(2)
WST001 Household Waste [CTW611]	1,844	1,844	1,942	98
RYC001 Recycling [CTW633]	3,340	3,340	3,457	117
RYC003 Refuse/Recycling/Food Waste [CTW635]	732	732	766	34
STC001 Street Cleaning [CTW666]	1,387	1,387	1,347	(40)
Trinity Road Offices GM [CTW668]	17	17	14	(3)
Grand Total	8,863	8,863	9,029	166
Net variation on contract				166

Treasury Management

- 4.47** Dividends from the Council's longer-term investments (Pooled funds and Real Estate Investment Trusts) of £0.515m were received in the year to 31 March 2026 achieving a return of 4.94%. Interest from short term cash deposits including the Debt Management Office (DMO) was £0.989m due to higher surplus balances and interest rates remaining at a higher level than assumed in the budget and MTFS.
- 4.48** It should be noted that the budgeted level of net investment income for 2025/26 is £1.208m – a decrease of £0.077m over the 2024/25 budgeted level and recognises the lower interest rate position. This was a prudent estimate for the year and lower than



the final 2024/25 level of investment income achieved of £1.621m given the forecast interest rate reductions over the financial year.

- 4.49** It is not expected that the current interest rate level will be maintained over the MTFS period, as set out in Section 3 of this report, with expectations of investment income in 2026/27 reducing to £1.1m with a further reduction to £0.867m by 2027/28.
- 4.50** Investment income of £1.507m has been included in the outturn, resulting in a £0.300m favourable variance against budget. This surplus has been transferred to the Treasury Management Risk Reserve to mitigate potential future losses on pooled funds or increased borrowing costs.
- 4.51** The outturn is £0.075m lower than forecast at Q3, largely due to the timing of interest received in respect of a development loan to Cottsway Housing Association, which were received in Q1 of 2026/27 rather than in 2025/26, following the securitisation of the loan in June 2026.
- 4.52** The level of investment income for the year depends upon the performance of both short-term investments (Money Market Funds, deposits with the DMO) and dividends from the long-term investment. The table below provides members with a high-level overview of the Council's Treasury Management investments on 31 March 2026.



Table 5 – Treasury Management Investments

Investment type	Balance invested at 30/03/26 (£'000)	Investment Income received to 31/03/26 (£'000)	Interest Rates at 31/3/26 (%)
Bank of England DMDAF	10,000	222	3.70
Money Market Funds			
Federated Money Market Fund	3,000	64	3.83
DGLS Money Market Fund	3,000	64	3.82
Insight Liquidity Money Market Fund	3,000	58	3.76
Lloyds Instant Access	265	11	3.51
Santander Call Account	1	-	1.73
Other Short-term deposits	-	13	3.93
Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT)			
Fundamentum Housing REIT	650	8	3.01
Cash Plus Fund			
Federated Cash Plus Fund	1,239	-	N/A
Pooled Funds			
CCLA Property Fund	2,199	25	4.44
Shroders Income Maximiser Fund	922	36	5.22
CCLA Cautious Multi Assets Fund	926	11	2.13
M&G UK Income Fund	1,943	54	3.41
Ninety-One Investec Diversified Fund	1,848	38	4.20
Columbia Threadneedle Bond Fund	1,959	43	4.55
	30,952	647	4.04

4.53 Council approved the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy (including the Non-Treasury Management Investment Strategy) at their meeting on 24 February 2025. Audit and Governance Committee have responsibility for reviewing and monitoring treasury management arrangements in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and receiving performance reports. The Council adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve, as a minimum, treasury management semi-annual and annual outturn reports.

4.54 The CIPFA Code was updated in 2021 and includes the mandatory requirement, from 01 April 2023, of quarterly reporting of the treasury management prudential indicators. The non-treasury prudential indicators are expected to be included in the Council's



usual revenue and capital monitoring reports. Section 8 and **Annex B** of this report provide members with an overview on the non-treasury position.

Corporate Income and Expenditure, Provisions, and Risk

- 4.55** As outlined in Tables 3 and 4 there are variations across the Corporate Income and Expenditure budgets. These budgets support the General Fund Revenue budget and are typically the non-service items such as Treasury Management, financing, contingency budget, and provisions for risk.
- 4.56** As outlined earlier in the report, the outturn includes a shortfall of £0.300m relating to the non-delivery of the Street Cleaning savings target.
- 4.57** As outlined earlier in this section, the performance of the Council's Treasury Management Investments is a result of higher than anticipated interest rates and surplus balances to invest.

5. COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES

- 5.1** Statute requires that tax revenues from Council Tax and Business Rates are accounted for separately from the General Fund. These arrangements result in the outturn position for the Collection Fund being resolved in future financial years beyond 2025/26.

Council Tax

- 5.2** For the Council Tax element of the Collection Fund, the 2025/26 outturn shows a surplus of £1.292m of which Cotswold District Council's share is £0.156m. The variance between Cotswold's share of the actual 2025/26 outturn and the forecast surplus of £0.172m included in the 2026/27 approved revenue budget will be reflected in the 2027/28 revenue budget estimates.

Retained Business Rates and Pooling

- 5.3** For the Business Rates element of the Collection Fund, the 2025/26 outturn shows a deficit of £1.910m of which Cotswold District Council's share is £0.764m. The variance between Cotswold's share of the actual 2025/26 outturn and the forecast deficit of £0.911m included in the 2026/27 approved revenue budget will be reflected in the 2027/28 revenue budget estimates.
- 5.4** Cotswold's share of gains from the Gloucestershire business rates pool for 2025/26 are estimated to be £0.771m. As outlined in the 2025/26 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council in February 2025, these gains will be



transferred to the Council's Financial Resilience Reserve to support future budget pressures, funding volatility, and to strengthen the Council's financial sustainability.

6. GENERAL FUND AND EARMARKED RESERVES

6.1 Annex C details the reserves held by the Council at 31 March 2026 and the proposed movements to/from and between reserves. The Council's General Fund balance remains unchanged at £1.760m at 31 March 2026. Earmarked reserves have increased overall from £11.152m to £14.093m, reflecting a net transfer of £2.940m to reserves during the year. The table below outlines the movements in earmarked reserves.



Table 6 – General Fund and Earmarked Reserves

	Closing Balance 31/03/2025 (£'000)	Transfers (To)/From (£'000)	Review £'000	Closing Balance 31/03/2026 (£)
Earmarked Reserves and Balances				
General Fund Balance	(1,760)	0	0	(1,760)
Council Priorities				
Council Priority: Transformation and Change	(580)	33	248	(299)
Council Priority: Publica Review	(108)	108	0	0
Council Priority: Climate Emergency	(233)	12	120	(100)
Council Priority: Housing Delivery	(500)	0	0	(500)
Council Priority: Local Plan	(1,005)	143	(130)	(993)
Council Priority: Regeneration/Infrastructure	(200)	70	130	0
Council Priority: LGR Transition	0	0	(2,000)	(2,000)
Council Priority: Capacity Building	0	(531)	(340)	(871)
Council Priority: Capital Financing	0	(165)	0	(165)
Council Priority: Other Commitments	(82)	3	80	0
Subtotal Council Priorities	(2,708)	(328)	(1,892)	(4,928)
Risk Mitigation				
Financial Resilience Reserve	(2,943)	(1,241)	1,846	(2,337)
Business Rates Risk	(2,079)	(267)	0	(2,346)
Treasury Management Risk	(375)	(300)	0	(675)
Planning Appeals Risk	(25)	(695)	0	(720)
Asset Management and Property	(382)	0	0	(382)
Commercial Property Income	0	(37)	0	(37)
Extended Producer Responsibility	0	(481)	0	(481)
Other risk mitigation reserves	(96)	(60)	0	(155)
Subtotal Risk Mitigation	(5,899)	(3,081)	1,846	(7,134)
Revenue Grants/Contributions Unapplied	(1,850)	540	1	(1,310)
Ringfenced Earmarked Reserves	(57)	(30)	0	(86)
Other Revenue reserves	(638)	(41)	45	(634)
Subtotal Earmarked Reserves	(11,152)	(2,940)	0	(14,093)
TOTAL GF Balance + Earmarked Reserves	(12,912)	(2,940)	0	(15,853)

6.2 The movement in reserves reflects the Council's strategic approach to strengthening financial resilience and preparing for future pressures, including Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).



- 6.3** Within Council Priorities reserves, balances have increased from £2.708m to £4.928m. Key movements include the establishment of a £2.0m LGR Transition reserve, funded from the Financial Resilience Reserve, and the continued use of the Capacity Building reserve (£0.871m closing balance) to set aside underspends from vacancy management and Publica Phase 2 to support future staffing costs associated with LGR. Several reserves, including Regeneration/Infrastructure and Climate Emergency, have been realigned or transferred into the Capacity Reserve in line with the 2026/27 Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 6.4** Risk Mitigation reserves have increased from £5.899m to £7.134m. The Financial Resilience Reserve remains the Council's primary contingency, with a closing balance of £2.337m after funding LGR-related transfers and costs, partially offset by gains from the Business Rates Pool (£0.771m). Other significant movements include strengthening the Business Rates Risk reserve (closing balance of £2.346m), reflecting income volatility, and increasing the Planning Appeals reserve (£0.720m) following the transfer of surplus planning fee income.
- 6.5** Revenue Grants and Contributions Unapplied reduced to £1.310m as balances continued to be applied to service delivery. Other smaller earmarked reserves remain stable and continue to support specific service commitments, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) administration, counter fraud activity, and tourism.
- 6.6** Overall, the reserves position demonstrates a proactive approach to financial planning, with resources being directed towards managing future risks, supporting organisational change, and maintaining financial sustainability over the MTFS period.
- 6.7** Capacity Reserve– It is proposed that the additional surplus from the General Fund (£0.251m) is transferred to the Capacity Reserve.
- 6.8** In setting the budget for 2025/26 a review of reserves was undertaken to assess whether the levels were appropriate considering the needs and risks of the organisation. The movements between reserves detailed in Annex C reflect transfers to/from reserves budgeted for in 2025/26 and transfers between reserves as proposed in the 2025/26 Medium-term financial strategy.

7. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 7.1** Council approved the revised Capital Programme for 2025/26 at their meeting on 23 February 2026. The Capital Programme has been updated to reflect adjustments as set out in Table 7 below.
- 7.2** The revised capital programme for 2025/26 is £3.379m with a total net spend of £2.604m as at 31 March 2026.



Table 7 – Capital Programme budget reconciliation

Capital Programme Reconciliation	(£'000)
Original Budget (Council, 24 February 2025)	4,027
Slippage from 2024/25(Cabinet 10 July 2025)	565
Reallocation of the UKSPF capital budget (£0.327m) as follows: - £0.229m to Rural England Prosperity -£0.060m to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF Capital) in line with agreed allocations. This results in a net reduction of £0.038m, in line with agreed allocations.	(38)
Revised Capital Programme (Council 23 February 2026)	(1,175)
Latest Budget	3,379

Table 8 – Capital Programme Outturn

Capital Programme	2025/26 OB (£'000)	2025/26 LAB (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Q3 2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3 (£'000)
Leisure & Communities	0	244	218	(26)	0	(26)
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing	1,718	1,845	1,608	(237)	(345)	108
Environment	1,132	651	372	(279)	(176)	(103)
ICT, Change and Customer Services	350	150	144	(6)	2	(8)
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	0	229	195	(34)	0	(34)
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	327	60	52	(8)	0	(8)
Land, Legal and Property	500	200	0	(200)	(200)	0
Transformation and Investment	0	0	0	0	0	0
S106 Refcus (NHS)	0	0	15	15	0	15
TOTAL Capital Programme	4,027	3,379	2,604	(775)	(719)	(56)

7.3 The outturn for the 2025/26 is an underspend of £0.775m (£0.719m forecast at Q3). **Annex A** sets out the detailed outturn with commentary from budget holders and is summarised in table 8 above.



7.4 The Capital Programme was significantly revised in the budget papers considered by Council at their meeting on 23 February 2026. The significant variations on the Capital Programme are:

- **Asset Management Strategy** - A underspend of £0.200m is reported against the revised budget, primarily due to planned roof works at Abberley House being deferred to 2026/27. The delay reflects the need to align the works with the wider asset management and funding will be reprofiled in the 2026/27 capital programme.
- **Private Sector Housing Renewal (Disabled Facilities Grant)** - The annual expenditure was £1.608m resulting in an underspend of £0.167m (£0.275m reported at Q3).
- **Provision for financing of Ubico Vehicles** – underspend of £0.273m against budget. As set out in the report to Cabinet in January 2026, expenditure relating to the replacement of five 3.5 tonne cage vehicles will be reprofiled within the Fleet Replacement Programme. Procurement has been completed, and the vehicles are now scheduled for delivery in Q1 2026/27. Expenditure of £0.254m was forecast at Quarter 3
- Procurement for the replacement of five 3.5-tonne cage vehicles has been completed, and the vehicles are scheduled for delivery in Q1 of 2026/27. As part of the year-end outturn process, the associated budget will be carried forward into 2026/27, subject to approval.
- **Bromford Joint Venture - (£0.070m)** Planning consent was granted on the 12 March, However Bromford need to resolve issues around drainage which is delaying the commencement of the work. This may delay commencement of works until 2027 unless Thames Water bring their upgrade plans forward.
- **Public Conveniences** – Accelerated rollout of payment devices including new doors at West Street (Tetbury), Chipping Campden, Lechlade, Northleach, and replacement paddle gates at the two facilities in Bourton-on-the-Water (Rissington Road and Church Rooms). Additional spend of £0.049m will be funded from capital receipts.
- **Waste and Recycling Receptacles** - The rolling budget for the purchase of waste and recycling receptacles overspent by £0.046m in 2025/26. This pressure reflects continued growth in the number of properties and an increase in replacement container requests. The unit pricing for all containers has also increased significantly in recent years, and this will need to be reflected in the budget in future years. Benchmarking undertaken as part of a waste review identified that replacement rates are in line with the ranges set by the Waste and Resources Action



Programme (WRAP). The overspend for 2025/26 will be funded from capital receipts.

- **On Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) - £0.065m** Final grant submissions have been completed for the installation of 24 new EV charge points across Tetbury, Moreton-in-Marsh, Stow-on-the-Wold and Cirencester. A safety issue affecting one charger at Brewery, Cirencester is being addressed with the supplier. The unspent budget relating to deferred expenditure of £0.065m will be carried forward into the 2026/27 financial year budget when the charge point is expected to become operational.

7.5 This report recommends to members that £0.858m of the unspent capital budget is carried forward into 2026/27 as detailed below:

- Spa Pool, Bourton Leisure Centre (£0.006m)
- Disabled Facility Housing Adaptions (£0.167m)
- Bromford Joint Venture Partnership (£0.070m)
- Provision for financing of Ubico vehicles (£0.273m)
- Off Street Residential Charge Point Scheme (£0.65m)
- In cab Technology (£0.015m)
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects (£0.008m)
- Rural England Prosperity Fund (£0.038m)
- Asset Management Strategy (Abberley House Roof) (£0.200m)

7.6 At their meeting on 31 October 2023 Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Capital Programme should be kept under review to ensure the revenue impact of capital expenditure and financing decisions were fully considered.

Capital Receipts and Disposals

7.7 No asset disposals occurred during the fourth quarter of the financial year. The Council is due to receive its share of Right to Buy receipts from Bromford Housing amounting to £0.325m in relation to 2025/26.

7.8 In total, net capital receipts of £0.584m have been received from asset disposals during the 2025/26 financial year including:

- Old Station (£0.076m)
- Memorial Cottages (£0.270m)
- Bourton Visitor Information Centre (£0.238m)



Table 9 – Capital Financing

Capital Financing Statement	2025/26 OB (£'000)	2025/26 LAB (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Capital receipts	2,052	952	437	(515)
Capital Grants and Contributions	1,975	2,334	2,074	(260)
Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO)	0	0	0	0
Community Municipal Investments (CMI)	0	93	93	0
Prudential Borrowing	0	0	0	0
	4,027	3,379	2,604	(775)

7.9 The Capital Financing position set out in the table above has been reviewed by the s151 Officer as part of the financial year end closedown process to ensure a balanced use of capital resources and mitigation of current and future interest rates.

8. NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

8.1 The CIPFA Code was updated in 2021 and includes the requirement, mandatory from 01 April 2023, of quarterly reporting of the treasury management prudential indicators. The non-treasury prudential indicators are expected to be included in the Council's usual revenue and capital monitoring reports.

Prudential Indicators

8.2 The detailed Non-Treasury Management prudential indicators are included in **Annex B** with the commentary below providing members with a high-level summary.

8.3 Whilst there is no underlying need to borrow with the Capital Programme financed through internal resources and external grants and contributions, any additional capital expenditure proposed in the future will need to consider the availability and cost of capital financing. The 2025/26 outturn Treasury Management report to Audit and Governance Committee in July will set out the wider impact on the Capital Financing Requirement.

9. RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

9.1 The reported financial outturn for the 2025/26 financial year remains provisional, pending completion of the external audit by Bishop Fleming. As part of their review of the 2025/26 Statement of Accounts there remains a possibility that the final financial position may be subject to audit adjustment.



- 9.2** As outlined in section 3 and 4.4, interest rates remained relatively high throughout 2025/26; with the Bank of England maintaining the base rate at 3.75% as it balanced easing domestic inflation against heightened geopolitical risks. Inflation had been falling and was expected to return close to the 2% target in early 2026, though the surge in global energy prices following conflict in the Middle East has introduced renewed upward pressure creating uncertainty for the next financial year.
- 9.3** A further risk was identified at Q2 and Q3 concerning the additional Development Management fees received in the first half of the financial year and the forecast for the financial year. With an increase in speculative applications, it was agreed it would be prudent to set aside 100% of any potential additional income against planning appeals. £0.710m has been set aside as part of the outturn reported.

10. CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1** As set out in paragraph 2.2 and Table ES1, the year-end outturn is favourable with an underspend of £0.251m.
- 10.2** The Council must ensure it can address the financial challenges arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement and Local Government Reorganisation ("LGR") over the MTFS-period.
- 10.3** This report summarises the Council's financial outturn position. As set out within the report, the favourable outturn enables a transfer of £0.736m—arising from underspends linked to recruitment, vacancies and Publica review costs—into the Capacity Building Reserve. In addition, a further £0.251m will be transferred as a result of the overall underspend. These transfers will support capacity-building initiatives in preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- 10.4** The increase in planning applications (and associated income from fees) for major housing developments continues to bring additional risks. As a large number of these schemes are speculative, it is likely that a number will be refused permission and will therefore result in appeals or, where granted, could also be subject to judicial review. Given the scale of development, there is a high chance appeals are dealt with as informal hearings or inquiries which bring greater costs to the Council.
- 10.5** At its January 2026 meeting, Cabinet approved in principle that 100% of income generated in excess of the budgeted amount be transferred to the Planning Appeals earmarked reserve, given the favourable outturn position, £0.710m is proposed to be transferred.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** The detailed financial implications are set out in the report.



12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1** Under Part 2 Local Government Act 2003, the Council must, from time to time during the year, review the calculations it has used to set its budget. The Council's Chief Financial Officer is required to report to the Council on the robustness of estimates made for the purposes of calculating the annual budget, and on the adequacy of proposed financial reserves. Members must have regard to that report when making decisions about the calculations in connection with which it is made.

13. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 13.1** Section 9 of the report set out the material risks and uncertainties.

14. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 14.1** None

15. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1** None

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1** None

(END)

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Annex A - Capital Programme 2025/26 Outturn							
Capital Programme by Service Area	2025/26 Budget [Incl. 24/25 slippage] (£'000)	2025/26 Schemes approved in- year (£'000)	2025/26 Revised Budget (£'000)	2025/26 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2026/27	Commentary
Leisure and Communities							
Spa pool - Bourton Leisure Centre	34	0	34	28	-6	6	Contractors have encountered several challenges while installing the spa pool. They located and repaired one leak, but a second leak was subsequently discovered. Although Freedom Leisure has arranged for multiple contractor investigations, the second leak has not yet been identified, and installation cannot progress until it is resolved. A leak detection specialist is now being sought. We propose that the underspend is carried forward to 2026/27.
Crowdfund Cotswold	30	0	30	10	-20	0	Expenditure to date relates to funds currently held by Cotswold's funding platform partner, Spacehive. Crowdfund Cotswold supports both capital and revenue projects. There were two funding rounds in 2025/26, supporting a total of £160,000 worth of projects.
CIL - Cycle path provision	0	0	180	180	0	0	As per Cabinet decision of 5th September 2024, the scheme was approved through the CIL Bidding process. The project proposes re-using the former railway line between Kemble and Cirencester for cycling, with the allocated funds being used to develop deliverable outline designs. This scheme is linked to a second bid submitted by Gloucestershire County Council, which aims to create a connecting route between The Steadings and Cirencester Town Centre.

Capital Programme by Service Area	2025/26 Budget [Incl. 24/25 slippage] (£'000)	2025/26 Schemes approved in- year (£'000)	2025/26 Revised Budget (£'000)	2025/26 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2026/27	Commentary
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing							
Private Sector Housing Renewal Grant (DFG)	1,775	0	1,775	1,608	-167	167	Disabled Facilities Grants provide financial support to help disabled people make essential adaptations to their homes so they can live independently and safely. Adaptations can include ramped access, widened doorways, stairlifts, level-access showers, or extensions such as ground-floor bedrooms, and must be recommended as necessary and practicable following an Occupational Therapy assessment. Expenditure for 2026/27 is £1.6m, therefore it is proposed that this underspend is carried forward to 2026/27.
Bromford Joint Venture Partnership	70	0	70	0	-70	70	Due to slippage on wider programme by Bromford (drainage requirements - Thames Water), it is proposed that this budget is carried forward to 2026/27.
Environment							
Waste & Recycling receptacles	82	0	82	128	46	0	Rolling budget for the purchase of waste receptacles due to growth in properties or replacements.
Provision for financing of Ubico Vehicles	790	0	292	19	-273	273	This budget is to fund the Capital Fleet Replacement Programme for Ubico. It was approved during 2025/26 to also fund the installation of a vehicle ramp at Packers Leaze Depot, South Cerney. The installation was completed during Q.1. Procurement to replace 5 x 3.5 tonne cage vehicles has been undertaken and vehicles are expected to be delivered during Q.1 2026/27. It is proposed that this budget is carried forward to 2026/27.
Fuel Bunkering (Ubico)	60	0	0	0	0	0	A report on the fuel tank installation, aimed at enabling the purchase of HVO and reducing carbon emissions, was presented to Cabinet in January 2026. The fuel tank location has now been confirmed at the depot, and further due diligence is underway, including obtaining estimates for associated civils work and updating the costs for the tank, fuel management system, and security requirements. Following approval of the 2026/27 budget and MTFS the original budget has been carried forward to 2026/27.

Capital Programme by Service Area	2025/26 Budget [Incl. 24/25 slippage] (£'000)	2025/26 Schemes approved in- year (£'000)	2025/26 Revised Budget (£'000)	2025/26 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2026/27	Commentary
In cab technology (Street Cleaning)	60	0	60	24	-36	15	In-cab technology has been rolled out to the street cleansing services. A request has been received from Ubico to refresh the remaining in-cab devices within the waste collection fleet. The refresh is required because the current devices are no longer receiving security patches, creating an increasing security and compliance risk. In addition, support for the existing devices will end on March 2026, meaning our current tablets are already operating on unsupported platforms, which may affect system reliability and ongoing support. It is requested that £15k is carried forward to 2026/27 to fund this.
On Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS)	183	0	183	118	-65	65	Final grant submissions were made for the installation of 24 new EV charge points across Tetbury, Moreton-in-Marsh, Stow-on-the-Wold and Cirencester. A safety issue affecting one charger at Brewery, Cirencester is being resolved with the supplier. The remaining budget will be carried forward to 2026/27.
Public Toilets - Card Payment (bc)	34	0	34	83	49	0	Installation of payment mechanisms and new doors at West Street (Tetbury), Chipping Campden, Lechlade, Northleach, and replacement paddle gates at Rissington Road and Church Rooms completed in Q2.
Replace/Upgrade Pay and Display machines	125	0	0	0	0	0	
ICT, Change and Customer Services							
ICT Capital	150	0	150	144	-6	0	Expenditure on Civica software, servers and the ongoing laptop replacement programme. Upgrade of Council Chamber audio/visual equipment including microphones, licences and MS Teams link.
Planning Documents and Scanning Solution	200	0	0	0	0	0	Planning service and ICT are scoping improvements to the IDOX system as part of a wider service transformation agenda to focus on delivering service efficiencies through ICT. No expenditure during the current financial year. Following approval of the 2026/27 budget and MTFs the original budget was carried forward to 2026/27.

Capital Programme by Service Area	2025/26 Budget [Incl. 24/25 slippage] (£'000)	2025/26 Schemes approved in- year (£'000)	2025/26 Revised Budget (£'000)	2025/26 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2025/26 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2026/27	Commentary
UK Prosperity schemes:							
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	327	-267	60	52	-8	8	The UKSPF funding is now fully committed following an open application process. The deadline for the use of funding has been extended to 30 September 2026, and it is expected that all funds will be spent in full by this date. The budget will therefore be carried forward into 2026/27.
Rural England Prosperity Fund	0	229	229	195	-34	34	The REPF funding is now fully committed following an open application process. The deadline for the use of funding has been extended to 30 September 2026, and it is expected that all funds will be spent in full by this date. The budget will therefore be carried forward into 2026/27.
Land, Legal and Property							
Asset Management Strategy	672	0	200	0	-200	200	Abberley House roof works project is currently at the scoping stage and is expected to be finalised by the end of the financial year. Subject to approval, a procurement exercise will be undertaken in April, with the aim of commencing works during June 2026. It is proposed that this budget is carried forward to 2026/27.
S106							
S106 - REFCUS (NHS)				15	15	0	S106 contributions allocated towards cost of extending Meon Medical Centre. Unbudgeted due to unknown timing.
	4,592	-38	3,379	2,604	-775	838	

ANNEX B

NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

ANNEX B: Non-Treasury Prudential Indicators

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Council measures and manages its capital expenditure, borrowing and commercial and service investments with reference to the following indicators. It is now a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code that these are reported on a quarterly basis

2. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

- 2.1** Cotswold District Council has undertaken and is planning capital expenditure as summarised below.

Capital Expenditure	2024/25 actual (£)	2025/26 outturn (£)	2026/27 budget (£)	2027/28 budget (£)
General Fund services	6,909,309	2,604,000	10,489,000	4,057,000
Capital investments	211,101	0	0	0

- 2.2** The main General Fund capital projects this year include expenditure in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants, purchase of Ubico Vehicles, EVCPs, CIL approved project (cycle path provision) and ICT expenditure.

3. CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT

- 3.1** The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and capital receipts used to replace debt.

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	2024/25 actual (£)	2025/26 outturn (£)	2026/27 budget (£)	2027/28 budget (£)
General Fund services	360,000	449,000	428,000	396,000
Capital investments	0	0	0	0
TOTAL CFR	360,000	449,000	428,000	396,000

4. GROSS DEBT AND THE CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT

- 4.1** Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The Council has complied and expects to continue to comply with this requirement in the medium term as is shown below.

ANNEX B

NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

	31/03/2025 actual (£)	31/03/2026 outturn (£)	31/03/2027 budget (£)	31/03/2028 budget (£)
Gross Debt and CFR				
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	260,000	161,581	5,000	0
Capital Financing Requirement	360,000	449,000	428,000	396,000

5. DEBT AND THE AUTHORISED LIMIT AND OPERATIONAL BOUNDARY

- 5.1** The council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the Authorised Limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Debt, Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary	Debt as at 31/03/2026 (£)	2025/26 Authorised Limit (£)	2025/26 Operational Boundary (£)	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	158,000	10,000,000	5,000,000	Yes
PFI and Finance Leases	0	0	0	Yes
TOTAL Debt	158,000	10,000,000	5,000,000	

- 5.2** Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure.

6. NET INCOME FROM COMMERCIAL AND SERVICE INVESTMENTS TO NET REVENUE STREAM

- 6.1** The Council’s income from commercial and service investments as a proportion of its net revenue stream has been and is expected to be as indicated below.

	2024/25 actual (£)	2025/26 outturn (£)	2026/27 forecast (£)	2027/28 budget (£)
Total net income from service and commercial investments	357,992	245,431	521,937	529,234
Proportion of net revenue stream	2.14%	1.49%	3.03%	3.20%

7. PROPORTION OF FINANCING COST TO NET REVENUE STREAM

- 7.1** Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue.
- 7.2** The net annual charge is known as financing costs, this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e., the amount funded from Council Tax, Business Rate, and general government grants.

ANNEX B
NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

	2024/25 actual (£)	2025/26 outturn (£)	2026/27 budget (£)	2027/28 budget (£)
Financing costs (£)	11,233	12,216	35,000	32,000
Proportion of net revenue stream	0.10%	0.07%	0.25%	0.25%

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Earmarked Reserves and Balances	Closing Balance 31/03/2025 (£'000)	Transfers (To)/From (£'000)	Review £'000	Closing Balance 31/03/2026 (£)	Notes
General Fund Balance	(1,760)	0	0	(1,760)	
Council Priorities					
Council Priority: Transformation and Change	(580)	33	248	(299)	£0.248m has been transferred to the 'Capacity Building Reserve' to support future service delivery requirements.
Council Priority: Publica Review	(108)	108	0	0	
Council Priority: Climate Emergency	(233)	12	120	(100)	Balance transferred to the 'Capacity Building Reserve' in line with the approved 2026/27 MTFS.
Council Priority: Housing Delivery	(500)	0	0	(500)	
Council Priority: Local Plan	(1,005)	143	(130)	(993)	
Council Priority: Regeneration/Infrastructure	(200)	70	130	0	Remaining balance transferred to the 'Capacity Resrve' in line with approved. 2026/27 MTFS.
Council Priority: LGR Transition	0	0	(2,000)	(2,000)	£2.0m has been transferred from the Financial Resilience Reserve to establish a dedicated reserve to support Local Government Organisation (LGR) costs.
Council Priority: Capacity Building	0	(531)	(340)	(871)	Underspends from vacancy management and Publica Phase two have been set aside to support additional staffing requirments associated with Local Government Reorganisation.
Council Priority: Capital Financing	0	(165)	0	(165)	Funding set aside from surplus car park income to support the replacement of pay and display machines in 2026/27.
Council Priority: Other Commitments	(82)	3	80	0	Unrequired commitments have been releasted and transferred to the Capacity Building Reserve in line with the 2026/27 MTFS.
Subtotal Council Priorities	(2,708)	(328)	(1,892)	(4,928)	
Risk Mitigation					
Financial Resilience Reserve	(2,943)	(1,241)	1,846	(2,337)	Includes £0.771m gain from the 2025/26 Business Rate Pool. The reserve has funded a £2m transfer to the LGR Transition Reserve, alongside £0.015m of LGR costs and £0.076m of redundancy cost associated with the Publica Phase 2 Review.
Business Rates Risk	(2,079)	(267)	0	(2,346)	Includes a £0.809m budgeted transfer and S31 grant income retained to mitigate future volatility in business rates income.
Treasury Management Risk	(375)	(300)	0	(675)	Inceas refleets treasury managmenet income achieved above budget during the year.

Earmarked Reserves and Balances	Closing Balance 31/03/2025 (£'000)	Transfers (To)/From (£'000)	Review £'000	Closing Balance 31/03/2026 (£)	Notes
Planning Appeals Risk	(25)	(695)	0	(720)	Includes transfer of £0.710m of planning fee income received above budget to mitigate future appeals expenditure risks.
Asset Management and Property	(382)	0	0	(382)	
Commercial Property Income	0	(37)	0	(37)	
Extended Producer Responsibility	0	(481)	0	(481)	Includes additional grant income of £0.181m received in year.
Other risk mitigation reserves	(96)	(60)	0	(155)	Includes planned transfer to the Election Reserve of £0.075m to fund future election costs, including provision for LGR shadow elections.
Subtotal Risk Mitigation	(5,899)	(3,081)	1,846	(7,134)	
Revenue Grants/Contributions Unapplied	(1,850)	540	1	(1,310)	Represents grant and contribution income received where no conditions remain outstanding but funding has not yet been applied.
Ringfenced Earmarked Reserves	(57)	(30)	0	(86)	
Other Revenue reserves	(638)	(41)	45	(634)	Includes balances held for specific purposes such as CIL Administration Reserve (£0.3m), Member Training (£0.023m), Counter Fraud (£0.062m), Accommodation Guide (£0.150m), Cotswold Tourism (£0.027m), Communications (£0.020m), Legal Staffing (£0.031m).
Subtotal Earmarked Reserves	(11,152)	(2,940)	0	(14,093)	
TOTAL GF Balance + Earmarked Reserves	(12,912)	(2,940)	0	(15,853)	



COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 1 JULY 2026
Subject	COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2025-26 QUARTER FOUR (JANUARY – MARCH 2026)
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Every, Leader of the Council Email: mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jane Portman, Chief Executive Email: jane.portman@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Yemi Olu-Opaleye, Senior Performance Analyst Email: yemi.oluopaleye@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance
Annexes	Annex A - Corporate Plan Action Tracker Annex B - Council Priorities Report Annex C - Performance Indicator Report
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Note overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2025-26 Q4 (January – March 2026).
Corporate priorities	• Preparing for the Future • Delivering Good Services • Responding to the Climate Emergency • Delivering Housing • Supporting Communities • Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	NO



COTSWOLD
District Council

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	CDC Corporate Leadership Team, Publica Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.



1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** High-performing front-line public services are critical to the Council's role in supporting residents, businesses and communities. By ensuring our performance framework highlights variations from expected performance at the earliest opportunity, we can trigger targeted interventions that support improvement and recovery. This, in turn, strengthens our ability to provide modern, effective services for residents, businesses and communities.

Our performance framework covers the full range of public services delivered to communities through a variety of delivery models including the Council itself and the Council's Teckal companies (Publica and Ubico). The report aims to provide the necessary information for the Council to assess whether services are being delivered in line with agreed quality standards and expectations.

- 1.2** The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

- 2.1** The Council adopted its Corporate Plan 2025–2028 ("the Plan") in September 2025. The Plan outlines the Council's purpose, vision, values, key priorities, and measures of success.

- 2.2** Progress on key actions identified in the Corporate Plan for Q4 (January - March) include:

- The Digital Transformation programme has progressed well with delivery on track across multiple workstreams. Work includes delivering completed projects including Windows 11, Microsoft Copilot Chat rollout, Salesforce Automatic Case Detection now live.
- Local Government Reorganisation activity has advanced, with the government undertaking their statutory consultation and good progress being made in preparing for implementation ahead of the decision expected in Summer 2026. In parallel, Gloucestershire Leaders have set out a preferred approach to establishing a Foundation Strategic Authority.
- Workforce and organisational development delivered strong outcomes, with an employee survey undertaken, 97 percent of staff completed mandatory training Internal communications performing strongly with 85 percent of staff feeling informed and connected and highly engaged.



- Service delivery improvements are progressing across several areas, including digital waste systems. The in-cab system is now live and integrated with customer platforms, supporting residents to report overflowing litter bins digitally.
- Parking strategy is advancing, tender has been awarded for capital investment in new Pay and Display machines for public car parks, with installation now being planned for later in 2026.
- The second Climate Board meeting took place in March with sustained focus on the Assets and Waste & Environment service areas which together account for most of the Council's carbon emissions: 43% from the waste fleet and 36% from council-owned buildings. Final report, actions and next steps were presented at the June Climate Leadership Group meeting. Following a CDC Cabinet decision, Ubico is procuring one electric recycling and food waste vehicle. The Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment has been completed with the final report published.
- Retrofit and decarbonisation activity is progressing well, planning is underway for CDC's retrofit and electric vehicle flagship event, Drive and Thrive, to be delivered in Cirencester in June 2026.
- Delivery of new Local plan, Local Plan on track to reach the Regulation 19 stage successfully in the summer of 2026 and Plan submission in December 2026. Full Council have agreed the date of the Regulation 19 consultation to be week commencing 24th August.
- Community activity and partnerships delivered strong outcomes, with 14 events engaging nearly 1,000 residents. This included a webinar for Gloucestershire's town and parish councils on LGR, as the government consulted on the three options.

2.3 An overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex A and the Council Priority highlight report is attached at Annex B.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Overall, the Council delivered strong performance across most key services in Q4. Council Tax and Business Rates collection were near target, major planning applications were processed well within agreed timescales with minors and others near target. Customer satisfaction, regulatory compliance, waste services and leisure participation all remained strong.

A smaller number of services experienced ongoing pressures. Processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit change events, although improving, remain above cumulative targets due to earlier delays and case complexity. Land Charges



performance dipped following staffing shortages but is now recovering, planning appeals allowed remain above target on a cumulative basis, affordable housing delivery is below target and recycling rates were affected by seasonal reductions.

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.24% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (99% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (93% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (100% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of high-risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 95%)
- Percentage of high-risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 95%)
- Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (91.7% against a target of 90%)
- Total Planning income (£1,613,566 against a target of £1,016,495)
- Residual Household Waste per Household (kg) (90 against a target of 96)
- Missed bins per 100,000 Collections (75 against a target of 80)
- Number of gym memberships (4,712 against a target of 4,550)

3.2 Service Performance near target:

- Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (20.09 days against a target of 20 days)
- Percentage of Council tax collected (98.16% against a target of 99%)
- Percentage of Non domestic rates collected (97.24% against a target of 99%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (85.5% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (87.1% against a target of 90%)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (161,805 visits against a target of 162,193)



3.3 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (7 days against a target of 5 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (7 days against a target of 4 days)

Processing times improved in Q4, particularly for Council Tax Support, but cumulative performance remains above target. In-quarter performance reached around 4 days, the strongest position this year, showing sustained improvement.

Housing Benefit remains above target, reflecting a more complex caseload following the shift to Universal Credit. Remaining cases are typically pension-age or involve higher levels of verification, meaning processing times are more sensitive to delays, particularly where evidence is outstanding. Seasonal pressures also impacted performance in the quarter, although backlog reduction activity has helped stabilise the position.

With fewer straightforward cases, complex claims now have a greater impact on overall averages, and timescales continue to be affected by factors outside the Council's control, including evidential delays.

Alongside this, the Council has continued targeted support to financially vulnerable residents, focusing on benefit take-up, hardship support, and pension credit awareness. These activities are helping ensure residents access the support they are entitled to.

Overall direction of travel is positive, with continued improvement expected.

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (40.2% against a target of 30%)

Between January to March, seventeen planning appeals were determined. Of these, six were allowed in favour of the applicant, giving an allowance rate of 35.3% for the quarter. As this measure is cumulative, from April to December a total of 51 appeals were decided, with 20 allowed and 1 split decision, resulting in a cumulative allowance rate of 40.2%.

While the general target is for no more than 30% of appeals to be allowed, the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 introduced a formal system for assessing the performance of local planning authorities. The Council is well within tolerance for this measure. Under the designation criteria, an authority may be identified as underperforming if 10% or more of its total planning decisions are overturned at appeal. This measure of decision quality is assessed over a rolling two-year period and is applied separately to major and non-major development categories. It's important to note that the 10% threshold is based on the total number of decisions made, not just those that are appealed. Authorities exceeding this threshold in either category may be designated,



allowing applicants to submit certain types of applications directly to the Secretary of State. The Council is well below this threshold.

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (69 against a target of 100)

In Cotswold, twenty-eight affordable homes were delivered during Q4, bringing the year-to-date total to sixty-nine. These completions comprised 11 in South Cerney and Tetbury by Bromford, 11 new homes at Dunstall Farm by Cottsway, and 6 at Down Ampney by Sanctuary Housing Association.

The delivery of affordable housing is subject to fluctuations, as most developments take over a year to complete and often progress in multiple phases over several years. Early over delivery at the beginning of the current strategy has also contributed to the dip in recent annual outputs, as the early years set a higher baseline.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2018, the district has delivered approximately 880 affordable homes, averaging around 110 homes per year. Despite the recent dip in completions, this continues to reflect the Council's ongoing commitment to delivering affordable housing and meeting long-term housing needs in the area.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (61.9% against a target of 90%)

The Council's performance against the 10-day target for completing official Land Charges searches improved in Q4, rising from 46.98% in Q3 to 61.9%, still below the 90% target. A total of 533 searches was carried out within the period, with 330 completed within the target period.

Performance declined earlier in the year due to staffing disruption in a very small team, with reduced capacity following loss of a team member last September.

To stabilise the service, a new starter will be joining the team to support the HM Land Registry Project, freeing up officers so they are able to clear the backlog, establish workflow control, and direct specialist capacity toward the more technical elements of the search process. Following the sharp downturn in September, the Council has shown a steady improvement in results.

An improvement process is underway to identify constraints around the service, reduce workarounds and remove dependencies.

Percentage of household waste recycled (54.43% against a target of 61%)

During Q4, the Council's household recycling rate fell by 2.2% compared to the same quarter last year, reflecting a wider national trend influenced by seasonal and structural factors. Residual household waste performed below target in Q4 but increased by 4.5kg compared to the same quarter last year.

Despite the recent dip, the Council continues to demonstrate strong performance. According to the latest 2024/25 national results on local authority waste management,



the district ranks within the top 25 councils in England for household recycling and remains firmly in the top quartile nationwide. This achievement underscores the Council's sustained commitment to environmental stewardship and effective waste management practices.

Nationally, recycling rates continue to vary widely: in 2024/25, councils in England recorded household recycling rates ranging from 17% to 63.9%, with a national average of 41.23%, highlighting the considerable spread between the highest- and lowest-performing areas. Against this backdrop, Cotswold continues to perform strongly with a recycling rate of 56.70%, placing the district firmly within the top tier nationally.

3.4 A full performance report is attached at Annex C.

3.5 As previously agreed, where possible, broader benchmarking has been included in the full performance report to gain a more robust and insightful evaluation of performance. Where benchmarking data is not currently available or outdated, this is noted, and further investigations will be undertaken to look at options.

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.1 This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 29 June 2026. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to Cabinet.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None specifically because of this report. However, a failure to meet statutory deadlines or standards in some services may expose the Council to legal challenge and/or financial liability.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 Contained in this report.



8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 None

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Contained in this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

(END)

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Priorities	Sub-Priority	Action	Portfolio Holder	Accountable Officer(s)	Updated By	Start date	End date	Status	Q4 Update
Preparing for the Future	Driving organisational and cultural change to be fit for the future	Transformation - Develop Strategy Action Plan	Cllr Mike Every Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Helen Martin	Helen Martin	Aug-25	Mar-28	On Target	Plan further refined and cross referenced to the ICT development programme. ICT Programme has kicked off, In house projects are awaiting kick off. Meeting with Portfolio members being arranged to update.
Preparing for the Future	Driving organisational and cultural change to be fit for the future	Transformation through changing existing or creating new service delivery models, and/or making changes to the organisation structure, roles, processes or technology to improve outcomes, as a result of introducing new ways of working, and/or to reduce the costs of services.	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Helen Martin	Helen Martin	Oct-25	Mar-28	On Target	Workstream 2 of the technical programme is progressing well. - Business world procurement enhancement project has now been closed down - The projects for Business World escalation and new starter alerts have been completed, but are awaiting project close down - PropTech Round 4 Continuous funding round is complete - PropTech & Geovation round 5 Challenge is complete - IDOX integration with Planda is complete - Enterprise Task for DM officers Workflow and Process automation has gone Go Live and is now complete
Preparing for the Future	Driving organisational and cultural change to be fit for the future	Digital Transformation: accelerating the use of digital technology to improve council services, enhance accessibility, and promote digital inclusion across communities.	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Helen Martin	Helen Martin	Oct-25	Mar-28	On Target	Workstream 1 of technical programme is progressing well with very little concerns. - Windows 11 - Platform management project is complete - Microsoft CoPilot Chat rollout is complete - Automatic Case Detection (Salesforce) is complete and has gone Live
Preparing for the Future	Preparing for Local Government Reorganisation	Prepare the LGR submission to government. Prepare the next phase of the LGR Programme. Implement the governments decision.	Cllr Mike Every	Jane Portman	Jane Portman	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The government undertook their statutory consultation during this quarter. Responses will be considered as part of the decision making process. The Portfolio and Programme team is being developed to drive through the implementation plan in advance of the governments decision. Good progress is being made in preparing for implementing the governments decision, which is due in Summer 2026.
Preparing for the Future	Preparing for Local Government Reorganisation	Consult with other local authorities to inform possible options for establishing a Strategic Authority	Cllr Mike Every	Jane Portman	Jane Portman	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The government has written to all local authorities setting out their expectations regarding devolution, and Gloucestershire Leaders have responded setting out their preferred option of establishing a Foundation Strategic Authority across Gloucestershire in advance of joining the West of England Combined Authority, in due course.
Preparing for the Future	Developing our workforce	Deliver the People and Culture Strategy	Cllr Mike Every	Angela Claridge	Angela Claridge	Sep-25	Mar-28	On Target	Employee survey undertaken, results analysed and actions being determined to progress the findings. Number of HR policies either introduced or updated (EDI&E, Carers, Dogs at Work, Smoke Free, Recruitment, Relocation, Retirement and Sickness Absence). 97% of staff have completed all their mandatory training.

Preparing for the Future	Developing our workforce	Deliver the Internal Communications Plan, to keep staff informed and engaged in organisational development and LGR	Cllr Mike Evemy	Matt Abbott	Matt Abbott	Sep-25	Mar-28	On Target	The final period of 25/26 saw a successful end to year one of the council's internal communications strategy. In a employee experience survey held through January and February, 85% of staff said they felt the council's communications and engagement activity helps keep them informed and connected. Across a number of KPIs, internal communications performance has been achieving expected performance, or exceeding. Throughout the year, an average of 32 pieces of content were posted to the council's portal per month exceeding target, with the number of visitors and page views on target, staff briefings were held with greater frequency and at least 100 attendees at each. Through the Future Gloucestershire / LGR Portfolio and Programme Office, fortnightly updates on LGR have been sent every other Wednesday. The roll out of the Council's new values continued, with display assets showing case studies. KPIs and targets have been updated for the next financial year.
Preparing for the Future	Developing our workforce	Consideration of a small number of functions currently in Publica in light of their focus core function delivery	Cllr Mike Evemy	Jane Portman	Jane Portman	Jul-25	Dec-25	On Target	Services continue to be reviewed. The statutory safeguarding function and the Flood Risk Management function are planned to be transferred back to the council in Q1 2026/2027. Service reviews are a key part of the Publica Business Plan for 2026/2027.
Preparing for the Future	Deliver the new Local Plan	Adopt the new Local Plan, providing a robust development framework for the Cotswold area post 2028 that provides affordable housing, employment and infrastructure for present and future generations whilst conserving and enhancing the national landscape.	Cllr Juliet Layton	Geraldine LeCointe	Andrew Maxted	already commenced	Dec-27	On Target	Local Plan on track to reach the Regulation 19 stage successfully in the summer of 2026 and Plan submission in December 2026. Full Council have agreed the date of the Regulation 19 consultation to be week commencing 24th August.
Delivering good services	Ensure value for money and good standards	Develop a Fleet Replacement programme	Cllr Andrea Pellegram	Peta Johnson	Peta Johnson	already commenced	Apr-26	On Target	Tenders are live for the majority of the recycling and food waste vehicles and 7.5t vehicles. Trials are taking place to inform the tender process for a mechanical sweeper. The remaining procurement processes are at an earlier stage of development.
Delivering good services	Ensure value for money and good standards	Improve and digitise engagement with the customers of the Waste and Environment Services	Cllr Andrea Pellegram	Peta Johnson	Peta Johnson	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The in-cab system has been rolled out on street cleansing services. This system is now integrated with Salesforce and allows residents to report overflowing litter bins by selecting the bin on a map.
Delivering good services	Ensure value for money and good standards	Adapt to changes in Waste legislation	Cllr Andrea Pellegram	Peta Johnson	Peta Johnson	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Waste flow modelling is continuing and is being used to inform vehicle design. This includes modelling for the upcoming flexible plastics collection required under Simpler Recycling.
Delivering good services	Ensure value for money and good standards	Implement the Planning Advisory Service action plan	Cllr Juliet Layton	Geraldine LeCointe	Harrison Bowley	already commenced	Aug-26	On Target	The end of 2025/26 saw the implementation of Enterprise for Development Management. Additionally, pre-application fees were reviewed and updated ready for the new financial year, including a review of additional services and opportunities to enhance the service. A PPA template and process was also agreed and referenced within the new pre-application schedule.
Delivering good services	Enhance financial resilience and make best use of our assets	Maintain financial sustainability over the MTFs-period (2026/27 to 2029/30) following the outcome of the Fair Funding 2.0 review.	Cllr Patrick Coleman	David Stanley	David Stanley	Apr-26	Mar-28	On Target	Started

Delivering good services	Play our part in maintaining and enhancing the public realm	Introduce charging to sustain Council owned public toilets.	Cllr Tony Dale	Claire Locke Sue Hughes	Claire Locke	already commenced	Dec-25	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	Charging mechanisms have now been introduced to all public conveniences, although charging has not yet been implemented at Northleach pending the conclusion of discussions regarding the future ownership and management of those facilities.
Delivering good services	Play our part in maintaining and enhancing the public realm	Deliver the new Parking Strategy.	Cllr Tony Dale	Sue Hughes	Sue Hughes	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The parking team have awarded contracts for the new parking machines for the District, together with implementing the changes to the parking order to reflect the actions identified in the car parking strategy.
Delivering good services	Play our part in maintaining and enhancing the public realm	Invest in and maintain our car parks	Cllr Tony Dale	Alan Hope	Andrew Turner	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Capital investment works complete, inspections/maintenance ongoing. Collaboration between service areas to address issues as they arise.
Delivering good services	Deliver the new Local Plan	Ensure our planning policies deliver our corporate priorities and promote carbon neutral development and sustainable infrastructure for our communities	Cllr Juliet Layton	Geraldine LeCointe Jo Symons	Andrew Maxted	already commenced	Dec-26	On Target	DM policies have been drafted and, together with the strategic policies, aim to ensure the Plan is 'green to the core'. The Draft Plan remains on track for submission to the Planning Inspectorate by December 2026. We are also commissioning our consultants, Étude, one of the leading specialists in this field nationally, to ensure our evidence is fully up to date and robust to support the Plan's submission.
Responding to the climate emergency	Support and Enable Residents & Businesses	Expand the network of Electric Vehicle Charge Points	Cllr Mike McKeown	Olivia McGregor	Olivia McGregor	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	A 'sim-touch' issue relating to the earthing of 1 EVCP at Brewery car park is preventing that 1 unit from being fully operational. Property and Assets are in conversation with supplier Connected Kerb to resolve the issue.
Responding to the climate emergency	Decarbonise Council Operations	Embed climate action into council services to reduce the council's operational carbon emissions	Cllr Mike McKeown	Olivia McGregor	Olivia McGregor	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The second climate board took place on 3rd March 2026 with a continued focus on the Assets and Waste & Environment service areas. These are responsible for the majority of the Council's carbon emissions (waste fleet 43% of emissions, council owned buildings 36% of emissions). The Council are continuing to work with Ubico to plan and prepare for the installation of a fuel tank at the depot. A fuel tank is required to source HVO to fuel the vehicles. Following a CDC cabinet decision - Ubico are currently procuring new vehicles in line with the Capital Fleet Replacement Programme. This includes the procurement of one electric recycling and food waste vehicle, requiring an upgrade to the vehicle charging capacity at the depot. The depot has one charger installed that charges a plug-in hybrid van. An additional, more heavy-duty charger is required to charge the collection vehicle.
Responding to the climate emergency	Increase resilience to the effects of climate change	Work in partnership to respond to the Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment	Cllr Mike McKeown	Olivia McGregor	Olivia McGregor	Oct-25	Mar-28	On Target	'Final report published in November. This action to therefore be replaced by next steps and actions to implement. To be presented at the June CLG meeting
Responding to the climate emergency	Deliver high quality retrofit advice and support installation of renewables across the district	Deliver high quality retrofit advice and support installation of renewables across the district through policy, partnership working and initiatives	Cllr Mike McKeown	Olivia McGregor	Olivia McGregor	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Retrofit engagement events across the district have generated strong interest but limited resident uptake: as a result, the programme is pivoting towards high quality online videos and case studies to stimulate demand for home visits, which are experiencing high numbers of requests. Planning is underway for CDC's retrofit and electric vehicle flagship event, Drive and Thrive, to be delivered in Cirencester in early June 2026.'

Delivering Housing	Deliver the new Local Plan	Allocate sites in line with Government requirements that will boost housing delivery whilst taking account of the significant constraints across the district	Cllr Juliet Layton	Geraldine LeCointe	Andrew Maxted	already commenced	Dec-26	On Target	The Council, with its technical consultants, are currently assessing the deliverability of potential sites. This will inform the Reg. 19 version of the plan. Consultation on this plan commences 24th August.
Delivering Housing	Working with our partners to deliver more affordable homes	Move forward a Pipeline of Rural Affordable Housing Sites and develop ways to increase Affordable Housing delivery	Cllr Juliet Layton	Alan Hope	Alan Hope	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Partnership working to deliver affordable housing ongoing. Rural Exception site Pipeline continues to be developed. NPPF consultation document potential 5% cap unhelpful
Delivering Housing	Understanding everyone's housing needs	Adopt and implement the Preventing Homelessness Strategy	Cllr Juliet Layton	Calire Locke Caroline Clissold	Caroline Clissold	Sep-25	Mar-28	On Target	A half year review of the Preventing Homelessness strategy is underway, with most actions on target or ahead of target. A full review of the strategy against the MHCLG's National Plan to End Homelessness is also being undertaken.
Delivering Housing	Understanding everyone's housing needs	Continue to monitor housing needs to inform the councils revised Housing Strategy	Cllr Juliet Layton	Claire Locke Caroline Clissold	Caroline Clissold	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Quarterly reviews of H-CLIC data are being carried out to inform housing trends and monitor increases in contacts.
Delivering Housing	Understanding everyone's housing needs	Refocus the Housing Strategy on Strategic Actions.	Cllr Juliet Layton	Alan Hope	Alan Hope	Aug-25	Oct-25	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	The refocussed draft Housing Strategy will be going forward to Cabinet to consider
Supporting communities	Strengthen our links with town and parish councils and key stakeholders	Engage with and support town and parish councils to prepare for Local Government Reorganisation	Cllr Mike Evemy	Matt Abbott	Matt Abbott	Jun-25	Mar-28	On Target	In Q4, the Council has engaged with towns and parishes on LGR. This included a webinar for Gloucestershire's town and parish councils on LGR, as the government consulted on the three options. We have organised the next set of TPC forums for May, and continued to issue a monthly newsletter to TPCs which has included updates on LGR and the Local Plan
Supporting communities	Encourage community health and wellbeing	Enable networking and public engagement events to help local residents to access support services	Cllr Paul Evans	Joseph Walker	Clare Jobling	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The Easter HAF programme was delivered successfully, with strong engagement across providers, while the final Strengthening Local Communities events were completed, with 14 events engaging nearly 1,000 residents and improving access to services in rural areas. Looking ahead, priorities include piloting advice services in a school setting, strengthening early intervention through housing partnerships, fostering partner collaboration through the Cotswold Food Network, and widening access to cultural opportunities through local partnerships.
Supporting communities	Encourage community health and wellbeing	Celebrate the contribution of individuals and local groups	Cllr Paul Evans	Joseph Walker	Clare Jobling	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	A further cohort of Unsung Heroes were feted at Council in March. Numbers of nominees have dropped,, potentially because a lot of residents were put forward in earlier rounds, so we have dropped to three times yearly, and will continue to work with comms and external partners to raise awareness of the scheme
Supporting communities	Encourage community health and wellbeing	Promote community activity through Crowdfund Cotswold	Cllr Patrick Coleman	Joseph Walker	Clare Jobling	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Quarter 4 is usually quiet - the Spring round launches in February, with a deadline in April. The February workshop was well attended, with a broad range of projects, and there have been quote a few enquiries. Some of these have translated into project pitches for the April deadline, with a few other projects now anticipated for the Autumn round.

Supporting communities	Encourage community health and wellbeing	Ensure the leisure and culture contracts deliver core provision and positive community outcomes	Cllr Tony Dale	Joseph Walker	Lisa Caton	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Freedom Leisure has maintained a strong focus on Health & Safety, undertaking comprehensive internal audits at each leisure centre during January, February and March 2026. All findings have been reviewed, with action plans implemented where required. Within Culture, Corinium Museum further enhanced its collection with the loan of the Withington Mosaic fragments from the British Museum, marked by a well-attended community celebration event. The Museum has also once again been awarded the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge, a nationally recognised mark of excellence for high-quality learning experiences. Finally, a successful cross-over initiative between Leisure and Culture was trialled at Corinium Museum. A gentle Movement class, delivered weekly over an eight-week period and jointly funded by Active Cotswold and Freedom Leisure, proved highly popular. The programme has now transitioned into Freedom Leisure's Healthy Communities offer, expanding from one to two sessions per week. This initiative provides a safe and welcoming environment for people who may not feel comfortable attending a leisure centre, supporting physical activity and helping to reduce social isolation.
Supporting communities	Encourage community health and wellbeing	Work with Cotswold Youth Network to champion to contribution and needs of young people	Cllr Paul Evans	Joseph Walker	Clare Jobling	Oct-25	Mar-28	On Target	Council officers continue to work with the CYN to engage with the range of youth provision across the district. Central Government confirmed the continuation of HAF funding late last year, so in q4 GCC has been procuring HAF providers across the county, to get contracts in place for provision through the summer and subsequent school holidays
Supporting communities	Support our residents in crises	Coordinate a partnership response to address financial hardship and the cost of living	Cllr Patrick Coleman	Joseph Walker	Clare Jobling	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Through the quarter, there have been Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) planning meetings convened by CDC to ensure that the new programme is able to get up and running early in the financial year. The three year programme period will enable a stronger and well coordinated response. The current HSF programme has been able to provide resource to partners to tide them over until the new programme kicks in, to try to avoid having to run down and built up activity.
Supporting communities	Support our residents in crises	Work with the NHS Integrated Locality Partnership to improve the quality of life of children and vulnerable households	Cllr Paul Evans	Joseph Walker	Clare Jobling	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The Council continues to work with partners through the ILP, which helps ensure alignment between community focused activity and health partners. The ILP has recently carried out a partner survey, to understand how the model is working, and to try to ensure that its structure complements other partnership tools - for example the Children and Young People subgroup is merged with the County's One Plan working group for the district. The ILP provides an opportunity to update and engage partners in the outreach work enabled by the council's subscription to LIFT, now funded by GCC via the Household Support Fund.
Supporting communities	Support our residents in crises	Work with the Cotswold Community Safety Partnership to improve road safety and reduce antisocial behaviour	Cllr Paul Evans	Joseph Walker	Clare Jobling	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The CSP met in January, now under the chairship of Councillor Tony Dale. We are still awaiting the recruitment of a Road Safety Partnership Coordinator for the County to support on this important issue. The Partnership looked at the latest Serious Violence Duty toolkit, which provides a useful statistical overview of crime and AB activity. This shows Cotswold remains a low crime area. However there have been a few serious incidents recently in Cirencester, so the partnership will be looking at what activity might be undertaken to try to prevent escalated poor behaviour by certain groups.

Supporting communities	Deliver the new Local Plan	Through our Local Plan review aim to ensure that development provides the necessary infrastructure for communities and that this provision is aligned with the phasing and delivery of development	Cllr Juliet Layton	Geraldine LeCointe	Andrew Maxted	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	Regulation 18 consultation for the draft Local Plan has now been completed. The Plan will allocate sites with appropriate infrastructure provision, supported by ongoing evidence work. We are progressing the technical work, including an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which will inform Plan policies and set out infrastructure requirements for individual site allocations. This is being developed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including infrastructure providers. All work remains on track for submission in December 2026.
Supporting the economy	Develop the skills of our residents	Support key sectors to create new highly skilled jobs, including through promotion of apprenticeship opportunities.	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Joseph Walker Paul James	Paul James	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The council is working with Cirencester Chamber of Commerce, through a UK Shared Prosperity funded programme, to enhance opportunities for young people, including promoting apprenticeships. The programme has been officially launched and is now underway.
Supporting the economy	Grow a strong and sustainable economy	Deliver a programme of activities through the Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funds	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Joseph Walker Paul James	Paul James	Mar-25	Mar-26	On Target	All UKSPF & REPF funds are allocated and most projects are completed. The Government has extended the date for delivery to the end of September 2026. Only a very small number of projects are still to be completed and we are confident all will be in good time for the September deadline.
Supporting the economy	Grow a strong and sustainable economy	Deliver the actions set out in the refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy.	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Joseph Walker Paul James	Paul James	Jan-25	Mar-28	On Target	The Green Economic Growth Strategy is overseen by the Cotswold Economic Advisory Group. The refreshed strategy was adopted by Cabinet in March 2025 and delivery of the actions is underway.
Supporting the economy	Grow a strong and sustainable economy	Work with the Royal Agricultural University on their aspiration for the Innovation Village	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Joseph Walker Paul James	Paul James	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	A planning application was submitted in April 2024. It is hoped it will be determined at May's Planning Committee. The Council continues to support the RAU in other aspects of this project in parallel with the application being considered.
Supporting the economy	Grow a strong and sustainable economy	Promote the Growth Hub to support existing businesses and encourage the growth of start-ups	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Joseph Walker Paul James	Paul James	already commenced	Mar-28	On Target	The Growth Hub provides support to start-up and growing businesses and has been funded for the last few years via the UKSPF. Officers work closely with the team at the Growth Hub and hold regular monitoring meetings. Cirencester Growth Hub is the best-performing Growth Hub in the county. A bid to the County's Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) for the financial years 2026-27 and 2027-28 was successful, albeit that it is only for around half of the level of the UKSPF funding, meaning that fewer business navigators will be employed.
Supporting the economy	Grow a strong and sustainable economy	Work with partners to realise benefits of the Creative Cotswolds Action Plan	Cllr Tony Dale	Joseph Walker	Lisa Caton	Sep-25	Mar-28	On Target	The Leisure and Culture Support Officer has been a welcome addition to the team and has instituted stronger monitoring and reporting, helping us get a better handle on both the activity taking place at the museum, and the opportunity that might be realised. This has led to the creation of a report seeking additional resource to support the cultural economy, due to be considered in May. We have developed further contacts with the library service, to try to use their connections and community presence to extend the network of venues we and partners use for community outreach.
Supporting the economy	Manage the opportunity and impact of the visitor economy	Refresh the Tourism Destination Management Plan	Cllr Tony Dale	Joseph Walker Chris Jackson	Chris Jackson	Sep-25	Sep-26	On Target	During the quarter, the team have been working with GCC to finalise the grant agreement and monitoring requirements to sign off on the SEDF funding. The funding offer was signed off at the end of the quarter, allowing the recruitment of an admin role to support on the project, and commencement of a procurement exercise to obtain robust visitor economy data to underpin the strategy moving forwards.

Supporting the Economy	Deliver the new Local Plan	Promote policies that maintains and protects our existing employment sites whilst supporting sustainable economic growth in the district	Cllr Juliet Layton	Geraldine LeCointe	Andrew Maxted	already commenced	Dec-26	On Target	Regulation 18 consultation for draft Plan now completed. The Plan will seek to protect our existing employment sites and support sustainable economic growth; evidence is also being undertaken in this regard. Currently on target for submission in December 2026.
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COTSWOLD

District Council

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REPORT

January – March 2026

Our Purpose, visions, priorities and values

Cotswold District Council serves one of the UK's most iconic areas, home to 90,000 residents across more than 100 communities and parishes. We work to protect its unique character, support its economy, and improve lives.

Our Purpose

We provide high-quality services that meet community needs—from planning and housing to climate action and wellbeing. As local government faces significant change, we remain focused on delivering with **purpose, integrity, and ambition**. This strategy sets out our vision to **2028**, when national plans for Local Government Reorganisation are expected to create a new unitary council, and includes an action plan to leave a lasting legacy.

Our Vision

To leave a legacy of:

- Affordable, sustainable housing
- Resilient, connected communities
- A thriving local economy
- A protected natural environment
- Transparent, high-quality public services

Our Values

Everything we do is built on trust, transparency, and listening to our communities. We:

- **Put communities first** – their priorities are our priorities
- **Work as one team** – for residents and businesses
- **Focus on efficiency and value** – ensuring good use of resources
- **Set up for success** – to deliver against our corporate priorities

Our Strategic priorities

Between now and 2028, the priorities we've set out to achieve this legacy are:

- Preparing for the future
- Delivering good services
- Responding to the climate emergency
- Delivering housing
- Supporting communities
- Supporting the economy



Preparing for the Future

The Context

Gloucestershire is set to move to a unitary structure in 2028, with Cotswold District Council services transferring to a successor authority. Our focus remains on ensuring a smooth transition while continuing to meet residents' needs. We are driving organisational change, developing our workforce, and progressing a new Local Plan. Engagement with town and parish councils and collaboration with partner authorities is underway to design future services and ensure decisions reflect local priorities.

Actions we are taking

In 2025, the Council launched an ambitious transformation programme to modernise services, strengthen digital capabilities, and prepare for future governance changes. This reflects our commitment to delivering accessible, high-quality services while ensuring financial sustainability and organisational resilience. Against a backdrop of rising demand, technological change, and shifting national policy, our approach aims to create a more agile, efficient, and customer-focused organisation.

The programme is underpinned by a clear vision: improving outcomes for residents, enhancing organisational culture, and ensuring readiness for potential changes in local government. An initial Strategy Action Plan has been drafted and is being assessed to prioritise initiatives based on speed, cost, and scalability. The plan includes proposals for service redesign, restructures, and expanded use of digital solutions, and has been aligned with the ICT development programme. Digital transformation is central to this work, with several AI initiatives being scoped to improve accessibility and support digital inclusion. Some completed projects include Windows 11, Microsoft Copilot Chat rollout, Automatic Case detection will deliver workflow automation across the Council.

The Council is actively engaged in Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and amplified the Government's consultation, running from February to March 2026. The Portfolio and Programme team is being developed to drive through the implementation plan. The government has written to all local authorities setting out their expectations regarding devolution, and Gloucestershire Leaders have responded setting out their preferred option of establishing a Foundation Strategic Authority across Gloucestershire in advance of joining the West of England Combined Authority, in due course.

The People and Culture Strategy has made significant progress. Employee experience surveys were conducted through January and February, with 85% of staff feeling informed and connected. Throughout 2025/26, an average of 32 pieces of content were posted to the council's portal per month exceeding target, staff briefings were held with greater frequency and at least 100 attendees at each. Through the Future Gloucestershire / LGR Portfolio and Programme Office, fortnightly updates on LGR have been sent every other Wednesday. The roll out of the Council's new values continued, with display assets showing case studies. Publica and shareholder councils have also prioritised reviews of Publica-delivered services to ensure alignment with future governance arrangements.

Looking ahead, the Council is preparing to adopt a new Local Plan, which will provide a development framework for the Cotswold area post-2028. This plan will deliver affordable housing, employment opportunities, and infrastructure for current and future generations, while conserving and enhancing the district's nationally significant landscape. Regulation 18 consultation has now been completed, and evidence remains on track for submission in December 2026.

Delivering Good Services



The Context

The Council is committed to providing high-quality services that offer value for money, tackle climate change, and meet community needs. We've strengthened accountability by bringing key services in-house and advanced a Local Plan update to deliver sustainable growth. Current priorities include modernising waste services, improving digital engagement, preparing for legislative changes, and implementing strategies for parking, financial resilience, and income generation. These actions ensure services remain responsive, sustainable, and future-ready.

Actions we are taking

The Council is driving forward a series of strategic projects to modernise waste, environmental, planning, and infrastructure services, aligning them with wider transformation and climate ambitions. A major focus is delivery of the updated Fleet Replacement Programme, approved by Cabinet in January. This includes replacing the ageing kerbside recycling and food waste fleets and taking early steps towards decarbonisation through the introduction of one electric vehicle and the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil where its sustainability can be assured. Delivery of the Fleet Replacement Programme is progressing, with tenders now live for recycling, food waste and smaller vehicles, alongside trials to inform procurement and support the transition to low emission technologies.

Improving customer engagement remains a priority, with the in-cab system now rolled out on street cleansing services and integrated with internal Waste monitoring tools, enabling residents to report issues such as overflowing litter bins directly through a mapped system. Work is also continuing to review digital tools to support a faster issue resolution and further digitisation of operational data.

The Council is preparing for significant changes in national waste legislation. Current policy expectations are being used to model potential impacts on waste flows and inform the design and capacity of new recycling vehicles, including possible requirements for collecting additional materials such as flexible plastics under Simpler Recycling requirements.

In planning, the Council continues to implement recommendations from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) peer review. In Q4 the Enterprise system for Development Management was implemented, New reporting mechanisms have been introduced to monitor stakeholder response times, pre-application fees have been reviewed ahead of the next financial year, and work is underway to refresh the pre-application service for April. These improvements support more efficient case management, enhanced enforcement, and opportunities to pilot AI tools to streamline correspondence and reporting.

Work is also progressing across parking services. The new Car Parking Strategy has been approved and has now moved into implementation and business-as-usual. Capital investment works across car parks are complete, with ongoing maintenance and cross-service collaboration to address operational issues. Charging mechanisms have been introduced at all Council-owned public toilets, except Northleach pending discussions on future ownership and management.

Responding to the Climate Emergency



The Context

The climate and ecological crises pose existential threats. A report published by Defra on the 20th January 2026 stated ecosystem degradation is occurring across all regions and every critical ecosystem is on a pathway to collapse (irreversible loss of function beyond repair). The report states the consequences of this ecosystem degradation include geopolitical instability, economic insecurity, conflict, migration and increased inter-state competition for resources. Cotswold District Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and adopted its Climate Emergency Strategy (2020–2030), setting ambitious targets: an 80% reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2045.

Actions we are taking

The Council has made strong progress in cutting operational carbon emissions, achieving a 41% reduction since 1990, from 4.7 million kg CO₂e to 2.76 million kg CO₂e in 2022–23 (latest data). Key initiatives include:

- EV infrastructure: 24 new EV chargers have been installed across Stow-on-the-Wold, Moreton-in-Marsh, Tetbury, and Cirencester, bringing the total to 49 Council-installed chargers out of 150 public chargers in the district. This supports residents without off-street parking and aligns with the ambition for an EV charger within a 10-minute walk wherever possible.
- Embedding climate action: The second Climate Board meeting took place in March with sustained focus on the Assets and Waste & Environment service areas which together account for 79% of the Council's carbon emissions. Final report, actions and next steps were presented at the June Climate Leadership Group meeting.
- Waste fleet decarbonisation: The district's diesel waste fleet will be replaced with 30 lorries running on hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) and one electric vehicle—part of a £7.8m investment supporting long-term decarbonisation.
- Solar and retrofit schemes: The Cotswold Home Solar scheme has enabled 53 installations, with 26 more in progress. Planning is underway for CDC's retrofit and electric vehicle flagship event, Drive and Thrive, to be delivered in Cirencester in June 2026. Draft planning policies promoting renewable energy deployment are progressing through the Local Plan process, informed by the 2025 Renewable Energy Study to ensure the plan is "Green to the Core."
- Climate resilience: A Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (CRVA) has been published, providing evidence on current and future climate risks across Gloucestershire and highlighting best practice and next steps for adaptation. Planning for priority follow-up actions is underway.
- Community engagement: Carbon literacy training, behaviour-change campaigns, and funding opportunities such as Crowdfund Cotswolds continue to support local climate action. Partnerships with housing providers, including Bromford, are helping strengthen climate resilience in affordable homes.



Delivering Housing

The Context

Cotswold faces a severe housing affordability crisis, with property prices far exceeding local incomes and a shortage of genuinely affordable homes. Many residents, especially younger people, are forced to leave the area, threatening community resilience. The council is committed to delivering good-quality, affordable housing, prioritising social rent and homes for young people, families, and veterans. New homes will be energy-efficient and carbon-neutral to reduce costs and support sustainability. Tackling homelessness and ensuring long-term housing solutions are central to our strategy because secure housing underpins health, wellbeing, and strong communities.

Actions we are taking

Meeting sharply increased government housing targets while protecting the Cotswolds' unique landscape remains one of the Council's most significant challenges. National policy now requires planning for 18,650 new homes by 2043, more than double previous requirements, despite over 80% of the district being designated National Landscape, severely restricting where development can occur. In response, the Council is rapidly updating its Local Plan. Regulation 18 consultation is now complete, and nearly 200 sites were submitted through the Call for Sites process. Strategic options under consideration include a new settlement near Driffield, extensions to several towns and villages, and smaller-scale developments distributed across the district. All work remains on track for submission of the updated Plan by December 2026.

Alongside meeting housing targets, the Council remains committed to delivering genuinely affordable homes. High land values and property prices, often more than 16 times average rural incomes, continue to create barriers, but partnership working with housing associations and parish councils is ongoing, and the rural exception site pipeline continues to grow. Recent schemes, such as the Avening development opened by HRH The Princess Royal, demonstrate how high-quality, energy-efficient homes can be delivered in rural settings using technologies such as air-source heat pumps and solar panels while maintaining traditional Cotswold character.

The Council's Housing Strategy focuses on meeting diverse housing needs, expanding affordable housing supply, and creating sustainable, climate-resilient homes. Final shortlisted site allocations is completed and technical evidence review is ongoing.

Preventing homelessness remains a core priority. The half year review of the Preventing Homelessness strategy is underway, with most actions on target or ahead of target. The partnership is working to deliver affordable housing and full review of the strategy against the MHCLG's National Plan to End being undertaken. The Council already prevents more than 200 households a year from becoming homeless through early intervention, landlord negotiation, and targeted support. Rough sleeping remains extremely low in the district due to proactive outreach and rapid response arrangements. Ongoing monitoring ensures actions stay on track and resources remain focused where they are most needed.

Looking ahead, the Council will continue to balance housing delivery with environmental stewardship. Draft development management policies aim to make the updated Local Plan "Green to the Core," embedding biodiversity enhancements, green infrastructure, and carbon-neutral design principles. Evidence from the 2025 Renewable Energy Study and other climate resilience work is helping ensure new development supports thriving communities without compromising the Cotswolds' nationally significant landscape.

Supporting Communities

The Context

Cotswold District enjoys many strengths, including positive health outcomes, low crime rates, and an attractive natural environment. Nevertheless significant challenges persist, especially for older residents in rural communities who may experience loneliness and poor access to essential services. Wider factors such as unemployment, limited income, substandard housing, and unhealthy lifestyle patterns also affect wellbeing. Responding effectively requires partners to work together through a whole-systems, asset-based approach to community development.

Actions We Are Taking

Cotswold District Council is continuing to build its role as a leading voice for health and wellbeing, encouraging active lifestyles and inclusive community action. The Leisure Strategy, developed around local needs, directs investment in facilities and non-facility programmes, with oversight from the Active Cotswolds Programme Board across three themes: Healthier District, Connected Community, and Active Environment. The leisure contract continues to outperform key targets, including gym membership, participation rates, and Learn to Swim enrolments, with support from partners such as The Churn Project and The Long Table. Freedom Leisure carried out internal audits between January – March 2026, with findings reviewed and action plans implemented where required. Within Culture, Corinium Museum enhanced its collection through the loan of the Withington Mosaic fragments from the British Museum, marked by a well-attended community celebration event. At Corinium Museum, a successful crossover trial initiative “A gentle Movement class” was delivered over eight weeks, jointly funded by Active Cotswold and Freedom Leisure.

The Easter HAF programme was delivered successfully, attracting strong engagement from providers, while the final Strengthening Local Communities events were completed, with 14 events involving nearly 1,000 residents and improving access to services in rural areas. Looking forward, key priorities include testing advice services in a school setting, enhancing early intervention through housing partnerships, deepening collaboration through the Cotswold Food Network, and broadening access to cultural opportunities through local partnerships.

Effective partnership working remains fundamental, with support from the NHS, Citizens Advice, Severn Wye, Foodbanks, and Carers Hub in responding to cost-of-living pressures, health inequalities, and social isolation. Officers also play an active role through the Integrated Locality Partnership and GCC’s One Plan Cotswolds group to help children and vulnerable households.

The Cotswold Food Network is continuing to drive food sustainability through resources such as the Food Procurement Guide, Allotments Mini Guide, and Cookery Classes Guide. Outreach tools, including the Low-Income Family Tracker and the updated Worrying About Money leaflet, are helping to reach and support low-income households. Work is also progressing to explore a Venison Supply Project for local food charities.

Crowdfund Cotswold continues to champion community-led initiatives, having supported more than £1 million in local projects. Recent bids have included community sheds, skateparks, and murals, such as The Churn Project’s Community Shed. A further cohort of Unsung Heroes were feted at Council in March.

On Local Government Reorganisation LGR), the Council has engaged with towns and parishes conducting a webinar for Gloucestershire’s town and parish councils, as the government consulted on the three options.

Finally, the Council continues to work with the Community Safety Partnership to improve road safety and reduce antisocial behaviour. A community speedwatch film will be released shortly, and the district supported Operation Shield, a summer town-centre safety initiative.



Supporting the Economy



The Context

The Cotswold economy is diverse, with businesses of all sizes across multiple sectors. While tourism remains a major employer, the district's economic potential goes far beyond visitor activity. Our focus is on creating a resilient, balanced economy by supporting innovation, enhancing digital capability, and promoting green growth. Through targeted investment and partnership working, we aim to nurture high-value, low-impact sectors such as agritech, cyber, medical technology and environmental innovation—providing better opportunities for local people and businesses.

Actions we are taking

The Green Economic Growth Strategy 2025–29 guides economic development activity and is overseen by the Cotswold Economic Advisory Group, which includes key partners such as St James's Place, Cirencester College, and the Royal Agricultural University (RAU). The refreshed strategy focuses on creating high-value, low-impact jobs, supporting sustainable growth, and promoting skills development, including apprenticeships and T-Levels.

Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the Council has delivered projects such as business support via the Growth Hub, heritage restorations, and the rebranding of the Cotswold Water Park area as the Cotswold Lakes. Outreach from the Growth Hub has expanded to towns like Moreton-in-Marsh, and the most recent round of UKSPF and REPF funding has supported initiatives including mentoring for young people, creative co-working spaces, and town centre improvements. Nine projects received over £120,000 from the UKSPF in 2025/26, including £25,000 for Cirencester Chamber of Commerce to support young people to prepare to enter the workforce. Additional funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) has supported rural business grants, village hall upgrades, and active travel schemes. Projects funded from 2022–25 are complete, with 2025–26 funding fully allocated and the vast majority of projects completed including energy efficiency measures, solar panels, and community facility improvements. Both funding streams have now come to an end.

A bid by the CotswoldsPlus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) to the County's Strategic Economic Development Fund (SEDF) for the financial years 2026-27 and 2027-28 was successful. On robust visitor economy data, the grant agreement and funding offer was signed off at the end of the quarter, allowing the recruitment of an admin role to support on the project, and the commencement of a procurement exercise.

The Council is working with partners to grow sectors such as agritech, cyber, and medical tech. Key projects include:

- RAU Innovation Village – £140M scheme, outline planning application approved by Planning and Licensing Committee in May 2026.
- ZeroAvia and Vertical Aerospace at Cotswold Airport – advancing sustainable aviation.
- A417 Missing Link – £460M infrastructure project improving connectivity due to complete in Spring 2027.

The Growth Hub network for Gloucestershire also secured funding from the County Strategic Economic Development Fund for 2026-27, which enables the service to continue, including in Cotswold District, but is at a lesser level than the combined UKSPF funding through the districts.

Cultural development is supported through the Creative Cotswolds Action Plan, approved in July 2025, which aims to strengthen the district's cultural sector. Delivery will now be driven forward by the newly appointed Leisure and Culture Support Officer, who started on 20 January 2026, enabling this work to be effectively facilitated and coordinated across programmes.



COTSWOLD

District Council

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:

January – March 2026

Area	KPI Name	RAG	Page
Revenues, Benefits and Housing	Percentage of Council Tax Collected		7
	Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates collected		8
	Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims		9
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Area	KPI Name	RAG	Page
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	Percentage of household waste recycled		34
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	Missed bins per 100,000		36
Leisure	Number of visits to the leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships		37

A note on performance benchmarking

Benchmarking can be a useful tool for driving improvement; by comparing our performance with other similar organisations, we can start a discussion about what good performance might look like, and why there might be variations, as well as learning from other organisations about how they operate (process benchmarking). When we embark on performance benchmarking, it is important to understand that we are often looking at one aspect of performance i.e. the level of performance achieved. It does not take into account how services are resourced or compare in terms of quality or level of service delivered, for example, how satisfied are residents and customers? Furthermore, each council is unique with its own vision, aim and priorities, and services operate within this context.

Benchmarking has been included wherever possible ranking against Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Nearest Neighbours model which uses a range of demographic and socio-economic indicators to identify the local authorities most similar to our own. Cotswold's identified Nearest Neighbours are Babergh, Chichester, Derbyshire Dales, East Hampshire, Lichfield, Maldon, Malvern Hills, Mid Devon, South Hams, Stratford-on-Avon, Stroud, Tewkesbury, West Devon, West Oxfordshire and Wychavon. Additional investigations are underway to provide it for those metrics that are missing comparisons.

A RAG (red, amber, green) status has been applied to each KPI to provide a quick visual summary of the status of that KPI for the quarter. Additionally, RAG status has been added to the direction of travel for each metric to show how the performance against last quarter and the same quarter compared to last year is progressing.

A note on Standard Deviation

Standard deviation is included in this report to provide insight into the consistency of performance, not just the average results. While averages show overall trends, standard deviation highlights how much variation exists around those averages. A low standard deviation suggests performance is stable and predictable, whereas a high standard deviation indicates inconsistency, which may warrant further investigation. This helps identify areas where performance may be less reliable, supporting more informed decision-making and targeted improvements. We have used 1 standard deviation in this report to help understand variation in performance and to monitor consistency over time. This approach highlights typical fluctuations around the average, allowing us to identify patterns and potential areas of concern without focusing solely on extreme outliers.

Overall Performance

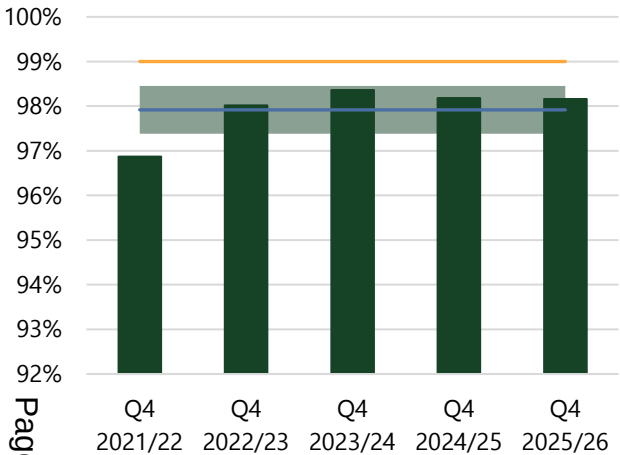
Overall, the Council delivered strong performance across most key services in Q4. Planning income target was above target, Council Tax and Business Rates collection were near target, major planning applications were processed well within agreed timescales with minors and others near target. Customer satisfaction, regulatory compliance, waste services and leisure participation all remained strong.

A smaller number of services experienced ongoing pressures. Processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit change events, although improving, remain above cumulative targets due to earlier delays and case complexity. Land Charges performance dipped following staffing shortages but is now recovering, planning appeals allowed remain above target on a cumulative basis, affordable housing delivery is below target and recycling rates were affected by seasonal reductions.

The Council remains committed to further improving its performance and service delivery and actively investing in the development and implementation of automation and self-serve options for customers. By providing accessible and efficient self-help tools, customers can address their queries and concerns independently, leading to a decrease in the need for repeated interactions with services. It will continue to monitor and assess the impact of improvement programs in reducing customer contact and enhancing operational efficiency.

Percentage of Council Tax Collected

[INDEX](#)



Percentage

Mean

Target

± 1SD Range

Higher is Good
Target 99%
Actual 98.16%

Direction of Travel
Against last Year
Slight decrease since last year

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How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using CIPFA Nearest Neighbours – Latest dataset is 2024-25 Collection Rates

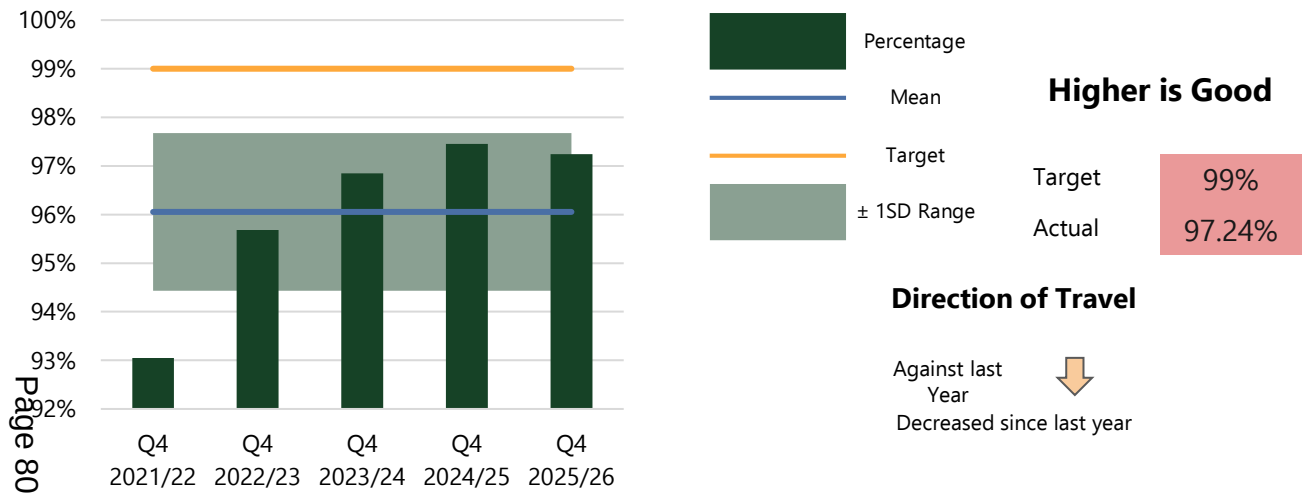
2024-25 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Babergh	99.12	1/16	Top
Tewkesbury	98.53	4/16	Top
Cotswold	98.3	7/16	Second
Maldon	97.95	12/16	Third
Chichester	97.47	16/16	Bottom

Council Tax Collection remained strong in Q4, with only a small year-on-year decline of 0.02%.
A refreshed Direct Debit campaign is planned to boost uptake and support future performance. Recovery work is fully up to date, and processing times remain steady at around five working days.

The table below shows historic Council Tax collection rates alongside outstanding balances.

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Total Outstanding
Balance at Quarter End	£419,228.87	£560,109.85	£611,987.53	£794,807.53	£1,069,550.83	£3,455,684.61
% collected	99.53%	99.36%	99.37%	99.23%	99.01%	

Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected



How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using CIPFA Nearest Neighbours - Latest dataset is 2024-25 Collection Rates

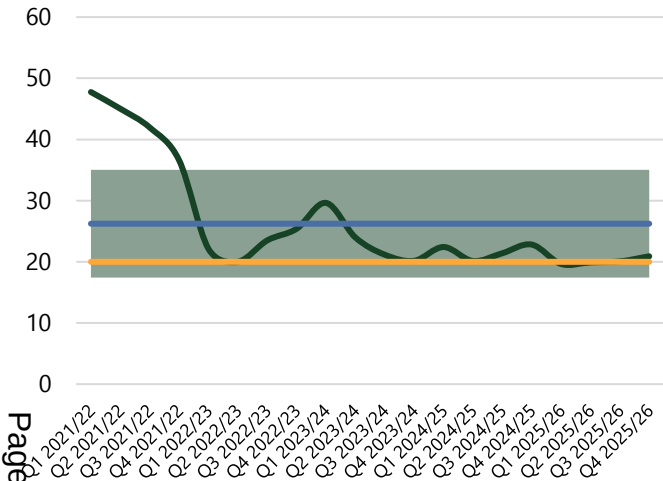
2024-25 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Mid Devon	99.83	1/16	Top
South Hams	98.3	7/16	Second
Malvern Hills	97.59	11/16	Third
Cotswold	96.91	14/16	Bottom
Stratford-on-Avon	96.46	16/16	Bottom

Cotswold collected 97.24% in Q4, a slight drop from last year's 97.45% and below this year's target of 99%. Performance has been supported by recent work to keep billing and account updates fully up to date, contributing to the steady year-on-year improvement. Operationally, NDR recovery work remains fully up to date, with processing backlogs stable at around 10 working days.

The table below displays the percentage of Non-Domestic Rates collected in respect of previous years, along with the outstanding amount:

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Total Outstanding
Balance at Quarter End	£92,878.46	£218,770.71	£238,102.84	£187,026.36	£418,430.40	£1,155,208.77
% collected	99.41%	99.20%	99.26%	99.49%	98.87%	

Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims



Lower is Good

Target	20
Actual	21

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Slightly increased since last quarter but decreased since last year

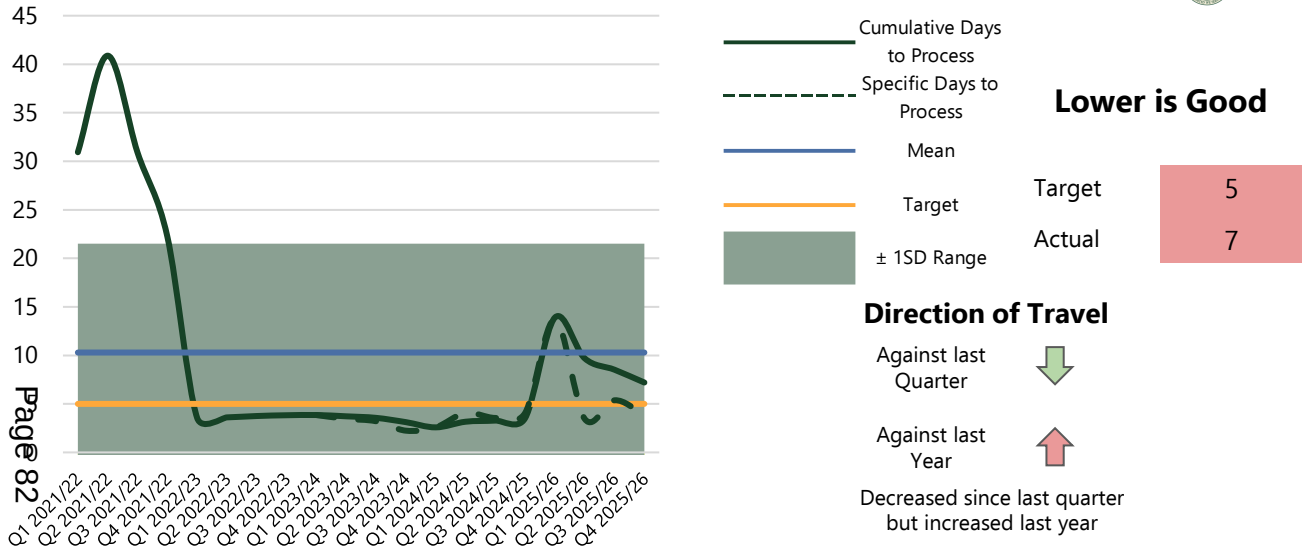
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How do we compare?

Gov.uk produces tables to show a snapshot of the number of CTS claimants at the end of each financial year. The below table shows number of claimants at the end of September 2025 and the percentage change from September 2024 for each authority.

<i>Q3 2025-26 Benchmark</i>	Number of Claimants at end of September 2025	Percentage Change since September 2024
Malvern Hills	3,758	-2.5%
Cotswold	3,727	-3.7%
Tewkesbury	5,053	2.5%
Wychavon	6,581	1.0%

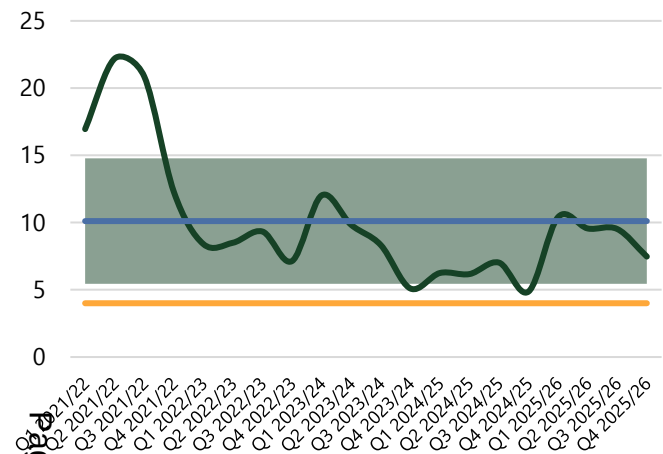
Processing times for Council Tax Support (CTS) new claims remained consistent across the year, with performance slightly above target in Q4.



Processing times for Council Tax Support changes continued to improve through Q4, with steady week-on-week reductions strengthening the position. The Council recorded a cumulative average of just over 7 days, around one day faster than in Q3. Although the metric is cumulative, Q4 specific processing time was at 3.89, its lowest levels since the start of the year.

How do we compare?
Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances



Days to Process

Mean

Target

± 1SD Range

Lower is Good

Target

Actual

4

7

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter
↓

Against last Year
↑

Decreased since last quarter but increased since last year

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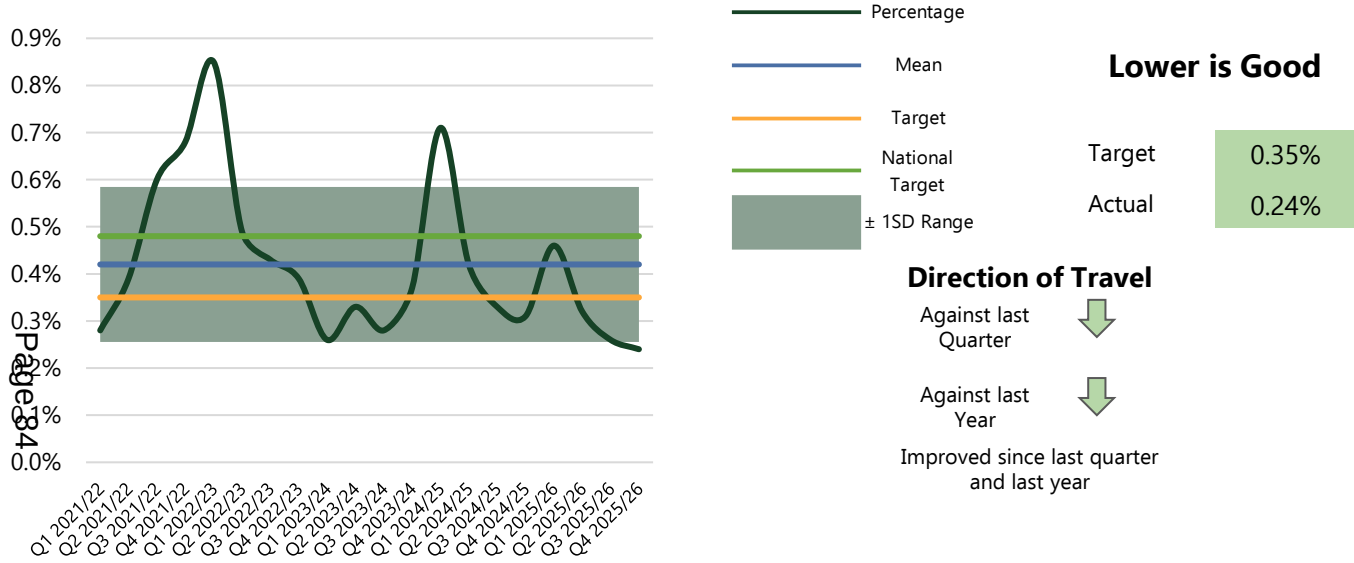
How do we compare?

Speed of processing for HB CoCs – LG Inform. Latest dataset is September - December (Q3 2025-26)

<i>Q3 2025-26 Benchmark</i>	Days	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank	Quartile
Derbyshire Dales	2	1/16	Top
Tewkesbury	3	3/16	Top
Maldon	5	7/16	Second
South Hams	6	11/16	Second
West Oxfordshire	7	9/16	Third
Cotswold	10	12/16	Third

Processing times for Housing Benefit remained above target in Q4, affected by seasonal workload pressures and delays in receiving full evidence for Change of Circumstances and Full Claim Reviews. The planned pause to Universal Credit activity helped reduce parts of the backlog, and all CFU reviews were completed on time, while the full HBAA Claims Review continues into next year.

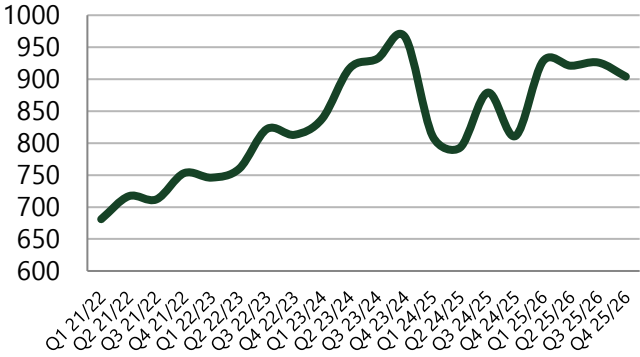
Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay



The Council is currently performing below both the national target of 0.48% and the stricter service target of 0.35%.

How do we compare?
Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Decreased since last quarter but increased since last year

Lower is Good

No Target

904

How do we compare?

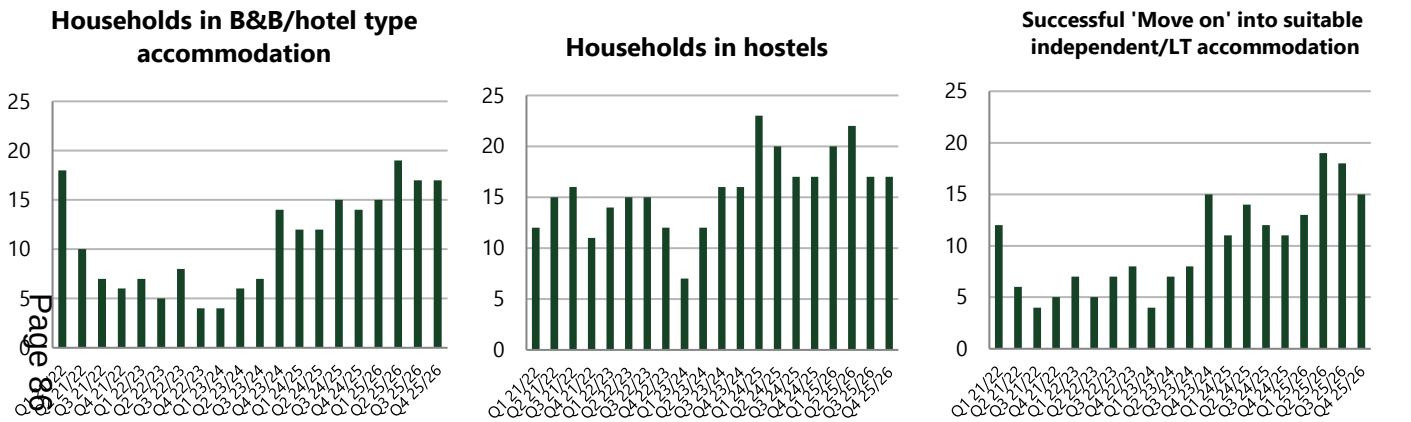
Long Term Vacant Properties within districts - Benchmarking via Gov.uk

2025 Benchmark	Properties	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank	Quartile
Tewkesbury	228	1/16	Top
West Devon	246	3/16	Top
South Hams	434	7/16	Second
Stroud	671	11/16	Third
Cotswold	938	14/16	Bottom
Stratford-on-Avon	1,181	16/16	Bottom

During Q4, the Council recorded a decrease in the number of long-term empty properties (defined as those vacant for six months or more).

Most long-term empty properties have been vacant for less than two years, with 61% falling into this timeframe. If the measure focused solely on properties empty for more than two years, the figures would reduce significantly to 353 properties.

(Snapshot) Number of households in B&B/hotel-type accommodation & Hostels (LA owned or managed); and Number of successful 'Move On' into suitable independent/long-term accommodation from B&Bs/hotels/hostels



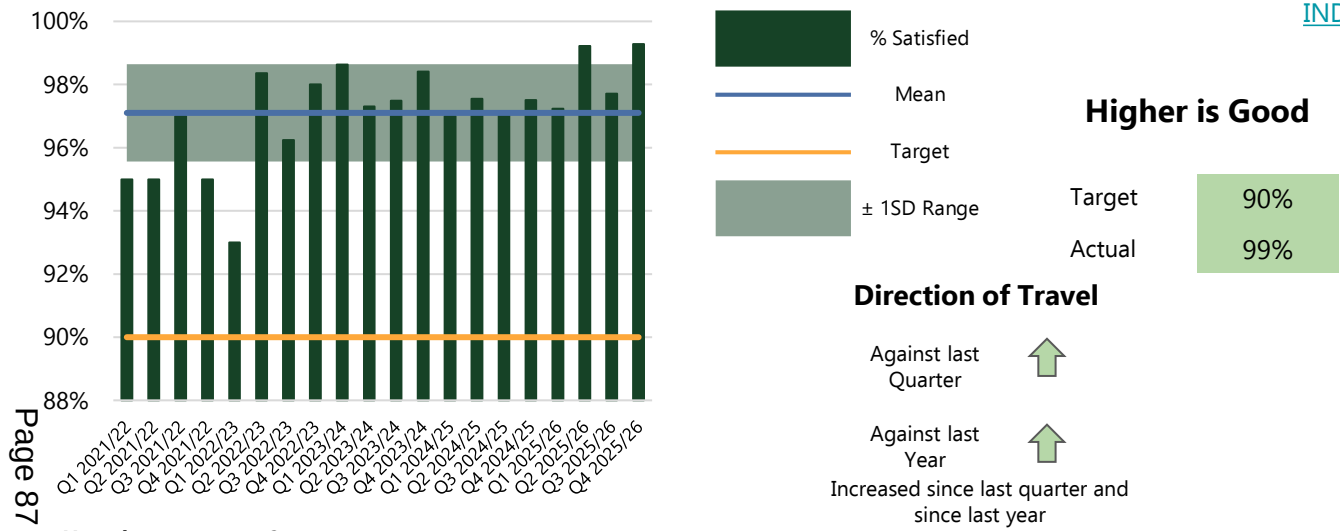
Direction of Travel

Against Last Quarter	B&Bs/Hotels	➡
Against Last Year	B&Bs/Hotels	⬆
Against Last Quarter	Hostels	➡
Against Last Year	Hostels	➡
Against Last Quarter	Move Ons	⬇
Against Last Year	Move Ons	⬆

How do we compare?
 The Institute for Government has published the Homelessness Performance Tracker, which evaluates the effectiveness of local homelessness services in England by analysing data on demand, funding and outcomes over time. The full report is available [here](#).

A slight seasonal rise in rough sleeping has been observed, increasing from typically zero or one individual to two or three.
 This pattern is usual during colder months, when individuals are more likely to engage with council services.

Customer Satisfaction - Telephone



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How do we compare?

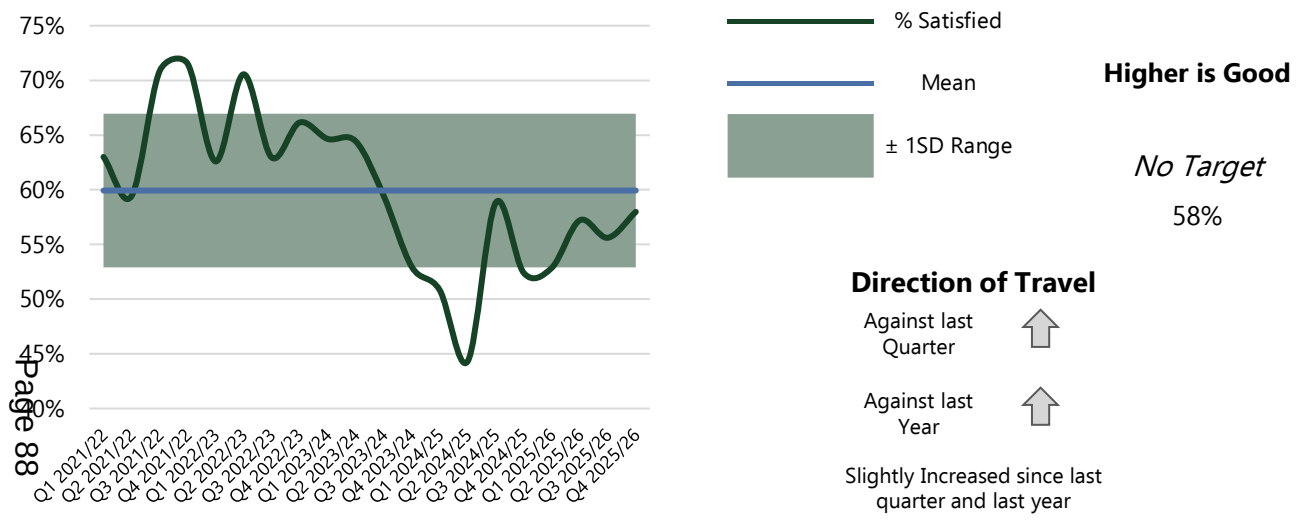
The Govmetric Channel Satisfaction Index is a monthly publication of the top performing councils across the core customer access channels. At least 100 customers need to be transferred to the survey to be included in the league table so even if satisfaction is high, it may not be included.

	July Rank	July Net Sat.	Aug Rank	Aug Net Sat.	Sept. Rank	Sept. Net Sat.
Cotswold	2	98%	2	99%	2	96%
Forest	1	99%	N/A	N/A	1	96%
West	4	92%	1	100%	4	94%

Telephone satisfaction remained consistently high throughout Q4, supported by efforts to encourage survey participation and gather valuable feedback.

A total of 693 residents participated in the survey, of these, 688 customers reported being satisfied with the service, reflecting a high level of overall satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction - Email

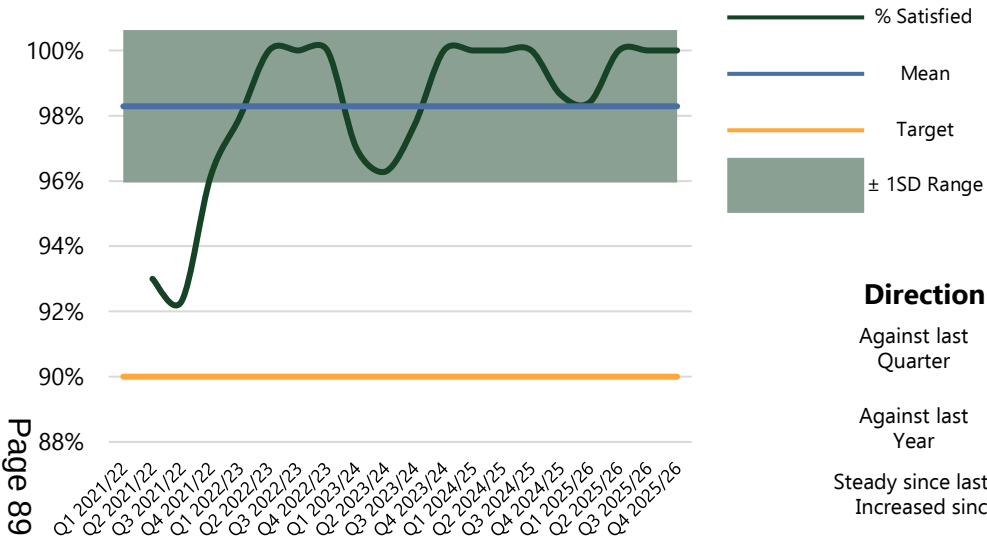


How do we compare?
No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

A total of 564 residents participated in the email satisfaction survey, with 327 respondents indicating they were satisfied with the service received.

As part of efforts to strengthen customer insight, all customer service emails issued through Salesforce include a built-in survey link, enabling residents to provide feedback quickly and easily.

Customer Satisfaction - Face to Face



Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	100%

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

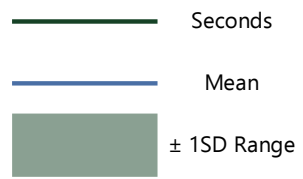
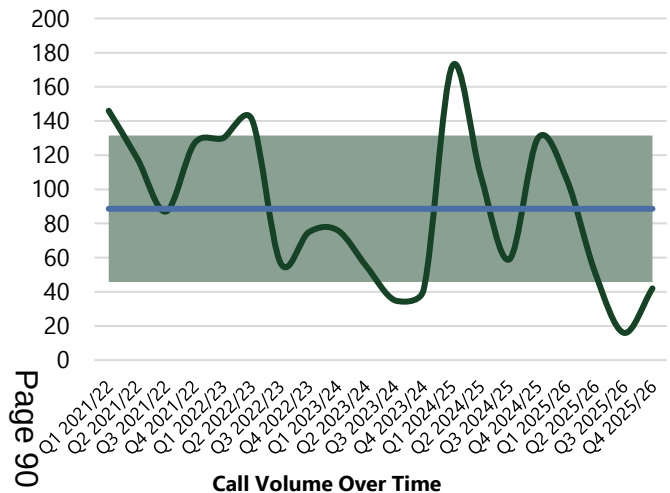
Against last Year 

Steady since last quarter and Increased since last year

How do we compare?
No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

Customer satisfaction with face-to-face interactions remains consistently strong. This continued performance underlines the value of maintaining accessible in-person services as a key part of delivering a positive and inclusive customer experience.

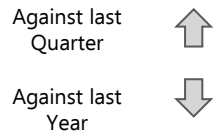
Customer Call Handling - Average Waiting Time



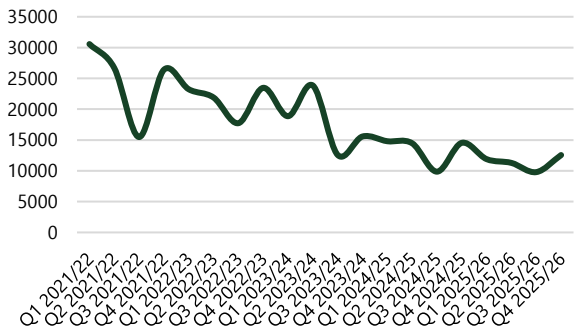
Lower is Good

No Target
42 Seconds

Direction of Travel



Increased since last quarter and
decreased since last year



How do we compare?

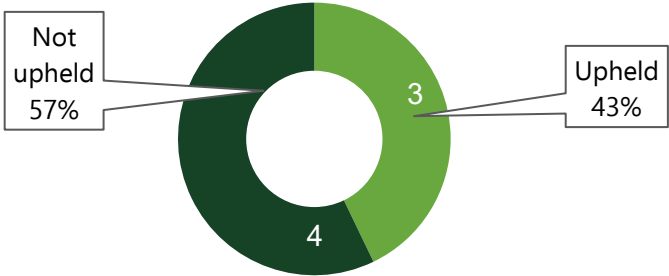
SPARSE are investigating pulling together Customer Services benchmarking data and if there is sufficient demand and suitably similar metrics to provide comparison across similarly rural local authorities we will work with them to assess any crossover in metrics and potential presentation.

In Q4, average call waiting times in Cotswold increased by 26 seconds compared to last quarter but dropped significantly by roughly 88 seconds compared with the same period last year.

Q4 is typically a busy period for Customer Services, call spikes on services such as garden waste renewals, explains higher wait times in comparison to Q3 which is a quieter period. Regular training and refresher sessions have helped ensure advisors remain confident and consistent, supporting service continuity during periods of annual leave and sickness.

Call volumes in Cotswold remain broadly in line with last year, and the seasonal peaks typical of Q4.

Complaints by Status



Direction of Travel

Complaints upheld or partly upheld at Stage 1

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter and decreased since last year

Page 10

How do we compare?

The table outlines the complaints received by the Ombudsman over the period, the decisions made on these cases, and the Council's compliance with any recommendations issued by the Ombudsman during this time.

Complaints received by the Ombudsman reflect cases where customers, having completed the Council's complaint process (see to the right), feel that the Council has not satisfactorily resolved the matter.

2024-25	Complaints Investigated	% Upheld	Upheld decision per 100,000 residents	% Compliance with Recommendations	% Satisfactory Remedy	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	1	0%	0	N/A	N/A	1/13	Top
Stroud	1	100%	0.8	100%	0%	4/13	Second
Chichester	2	100%	1.6	100%	0%	9/13	Third
South Hams	2	100%	2.2	100%	50%	13/13	Bottom

See the table on the following page for a breakdown of those upheld and partially upheld.

A new Customer Feedback Procedure went live on the 1st April 2025.

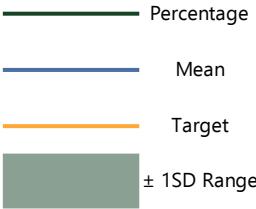
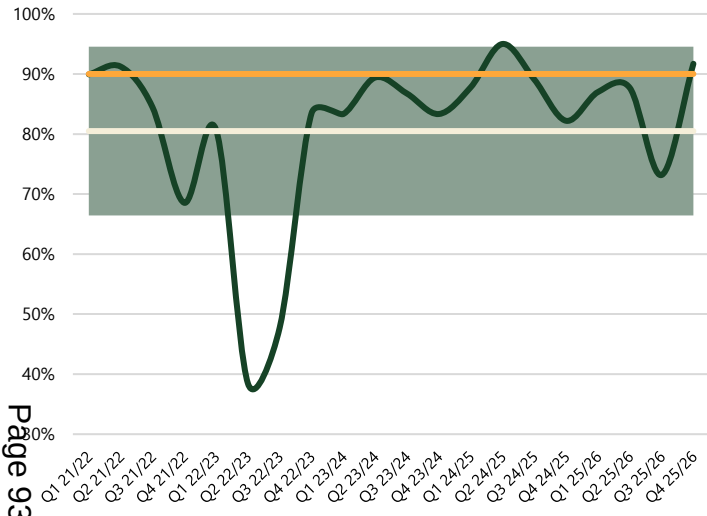
The new process has the following stages:

- Stage 1: A review of the complaint will be undertaken by an Operational Manager within the Service Area to which the complaint relates. A response needs to provide within 10 working days from the date that we advised that the complaint was valid.
- Stage 2: Requests for Stage 2 will be acknowledged and logged within five working days of the escalation request being received. Upon receipt of a Stage 2 request, an investigation into the complaint will be undertaken by the Complaint Officer or a member of the Complaints Team. A response will be provided to the customer within 20 working days from receipt of the request to escalate the complaint to Stage 2. Stage 2 is the organisation's final response; the complainant can then refer their complaint to the LGO.

Complaints Upheld or Partially Upheld Breakdown

Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Decision	Response time (days)
Cotswold				
Parking	Faulty machine causing double charging and lack of action taken	Machines were investigated, and refunds issued where required. Proactive checks in place, to review pay and display transactions weekly and ensure refunds are made where necessary within 5 to 7 working days.	Upheld	1
Revenues and Benefits	Delays in starting Housing Benefit claim	Review of training needs and system issues, with escalation and process improvements to prevent delays	Upheld	8
Planning	Failure to consider planning objections	Partial fault accepted; feedback provided to improve reporting standards and ensure clear policy application going forward.	Upheld	10

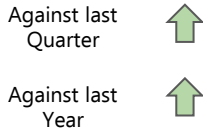
Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days



Higher is Good

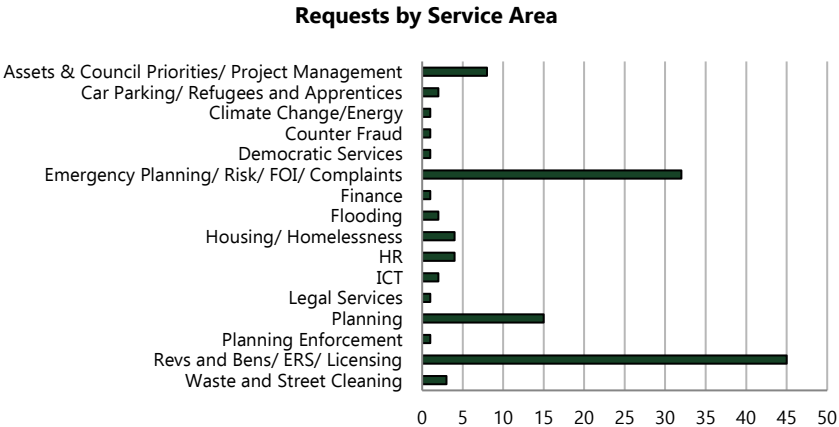
Target	90%
Actual	91.7%

Direction of Travel

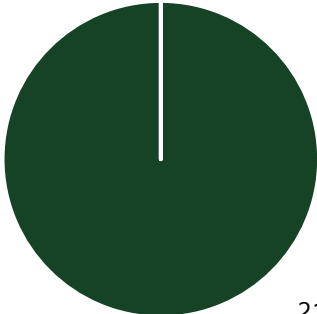


Increased since last quarter and last year

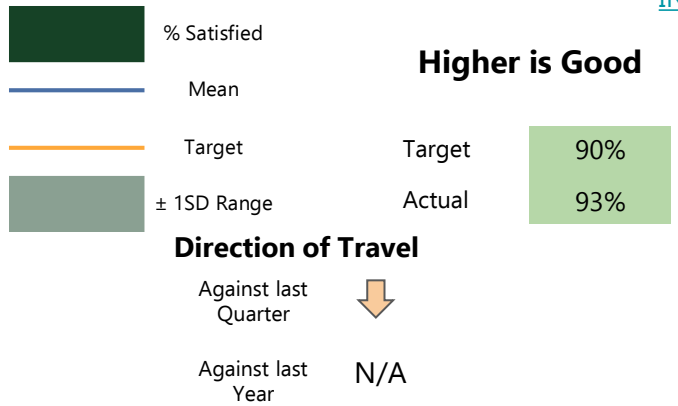
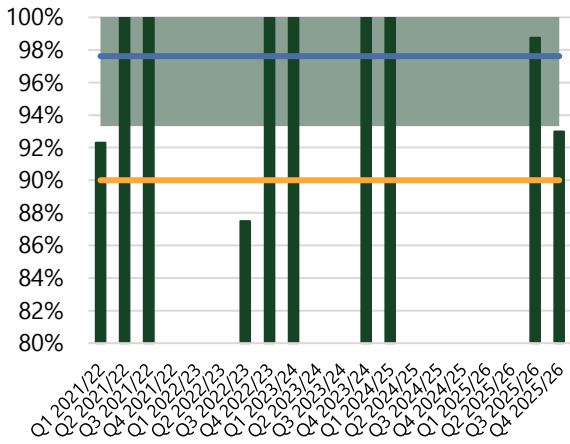
Reasons for Delays in Responding to FOI Requests Beyond the 20-Day Deadline



Service Area not provided Information in time



Building Control Satisfaction



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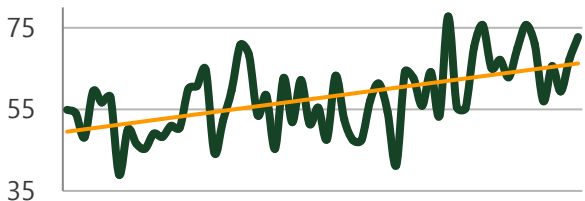
A new customer-feedback webform was introduced in October and issued with completion certificates. Early responses have been very positive, with customers commending the team’s knowledgeable support, friendly guidance, and efficient, responsive service.

In Q4, the market share averaged 66%, with 152 applications processed, reflecting a 4% increase in market share compared to last quarter.

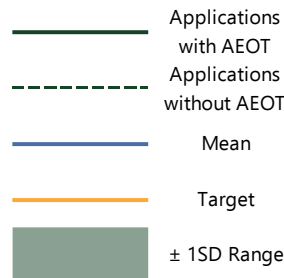
The below chart shows market share over time from April 2021

How do we compare?
Percentage of share in the market

January	February	March	Number of Apps for Quarter
59.38%	67.19%	72.73%	152



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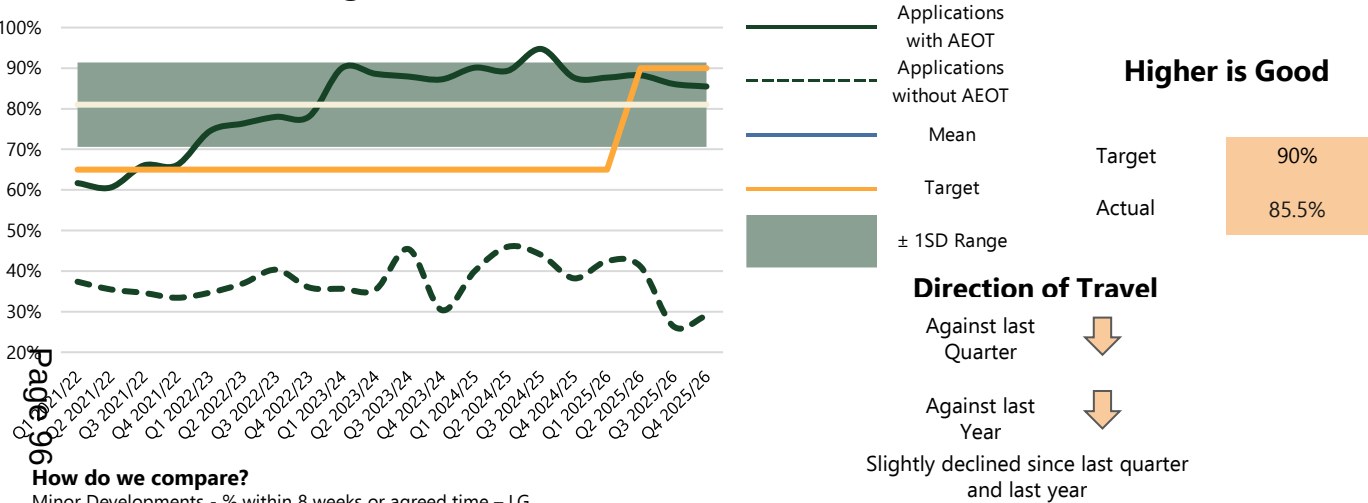
100%



<i>Q3 25-26 Benchmark</i>	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	100	Joint - 1/16	Top
Stratford-on-Avon	86	9/16	Second
Wychavon	85	11/16	Second
Maldon	75	14/16	Bottom
Babergh	71	15/16	Bottom
Derbyshire Dales	0	16/16	Bottom

[See slide for Minor Developments for further narrative](#)

Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)



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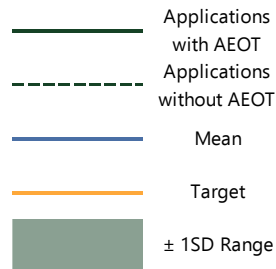
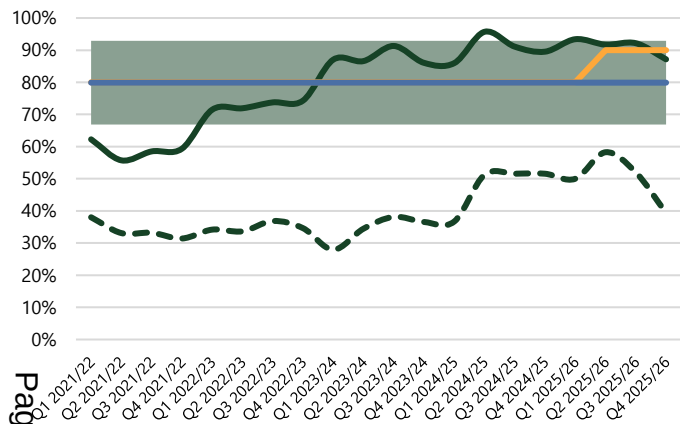
How do we compare?

Minor Developments - % within 8 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform. Latest dataset is September - December '25 (Q3 2025-26)

Q3 25-26 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	94	3/16	Top
Malvern Hills	88	7/16	Second
Tewkesbury	87	8/16	Second
Cotswold	86	10/16	Third
Maldon	77	14/16	Bottom
Derbyshire Dales	64	15/16	Bottom

This quarter, the Council maintained strong performance in processing minor planning applications within statutory timeframes. However, results fell slightly short of the newly introduced 90% service target, which was implemented following recommendations in the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) report. The Planning team continues to make steady progress with key priorities include the staffing restructure and improvements to enforcement. A Pre-planning Application Agreement (PPA) strategy review is underway, with a draft template already produced. Revised fees and charges were agreed by Cabinet in January.

Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)



Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	87.1%

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Slightly decreased since last quarter and decreased since last year

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How do we compare?

Other Developments - % within 8 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform. Latest dataset is October – December '25 (Q3 2025-26)

Q3 25-26 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Chichester	99	1/16	Top
Sevenoaks	97	4/16	Top
Malvern Hills	95	5/16	Second
Tewkesbury	94	6/16	Second
Cotswold	92	11/16	Third
Derbyshire Dales	71	16/16	Bottom

The Council has performed very well in processing Other applications within agreed timeframes.

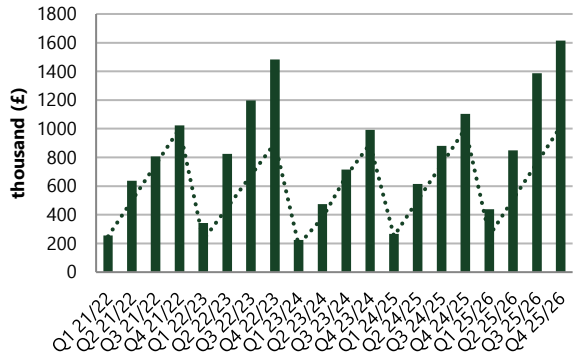
In Q4, a total of 249 Other applications were determined.

[See slide for Minor Developments for additional narrative](#)

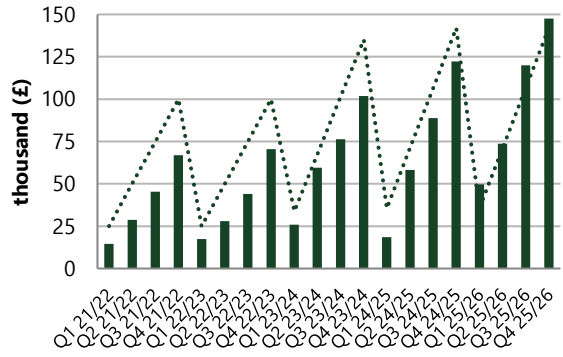
Total Income achieved in Planning & Income from Pre-application advice

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Total planning income



Pre-application income



Direction of Travel

Total Planning Income

Against last Year



Pre-Application Income

Against last Year



Higher is Good

Total Planning Income (£)

Target 1,016,495

Actual 1,613,566

Pre-Application Income (£)

Target 142,000

Actual 147,609

Total Income – Increased since last year
Pre-App Income – Increased since last year

The Council exceeded cumulative total planning income targets by about £600k delivering a strong overall year performance.

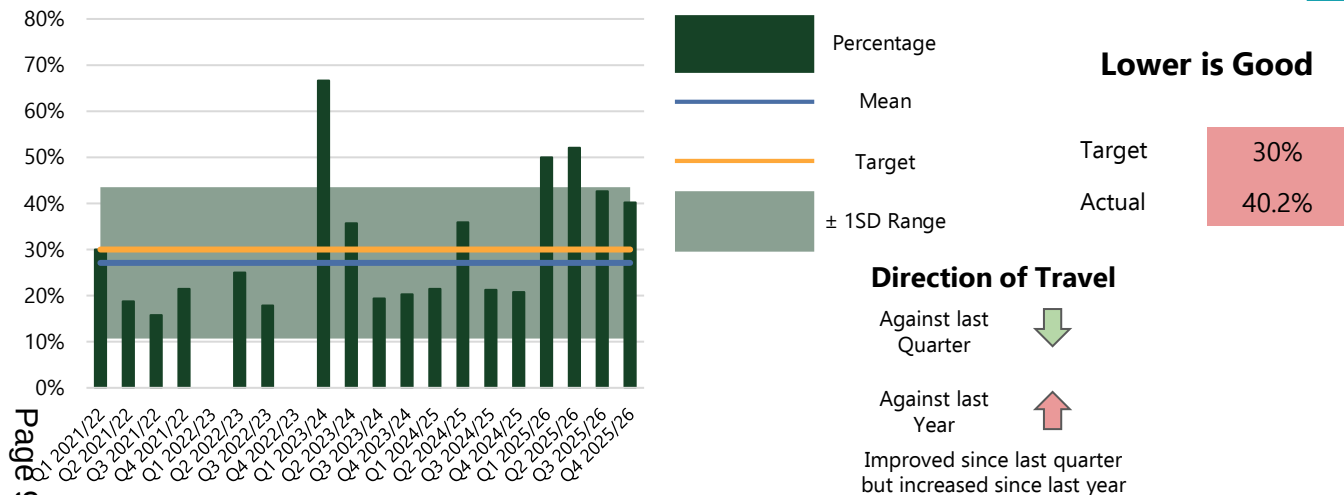
Q4 witnessed a significant surge in applications in January, driven by applicants submitting ahead of fee increases and increased speculative development activity.

Progress was made on the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Action Plan, including the successful go live of a new enterprise IT case management system on 1 April, expected to improve workflow visibility and officer efficiency going forward.

How do we compare?

Planning Advisory Service (PAS) planned to benchmark back in 2021. No data is available in the public domain.

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative)



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How do we compare?

Percentage of planning appeals allowed (Specifically Q3 2025-26)

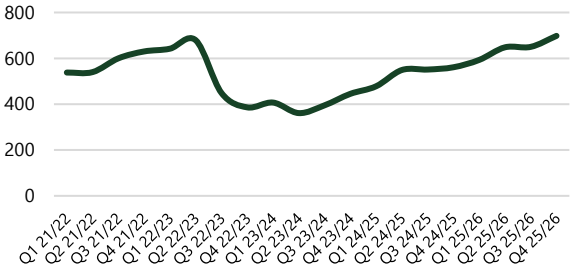
Q3 25-26 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Sevenoaks	0	1/16	Top
Cotswold	13	4/16	Top
Mole Valley	30	6/16	Second
Chichester	50	13/16	Bottom
Malvern Hills	75	14/16	Bottom
Tewkesbury	75	15/16	Bottom

This indicator aims to ensure that no more than 30% of planning appeals are allowed in favor of the applicant, with a lower percentage being more favorable. According to the latest statistics from the Planning Inspectorate, the national average for Section 78 planning appeals granted is 28% (source: gov.uk).

In Q4, seventeen appeals were decided, with six allowed in favour of the applicant, resulting in a 35% allowance rate for the quarter.

(Snapshot) Planning Enforcement Cases

Open Cases at end of Quarter over Time



Direction of Travel for Open Cases at end of Quarter

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



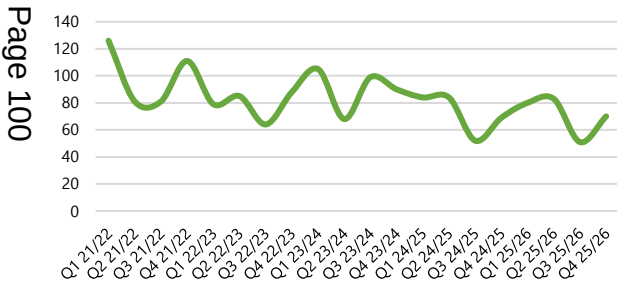
Lower is Good

No Target

Open Cases at End of Quarter

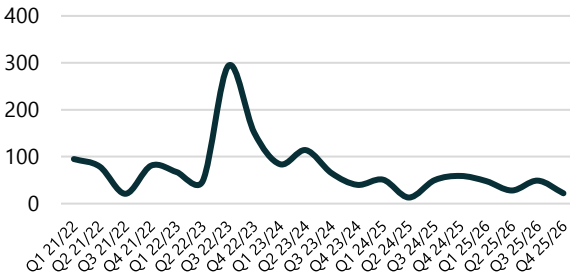
698

Number of Cases Opened During the Quarter over Time

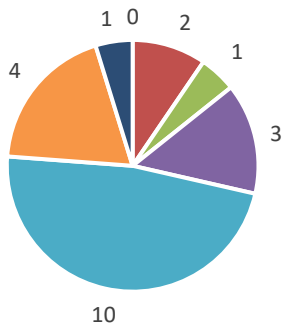


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Number of Cases Closed During the Quarter over Time

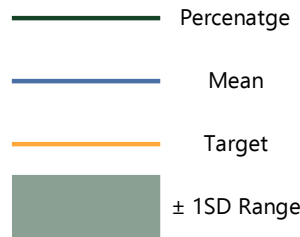
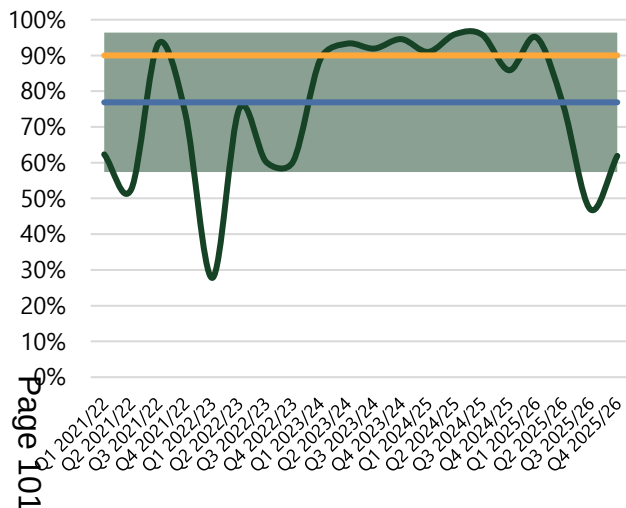


Reasons Cases Closed



The Enforcement team has made steady progress last quarter. Transformation team is mapping key processes to identify quick wins and support a more streamlined service. This combined work is helping to strengthen capacity and improve the team's overall resilience.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days



Higher is Good

Target

90%

Actual

61.9%

Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Increased since last quarter and
decreased since last year

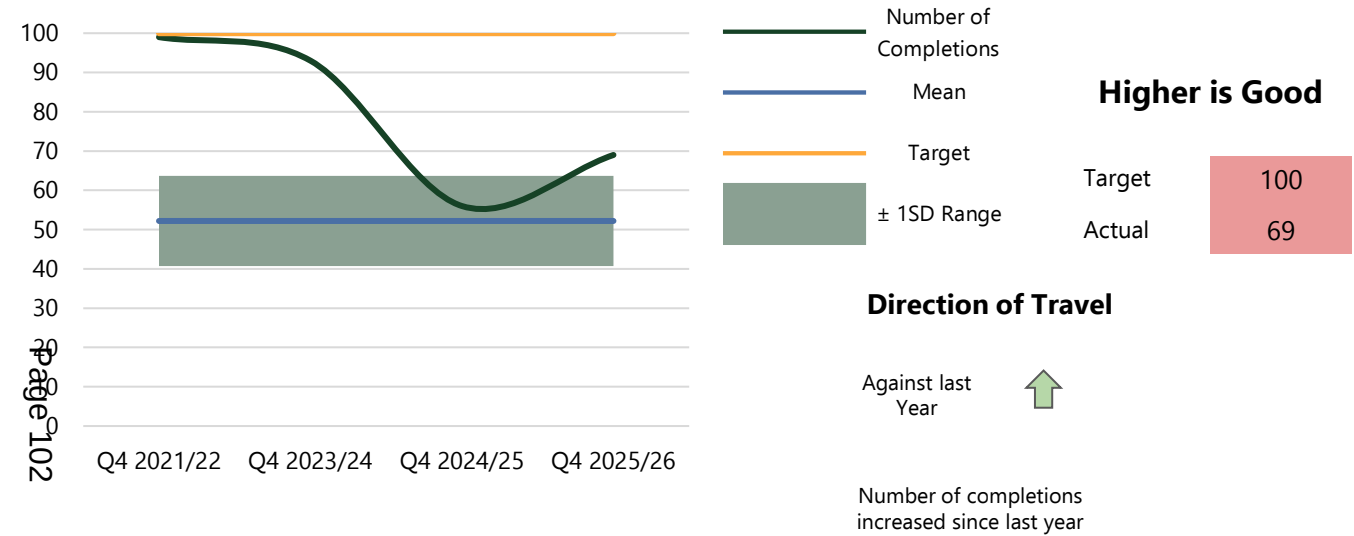
During Q4, the Council experienced a better performance compared to Q3 against the 10-day target for completing official Land Charges searches. Performance declined due to staffing disruption in a very small team, with reduced capacity following loss of a team member last September.

To stabilise the service, a new starter will be joining the team to support the HMLR Project, freeing up officers so they are able to clear the backlog, re-establish workflow control, and direct specialist capacity toward the more technical elements of the search process. An improvement process is underway to identify constraints around the service, reduce workarounds and remove inappropriate dependencies.

How do we compare?

No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative)

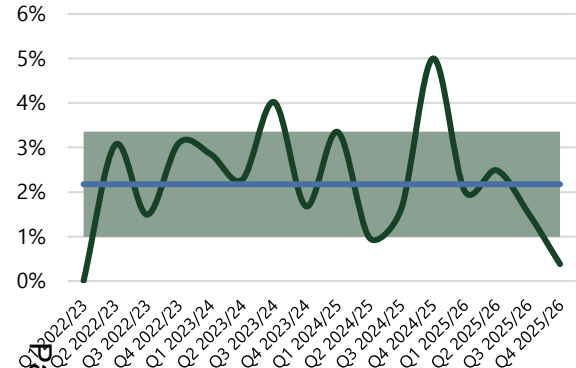


How do we compare?
No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

In Q4, 28 affordable homes were completed bringing the cumulative total to 69. These completions comprised 11 in South Cerney and Tetbury by Bromford, 11 new homes at Dunstall Farm by Cottsway, and 6 at Down Ampney by Sanctuary Housing Association.

Number of fly tips collected and percentage that result in an enforcement action

(defined as a warning letter, fixed penalty notice, simple caution or prosecution)



Direction of Travel

Number of Fly Tips

Against last Quarter	↑	<i>No Target</i>
Against last Year	↑	Number of Fly Tips Collected
		201
		Percentage Enforcement Action
Against last Quarter	↓	
Against last Year	↓	0.38%

Percentage Enforcement Action

Fly Tips – Increased since last quarter and last year
Enforcement Action – Slightly declined since last quarter and last year

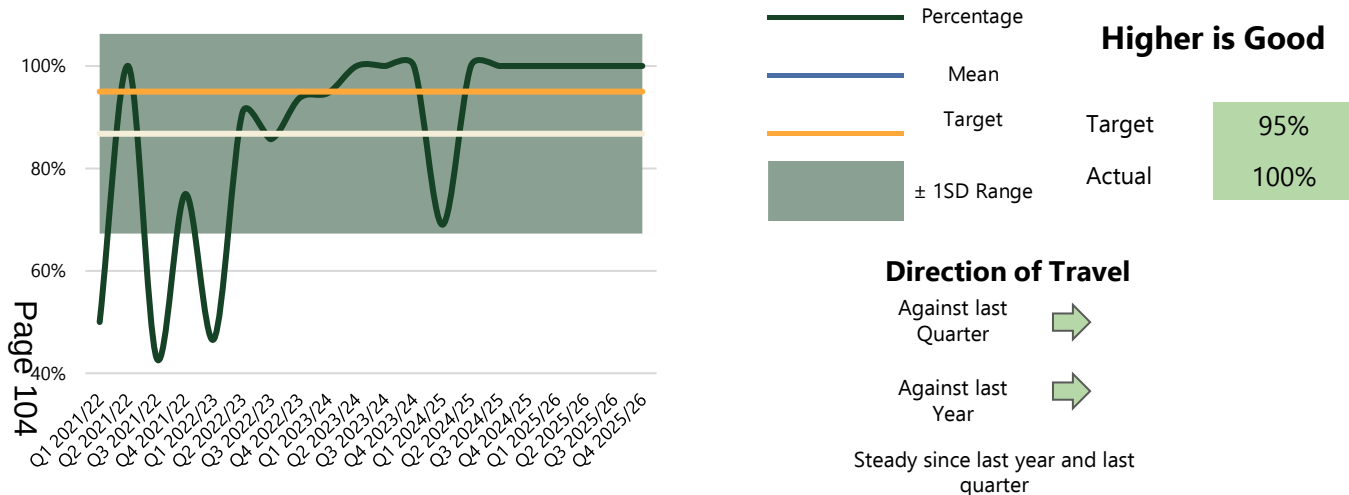
How do we compare?

Number of Fly Tips reported for year 2023-24 for Local Authorities in England – Gov.uk. The latest dataset available is 2023-24

2023-24 Benchmark	Total Fly Tips	Total FPNs	% FPNs per Fly Tip	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank	Quartile
Maldon	364	13	3.57	1/16	Top
Cotswold	972	12	1.23	6/16	Second
Wychavon	835	3	0.36	10/12	Third
West Devon	346	0	0	16/16	Bottom

Fly-tipping annual reports have reduced to 629 in 2025/26 compared to 710 in 2024/25 demonstrating a clear downward trend. A directed surveillance operation (RIPA) has been in place for 13 weeks, targeting offenders fly-tipping large quantities of cannabis waste with an arrest warrant for a fly-tipping offender issued. The operation has been renewed for a further 12 weeks due to positive intelligence outcomes. In March, the team delivered a multi-agency joint stop-and-search operation near Stroud where 42 vehicles were stopped.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales



The Council conducted four inspections during Q4, all of which were completed within the timescale.

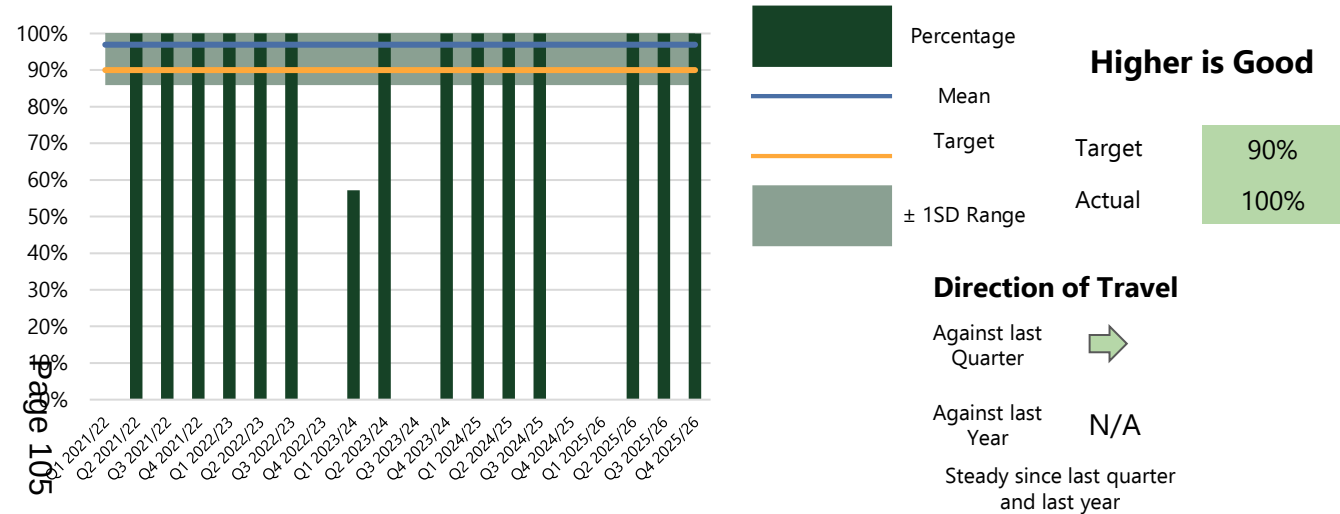
High-risk food inspections are prioritised due to their greater potential impact on public health and safety enabling issues to be addressed swiftly. However, this focus can occasionally delay scheduled inspections for lower-risk food businesses. To mitigate this, the service uses a dashboard to track both high- and lower-risk inspections, ensuring that, despite the emphasis on high-risk establishments, lower-risk inspections are still completed promptly to maintain overall compliance and safety standards.

How do we compare?

No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

% High risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day

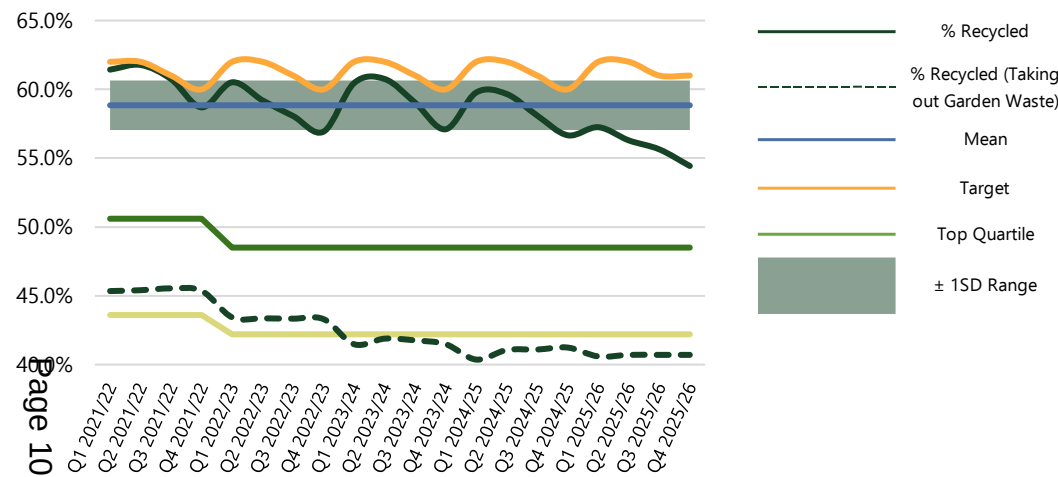
(including food poisoning outbreaks, anti-social behaviour, contaminated private water supplies, workplace fatalities or multiple serious injuries)



Four high-risk notification was received during Q4 relating to Smoke, possible illegal eviction, Fuel spill and a life-threatening accident.

All of which were assessed within the target timescale.

Percentage of household waste recycled



Higher is Good

Target	61%
Actual	54.4%

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter
↓

Against last Year
↓

Declined since last quarter and last year

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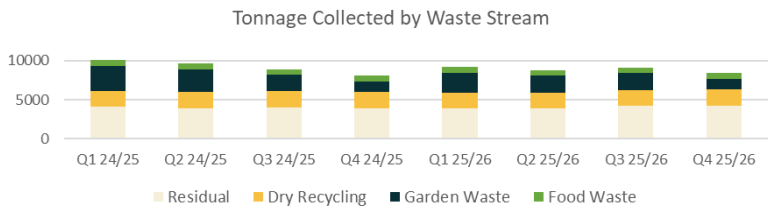
How do we compare?

Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting – Gov.uk.

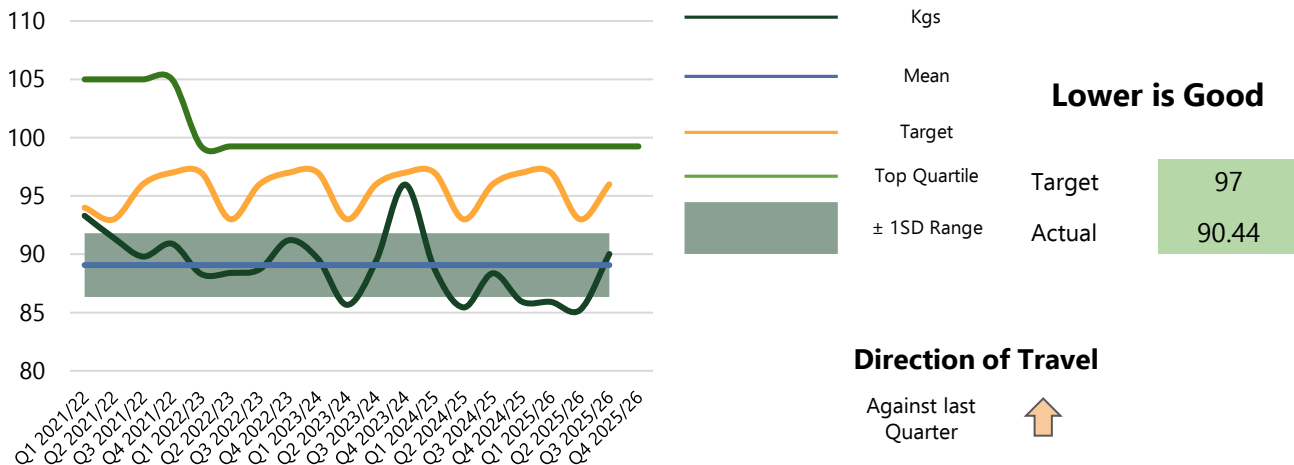
2024-25 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Stratford-on-Avon	63.9	1/16	Top
Maldon	57.8	2/16	Top
Cotswold	56.7	4/16	Top
Derbyshire Dales	51.4	6/16	Second
South Hams	49.3	10/16	Bottom
East Hampshire	34.8	16/16	Bottom

The Council's recycling rate declined by around 2.2% compared to the same period last year, reflecting a wider national trend. In 2024/25, household recycling rates across England varied widely, ranging from 17% to 63.9% among local authorities.

The national average recycling rate is 41.23%.



Residual Household Waste per Household (kg)



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter

Against last Year

Increased since last quarter and last year

How do we compare?

Residual household waste per household (kg/household) – Gov.uk. The latest dataset available in 2023-2024

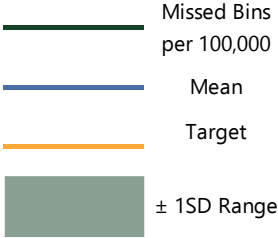
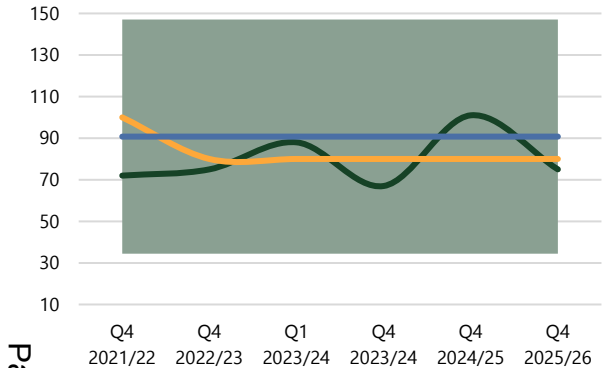
2023-24 Benchmark	Kg	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Stroud	298.6	1/16	Top
Stratford-on-Avon	320.0	4/16	Top
Maldon	350.2	8/16	Second
Cotswold	358.0	9/16	Third
Wychavon	436.5	13/16	Bottom
Babergh	461.4	16/16	Bottom

Residual household waste levels typically follow seasonal patterns, and targets are set accordingly.

In Q4, the Councils remained below their residual waste targets and also outperformed the Shire Districts' median of 111 kg per household. They also ranked within the top quartile of English District Local Authorities, with residual waste levels below the 99.25 kg threshold.

This continued strong performance highlights the Councils' effective waste reduction efforts and their position as national leaders in managing household waste.

Missed bins per 100,000



Lower is Good

Target	80
Actual	75

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Steady since last quarter and decreased since last year

Unique Instances of Households being Affected by Service Failures This Quarter

1292

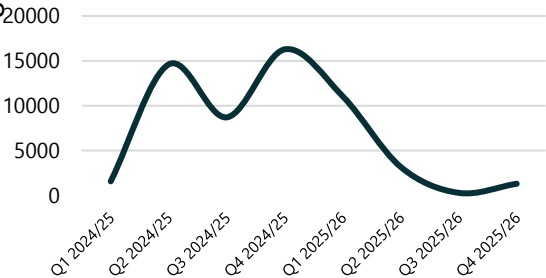
Missed bins per 100,000 collections remained steady in Q4, remaining below the target of 80.

During the quarter, staff and process changes, along with improved communication through memos and toolbox talks, helped reinforce the importance of returning to missed collections.

Cabinet have approved a new waste fleet replacement strategy, which should address the ageing fleet problem contributing to breakdowns and service reliability.

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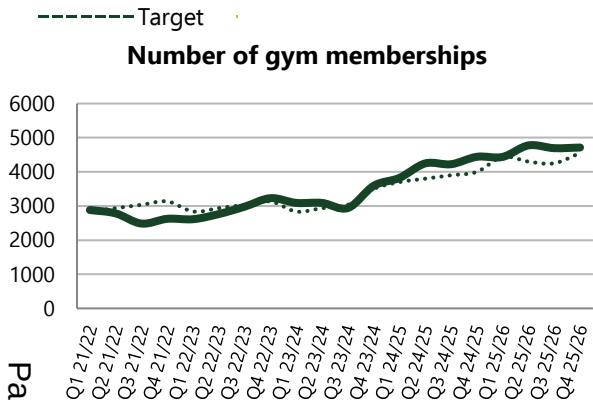
Household Service Failures



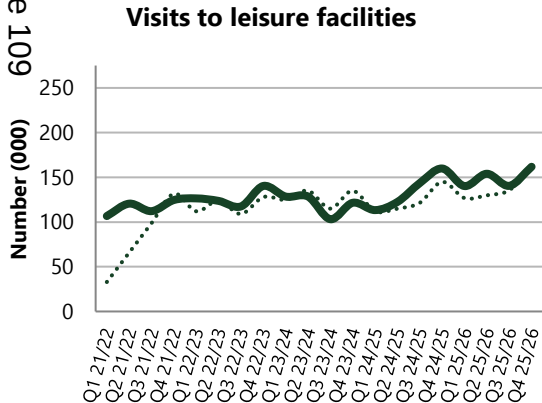
How do we compare?
Missed collections per 100,000 collections (full year) - APSE

2022-23 Benchmark	Missed collections per 100,000 collections	Family Group Rank	Family Group Quartile	Whole Service Rank	Whole Service Quartile
Cotswold	109.89	12/14	Bottom	39/45	Bottom

Number of visits to the leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships



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Direction of Travel

Gym Memberships

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Leisure Visits

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Gym Memberships – Increased since last quarter and last year
Leisure Visits – Increased since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Gym Memberships

Target

4,550

Actual

4,712

Leisure Visits

Target

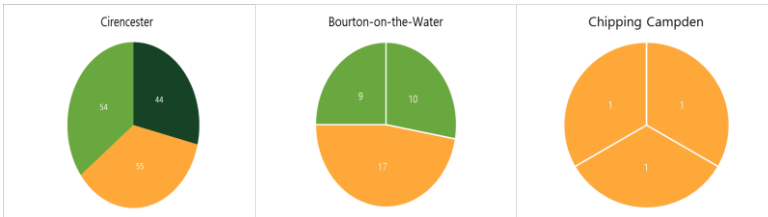
162,193

Actual

161,805

Cotswold Gym memberships exceeded target by 3.6% with leisure visits hitting 99.8% target, reflecting strong usage and demand for its facilities. A small shortfall in leisure visits is attributed to temporary failure of entrance turnstiles during March, which prevented some visits from being captured.

A renewed focus on engagement this quarter has supported encouraging improvements in survey participation.



Comment Complaint Compliment

How do we compare?

The Data Team are currently working with partners to compile the data return for APSE performance networks which will then provide benchmarking for this metric.

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29 JUNE 2026
Subject	PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Juliet Layton - Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Email: Juliet.layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Geraldine LeCointe – Assistant Director of Planning Services Email: Geraldine.Lecointe@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Harrison Bowley – Head of Planning Services Email: Harrison.Bowley@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report provides an update on the performance, staffing, and capacity of the Planning Enforcement Team following the transition of planning services back into the Council in November 2024 and the subsequent PAS Peer Review. It summarises progress against the PAS Action Plan, identifies continuing service pressures including recruitment challenges and backlog management, and sets out the measures underway to improve resilience, service efficiency, and performance. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the progress made, note the areas where performance remains constrained, and provide any recommendations on the proposed next steps.
Annexes	Appendix A – Response to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s February 2026 report.
Recommendation(s)	That Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves to: 1. Note progress made in implementing the PAS Peer Review recommendations, particularly regarding staffing, backlog



	management, and the development of the revised Local Enforcement Plan. 2. Note any comments or recommendations on the future direction of the Enforcement Service, particularly regarding resourcing and prioritisation.
Corporate priorities	• Delivering Good Services • Responding to the Climate Emergency • Supporting Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	No formal consultation has been undertaken as this report is providing an update on the enforcement function. Previously, a Members Briefing has been held including discussion of enforcement priorities and constraints. Feedback and discussions from this briefing and fed into updates to the enforcement service.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The Planning Enforcement service has undergone significant transition since planning functions were brought back into the Council in November 2024. The PAS Peer Review highlighted longstanding capacity constraints, a large inherited backlog, recruitment difficulties at senior levels, and under-utilised ICT systems.
- 1.2** Since then, the service has made measurable progress. A new administrative post has been recruited to, improving workflow efficiency, and an additional Enforcement Officer started in March 2026. However, staffing pressures remain acute at senior level: four recruitment campaigns between November 2024 and January 2026 for permanent Senior/Principal Enforcement Officer roles resulted in no appointable candidates. To maintain continuity, governance and timely decision-making on complex and high-profile cases, the Council has therefore continued to rely on agency senior cover, which can reduce continuity and is more costly than permanent staffing. Alongside this, periods of reduced capacity (including sickness absence and vacancies) have constrained the team's ability to progress both service improvement work and lower-priority historic cases at the intended pace.
- 1.3** Demand remains sustained. The historic backlog has reduced from 464 to 400 cases; however, the overall live caseload has increased to 684 including the backlog, as new reports continue to enter the system. Key service improvements, including the revised Local Enforcement Plan, enhanced Member engagement, and the initiation of process mapping and digitisation work, are underway, but the pace of both backlog reduction and transformation activity has been constrained by limited capacity and a lack of consistent senior continuity.
- 1.4** The purpose of this report is to update Overview & Scrutiny Committee on progress against the PAS Action Plan, highlight continuing pressures, and set out the steps required to build service resilience. It also summarises how the service is responding to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's February 2026 report (Appendix A), using the Ombudsman's scrutiny questions to strengthen triage, prioritisation, case governance and performance monitoring.
- 1.5** Looking ahead, finalising and implementing the revised Local Enforcement Plan (late Spring / early Summer 2026) and stabilising staffing levels are expected to bring more consistent and efficient case handling. However, Members should note that meaningful and sustained reduction of both backlog and total caseload will depend on sustained staffing stability (including senior oversight) and delivery of the identified process and ICT improvements.



2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** In November 2024, Planning Services transferred from Publica back into Cotswold District Council, following approval of the Transition Plan in July 2024. A key objective of this move was to strengthen recruitment, staff retention, and operational performance within the Planning Enforcement Team.
- 2.2** Following the transition, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) undertook a Peer Review of the planning service. The review identified strong staff commitment, but raised concerns about enforcement capacity, the scale of the backlog, and constraints caused by long-term recruitment difficulties. PAS recommended increasing enforcement resources, improving the team structure, updating the Local Enforcement Plan, and creating more structured engagement between officers and Members to set realistic priorities.
- 2.3** Further to the PAS Peer Review, an Action Plan was created in order to ensure the practical implementation of the review recommendations. For Enforcement, the Action Plan set out the following actions:

Action	Description	Target	Outcome
Extend agency contracts for temp staff	Extend existing agency contracts to ensure staffing levels are maintained whilst a recruitment strategy and team structure are reviewed.	Summer/Autumn 2025	Extensions were offered and accepted, maintaining existing resource levels.
Review enforcement structure	Review the team structure including the teams capacity.	Summer/Autumn 2025	A comprehensive review and re-structure was undertaken in Summer 2025 and partially implemented in Autumn 2025. The service has continued to be unable to recruit to senior and principal posts on a permanent basis.
Review and update local enforcement plan	Review the Enforcement Plan, which had not been updated for a number of years.	Summer 2025	A full review of the enforcement plan was undertaken in Summer 2025. This has fed into a



			new plan which is nearing the point of adoption, expected early Summer 2026.
Undertake enforcement complaint analysis	Review the nature of enforcement complaints to better understand the origin and trends within reported breaches.	Autumn 2025	An analysis of complaints was undertaken in Summer 2025, informing the team structure and backlog strategy.
Agree an enforcement backlog clearance strategy	Address the backlog with a dedicated clearance plan.	Summer 2025	A backlog strategy was agreed in Autumn 2025 – delayed owing to the team re-structure and challenges with recruitment.
Process map enforcement function and maximise ICT	Map the enforcement process from beginning to end and identify pain points and opportunities to enhance IT usage and streamline processes.	Autumn 2025	Process mapping for the enforcement service was completed in Spring/Summer 2025.
Enforcement training for officers and Members	Undertake enforcement training for the wider planning team and Members to ensure full understanding of the functions of the service.	Autumn 2025	A training session was undertaken in September 2025.

3. Progress following Phase 1 Transition and PAS Peer Review

Recruitment, Staffing and Team Structure

- 3.1** The Enforcement Team has faced significant recruitment challenges for several years, resulting in prolonged periods where the team has been understaffed and reliant on costly agency support where there is a high turnover of staff. This issue has extended for a number of years, and is not unique to the Cotswolds, with enforcement teams across Gloucestershire and further afield struggling to recruit enforcement staff. To



address this, a review of the team structure was undertaken, along with a review of team capacity and recruitment opportunities.

3.2 A full review of the team structure in early 2025 identified two priority areas for improvement:

- **Administrative Capacity:** Previously, enforcement officers were carrying out administrative tasks such as case creation, data management, performance reporting and supporting appeals. The absence of dedicated admin support reduced officer efficiency and diverted capacity away from casework. A new administrative role was created and successfully recruited to in January 2026, which is already helping improve workflow and reduce officer time spent on non-specialist tasks.
- **Officer-Level Capacity:** Analysis showed the service consistently receives around 300 reported breaches each year but only had capacity to deal with around 60% of them. To address this mismatch, an additional Enforcement Officer post was created. Recruitment at officer level proved more successful than previous attempts at senior levels, resulting in a strong appointment who joined the team in March 2026. It is recognised that this additional post will not fully resolve the capacity shortfall identified. However, the extra resource, combined with planned efficiencies in processes and systems, is intended to form part of a broader package of improvements designed to address the service's capacity challenges.

3.3 Recruitment of staff, particularly experienced officers, continues to present a significant challenge. Four recruitment campaigns undertaken between November 2024 and January 2026 for permanent Senior or Principal Enforcement Officers resulted in no appointable candidates for either role. To address this, the Council has taken a deliberate decision to extend agency contracts until August 2026 in order to maintain service continuity, manage risk and ensure timely decision-making on high-profile and sensitive cases.

3.4 Agency cover is more costly than permanent recruitment, but the alternative would be an unacceptably reduced ability to respond to priority breaches, oversee complex investigations, and support effective case governance. In the absence of permanent senior staff, agency contractors are being used to provide experienced professional oversight, maintain consistency of approach, and to train and mentor less experienced team members while a further permanent recruitment approach is reviewed.



- 3.5** The additional officer post and administrative support will improve resilience and efficiency, but they do not in themselves remove the structural mismatch between demand, backlog and available specialist capacity.
- 3.6** Continued reliance on agency contractors presents challenges for case continuity, as well as additional staffing costs. A recent example involved a lower-priority breach of advertisement control. At the time of writing, the case has been allocated to a third senior officer due to turnover in agency senior cover. Each change in case officer required the incoming officer to review the case history, familiarise themselves with previous correspondence, re-establish contact with the complainant and site owner, and form their own assessment of the planning harm and appropriate next steps.
- 3.7** This results in significant duplication of work and delay. The issue is compounded by the short notice periods often associated with agency arrangements, which can limit the opportunity for structured handover or detailed case notes beyond those already held on the case management system. This example demonstrates how reliance on temporary senior capacity can affect even relatively straightforward cases, with the potential impact being greater in complex, sensitive or high-profile cases. While agency support remains necessary in the short term, continued reliance on this model can carry an ongoing risk to timely, consistent and efficient case management.

Performance and Backlog Clearance

- 3.8** At the time of the PAS Review in 2024/25, the service held a substantial backlog of enforcement cases. By August 2025, there were 607 live enforcement cases which has risen to 684 at the start of the 2026/28 financial year. Of these live cases, 464 were classified as backlog cases. For the purposes of the Backlog Clearance Strategy, backlog cases were identified as enforcement cases received on or before 31 December 2024. A further 131 enforcement notices also required periodic monitoring and follow-up.
- 3.9** A Backlog Clearance Strategy was developed to provide a structured approach to reducing the historic caseload. The strategy proposes a triage-based method of review, including clearer case categorisation, prioritisation according to planning harm and urgency, and targeted officer time to progress older cases in a consistent and risk-based way.
- 3.10** However, implementation of the Backlog Clearance Strategy has been constrained by capacity and continuity issues. During 2025/26, the service experienced:
- three different agency senior officers rotating through the team, reducing continuity;



- long-term sickness absence;
- periods where the team was operating at less than 50% capacity.

- 3.11** As a result, officers have had to prioritise new, urgent and high-priority cases to ensure that the most harmful and time-sensitive breaches are addressed. This has meant that progress on some older and lower-priority cases has been slower than intended because the team has not had the capacity to deal with them.
- 3.12** Given the current level of demand, inherited backlog and continuing constraints on senior capacity, the service is operating on a risk-based model. This means that available officer resource is prioritised towards cases involving the greatest actual or potential planning harm, including works to listed buildings, protected trees, significant harm to amenity or the environment, high-profile or complex cases requiring senior oversight, and cases where statutory time limits may be relevant. Lower-priority and historic cases will continue to be progressed with the objective of reducing the outstanding caseload over time. However, the pace of progress will necessarily be affected by available capacity and the need to ensure that urgent, high-harm and time-sensitive matters are addressed first. This approach reflects the discretionary and proportionate nature of planning enforcement and will be formalised through the revised Local Enforcement Plan and Backlog Clearance Strategy.
- 3.13** This risk-based approach is particularly important because some breaches of planning control may become immune from enforcement action if no action is taken within the relevant statutory time period. The risk is heightened where older cases have not yet been fully reviewed, where case records are incomplete, or where the date of substantial completion or commencement of a use is unclear. The revised Local Enforcement Plan, improved triage arrangements and clearer case monitoring are intended to strengthen the Council's ability to identify and escalate cases where statutory time limits may be relevant.
- 3.14** Despite the capacity pressures set out above, the backlog has reduced from 464 to 400 cases. However, the overall live caseload has increased to 684 as new cases continue to enter the system. This demonstrates that, while progress has been made in reducing the historic backlog, the service continues to experience sustained demand and the Backlog Clearance Strategy has not yet been implemented at full pace.
- 3.15** The service has maintained some control of higher-priority and higher-harm cases and has achieved some backlog reduction despite significant staffing constraints. However, progress on some historic and lower-priority cases remains constrained, and meaningful reduction of the overall caseload will depend on improved staff capacity



and continuity, consistent senior oversight, improved case recording and implementation of the Backlog Clearance Strategy.

- 3.16** Once the team reaches a more stable staffing position the service intends to implement the Backlog Clearance Strategy more fully. This will involve structured triage and prioritisation aligned with the revised Local Enforcement Plan, supported by clearer recording, monitoring and performance oversight. The objective will be to systematically reduce historic cases while maintaining sufficient capacity to respond to new, urgent, high-harm and time-sensitive reports.

Process Mapping and IT Enhancement

- 3.17** During summer 2025, a full process-mapping exercise was completed across the Planning Service. This highlighted inefficiencies within enforcement workflows, largely due to under-utilisation of the case management system and reliance on outdated, manual processes. Officers also identified several pain points, including inconsistent case categorisation, limited reporting functionality, and duplicated administrative steps. Furthermore, owing to limited access to data, reporting on performance relied on manual data analysis, based on limited information.
- 3.18** One of the objectives arising from the PAS review included undertaking enforcement complaint analysis. Whilst undertaken, the outcome offered limited insight owing to the limited nature of the existing case categorisation systems.
- 3.19** Although the process-mapping exercise completed in summer 2025 identified a number of opportunities to streamline workflow and make better use of case management software, progress in implementing these improvements has been limited. Capacity pressures over the past year, including long-term vacancies at senior levels, reliance on agency cover, and periods where the team operated at less than 50% strength, have meant officers have been focused on essential casework rather than service transformation. As a result, most identified process and ICT improvements remain outstanding and will require renewed attention once the team reaches stable staffing levels. The revised Local Enforcement Plan is intended to set the agreed workflow expectations and data requirements first, so that subsequent ICT configuration and automation can be implemented consistently and sustainably.

Enforcement Plan and Member Engagement

- 3.20** A full review of the Council's Local Enforcement Plan (LEP) has been undertaken as part of the post-transition improvement programme. A revised draft Plan has been prepared, reflecting updated legislation, clearer prioritisation criteria, and a more transparent explanation of how planning breaches are assessed, triaged and



investigated. The revised LEP is currently undergoing internal review and is expected to be finalised and implemented in late Spring / early Summer 2026, subject to Member sign-off. Implementation will also coincide with work to enhance access to enforcement information on the Council's website, improving clarity for residents, applicants and Members about how the service operates.

- 3.21** Alongside the Plan review, Member engagement has been strengthened to improve understanding of the enforcement function and its statutory limitations. A Member Briefing was held in September 2025, providing an overview of typical case types, the investigation process, resource pressures, and the longstanding challenges associated with recruitment and backlog management. Options for further Member engagement are currently under review to ensure Members can receive appropriate, lawful and useful levels of insight into service performance and priorities. It is intended to build upon the 2025 briefing with annual Member enforcement briefings taking place in September.

Service Improvement Capacity

- 3.22** In response to continued challenges and in order to accelerate delivery of the remaining PAS Action Plan objectives, it is proposed to create a dedicated, time-limited leadership role within Enforcement Service, focused on service redesign, digital innovation, improved use of ICT, performance reporting and implementation of the revised Local Enforcement Plan. The role would be undertaken by an experienced contractor with specific expertise in planning enforcement, planning service transformation and change delivery. This additional capacity would allow service improvement work to progress at pace without diverting enforcement officers from frontline casework, backlog reduction and priority investigations.
- 3.23** The role would support the delivery of improved workflows, enhanced Member engagement and more effective use of case management systems, with the aim of strengthening service resilience, improving consistency and enabling more efficient case management. Whilst the benefits are not readily quantifiable, the role is expected to accelerate system improvements and allow technical officers to focus on complex casework.

Further considerations

- 3.24** Following the publication of the PAS Report and Action Plan, further local and national changes have influenced the Enforcement Service. In February 2026, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman published its report "Losing control: complaints about planning enforcement", highlighting the increased risk of upheld



complaints where enforcement teams are under-resourced, backlogs are not actively managed, and cases drift without clear oversight, recording and prioritisation. In response, officers have reviewed the scrutiny questions set out in the Ombudsman's report (summarised at Appendix A) to test the Council's arrangements and identify where further strengthening is required. This has directly informed the approach being implemented through the revised Local Enforcement Plan and wider service improvement work, including: clearer triage and published priority categories; more realistic target timescales and investigation stages; improved differentiation between reported breaches and formal complaints; strengthened arrangements for identifying urgent/significant cases; and a renewed focus on data, monitoring and governance to reduce the risk of delay and loss of control.

- 3.25** Appendix A sets out the Council's responses against each of the Ombudsman's scrutiny questions and provides additional detail on how the service is addressing identified risks and recommendations.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** Not Applicable.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. In order to support the proposed time-limited leadership role set out in paragraphs 1.6–1.7, further budget provision will be made available from the Council's Capacity Building Reserve. Due to the specialist nature of the role and the need to recruit without delay to ensure maximum impact during the remaining time the council has left, the decision has been taken to recruit a consultant rather than seek a fixed term contract. This additional investment reflects the need for dedicated specialist capacity to accelerate delivery of the remaining PAS Action Plan objectives and wider service improvements, without diverting existing enforcement officers from frontline casework, backlog reduction and priority investigations.
- 5.2** This additional budget provision arises from the Chief Executive's decision under delegated authority (Part C4 of the Constitution and section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972) to establish and appoint to the time-limited Enforcement Leadership role. The decision is recommended to be endorsed by Cabinet in July.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The Council is the local planning authority for its administrative area and has statutory powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to respond to breaches of planning control. A breach of planning control includes the carrying out of



development without the required planning permission or failing to comply with a condition or limitation attached to a planning permission.

- 6.2** Planning enforcement action is discretionary. The Council must consider whether it is expedient and proportionate to take formal action, having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations, including the public interest and the planning harm arising from the breach. Not every breach of planning control will justify formal enforcement action, and informal resolution or no further action may be appropriate where there is no material planning harm or where action would not be proportionate.
- 6.3** There are statutory time limits for taking enforcement action. Under section 171B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, certain breaches may become immune from enforcement action if no action is taken within the relevant period. Since 25 April 2024, the general position in England is that a ten-year period applies to most breaches, although transitional arrangements mean that earlier four-year periods may still apply to some operational development and changes of use to a single dwellinghouse that took place before that date. Delay in identifying, investigating or escalating cases may therefore create legal risk where a breach is approaching immunity.
- 6.4** The revised Local Enforcement Plan, triage process, backlog strategy and improvements to case recording are intended to support lawful, consistent and proportionate decision-making, including the timely identification and escalation of urgent cases, high-harm cases and cases where statutory time limits may be relevant. The Council is also required to maintain a register of certain formal enforcement notices and related enforcement action.
- 6.5** There are no known specific legal implications arising from this report.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** Although the recommendations are for noting, there are significant operational, legal, financial and reputational risks associated with the planning enforcement function. These include continued backlog growth, delay in progressing investigations, loss of public confidence, failure to act before statutory time limits expire, increased complaints, and continued reliance on agency resource. The improvement programme, revised Local Enforcement Plan, backlog strategy and enhanced monitoring arrangements are intended to mitigate these risks, but the level of residual risk remains linked to sustained staffing stability and successful implementation of system improvements.



8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** The recommendations in this report relate primarily to internal operational improvements and staffing changes. No negative equality impacts have been identified.
- 8.2** The updated Local Enforcement Plan will include clear guidance on consistent, fair, and transparent decision-making to ensure enforcement activity is applied equitably across all communities. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the adoption process for the revised Plan.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** None identified.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:
- Overview and Scrutiny – Tuesday 8 July 2025 (OS.212)
 - Cabinet – Thursday 10 July 2025
 - Council – Wednesday 31 July 2024
- 10.2** These documents will be available for inspection online at www.cotswold.gov.uk or by contacting democratic services democratic@cotswold.gov.uk for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29th June 2026

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Appendix A – Response to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's February 2026 report.

1. Response to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's February 2026 report – Questions for councillors and heads of service

- 1.1** The report invites local councillors and service leads to "*play a vital role in scrutinising their local planning enforcement services.*" The report asks the following questions, with the Council's answers set out below:

Does your Authority:

1. Have a planning enforcement policy with realistic, but robust, time targets?

- 1.2** The Council's Local Enforcement Plan (LEP) had not been updated for a number of years. It contained target timescales that were not achievable in the context of current service pressures and did not provide sufficient clarity for people reporting alleged breaches, or for those who are subject to investigation. Following a full review, a revised Local Enforcement Plan was drafted during 2025 and has been taken through internal review.

- 1.3** The revised LEP is currently at final draft stage and is expected to be implemented in late Spring / early Summer 2026, subject to Member sign-off. It sets out clearer investigation stages, more realistic target timescales, and a triage and prioritisation framework. The intention is for this to be supported by improvements to internal systems, enabling clearer workflows, monitoring and reporting; however, resourcing constraints have limited the pace of wider process change to date.

2. Have a policy and procedures that refer to people making 'reports' about breaches of planning rather than 'complaints'?

- 1.4** The review of the previous enforcement plan identified the use of the term 'complaint' or 'complainant' throughout. The new LEP addresses this by referring instead to 'reports' and 'reported breaches'. It is important that enforcement investigations are clearly differentiated from the Council's corporate complaints process.

3. Have officers who understand the difference between a service request and a complaint?

- 1.5** Council staff understand the difference between service requests (for example, reports of potential breaches of planning control) and corporate complaints. The Council has a clear complaints process for situations where service users wish to raise concerns about the quality of service they have received, and officers understand and engage with that process. The LEP has been updated to reflect this approach clearly.

4. Have systems in place to identify significant matters needing urgent attention?

- 1.6** Until now, the enforcement team has not had the ability to identify significant or high-priority breaches consistently and efficiently. The team immediately identifies works to listed buildings and protected trees as urgent; however, beyond these categories,

systems have not previously existed to support clear and consistent case categorisation.

- 1.7** In response, the new LEP introduces a triage process so that reported breaches are reviewed at the start of the process to identify: whether a breach appears to have occurred; whether sufficient information is available to investigate; and what priority level the investigation will be assigned. Priority categories will be published within the LEP for transparency, and internal systems will record priorities for monitoring and reporting purposes.

5. Ensure it acts before statutory time limits expire?

- 1.8** Officers will prioritise cases that may be approaching immunity by virtue of statutory time limits. Based on current case-handling arrangements, there is nothing to suggest a systemic issue whereby breaches routinely become immune due to avoidable delay; however, the Council recognises that this is a key risk area and requires active oversight.
- 1.9** To strengthen this further, the Council is improving case recording, monitoring and reporting so that potential time-limit risks can be identified and escalated consistently, particularly where evidence is required and immunity dates may be relevant.

6. Consistently check its decision making is effective and compare its performance with other authorities via Key Performance Indicators?

- 1.10** The Planning Service Plan includes key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to the speed and quality of enforcement investigations. This was not previously the case but was updated as part of the PAS Action Plan. The intention is now to prepare a robust suite of performance management tools to monitor performance going forward.
- 1.11** Access to data has been, and remains, a significant barrier to effective performance management. By progressing internal system improvements, the intention is also to enable more reliable performance monitoring and reporting.
- 1.12** Comparison with other LPAs is more challenging. As noted previously, it is not uncommon for LPAs to have under-resourced enforcement departments, including backlogs. In addition, due to data protection requirements and the integrity of ongoing investigations, public reporting of live enforcement performance is not common. There is no national requirement to publish enforcement performance data and there is no nationally standardised reporting mechanism (as there is with Development Management PS2 returns, for example). Government guidance requires LPAs to keep a public register of enforcement and stop notices, and states that LPAs

should consider publishing a local enforcement plan; beyond that, broader performance reporting is discretionary and locally designed.

- 1.13** Ultimately, whilst effective performance management and reporting against agreed KPIs is essential, direct comparison against other LPAs is not straightforward in practice.

7. Have systems to ensure timescales are adhered to when work passes between different departments?

- 1.14** The Council does not currently have Service Level Agreements in place to manage work across different departments. As such, matters are handled on a case-by-case basis. From the system reviews undertaken to date, there is limited evidence to suggest that cross-department working is a material barrier to effective planning enforcement, and teams have a strong track record of successful collaborative working where required.

8. Ensure it has sufficient staff and resources to deal with workloads?

- 1.15** A lack of staff and resources has been a prolonged issue within the Planning Enforcement Team, resulting in periods where the service has been significantly below establishment and reliant on agency support. Recruitment has been particularly challenging at senior levels.
- 1.16** As set out in the main report, the Council has strengthened capacity by recruiting to a dedicated administrative post (January 2026) and appointing an additional Enforcement Officer (March 2026). The additional administrative capacity is intended to reduce time spent on non-specialist tasks and support improved case recording, monitoring and reporting.
- 1.17** Notwithstanding these improvements, the service continues to face capacity pressures, particularly when managing both new reports and the inherited backlog. The revised LEP and the Backlog Clearance Strategy are intended to support a transparent approach to triage and prioritisation, recognising that enforcement action is discretionary and resources must be focused on the most harmful or urgent breaches.

9. Have processes to check how competitive its salary offer is?

- 1.18** Recruitment continues to be managed through the Publica Recruitment Team, with pay and grading set through the Council's HR policies. The Council does not currently operate a specific, formal process within the enforcement function to benchmark salary offers against the wider market, beyond its established pay and grading arrangements.

10. Have contingency plans to deal with any caseload backlogs?

1.19 A Backlog Clearance Strategy has been prepared, including a structured triage approach. Once resources and continuity are in place, the team will be able to implement the strategy more consistently. At present, whilst officers undertake periodic targeted work on older cases, the primary focus has remained on handling new and high-priority cases.

11. Have protocols for dealing with issues that could be covered by other authorities or bodies?

1.20 Cotswold District Council has established working relationships with relevant authorities and bodies to help ensure that matters are directed to the most appropriate organisation. As part of the triage process, officers will consider at the outset whether another authority or body is better placed to lead an investigation, and will signpost or refer where appropriate.

12. Regularly check its work practices and procedures are fit for purpose and up-to-date?

1.21 New and updated policies and procedures (including the LEP) include governance and monitoring arrangements to enable regular review and, where necessary, updating.

13. Have a system in place to ensure its equipment and software meet their intended purposes?

1.22 At the time of writing, the systems and software that support the planning enforcement function are limited and require modernisation. Work is ongoing to address this, using a three-stage approach: first, maximise the capability of existing systems; second, upgrade existing systems with compatible hardware and software (for example, internet-enabled tablets and Idox on-site functionality); and third, explore opportunities for more innovative solutions (such as through the Open Digital Planning network).

1.23 Progress on the first stage is underway but has been limited due to resource constraints within the team.

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AJ Forest of Dean Economic Opportunity Review

The scrutiny report rightly frames the Forest of Dean as **a test case for whether Gloucestershire's Local Growth Plan can respond to a rural, polycentric and environmentally constrained district.**

The scrutiny report is right that **But it also has structural assets.** and in listing many of these. Its core diagnosis is that the district has relatively good resident employment but a weaker local job base, so that many residents' economic lives are organised across district boundaries, a temporary phenomenon in the present circumstances. That distinction matters because it shifts policy away from unemployment alone and towards spatial mismatch, commuting resilience, transport exclusion, local value capture and enterprise scale-up.

I think a strategic portfolio approach might use many of the currently mentioned initiatives but have a more cohesive strategy and some new or varied initiatives. [Ref UN Sec Gen]

Core conclusion: the Forest of Dean's best economic proposition is not to imitate urban growth districts, but to become a high-quality rural living and enterprise district that captures more value from its landscape, residents, visitors, small businesses, hybrid workers and neighbouring labour markets.

The main underused opportunities are forest wellbeing, slow tourism, distributed work hubs, retrofit and green construction, woodland products, agritech and agritechnique (regenerative agricultures and nature-friendly food/forest cultivation), Severn/Wye enterprise, local procurement and a practical Biosphere economy. Sustained and improved transport is also important.

The Forest of Dean **should not be treated as a weak version of an urban growth district. Its strongest economic proposition is as a high-quality living landscape with a distinctive forest, river and border identity, connected selectively to neighbouring labour markets and capable of growing more value from nature, culture, local enterprise, retrofit, land-based innovation and hybrid work.** The district's own Sustainable Economy Strategy already names the main platform for this: workforce skills, infrastructure, circular economy, business support, natural capital preservation and sustainable towns.

The opportunity is therefore not simply "more jobs anywhere." It is to build a district economy that captures more value from people who already live there, people who might choose to live there, and visitors who already come for the landscape.

- Gloucestershire's 2024 **visitor economy report** implies that the important strategic question is how to shift from extractive day visitation to higher-value, lower-impact, longer-stay, locally supplied and skills-rich activity.
- The "live in the Forest, work in neighbouring areas" proposition is credible but uneven. It is strongest around Lydney and the southern/eastern edge, where direct rail links make Gloucester, Cheltenham, Newport and Cardiff realistic for hybrid workers.
- The **most promising unexploited opportunities are a portfolio rather than a single sector** bet: forest health and wellbeing, distributed hybrid-work hubs, off-season slow tourism, sustainable construction and retrofit, woodland products and repair, agri-tech and regenerative land management, screen and creative place-making, Severn/Wye blue-green enterprise, local food and procurement, and a carefully framed Biosphere economy.

The following **GESSC Recommendations** were made:

1. That the potential within the Forest of Dean is built on recognition of the global and local demand for the nature-based and rural-based assets that the Forest of Dean has, and that opportunities for leverage be identified.
 - a. *NOTE: Within the scope of a new unitary that would no longer have district boundaries, the Forest of Dean provides a unique social and natural ecosystem and consequently that the paradigm for economic development should be reframed to take account of its considerable nature-based potential.*
 - b. *Many of the following individual recommendations then fall as consequences to this approach. It relates also to the "elephant in the room" that was mentioned.*
2. That the opportunities for hybrid working within the Forest of Dean are recognised and facilitated.

3. That the strategic constraints of the Forest of Dean are recognised and that a plan be developed to address them.
4. That an extractive economy, such as mining and tree cutting, is NOT developed within the Forest of Dean.
5. That as much emphasis as possible is placed on public transport links within the Forest of Dean as well as in and out of the Forest of Dean.
6. That there is investment into the rail links in the Forest of Dean, focused particularly at Lydney.
7. That a new integrated minibuss service going between villages, railway stations and towns within the Forest of Dean is established, and that the service is provided to the public for free for the first six months.
8. That regular multiagency meetings involving members of the Forest of Dean community, councillors and local authority officers are established to promote the biosphere designation in order to attract entrepreneurs to the Forest of Dean to develop existing sites.
9. That a fully integrated approach to the development of eco-tourism infrastructure within the Forest of Dean is developed.
10. That the minimum number of houses are built within the Forest of Dean, in recognition that the Government's housing targets for the area are not appropriate.
11. That the possibility of a satellite technology park in the Forest of Dean, linked to the Cheltenham Cyber Park, as well as the potential for data centres by the river, be considered.
12. That the plausibility of a satellite grammar school in the Forest of Dean be considered.
13. To consider the possibility of a Forest of Dean satellite university site, linked to the University of Gloucestershire.
14. We should be asking the young people from the FoD through a skilled process about their own aspirations for themselves and the area - after all it is they that will be most affected by the work ahead. It was clear from report and responses that no such consultation has been undertaken or commissioned.

