

Public Document Pack



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tuesday, 14 November 2023

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COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council will be held at Council Chamber - Trinity Road on **Wednesday, 22 November 2023 at 2.00 pm.**

Rob Weaver
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council

(Councillors Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Joe Harris, Mark Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Roly Hughes, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Andrew Maclean, Helene Mansilla, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Nigel Robbins, Gary Selwyn, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Chris Twells, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins)

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Committee Administrator know prior to the date of the meeting.

Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1PX
Tel: 01285 623000 www.cotswold.gov.uk

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

The quorum for Council is nine Members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members and Officers, relating to items to be considered at the meeting.

3. **Minutes (Pages 7 - 42)**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Council held on Wednesday 20 September 2023.

4. **Announcements from the Chair, Leader of Chief Executive**

To receive any announcements from the Chair, the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

5. **Public Questions**

To deal with questions from the public within the open forum question and answer session of fifteen minutes in total. Questions from each member of the public should be no longer than one minute each and relate to issues under the Council's remit. At any one meeting no person may submit more than two questions and no more than two such questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

The Chair will ask whether any members of the public present at the meeting wish to ask a question and will decide on the order of questioners.

The response may take the form of:

- a) a direct oral answer;
- b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

6. **Member Questions**

A Member of the Council may ask the Chair, the Leader, a Cabinet Member or the Chair of any Committee a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Cotswold District. A maximum period of fifteen minutes shall be allowed at any such meeting for Member questions.

A Member may only ask a question if:

- a) the question has been delivered in writing or by electronic mail to the Chief Executive no later than 5.00 p.m. on the working day before the day of the meeting; or
- b) the question relates to an urgent matter, they have the consent of the Chair to whom the question is to be put and the content of the question is given to the

Chief Executive by 9.30 a.m. on the day of the meeting.

An answer may take the form of:

- a) a direct oral answer;
- b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

The following questions were submitted in advance of the agenda publication:

Question 1 from Councillor Jon Wareing to Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation

Could the Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation please advise the Council about the outcome of the exploratory work officers were asked to do looking at off-site pay by cash facilities for people who can't or don't wish to pay by card, by phone or by app when using our car parks?

Question 2 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

We have seen the huge amount of building work being carried out on the Trinity Road premises to repair roof defects, install solar panels, office conversions and other improvements. Is this work on time and on budget?

Question 3 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Joe Harris

Could you confirm the cost of producing the October 2023 "Cotswold News", including design, print and distribution via Royal Mail?

Please also confirm ALL officer time spent in preparing this publication?

Question 4 from Councillor Daryl Corps to Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation

On the 5th November this Council announced that it will be conducting a full study and review of its current car parks, working with local communities and parish councils to understand the current needs in each area. It also announced that it will look at what improvements car parks may need such as EV chargers.

So far, the Town and Parish Councils in my ward are reporting that the community reach out from CDC has been limited to one generic email! How does the portfolio holder intend to engage on such an important and fundamental part of Town and Parish life?

'Working together' is not done by a circular email or would anything more be considered too expensive given this councils current budgetary pressures?

Question 5 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

Cherwell District Council provides support for people needing to rent in the Private

Rental Sector (PRS) who have insufficient savings to provide a deposit, are refugees or involved with the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Primarily they provide a deposit bond in place of a cash deposit, as well as other help for both the potential tenant and landlord, including access to grant funding for property improvements of up to £15,000 (Landlord Home Improvement Grant).

Has CDC considered implementing a similar scheme to help those who are on the waiting list for social and affordable housing find suitable, secure accommodation more quickly?

Question 6 from Councillor Len Wilkins to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability

At the Audit Committee meeting on 18th October, Internal Audit reported a key finding that climate change operations are not sufficiently embedded in the organisation. In particular, it found that 75% of survey respondents did not have any Climate Change key performance indicators to track operational work being done; 88% of officers were not actively tracking their Carbon Footprint within their service area and only 50% of respondents said they had resources to actively work towards their Climate Change commitments. There are KPIs shown in the last two Overview and Scrutiny minutes, so when will KPI's appear for Climate Change so we can monitor progress being made in this vital area?

Question 7 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture

Since Freedom Leisure won the contract to manage CDC's leisure and museum services, it is noticeable that the built fabric and level of service has deteriorated. As a season ticket member, I receive regular comments from other users. Could the portfolio holder confirm what plans are in place to monitor customer satisfaction levels?

Question 8 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Members will have noted that the 2023/24 pay award for local government staff in England has now been agreed with the trade unions. Can the Deputy Leader now provide us with a figure for increased councillor allowances, as voted for by Liberal Democrats and Cllr Ind at Annual Council on 24 May?

Question 9 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

What will be the total cost to council taxpayers for the by-election in the Lechlade, Kempsford and Fairford South Ward scheduled for Thursday 14 December?

7. Amendments to the Constitution (Pages 43 - 62)

Purpose

To consider proposals from the Constitution Working Group for amendments to the Constitution to:

1. Update the Council Budget Protocol
2. Remove references to the now rescinded Recovery Investment Strategy from the constitution.

Recommendations

That Council resolves to:

1. Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to update the Council Budget Protocol [Part G, Appendix D] to reflect the change in political composition following the District Council elections in May 2023.
2. Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to remove references to the now rescinded Recovery Investment Strategy from the Council's constitution.

8. **Programme of Meetings 2024/25 (Pages 63 - 76)**

Purpose

To set a programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2024/25.

Recommendations

1. Agree the programme of meetings from June 2024 to May 2025 as set out in Annexes A and B.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer), in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings in the event that there is any future decision of Council to change the committee structure or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings.
3. Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set the meeting dates for the Performance and Appointments Committee.
4. Delegate Authority to the Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) to set dates for member training and briefing sessions, any working groups established by the Council and any meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee (Licensing Act 2003 Matters) and the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee (if required).
5. Agree that, subject to any alternative proposals Council considers and agrees, meeting start times will be rolled forwards from 2023/24.

9. **Publica Review Report (Pages 77 - 136)**

Purpose

To consider the Human Engine report and recommendations.

Recommendations

That Full Council resolves to:

1. Approve the recommendations set out in the Human Engine report (that the majority of services are returned to the Council as per the detail provided on page 12 of the Human Engine report).
2. Instruct the Chief Executive to oversee the creation of a detailed transition plan for subsequent agreement by Cabinet and Council.
3. Endorse the approach to the further due diligence outlined in the financial implications of the report including analysis of the detailed payroll data required, which will be essential to calculate the short and long-term costs associated with the recommendations set out in the Human Engine report.

10. **Notice of Motions**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12, the following Motions have been received.

Motion A: Council Finances

Proposed: Councillor Mike Evemy

Seconded: Councillor Tony Dale

This Council notes the declining health of local council finances across England and the financial failures of eight councils since 2018 as evidenced by the issue of Section 114 notices by their Chief Finance Officers, most notably Birmingham City Council, Europe's largest local authority, which declared effective bankruptcy on 5 September 2023.

This Council notes that following the issue of Section 114 notices, the Secretary of State has appointed commissioners to the affected councils whose priority is to make decisions to bring their budgets into balance rather than to maintain services.

This Council notes its financial position including the use of £1.3 million in reserves in 2022/23 to balance its budget and its projected use of a further £0.86 million to do so in 23/24 and its establishment of a Financial Resilience Reserve for this purpose.

This Council recognises that it cannot continue to use reserves to balance its revenue budget and therefore instructs the Deputy Leader and Deputy Chief Executive to prepare a budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy that puts funds back into the Financial Resilience Reserve in 2024/25 and 2025/26 by delivering operating surpluses in those years.

It further notes the delays in the Government's Fairer Funding Review which its advisers Pixel now expect to be implemented in 2026/27 and the potential reduction of £3 million in Government funding which that review could entail for Cotswold District Council.

The Council resolves to:

1. To write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities including the contents of this motion and asking him for: (i) multiple year settlements for local councils to give them a more sound base on which to plan their finances; (ii) an overall real terms funding increase for councils in 2024/25 and beyond to prevent further councils declaring effective bankruptcy and enabling them to arrest, if not reverse, the decline in their services; and (iii) a commitment that the implementation of the Fairer Funding Review will not see councils facing reductions in their Government funding.
2. Request that a copy of this letter be sent to the Member of Parliament for the Cotswolds and the Local Government Association.

11. **Next meeting**

The next scheduled meeting of Full Council will be Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 2pm.

(END)

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COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Council held on Wednesday, 20 September 2023

Councillors present:

Nikki Ind - Chair
Gina Blomefield
Claire Bloomer
Patrick Coleman
Daryl Corps
David Cunningham
Tony Dale
Mike Evemy
David Fowles
Joe Harris
Paul Hodgkinson

Mark Harris – Vice Chair
Roly Hughes
Angus Jenkinson
Julia Judd
Juliet Layton
Andrew Maclean
Helene Mansilla
Mike McKeown
Clare Muir
Dilys Neill
Nigel Robbins

Gary Selwyn
Tony Slater
Lisa Spivey
Tom Stowe
Jeremy Theyer
Clare Turner
Chris Twells
Michael Vann
Ian Watson
Len Wilkins

Officers present:

James Brain, Forward Planning Manager
Jan Britton, Managing Director - Publica
Matthew Britton, Principal Planning Policy Officer
Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)

Sarah Dalby, Elections Manager
Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services Officer
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer
Kira Thompson, Election and Democratic Services Support Assistant
Robert Weaver, Chief Executive

54 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Ray Brassington and Jon Wareing

55 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members or Officers present.

56 Minutes

The Chair noted that there were exempt minutes as part of the item on Solar Photovoltaic Installation on Council Assets from the previous meeting. It was reaffirmed that any discussion on this would need to take place in closed session.

There were no comments on the exempt minutes.

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RESOLVED: That the public and exempt minutes from 19 July 2023 be agreed as a true and correct record of the meeting.

Voting Record

25 For, 1 Against, 4 Abstention, 4 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Angus Jenkinson	Roly Hughes	Andrew Maclean	Jon Wareing
Claire Bloomer		Chris Twells	Nigel Robbins
Clare Muir		David Fowles	Patrick Coleman
Clare Turner		Dilys Neill	Ray Brassington
Daryl Corps			
David Cunningham			
Gary Selwyn			
Gina Blomefield			
Helen Mansilla			
Ian Watson			
Jeremy Theyer			
Joe Harris			
Julia Judd			
Juliet Layton			
Len Wilkins			
Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evey			
Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Tom Stowe			
Tony Dale			
Tony Slater			

57 Announcements from the Chair, Leader of Chief Executive (if any)

The Chair introduced the announcements section.

The Chair noted the extensive commitments in the summer they had attended in their role as Chair of Council in the district and in the county. This included the Three Choirs festival launch in Gloucester Cathedral and the opening of the new Cotswold Friends Community Garden in Stow.

The Chair also noted the Mr Motivator Active Cotswold event on Sunday 1 October in Cirencester and encouraged all Members and residents to get involved.

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The Chair also wished to congratulate the winners of the Gloucestershire County Council Holiday Activities Fund Awards which included Stow Active Sports, Tetbury Area Youth and Community Trust, World Jungle.

The Chair also wished all a Happy Gloucestershire Day for 21 September 2023.

The Leader began his announcements by wishing to offer condolences following the death of David Prewett as one of the founding members for Cirencester Action on Buses. It was noted that the tireless work undertaken against bus service reductions and helping with the design of many of the routes in the area would not be forgotten.

The Leader also wished to highlight to Members the financial challenges faced by the Council in the light of Birmingham City Council issuing a Section 114 notice.

It was highlighted that the reduction in funding and other inflationary pressures had left many councils struggling. It was affirmed that Cotswold District Council was financially solvent, but this could change by the year 2026/27 if financial savings were not made.

It was highlighted that to avoid what Birmingham City Council, Woking Borough Council, and Thurrock Borough Council had gone through, action needed to be taken.

The Leader also noted the Chair's comments in regards to the photo competition, the winning entries of which would be hung in the Chamber.

The Chief Executive was then invited to give any announcements and urged all Councillors to complete their Cyber Security training to ensure they had the skills to prevent Cyber Security attacks.

58 Public Questions

Question 1: Councillor Michael Haines, Chipping Campden Town Council

The first public question was from Councillor Michael Haines from Chipping Campden Town Council and the newly appointed Chairman of the Chipping Campden Visitor Information Centre. Councillor Haines addressed the concerns around the withdrawal of the grant funding for the visitor information centres. It was commented that the decision was seen to reflect a lack of understanding about the importance of these centres in promoting the visitor economy. It was noted that the Town Council was not aware of any consultation undertaken. Councillor Haines asked Councillor Dale as the Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation.

- What consultation was carried out before the decision on Visitor Information Centres was taken?
- What assessment was made of likely job losses as a result of this decision, and;
- Why was the Town Council not asked to submit proposals to the Commissioning models?

Councillor Dale responded by explaining that it was felt that the public would understand the budget position. It was noted that the decision taken in December 2021 for the grant funding to not continue after 18 months which was communicated to Town and Parish Councils affected.

Question 2: Councillor Richard Harrison, Fairford Town Council

Councillor Harrison wished to ask what the Council was doing to ensure decisions on planning matters were being taken properly in accordance with development management policies. It was also asked what controls were in place to ensure decisions were not taken under delegated authority without proper notice or transparency under the scheme of officer delegation. It was commented that some recent decisions were damaging to the character of the district and conflicted with the policy of tackling climate change.

Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services, noted that advance sight of the question had been provided by Councillor Harrison. It was noted that the scheme of delegation had strict rules for its use and required that the case officer recommendation being proposed is checked by one other officer before being issued. It was outlined that therefore there were checks and balances provided within the scheme for these decisions. It was noted that the question pre-supposes that officers would attempt to act outside of the scheme of delegation, which was outlined as not being the case.

Councillor Harrison followed-up by commenting that it was viewed as inadvertent non-compliance with the scheme. Councillor Layton highlighted that policies are weighted and there were systems to consider all views and come to a balanced conclusion.

59 Member Questions

The Chair introduced this item by highlighting that the written responses to Member Questions were on desks. These are attached at Annex A

The supplementary questions can be found attached at Annex B.

60 Establishment of a Working Group for Boundary Reviews

The purpose of the report was to seek the approval of Council to create a Working Group to oversee the Local Government Boundary Review and Polling District Review which are due to take place in the next 2 years and agree Terms of Reference for the Group.

The Leader, Councillor Joe Harris introduced the report.

It was noted that the last review of the boundaries for the District Wards was in 2015. It was highlighted that the 32 wards covered by 34 Councillors represented at that time around 2000 electors with a 10% variance for individual wards.

It was highlighted that changes that had taken place since 2015 had meant a varying of the size of wards. It was highlighted that there were ten wards in the District over the 10% size variance set out by the Boundary Commission.

It was noted that a request to the Local Government Boundary Commission had been made to review the size of the wards in the District, and this work was set to be completed in good time before the next set of District elections in 2027.

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It was highlighted that a Polling District review was also required every five years, to look at polling stations and make sure they are fit for purpose.

It was noted that the two reviews would look at the number of Members, the size of the Wards and the polling station location within the District.

Councillor Stowe then seconded the report and provided comments on this item.

It was noted that a democratic deficit could emerge with the larger seats like Campden and Vale having over 2000 electors per Member.

Members welcomed that work had already started on this issue following the May 2023 local elections.

There were various comments by Councillors that welcomed the engagement of all political groups on a cross-party basis.

It was noted by Council that there was an opportunity to review some polling stations and look at future requirements.

It was noted by the Council that the 10% variance was a statutory figure, but there was an opportunity on a local level to take house building into account.

There were various comments about dual Member wards and how these would need to be discussed as part of the reviews.

The Chair then asked each Group Leader for their Member nominations for the Boundary Reviews Working Group:

Councillor Joe Harris as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group confirmed the following Members: Councillors Paul Hodgkinson, Mike Evemy, Patrick Coleman and Clare Muir.

Councillor Stowe as Leader of the Conservative Group then confirmed the following Members: Councillors Stowe and Councillor Fowles.

Councillor Maclean was then confirmed as the nomination from the Green Group.

Voting Record

32 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 2 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Andrew Maclean			Jon Wareing
Angus Jenkinson			Ray Brassington
Chris Twells			
Claire Bloomer			
Clare Muir			
Clare Turner			
Daryl Corps			
David Cunningham			

David Fowles			
Dilys Neill			
Gary Selwyn			
Gina Blomefield			
Helen Mansilla			
Ian Watson			
Jeremy Theyer			
Joe Harris			
Julia Judd			
Juliet Layton			
Len Wilkins			
Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evey			
Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Nigel Robbins			
Patrick Coleman			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Roly Hughes			
Tom Stowe			
Tony Dale			
Tony Slater			

61 A review of the Cotswold District Local Plan housing requirement

The purpose of the report was to agree that Full Council should approve the Review of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 Housing Requirement, which finds that the local housing need of the district has not changed significantly and that the minimum housing requirement provided by the Cotswold District Local Plan does not require updating.

Councillor Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services, introduced the report.

- It was noted that a review of the strategic housing requirement was required every five years, and that a 2020 review highlighted that a partial update of the Local Plan was required to address issues such as changes to national policy and meeting the changing housing need in the District.
- It was highlighted that the adopted local housing requirement sets a minimum of 8400 homes and an additional requirement of 580 nursing and residential bed spaces.
- The review of the housing requirement carried out in Summer 2023 tested the adopted requirement to see if the number of homes needed to be higher or lower to meet housing needs whilst also protecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The review was confirmed to have found that 10,000 homes were already expected to be delivered over the Local Plan period (2011-2031).
- It was noted by Council that the local housing need in the district had not changed significantly, and that the Council had a robust housing land supply of 6.9 years.

- It was highlighted that the situation was being kept under review if any changes in the future to national policies, local housing need and any legal challenge through the planning process by applicants.

The Chair and other Members also wished to thank the Forward Planning officers for their work and for the Member Briefing provided.

It was noted that this was an important report to ensure that future developments are right for communities and are locally managed.

There was a query about special landscape areas and their protection of the AONB. The Chair then invited the Forward Planning Manager to respond to this. It was noted that special landscape areas were defined in policy EN6 of the Local Plan and that these were areas that were important to protect for their landscape character and tranquillity.

Councillor Joe Harris then seconded the report.

The thanks to the officers were reiterated by Councillor Harris for their work and to Councillor Layton for her leadership in this area.

It was noted that the situation ten years ago without a Local Plan and a five year housing land supply had changed communities, and this was why the report was so important to approve.

Voting Record

32 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 2 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Andrew Maclean			Jon Wareing
Angus Jenkinson			Ray Brassington
Chris Twells			
Claire Bloomer			
Clare Muir			
Clare Turner			
Daryl Corps			
David Cunningham			
David Fowles			
Dilys Neill			
Gary Selwyn			
Gina Blomefield			
Helen Mansilla			
Ian Watson			
Jeremy Theyer			
Joe Harris			
Julia Judd			
Juliet Layton			
Len Wilkins			

Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evely			
Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Nigel Robbins			
Patrick Coleman			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Roly Hughes			
Tom Stowe			
Tony Dale			
Tony Slater			

62 Appointment of two Independent Persons to the Audit & Governance Committee

The purpose of this report was to appoint two appropriately skilled and experienced members of the public to be “independent members” of the Audit & Governance Committee.

Councillor Robbins as Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee introduced this item.

It was noted that the advertisement for the role achieved a great response which should be welcomed.

The selected appointees were outlined to Council for their experience and the knowledge they could bring to the Committee.

Councillor Muir as the seconder then addressed Council.

It was highlighted as Vice-Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, that the expertise and oversight which would be provided was welcomed.

Council asked whether the appointments would be for a four-year term or would be permanent. The Director of Governance responded that it would be for a four-year term, and the current appointees could apply again if they so wished to after 4 years.

RESOLVED: The Council APPROVED to:

1) APPOINT John Chesshire and Christopher Bass to the Council’s Audit & Governance Committee for a four-year term, commencing immediately.

Voting Record

32 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 2 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Andrew Maclean			Jon Wareing
Angus Jenkinson			Ray Brassington

Chris Twells			
Claire Bloomer			
Clare Muir			
Clare Turner			
Daryl Corps			
David Cunningham			
David Fowles			
Dilys Neill			
Gary Selwyn			
Gina Blomefield			
Helen Mansilla			
Ian Watson			
Jeremy Theyer			
Joe Harris			
Julia Judd			
Juliet Layton			
Len Wilkins			
Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evey			
Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Nigel Robbins			
Patrick Coleman			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Roly Hughes			
Tom Stowe			
Tony Dale			
Tony Slater			

63 Amendments to the Constitution - Recommendations of the Constitution Working Group

The purpose of this report was to consider amendments to the Constitution.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and proposed the recommendations.

It was noted that it was important that the Constitution is kept up to date in line with legislation.

The first change outlined was the creation of a Standards Hearing Sub-Committee which was outlined as being good practice for dealing with complaints against District Councillors and Town and Parish Councillors.

It was noted that these hearings are rare but are important for good governance.

It was also highlighted that the recommended two un-paid Town and Parish Councillors would be recruited from a geographical spread and would attend hearings relating to a Town/Parish Councillor in an advisory capacity.

It was noted that the call-in rules were being changed to reflect the outcome of the 2023 local elections.

Councillor Every then seconded the item and outlined some points of clarification to the proposals.

It was noted that the terminology was mixed in the report but that the sub-committee would be responsible for undertaking standards hearings whereas general standards matters would remain the responsibility of the Audit and Governance Committee.

It was also noted that the word 'must' should replace the word 'should' to reflect the requirements of call-in.

It was therefore noted that the call-in rules would become the following;

The power of call-in can be exercised by any three Members of the Committee (who must be from either (i) at least two political groups; or (ii) one political group and a nonaligned (independent) Committee Member, if one sits on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

It was asked as to how Town and Parish Councillors would be recruited for participation in the process. The Director of Governance outlined that some ideas had been taken from other local authorities and Gloucestershire Association of Town and Parish Councils (GATPC). It was noted the approach for recruitment had not been formalised, but that the geographical spread would be considered. Once this had been formalised, it would then go back to Members.

It was reaffirmed that the number of people who could exercise call-in could be more than 3, and that this rule was one that the Council had agreed in its Constitution.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- 1) AGREED to establish a Standards Hearing Sub-Committee (of the Audit and Governance Committee). This would be a politically balanced 3-member sub-committee with membership appointed by the Committee each year.
- 2) INSTRUCTED the Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) to recruit up to two town and parish council representatives to act as a non-voting consultee(s) at hearings to determine whether a town or parish councillor has breached their council's code of conduct.
- 3) AUTHORISED the Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) to update i) Part B, Article 8 of the Constitution with consequential amendments to the Audit & Governance Committee's membership Page 95
- 4) AUTHORISED the Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) to update Part D6, paragraph 4.13, Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Voting Record

32 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 2 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Andrew Maclean			Jon Wareing

Angus Jenkinson			Ray Brassington
Chris Twells			
Claire Bloomer			
Clare Muir			
Clare Turner			
Daryl Corps			
David Cunningham			
David Fowles			
Dilys Neill			
Gary Selwyn			
Gina Blomefield			
Helen Mansilla			
Ian Watson			
Jeremy Theyer			
Joe Harris			
Julia Judd			
Juliet Layton			
Len Wilkins			
Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evey			
Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Nigel Robbins			
Patrick Coleman			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Roly Hughes			
Tom Stowe			
Tony Dale			
Tony Slater			

64 Petition received in relation to Visitor Information Centres

The purpose of this item was to consider a petition presented by Councillors David Fowles and Tom Stowe regarding Visitor Information Centres in the Cotswold District.

The Chair announced that as the Local Petition Scheme within the Constitution only allowed for a maximum debating time of 15 minutes, it was felt by many Members from all groups that this wasn't sufficient time to debate the topic.

The Chair therefore proposed that this specific Rule of Procedure (in paragraph 19 of the Local Petition Scheme) be suspended for the duration of this item.

Councillor Nikki Ind proposed, and Councillor Joe Harris seconded.

RESOLVED: That Council suspend the time limit rule in paragraph 19 of the Local Petition Scheme as outlined for the duration of this item.

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Voting Record

30 For, 2 Against, 0 Abstention, 2 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Angus Jenkinson	Andrew Maclean		Jon Wareing
Claire Bloomer	Chris Twells		Ray Brassington
Clare Muir			
Clare Turner			
Daryl Corps			
David Cunningham			
David Fowles			
Dilys Neill			
Gary Selwyn			
Gina Blomefield			
Helen Mansilla			
Ian Watson			
Jeremy Theyer			
Joe Harris			
Julia Judd			
Juliet Layton			
Len Wilkins			
Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evey			
Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Nigel Robbins			
Patrick Coleman			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Roly Hughes			
Tom Stowe			
Tony Dale			
Tony Slater			

Councillor Tom Stowe as the Petition Organiser and Leader of the Conservative Group presented the petition to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council.

Councillor Stowe highlighted that:

- Councillor Stowe and Councillor Fowles had presented the petition to the Deputy Chief Executive on Tuesday 5 September which called for the reversal of the decision to cut £54,000 to save visitor information centres in Bourton-on-the-Water, Chipping Campden, Stow-on-the-Wold and Tetbury.
- The petition contained 2093 signatures and 953 signatures from Cotswold residents. It was noted that since the petition was handed in, there were an additional 316 signatories with 83 of these being from Cotswold district residents.

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- The response was higher than the Council's budget consultation and was a great example of local democracy in action.
- Visitor information centres helped contribute to the tourism sector of the Cotswolds which was an industry providing many jobs to residents.
- The decision to remove grant support taken by Cabinet would have an impact on the provision of visitor information centres.
- The funding was to be withdrawn at the end of September and therefore that time was of the essence for Cabinet to reconsider the decision taken.

Councillor Fowles, the second petition organiser then spoke and highlighted that:

- The Council's stated principles to decision-making, and that local views would be considered to contribute to decisions taken.
- There were Members from both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups who represent wards which have Visitor Information Centres located in their ward.
- The decision taken in December 2021 by Cabinet included a consultation with these centres, which had not appeared to have been done.
- The centres provide the opportunity to seek information and buy products which was felt could not be as useful online.

The Chair then addressed Council as a Tetbury ward member. It was noted that there was no known engagement with Tetbury residents, and that only 7 residents from Tetbury had signed the petition itself. It was noted that Tetbury Town Council had been planning for the removal of funding, and that the financial position of the Council needed to be considered.

Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation then addressed Council as the accountable member and said that:

- There had been a lot of proactive efforts to promote modern and active tourism and this decision could be helpful to provide modern digital services.
- The concerns were recognised by the Cabinet, and that the Council had given grants during its time in office.
- Many of the Visitor Information Centres had been planning for the future when the original decision was taken in December 2021.
- Digital training had been given to help all organisations businesses in the district promote tourism globally.
- Whilst it was regrettable that the grants had to be removed, it was hoped that the Visitor Information Centres would continue to engage with their communities.

There were various points raising concerns over the future of these centres once the grant funding had been withdrawn. However, it was also highlighted how alternative funding sources such as Crowdfund Cotswold may be available to them.

It was noted that Cabinet would need to reconsider the decision quickly if it wished to do so before the funding was withdrawn. Therefore, option two would not be considered as helpful at this point.

Councillor Every then proposed the following resolution in response to the petition:

“This Council notes:

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- 1) The petition signed by 957 residents and 1,140 non-residents of the District and the desire from the signatories for the Visitor Information Centres in Chipping Campden, Stow-on-the-Wold, Bourton-on-the-Water and Tetbury to remain open;
- 2) The budget it passed on 15 February 2023 removed the funding allocation for the four visitor information centres with effect from 1 October 2023 following the decision by Cabinet on 6 December 2021 to continue funding the centres for an 18-month period until 30 September 2023;
- 3) The report presented to Cabinet on 17 July 2023 when the Cabinet decided to allocate an additional £6,000 to the Bourton Visitor Information Centre in recognition of the support to be provided for coach parking in the village until 31 December 2023.
- 4) That the four affected centres have been offered non-financial, transitional, strategic support by the Council's economic development lead, working closely with the local town and parish councils alongside input from the tourism team until 31 December 2023. The purpose of the support is to work alongside the VICs towards a self-sustaining business model and provide signposting to known funding opportunities for projects which facilitate digital engagement. This could include connecting to business support or training and potential opportunities to bid for relevant funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund or Rural England Prosperity Fund to support sustainable future delivery models.
- 5) The Council recognises its financial position. It is facing a significant financial challenge over the medium-term with a budget gap of £5m identified (2024/25 to 2026/27) in the February 2023 MTFs and a forecast overspend of £448,000 in its 2023/24 revenue budget as reported to Cabinet on 12 September. With both expenditure and income pressures continuing it is likely the budget gap will increase in part due to higher levels of inflation this year. The Council therefore needs to take action to bring its income and expenditure into line.

The Council therefore resolves to take no additional action in response to this petition.”

It was then noted that within the Council's Budget passed by Council in February 2023, the Visitor Information Centre funding reductions had been outlined and agreed by a majority vote.

It was highlighted that the financial position of the Council was not considered within the petition's resolution, and therefore could not be considered by those signing.

Councillor Joe Harris as seconder of the Liberal Democrat's Group resolution said that the debate had been constructive, but that the financial challenges meant that the proposal in the petition could not be met.

It was highlighted that some services may need to be reconsidered or taken on by Town and Parish Councils if possible. It was further noted that the Town and Parish Councils did not have a cap on their precept levels, and therefore this could be a source of funding for them.

Following a query raised by the Senior Democratic Services Officer, it was confirmed by the Director of Governance that the Liberal Democrat Group Resolution would be voted upon as it was the first resolution proposed and seconded.

RESOLVED: That Council NOTED:

1. The petition signed by 957 residents and 1,140 non-residents of the District and the desire from the signatories for the Visitor Information Centres in Chipping Campden, Stow-on-the-Wold, Bourton-on-the-Water and Tetbury to remain open;
2. The budget it passed on 15 February 2023 removed the funding allocation for the four visitor information centres with effect from 1 October 2023 following the decision by Cabinet on 6 December 2021 to continue funding the centres for an 18-month period until 30 September 2023;
3. The report presented to Cabinet on 17 July 2023 when the Cabinet decided to allocate an additional £6,000 to the Bourton Visitor Information Centre in recognition of the support to be provided for coach parking in the village until 31 December 2023.
4. That the four affected centres have been offered non-financial, transitional, strategic support by the Council's economic development lead, working closely with the local town and parish councils alongside input from the tourism team until 31 December 2023. The purpose of the support is to work alongside the VICs towards a self-sustaining business model and provide signposting to known funding opportunities for projects which facilitate digital engagement. This could include connecting to business support or training and potential opportunities to bid for relevant funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund or Rural England Prosperity Fund to support sustainable future delivery models.
5. The Council recognises its financial position. It is facing a significant financial challenge over the medium-term with a budget gap of £5m identified (2024/25 to 2026/27) in the February 2023 MTFs and a forecast overspend of £448,000 in its 2023/24 revenue budget as reported to Cabinet on 12 September. With both expenditure and income pressures continuing it is likely the budget gap will increase in part due to higher levels of inflation this year. The Council therefore needs to take action to bring its income and expenditure into line.

The Council therefore RESOLVED to take no additional action in response to this petition

Voting Record

21 For, 10 Against, 1 Abstention, 2 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Angus Jenkinson	Chris Twells	Andrew Maclean	Jon Wareing
Claire Bloomer	Daryl Corps		Ray Brassington
Clare Muir	David Cunningham		
Clare Turner	David Fowles		
Dilys Neill	Gina Blomefield		
Gary Selwyn	Jeremy Theyer		
Helen Mansilla	Julia Judd		
Ian Watson	Len Wilkins		
Joe Harris	Tom Stowe		
Juliet Layton	Tony Slater		
Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evemy			

Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Nigel Robbins			
Patrick Coleman			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Roly Hughes			
Tony Dale			

65 Notice of Motions

There were two motions presented to Full Council as included within the document pack.

Motion 1: Rail Ticket Offices Motion.

The motion was presented by Councillor Hodgkinson as the proposer.

- It was noted that this issue was important as it was central to the concerns from the closure of rail ticket offices. The specific concerns were around accessibility, the quality of service and the future of public transport within the District.
- It was highlighted there had been a decline in rail ticket offices over the previous 10 years which had been met with public concern. It was stated that recent announcements in the Summer of 2023 about the closure of ticket offices in Moreton and Kemble and in Kingham in West Oxfordshire.
- It was noted that a petition had been launched by Councillor Hodgkinson and Councillor Jenkinson in response to the proposed closure of Moreton's rail ticket office, which had received public support.
- It was noted that there was a concern around job security for those staff working in ticket offices in the District.
- It was noted that the Chief Executive as part of the motion was being instructed to write to Mark Harper MP, as Secretary of State for Transport, and also to Great Western Railway in regards to the closures.
- It was also noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could provide value in questioning the decision with representatives from the railway.

An amendment had been tabled by Councillor Fowles and seconded by Councillor Blomefield which struck out point 3 of the resolution (the referral to Overview and Scrutiny Committee) and inserted the following point (point 4):

- *Petition the MP for the Cotswolds to write to Mark Harper MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to request a review of the provision of rural ticket offices in the Cotswolds.*

Councillor Hodgkinson clarified that in proposing the motion he was altering the motion to accept the insertion of point 4 but without removing point 3 which referred the issue to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Jenkinson as the seconder, spoke in regard to the altered motion.

- It was highlighted that whilst there was an understanding to make the railways viable, it was a core service for many residents.
- It was reaffirmed that many individuals struggle with a digital platform for tickets, and having a human support was important.

Councillor Fowles asked for clarity in regard to the motion due to some revisions being accepted. The Chair clarified that the motion was altered by the proposer who accepted the amendment in regard to point 4. Councillor Fowles then announced that following discussions with Councillor Hodgkinson before this item, that the amendment would be withdrawn so the proposal could be fully supported.

There was also a question by Councillor Fowles about whether it could be a cross-party motion, but the Chair highlighted that Councillor Jenkinson as seconder had already spoken to the motion.

There were various comments made in debate raising concerns for elderly and disabled residents, and those lacking ICT skills in the district highlighted in the motion. It was also highlighted how these were the same residents affected by the removal of cash payments from car parks.

It was noted that there was a safeguarding element to rail ticket offices, especially with railway stations at night.

It was highlighted that as the railway companies were private operators, and it was important for them to have a human interface.

It was noted that providing ticket offices was particularly important to promote sustainable travel into the future for all people.

Councillor Blomefield, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, spoke about the importance for Members to engage with the sessions proposed with Great Western Railway.

There were comments raised about the capacity for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to examine this on top of the usual business.

RESOLVED: That Council agreed (as amended) to

- **INSTRUCT** the Chief Executive to write to Mark Harper MP Secretary of State for Transport, and the Chief Executive of the Rail Delivery Group, expressing Council's opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the office(s) at Moreton in Marsh, Kemble and Kingham.
- **INSTRUCT** the Chief Executive to write to Great Western Railway expressing the Council's opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket office(s) at Moreton in Marsh, Kemble and Kingham.
- **REFERRED** the issue to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the recommendation that representatives from Great Western Railway are invited to attend a Scrutiny Meeting at the earliest possible point to discuss future plans for ticket offices and staffing at our local stations.

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- PETITION the MP for the Cotswolds to write to Mark Harper MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to request a review of the provision of rural ticket offices in the Cotswolds.

Voting Record

30 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Andrew Maclean		Gary Selwyn	Chris Twells
Angus Jenkinson			Jon Wareing
Claire Bloomer			Ray Brassington
Clare Muir			
Clare Turner			
Daryl Corps			
David Cunningham			
David Fowles			
Dilys Neill			
Gina Blomefield			
Helen Mansilla			
Ian Watson			
Jeremy Theyer			
Joe Harris			
Julia Judd			
Juliet Layton			
Len Wilkins			
Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evely			
Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Nigel Robbins			
Patrick Coleman			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Roly Hughes			
Tom Stowe			
Tony Dale			
Tony Slater			

Motion 2: Grey Water Motion

Councillor Julia Judd as the proposer of the motion introduced the motion. The following points were highlighted:

- It was highlighted how there were very simple ways of capturing rainwater such as water butts which could have a big impact.

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- It was noted that there were significant problems with water drought, and the harvesting of rainwater and re-use of grey water was important to combat this.
- It was noted that minimising hot water use was important for reducing carbon emissions.
- It was noted that it was important that the use of these systems can prevent localised flooding.

Councillor Maclean then seconded the motion and spoke to the motion.

- It was highlighted that promoting these schemes in developments is difficult to enforce at present.
- It was highlighted that river pollution was also a big problem and these systems will help to reduce that.

An amendment was tabled by Councillor Spivey which was highlighted at Annex A.

Councillor Judd and Councillor Maclean accepted the amendment, and this became the substantive motion.

Councillor Spivey as the proposer for the amendment thanked Councillor Judd and Councillor Maclean for accepting the amendment.

It was noted that the measures should be part of national standards and it was important to promote this within the National Planning Policy Framework, and with the water companies.

It was highlighted that as part of the review of the Local Plan, the Cotswold District design code could be reviewed to reflect the intentions of this motion.

It was highlighted by Members that parts of the motion did not go far enough to cover areas like agriculture which were high users of water.

RESOLVED:

That Council:

Endorses the use of rainwater and greywater systems to achieve water neutrality.

- Request that officers investigate how rainwater and greywater systems can be promoted for use in developments and properties in the wider District.
- Request that officers investigate how rainwater and/or greywater systems could be applied to Council assets such as the Council Offices, Trinity Road.
- Request that the findings of these requests be delivered by officers through a briefing note to Members'.
- Instructs the Chief Executive to write to the MP asking for urgent action on funding for the Environment Agency to investigate and take action on illegal sewage spills by water companies
- Writes to the Secretary of State for DHLUC lobbying for changes in the NPPF and Building Regulations, making the introduction of greywater recycling mandatory in new housing developments

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Voting Record

31 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention, 3 Absent/Did not vote

For	Against	Abstention	Absent/Did not vote
Andrew Maclean			Chris Twells
Angus Jenkinson			Jon Wareing
Claire Bloomer			Ray Brassington
Clare Muir			
Clare Turner			
Daryl Corps			
David Cunningham			
David Fowles			
Dilys Neill			
Gary Selwyn			
Gina Blomefield			
Helen Mansilla			
Ian Watson			
Jeremy Theyer			
Joe Harris			
Julia Judd			
Juliet Layton			
Len Wilkins			
Lisa Spivey			
Mark Harris			
Michael Vann			
Mike Evely			
Mike McKeown			
Nikki Ind			
Nigel Robbins			
Patrick Coleman			
Paul Hodgkinson			
Roly Hughes			
Tom Stowe			
Tony Dale			
Tony Slater			

66 Next meeting

The next meeting of Full Council will be on Wednesday 22 November 2023.

67 Matters exempt from publication

Full Council did not enter into private session.

68 Exempt minutes from the meeting on 19th July 2023

The exempt minutes within the private document pack were taken as read and agreed at Agenda Item 3.

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The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 9.35 pm

Chair

(END)

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Member Questions for Council - 20 September 2023

Question	Response
<p>Question 1 from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability</p> <p>In December last year, your predecessor, Cllr Coxcoo, stated her position that tourists travelling to the Cotswolds via air travel should be deterred. Please could you confirm the Cabinet's current position on promoting the Cotswolds as a place to visit for air travellers?</p>	<p>We welcome visitors to the Cotswolds from all over the world and would ask them and indeed support them, where possible, to travel here in the most sustainable way possible.</p> <p>A couple of points on how we support sustainable visitor travel:</p> <p>The District Council plays a key role in Cotswolds Tourism Destination Management Organisation and the newly formed Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). The Destination Management Plan identifies sustainability as a priority and highlights an objective to: "To increase usage of sustainable transport by visitors when travelling to and around the Cotswolds". Efforts are made to specifically target operators with an active & sustainable travel element.</p> <p>I'm currently working with officers to make the Cotswolds a better place to visit in an electric vehicle, by accelerating both our own and partners installation of electric vehicle chargers. We've all been frustrated by the lack of progress on the lack of progress when it comes to electric vehicle charging points and I hope to bring positive news on this soon.</p> <p>I'd also like to highlight this administration's work on green economic growth means that we now host ZeroAvia here in the Cotswolds, who are one of the companies that is leading the transition to sustainable aviation.</p>

Question 2 from Councillor Julia Judd to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services

CDC recently issued a Press Release about the planning department including new information about recruitment.

How many vacancies are there currently and will that mean that the planning department will be running at full capacity for the foreseeable future?

Our Cotswold District Planning team has a team of 13 FTEs assessing planning applications. Following a period of relative stability we now have 4 vacancies within the team. Reasons for leaving include family commitments, moving into the private sector, change in career and taking time out for travelling.

We are reviewing how best to fill these vacancies in order to ensure we're working as smartly and efficiently as possible, taking the opportunity to review any possibilities for cost savings whilst ensuring we don't compromise on good service and performance. We will utilise temporary resource if we feel more time is needed to review these considerations.

It's worth noting that there is a national shortage of planners and after 10 years of austerity councils struggle to compete with the private sector when it comes to terms and conditions that we can offer current and prospective employees.

With this in mind and this administration's ambition to enhance planning services, whilst balancing required cost savings, a holistic resource review is underway and may result in further changes in team structure.

Question 3 from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture

Please could you confirm the total costs to CDC of hosting the upcoming Mr Motivator event on Sunday 1st October?

The total estimated cost of the event is £3800. The exact figure will be available after the event. There is no direct cost to Cotswold District Council for the event.

It is funded through an external grant received from NHS Gloucestershire to get people more active, promote healthy lifestyles and tackle health inequalities. This therefore represents an investment in the wellbeing of our residents and preventative activity such as this significantly reduces the future burden on the NHS which is a priority for our administration.

This event is part of the wider Active Cotswold programme, which aims to develop an improved leisure offer. Apart from improvements to the leisure centres and facility-based offers, Active Cotswold specifically aims to co-create more community based, affordable,

	<p>sustainable, and inclusive physical activity opportunities that are accessible to people where they live.</p> <p>Examples of initiatives that have already been implemented are Community Fit Kits, a new inclusive Outdoor Movement Class and free access to the Mr Motivator Motivation Club which is an online offer.</p> <p>I look forward to Councillor Stowe attending the event if he can.</p>
<p>Question 4 from Councillor Len Wilkins to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council</p> <p>There have been some recent high profile cyber security attacks on several private and public organisations. This threat is likely to continue to grow over the coming years. To counter this growing threat it's vital that organisations have a policy of continuous improvement in cyber security practice to support the security, resilience and integrity of digital services, data and systems. Does the council have a formal published cyber-security policy?"</p>	<p>We have made significant investments in Cyber Security. Cyber Security is now embedded in every technology and data decision across the Council.</p> <p>In early 2022, in the wake of the Gloucester City Council Cyber incident, a gap analysis was conducted comparing the Councils security capabilities with information provided by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC). Whilst the analysis concluded our systems would have detected an attack with similar traits to the Gloucester City incident, other attack pathways were identified. The analysis made a series of recommendations which were given a high priority and accepted. The recommendations included additional funding for security tools to enhance threat visibility and protection as well as investment in staff and professional training.</p> <p>Through this investment, supplemented with additional Local Government Association (LGA) funding, the 4 Councils now employ 3 staff dedicated to Cyber Security that form a Cyber Team within the shared ICT team. In total, across our ICT team we now employ 5 staff who hold cyber certifications. These certifications require continuous, professional development (CPD), ensuring the staff's skills and knowledge are up to date.</p> <p>Across the ICT partnership our systems ingest over 40 million security logs per day. Our Cyber Team use Artificial Intelligence / Machine Learning to reduce this to an average of 25 incidents per day. Each incident is reviewed by the Team and the appropriate action taken.</p>

	<p>We accept that we cannot stand still. Our technical security systems continue to evolve and adapt as new threats emerge. Our ICT staff receive regular cyber intelligence from the NCSC as well as leading private sector security organisations. As an aside, security information sharing between our neighbouring Councils in Gloucestershire has significantly improved over the past two years.</p> <p>We do not publish a formal policy that lists the current security tools and deterrents deployed as this would be the equivalent of providing a burglar with the blueprints to our buildings.</p> <p>To provide further detail, a confidential Councillor Cyber Briefing has been arranged for 14th November 2023, which I would encourage you all to attend. This briefing will include a live demo of some of the Councils security capabilities. It will also include details of enhancements being deployed in the current financial year.</p> <p>It would be appreciated if all members could complete their Cyber Security training as soon as possible. The training is an NCSC accredited course specifically designed for Councillors. A similar course is being rolled out to all Officers across both Publica, Ubico and the Councils.</p>
<p>Question 5 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture</p> <p>A local resident from the farming community raised concerns with me regarding the future of the very important collection of old agricultural equipment currently displayed at the Old Prison, Northleach. I followed this up and</p>	<p>Thank you for your question and for taking the time to liaise with the Museum and Friends of the Cotswolds on the wide and varied collection that we have including the agricultural equipment. As you may be aware, there is an agreement in place between the Council and the Friends regarding the collection. We had a productive meeting in the last few days with the Friends which included some of the points and observations you have made in your question.</p> <p>We discussed with the Friends of the Cotswolds how we can make the displays more</p>

subsequently had a meeting with Emma Stuart of the Corinium Museum together with Dr Alison Grierson-Brooks at the Old Prison and also met three of the volunteers who work on the conservation of the objects. As I understand it the collection is owned by the Corinium Museum which in turned is owned by Cotswold District Council. Many of the pieces in the collection are 'accessional' and were accepted by the Government in lieu of death duties so cannot be sold. Friends of the Cotswolds bought the Old Prison from CDC in 2012-2013 and agreed to house and maintain the collection there. A review of the display with a condition report was due to have been carried out in July 2022 but was never done.

What are the plans for the future of this historic collection of farm equipment which I feel should be given greater care and more publicity so that more people now as well as future generations can learn about farming methods before the advent of modern machinery and enjoy seeing these fascinating objects?

prominent and accessible to ensure these fascinating objects are cared for, conserved and displayed so they receive the attention they deserve.

We will continue to work closely with our stakeholders to make improvements to the display of old agricultural equipment including funding new information and interpretation boards and obtaining an up-to-date condition survey of all the historic and culturally significant artefacts that are in the collection at the Old Prison, Northleach.

Question 6 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

I read the latest Ubico newsletter with interest, particularly regarding the visit to Oak Quarry Household Recycling Centre in Coleford by students from the Heart of the Forest Special School. I am frequently asked questions regarding recycling by residents – where it goes, how it is organised

Ubico manages the household waste recycling centres on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) who are the Waste Disposal Authority. Oak Quarry Household Recycling Centre is in the Forest of Dean district. Information about where waste is sent by GCC is on their website here -

<https://www.gloucestershirerecycles.com/recycling-at-home/where-are-gloucestershires-materials-recycled/county/asbestos/#main>

Councillor Lynden Stowe, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member - Finance and Change at GCC has been asked to provide details to Councillor Blomefield of the proceeds from waste

<p>and the proceeds from it. Could a visit to this recycling facility for all interested District Councillors be arranged so that we could see for ourselves how this important service is managed by Ubico</p>	<p>materials.</p> <p>Cotswold District Council provides a domestic kerbside service to all residents of the district and details of where recycling materials are taken are on the Council's website here - https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling/what-happens-to-your-recycling/</p> <p>I have asked Officers to arrange a visit for Members to a Household Recycling Centre and I know they have already been in contact with Councillor Blomefield about this.</p>
<p>Question 7 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Mike Evely, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Given the national concern over public buildings constructed using RAAC concrete, could the leader confirm that no buildings owned by CDC were constructed using this material.</p> <p>If CDC does not have this information, will the leader confirm what plans he has to reassure members of the public that our buildings are safe?</p>	<p>I am responding to your question as a portfolio holder for assets. As soon as the issue with RAAC became widely known, the Leader asked officers to carry out a review of the Council's buildings. Here is a summary of the key findings from that review:</p> <p>Corporate buildings: Our corporate buildings (Trinity Road and Moreton Area Centre) are not affected by RAAC.</p> <p>Leisure Centres: Our leisure centres are not at risk due to more recent construction.</p> <p>Commercial Buildings: Initial feedback indicates there's a low risk in our commercial buildings due to age and construction method.</p> <p>Properties Constructed Between 1950 and 1990 Further review of properties constructed between 1950 and 1990 is underway to ensure nothing is missed.</p>

	<p>I will ensure Members are advised if further investigations identify any issues regarding RAAC in our buildings. In addition, the Leader has asked housing associations with homes in the District to tell the Council if any of their housing stock is affected and will update Members following receipt of their replies.</p>
<p>Question 8 from Councillor Daryl Corps to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council</p> <p>Historically all Council meetings were held during the working day. When the Liberal Democrats took power in 2019, the times of meetings were reviewed and changed so that a number of meetings now take place in the evenings.</p> <p>This change was designed to allow elected members who worked to attend meetings as well as giving members of the public more flexibility.</p> <p>Since 2019 we have been through Covid, introduced agile working for staff and held local elections resulting in a large number of newly elected members who in many instances have to attend Parish Council meetings and other meetings in the evenings.</p> <p>We have experienced many instances where staff are not available in the evenings and members have meeting clashes and conflict.</p> <p>I believe the schedule of meeting times doesn't work and</p>	<p>I do not recognise the statement that there have been many instances where staff have not been available to attend evening meetings. Speaking to both our Chief Executive and the Managing Director of Publica they haven't raised any concerns in this respect on behalf of staff.</p> <p>The current start times for committee meetings were agreed by Council in November 2022.</p> <p>A draft programme of meetings for 2024/25 will be coming forwards to the next meeting of Council, which will provide Members with an opportunity to propose alternative start times.</p> <p>It's worth noting that most councils hold the majority of their formal meetings in the evening to make it easier for working age people to attend and that this is considered best practice in the local government sector.</p>

needs to be changed as a priority.

Please could the portfolio holder undertake a review?

Question 9 from Councillor Nikki Ind to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member Climate Change and Sustainability

Further to the recent announcement that the first funding for rural electric buses via the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas programme is being made available to all local authorities in England outside of London, can you please confirm that Cotswold District Council is working with Gloucestershire County Council to apply for this funding to provide rural transport, which is lacking in the District and particularly in my area in the south – which missed out on the Robin ‘on demand’ trial currently being run in the north of the District.

I am certainly keen to encourage and support the transition from fossil fuel to zero emissions bus services and improve public transport access in the Cotswolds and will seek to work with GCC to ensure the Cotswolds is represented on this.

I understand the Department for Transport (DfT) launched the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) 2 fund on 8 September 2023 and it has requested that local highways authorities submit notifications of intention by 20 October 2023. The deadline for submitting a bid is 15 December 2023. At the time of writing Gloucestershire County Council has not yet considered what a potential bid could look like and whether it will submit a bid.

Gloucestershire County Council have explained that like ZEBRA 1, applicants can bid for up to 75% of the cost difference between a zero-emission bus and a standard conventional diesel bus and up to 75% of capital expenditure incurred for infrastructure. It appears an element of the fund will be ring-fenced for rural areas. DfT ZEBRA 2 guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-zero-emission-bus-funding-zebra-2/apply-for-zero-emission-bus-funding-zebra-2>.

It should be noted that the “Robin” was funded via the Rural Mobility Fund not ZEBRA 1. GCC was not able to bid for ZEBRA 1 funding as it could not raise the local matched funding contribution needed. Again ZEBRA 2 bid depends on whether it can find a bus operator to work with who is also willing to invest and contribute financially. GCC are contacting operators this week to see who may be interested.

Question 10 from Councillor Dilys Neill to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

(This question was received past the deadline for a guaranteed response in advance of the meeting of Friday 8th September. It was therefore not published on the main agenda)

What are the council's policies for bringing empty properties back into use? Do you know how many empty properties there are in Cotswold District and how many have been brought back into use, particularly for accommodation in the last year?

The council is committed to bringing as many empty properties back into use as possible and our current strategy is outlined in the Long Term Empty Homes Strategy 2019 - 2024. You can find a link to this on the council's website - [link to Long Term Empty Homes Strategy](#)

As at the end of July 2023 there were 846 long term empty homes on the register.

236 properties have been removed from the Long Term Empty register during this financial year.

We'll shortly begin work on the next iteration of the Long Term Empty Homes strategy and I'd appreciate Cllr Neill's input as I know Stow, Mangersbury and the Swells suffer because of long term empty properties.

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Question Number	Follow-up question	Answer
<p>Question 1 from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability</p>	<p>Councillor Stowe asked for Councillor McKeown to clarify that former Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning, Rachel Coxcoon, was wrong to state that long haul air travellers should be deterred from visiting the Cotswolds, and that visitors are welcomed across the world irrespective of their means of travel?</p>	<p>Councillor McKeown stated that he couldn't comment on previous comments made by a former Councillor. It was stated that tourism is always welcomed, and that the administration was proud of companies like Zero Avia being within the District which promotes sustainable air travel for the future.</p> <p>Councillor Dale as the Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation was invited to comment on this area. It was highlighted that it was down to individuals as to which travel method they use. It was highlighted that Zero Avia was developing technology which would help to decarbonise air travel, and that Members should be proud of the companies' work.</p>
<p>Question 2 from Councillor Julia Judd to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p>	<p>Councillor Judd asked about the work of the enforcement team and their performance.</p>	<p>Councillor Layton responded that the workforce narrative provided for Planning Officers could also be applied to Enforcement Officers. However, it was noted that a new Member of the team was starting shortly, but the Council kept the team structure under review in line with demand.</p>
<p>Question 3 from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture</p>	<p>Councillor Stowe responded by noting that he was not able to attend but that he wished the event well. It was asked that given public funds may have been used in some way, a debrief</p>	<p>Councillor Hodgkinson responded by recognising the importance of monitoring how taxpayer money is spent. However, it was outlined that the importance of this event</p>

	<p>be provided to Members after the meeting for attendance to the session, and how many people then subsequently signed up for the course? It was also asked if a feedback survey would be provided?</p>	<p>would be for health prevention, and the balance between money spent and the prevention of illness. It was noted that the Cabinet Member would confirm with officers in regards to the feedback form, and the confirmation of attendance and money spent.</p>
<p>Question 4 from Councillor Len Wilkins to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council</p>	<p>Councillor Wilkins thanked Councillor Harris for the full answer and stated he did not have a supplementary question.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Question 5 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture</p>	<p>Councillor Blomefield asked about the condition report which had not been carried out, and when would this be done to preserve the historic agricultural equipment?</p>	<p>Councillor Hodgkinson thanked Councillor Blomefield for highlighting this equipment. It was confirmed that a meeting had taken place with Friends of the Cotswolds on this matter. It was stated that the timetable could not be confirmed, but that preserving this equipment for the public was seen as important.</p>
<p>Question 6 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Mike Evey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p>	<p>Councillor Blomefield noted contact with Publica officers on a visit to a recycling centre from Ubico or at the centre in Cricklade operated by Thamesdown. It was highlighted that there was a lot of waste generated through modern life and it was important that Members get the opportunity to visit a centre.</p>	<p>Councillor Evey confirmed that he had asked officers to organise this. It was noted that this could be part of Member Development, so that new and existing Members have the opportunity to understand these processes.</p>
<p>Question 7 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Mike Evey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p>	<p>Councillor Fowles was reassured that this issue had been looked into. It was asked as to how many buildings between the years 1950-1990 are included in</p>	<p>Councillor Evey confirmed that he would ask for that information and provide it to Councillor Fowles and any other interested Members.</p>

	the review for RAAC and the timetable for completing this review.	
Question 8 from Councillor Daryl Corps to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council	Councillor Corps had asked as to why the date of Cabinet had moved from a Monday to a Thursday, and would Members get the chance to review the programme of meetings to minimise any clashes with other commitments?	Councillor Joe Harris confirmed that this had been done to assist Cabinet Members to join the meetings. It was confirmed that the programme of meetings would be considered at the next meeting of Council on 22 November 2023. However, it was noted that any change to the start times away from afternoon and evening meetings would leave the Council as an outlier. However, Councillor Harris suggested that it would be helpful for Group Leaders to meet to try and reach a consensus.
Question 9 from Councillor Nikki Ind to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability	Councillor Ind asked about the vacancy for the Sustainable Transport Officer, and who was the current contact for this?	Councillor McKeown confirmed that he would provide this information to Councillor Ind.
Question 10 from Councillor Dilys Neill to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council	Councillor Neill confirmed that any discussion on this would be welcome. It was highlighted that in Stow there were many empty properties, particularly in retirement developments where this was figure between 80-90 empty flats. Councillor Neill wished to know if this was an issue in other wards, as this was a particular concern for areas like Stow within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.	Councillor Harris noted the concerns in Stow, and the supply of retirement developments which were not available to other people. It was highlighted that the Long-Term Empty Homes Strategy would be reviewed to tackle this problem. This was particularly a concern in regards to empty homes. It was highlighted that a meeting with officers would take place to discuss this.

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Member Questions for Council - 22 November 2023

Question	Response
<p>Question 1 from Councillor Jon Wareing to Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation please advise the Council about the outcome of the exploratory work officers were asked to do looking at off-site pay by cash facilities for people who can't or don't wish to pay by card, by phone or by app when using our car parks?</p>	<p>Officers have made enquiries into how PayPoint may offer an opportunity for customers to pay by cash for parking in Cotswold District Council car parks.</p> <p>The initial setup fee would be £7,500 with ongoing support fees of £9,000 per annum.</p> <p>The customer would need to locate the nearest store that offers PayPoint and walk there from the place of parking. Out of the 15 charged car parks in the district, 4 outlets were identified as being within a 4-minute walk.</p> <p>No other services have been identified that could provide a cash service.</p>
<p>Question 2 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>We have seen the huge amount of building work being carried out on the Trinity Road premises to repair roof defects, install solar panels, office conversions and other improvements. Is this work on time and on budget?</p>	<p>A report is coming forward to Cabinet in January which provides an update. The agile working project set aside £675,000 for office moves, lighting upgrades, carpeting and redecoration and security changes to tenant areas. £495,000 has been committed to-date and this work is due to be completed on budget. There was £520,000 allocated for repairs to the roofs. Whilst the initial quotes received were within budget, the scope of the work has been extended as invasive testing revealed that the substructure was saturated and therefore flat roofs would need to be stripped and insulation and boarding replaced rather than just re-covered. In addition the opportunity has been taken to undertake replacement of valleys (wide gutters between roofs) as it is more cost effective while other roofing repairs are ongoing. Work is ongoing but the estimated cost is now £606,364.</p> <p>Work was originally due to complete in July 2023. However, the initial tender process for roof repairs failed to generate any quotations. There was therefore a delay whilst interest in the work was generated and contractors were again invited to submit quotes. Delays have pushed the work into the</p>

	Autumn period which causes further delays due to weather conditions, however work is due to complete by the end of January.
<p>Question 3 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Joe Harris</p> <p>Could you confirm the cost of producing the October 2023 “Cotswold News”, including design, print and distribution via Royal Mail?</p> <p>Please also confirm ALL officer time spent in preparing this publication?</p>	<p>The total cost of design, print and distribution of Cotswold News in October 2023 was £15, 818.</p> <p>We have not kept detailed records of time spent working on Cotswold News, however, we estimate a total of 50-70 hours worth of work across the Communications and Marketing Team. There will also be time spent by other officers to review content, supply information and provide other required support.</p>
<p>Question 4 from Councillor Daryl Corps to Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation</p> <p>On the 5th November this Council announced that it will be conducting a full study and review of its current car parks, working with local communities and parish councils to understand the current needs in each area. It also announced that it will look at what improvements car parks may need such as EV chargers.</p> <p>So far, the Town and Parish Councils in my ward are reporting that the community reach out from CDC has been limited to one generic email! How does the portfolio holder intend to engage on such an important and fundamental part of Town and Parish life?</p> <p>‘Working together’ is not done by a circular email or would anything more be considered too expensive given this councils current budgetary pressures?</p>	<p>The Council intends to engage with Town and Parish Councils, and all interested stakeholders through focused meeting sessions held in the community to listen to feedback and concerns.</p> <p>Furthermore, we will be running online surveys which will be promoted in all our car park locations and through our media channels. This will provide an opportunity for all customers and stakeholders that have an interest in shaping the future car parking strategy to share with us their feedback and concerns.</p>

Question 5 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

Cherwell District Council provides support for people needing to rent in the Private Rental Sector (PRS) who have insufficient savings to provide a deposit, are refugees or involved with the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Primarily they provide a deposit bond in place of a cash deposit, as well as other help for both the potential tenant and landlord, including access to grant funding for property improvements of up to £15,000 (Landlord Home Improvement Grant).

Has CDC considered implementing a similar scheme to help those who are on the waiting list for social and affordable housing find suitable, secure accommodation more quickly?

Cotswold District Council is allocated an annual Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) plus on occasion, other short term top ups allocated throughout the year for specific purposes such as Winter pressures. For 2023/24 Cotswold DC also received a large top up to address additional pressures from the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

The reports outlining the grants and the planned expenditure can be found here:

<https://meetings.cotswold.gov.uk/documents/s6764/Cotswold%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20Grant%202023-2025%20Proposed%20Spending.pdf>

<https://meetings.cotswold.gov.uk/documents/s7493/CDC%20Planned%20Expenditure%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20Grant%20Top%20Up%20Ukraine.pdf>

Part of the planned spending of the general HPG is to provide Rent in Advance and Deposits for those who the council has an assessed housing duty to assist. The Housing Team may also provide, amongst other things, necessary white goods or furniture to those who are homeless and have no possessions from a previous tenancy. The Housing Team will also consider on a case-by-case basis using the HPG for any measure providing that it prevents homelessness or assists with securing alternative accommodation to avoid a household becoming homeless.

It is necessary to limit the funds to those with housing duties as the HPG is finite so must be directed at those with the greatest need.

Households from the Homes for Ukraine scheme in need of financial support to set up a tenancy can also access a countywide fund as well as the Cotswold top up grant. The Housing Team work in close partnership with the County to ensure that each fund is used for its intended purpose and is maximised to help as many people as possible.

The Council has offered a 'paper' bond scheme in the past whereby the

	<p>council would guarantee to cover costs incurred through arrears or damage at the end of a tenancy up to an agreed amount, however this was discontinued around 5 years ago for multiple reasons. The ‘paper’ bond can remain outstanding for many years until a tenancy ends and therefore a landlord may make a claim on the bond years after it is issued. This left the council exposed to tens of thousands of potential claims that cannot be predicted and are therefore difficult to budget for. There is also very little chance of recovering any bonds paid to landlords as these were being given to the most vulnerable of our clients and who have the least amount of spare money to repay such a debt.</p> <p>The HPG conditions have also changed in recent years in that DLUHC expect the grants to be spent within the budget year and they cannot be carried over into the next. Therefore, any payments made from the HPG to the most vulnerable of our clients are now given as one-off grants with no expectation of repayment.</p>
<p>Question 6 from Councillor Len Wilkins to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability</p> <p>At the Audit Committee meeting on 18th October, Internal Audit reported a key finding that climate change operations are not sufficiently embedded in the organisation. In particular, it found that 75% of survey respondents did not have any Climate Change key performance indicators to track operational work being done; 88% of officers were not actively tracking their Carbon Footprint within their service area and only 50% of respondents said they had resources to actively work towards their Climate Change commitments. There are KPIs shown in the last two Overview and Scrutiny minutes, so when will KPI’s appear for Climate Change so we can monitor progress being made in this vital area?</p>	<p>Thank you, Councillor Wilkins, for raising this crucial issue. Climate change is a matter I feel deeply passionate about, and its impacts are not just a distant threat but a present reality. It’s imperative that we acknowledge and address these challenges head-on, both within our organisation and beyond.</p> <p>Regarding the key findings from the audit committee, I want to clarify some points. The percentages cited, while concerning, stem from a low response rate to the survey, with only 27 officers participating. For example, the 75% who reportedly did not have climate change KPIs actually represents just 6 officers. Similarly, the 88% not tracking their carbon footprint equates to 7 respondents.</p> <p>This limited participation does not provide a comprehensive view of our organisation’s engagement with climate change. We are addressing this by redesigning the questionnaire for greater uptake and plan to relaunch it in 2024. This will offer a more accurate reflection of our efforts and areas needing improvement.</p> <p>Furthermore, the survey did not cover significant climate change activities</p>

	<p>already underway, such as our work on the Local Plan and the Carbon Literacy training rolled out since July and the recent decision to install solar on council buildings and the successful launch of the Cotswold Solar initiative with Make My House Green.</p> <p>Acknowledging the need for improvement, we're prioritising the creation of a corporate plan KPIs and myself and Charlie Jackson are looking to engage more widely with staff and the cabinet by establishing a new Climate Board starting in the New Year. The aim of the board will be to ensure strong embedding and action to ensure climate change is at the heart of all our operations and we are green to the core.</p> <p>Regarding national climate policy, the government's recent cynical reversal of key green initiatives is deeply concerning. These decisions, widely criticized, not only undermine the UK's climate leadership but also pose substantial risks to our economy and prospects for inward investment.</p> <p>Rolling back these policies will harm the UK's economy by increasing reliance on fossil fuels, leading to higher long-term costs and greater exposure to volatile global energy markets and Putin's War, increases household expenses and diminishes savings from transitioning to energy-efficient technologies, while harming people's health due to pollution. The UK risks missing out on the growing global market for green technology and sustainable infrastructure, sectors that are pivotal for future economic growth.</p> <p>These developments emphasize the critical importance of our local efforts and the need for robust, consistent leadership at all levels to confront the climate emergency. It's a stark reminder that effective climate action is not only an environmental necessity but also a key driver of economic stability and growth.</p>
<p>Question 7 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure and Culture</p> <p>Since Freedom Leisure won the contract to manage CDC's leisure and</p>	<p>The transition from one Leisure Operator to another at the end of a Contract Term is a complex process with a range of items and matters that need to be put into place. The overarching aim is to ensure that the customer experience remains seamless whilst 'behind the scenes' all of the</p>

museum services, it is noticeable that the built fabric and level of service has deteriorated. As a season ticket member, I receive regular comments from other users. Could the portfolio holder confirm what plans are in place to monitor customer satisfaction levels?

systems, processes, data, ITC software and hardware, etc. are migrated.

Unfortunately, there were some technical issues that occurred in the mobilisation phase (since August 1st). These included a staff error which led to a loss of pool water, some items of plant being identified as below the expected standard on takeover, and rainwater ingress which led to an electrical fault. Whilst these were managed and responded to well by Freedom Leisure they were unexpected which led to short periods of downtime for the facilities, including pool closures.

Whilst the intended mobilisation phase of three months has taken slightly longer, Freedom Leisure has worked very hard alongside council officers to address the unexpected problems, most of which were legacy issues, as well as customer concerns effectively and in a timely manner. This has meant a slight delay in making the planned improvements. The transition is now on schedule and business as usual as well as further improvements to the services and customer experience is expected to continue.

As an example of Freedom Leisure's commitment to making improvements in the facilities, they have reported that since 1st August 2023 they have spent approximately £24,000 on building maintenance. This demonstrates that some areas were in need of investment – and that under our new partnership agreement Freedom Leisure are committed to take on these challenges, which will lead to significant improvements in the longer term.

Customer Satisfaction is a key factor in delivering the Leisure service, this is an area in which Freedom Leisure have a strong track record. There are a number of reporting mechanisms that fall under the Leisure Contract to ensure that Customer Satisfaction is delivered. Listed below is an example of the range of measures that will be used for this:-

- Quest (a nationally recognised Quality Assurance Scheme for the Leisure sector) will be introduced in 2024. This will include 'Mystery Visits' and face to face interviews and site management reviews from industry qualified assessors.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An NPS Survey (which measures customer experience and loyalty) will be undertaken early in 2024 to ascertain the current performance and to form a benchmark through the rest of the Contract • Freedom Leisure conduct internal audits from experts within their own estate to continually monitor service performance in fields such as H&S, Technical Operations, Energy Management, etc. <p>Regular meetings are now scheduled (Monthly, Quarterly, Annually) between various stakeholder representatives and the Freedom Leisure colleagues to ensure continued monitoring takes place of each of the service areas. Customer Feedback is also important and there is a trackable 'Customer Comment' scheme in place. This is in the form of both physical media and virtual. Whilst the number of actual reports received since August 1st 2023 are relatively low, we can see from the data held that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89% of enquiries were resolved within 24 hours • 11% of enquiries were resolved within 7 days • There is a downward trend in the number of comments being received at the sites. <p>In November 2023 Freedom Leisure have also introduced 'Meet the Manager' sessions for sites. Feedback from these sessions will be used to inform each Centres planning/improvement actions. The response from customers to the initial sessions has been positive.</p>
<p>Question 8 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Mike Evey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Members will have noted that the 2023/24 pay award for local government</p>	<p>Members' Allowances for 2023/24 will remain unchanged in line with the decision taken by Members at the Annual Council to implement a freeze in allowances for 2023/24 at their 2022/23 level.</p> <p>23 councillors including members of the Liberal Democrat and Green Groups</p>

<p>staff in England has now been agreed with the trade unions. Can the Deputy Leader now provide us with a figure for increased councillor allowances, as voted for by Liberal Democrats and Cllr Ind at Annual Council on 24 May?</p>	<p>together with Councillor Ind supported this resolution. Five members from the Conservative and Green Groups opposed the resolution while five Conservative Group members abstained with Councillor Twells absent.</p>
<p>Question 9 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>What will be the total cost to council taxpayers for the by-election in the Lechlade, Kempsford and Fairford South Ward scheduled for Thursday 14 December?</p>	<p>The estimated cost of the by-election is around £9,000, but the final figure will not be known until all the invoices have been received. The by-election in February 2022 in the other two-member ward, Campden & Vale, cost £8,500.</p>

Agenda Item 7



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	COUNCIL – 22 NOVEMBER 2023
Subject	AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION – REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council Email: joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Email: david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Email: david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider proposals from the Constitution Working Group for amendments to the Constitution to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update the Council Budget Protocol 2. Remove references to the now rescinded Recovery Investment Strategy from the constitution.
Annexes	Annex A – Part C2 (Council Functions) of the Constitution Annex B - Part C5 (Executive or Cabinet Functions) of the Constitution (Both annexes include Recovery Investment Strategy references as highlighted to the Constitution Working Group)
Recommendation(s)	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to update the Council Budget Protocol [Part G, Appendix D] to reflect the change in political composition following the District Council elections in May 2023. 2. Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to remove references to the now rescinded Recovery Investment Strategy from the Council’s constitution.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the highest standard of service



Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Elected Members of the Constitution Working Group (Cllrs M Evely, D Fowles, J Harris, J Layton, N Robbins and L Wilkins) Local Management Team; Business Manager, Democratic Services, and Interim Head of Legal Services.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Constitution Working Group has reconvened for the 2023/24 municipal year with revised terms of reference. Following the Group's meeting of 07 November 2023, this report makes the following recommendations to Council:
- i) Update the Council Budget Protocol
 - ii) Remove references to the now rescinded Recovery Investment Strategy from the constitution.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.
- 2.2 The Constitution must contain:
- the Council's standing orders/procedure rules;
 - the members' code of conduct;
 - such information as the Secretary of State may direct;
 - such other information (if any) as the authority considers appropriate
- 2.3 Members of the Constitution Working Group have considered a number of proposals and now recommend the following amendments to the Constitution to the Council.

3. RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL BUDGET PROTOCOL

- 3.1 The Council's constitution (Part G, Appendix D) sets out the Council Budget Protocol and provides a robust framework and procedures for members to follow when discussing, debating and proposing the budget and any amendments to it.
- 3.2 Following the District Council elections in May 2023, the Budget Council Protocol should be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects the political composition of the Council.
- 3.3 The Constitution Working Group recommend that minor changes are made to the process to reflect the changed political composition of the Council, as set out in the paragraphs below.
- 3.4 Amend the deadline for notification of alternative budget proposals from the current requirement of *"preferably at least 2 days before the meeting, but by no later than 3.00 p.m. on the day before the Council meeting"* to *"no later than 3.00pm on the Monday before the Council meeting"*. This proposal balances the need to allow members adequate time to review and discuss with the relevant officers the published budget proposals but at the same time ensuring there is adequate time for the proposed amendments to be considered by relevant officers.



3.5 Paragraph 3.7 and the associated flowchart sets out the way in which opposition group(s) are able to present budget amendments. Recognising the change in political composition of the Council, it is recommended that this is amended to reflect the order in which political groups would be able to propose budget amendments. The order would be on the basis of the number of members in each group (i.e. the group with the most members would have the first opportunity, other groups would follow in descending order).

4. REFERENCES TO THE RECOVERY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

4.1 The Recovery Investment Strategy (RIS) was rescinded by the Council at their meeting on 16 November 2022.

4.2 The Council's constitution contains references to the RIS with the Constitution Working Group recommended that these are removed with the Deputy Chief Executive authorised to remove references and, where appropriate, reduce authorisation levels for the approval of acquisition or disposal of land and property to those currently outside of the Recovery Investment Strategy. Annex A includes a copy of the report that was provided to the Constitution Working Group highlighting references to the RIS.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 Members are advised to adopt the recommendations for the reasons outlined in the main body of the report.

5.2 Not amending the Constitution which would lead to a lost opportunity in terms of improving agile decision making, promoting transparency and ensuring robust governance arrangements.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None specifically arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Full Council, through its responsibilities as set out in the Constitution, recognises the requirement to observe specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on the Council by public law, but also accepting responsibility to use its legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in its area.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 None

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT



9.1 The Constitution is made available to all Members and the Public via the Council's website and has been updated in line with the Accessibility Requirements for Public Sector Bodies Regulations (2018). This means that it can be accessed by as many people as possible including those with impaired vision, motor difficulties or cognitive impairments. Where accessibility difficulties are encountered, the Council can provide a copy of the Constitution in different formats.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Not applicable

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)

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Part C2: Council Functions

The functions which may only be exercisable by Council are set out in the table below:

Council Functions	
1	Determine which plans, strategies and policies shall comprise the Council's Policy Framework and from time to time approve, adopt and amend those plans, strategies and policies.
2	Determine and amend the Council's Budget.
3	Approve a departure from the approved Policy Framework and / or the approved Budget.
4	Appoint and remove the Leader.
5	Change the executive arrangements of the Council.
6	Establish, abolish, and decide the terms of reference and the composition of Council, Committees and make appointments including co-opted members to them and other non-Executive bodies.
7	Make and amend Procedural Rules, Financial Rules and Contract Rules.
8	Change the name of the District or a parish.
9	Elect a Council Chair and Vice-Chair
10	Promote or oppose local or personal bills.
11	Where it is the function of the Council, divide Parliamentary Constituencies and local government electoral divisions into polling districts.
12	Appoint an Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer for local government elections.
13	Make, amend, revoke, or re-enact by-laws.
14	Fill Council or Parish Council vacancies in the event of insufficient nominations.
15	Change ordinary year of election of parish councillors.
16	Confirm the appointment of the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) and designate officers as the Monitoring Officer and the S151 Officer.
17	Make a scheme for the payment of allowances to Members and determine the amount of all allowances payable to Members of the Council.
18	Establish and abolish Joint Committees (in respect of non-Executive functions).
19	Approve the Pay Policy Statement.
20	In addition to annual approval of appointments to outside bodies, to appoint or nominate individuals to outside bodies in respect of non-Executive Functions and revoke or withdraw such appointment or nomination where there is no Group Leader consensus on the decision to be taken.
21	Adopt or amend the Code of Members' Conduct and the Arrangements for investigating allegations
22	Take decisions and/or give advice on matters brought to Council by the Leader, Cabinet, Officers and other bodies or persons.
23	Receive and consider statutory reports from the Head of Paid Service, the Section 151 Officer, and the Monitoring Officer.
24	Authorise virements from the Council's approved Annual Revenue and Capital Budgets in excess of £150,000.
25	Certain functions of local authorities are classified as "Local Choice" functions under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Functions and

Council Functions	
	Responsibilities) Regulations 2000, Schedule 2. The Council can decide which of these decisions should be taken by the Full Council and which should be taken by the Cabinet.
26	Approval and allocation of the Council's annual borrowing limit
27	The power to submit proposals to the Secretary of State for an Order under Section 10 (pilot schemes for local elections in England and Wales) of the Representation of the People Act 2000
28	Any resolution for whole Council elections
29	Any change in the name of electoral areas
30	Any decision as to whether a casino should be in the District
31	To undertake the function of Trustee in respect of all Trusts held by the Council (where applicable)
32	Make changes to the Constitution (other than minor amendments which are delegated to the Monitoring Officer or any protocol which falls within the Terms of Reference of any Committee)
33	Delegating functions to other local authorities and deciding whether to accept such a delegation from another authority
34	Set the Council Tax
35	Approving the acquisition or disposal of land or property outside of the Council's Recovery Investment Strategy over £1,000,000.
36	Approving the acquisition or disposal of land and property made under the Council's Recovery Investment Strategy over £3,000,000
37	All other matters which by law must be reserved to the Council

Policy Framework

The policy framework comprises the following plans and strategies:

- [Corporate Strategy/Corporate Plan](#)
- Plans and strategies which together comprise the Development Plan (the [Cotswold District Local Plan](#) and the Council's input into the Gloucestershire County Structure Plan)
- [Housing Strategy](#)
- [Pay Policy](#)
- Licensing Policy Statements ([Licensing Act 2003](#) and [Gambling Act 2005](#))
- [Budget](#), which includes:
 - The Medium-Term Financial Strategy
 - Capital Programme
 - Setting the Council Tax
 - Decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirements, the control of its capital expenditure and the setting of virement limits
 - The Capital, Treasury Management and Investment Strategies

Part C5: Executive or Cabinet Functions

- 5.1 The Council operates a Leader and Cabinet form of Executive and the Leader of the Council specifies how the functions of the Executive (known as 'Executive Functions') will be carried out. All functions of the Council that are not reserved by law as Non-Executive (see Part C2), are Executive functions. Except where the law otherwise provides, it is at the Leader's discretion to determine how decision-making in relation to Executive functions will be exercised.
- 5.2 The Leader may discharge any Executive functions directly or may arrange for the discharge of those functions by:
- the Cabinet
 - a Cabinet Committee
 - an individual member of the Cabinet (Cabinet Member)
 - an officer of the Council
 - another local authority
 - jointly with another local authority through a joint committee or Officer
- 5.3 The Cabinet undertakes all Executive functions including:
- (a) proposing plans and strategies, including the overall Budget, the Policy Framework, changes to the Constitution and arrangements for the good governance of the authority, to Council to approve and adopt
 - (b) publishing in the Forward Plan all decisions by Cabinet, individual Cabinet members and Key Decisions made by officers
 - (c) establishing committees to discharge specific Executive functions, or establishing working groups or panels to review or advise on specific issues
 - (d) representing the Council locally, nationally, and internationally
 - (e) attending meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny committee and any Task and Finish Groups when required to do so.
 - (f) agreeing the acquisition and disposal of property (within limits set out in the Financial Rules and the Acquisition and Disposal Policy) and the management of the Council's landholdings
 - (g) proposing acquisition or disposal of land and property to Council where the financial implications exceed the threshold delegated to the Cabinet
 - (h) exercising the powers and duties of the Council in respect of leisure, museums, consumer protection and environmental health
 - (i) acting as waste collection authority
 - (j) agreeing protocols for consultation and relations with outside bodies
- 5.4 As a rule, matters of corporate policy and high-level strategic matters will be determined by the Cabinet collectively; strategic matters relating to Cabinet member portfolios will be determined by individual Cabinet members; and operational service matters will be determined by the Chief Executive and / or Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and / or relevant Cabinet Member, where appropriate. Where there is doubt, the Leader will be asked to decide.
- 5.5 **Delegations**

- 5.5.1 The Leader has exercised the power of delegation in the manner set out below in Table 4 ‘General Scheme of Delegation of Executive Functions’ and Table 5 ‘Additional Delegation of Executive Functions to Officers’. In Table 4 reference to ‘Cabinet Member’ means a Cabinet Member acting in portfolio as set out in Appendix A and reference to ‘Officer’ means Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, or designated senior Publica employee, when acting as an employee of Cotswold District Council.
- 5.5.2 The Leader has directed that the Executive Functions delegated to Cabinet Members as setout in Table 5 shall not be sub-delegated to Officers without prior consent.
- 5.5.3 Each person or body to whom an Executive Function is delegated shall be empowered to take any step for the purposes of or in connection with the discharge of the Function and may do anything incidental or conducive to discharge of the Function or do anything expedient in connection with the discharge of the Function.
- 5.5.4 The Leader may amend these delegations at any time by giving notice in writing to any person who currently holds the power and any person to whom the power is now to be delegated and to the Proper Officer (in this case the Chief Executive or in their absence or where they are unable to act the Deputy Chief Executive) setting out the change to be made; such amendment to take effect immediately on confirmation of receipt by the Proper Officer. The Proper Officer will ensure that this Part C of the Constitution is updated forthwith.
- 5.5.5 Where an Executive Function has been delegated by the Leader this does not prevent the Leader from exercising that Function.
- 5.5.6 In the absence of the Leader of the Council the person or persons designated by the Leader and notified by the Leader to the Proper Officer as having responsibility for the Leader's area(s) of responsibility is or are authorised to exercise the functions of the Leader pursuant to the Constitution.
- 5.5.7 [Article 13 ‘Decision Making’](#) applies to the exercise of all Executive Functions in this Part.

5.6 Officer Delegations - Special Provisions

- 5.6.1 The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive are not required to exercise all delegations personally and may sub-delegate any Function in this Part C to Officers of suitable experience and seniority.
- 5.6.2 An Officer does not have delegated authority to take a Key Decision unless
- specifically authorised to do so by the Leader or
 - the Chief Executive
 - or, in their absence or where they are unable to act, the Deputy Chief Executive is taking an urgent decision as set out in this Part C5.
- 5.6.3 The fact that a function is delegated to an Officer under this Scheme does not preclude the person or body which gave the delegation from exercising the function

in question.

- 5.6.4 The Leader may direct in any case that a power delegated to an Officer in respect of an Executive Function shall not be exercised by an Officer and that the Function in question shall instead be exercised by the Leader or Cabinet. Such direction must be exercised in consultation with the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive.
- 5.6.5 A Cabinet Member may in respect of an Executive Function which falls within their portfolio direct in any case that a delegated power to an Officer shall not be exercised by an Officer and shall instead be exercised by them as Cabinet Member. Such direction must be exercised in consultation with the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive and the Leader.
- 5.6.6 The Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive may at their discretion and in consultation with the Leader or Cabinet Member refer any matter to the Leader or Cabinet for decision.
- 5.6.7 Officers have responsibility to report to the Leader or Cabinet Member matters that are of political or strategic significance related to any function they are exercising where it is proper for them to be aware of the position.

5.7 Cabinet Member Portfolios

- 5.7.1 Cabinet members have personal responsibility for decisions taken in relation to and discharging those Executive functions within their remit (portfolio of responsibility) as determined by the Leader.
- 5.7.2 As a general proposition, Cabinet members are responsible for:
- leading on developing Council policy and make recommendations to the Cabinet
 - providing guidance to the Cabinet on running activities
 - giving guidance to the Cabinet on budget priorities
 - monitoring performance and ensure policy is delivered
 - leading on improving Council services
 - making sure that activities meet the Council's overall vision, core values and guiding principles
 - contributing to debate and decision-making
 - working with councillors who are not members of the Cabinet, including members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, members of the Opposition and Officers to make sure that the overview and scrutiny process works correctly
 - appearing before and responding to Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports
 - representing the Council at a national and local level
 - Each Cabinet Member is the spokesperson for the policy area or 'portfolio' they are responsible for
- 5.7.3 If a Cabinet Member wishes to make a decision contrary to the advice of the relevant Officer, they must refer the issue to the Cabinet for a decision. If a Cabinet Member considers that any decision they are being asked to take is likely to be particularly sensitive or controversial, they have the discretion to refer the decision to the Cabinet for consideration.

5.8 Table of Executive Functions (Table 4)

Function	Leader	Cabinet Member	Cabinet	Other Local Authority	Officer Chief Executive (CX) or Deputy Chief Executive (DCX)
Policy and Strategy					
Recommend to Council all plans strategies and policies which comprise the Policy Framework (Part 2 article 4) and initiate consultation on such plans policies and strategies			✓		
Agree in year changes to the Policy Framework to the extent permitted by Council or by the Constitution			✓		
Refer to Cabinet for discussion those plans strategies and policies which comprise the Policy Framework and initiate any appropriate consultation on them	✓	✓			
Take urgent decisions that are contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Policy Framework	✓		✓		CX
Refer to Cabinet those plans strategies and policies which do not comprise the Policy Framework and require Cabinet approval	✓	✓			CX/DCX
Agree/amend plans strategies and policies which do not comprise the Policy Framework and require Cabinet approval			✓		
Agree/amend plans strategies and policies which do not comprise the Policy Framework and require Cabinet Member approval (except Key Decisions)		✓			
Agree/amend plans strategies and policies which do not comprise the Policy Framework and require Officer approval (except Key Decisions)					CX/DCX
Respond to consultations from Government, local authority associations and similar bodies which have policy or cross service issues	✓	✓			
Respond to all other consultations					CX/DCX
Finance					
Prepare and consult on the Council's Budget and recommend to Council for approval			✓		
Receive and consider quarterly budget monitoring reports			✓		
Take urgent decisions that are contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the Budget	✓		✓		CX/DCX

Function	Leader	Cabinet Member	Cabinet	Other Local Authority	Officer Chief Executive (CX) or Deputy Chief Executive (DCX)
Make bid for funding with resource implications exceeding £150,000			✓		
Make bid for funding with resource implications exceeding £100,000 and not exceeding £150,000	✓	✓			
Make bid for funding with resource implications not exceeding £100,000					CX/DCX
Agree a contribution to reserves above the level set in the Budget up to £150,000			✓		
Propose to Council a contribution to reserves above the level set in the Budget over £150,000			✓		
Agree use of charging and trading powers		✓	✓		
Set fees and charges		✓	✓		
Agree increase in fees and charges by more than inflation			✓		CX/DCX
Agree increase in fees and charges in line with inflation		✓			
Service Delivery					
Take all steps reasonably necessary to facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of services within their portfolio		✓			
Take all steps reasonably necessary for the effective and efficient delivery of services for which they are responsible					CX/DCX
Undertake internal changes and improvement of the Council's services					CX
Commissioning and Contracts					
Approve the means by which the Council's services will be provided including through a delegation to another local authority, local authority company, community interest company, private organisation, trust or public/private partnership			✓		
Arrange for any Executive Function to be undertaken by another local authority			✓		
Arrange for any Executive Function to be exercised jointly with one or more local authorities through joint arrangements			✓		

Function	Leader	Cabinet Member	Cabinet	Other Local Authority	Officer Chief Executive (CX) or Deputy Chief Executive (DCX)
Appoint member to a joint committee which undertakes Executive Functions and decide on the number of Members to be appointed and their term of office	✓				
Agree to Council appointment of member to a joint committee which undertakes at least one Executive Function and agree the number of members to be appointed and their term of office	✓				
Represent (or arrange for a Member or Officer to represent) the Council as shareholder or member in a company in which the Council holds an interest	✓				
Monitor the performance of contracts and service level agreements in respect of all non-internally provided services					CX/DCX
Accept tenders within budget and exceeding £250,000		✓			
Accept tenders and quotations within budget and not exceeding £250,000					CX/DCX
Approve waiver to Contract Rules where the value is in excess of £100,000			✓		
Approve waiver to Contract Rules where the value does not exceed £100,000 pursuant to Contract Rule 6.2					DCX/MO
Approve waiver from Contract Rules where the value exceeds £100,000 and an urgent decision is required pursuant to Contract Rule 6.2.1					CX
Constitution & Democratic Process					
Make Key Decision		✓	✓		
Make urgent Key Decision	✓		✓		CX
Respond to call-in of a decision	✓	✓	✓		
Respond to petition to Council		✓			
Appoint and remove Cabinet Members and decide their portfolios	✓				
Establish Cabinet Committee or working group			✓		
Delegate Executive Function to a Cabinet Member or Officer	✓				
Delegate Executive Function to an Officer with prior consent of Leader		✓	✓		
Undertake such specific Executive	✓	✓	✓		CX/DCX

Function	Leader	Cabinet Member	Cabinet	Other Local Authority	Officer Chief Executive (CX) or Deputy Chief Executive (DCX)
Function as maybe allocated from time to time by the Leader					
Undertake any Executive Function which is delegated to an Officer where the Leader directs it should be exercised by Cabinet			✓		
Undertake any Executive Function which is delegated to an Officer where the Officer decides to refer it to Cabinet			✓		
Undertake any Executive Function delegated to a Cabinet Member where through absence, conflict or otherwise the Cabinet Member is unable to act	✓				
Undertake any Executive Function delegated to Cabinet which in the opinion of the Chief Executive requires an urgent decision before the next meeting of Cabinet	✓				
Appoint or nominate individuals to outside bodies in respect of Executive Functions and revoke or withdraw such appointment or nomination provided all Group Leaders agree	✓				
Legal Services					
Undertake the role and functions of the Council's Solicitor and Chief Legal Officer and provide the Council's legal service					MO/Head of Legal Services
Audit and Governance					
Undertake the functions of the Council in respect of internal audit					DCX – SWAP
HR					
Undertake functions of the Council in respect of human resources and payroll					CX – Publica
Building Control					
Undertake functions of the Council in respect of building control					CX – Publica
Assets & Property					
Agree asset strategic/management plan			✓		
To be notified of any disposal of non-land assets with a value exceeding £10,000			✓		DCX - Publica
To be notified of any disposal of non-land assets with a value not exceeding		✓			DCX - Publica

Function	Leader	Cabinet Member	Cabinet	Other Local Authority	Officer Chief Executive (CX) or Deputy Chief Executive (DCX)
£10,000					
Make compulsory purchase order (CPO)			✓		
Acquire land or property following CPO					CX
Propose to Council a property acquisition or disposal under the Council Recovery Investment Strategy with a value exceeding £3,000,000			✓		
Acquire or disposal of land and property under the Council Recovery Investment Strategy with a value up to £3,000,000			✓		
Propose to Council a property acquisition or disposal (other than following CPO or under Council Recovery Investment Strategy) where the value exceeds £1,000,000;			✓		
Agree a property acquisition or disposal (other than following CPO or under the Council Recovery Investment Strategy) where the value is over £250,000 and up to £1,000,000;			✓		
Agree a property acquisition or disposal (other than following a CPO or under the Council Recovery Investment Strategy) where the value is more than £50,000 but does not exceed £250,000;		✓			
Agree a property acquisition or disposal (other than following a CPO or under the Recovery Investment Strategy) where the value does not exceed £50,000;					CDX - Publica
Agree Surplus Property Register and determine whether to retain the property or to dispose of it (the timing of such disposal to be at the discretion of the Deputy Chief Executive)		✓			DCX - Publica
Dispose of, exchange or appropriate public open space (any value) where there have been objections to the statutory notice of disposal or appropriation			✓		
Appropriate land (except public open space where objections to the statutory notice of intended appropriation are received)		✓			
Propose to Council to dispose of or exchange land with a value exceeding			✓		

Function	Leader	Cabinet Member	Cabinet	Other Local Authority	Officer Chief Executive (CX) or Deputy Chief Executive (DCX)
£1,000,000 except under the Council Recovery Investment Strategy where the threshold is £3,000,000					
Dispose of or exchange land with a value exceeding £250,000 up to £1,000,000 (including at an undervalue)			✓		
Dispose of or exchange land with an annual value exceeding £500,000 but not exceeding £250,000 including at an undervalue (and including public open space disposals where there have been no objections to the statutory notice of disposal)		✓			
Dispose of or exchange land with an annual value not exceeding £50,000 including at an undervalue (and including public open space disposals where there have been no objections to the statutory notice of disposal)					DCX - Publica
Dispose of statutory allotments			✓		
Apply to Secretary of State to dispose of housing land under Housing Act 1985		✓			
Give public notice of a proposal to dispose of or change the use of public open space					DCX - Publica
Approval of rent reviews where the annual rent exceeds £250,000 and reviews are the subject of negotiation			✓		
Determination of rent reviews: (a) Where the annual rental does not exceed £250,000; or (b) Where the annual rental exceeds £250,000, where a calculation mechanism is set down in the lease and has no element of negotiation		✓			DCX - Publica
Determination of rent reviews: (a) Where the annual rental does not exceed £50,000; or (b) Where the annual rental exceeds £50,000, where a calculation mechanism is set down in the lease and has no element of negotiation					DCX - Publica
Grant consents and licences under any leases granted by the Council					DCX - Publica
Apply for consents and licences under any leases under which property is held by the Council					DCX - Publica

Function	Leader	Cabinet Member	Cabinet	Other Local Authority	Officer Chief Executive (CX) or Deputy Chief Executive (DCX)
Authorise rent subsidy (exceeding a value of £250,000) to third party on Council owned land			✓		
Authorise rent subsidy (exceeding £50,000 but not exceeding a value of £250,000) to third party on Council owned land		✓			
Authorise rent subsidy (not exceeding £50,000) to third party on Council owned land					DCX - Publica
All other matters within the day-to-day management of the Council's property portfolio where the value of the action taken does not exceed £50,000					DCX - Publica

Definitions:

- “Acquire” includes the acquisition (including the acceptance of a surrender where appropriate) of a freehold or leasehold interest, rights, benefits or privileges, the dedication under statutory powers or obligations and includes the variation of any lease where the Council is a tenant under the lease.
- Appropriation (appropriate)” is the formal transfer of property within the Authority from one statutory function to another
- “Dispose” includes the transfer of a freehold interest, dedication under statutory powers or obligations, easements (leasehold or freehold) and the grant, release, assignment or giving of a surrender (as appropriate) of any lease, covenants, benefits rights or privileges and includes the variation of any lease where the Council is a landlord under the lease.
- “Land” includes all buildings structures, rights and interests associated with land
- “Lease” includes any tenancy, licence, consent to occupy
- “Subsidy”, where there is reference to rent subsidy, is to the value of the identifiable rent, service charges, business rates and other out goings for the identifiable period of commitment
- “Value”, where there is reference to a lease/tenancy/licence/surrender, is to the identifiable rent, service charges, business rates and other out goings for the identifiable period of commitment

5.9 Additional Delegation of Functions to Officers

- 5.9.1 All Executive Functions, other than those allocated in Table 4 of this Part, are delegated to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive as set out in Table 5 below.

5.9.2 In addition, the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive will exercise powers or duties specifically delegated to them by the Leader, Cabinet or a Cabinet Member.

Additional Executive Functions of Officers (Table 5)

Chief Executive	
Function	Condition
Discharge any Executive Function which is delegated to an Officer under Part C	Where that Officer is absent or unable to act through conflict of interest or otherwise.
Take an urgent decision in respect of an Executive Function (excluding a key decision) in a situation where there is not sufficient time for a report to be considered by the Leader or Cabinet Member.	Wherever possible this shall be done in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member (where not the Leader). The decision shall be reported to the next scheduled ordinary Cabinet meeting.
To authorise Officers to represent the Authority before a court or tribunal pursuant to: - a) Paragraph 1(3) Schedule 3 of the Legal Services Act 2007 in respect of: - (i) Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1972 (ii) Section 60 of the County Courts Act 1984 b) Paragraph 1(7) Schedule 3 of the Legal Services Act 2007 The Lay Representatives (Rights of Audience) Order 1999.	In consultation with the Head of Legal Services
Authorise any Officer to or for any legal purpose including Statutory Officer appointments.	Unless otherwise prescribed by law or allocated to Council in Part C.
Make arrangements with other local authorities for the placing of staff at the disposal of those other authorities.	
Authorise requests for investigations under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and to maintain a register of investigations authorised under the Act.	
The Chief Executive may take any necessary action on behalf of the Council in respect of the function of emergency planning and shall sub-delegate the same to the Managing Director of Publica Group Ltd	

Deputy Chief Executive	
Function	Condition
Discharge any Executive Function which is delegated to an Officer (including the Chief Executive) under this Part C	Where that Officer is absent or unable to act through conflict of interest or otherwise.

Deputy Chief Executive	
Undertake the role of Chief Executive	Where the Chief Executive is absent or unable to act through conflict of interest or otherwise. This Function falls to the Deputy Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer who is deputising for that period.
Undertake emergency planning and civil defence functions.	

5.10 Cabinet, Cabinet Member Portfolios and Decision making by Individual Cabinet Members

Cabinet	
1	The Cabinet will bear the responsibility for any of the local authority's functions which are delegated to it by the Leader.
2	The Leader will publish a Forward Plan at least monthly, showing a twelve-month programme of work and those decisions which are "Key Decisions", and also those decisions that may be made by an Individual Cabinet

5.10.1 Decisions by Individual Cabinet Members

Decision making by Individual Cabinet Members applies only to Executive functions that have been delegated by the Leader. The process does not apply to any function exercised by Council itself, or that Council has delegated to a Committee, Sub-committee or Officer. Individual Cabinet Members are empowered to make all executive decisions in respect of their own portfolio area of responsibility except:

- a) Decisions already taken by Cabinet or an Officer acting under delegated powers.
- b) Decisions involving a departure from the Council's Budget or Policy Framework or any Cabinet or regulatory committee policy.
- c) Decisions which the Leader wishes to be taken by the full Cabinet or a decision which the Cabinet Member has asked to be taken collectively by the full Cabinet.
- d) Where at least 3 Members of the Council request that a decision be taken by the full Cabinet.

provided that all such decisions will be taken by the decision maker having regard to the advice of the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Chief Executive in interpreting these provisions.

5.10.2 Cabinet Portfolios

Individual Cabinet Members are empowered by the Leader to make all executive decisions in respect of their own portfolio area of responsibility.

The allocation of portfolios to Cabinet Members will be reported to Council by the Leader of the Council from time to time.

Agenda Item 8



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	COUNCIL – 20 NOVEMBER 2023
Subject	PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2024/25
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council Email: joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Caleb Harris, Senior Democratic Services Officer Email: democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To set a programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2024/25
Annexes	Annex A – proposed Programme of Meetings from June 2024 to May 2025 – Calendar format Annex B - proposed Programme of Meetings from June 2024 to May 2025 – List format
Recommendation(s)	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree the programme of meetings from June 2024 to May 2025 as set out in Annexes A and B. 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer), in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings in the event that there is any future decision of Council to change the committee structure or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings. 3. Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set the meeting dates for the Performance and Appointments Committee. 4. Delegate Authority to the Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) to set dates for member training and briefing sessions, any working groups established by the



	<p>Council and any meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee (Licensing Act 2003 Matters) and the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee (if required).</p> <p>5. Agree that, subject to any alternative proposals Council considers and agrees, meeting start times will be rolled forwards from 2023/24.</p>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver the highest standard of service
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Local Management Team Democratic Services Business Manager



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report sets out the proposed programme of meetings for 2024/25 for Members to agree.
- 1.2 The report also provides necessary delegations to officers to make any alterations to the programme as necessary and to schedule meetings of bodies that meet on an ad hoc basis and Member training and briefing sessions. This ensures that Council does not have to meet to provide any minor alterations to the programme of meetings which cannot be foreseen.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Constitution requires that the Chief Executive produces a schedule of meetings for each municipal year, based on operational requirements.
- 2.2 This report proposes meetings dates for May 2024, which have not previously been set by Council, and a recommended programme of Council and Committee meetings for June 2024 to May 2025. Meeting dates for Cabinet are a matter for the Leader of the Council and are included in the programme for completeness.
- 2.3 Setting meeting dates encourages good governance, alongside open and efficient decision making. It also helps members and officers to plan their workloads and availability.

3. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2024/25

- 3.1 The draft programme of meetings for 2024/25 is set out at Annex A in line with the basis of similar years and the committee structure at present.
- 3.2 The general principle for the timetabling of meetings is that business of each committee needs to be transacted in a timely manner. Notwithstanding this, it's important that Members' needs are taken into account. Gloucestershire school holiday dates (shown as grey in Annex A) have been avoided where this does not adversely affect the overall meetings programme however the following meeting dates do fall within Gloucestershire school holidays;
 - Audit and Governance 23 July 2024
 - Planning and Licensing Committee 14 August 2024
- 3.3 District councillors may also serve as county councillors and / or parish councillors. Meetings of Gloucestershire County Council have been set up to the end of the 2024 calendar year, with most meetings of that authority starting in the morning. Clashes with County Council meetings are few but where they do occur any members affected would be able to arrange a substitute for one meeting or the other.
- 3.4 The meetings of Cabinet were agreed by the Leader to be held on a Thursday rather than on a Monday commencing November 2023 onwards. These are generally scheduled for the first Thursday of each month. For future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, these are proposed to be held on a Monday, to allow time for pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet reports. This will provide an extra day for any recommendations to be written up and responded to



compared to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on a Tuesday, as at present. Cabinet reports are subject to a robust internal clearance process and won't normally be finalised for publication until after the agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been published. Any Cabinet decisions for pre-decision scrutiny will be published on the Wednesday before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the following Tuesday.

- 3.5** This report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager, rather than the Director of Governance and Development, to schedule any meetings of the Performance and Appointments Committee that may be required. This is because this Committee would be responsible for considering any disciplinary and/or capability and any grievance matters arising in relation to the Council's Statutory Officers.

4. MEETING START TIMES

- 4.1** No changes are proposed in this report to the start times of meetings but Members may wish to propose alternative start times. Current start times are as follows:
- Council meetings are held at 6.00pm during the summer months (BST) and at 2.00pm during winter months (GMT), with the exception being the February Budget Council meeting which is held at 6.00pm.
 - Planning and Licensing Committee meetings are held at 2.00pm.
 - Licensing Sub-Committee (Hackney Carriage, Private Hire and Street Trading Consent) and Licensing Sub-Committee (Licensing Act 2003 matters) are held at 2.00pm.
 - Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committee meetings start at 5.00pm.
 - Cabinet starts at 6.00pm. However this a matter for the Leader rather than Council.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1** Should Council wish to consider alternative proposals it could request that a further report is presented to a future meeting.
- 5.2** Any future proposals would require consultation with officers to ensure sufficient resource could be provided to facilitate any new meeting.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The number of meetings is similar to previous programmes of meetings and therefore should not have a significant impact on costs.
- 6.2** Members can claim mileage expenses for attending meetings and this is provided for through existing budgets.



- 6.3** There are Members who receive paper copies of agenda packs by post which has a financial cost. The number of copies varies from meeting to meeting, and the overall number is reduced as more Members access papers online or via the Modern.gov app .

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** There are no legal implications, but it should be noted that Licensing Sub-Committee dealing with Licensing Act 2003 matters must be arranged to comply with the deadlines prescribed by the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2003, so the dates cannot be predicted. This report seeks a delegation to the Director of Governance and Development to schedule these sub-committee hearings.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** There are no significant risks in relation to this report. However, if Members do not agree a programme of meetings there is a risk that Members and Officer availability could cause changes to be made at short notice.
- 8.2** If Members are not able to attend Committee meetings, this could affect the overall performance of those Committees in transacting Council business. However, for most meetings it is possible to nominate a substitute Member.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** The recommendations are not expected to differentially impact any groups with protected characteristics.
- 9.2** The meetings are held in an accessible venue and are webcast live to the Council's website which encourages the engagement of all residents with the business of meetings.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** Members are required to attend meetings in person so there will be emissions associated with journeys to and from meetings by car.
- 10.2** Whilst Members have electronic copies by default through Modern.Gov or through the Councillor extranet, many members do receive paper copies which has an environmental impact through use of paper.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None

(END)

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Draft programme of meetings 2024/25

Jun-24				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
	3	4	5	6
O&S		SIB	Cabinet	
	10	11	12	13
		P&L		
	17	18	19	20
	24	25	26	27
		Licensing		

Jul-24				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
	1	2	3	4
		SIB		
	8	9	10	11
O&S		P&L	Cabinet	
	15	16	17	18
		Council		
	22	23	24	25
		A&G		Licensing
	29	30	31	
		SIB		

Aug-24				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
			1	2
	5	6	7	8
		P&L		
	12	13	14	15
	19	20	21	22
			Licensing	
	26	27	28	29
PH				

Sep-24				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
	2	3	4	5
O&S		SIB	Cabinet	
	9	10	11	12
		P&L		
	16	17	18	19
	23	24	25	26
		Council	Licensing	
	30			
	O&S			

Oct-24				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
		1	2	3
			Cabinet	
	7	8	9	10
		SIB		
	14	15	16	17
		P&L		
	21	22	23	24
			A&G	
	28	29	30	31
	Licensing			

Nov-24				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
				1
	4	5	6	7
O&S		SIB	Cabinet	
	11	12	13	14
		P&L		
	18	19	20	21
			A&G	
	25	26	27	28
		Council	Licensing	

Dec-24				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
2	3	4	5	6
		SIB	Cabinet	
9	10	11	12	13
		P&L		
16	17	18	19	20
		Licensing		
23	24	25	26	27
		PH	PH	
30	31			

Jan-25				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
		1	2	3
		PH		
6	7	8	9	10
O&S		SIB	Cabinet	
13	14	15	16	17
		P&L		
20	21	22	23	24
		Council		
27	28	29	30	31
	A&G		Licensing	

Feb-25				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
3	4	5	6	7
O&S		SIB	Cabinet	
10	11	12	13	14
		P&L		
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
		Council	Licensing	

Mar-25				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
3	4	5	6	7
O&S		SIB	Cabinet	
10	11	12	13	14
		P&L		
17	18	19	20	21
		Council		
24	25	26	27	28
			Licensing	
		31		
O&S				

Apr-25				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
	1	2	3	4
		SIB	Cabinet	
7	8	9	10	11
		P&L		
14	15	16	17	18
				PH
21	22	23	24	25
PH			Licensing	
28	29	30		
	A&G			

May-25				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
PH	O&S	SIB	Cabinet	
12	13	14	15	16
		P&L		
19	20	21	22	23
		A.C.		
26	27	28	29	30
PH			Licensing	

Date number greyed out - School Holidays

PH - Public Holidays

P&L - Planning and Licensing Committee

SIB - Sites Inspection Briefing (if required)

A.C. - Annual Council

A&G - Audit and Governance Committee

O&S - Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Cotswold District Council 2024/25

Programme of Meetings



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

June 2024

03/06/2024 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5pm
 05/06/2024 Sites Inspection Briefing
 06/06/2023 Cabinet – 6pm
 12/06/2024 Planning and Licensing Committee – 2pm
 26/06/2024 Licensing Sub-Committee – 2pm

July 2024

03/07/2024 Sites Inspection Briefing
 08/07/2024 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5pm
 10/07/2024 Planning and Licensing Committee – 2pm
 11/07/2024 Cabinet – 6pm
 17/07/2024 Full Council – 6pm
 23/07/2024 Audit and Governance Committee – 5pm
 25/07/2024 Licensing Sub-Committee – 2pm
 31/07/2024 Sites Inspection Briefing

August 2024

07/08/2024 Planning and Licensing Committee – 2pm
 22/08/2024 Licensing Sub-Committee – 2pm

September 2024

02/09/2024 Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 5pm
 04/09/2024 Sites Inspection Briefing – 2pm
 05/09/2024 Cabinet – 6pm
 11/09/2024 Planning and Licensing Committee -2pm
 25/09/2024 Full Council – 6pm
 26/09/2024 Licensing Sub-Committee – 2pm
 30/09/2024

October 2024

03/10/2024 Cabinet – 6pm
 09/10/2024 Sites Inspection Briefing
 16/10/2024 Planning and Licensing Committee – 2pm
 24/10/2024 Audit and Governance Committee – 5pm
 29/10/2024 Licensing Sub-Committee – 2pm

November 2024

04/11/2024 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5pm
 06/11/2024 Sites Inspection Briefing
 07/11/2024 Cabinet – 6pm
 13/11/2024 Planning and Licensing Committee – 2pm
 21/11/2024 Audit and Governance Committee – 5pm
 27/11/2024 Full Council – 2pm

December 2024

04/12/2024 Sites Inspection Briefing
 05/12/2024 Cabinet -6pm
 11/12/2024 Planning and Licensing Committee – 2pm
 18/12/2024 Licensing Sub-Committee – 2pm

January 2025

06/01/2025 Overview and Scrutiny Committee -5pm
 08/01/2025 Sites Inspection Briefing
 09/01/2025 Cabinet – 6pm
 15/01/2025 Planning and Licensing Committee – 2pm
 22/01/2025 Full Council – 2pm
 28/01/2025 Audit and Governance Committee -5pm
 30/01/2025 Licensing Sub-Committee – 2pm

February 2025

03/02/2025 Overview and Scrutiny Committee -5pm
 05/02/2025 Sites Inspection Briefing
 06/02/2025 Cabinet -6pm
 12/02/2025 Planning and Licensing Committee -2pm
 26/02/2025 Full Council – 6pm
 27/02/2025 Licensing Sub-Committee -2pm

March 2025

03/03/2025 Overview and Scrutiny Committee -5pm
 05/03/2025 Sites Inspection Briefing
 06/03/2025 Cabinet -6pm
 12/03/2025 Planning and Licensing Committee -2pm
 19/03/2025 Full Council – 2pm
 27/03/2025 Licensing Sub-Committee 2pm
 31/03/2025 Overview and Scrutiny Committee -5pm

April 2025

02/04/2025 Sites Inspection Briefing
 03/04/2025 Cabinet – 6pm
 09/04/2025 Planning and Licensing Committee -2pm
 24/04/2025 Licensing Sub-Committee – 2pm
 29/04/2025 Audit and Governance Committee – 5pm

May 2025

06/05/2025 Overview and Scrutiny Committee -5pm
 07/05/2025 Sites Inspection Briefing
 08/05/2025 Cabinet – 6pm
 14/05/2025 Planning and Licensing Committee -2pm
 21/05/2025 Annual Council – 6pm
 29/05/2025 Licensing Sub-Committee -2pm

Notes: 1) Unless otherwise stated, meetings held at the Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester GL7 1PX; 2) Programme subject to change - for further information contact Democratic Services: Tel: 01285 623000; Email: democratic@cotswold.gov.uk ; 3) Licensing Sub-Committee meetings scheduled are for (Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading Consent Matters). Sub-Committees to deal with Licensing Act 2003 matters are scheduled as required; 4) Sites Inspection Briefing are scheduled here but are attended by Councillors and officers only 5) The Leader of the Council may call additional Cabinet meetings if required; 6) To view agendas, reports and minutes, see: www.cotswold.gov.uk

Agenda Item 9



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	FULL COUNCIL 22 NOVEMBER 2023
Subject	PUBLICA REVIEW
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Joe Harris, Leader of the Council Email: joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive Email: Robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive Email: Robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the Human Engine Consultants report and to approve the recommendations therein.
Annexes	Annex A - Peer Review report and recommendations Annex B - Human Engine report and recommendations
Recommendation(s)	That Full Council resolves to; <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the recommendations set out in the Human Engine report (that the majority of services are returned to the Council as per the detail provided on page 12 of the Human Engine report)2. Instruct the Chief Executive to oversee the creation of a detailed transition plan for subsequent agreement by Cabinet and Council3. Endorse the approach to the further due diligence outlined in the financial implications of the report including analysis of the detailed payroll data required, which will be essential to calculate the short and long-term costs associated with the recommendations set out in the Human Engine report.



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Corporate priorities	Ensure that all services delivered by the Council are delivered to the highest standard.
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The relevant staff consultation process will commence following the decision-making process (if applicable).



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- I.1** Since 2017, Cotswold District Council, along with Forest of Dean District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Cheltenham borough Council have worked in partnership with Publica, a teckal company owned by the Councils and created to deliver day to day services. Since 2017, Publica has delivered a number of efficiencies and savings but due to the pressures and the local aspirations that the councils are focussed on, an independent review was undertaken to look at whether Publica's company model was still able to meet the current and future needs of its council owners.
- I.2** For Cotswold District Council, a Local Government Association Peer Review in 2022 highlighted the need to ensure the council was best placed to maximise opportunities associated with an ambitious Administration and Corporate Plan. It recommended that an options appraisal be undertaken, considering the appropriateness of some services remaining within Publica.
- I.3** An options appraisal review was undertaken by a company called Human Engine. The final report recommends that a significant number of services should move from Publica and return to being under greater control of the councils. This would leave Publica delivering a range of back office and customer services for the Councils.
- I.4** This represents a fundamentally different future for the councils and for Publica. The Publica of the future will be smaller, leaner, and principally a vehicle for sharing services rather than an entity with its own management, cultural identity, and high-profile brand. If the recommendations of the Human Engine report are approved, each of the four councils will then work in partnership to create a phased plan for the transfer of services.
- I.5** It is important to note that this recommendation is not a commentary on the performance of staff. Staff in Publica have worked diligently and professionally to deliver services on behalf of the shareholder councils. They are passionate about public service and there is every reason to believe they would be equally passionate in direct employment.
- I.6** The recommended option reflects a view that returning services to direct management by the council will provide the council with greater autonomy over service delivery, recruitment, service performance and creating a sustainable financial future.
- I.7** The company Directors are responsible for the management of the company's business and have indicated they will work with the Councils to ensure that the revisions set out in the

Human Engine report are in the best interests of the Company following the review. However, Article 7.2 of the company's Articles of Association gives members, by Special Resolution, the power to direct the Directors to take or refrain from taking specified action provided that no such Special Resolution invalidates anything which the Directors have done before the passing of the Special Resolution.

- 1.8** Section 6 of the report sets out the initial view on the financial projections arising from the recommendations from the review of Publica services. Whilst Human Engine have undertaken modelling and provided high-level financial projections of returning the majority of services to the councils these should be seen as indicative given the limited availability of relevant and detailed data. Sections 6.1 to 6.7 set out the further due diligence requirements including the provision and analysis of detailed payroll data required to enable the S151 officers to calculate the short and long-term financial implications.
- 1.9** The councils retained teams do not have the internal capacity to project manage a change of this scale and complexity. The Human Engine report refers to a number of options in terms of how the Councils could manage the transition process. In addition, it is likely that independent Human Resources and legal support will be needed to complement the Publica and in-house teams, respectively.
- 1.10** Should members be minded to approve the recommendations, the Chief Executives, and their retained management teams will work with Leaders and the Publica Board and Executive to consider in detail the requirements for a smooth transition, via preparing and presenting a detailed transition plan for subsequent approval by Cabinet and Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** In October 2022, the Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a corporate peer challenge. A corporate peer challenge provides for an external review of how a council functions and its ability to deliver on its plans, proposals, and ambitions. The review was undertaken by a team that is knowledgeable and experienced in local government and includes both officer and councillor representatives. The team acts as a 'critical friend' and produces feedback that provides a health check and commentary on areas of strength and potential areas for further consideration.
- 2.2** The corporate peer challenge team gathered information from a wide range of sources and attended various meetings, whilst also conducting interviews with staff, councillors, and some of the Council's key partner organisations. In addition to covering the core assessment areas

associated with all peer challenges (including leadership, financial management, corporate priorities, and governance) the Council requested that the peer challenge team also consider the following questions:

- How well equipped the Council is to respond to the challenges and opportunities that are facing local government now and into the future?
- How well does the Council ensure it delivers its ambitions and priorities through its existing partnership arrangements with Publica?

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 Following the Corporate Peer Challenge 2023 feedback report (which sets out the team's findings and recommendations – **Annex A**) the Chief Executive oversaw the creation of an action plan that set out how the recommendations would be implemented. This action plan was approved at full Council in January 2023.

The action plan reproduced the recommendations made by the corporate peer challenge team, the measures that will be implemented to embed the recommendations, commencement dates and the lead officers assigned to oversee delivery.

3.2 The peer review team identified that there was work to do to improve the effectiveness of the Publica partnership and help drive the Councils priorities. One of the recommendations set out and subsequently agreed by Council in the action plan was to:

'Give consideration to reviewing service delivery options,' namely the continued appropriateness of some services remaining within Publica.'

The peer review recommendation referred in particular to Democratic Services, Elections, Planning, Strategic Finance, Commissioning and Procurement.

3.3 The Peer Review team felt this was important, given the Councils ambition, leadership, Corporate Plan and a desire to be more 'fleet of foot' when it came to setting the direction to deliver services. It noted in their feedback that Publica had been set up in 2017 when circumstances, politics and drivers were different.

3.4 Whilst the peer review was specific to Cotswold District Council, a discussion with the other partner councils in relation to the recommendation to undertake an options appraisal regarding service delivery took place. Publica Executives also agreed that it would be beneficial



to undertake an options appraisal once, collectively, rather than individually. This approach was agreed at the Publica's Shareholder Forum (Chair of the Board, Publica Executive Officers, Council Leaders, and Chief Executives). As such the CEO's (Cotswold District Council, West Oxfordshire, Forest of Dean and Cheltenham Borough Council) agreed to jointly commission an options appraisal.

- 3.5 The peer review report and recommendations formed the basis of a brief and the starting point for the options appraisal. Two consultancies with experience in this field were approached (Local Partnerships and Human Engine). After reviewing the submissions (based on quality, cost, timescales and an interview with the Chief Executives, all CEO's agreed that Human Engine be commissioned to undertake the options appraisal.
- 3.6 The approach adopted by Human Engine was similar in format to that of an LGA peer review. This entailed a review of relevant documents, and a number of one to one and group interviews (including interviews with key Council and Publica senior staff, the Leaders of each Council, the senior management teams of each Council and the Chair of the Publica Board) and then triangulation and assessment of this information. The Human Engine report and recommendations are set out at **Annex B**.
- 3.7 The key recommendation is that the majority of services are returned to the Councils. The report sets out the proposed service area groupings.
- 3.8 The Human Engine report sets out the benefits associated with returning the majority of services to the Council. In summary these include providing greater flexibility for councils in their approach to delivering individual strategic objectives and greater responsibility in doing so; the return of a critical mass of strategic oversight to councils, enabling councils to better manage the strategic direction of the organisation; increasing capacity within each Council's core operating team(s); greater ownership to deliver and 'own' savings plans, through a range of different service arrangements that best align to each council's priorities; reducing the risk of recruitment challenges for local government specific roles and a reduction in corporate overheads of services retained in the Publica model.
- 3.9 The Human Engine report sets out that in their worst-case scenario, the net cost associated with in-sourcing would be approximately £150k per Council. This has been estimated on the data provided to date by Publica in relation to the pension liabilities the councils could inherit and assumptions on mitigation through management and structure savings. Human Engine's assessment of the worst-case scenario is predicated on limited cost and staffing information

and should be viewed as indicative at this stage. This information will be reviewed by the S151 officers as part of the due diligence process.

- 3.10** It is likely that further opportunities to mitigate the additional pension cost pressure will arise through the detailed due diligence and transition period. (For example, support requirements for services that continue to be delivered by Publica such as ICT, Customer Services will be reduced). However, detailed payroll data will need to be provided and analysed to establish the short and long-term impact. This analysis will be undertaken by each partner Council's S151 officer in due course, as the detailed payroll data could not be requested until the outcome of the review had been agreed and made known. The financial implications set out in this report make it clear that extensive further due diligence is required to give members confidence in the likely financial impact of the HE recommendations.

4. NEXT STEPS – Transition Arrangements

- 4.1** Reference is made within the Human Engine report to options for the process of returning services (the transition) to the Councils. If the report is approved, the Council Chief Executives will work with Leaders, the Publica Executives and Board, if necessary, to prepare a detailed transition plan for subsequent submission to the Cabinet and Council. A key aim of the transition plan would be to seek agreement between the Leaders on the order in which services are returned.
- 4.2** A transition team will be established first to oversee the entire process. Channels for clear communications with the staff who might be impacted by the transition will be put in place. Cooperation with Publica leadership will be essential for aligning the transition with the Council's goals and objectives and we expect to work closely with our Publica colleagues to make a success of the transition process. Transition governance arrangements will be established to provide structure and oversight and will set out the relevant staff consultation process that will be followed where applicable. Agreement on phased services will be made to determine the scope and timeline of the transition.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1** The Human Engine review considered a range of options from 'doubling down' (Option 1) and investing more resources in Publica, through to the complete dismantling of the company. (Option 7). This report recommends that Option 6 (returning the majority of services to the



partner councils) is adopted. Members may decide not to approve the recommendations to return to the partner councils the majority of services and instead decide that there is merit in the other options considered. However, in light of the recommendation from the 2022 Peer Review and the outcomes of the Human Engine report, these options are not recommended.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Due diligence requirements

- 6.1** As set out earlier in this report, the indicative financial projections set out in the Human Engine review are based on limited information. The financial impact of the proposals set out in this report will need to be developed as part of the due diligence process over the coming weeks and included in the Transition Plan that will be considered by Cabinet and Council in January 2024.

- 6.2** In considering the recommendations from the Human Engine review of Publica and those set out in this report, members should be aware of the difficulty in providing precise estimates at this stage.
 - Decision around structure, composition of services and management arrangements has not yet been considered.
 - High-level assumptions are subject to degrees of estimation and judgement
 - Detailed payroll data is required to provide timely and accurate modelling of options which has not been undertaken at this stage of the process
 - Affordability of options will need to be part of the decision-making process

- 6.3** Estimates as to the additional cost and mitigation options will be subject to variation throughout the due diligence and transition periods. Members should therefore expect variations on the estimates to be reported regularly to ensure they are appraised on the likely financial impact and mitigation options should costs increase or benefits are not able to be realised.

- 6.4** The Council must undertake further and extensive due diligence on the recommendations from the Human Engine review. This will be a complex process with consideration of a number of workforce planning issues (e.g., Pensions, TUPE arrangements).

- 6.5 Detailed salary and payroll information will need to be provided by Publica to partner Councils to calculate the financial impact of changes to service delivery.
- 6.6 Partner Councils will need to undertake detailed modelling of the potential impact on their respective LGPS (Local Government Pension Scheme) funds with Gloucestershire County Council and the actuary to determine the short-term and longer-term impact on the pension fund liability and contribution levels.
- 6.7 Members will need to consider the longer-term financial implications as highlighted through the due diligence. It is anticipated that further resources will be required as part of this process. These costs could be significant covering workstreams such as:
- External/independent legal advice (to consider contractual matters)
 - External/independent HR (Human Resources) advice (to consider employment matters and TUPE)
 - Detailed LGPS modelling undertaken in conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council and the pension fund actuary, Hymans Robertson

Transition period

- 6.8 The estimated cost over the duration of the transition period for option ii is £236k which is shared between the partner councils. On that basis, Cotswold District Council's share would be £78k over the 18-month transition period.
- 2023/24: £22k
 - 2024/25: £56k
- 6.9 For costs incurred during 2023/24 it is proposed that this is funded from the Council Priorities Fund in line with the position set out in the Budget Strategy and MTFs (Medium Term Financial Strategies) Update report being considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 02 November 2023 (paragraph 5.34).
- The recommended approach funding additional transition costs would be to set aside adequate funding in the Savings and Transformation Reserve. A review of the Council's Balances and Reserves is being undertaken by the Council's Section 151 Officer as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process and will be included in the 2024/25 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, and Medium-Term Financial Strategy report to be considered by Cabinet and Council in February 2024.



6.10 For the purposes of this report it would be prudent to notionally set aside £0.200m in the Savings and Transformation reserve (transferred from the Council Priorities Fund) to recognise the commitments outlined above.

Monitoring and reporting

6.11 It is important that members are kept apprised on the outcomes from the due diligence and the financial implications throughout the transition period. The estimated cost outlined in the report of £236k (CDC (Cotswold District Council) £78k) only covers the project management costs associated with the programme of returning services to partner councils. As set out earlier in the financial implications, there will be significant additional costs associated from the due diligence work and there will be costs arising from implementing change.

6.12 Whilst the Human Engine report and this covering report set out some of the potential opportunities that will mitigate some of these costs, these have not been developed in full and are therefore subject to variation. Members should be cognisant of the risk that

- timing of additional expenditure and availability of resources may not align
- additional one-off costs associated with change may increase pressure on the Council's revenue budget requiring savings to be identified and delivered from other Council services
- cost mitigation actions may not be delivered in full or on time
- impact of redundancy and recruitment costs if staff do not wish to TUPE across

6.13 Although there will be further reports to Cabinet and Council throughout the transition period, it is recommended that the quarterly financial performance reports to Cabinet include timely and relevant financial updates.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Prima Facie, the Legal Implications of transferring services back to the Council, fall into three principal areas:

- Contractual Obligations
- Governance and vires issues
- Employment law

All are complex and require further detailed specialist advice, as did the establishment of Publica and its relationship with its creator councils six years ago. However, the following issues are immediately apparent.

7.2 Contractual arrangements

The Human Engine Report briefly refers to the contractual implications of its proposal. The contractual relationship between the Council and Publica Group Ltd is in fact the subject of various legal agreements including:

- A members' agreement dated 25 May 2017 between CDC, FoDDC (Forest of Dean District Council) and WODC (West Oxford District Council)
- An admission Agreement in relation to the Gloucestershire County Council Local Government Pension Scheme dated 14 November 2017
- A Revolving Credit Facility Agreement between CDC and Publica Group Ltd dated 31 October 2017
- A Services Agreement dated 31 October 2017

Clauses 37 of the Services Agreement provides:

“Without prejudice to the Council’s rights of early termination under this Agreement, or otherwise at law or equity, the Company hereby irrevocably grants to the Council a break option in respect of all or any part of its services which may be exercised by the Council by giving not less than 12 months’ prior written notice expiring on 31 March in the following Contract Year.”

This is the basis upon which services might be taken back in-house within an existing contractual term. In addition, the Council might decide against extending the contract beyond the original expiry dates or the expiry date of any extension. The Human Engine Report correctly identifies that the 7-year term for provision of General Services expires in October 2024.

The consequences of termination under Clause 37 are set out in Clause 38 and include obligations to (inter alia) agree an exit strategy, agree the disaggregation and division of assets, and deliver data.

As well as cessation of existing contractual arrangements, the report’s recommendations appear to envisage the creation of new ones to provide for shared working arrangements are proposed and ongoing provision of limited services by Publica.

7.3 Governance

The Council will need to evaluate its existing non-executive scheme of delegation and satisfy itself that it either employs or has available to it (for example through shared services) the officers empowered to discharge delegated powers. In some areas (for example, Environmental and Regulatory functions) one officer currently holds delegated powers for all three councils.

7.4 Employment Law

The process of bringing services back in-house is highly likely to amount to a service provision change under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (“TUPE”) which will trigger obligations to transferring staff and careful consideration of how best to apportion liabilities between the transferring employer (Publica) and the new employer (the Council).

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** The options appraisal undertaken by Human Engine sets out a recommendation to return the majority of services back to the Council. It also sets out the benefits and risks associated with doing so. The financial and legal implications in this covering report refer to the need for the Council to undertake appropriate due diligence, particularly in relation to the costs associated with pension liability, to ensure it is fully informed. The covering report also refers to the need for a detailed transition plan to support the return of services to the Council should members be minded to approve the recommendation to do so. This plan will ensure the Council has the information required to successfully manage the transition of the services identified in the Human Engine report. Clarity around the transition plan will also help to minimise risks associated with staff feeling unsettled and unsure of their future, which in turn should minimise risks around day to day service delivery.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in relation to:
- Race
 - Disability
 - Gender, including gender reassignment
 - Age
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Religion or belief

When considering this recommendation, no barriers or impact on any of the above groups has been identified.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This recommendation has no climate change implications.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Annex A Peer Review report and recommendations
- Annex B Human Engine report and recommendations

(END)

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Cotswold District Council

Tuesday 11th to Thursday 13th October 2022

Feedback report





1. Executive summary	3
2. Key recommendations	6
3. Summary of the peer challenge approach	7
4. Feedback	9
5. Next steps	27

1. Executive summary

External partners reflected having seen a fundamental shift in the council over the last three years. It has become an organisation, and with a leadership, that is ambitious and outward looking. The drive, energy and passion of the Administration and Chief Executive are clear to see.

The Cabinet is highly regarded both internally and externally and strong leadership is being demonstrated on the agendas that form the council's priorities. What the Administration stands for and is seeking to achieve is very clear. There is tremendous pride on the part of the Administration and officers in relation to what has been achieved in the period since 2019 and the agenda going forward is both exciting and compelling.

The Leader, Cabinet Members and the Chief Executive are visible and proactive with partners across a range of geographies. Partners highlighted the efforts being made by the council in the last few years and months to establish or reinforce key relationships. It is important to highlight, though, that the experiences of some local authority partners when they are engaged with the senior political leadership of the council can be mixed, with a need for the council to refine and adapt the approach sometimes going forward.

Since 2019, a number of changes to the council's Constitution have been agreed by elected members. Councillors recently requested that a comprehensive review be undertaken in light of it becoming apparent that no single overview has been maintained of how the Constitution should now read. There are additional aspects to the approach to governance which, whilst more mundane, can, when aggregated, easily escalate into undermining trust and confidence amongst stakeholders internally and externally. These different elements combined has led to the peer team's recommendation around the council reassuring itself that its governance arrangements are robust.

There are different views around the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny in the council. People reflected that the Chair is driven and keen to see the fulfilment of the valuable role that this important governance function can provide. Another key part

of the jigsaw is also already in place, with the Leader and Cabinet being very clear that they wish to be held to account more by Overview and Scrutiny. There is a strong sense of members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee valuing it currently as a mechanism for being kept informed of key developments across the district. The fundamental consideration in relation to Overview and Scrutiny is determining, as a council, what it is there to do.

There is an absence of training and development provision for elected members which needs to be addressed. The council needs to ensure that an effective and timely induction programme is prepared for implementation following the elections in May next year. This should be supplemented with a rolling programme of elected member training and development covering all of the key elements of councillors' roles and weaving in regular all member briefings on key issues.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy from February outlined a budget gap over the period up to and including 2025/26 of £8.9m – with just under £4m of this relating to the financial year starting in April next year. However, in the period since February, the council is confident that the gap for next year has reduced significantly. Ensuring an accurate understanding is maintained of the financial situation facing the council, through the guidance of the new permanent Section 151 Officer, will be crucial.

Cabinet has been demonstrating leadership around the financial challenge that exists for the council – reflected in the development of the Recovery Investment Strategy (RIS) produced in September 2020 and updated in July this year. This is designed as a framework within which the council can operate to deliver on its priorities whilst simultaneously closing the budget gap without having to look at cuts to services. Thinking around the refreshed RIS has developed since July in response to the fluid context the council is operating in. Given the state of flux being experienced, we recommend that the council takes stock again now of the strategy and what it can deliver.

Cabinet needs to continue to demonstrate the required leadership and collective responsibility for addressing the financial challenge. Proposals for addressing the financial gap are currently being developed and these will enter the public domain over the coming months. Cabinet and the managerial leadership need to ensure that

all necessary due diligence around the proposals is undertaken and that they are realisable and that a strong financial grip overall is applied.

In 2017 Cotswold District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Cheltenham Borough Council became equal shareholders in a newly created company, known as 'Publica', delivering council services. The majority of the staff that had previously worked for one or other of the partner councils transferred into the employment of the new company.

It is clear that there are contrasting perspectives in the council and Publica regarding how effectively things are working in the partnership. There is much that Publica is delivering, including increased resilience in certain services and functions; fulfilment of the agreed financial objectives; and savings that go beyond the financial targets set out for Publica when the company was established. However, the contrasting perspectives remain and there is a fundamental set of considerations that need to be explored. Either clarity for now, or planning for the future, is required around these if the partnership is to be felt to be successful on all levels and, crucially, to be helping to drive the council's priorities. They include the continued appropriateness of some functions remaining with Publica; where direction is set from, clarity of roles and where accountability sits; whose 'people' officers within Publica are; and how performance and value for money are understood and managed.

It was clear from our discussions with staff at various levels of both organisations that capacity pressures are increasingly being felt and are impacting on both the delivery of council priorities and the well-being of staff. Ensuring the clear political objectives of the Administration are translated into manageable deliverables is a key managerial responsibility that sits across both the council and Publica.

Whilst Publica acts as the 'Chief of Staff', their employees are also "the council's people". It is in both organisations' interests to look after people's physical and mental well-being. Staff that we spoke to reflected concerns about the way they are treated by some senior leaders within the council and Publica. It is important for there to be a focus on organisational culture and behaviours and the well-being of staff and it is vital to ensure that people feel valued and respected and able to cope. What we gleaned from our discussions with staff regarding levels of stress, low morale and well-being should represent a major concern for the leadership of both

organisations.

Whilst the vast majority of officers delivering for the council in the Cotswolds are employed by Publica, there is also work to be done by the council in enabling the small core group of staff it has retained to have a greater sense of identity and belonging and feel better informed and engaged.

There needs to be more direct dialogue between the senior leadership of the two organisations in order to address issues. Steps have been made in this regard since the Cotswold District Council Chief Executive arrived in January 2021. This is positive but the sense is that there is a long way to go still in enabling the necessary dialogue to take place. Making sure it happens is fundamental to mutual success.

2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

- The council needs to reassure itself that its governance arrangements are robust
- Refine and adapt the leadership approach in engaging local authority partners in order to ensure shared objectives can be achieved
- Determine what Overview and Scrutiny is there to do and provide the appropriate support to it
- Establish a training and development programme for elected members and ensure good induction arrangements are in place for after the election
- Cabinet continue to be cognisant of the financial challenge that exists and demonstrate the required leadership and collective responsibility for addressing it
- Take stock of the Recovery Investment Strategy and what it can deliver
- Ensure all necessary due diligence is undertaken in relation to the budget proposals and that the proposals are realisable

- Address the concerns of staff about the way they are treated by some senior leaders within the council and the Publica organisation
- Undertake more direct dialogue between the senior leadership of the council and Publica in order to address the following issues:
 - The continued appropriateness of some functions remaining with Publica
 - Where direction is set from, clarity of roles and where accountability sits
 - How increased strategic capacity is provided to support the council
 - Translating the political objectives into manageable deliverables
 - Developing a focus on organisational culture and behaviours and staff well-being

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1. The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- John Robinson, Chief Executive, Newark and Sherwood District Council
- Councillor Alan Connett, Leader, Teignbridge District Council
- Sarah Pennelli, Strategic Director and S151 Officer, Blaby District Council
- Deborah Poole, Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development, Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council
- Bev Thomas, Relationship and Commissioning Manager, Harlow District Council
- Chris Bowron, Peer Challenge Manager, LGA

3.2. Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components

of all corporate peer challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** – Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** – Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture** – Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management** – Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?
5. **Capacity for improvement** – Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

In exploring the above, the council asked us also to consider:

- How well equipped is the council to respond to the challenges and opportunities that are facing local government now and into the future?
- How well does the council ensure it delivers its ambitions and priorities through its existing partnership arrangement with Publica?

3.3. The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by

people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure that they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent three days onsite, during which they:

- Gathered information and views from more than 25 meetings, in addition to further research and reading
- Spoke to more than 100 people including a range of council staff, elected members and external stakeholders

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

4. Feedback

4.1. Local priorities and outcomes

The peer team met a wide range of external partners during the corporate peer challenge, at both the local and regional level. They reflected having seen a fundamental shift in the council over the last three years. It has become an organisation, and with a leadership, that is ambitious and outward looking. The drive, energy and passion of the Administration and Chief Executive are clear to see.

The council generally, and the Cabinet specifically, reflect a good knowledge and understanding of the place that the organisation serves. This includes median house prices being more than 13 times gross median earnings (which is the highest in the county); the district having double the national average of people working from home; the existence of pockets of deprivation within what is a relatively prosperous district; challenges for those residents reliant on public transport when it comes to accessing services, amenities, training and education; and 80% of the district being within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The ambition, drive and knowledge and understanding of place are translated into

the Corporate Plan 2020 to 2024 – updated in the spring of this year – and reflected in the priorities and principles that are the focus of the organisation:

Council Priorities

- Deliver the highest standards of services
- Respond to the climate crisis
- Provide socially rented homes
- Make the Local Plan ‘Green to the Core’
- Support health and well-being
- Enable a vibrant economy

Principles

- Rebuilding trust and confidence in the council
- Providing value for money for residents and businesses
- Listening to the needs of the community and acting on what is heard

What the Administration stands for and is seeking to achieve is very clear and this is crystallised further by the political leadership who consistently cite ‘affordable housing, the climate agenda and the economy’ as the primary drivers. The agenda going forward is both exciting and compelling and there is tremendous pride on the part of the Administration and officers in relation to what has been achieved in the period since 2019, with the following providing just a flavour of this:

- Led the response in the Cotswolds to the pandemic, including the creation of the ‘Help Hub’ to support over 700 residents, particularly the elderly and the vulnerable, and the disbursement of £73m of Local Business Grant from government
- Driven forward affordable housing provision focused on social rented accommodation – with 2020/21 seeing 114 affordable houses built, thus exceeding the council’s target of 100, and a range of other initiatives with both the private sector and social landlords to boost further the provision of social, affordable and low-carbon housing over the coming months and years

- Rolled out a new waste and recycling service during the pandemic with the council's partner Ubico, with 144,000 containers now being emptied every week
- Established the Green Economic Growth Strategy and Cotswold Economic Advisory Group
- Commissioned a Framework Master Plan for Cirencester town centre
- Established 'Cotswold New Start' to support young people not in education, employment or training
- Drawn in funding to provide accessible toilet facilities for people with severe disabilities
- Established the 'Crowdfund Cotswolds' grants funding platform as a way to help communities raise money for local projects, generating over £400,000 funding thus far in support of more than 20 community-led initiatives. The approach won the 'Community Involvement Award' at this year's Local Government Chronicle Awards.
- Developed an innovative tourism charge scheme to benefit local communities, involving an extra 50p levy on car parking in Bourton-on-the-Water which is mainly used by visitors to this popular village. In 2021/22 this generated an additional £60,000 which has been used to fund a Village Warden, extra waste bins, parking control bollards and an accessibility audit looking at how the needs of disabled residents and visitors can be better met.
- Created the Green Investment Bond scheme – the first in Gloucestershire and only the fifth such scheme nationally – generating over £500,000
- Established the 'Clean and Green Cotswolds' environmental initiative
- Drawn in funding to enhance energy efficiency and reduce carbon in key council facilities including leisure centres

- Secured enhanced electric vehicle charging point provision, with more to be rolled out in the coming months
- Designed the Carbon Net Zero Toolkit with Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Councils, as two of the key partners in the Publica arrangement, plus technical expert partner organisations – designed to show builders, architects, developers and homeowners how to make new build or retrofit projects ‘green to the core’. The toolkit has been made openly available as a resource for private and public sector organisations to adopt, in order to help others reach net zero and to speed up the UK’s collective response to the climate emergency.
- Exemplar areas of work ‘on the ground’, cited by partners, including around the climate agenda and through the Community Team which have impacted positively in areas such as health and well-being, frailty and social isolation – delivered in conjunction with partners including the voluntary and community sector

In service delivery terms, the council’s performance can be seen to be mixed when compared to councils serving similar areas. The following reflects performance information drawn from the LG Inform system that the Local Government Association hosts for the sector. The data is the latest available, which is from either 2020/21 or 2021/22 depending on the measure, and the comparator group (‘nearest neighbours’) are the fifteen other district or borough councils nationally that Cotswold District Council is deemed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to be most similar to.

Areas where the council can be seen to be performing well are:

- The amount of residual waste per household – with it being the third best performing (2020/21)
- The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting – with it being the second best performing (2020/21)

Areas that the council needs to be mindful of include:

- The percentage of council tax not collected – with it being the second highest behind West Oxfordshire (2021/22)
- The percentage of non-domestic rates not collected – with it again being the second highest behind West Oxfordshire (2021/22)
- The percentage of vacant dwellings in the area (2020/21)
- The percentage of Planning applications (major and ‘other’) decided in time (2021/22)

On most other performance measures recorded within the LG Inform system, Cotswold District Council appears around the middle within its ‘nearest neighbours’ group – including the time taken to process housing benefit new claims and change events (2021/22); the percentage of Planning applications (minor) decided in time (2021/22); and the number of households living in temporary accommodation (2021/22).

The following is a link to the LG Inform system - [Home | LG Inform \(local.gov.uk\)](https://www.local.gov.uk)

4.2. Organisational and place leadership

The Leader, Cabinet Members and the Chief Executive are visible and proactive with partners across a range of geographies, whether that be locally within the Cotswolds; across Gloucestershire; or on a wider regional footprint. The proactive element here is of particular note, with partners highlighting the efforts being made by the council in the last few years and months to establish or reinforce key relationships.

The Cabinet is highly regarded both internally and externally and seen to be of a high calibre and to be leading the place. Strong leadership is being demonstrated on the agendas that form the council’s priorities, reflected in the types of innovative examples already cited such as the work with partners to boost the level of affordable, social and low-carbon housing; the development of the Carbon Net Zero Toolkit; and the Green Investment Bond scheme.

Another area where leadership has been shown is the commissioning, with partners including the Town Council, of a Framework Master Plan for Cirencester town centre.

The creation of the 'Green Economic Growth Strategy' for the Cotswolds and the establishment of the Cotswold Economic Advisory Group are both good examples of strong place-based leadership, spearheaded at Cabinet level. The Economic Advisory Group draws together representatives from partners at different spatial levels, including the local Chamber of Commerce; Cirencester College; the Gloucestershire First LEP; and the Federation of Small Businesses with its reach across the West Midlands. Cabinet has also been showing leadership around, and demonstrating that it is cognisant of, the financial challenge that exists for the council. This is reflected in the development of the Recovery Investment Strategy (RIS) produced in September 2020 and updated in July this year. This is designed as a framework within which the council can operate to deliver on its priorities whilst simultaneously closing the budget gap without having to look at cuts to services.

It is important to highlight that the experiences of some local authority partners when they are engaged with the senior political leadership of the council can be mixed. Moving forward, it will be important for the leadership in Cotswold to refine and adapt the approach, according to the circumstances and context, in order to ensure shared objectives with local authority partners can be achieved.

The council's approach to external communications is seen to have improved significantly and to be engaging people across the district much more effectively now. Digital communications are playing a key role here, with social media channels reaching nearly 30,000 residents and businesses and more than 4,000 people having signed-up to receive the recently launched 'Cotswold Round-Up' E-newsletter. Digital consultation is also being undertaken, with it having been used in relation to the budget and the Local Plan, and all council meetings are now being livestreamed to make them more accessible.

Progress has also been made in 're-asserting' a council brand in a context of the Publica partnership, with examples including frontline staff returning to having council e-mail addresses and identity badges and the council logo re-appearing on adverts, letterheads and correspondence generally. There is still a way to go, though, in ensuring the public are clear that it is the council that is engaging and contacting them even where it is being undertaken by the Publica organisation.

By way of context, in November 2017 Cotswold District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Cheltenham Borough Council became equal shareholders in a newly created Teckal company, known as 'Publica', delivering council services. The majority of the staff that had previously worked for one or other of the partner councils transferred into the employment of the new company, which now has around 650 employees. Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire buy into all the services available from Publica whilst Cheltenham have opted only to receive support around HR, ICT and some financial services. Publica also provides HR and ICT services for Cheltenham Borough Homes, Cheltenham Leisure Trust and Ubico, which is the waste and environmental services Teckal company owned by the seven district/borough and county councils in Gloucestershire.

'Organisational leadership' is complex in this context – with the overwhelming majority of "the council's people" sitting in another organisation. This key corporate peer challenge theme feels inextricably linked to that of 'Capacity for improvement' and we have therefore opted to consider them together later in that section of the report.

Whilst the vast majority of officers delivering for the council in the Cotswolds are employed by Publica, it was important that we met a cross-section of those who are in the direct employment of the council. It was clear from those discussions that there is work to be done by the council in relation to this small core group of staff. The shift of so many colleagues to Publica, and the very strong brand and identity that was created in the early years of that partnership, means that some of those who have remained are seeking a greater sense of identity and belonging as part of the council. They also wish to feel better informed and engaged, which we would anticipate being relatively straightforward given the small number of people involved – although recognising that 'hybrid working' throws up some new challenges around this that will need to be overcome. As a simple example, the staff we met highlighted to us that they hadn't received any communications about the corporate peer challenge happening, beyond their being invited to participate in the focus group activity.

4.3. Governance and culture

The week prior to the corporate peer challenge, on Wednesday 5th October, an Extraordinary Council meeting was held dedicated to the Constitution of the Council. Since 2019, a number of changes to the Constitution have been agreed by elected members. Those councillors forming the Constitution Working Group recently requested that a comprehensive review be undertaken in light of it becoming apparent that no single overview has been maintained of how the Constitution should now read. Essentially the purpose of the meeting was to “authorise the Monitoring Officer to publish a final clean version of the Constitution”, ensuring that all revisions agreed since May 2019 have been incorporated.

This is one example of why the peer team are recommending that the council seeks to reassure itself that its governance arrangements are robust. During the course of our time in the Cotswolds we heard of issues around committee papers being published late; such papers being sent to members of the wrong committee or forum; and a lack of precision in reports, with the incorrect ‘Accountable member(s)’ or ‘Wards affected’ being shown. Aspects of what we are reflecting here may, in isolation, be seen as relatively mundane. However, when aggregated and seen repeatedly, which appears to be the case, at the very least the council’s reputation is negatively impacted upon. This can easily escalate into undermining trust and confidence on the part of elected members, the public and other stakeholders and start to prompt questions about the council’s attitude towards good governance, democracy and matters of openness and transparency. Given the scale of the types of decisions that are facing the council in the current financial context and the levels of complexity it is managing in the agendas it is facing, it is vital that all key stakeholders internally and externally have maximum confidence in the governance of the authority – hence the peer team’s recommendation around the council reassuring itself that its governance arrangements are robust.

There are a number of elected member working groups and forums in place which provide cross-party involvement. One of these is the Capital Programme Investment Board and this provides, through the challenge that is brought to bear there, an excellent example of the way in which the council can capitalise upon experience and knowledge across the wider elected membership. Other examples of cross-party engagement are the Constitution Working Group already highlighted and a joint working group with officers undertaking a review of Planning.

There are different views around the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny in the council. The Constitutional change that has been made which sees the Opposition chairing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a mature one that provides a good foundation. People reflected that the Chair is driven and keen to see the fulfilment of the valuable role that this important governance function can provide. Another key part of the jigsaw is also already in place, with the Leader and Cabinet being very clear that they wish to be held to account more by Overview and Scrutiny. They recognise this as a key element of leadership and ensuring the council is seen to be open, transparent and driving delivery and improvement. The fundamental consideration in relation to Overview and Scrutiny is determining, as a council, what it is there to do.

Based on our discussions and a look back at some agendas of previous meetings, there is a strong sense of members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee valuing it at this point in time as a mechanism for being kept informed of key developments across the district – with most agenda items being badged as an ‘update’ for councillors. Looking at alternative ways of facilitating this information sharing and extending it to the wider elected membership, which currently is not accustomed to the concept of ‘all member briefings’, would seem appropriate. This would enable the efforts and focus of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be applied to both holding the Executive to account more and contributing to policy development. Whatever approach is applied going forward, it needs to be supported appropriately, with there currently being no designated lead officer for overview and scrutiny designated in the council and little in the way of guidance and support for the Chair.

There is an absence of training and development provision for elected members which needs to be addressed. When asked about this area, both councillors and officers highlighted that an induction programme was delivered following the 2019 elections. However, that is the extent of what people could indicate as being in place, although we know there has been input provided by the Local Government Association around overview and scrutiny training and development at certain points.

The 2019 induction is seen to have been late in taking effect. Councillors also felt it was limited in both scope and the extent of the insights provided, which came from an officer perspective. In the short term, the council needs to ensure that an effective and timely induction programme is prepared for implementation following the

elections in May next year. This should be supplemented with a rolling programme of elected member training and development covering all of the key elements of councillors' roles and weaving in regular all member briefings that fulfil the role that overview and scrutiny is currently partly fulfilling.

Some of the staff that we spoke to reflected concerns about the way they are treated by some senior leaders within the council and Publica. They spoke of an environment in which mistakes are focused upon in a way which feels neither proportionate nor constructive whilst, on the other hand, they felt there is seldom thanks for people's hard work and effort or recognition of the things that go well. There were some instances cited of staff being addressed very directly by elected members and staff talked of feeling anxious and stressed sometimes when being contacted by Publica's senior leadership. These experiences speak of a culture that needs to be addressed across the two organisations. The senior leadership of both the council and Publica need to reflect on the best ways to care for and motivate people. First and foremost, ensuring their well-being is the right thing to do. Secondly, in a context of councils finding themselves increasingly operating on the goodwill of their staff, and with the capacity pressures already being experienced, they cannot risk the debilitating effect of the council's people potentially experiencing the leadership of the two organisations negatively.

4.4. Financial planning and management

The council has a current net revenue budget this year of £12.5m. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) from February outlined a budget gap over the period up to and including 2025/26 of £8.9m – with just under £4m of this relating to the financial year starting in April next year. However, in the period since February, and despite pressures emerging through the global and national context, including cost inflation; demand on services; a lack of clarity around central government funding; and uncertainty around being able to maintain or increase income, the council is confident that the gap for next year has reduced significantly. Ensuring an accurate understanding is maintained of the financial situation facing the council, through the guidance of the new permanent Section 151 Officer, will be crucial.

The opening General Fund balance this financial year of £2.5m represents around 20 per cent of the council's net budget. The current budget was set to increase this balance to around £4m by the end of 2022/23 but this is under review given the context referred to above. Usable reserves total around £25m, which is seen to be a reasonable level, and work is taking place with elected members to review earmarked reserves to potentially provide increased scope. The council is debt free.

The council has consistently achieved a clean audit opinion on its accounts from the External Auditors. The council's budget monitoring process sees a quarterly report presented to both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, with any variances over £10,000 highlighted along with the mitigating actions being undertaken.

Whilst a refreshed Recovery Investment Strategy was agreed in July this year, the thinking around it has developed since in response to the fluid context the council is operating in. As an example, we understand that the proposed 'Climate Change and Green Energy Investments' relating to solar provision, which were to be funded through borrowing, are now being reconsidered. Given the state of flux being experienced, and whilst recognising that the context means establishing certainty is difficult, we recommend that the council takes stock again now of the strategy and what it can deliver.

Cabinet needs to continue both to be cognisant of the financial challenge that exists and to demonstrate the required leadership and collective responsibility for addressing it. Obviously, proposals for addressing the financial gap are currently being developed and these will enter the public domain and be considered by the wider elected membership over the coming months, ahead of budget-setting in February. Cabinet and the managerial leadership need to ensure that all necessary due diligence around the proposals is undertaken and that they are realisable and that a strong financial grip overall is applied.

4.5. Capacity for improvement

As we outlined earlier in this report under 'Organisational leadership', aspects of that theme and the one of 'Capacity for improvement' feel inextricably linked in a context

of the overwhelming majority of officers sitting in another organisation. To contextualise this, well over 90% of officers linked to Cotswold sit within the Publica organisation.

Whilst, looking purely contractually, most officers in Cotswold are employees of Publica, they are also “the council’s people” – reflected in the way the political and managerial leadership of the council speak; the nature of what they are delivering – namely council services and functions; and the emotional bond with the organisation that exists for many, particularly those previously employed by the council.

It is clear that there are contrasting perspectives in the council and Publica regarding how effectively things are working in the partnership. The bottom line is that it is in everybody’s interests to ensure that the partnership works, in a context of the contract running until 2027.

Benefits being delivered through the Publica arrangement include increased resilience in certain services and functions as a result of having the staffing complement for at least three councils to call upon and deploy relatively flexibly; instances of the exchange of learning and cross-fertilisation of ideas across the partner organisations; and fulfilment of the agreed financial objectives.

The shared cyber security function provided by Publica for the four councils in the partnership is a good example of where economies of scale and resilience have been provided – with the existence of a specialist team that would most likely be beyond the resources of one of the partner councils acting alone.

Between April 2019 and March 2022, Publica delivered recurring annual core contract savings of £702,000 in respect of the Cotswold District Council contract which has a net annual value of £9.2m – representing savings of around eight per cent per annum. There have also been savings realised that go beyond the targets set out for Publica when the company was established. This includes £475,000 of one-off savings in the form of underspends, which have been returned to the council to reinvest. Other examples are Publica having enabled the council to secure accommodation savings through the letting of office space; a negotiated reduction in licensing costs for Revenues and Benefits software; and supporting the automation and rationalisation of green waste licensing – assisting the council to generate in

excess of £400,000 of additional income.

Publica as an organisation has recently received Investors In People accreditation. It has also established a learning and development programme for managers delivered through Oxford Brookes University. Officers directly employed by the council have been given the opportunity to engage in this programme too, alongside Publica colleagues.

Thus, there is much that Publica is delivering. However, the contrasting perspectives on how effectively things are working in the partnership remain and there is a fundamental set of considerations that need to be explored. Either clarity for now, or planning for the future, is required around these if the partnership is to be felt to be successful on all levels and, crucially, to be helping to drive the council's priorities:

- The continued appropriateness of some functions remaining with Publica
- Where direction is set from, clarity of roles and where accountability sits
- Whose 'people' officers within Publica are
- How performance in service delivery and organisational effectiveness is understood and managed
- How value for money is understood and demonstrated

Whilst Publica describes itself as 'Chief of Staff' when it comes to the employees working to support Cotswold, there is inevitably engagement between those staff and Cabinet members, ward councillors, the Chief Executive and other senior figures in the council. Equally inevitably, such engagement generates elements of direction-setting for those staff. At the same time, staff will be being directed by Publica's managerial leadership and a proportion of officers also have the demands of other partner council/s to consider. The different considerations, drivers, priorities and timescales of the different organisations will inevitably not always be aligned – sometimes leaving staff wondering where to take their direction from, what and how to prioritise and whose 'people' they are.

The peer team also heard of challenges and complexity in the processes across the two organisations to determine whether and how resource can be redeployed as priorities shift. One example was the liaison over who would be able to take a lead on developing the council's Corporate Plan produced earlier this year – with this being a priority for the council but Publica having the responsibility for identifying and deploying the resource. Another example relates to the project management support required to help drive the council priorities around climate change and the economy – with the council ultimately needing to provide further investment to Publica in order to secure the necessary capacity. A further example is that which we cited earlier of committee papers being published late; such papers being sent to members of the wrong committee or forum; and a lack of precision in reports. Responsibility for the production of committee papers sits with Democratic Services, within Publica, but clearly the issues are played out in 'the shop window' of the local authority and the reputational damage accrues to Cotswold District Council.

Aspects of what we have outlined here suggest the need for conversations between the council and its partner around the continued appropriateness of some functions remaining with Publica, such as strategic financial advice, Democratic Services and those that relate directly to the council's community leadership role such as strategic housing and Planning policy.

Another dimension and question here is whether and how 'internal' communication should take place directly between the council's senior political and managerial leadership and Publica staff. Staff we met conveyed a desire to hear at key junctures from the council's Leader and Chief Executive through the equivalent of what would be staff forums or Facebook Live sessions in many councils. This doesn't seem to take place currently but would be both beneficial and valued – returning us to the question of whose people Publica staff are.

All of the above serves to highlight what we see as a blurring of clarity both around respective roles at the senior levels of Cotswold District Council and Publica and where accountability sits. This needs to be addressed if delivery of the council's priorities is to be driven to best effect.

When asking how performance around service delivery is overseen by the council,

people generally pointed to the 'Financial, Council Priority and Service Performance Report' considered quarterly at both Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report features an extensive narrative around key achievements, service delivery, project delivery and progress against council priorities; data relating to performance metrics; and a financial overview.

One of the council's priorities is 'Delivering the highest standards of service'. This raised for us a question as to how those standards are determined and delivery against them is assessed. Based on the content of the report, the answer would seem primarily to be how the Publica council partners compare with one another and whether delivery is on target – although how targets are determined is unclear. Through the use of LG Inform, and as outlined in section 4.1 of this report, comparative analysis can be undertaken on a broader basis, including with the fifteen other district or borough councils nationally that Cotswold District Council is deemed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to be most similar to. From this, it can be seen that in the last financial year, collection of council tax and national non-domestic rates in Cotswold was the second lowest performing behind West Oxfordshire in that CIPFA group. Another example would be the number of affordable homes delivered in 2020/21 being the sixth lowest in the family group and yet Cotswold's own ambitions were exceeded with 114 delivered against a target of 100.

We highlight the above examples not as a judgement but as a means of prompting consideration within Cotswold around how targets are set and performance is measured and understood – all in a context of the council aspiring to deliver on its priority of the 'highest standards'. It may be that there are aspects of the Cotswold context that mean comparisons with elsewhere have less value. For example, delivering housing growth in a district where 80 per cent of it exists within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty clearly brings its challenges. The question is simply whether the council is clear on how targets are set and how effectively performance management is driving delivery of the highest standards. We understand that there is a working group in place, including elected members, looking at the development of a new suite of performance metrics – which would suggest the council is keen to develop a stronger focus in this area.

These matters in relation to how performance in the delivery of council services and

priorities is understood in turn raises a question of how value for money is understood and demonstrated. This is amplified when the subject of 'organisational effectiveness' in Publica is considered. The quarterly performance report to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee doesn't cover this element, which raises the question of how the council, and indeed Publica itself, understand key people issues across the organisation. Many councils have been undertaking regular 'temperature checks' during and since the pandemic to keep abreast of how people are, for example, coping in both their professional and personal lives; adapting to changing working arrangements; and feeling about the 'return to the workplace'. Staff turnover; vacancy rates; sickness absence levels and the related causal factors; and the findings from exit interviews are insights and measures that many councils will commonly be measuring and responding to.

As we previously touched on, whilst Publica acts as the 'Chief of Staff', their employees are also "the council's people". It is in both organisations' interests to look after people's physical and mental well-being and there can therefore be a legitimate interest on the part of the council in understanding core aspects of 'organisational effectiveness'.

It was clear from our discussions with staff at various levels of both organisations that capacity pressures are increasingly being felt and are impacting on both the delivery of council priorities and the well-being of staff. There would seem to be a number of issues that need to be considered in order to manage these pressures as effectively as possible and address resulting emerging tensions:

- In terms of an overall context, it is important to highlight that what is being experienced in the Cotswolds, in terms of the increasing, unrelenting and constantly changing demands on the council, is mirrored across all local authorities. Whilst recognising this doesn't in any way help to address the issue or reduce the impact, it is beneficial for people to understand that there are many causal factors outside anybody's control in the Cotswolds and that the experience elsewhere is unlikely to be much different. What the situation highlights is the importance of organisational adaptability, responsiveness and being 'fleet of foot' in order to cope as best as possible – which links back to our point from before around the processes to shape how Publica resources come to be re/deployed.

- In the current climate of unprecedented demands on councils, in terms of both their scale and nature, creativity and proactivity are at a premium. The same applies to strategic capacity to help organisations ‘horizon scan’; navigate emerging challenges and opportunities; and draw in learning. There is a key question around the extent to which these aspects are factored into the partnership both contractually and in terms of the approach within Publica and can therefore be drawn upon to support the work of the council. An obvious example would be the area of strategic financial advice, which is very different in nature to the more traditional and transactional aspects of financial management and support. Another example would be that of ensuring the Planning function operates as ‘an enabler’ to support, to the greatest extent possible, the council’s ambitions around the economy and housing whilst also continuing to protect all that is special about the district.
- We highlighted at the outset of this report that what the Administration in Cotswold stands for and is seeking to achieve is very clear. Ensuring the clear political objectives act as the driver and are translated into manageable deliverables is a key managerial responsibility that sits across both the council and Publica and requires good work programming. Alongside this, and given the scale of the ambitions the Administration holds and the demands that exist upon the people working for the Cotswolds, there is an essential requirement for senior officer liaison with elected members that involves mature dialogue, and probably negotiation too, around what is deliverable and when – with the outcomes from this then needing to be respected by all.
- Progressing casework issues for their residents is obviously a key priority for councillors. The means by which elected members bring these to the attention of officers are many and varied. It is also unclear how the response to them is prioritised and what the timescales for dealing with them are. This links to themes we have already outlined around where direction is set from, where accountability sits and whose ‘people’ officers within Publica are and it is generating ‘heat in the system’. Establishing greater clarity around the avenues that elected members should utilise, how prioritisation takes place and the timescales for responses would be very positive steps.

- Given what we have highlighted elsewhere in this report linked to themes such as capacity, organisational leadership and organisational effectiveness, it is important for there to be a focus on organisational culture and behaviours and the well-being of staff within Publica. It is vital to ensure that people feel valued and respected and able to cope in a context of the demands being faced. What we gleaned from our discussions with staff regarding levels of stress and low morale should represent a major concern for the leadership of both organisations.
- Recruitment and retention challenges are really impacting on organisational capacity. This, again, is not a situation unique to Cotswold and the situation is currently only worsening and being felt in many more services and functions within councils than before. There are no easy or quick answers here but ensuring that Cotswold is as attractive an employment proposition as possible will be beneficial.

There needs to be more direct dialogue between the senior leadership of the two organisations in order to address these issues. Steps have been made in this regard since the Cotswold District Council Chief Executive arrived in January 2021. One of the measures has been the development of a revised structure and membership for the Shareholder Engagement Forum, which acts as the key conduit between the Publica Shareholders (the Leaders of each council) and Publica's managerial leadership. This includes having broadened the forum membership to include the councils' Chief Executives. Another measure has been a re-focussing of the roles of the Publica Executive Directors, in the form of a locality lead being assigned for each of the partner councils, which is seen to have helped to create a more localised and direct link between Publica and the council in question and a better understanding of respective roles and responsibilities. This is positive but the sense is that there is a long way to go still in enabling the necessary dialogue to take place, in the right way, across the two organisations. Making sure it happens is fundamental to future mutual success.

5. Next steps

It is recognised that the council's senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge. The corporate peer challenge process includes a 'progress review' session around six months on from the initial activity, with this providing the opportunity for the council's senior leadership to update the peers on its progress against the related improvement planning. In a context of local elections being held in the Cotswolds in May next year we will liaise closely with you to ensure the progress review is scheduled for an appropriate point in time.

In the meantime, Paul Clarke, Principal Adviser for the region within which the council sits, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Paul is available to discuss any further support the council requires – paul.clarke@local.gov.uk

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Strategic Review of Publica Services

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1. Context and Background

- 1.1. Publica, a not-for-profit Teckal company was established in 2017. The company delivers the majority of public services on behalf of Cotswold District Council (CDC), Forest of Dean Council (FoDC) and West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and delivers some services on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC). The company is owned by the four councils listed above as equal shareholders.
- 1.2. Since Publica was formed the context for the shareholder authorities has changed at both Member level with changes in political control and officer level with all of the shareholder councils now having reinstated Chief Executive positions.
- 1.3. A recent LGA peer review at CDC recommended that the council review the future delivery options for some services (including whether they should remain with Publica) and revisit the relationship between the council and Publica, particularly around effective commissioner/provider roles. CDC has accepted the recommendations of the peer review and incorporated these into an action plan which has been agreed by Full Council.
- 1.4. Off the back of the LGA peer review, the councils commissioned a more detailed review that considers the future of a number of specific services; Democratic Services, Elections, Planning, Strategic Finance, Commissioning and Procurement.
- 1.5. The review has set out to add depth to the lines of enquiry opened by the LGA peer review and provide an options appraisal for the future of service delivery.

2. Review Methodology

2.1 Engagement throughout the review was thorough, with stakeholders from across each council and Publica engaged as part of the process. This included:

- i. Council chief executives
- ii. Retained officer teams at all four councils
- iii. Political leadership, including 1:1s with each council Leader
- iv. Publica leadership, including Managing Director, Finance Director and Board Chair
- v. Assistant Directors and Business Managers for services considered in scope

2.2 In addition to stakeholder engagement the review undertook analysis of service data provided by Publica and councils.

3. Summary of Findings

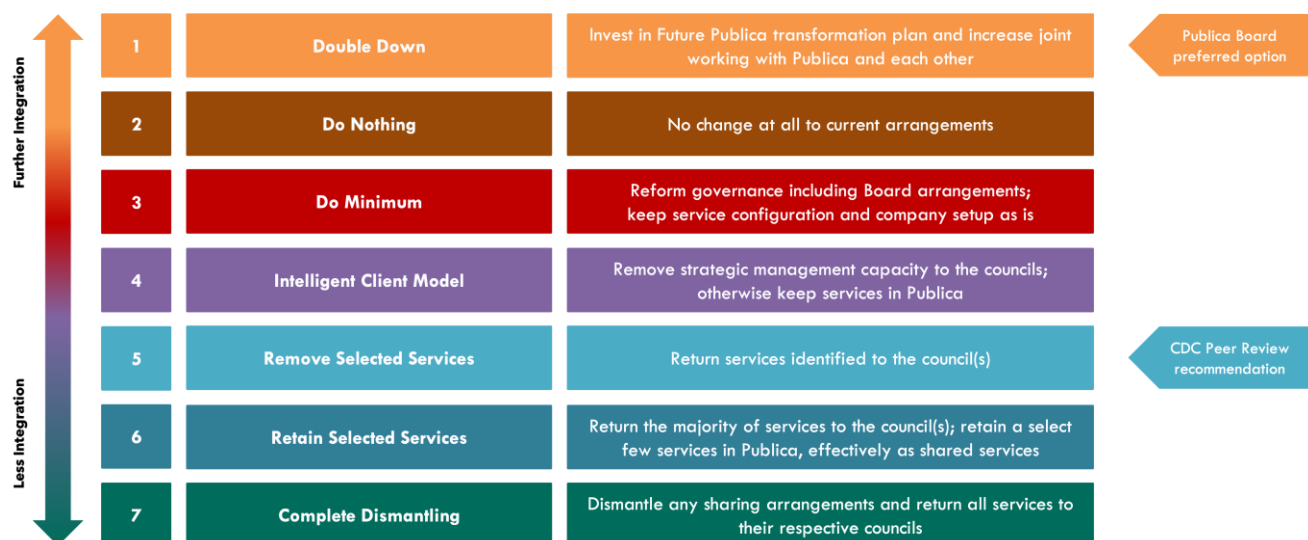
- 3.1 Findings from stakeholder engagement provided some areas of agreement and disparity of thought in others.
- 3.2 Stakeholders within Publica and the shareholder councils agreed that staff have done a remarkable job over a period of many challenging years for the local government sector. These efforts are recognised and greatly appreciated.
- 3.3 Chief among the areas of disagreement is a fundamental difference in perspective about the sovereignty and control that shareholder councils experience. Publica sees this an essential feature and benefit of the model, whereas some of the councils feel they have very little control at all.
- 3.4 Local Authority Trading Companies provide a compliant mechanism to undertake commercial trading activities that councils themselves may not lawfully do, and this is their primary purpose. At some point in time, councils became aware that they also create an opportunity to employ staff on alternative terms and conditions. Several councils have used this to reduce their employment costs, typically for specific sections of their workforces, particularly by reducing membership over time in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). This appears to be the main driver for the transition from the GO Shared Services model to the council-owned company, Publica.
- 3.5 The company was set up as a vehicle for cost savings – to provide an acceptable level of service at the lowest possible cost. It is now being asked to be a ‘turn-key’ operation – flexible, adaptable and responsive to changing priorities, providing more project management expertise and not just traditional back office services.
- 3.6 Improvement plans have been developed since the Peer Review and stakeholders have noted improvements in some aspects of service delivery. Transformation plans and projects have also been developed but these are not always agreed by shareholders.
- 3.7 Governance was routinely raised by stakeholders. Significant improvements have been made since the Campbell-Tickell Board Effectiveness Review in 2020, with the introduction of the Shareholder Forum.
- 3.8 No officers, in Publica or the councils, or Elected Members expressed any strong desire for the company to trade commercially. This means that the company is under-utilising the potential it has as a trading company. The only reason to retain Publica as a separate company (rather than some other shared service arrangement) is because around 50% of staff are now on a cost-saving pension scheme.
- 3.9 Stakeholders have provided anecdotal evidence that that not offering LGPS is a challenge for recruitment to public sector-specific professions, e.g., Electoral Services and Planning. There is also evidence of a failure to recruit to certain positions and the need to repeat recruitment processes, although there are different accounts of the reasons for this.

3.10 Future Publica sets out an ambitious but achievable target operating model for service delivery in common with many councils across the country. However, there is not a need for a trading company to deliver the savings attributed to the Future Publica plan.

3.11 For these reasons, repatriating the services in scope of the CDC Peer Review will not address the underlying issue(s). The purpose of Publica needs to be fundamentally reconsidered in the context of the councils' priorities.

4. Options for Future Delivery

4.1 Having set out the need to fundamentally reconsider what Publica should deliver, and how it should be configured, the full range of options were presented to the shareholder councils. This included the option proposed by the Publica Board to ‘double down’ on the current model (Option 1), a complete dismantling of the company and any shared service arrangements (Option 7) and a spectrum of options in between.



4.2 Benefits and disbenefits for each options were considered by the councils as part of workshops with the retained officer teams. The conclusions can be summarised as:

	Option	Benefits	Disbenefits
1	Double Down	Potential opportunities for income generation, although there is no serious appetite among partners to do this in the near future and lack of consensus over whether Publica is the right vehicle.	This will not address the underlying issue of a perceived lack of control. Confidence among councils in the model has eroded to the point where it is not feasible to commit further.
2	Do Nothing	This would cause minimal disruption in the short term but will almost certainly lead to a breakdown of stakeholder relationships in the long term.	Current arrangements are not working for any party; the councils are frustrated by a lack of control but Publica considers itself “shackled”.

3	Do Minimum	A change in governance arrangements may resolve some of the issues around perceived lack of control. Governance should be reformed in the short term, regardless of which option is pursued in the long term.	This will not address the recruitment issues that have been identified, nor the question of why the councils would continue to operate a trading company with no intention that it will trade.
4	Intelligent Client	This may resolve some of the issues around perceived lack of control and restore the 'strategic thinking' capability of the councils. CBC has indicated that this has been crucial to making the model work for them.	This risks creating a complex commissioner / provider split that could create additional cost and bureaucracy. It is likely that management costs will be duplicated rather than shared.
5	Remove Selected Services	This would address the issue of lack of control and allow the councils to test the putative barriers to recruitment for certain services.	This risks creating a smaller Publica with broadly the same overheads, impairing value for taxpayers. The underlying perceived lack of control of other services would not be resolved.
6	Retain Selected Services	This would address the issue of lack of control and allow the councils to test the putative barriers to recruitment. Services can be shared, via Publica or some other model, on a case by case basis.	The costs of this model will be higher than the current model, including pensions and the cost of future transformation. This option will be disruptive for staff and the change will need to be carefully managed.
7	Complete Dismantling	This would address the issue of lack of control and allow the councils to test the putative barriers to recruitment.	There is no obvious advantage to unpicking services that are working well. Economies of scale would be lost. This option would be maximally disruptive for all parties.

4.3 The conclusion of the options appraisal is that, while the Publica model may have been right for a certain point in time, the needs of the councils have fundamentally changed and a different model is required to deliver their future priorities. Specific consideration was given to the following points:

- i. The Publica model was set up to provide an acceptable level of service at the lowest possible cost. Since then, there have been a number of changes in the leadership of the shareholder councils and a more 'turn key' style of operation is required to deliver their objectives.
- ii. It was anticipated at the time that the company might undertake a level of trading, subject to the limitations of the Teckal exemption. Since there is no current desire among partners that the company should seek out trading opportunities, there is no need to operate a trading company with the associated overheads.
- iii. The main financial driver for continuing to operate a company structure is the saving in pension contributions, but evidence was offered that this is leading to recruitment difficulties (accepting a measure of disagreement about this).
- iv. There are fundamental differences in opinion over the level of influence councils have; whatever the rights and wrongs of this, it must be resolved in order to move forward productively and it is unlikely to be resolved in the current model.
- v. Moving away from a company model will allow the councils to lead and shape services with the autonomy they feel is needed, while still being minimising the overheads involved in delivering public services by sharing some management costs.

4.4 For this reason, the preferred option is Option 6. **The councils are recommended to return the majority of services to be managed directly by the councils, with selected services to be retained within the Publica model on a case by case basis.**

4.5 This represents a fundamentally different future for the councils and for Publica. The Publica of the future will be smaller, leaner and principally a vehicle for sharing services rather than an entity with its own management, cultural identity and high profile brand.

4.6 It is important to note that this recommendation is not a commentary on the performance of Publica staff. Staff in Publica have worked diligently and professionally to deliver services on behalf of the shareholder councils during a time of unprecedented challenge for local government. They are passionate about public service and there is every reason to believe they would be equally passionate in direct employment by the councils.

4.7 The recommended option reflects a view that, on balance of a complex set of considerations, returning services to direct management by the councils will achieve the desired balance of cost effectiveness and control.

5. Preferred Option

5.1 Benefits and Risks

5.1.1 Benefits of Option 6 are diverse and broad but must be balanced against the risks associated with the model.

5.1.2 Benefits can be summarised as:

- i. Provide flexibility for councils in their approach to delivering individual strategic objectives and greater responsibility in doing so.
- ii. Return a critical mass of strategic oversight to councils, enabling councils to better manage the strategic direction of the organisation.
- iii. Increasing capacity within each council’s core operating team(s).
- iv. Greater ownership to deliver own savings plans, through a range of different service arrangements that best align to each council’s priorities.
- v. Provides individual council identity for services where this is not currently the case and ensuring council identity where services are delivered through Publica hosted but council specific teams (for example, Planning Services).
- vi. Maintain services within the current model where there is agreement that the service is working well – and therefore removing risk of performance reduction during transition.
- vii. Maintain economies of scale and resilience in back-office services where there is less need for a council-specific USP.
- viii. Reduce the risk of recruitment challenges for local government specific roles.
- ix. Minimising risk disruption to large stakeholder groups (staff, residents, businesses) through the ability to prioritise (or deprioritise) services to be retained.
- x. Reduction in corporate overheads of services retained in the Publica model.

5.1.3 Risks are demonstrated below with scores and initial mitigations. Risks are scores on a likelihood / impact matrix, both scored out of five and multiplied to give overall risk score.

Impact	5	Yellow	Orange	Red	Red	Red
	4	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red	Red
	3	Green	Yellow	Orange	Orange	Red
	2	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Orange
	1	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
			1	2	3	4
		Likelihood				

	Risk (IF/THEN Statement)	Risk Score			Mitigation(s)
		Likelihood	Impact	Score	
1	IF some services are retained within Publica, THEN there will be a two-tier staffing model	5	1	5	Two tier of staffing already in play as part of current model
2	IF some services are retained within Publica, THEN existing challenges with accountability and oversight remain	3	3	9	Implementing governance quick-win changes Improved reporting Increasing role of shareholder forum
3	IF some services are repatriated, THEN there is likely to be increased costs to councils	4	4	16	Ownership of transformation agenda and accountability of savings delivery See section 5.3
4	IF number of services remaining in Publica is significantly reduced THEN costs of leadership may be too high	4	1	4	Suitable restructuring to support remaining services Ensuring best use of staff maintained in Publica
5	IF repatriation of services requires high resource change management requirements, THEN this could distract from political priorities	2	2	4	Phased approach to minimise impact on stakeholders Prioritisation of services based on effort and impact
6	IF change process is complex, THEN key staff could be lost	2	4	8	Strong change management and leadership Transparency and engagement with staff throughout any change
7	IF councils chose to repatriate different services, THEN cost of change needs to be agreed	2	5	10	High level transition plan completed with detailed service-by-service transition plan to be completed

5.2 Proposed Structures

5.2.1 Services should be returned to the councils in a phased way. A transition plan showing this phasing is provided in Section 6. When services are returned, the councils will have a choice over whether to keep them wholly sovereign or to share them with other councils. This could include councils in the existing partnership and/or others. Below is an indication of how services could operate.

Retained in Publica	Sovereign	Opportunities to Share
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Services • Complaints • Revenues and Benefits • Housing Services • ICT • Data Protection • Freedom of Information • Subject Access Requests • Procurement • Transactional Finance • Transactional HR including Payroll 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Finance • Accountancy • Insurance • Economic Development • Tourism • Parking • Property and Estates • Communications • Community Safety and Engagement • Business Intelligence • Corporate Performance • Organisational Development • Electoral Services • Democratic Services • Members Services • Waste • Grounds Maintenance • Leisure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Housing • Development Management • Building Control • Land Charges • Risk Management • Health and Safety • Emergency Planning and BCP • Flood Risk • HR Policy and Employee Relations • Legal Services • Commercial Contract Management (could include Waste, Grounds and Leisure) • Environmental Health • Food Safety & Licensing

- 5.2.2 The following shows an indicative to-be structure for the councils, for the purpose of assessing the cost of change and planning for the transition. Further work will need to be considered to refine structures within each service grouping.
- 5.2.3 Councils do not have to agree to adopt the same organisational structures and Forest of Dean Council has indicated it may adopt a different version of the below. However, the councils will benefit from sharing as many senior posts as possible and this will necessarily produce a level of standardisation across structures.
- 5.2.4 The below structure aims to show the majority of services and where they will sit but it is possible that not every team and activity is shown. Where an area of activity does not explicitly appear on the chart, it can be assumed that will sit with the councils.



5.3 Cost considerations

- 5.3.1 The exact costs associated with the proposed change are difficult to isolate at this stage, because they depend on a complex set of considerations particularly concerning pensions. The figures in this section should therefore be read as estimates in order to give a broad indication of cost. Figures could change significantly, although the estimates given err on the side of a higher cost of change in order that councils can plan accordingly.
- 5.3.2 The following shows the difference between the costs of the current model and the proposed model:

Cost / Saving Item	£Value	Notes
Additional pension costs	1,000,000	High level estimate – see paragraph 5.3.3 below
Management savings	- 500,000	Based on the proposed structure shown above
Corporate overheads	- 50,000	Reduction in some (but not all) company costs
Net additional cost	450,000	
Per authority	150,000	

- 5.3.3 Pension costs are both the single biggest line item and the biggest variable in the cost considerations. An approximate figure of £1m has been used based on a figure provided by Publica for the annual saving from moving some staff to the Royal London Pension Scheme. However, there are a complex set of additional considerations. This figure represents savings across the whole company whereas in the proposed model, a number of services will remain within the limited company structure. There are some legacy arrangements from which councils hosted which posts under the former GO Shared Service. Some councils are paying more in pension contributions than the payroll data indicates they should at face value, because of the difference in the actuary estimate of the contributions required to fund the scheme. The pensions cost figure will need to be refined with an actuary estimate based on the final list of staff that will transfer to the councils.
- 5.3.4 With these very important points of clarification noted, the net additional cost to the councils of the proposed model is approximately £150k per year. This does not yet factor in any savings that can be made from changes to how teams operate as only the proposed senior management structures have been modelled at this stage. All of the councils have savings targets over the next three years so will need to undergo significant transformation, in any case.
- 5.3.5 In addition to the ongoing difference in cost between the operating models, there are one-off costs associated with the transition. These are made up of:
- i. One-off staffing related costs
 - ii. The cost of managing the transition

- 5.3.6 One-off staffing related costs include possible redundancy and pension costs. It is not yet known whether there will be any redundancies or how many people may be affected. The councils have a duty to avoid any compulsory redundancies if at all possible and they will comply with this duty – to protect both the welfare of staff and the public purse. This does not mean that there will be no redundancies, but that all reasonable steps will be taken to avoid redundancies where suitable alternative employment can be found for staff. In this first instance, the possible risk of redundancy or redeployment will apply only to senior managers, who will be consulted on proposals that affect them.
- 5.3.7 The councils do not have the internal capacity to project management a change of this scale and complexity, the key activities for which are set out in Section 6 – Transition Plan. There are three viable options for managing the transition:
- i. Appoint an Interim Programme Manager or Director. One of the councils would employ this post on behalf of all, who would lead and manage the transition over an 18 month period.
 - ii. Appoint an Interim Programme Director and an external consultancy or project management organisation.
 - iii. Appoint only an external consultancy or project management organisation.
- 5.3.8 The recommended option is (ii), the blended delivery model. The benefit of this option is a single accountable lead employed by the councils to lead the transition, with hands-on support for project management. Having an external partner on board will also provide cover and resilience in case of absence. Costs associated with this option will be obtained through market research once CEOs have taken advice on procurement options.
- 5.3.9 Whichever option is ultimately preferred, the councils are recommended to choose the same model in order to share costs and effectively manage the transition in a single, joined up way.
- 5.3.10 The councils should also set aside funds to commission specialist HR and Legal advice, working alongside the HR team in Publica.
- 5.3.11 This does not overlook work that will need to take place by individual councils to determine council specific requirements on a service by service basis, and to give thought to what the future transformation requirements of those services might be.

5.4 Contractual implications

- 5.4.1 Services are provided through three contracts which are of different lengths and have different end dates. The structure of each contract is set in the table below.

5.4.2 There is a clause within each contract that enables councils to remove a service from Publica at any point throughout the period of the contract with an agreed notice period.

5.4.3 This means that shareholder councils can take a service-by-service decision and use a phased approach to any repatriation of services. This will reduce disruption to service delivery, staff and residents throughout any change.

	Commissioning	General	Support
Length of contract	10 years	7 years	5 years
Next Renewal Date	1 st November 2027	1 st November 2024	1 st November 2027
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Services • Electoral Services • Post/Print Room • Communities and Community Engagement • Leisure • Tourism • Waste and Recycling • Parking • Communications • Corporate Functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Services • Building Control • Public Protection • Revs & Bens • Housing Services • Development Management • Regeneration, Business and Economy • Planning Policy & Local Plan • Ecology, Heritage & Design • Strategic Housing • Community Alarms • Pest Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT • Finance • HR & Payroll • Procurement • Property Services • Land Charges • Flood Engineering

6. Transition Plan

Phase and Activity	2023/24						2024/25											
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1.0 Mobilisation and Preparation																		
Decision making process at each council (Cabinet, Executive and Scrutiny (TBC))																		
Creation of transition team; programme director, programme manager, HR, OD, Finance, Communication, Legal																		
Communication with impacted staff of agreed timelines																		
Agreement of future service arrangements (shared vs sovereign)																		
Agreement of phased approach																		
Liaise with Publica leadership																		
Staff consultation							M											
Assessment of company governance and introduction of transition governance arrangements								M										
Development of detailed transition plan for Round I and Round II								M										
1.0 Transition Round I (first wave of services)																		
Creation of full structure charts based on consultation outcomes																		
Ringfencing and job matching for existing staff																		
Recruitment to vacant leadership roles																		
Implement interim management for transition																		
Go live Round I services													M					
3.0 Transition Round II (second wave of services)																		

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Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Publica Review.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Publica Review at an additional meeting on 16 November 2023. The draft minutes will be circulated prior to the Council meeting if possible.

The Committee agreed one recommendation to Council on 22 November (resolution 2 below).

The Committee resolved to:

1. Agree to receive regular updates on the Publica Review (at additional meetings where needed) at critical milestones including prior to future Cabinet / Council decisions. Updates to include oversight of staff concerns and HR implications and how those matters are being managed.
2. Recommend to Council that recommendation 1 in the report is amended to read 'Approve the recommendations set out in the Human Engine report (that the majority of services are returned to the Council as per the detail provided on page 12 of the Human Engine report), *subject to the completion of due diligence and the agreement of the detailed transition plan*'.

Procedure for dealing with the recommendation at Council.

The Leader of the Council will propose the Cabinet recommendations when introducing the Publica Review item and in doing so will clarify whether or not the change to the wording recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is accepted and incorporated into the recommendations being moved.

If the Leader of the Council moves the Cabinet recommendations unamended, it would be open to any other member of Council to move the wording recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an amendment to the Cabinet recommendations. Any such amendment would be dealt with in the normal way.

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