

Public Document Pack



COTSWOLD
District Council

Wednesday, 2 July 2025

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CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX on **Thursday, 10 July 2025 at 6.00 pm.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DG Stanley'.

David Stanley
Deputy Chief Executive Officer and S151.

To: Members of the Cabinet

(Councillors Mike Every, Juliet Layton, Patrick Coleman, Andrea Pellegram, Claire Bloomer, Paul Hodgkinson, Mike McKeown and Tristan Wilkinson)

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 Cabinet is 3 members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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

3. **Leader's Announcements**

To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council.

4. **Minutes** (Pages 7 - 14)

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 May 2025.

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 Cabinet'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 Leader 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**

No Member Questions have been submitted prior to the publication of the agenda.

A Member of the Council may ask the Leader or a Cabinet Member 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 Leader 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.

7. **Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members** (Pages 15 - 16)

To note the decisions taken by the Leader and/or Individual Cabinet Members since the agenda for Cabinet 3 April 2025 was published. The following non-key decisions have been taken by individual Cabinet Members under delegated authority:

1. Cabinet Member for Communities

Decision meeting 23 May 2025 – Decision relating to a consultation run by British Telecommunications Ltd on the removal of payphones from 16 locations across Cotswold District, in the light of consultation responses submitted to the Council.

Non-key decision taken by the Cabinet Member for Communities on 23 May 2025

Date decision effective: 6 June 2025

See: Decision summary sheet.

8. **Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance**

To receive any recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to consider any matters raised by the Audit and Governance Committee.

9. **Achieving Corporate Net Zero** (Pages 17 - 40)

Purpose

To recommend the creation of a Corporate Climate Change Board and note the actions to address the emissions performance gap.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. NOTE the position as set out in the report (Annex A) and the actions to close the emissions performance gap

2. AGREE the creation of a Corporate Climate Change Board to provide accountability for an emission reduction programme

10. **Creative Cotswolds Action Plan - Culture Strategy** (Pages 41 - 50)

Purpose

To present Creative Cotswolds to Cabinet for approval.

Recommendation(s)

That the Cabinet resolves to

1. APPROVE Creative Cotswolds as the Council's approach to supporting the Cultural Sector.

11. **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review** (Pages 51 - 78)

Purpose

To consider the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Report 2024.

Recommendation

That Cabinet resolves to NOTE the report at Annex A.

12. **Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Peer Review and Action Plan** (Pages 79 - 130)

Purpose

To seek the Council's endorsement of the findings of the PAS (Planning Advisory Service) Planning Service Peer Challenge report (May 2025) and the proposed Action Plan.

Recommendation(s)

1. ENDORSE the PAS Planning Service Peer Challenge Report (May 2025) and its recommendations, and to endorse the resultant Action Plan for implementation.
2. AGREE to publish the report and the accompanying Action Plan on the CDC Planning and Building web pages.

13. **Local Plan Update** (Pages 131 - 166)

Purpose

To consider the way forward for the Local Plan Update.

Recommendation

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. RECOMMEND to Council to merge the two ongoing Local Plan projects:
 - the partial update of the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan (2011-2031); and

- the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan,

into a single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update in conjunction with incorporating work of the Gloucestershire Strategic Plan, where appropriate, with a view to submission in 2026 and adoption in 2027.

And, subject to Council approval of 1, Cabinet resolves to:

2. UPDATE the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy in parallel with the Local Plan process.
3. INVEST in additional resources to accelerate the delivery of the Local Plan to enable the December 2026 submission deadline to be hit.
4. CONFIRM the delivery of the Local Plan as a Council priority.
5. RE-ESTABLISH the Local Plan Oversight Board and confirm a new Terms of Reference.

14. **Licenced HMO fee policy and HMO Amenity Standards policy** (Pages 167 - 178)

Purpose

To renew the HMO Licensing policy setting fees and the licence period.

Recommendation

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. APPROVE the new HMO licence fees, to apply from September 1 2025
2. APPROVE the licence period increase to 5 years.

15. **Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter 4** (Pages 179 - 254)

Purpose

To provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance for Q4 2024-25.

Recommendation

That Cabinet resolves to NOTE overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2024-25 Q4 (January-March 2025).

16. **Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter 4** (Pages 255 - 306)

Purpose

To set out the final outturn position for the 2024/25 financial year.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. NOTE the outturn financial position set out in this report.

2. NOTE the Non-treasury Prudential Indicators in Annex B.
3. APPROVE the transfer to and from reserves as set out in paragraph 2.15 to 2.18 and 6.1 to 6.6 and Annex C.
4. APPROVE the carry forward of unspent capital budget included in paragraph 6.5 of £0.565m into the 2025/26 Capital Programme.
5. NOTE the change in provisions as set out in paragraph 2.14

17. **Next Meeting**

The date of the next Cabinet meeting is 4 September 2025.

(END)

Cabinet
08/May2025



COTSWOLD
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Thursday, 8 May 2025

Members present:

Joe Harris	Mike Every
Claire Bloomer	Juliet Layton
Paul Hodgkinson	Tristan Wilkinson

Officers present:

Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)	Sophia Price, Heritage and Design Manager
Jasper Lamoon, Principal Planning Policy Officer	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer
Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer	Frank Wilson, Interim Managing Director (Publica)
	Danielle Berry, Senior Biodiversity and Countryside Officer

Observers:

Councillor Patrick Coleman

90 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Mike McKeown who was delayed. Apologies were also received from the Chief Executive Officer.

91 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hodgkinson declared an interest in Agenda Item 11 by virtue of his appointment to the CNL board by Gloucestershire County Council.

Councillor Layton declared an interest in Agenda Item 11 by virtue of her appointment to the CNL board by Cotswold District Council.

92 Minutes

The purpose of this item was to consider the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet on 3 April 2025.

There were no amendments to the minutes.

The approval of the minutes was proposed by Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council, and seconded by Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation. This proposal was put to the vote and agreed by Cabinet.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 3 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

Voting Record:

5 For, 0 Against, 1 Abstention.

To approve the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 3 April 2025 as a correct record. (Resolution). (Resolution)		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evemy, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson and Juliet Layton	5
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Tristan Wilkinson	1
Carried		

93 Leader's Announcements

The Leader commented on the Council Chamber being decorated with Union flags for the VE-day commemoration and congratulated all of those who had made the moving event, with councillors, staff, and community members attending such a success.

There was a special mention of guest of honour Alan McQuillin, a 102-year-old D-Day veteran from Kemble, who had shared reflections on the war.

Representatives from Tetbury and Fairford Historical Societies who had shared insights into local wartime history were also thanked.

A minute's silence was held in remembrance of those who served.

Councillor Joe Harris announced that this would be his final Cabinet meeting as Leader of Cotswold District Council, marking six years in post. Cllr Harris expressed thanks to Cabinet colleagues, councillors, officers, and staff for their support and service.

Councillor Mike Evemy was congratulated on being elected Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and would be the controlling group's nomination to be elected as the new Council Leader at the Annual Council meeting on 21 May 2025.

94 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

95 Member Questions

No member questions were received.

96 Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members

There was one Cabinet Member decision to report to Cabinet since the agenda for Cabinet on 3 April 2025 was published.

Cabinet Member Delegated Decision 1.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning participated in a decision meeting on 2 April 2025 regarding the progression of a Neighbourhood Plan submitted by Chipping Campden Town Council and whether it met the legal criteria to progress to a Section 16 Consultation.

The Cabinet Member considered the recommendations within the report and resolved to **AGREE** that the submitted documents met the requirements of Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 and **RESOLVED** that the Council should launch the statutory 'Regulation 16' consultation period for the standard six-week period.

The decision was effective on 11 April 2025.

97 Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance

There was one recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider. The Committee had recommended that the Council give higher priority to implementing the recommendations of the Public Conveniences Working Group, which had been agreed by Cabinet on 1 February 2024.

Cabinet considered this recommendation and agreed that the implementation of the agreed recommendations should be treated as a higher priority.

98 Rural England Prosperity Fund 2025/26 (REPF) Update

The purpose of the report was to update Cabinet on the award of Rural England Prosperity Funding for 2025/26, to seek approval for the approach to delivery of REPF projects in 2025/26 and to agree the necessary delegations.

Councillor Tristan Wilkinson, Cabinet Member for Economy and Environment, introduced the item and thanked the Economic Development Lead and their team. It was noted that the applications already received were of high quality, and the assessment process was praised as fair, transparent, and effective.

The funding, provided through a direct government grant, would enable the Council to support local charities and community groups aligned with its objectives. Although the latest funding was lower than in previous years, it still represented nearly £1 million over three years.

The impact of even small grants was considered significant, particularly as other funding sources had diminished. Emphasis was placed on due diligence and value for money in decision-making. A key caveat required all projects to be completed within the financial year, necessitating timely decisions.

Promotion of CDC branding on funded projects was encouraged to raise awareness of District Council investment.

It was confirmed that the funding would be split, with 20% allocated to improving health and wellbeing, and 20% to developing the visitor economy. It was clarified that "tackling homelessness" was incorporated under "health and wellbeing" in line with government terminology.

Timelines were clarified, and it was confirmed that the application form was ready for publication, pending Council approval on 21 May. Applications would be scored and assessed by the assessment panel, producing a shortlist, with final decisions made by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Environment.

Awareness of the scheme would be promoted via a press release, social media, the Council website, and the Business Matters newsletter. Strong interest in the funding had already been noted.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Tristan Wilkinson and seconded by Councillor Mike Every.

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommend to Council to

1. Amend the capital programme for 2025/26 to include the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) scheme capital budget of £229,240, which is fully funded from the 2025/26 REPF grant allocation.

2. Approve the provisional allocations as set out in para 3.1.
3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Environment and the Council's Section 151 Officer to allocate the funding, having regard to the recommendations of the REPF Assessment Panel.

Voting Record:

6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain.

To Approve recommendations 1 to 3 of Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) report (Resolution)

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommend to Council to:

1. Amend the capital programme for 2025/26 to include the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) scheme capital budget of £229,240, which is fully funded from the 2025/26 REPF grant allocation.
2. Approve the provisional allocations as set out in para 3.1.
3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Environment and the Council's Section 151 Officer to allocate the funding, having regard to the recommendations of the REPF Assessment Panel.

For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Every, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Tristan Wilkinson	6
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0

Carried

99 Cotswold District Council Renewable Energy Study January 2025

The purpose of the report was to present the Cotswold District Renewable Energy Study and to provide evidence-based advice to inform decisions on renewable energy deployment and achieving net zero, while also supporting the Local Plan Update. Cabinet endorsement was sought to use the study as an evidence base for Council policies going forward.

The report was introduced by the Principal Planning Policy Officer in the absence of Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability.

The Cotswold District Renewable Energy Study, conducted by the Centre for Sustainable Energy in Bristol had been commissioned by the District Council to support

its goal of becoming "Green to the Core", and funded through the local plan reserve, as it supported the update of the local plan.

The comprehensive study had two main strands: assessing how the Council estate could move toward carbon neutrality and; exploring how planning policy could support wider district efforts to become more sustainable.

The importance of investing in renewable energy as a means to strengthen energy security and reduce long-term costs was noted.

No contradictions with current planning guidelines were identified when considering the recommendations. It was noted that while the study went further than national policy in some areas, this was permissible and not expected to cause issues.

Financial implications were highlighted, and it was noted that any future projects would require business cases to be submitted to balance future development with financial constraints.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Joe Harris and seconded by Councillor Tristan Wilkinson

Cabinet RESOLVED to endorse the Renewable Energy Study for use as:

- part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan;
- part of the evidence base for future Council policies and procedures in regard to responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies.

Voting record:

6 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstain.

To endorse the Renewable Energy Study as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan review and for informing future policies and procedures. (Resolution)		
RESOLVED that Cabinet endorses the Renewable Energy Study for use as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan; • part of the evidence base for future Council policies and procedures in regards to responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies. 		
For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Every, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Juliet Layton and Tristan Wilkinson	6
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

100 Endorsement of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Management Plan 2025-2030

The purpose of the report was to seek Cabinet's endorsement of the Cotswolds National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - AONB) Management Plan 2025 – 2030 and seek endorsement of its use as part of the evidence base for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects including but not limited to the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.

Councillor Layton introduced the Cotswold National Landscape Board five-year management plan.

The policies within the plan were described as ambitious and comprehensive, addressing key issues such as climate change, farming mitigation, landscape management, carbon sequestration, and hedgerow management. These themes aligned closely with recent agenda items and Council priorities. Although the plan did not fully align with every local plan policy it was noted that Council policies would take precedence where necessary. However, few conflicts were anticipated.

The plan also supported nature recovery across the Cotswolds and promoted improved public access to enhance physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. It aimed to preserve and enhance the natural beauty and special qualities of the Cotswold National Landscape and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Monitoring and reporting arrangements were outlined in the annexes.

Councillor Juliet Layton and Councillor Paul Hodgkinson having declared an interest as they serve on the board of the CNL, left the Chamber for the debate and the vote.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Joe Harris and seconded by Councillor Claire Bloomer.

Cabinet RESOLVED to endorse the recommendation of the report that the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025 be used as

- part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan;
- part of the evidence base for the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans;
- part of the evidence base for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects;
- as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications (where compatible with relevant Local Plan and national policy); and
- to inform the development and delivery of the Council's services and activities.

Voting Record

4 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstentions due to conflict of interest.

To endorse the Cotswold National Landscape (CNL) Management Plan 2025/30 (Resolution)

RESOLVED that Cabinet endorsed the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025–2030 for use as:

- part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan;
- part of the evidence base for the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans;
- part of the evidence base for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects;
- as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications (where compatible with relevant Local Plan and national policy); and
- to inform the development and delivery of the Council's services and activities.

For	Claire Bloomer, Mike Evemy, Joe Harris and Tristan Wilkinson	4
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	Paul Hodgkinson and Juliet Layton	2
Abstain	None	0

Carried

The Meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 6.31pm

(END)



Cabinet – 10 July 2025

SCHEDULE OF DECISION(S) TAKEN BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBERS

Note:

- Any decision that is still subject to call-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is marked with the expiry date of call-in at the standard close of business time of 5pm.
- Further information on the decision taken and the webcast link can be found within the hyperlink for each 'subject'.
- Decisions below are those taken after the publication of the Cabinet agenda on 30.04.2025.

Cabinet Member/ Officer	Meeting date	Subject	Decision(s)
Cabinet Member for Communities	23/05/2025	British Telecommunications (BT) consultation on the removal of payphones from 16 locations across Cotswold District, in the light of consultation responses submitted to the Council	<p>The Cabinet Member for Communities considered the recommendations within the report, noted that the consultation had followed due process and resolved that it would be appropriate to agree the recommendations.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member resolved to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agree the Council response for each affected kiosk2. Agree to encourage British



			<p>Telecommunications Ltd to keep open the offer of community adoption for telephone kiosks retained after the conclusion of the consultation process.</p> <p><u>Cabinet member for Communities - BT telephone boxes consultation decision</u></p> <p>Effective date: 6 June 2025.</p>
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Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 10 JULY 2025
Subject	ACHIEVING CORPORATE NET ZERO: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability Email: mike.mckeown@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	David Stanley, Chief Financial Officer Email: david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Olivia McGregor, Climate change and carbon reduction lead Email: olivia.mcgregor@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	Recommend the creation of a Corporate Climate Change Board and note the actions to address the emissions performance gap
Annexes	Annex A – Corporate Net Zero Target Report July 2025
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the position as set out in the report (Annex A) and the actions to close the emissions performance gap 2. Agree the creation of a Corporate Climate Change Board to provide accountability for an emission reduction programme
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the Climate Emergency • Delivering Good Services • Supporting Communities • Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/	Consultation has been carried out by the Climate Change Lead with



Consultation	the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and the Chief Executive as well as key officers and colleagues within Cotswold District Council including the Council leader, all other nominated climate change board members and service area leads. District stakeholders including officers from neighbouring councils in Gloucestershire have also been engaged and are issuing similar reports to their authorities.
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and since then has been working across a huge number of areas both to decarbonise its own operations as well as take a leadership role in enabling the district to decarbonise too¹. This is in recognition that local authorities are directly responsible for only 2-5 per cent of local emissions, but through their policies and partnerships have strong influence over more than a third of emissions in their area. At the time the emergency was declared, the Council committed to make the Council's corporate estate net zero as soon as possible, aiming for an 80% reduction against a 1990 baseline by 2030, and a 100% reduction by 2045. The Council has been working hard to build the evidence base to be able to assess progress against this target and has now been able to complete the exercise up to FY22-23. This paper introduces the report (Annex A) which provides this assessment and will be referred to as 'the report' from now on.
- 1.2** The report reveals that to date carbon emissions have reduced 41% against the 1990 baseline year, from 4,700,000 kg CO₂e in 1990 to 2,763,803 kg CO₂e in FY22-23, the most recent dataset available. Action to date can be seen to have led to tangible results.
- 1.3** The report reveals that to meet the 80% reduction by 2030 target, emissions are required to reduce 66% against FY22-23 levels and reach 940,000 kgCO₂e by 2030. That requires an average of 11% reduction annually.
- 1.4** The report reveals the council is operating with a performance gap, and needs to move from the current average rate of 1.28% reduction annually to achieve an average rate of 11% reduction annually if it is to meet the 2030 target.
- 1.5** Meeting the 2030 target will be challenging, however the report recommends a number of actions which will give the Council the best chance. As mentioned previously a lot of climate work the Council has undertaken falls outside of the scope of the 2030 target. The report recommends the Council sets up a Climate Board therefore to provide accountability over an emission reduction programme. This will enable the co-benefits from taking climate action (e.g. health improvements, economic improvements) to be maximised and ensure climate action can be

¹ Information on the full range of climate initiatives Cotswold District Council is involved in can be found here <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/climate-initiatives-future-plans-faqs/>



assessed and considered within the full context the Council operates in. It will mean that affordability and deliverability can be factored into the process.

- 1.6** The report sets out that subject to considering wider issues such as Affordability, Deliverability etc. as outlined in Section 5 of the report, the following actions will have the most impact on meeting the 2030 target:
- Decarbonising the waste fleet (which makes up 43% of emissions)
 - Decarbonising council owned buildings (which makes up 36% of emissions)
 - Reducing non-waste-fleet vehicle emissions (which makes up 8% of emissions)
 - Improving data quality and emission reporting capabilities
 - Avoiding emission increases
- 1.7** The report also recommends the Council ensures climate action is taken in the context of broader changes in local government (e.g. local government reorganisation). It makes clear the scale and urgency of the climate crisis requires everyone, including the Council, to undergo a paradigm shift in thinking about taking decisions and investing to achieve a liveable future. The report shows the value of taking action now, despite local government reorganisation (LGR), to ensure the Council's legacy is a positive one.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The climate crisis, and the related ecology crisis, present an existential threat to all Cotswold district residents, but particularly our young people, and future generations beyond them. There is an urgent imperative to act. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), have repeatedly outlined the catastrophic impacts that people and nature will face should the world warm by 2 degrees Celsius. They plead to limit global temperature rise through urgent, unprecedented, systemic change to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest.
- 2.2** Cotswold District Council's climate strategy, produced in response to net zero target setting has a 2020-2030 timeframe, reflecting the importance of this crucial 'Decade to Make a Difference'.
- 2.3** The strength of our action on climate change has been assessed by Climate Emergency UK (CE UK) via the Council Climate Plan Scorecards. The most recent 2025



assessment scored us in third place of all Gloucestershire councils with a score of 45%. The proposed actions can help build on the Council's scoring and reputation.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** The scope of the report relates to the Council's corporate estate which pertains to emissions arising from its own activities and operations. The council also works to leverage its influence on tackling climate change across the district (by for example encouraging the uptake of solar on buildings and setting net zero standards for new development), however this is outside the scope of this report.
- 3.2** The report proposes a Corporate Climate Change Board to provide accountability for a corporate emission reduction programme. It proposes the Board ensures investment required to deliver the actions set out in the report are subject to Council's usual decision-making processes, and require business cases to be produced for formal consideration. It proposes the Board also ensures the impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is factored into decision making around climate action. The proposed terms of reference for this Board are set out in Appendix 1 of the report (Annex A) and specify the Board's role and purpose, membership, meeting etiquette and meeting frequency.
- 3.3** The report reveals that to date significant decarbonisation milestones have been reached and emissions have reduced 41% against the 1990 baseline year, from 4,700,000 kg CO₂e in 1990 to 2,763,803 kg CO₂e in FY22-23. It demonstrates action to date has led to tangible results.
- 3.4** The report provides an assessment of emissions performance since the climate strategy was published and the Council put resources in place to progress net zero ambitions. It demonstrates emissions have decreased by 6% in that time (2% a year), as a result of decreases in natural gas consumption, electricity consumption, water consumption and business travel outweighing emission increases seen elsewhere.
- 3.5** It reveals the Council's emission sources using the most recent emissions data available (FY22-23). It demonstrates 1. waste fleet fuel consumption is by far the largest source of emissions making up 43% of CDC's total. 2. the second largest source of emissions comes from Council operated buildings and buildings managed by an external contractor (leisure centres and museum) which collectively make up



36% of CDC's total emissions and 3. remaining emissions arise from fuel consumption in vehicles used to carry out other CDC services (8% of total), well to tank (WTT) emissions² (13% of total), emissions from business travel (1% of total) and water (<1% of total).

- 3.6** The report highlights emissions are required to reduce a further 66% by 2030 against FY22-23 levels to meet the Council's emission reduction target. It highlights the council is therefore operating with a performance gap and needs to move from the current average rate of 1.28% reduction annually to achieve an average rate of 11% reduction annually if it is to meet the 2030 target.
- 3.7** The report provides the rationale for the proposed actions (as summarised in the Exec summary) required to work towards the 2030 target and close the emissions performance gap.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** The alternative would be to carry on with the strategy employed to date which has resulted in a 1.28% average annual reduction rate which is insufficient to meet the 2030 target.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** The proposed emission reduction actions will focus staff and resources to give the Council the best chance of meeting the 2030 target.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The Council, through its annual budget setting process and medium-term financial planning, ensures adequate budget is provided for the Council's energy needs. This ranges from utilities to heat and light corporate buildings such as Trinity Road, to ensuring adequate budget is provided to third parties such as Ubico (Fuel costs associated with the fleet of Waste and Recycling vehicles) and Freedom Leisure (heating and lighting of Leisure Centre and the Corinium Museum).
- 6.2** As part of the response to the global energy price shocks in 2022/23, the Council has mitigated some of the price risks through forward purchase of energy through a

² Well to tank emissions refer to the greenhouse gas emissions arising from the extraction, processing, transportation and distribution of the fuel to the point of use.



consortium with Cheltenham Borough Council, Forest of Dean District Council, and West Oxfordshire District Council. Further mitigation measures are in place with regard to Leisure and Culture facilities.

- 6.3** The Council, through its contract with Ubico, assesses the fuel price risk and budgets accordingly each year.
- 6.4** Whilst this report does not give rise to any financial implications directly, it is clear that further actions are required for the Council to achieve a net zero objective. The establishment of the Climate Change Board will provide the Council with a forum to ensure actions are considered in terms of the environmental benefit and the financial impact. This will support the Council with its objective of achieving net zero, promote greater accountability, and help guide future expenditure decisions.
- 6.5** With limited resources, the Council will need to ensure actions and proposals are supported by detailed business cases that set out both the environmental and financial impact(s) and are assessed 'in the round'.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** There are no legal implications.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** If the recommended course of action is not taken, the risk of failing to meet net zero is almost certain to come about. This would result in significant reputational damage as well as significantly comprise the Council's ability to deliver all four of its corporate priorities.
- 8.2** The Government's Devolution Whitepaper published December 2024, which announced a programme of local government reorganisation (LGR), poses a risk to delivery which will need to be carefully managed. District councils will cease to exist in their current form and all new authorities will be in place by the end of this government term (2029). The business case for action delivery will need to both incorporate and mitigate as far as possible the impact of LGR. The actions on waste fleet decarbonisation for example are already incorporating and mitigating the LGR risk. Gloucestershire Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) are already working together via their Resources and Waste Partnership to explore the option to produce a waste fleet EV transition plan at a countywide scale.



- 8.3** Responding to the climate emergency requires the Council to take, and learn to manage, a level of economic and political risk in taking actions and help others to take actions which are commensurate with the scale of the emergency. Strong leadership and effective partnership working will help adequately control those risks.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** There is a shared benefit to all groups identified (by race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy/maternity, religion and belief) in delivering the climate programme set out in the accompanying report, as climate change poses the most significant threat to human rights. The equalities impact of implementing specific climate actions will be considered as and when individual business cases are put forward to Council/Cabinet for consideration.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** To avoid repetition, please see the Exec Summary and Main Points sections of this Cabinet Report for detail.
- 10.2** The report also identifies ecological implications, principally that climate emergency and the ecological emergency are intrinsically linked. Many of the measures the report highlights to address climate change issues will therefore help to address ecological emergency issues.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1** None.

(END)

Annex A - Corporate net zero target report

Olivia McGregor, Climate change lead, July
2025



COTSWOLD
District Council

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1. Executive summary

In 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to make its own operations net zero as soon as possible, aiming for an 80% reduction against a 1990 baseline by 2030, and a 100% reduction by 2045. The scope of this report relates to this commitment. The council has also worked to tackle climate change beyond that, by enabling wider decarbonisation across the district (by for example encouraging the uptake of solar on buildings, installing electric vehicle infrastructure and setting net zero standards for new development). This report gives an assessment of the Council's performance against the 2030 target and makes recommendations for where the Council should focus efforts in order to meet the 2030 target.

The report reveals that to date emissions have reduced 41% against the 1990 baseline year, from 4,700,000 kg CO₂e in 1990 to 2,763,803 kg CO₂e in FY22-23¹. This gives an average annual emission reduction rate of 1.28%. Action to date can be seen to have led to tangible results.

The report reveals that to meet the 80% reduction by 2030 target, emissions are required to fall 66% against FY22-23 levels and reach 940,000 kgCO₂e by 2030. That requires an average annual emission reduction rate of 11%.

The report reveals the council is therefore operating with a performance gap, and needs to move from the current 1.28% annual emission reduction rate to an 11% annual emissions reduction rate if it is to meet the 2030 target.

Meeting the 2030 target will be challenging, however this report sets out the rationale for the actions which will give the Council the best chance of meeting it.

The report recommends the Council sets up a Climate Board to provide accountability for an emission reduction programme and balance work on the 2030 target with wider decarbonisation work it undertakes, to ensure the benefits from climate action are maximised. It recommends a Climate Board is also created to ensure climate action can be assessed and considered within the full context the Council operates in. It will mean that affordability and deliverability can be factored into the process.

The report sets out that subject to considering wider issues such as Affordability, Deliverability etc. as outlined in Section 5, the Council should focus on the following actions to close the target performance gap:

- Decarbonising the waste fleet (which makes up 43% of emissions)
- Decarbonising council owned buildings (which makes up 36% of emissions)
- Reducing non-waste-fleet vehicle emissions (which makes up 8% of emissions)
- Improving data quality and emission reporting capabilities
- Avoiding emission increases

¹ Details of the baseline year calculations are available in the Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 - 2030

Finally the report recommends a programme of climate action takes account of broader changes in local government (e.g. local government reorganisation).

2. Performance against net zero target

To date emissions have reduced 41% against the 1990 baseline year, from an estimated 4,700,000 kg CO₂e in 1990 to a confirmed 2,763,803 kg CO₂e in FY22-23² (Figure 1). Emissions data was first collected in FY2009-10 therefore the 1990 baseline figure was estimated. Please note the first 20 years on the graph has been compressed therefore to reflect the absence of emissions data. Further information on why a 1990 baseline was chosen and how the baseline was estimated is available in the Climate strategy 2020-2030. Emissions between FY2009-10 and FY2022-23 reduced 33%. Action to date can be seen to have led to tangible results.

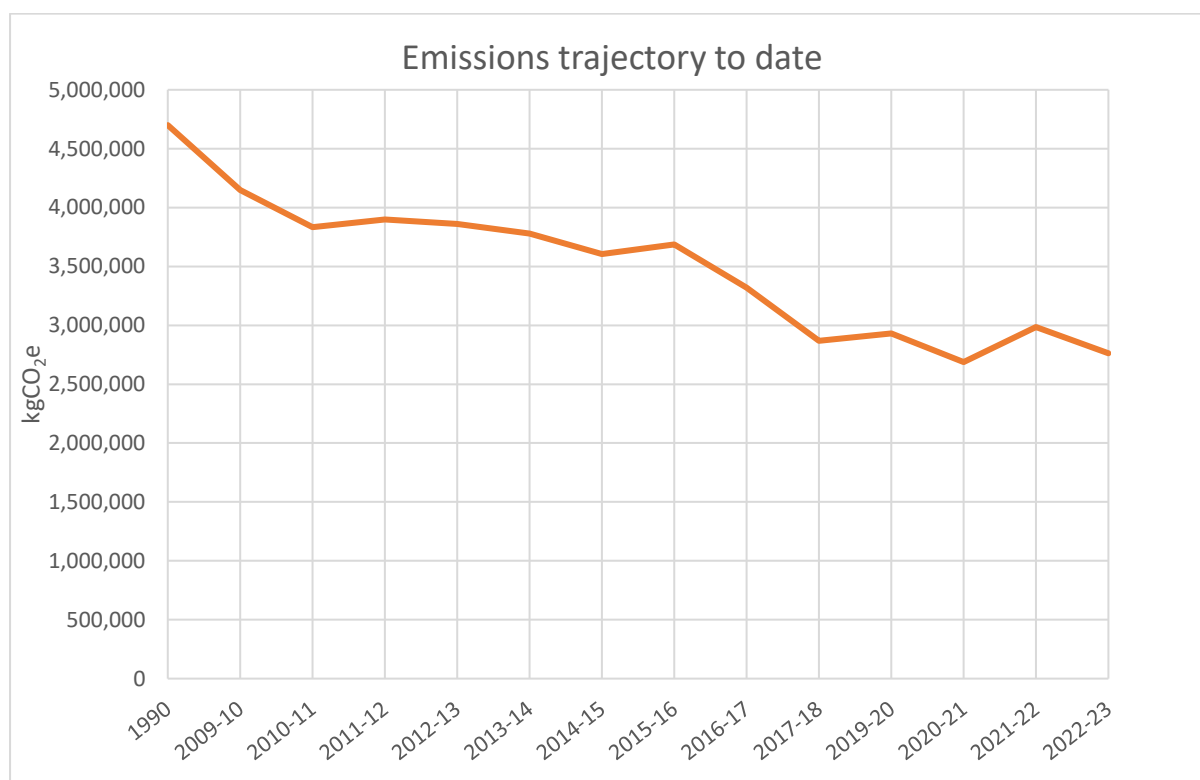


Figure 1 emissions trajectory to date (FY22-23)

The Council has committed to make the Council's own activities net zero as soon as possible, aiming for an 80% reduction against a 1990 baseline by 2030, and a 100% reduction by 2045. To meet the 80% reduction by 2030 target, emissions are required to fall to 940,000 kgCO₂e. That means emissions need to reduce a further 66% against FY22-23 levels. That equates to an 11% year on year reduction to achieve the 2030 target (assuming FY24-25 data broadly resembles FY22-23 data).

The annual emission reduction rate between the 1990 baseline year and the most recent year we have data for (FY22-23) is 1.28%. The council is therefore operating with a performance gap on the basis an 11% annual emissions reduction rate is needed to meet the 2030 target. An illustrative linear trajectory from FY24-25 to FY30-31 can demonstrate the scale of the

² Details of the baseline year calculations are available in the Climate Emergency Strategy 2020 - 2030

challenge. In reality, the emissions trajectory won't be linear. For example, it is unlikely waste fleet emissions which make up 43% of the total emissions would reduce in a linear fashion. The timings of fleet replacement will depend on the capital replacement programme schedule, EV infrastructure available to support EV vehicles and other considerations that won't necessarily materialise in a linear fashion.

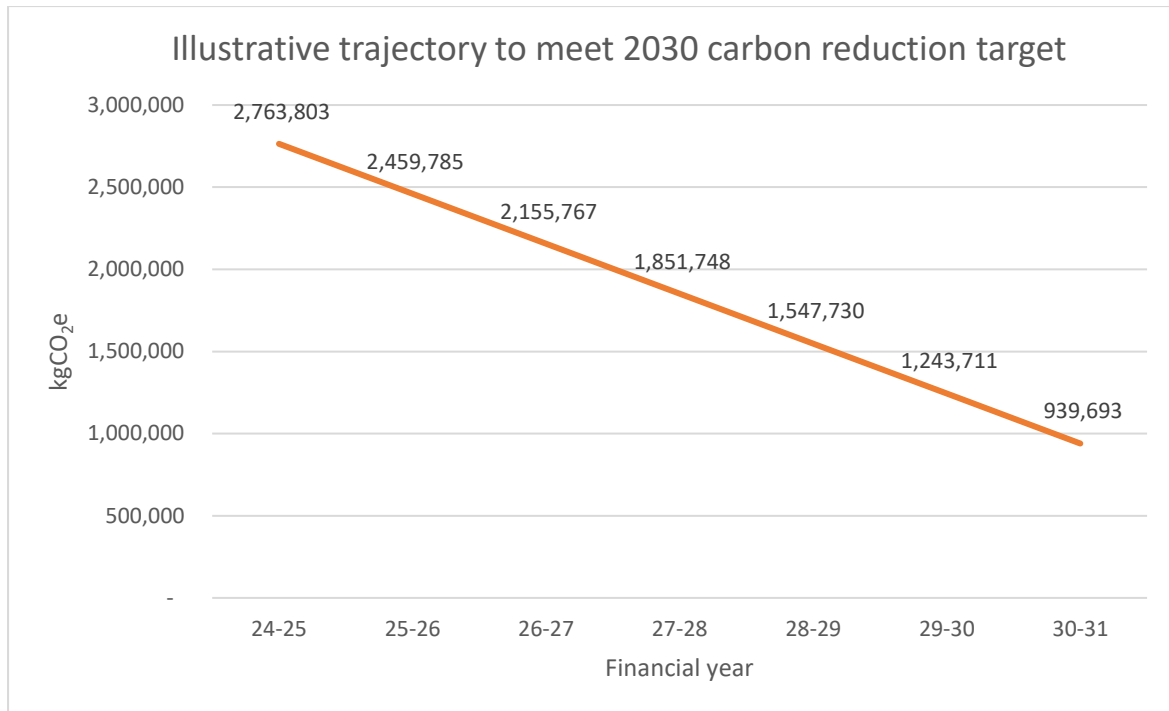


Figure 2 trajectory required to meet 2030 carbon reduction target.

3. Emissions performance since the climate strategy was published

This section sets out a review of emissions performance since the climate strategy was published in 2020 and the Council put resources in place to progress net zero ambitions. FY22-23 emissions are the most recent emissions dataset the council has to work with due to supplier issues. Between FY19-20 and FY22-23, emissions decreased 6%. Further decarbonisation work has been undertaken since then which is not reflected in these figures. This includes solar PV arrays mounted on to the three buildings that

Decreases in natural gas, electricity, water and business travel emissions outweighed emission increases associated with fuel and well to tank (WTT)³ emissions.

Table 1 provides a full breakdown of emission changes by source over this time period.

		kgCO ₂ e 2019/20	kgCO ₂ e 2022/23	% change between 19/20 and 22/23
Scope 1	Natural gas	229,976	205,310	-11%
	Fuel	1,036,984	1,191,445	15%
Scope 2	Purchased electricity (generation)	182,177	115,097	-37%
Scope 3	WTT Natural gas	29,909	34,979	17%
	WTT Fuel	246,823	284,982	15%
	Business travel	91,371	29,015	-68%
	Electricity T&D	15,467	10,529	-32%
	WTT electricity	25,409	27,527	8%
	WTT electricity T&D	2,160	2,518	17%
	Natural gas in buildings managed by an external contractor	428,465	250,641	-42%
	Electricity in buildings managed by an external contractor	406,377	394,833	-3%
	Water consumption in buildings managed by an external contractor	19,522	226	-99%

³ Well to tank emissions refer to the greenhouse gas emissions arising from the extraction, processing, transportation and distribution of the fuel to the point of use

	Water consumption in buildings fully owned and controlled by Cotswold District Council	8,025	7,674	-4%
	Fuel used by external contractors	209,027	209,027	0%
Total		2,931,692	2,763,803	-6%

Table 1 - emissions changes between FY19-20 and FY22-23 by source

Decreases in natural gas emissions can be attributed to extensive retrofit work undertaken on several buildings, including leisure centres. The retrofit work, valued at £1.3 million, included the replacement of fossil fuel heating systems with hybrid air source heat pumps in both leisure centres, and the Museum Resource Centre. Additionally, energy systems at the leisure centres were upgraded to improve energy efficiency.

Decreases in electricity emissions (relating to both generation as well as transmission and distribution (T&D)) are mainly the result of the grid decarbonising by 32%. Several solar arrays were installed in 2022 so emissions in future years should illustrate the benefits of these. Lighting at Moreton Area Centre Office has also been made more efficient, which will have contributed to the observed 37% emissions reduction.

A data quality review of both business travel and water from buildings managed by an external contractor is needed, since the observed large emission decreases cannot be explained. These emissions collectively make up <2% of the total and therefore are unlikely to have a material impact on the Council's overall emissions profile. The changes in business travel emissions could be the result of covid travel restrictions and wider societal shifts to online working, supported by the Council's introduction of an Agile Working Policy but further investigations are needed to confirm this.

Fuel emissions have increased overall by 15%. The reasons behind this need to be fully investigated however an increase in the number of properties needing to be serviced, increased tonnage of recycling collected, and a new dedicated food waste service (which has environmental and carbon benefits outside the scope of this carbon footprint) may be contributing factors.

Well to tank (WTT) emissions related to natural gas and electricity are higher in FY22-23 as a result of UK gas containing a higher share of imported LNG (which has a higher WTT emission factor than conventionally sourced natural gas).

Fuel used by external contractors has been recorded for the first time in FY22-23 Carbon footprinting convention dictates that in this situation, the data is applied to FY19-20 carbon footprint, to illustrate the scope of the carbon footprint has expanded otherwise it would appear the carbon footprint had increased.

4. Emission sources

Cotswold District Council published its emissions report for FY22-23 in December 2024⁴. This represents the most recent data available as staff shortages mean FY23-24 emissions are yet to be published. A summary page of the FY22-23 emissions report is overleaf. It demonstrates where emissions come from, what they total and shows:

- Waste fleet fuel consumption is by far the largest source of emissions making up 43% of the total.
- The second largest source of emissions comes from Council operated buildings and buildings managed by an external contractor (leisure centres and museum) which collectively make up 36% of total emissions.
- Remaining emissions arise from fuel consumption in vehicles used to conduct other services (8% of total), well to tank (WTT) emissions (13% of total), emissions from business travel (1% of total) and water (<1% of total).

⁴ <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/shxdvbcg/cotswold-district-council-annual-carbon-emissions-report.pdf>

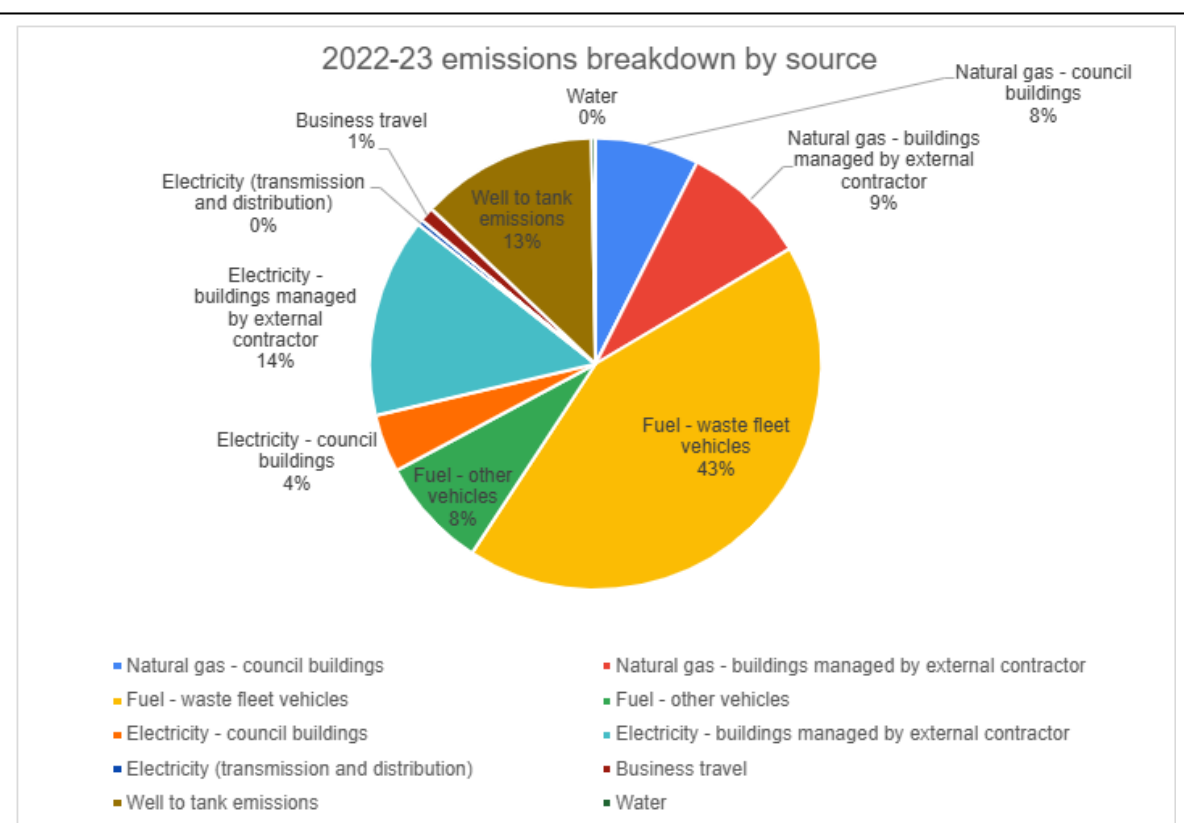


Figure 3 FY22-23 emissions by source.

		kgCO ₂ e 2022/23
Scope 1	Natural gas	205,310
	Fuel	1,191,445
Scope 2	Purchased electricity (generation)	115,097
Scope 3	Well to tank (WTT) Natural gas	34,979
	WTT Fuel	284,982
	Business travel	29,015
	WTT Business travel	-
	Electricity Transmission and distribution (T&D)	10,529
	WTT electricity	27,527
	WTT electricity T&D	2,518
	Natural gas in buildings managed by an external contractor	250,641
	Electricity in buildings managed by an external contractor	394,833
	Water consumption in buildings managed by an external contractor	226
	Water consumption in buildings fully owned and controlled by Cotswold District Council	7,674
	Fuel used by external contractors	209,027
Total		2,763,803

Table 2 – breakdown of FY22-23 emissions by source

1. Create a Climate Change Board

It is recommended a Corporate Climate Change Board is set up to provide accountability for an emission reduction programme and support the Council with its objective of achieving its 2030 target and help guide future expenditure decisions. The Climate Board can enable the co-benefits from taking climate action (e.g. health improvements, economic improvements) to be maximised and ensure climate action can be assessed and considered within the full context the Council operates in. It will mean that affordability and deliverability can be factored into the process.

When assessing the proposed actions, the Climate Board will enable the Council to consider factors namely:

- **Affordability** – does the Council have the revenue and/or capital resources available to support the actions? What impact does each action have on the Council's revenue budget?
- **Deliverability** – can the actions be delivered within the timescale available to the Council given the impact of Local Government Reorganisation? This is not to suggest that actions should not be taken but a consideration of whether the Council (and its successor) are able to support the actions as identified.
- **Investment and Payback** – Where actions require forward investment, do the climate and financial benefits justify the investment, do they flow in accordance within the required timeframe?
- **Governance** – one of the considerations around deliverability is to determine whether decisions should be taken solely by Cotswold District Council, or in partnership with other stakeholders such as the County Council due to Local Government Reorganisation. The Government published a Devolution Whitepaper December 2024 which announced a programme of local government reorganisation (LGR). District councils could cease to exist in their current form and all new authorities could be in place by the end of this government term (2029). The programme also needs to consider tackling climate change could become a statutory duty for Local Authorities which could have an effect on the programme's focus and the resources available to.

The proposed terms of reference for this Board are set out in Appendix 1 and specify the Board's role and purpose, membership, meeting etiquette and frequency.

2. Decarbonise the waste fleet

Procuring EV waste fleet vehicles could have the most significant effect on reducing the Council's emissions. Fuel consumption in the waste fleet is by far the largest source of emissions making up 43% of CDC's total and this would reduce to zero if EV vehicles were procured. Vehicle running costs could significantly reduce too by moving to electric. However, the Council needs to explore the viability of transitioning internal combustion engine (ICE) refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) to electric since while EV technology in cars and vans has been widely adopted, the same is not the case for refuse collection vehicles (RCVs) and other large vehicles. The substantial costs of building necessary charging infrastructure and securing grid capacity need to be considered as does the Local Government

Reorganisation and regulatory context. The use of alternative fuels (e.g. HVO) should be explored alongside. Given Gloucestershire Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) already work closely together via their Resources and Waste Partnership, are all shareholders in Ubico and have set ambitious carbon reduction targets, the option to produce an EV waste fleet transition plan at a countywide scale is being investigated via the Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG) forum.

3. Decarbonise council buildings

The second largest source of emissions comes from Council operated buildings and external contractor managed buildings, which collectively make up 39% of CDC's total emissions (well to tank emissions associated with natural gas and electricity consumption add 3% on top of more direct emissions which total 36%).

Significant decarbonisation of the built estate has already been undertaken: significant decreases in natural gas have been achieved because of extensive retrofit work undertaken on several buildings, including leisure centres. CDC has laid good foundations for further work in this area however the 'low hanging fruit' have already been taken so further decarbonisation may be more challenging. CDC will need to determine 1) where further building energy assessments are required 2) whether they are eligible for further grant funding and 3) the impact of local government reorganisation (LGR) on the Council's ability to decarbonise assets.

4. Reduce non-waste-fleet vehicle emissions

Emissions associated with non-waste-fleet vehicles makes up 8% of the total. These include Ubico-managed land management vehicles/machinery; vehicles used by staff to deliver Council services; and third-party vehicles delivering services on the Council's behalf (i.e. maintenance of public conveniences). To reduce emissions in this area:

1. vehicles used by staff to deliver council services will need to be transitioned to EV
2. Options to decarbonise land management vehicles/machinery will need to be explored
3. The Council's leverage over decarbonising third-party vehicles delivering services on the Council's behalf will need to be investigated

Electric vehicles are achieving cost parity with business as usual in certain cases and can even offer financial gains which bodes well.

5. Improve data quality and emission reporting capabilities

To date it has been possible to calculate emissions up to FY22-23. This means that some of the more recent decarbonisation work undertaken by the Council isn't reflected in this report's 2030 target progress assessment. It is recommended therefore that the Council investigates how best to collect FY23-24 and FY24-25 data in the immediate term so a more up to date picture can be formed. Beyond that, it is recommended performance against the 2030 goal is monitored annually so that the effect of decarbonisation efforts can be continuously measured. This will enable the Council to assess its decarbonisation strategy.

Emission reductions associated with business travel and water exhibited more than a 50% change between FY19-20 and FY22-23 and so it is recommended a data quality review is undertaken of these emission sources specifically (collectively making up <2% of the total) to ensure the Council demonstrates continues improvement here and can fully rely on the data being reported.

It is recommended options for streamlining the data collection process are investigated too since data collection processes have historically been incredibly time intensive.

Finally, it is recommended a data quality review is undertaken to ensure the Council's carbon emission reporting remains compliant with The GHG Protocol aka the *Greenhouse Gas Protocol for a Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard*¹. It requires emission reporting to be 1.Relevant 2.Complete 3.Consistent 4.Transparent and 5.Accurate.

6. Avoid emission increases

Producing additional emissions will only increase the scale of the net zero challenge therefore it is recommended that plans for changes to assets and service delivery are assessed to understand the impact on carbon emissions, and remedial action is taken where an increase in emissions is previewed. The delivery mechanism for conducting this assessment needs to be considered.

6. Appendices

7. Appendix 1 – Corporate Climate Change Board Terms of Reference

Context

Cotswold District Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and committed to make their own activities net-zero as soon as possible, aiming for an 80% reduction by 2030 and a 100% reduction by 2045, against a 1990 baseline. To meet the 80% reduction by 2030 target, emissions are required to reduce a further 66% against FY22-23 levels (the most recent data we have available). It has been estimated that requires an 11% year on year reduction between now and 2030. Efforts to date have led to emissions reducing on average 1.28% annually since the baseline year therefore taking action commensurate with the net zero target requires a step change going forwards.

Role and Purpose

1. Its function is to provide accountability for an emission reduction programme.
2. Monitor progress and hold officers and partners to account in terms of delivery of key climate projects and programmes.
3. Help identify solutions to project delivery problems and 'pathways' to those solutions, be that to external funding opportunities, a request to Cabinet for additional resources, (subject to business cases and the usual criteria for assessment) or opportunities to utilise Climate Leadership Gloucestershire further to support the Council's projects and programmes.
4. Provide a collective voice and present visible leadership on climate action for Cotswold District Council.

Support

The Climate Lead will prepare a quarterly progress update using a Red Amber Green (RAG) traffic light system, for review by the Climate Change Board, highlighting those areas for focused review to support delivery.

Membership

The membership comprises of:

- Council Leader
- Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Digital
- Chief Executive
- Deputy Chief Executive/S151 Officer
- Director of Communities and Place
- Climate Change Lead

In addition, Portfolio holders and Service leads will be invited to board meetings when their service area will be covered. Subject matter experts (e.g. fleet, property) will be invited on an ad-hoc basis.

Meeting procedure

The Board will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Climate and the CEO will function as vice chair.

For a meeting to take place, the CEO or Cabinet Member for Climate (or their nominated sub) must be present plus one other from the membership.

The Climate Lead will prepare an agenda in agreement with the Chair.

Meeting etiquette

To attend and contribute to meetings and, if unable to do so, to send a nominated deputy. To work effectively together to drive forward work on corporate net zero.

The first meeting will be in person with subsequent meetings to be a combination of in-person or hybrid as agreed at the first Board meeting.

Meeting frequency

Meetings to occur quarterly. It is proposed the first board meeting takes place in September 2025 with subsequent meetings in December, March and June of each year.

8. Appendix 2 - Net zero definition

Net zero refers to reducing an organisation's greenhouse gas emissions as close to zero as possible and using removal technologies (of a natural or industrial nature, for example peatland restoration) to remove residual emissions so that the net emissions balance is zero.

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 10 JULY 2025
Subject	CREATIVE COTSWOLDS – A CULTURE STRATEGY FOR COTSWOLD DISTRICT
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Paul Hodgkinson Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience Email: Paul.Hodgkinson@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Joseph Walker Head of Economic Development and Communities Email: Joseph.Walker@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Joseph Walker Head of Economic Development and Communities Email: Joseph.Walker@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To present Creative Cotswolds to Cabinet for approval
Annexes	Annex A: Creative Cotswolds – A Culture Strategy for Cotswold District
Recommendation(s)	That the Cabinet resolves to: 1. Approve Creative Cotswolds as the Council's approach to supporting the Cultural Sector
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Good Services • Supporting Communities • Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The Strategy is the culmination of two workshops with cultural sector partners, held in 2024, and the outturn of a more recent



	discussion held 29 May 2025. The strategy and action plan is presented very much as a live document, to give focus to a collaborative approach to supporting the cultural sector.
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Cotswold District enjoys a vibrant cultural scene. The District hosts some well-known cultural assets, from long-established institutions reflecting the area's history, such as the Corinium Museum, through to more recently established institutions, such as the Cidermill Theatre in Chipping Campden and the Barn Theatre in Cirencester. The purpose of Creative Cotswolds is to bring together these organisations to facilitate opportunities for them to collaborate on events, to work together on promotion, and explore opportunities to expand the reach and impact of the sector. Creative Cotswolds will be a network of partners, working towards a live action plan for which we are seeking Cabinet endorsement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Council's adopted Corporate Plan, agreed in 2024, expresses the ambition to develop a Culture Strategy for the District. To this end, two workshops were held in 2024 with representatives of local cultural organisations, to hear their views and to try to work towards a shared vision and shared actions.
- 2.2** This work confirmed there is appetite within the sector to work together – exemplified by the already good joint working towards local events such as the Cirencester History Festival. Partners saw joint working as an opportunity to add value, and to provide a strategic context to support their work, for example through added weight to external funding bids. It should be noted that this ambition is not limited purely to sustaining the cultural sector economically, but also helping develop its capacity to engage, support and develop local people – culture can be an important tool to empower and re-engage local people in community and economic activity.
- 2.3** The strength of this ambition does need to be tempered by some realism around resources to deliver. The district council has had limited resource - either cash or officer capacity, to direct towards enabling this work. Phase 2 of the Publica Transition has established two posts - a Leisure and Culture Manager and a Leisure and Culture Support Officer. While these two posts will take on existing tasks supervising the Council's contracted services with Freedom Leisure for the Leisure Centres and the Corinium Museum, they also provide some capacity to convene a



Culture Group to co-own a culture strategy, and the resource to help assess progress on agreed actions.

- 2.4** Since the initial workshops, the White Paper on Local Government has been published. Amid the general uncertainty this creates for local government, it also creates an uncertainty for this type of area-based work where there may be a longer trajectory, presenting a challenge to how best to present and structure a Culture Strategy. If the convening partners and appropriate geographical footprint for a culture strategy long-term is unknown, there is a risk that work towards longer term ambitions is abortive.
- 2.5** With this in mind, officers have consulted with partners to prepare a different kind of strategy – the focus will be pragmatic, on short-term actions, quick wins that can be delivered, and on giving the sector within the district more of a collective voice to feed into emerging discussions about how Local Government Review will impact.
- 2.6** A meeting was held on 29 May to update partners and to brief them on this challenge, resulting in the strategy and action plan appended to this report for Cabinet’s consideration.
- 2.7** Subject to Cabinet’s endorsement, the Action Plan will be re-circulated to partners, and a publication version will be prepared and published. As the purpose is to promote and advertise culture in the district, this will also require a form of public launch to provide exposure. Partners have previously expressed support for simple messaging around #CreativeCotswolds and ‘creative and cultural’ to aid campaigns on social media and through the Council-sponsored www.Cotswolds.com tourism website.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1** The adoption and delivery of a cultural strategy is not a duty upon the Council – this work does not have a basis in statute but is instead seeking to realise the opportunity presented by the district’s cultural sector. Therefore the clear alternative option would be for the district council to step back from this work.
- 3.2** This would avoid directing officer capacity at supporting partnership work, but would also mean the Council would lose its opportunity to influence partners through its ‘convening’ power. A minimal investment from existing officer capacity enables the



Council to work with a diverse set of partners, who have a key role, engaging local communities and underpinning our visitor economy.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1** The Culture Strategy, as attached, represents an opportunity to structure work with culture sector champions based in the district, to realise greater opportunity for local people and residents alike. This is a proportionate and realistic approach, given the constraints the Council is operating under.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** As proposed, this approach has minimal financial implications. This work will be delivered through existing officer posts, and while it will absorb some of their capacity, it also presents an opportunity to engage stakeholders collectively.
- 5.2** Partners have suggested that a Cultural Strategy helps give their own organisational aspirations a structure to report into, and provides a strategic layer to give kudos to funding bids to external funding bodies. A strategy that helps bring together partnership activity and strengthen funding bids should bring investment into the area.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The approach proposed has limited legal implications. Creative Cotswolds would be an unconstituted network of partners – an opportunity but not a legal obligation to work together. The network will present an opportunity to inform and influence activity by partners, but any decisions will sit individually with partner organisations.
- 6.2** Any project work will formally be led by individual partners, or subject to additional agreement between collaborating entities.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** Given the limited financial dimension to this strategy, the biggest risk is reputational – developing a culture strategy without significant underpinning resource may raise aspirations of delivery that the Council cannot meet. This risk is mitigated by the explanation within the strategy of its remit and reach, and a focus on short term deliverables.



8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** The approach proposed does not directly provide nor restrict any service provided to residents so is unlikely to have a direct equality impact. That said, the breadth of offer within our local cultural sector is a strength in terms of recognising and celebrating diversity within the district, so this work should help create a positive local narrative around diversity and equality in the face of increasing challenge.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Not applicable

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None.

(END)



Creative Cotswolds

A Culture Strategy for Cotswold District

Vision: A joined up, accessible and vibrant creative and cultural sector in the Cotswolds, engaging residents and visitors

Purpose: to be an enabling force for creativity and culture in Cotswold District

Cotswold District enjoys a vibrant cultural scene. The area hosts some well-known cultural assets, from long established institutions reflecting the area's history, such as the Corinium Museum and the Court Barn, through to recently established institutions, such as the Cidermill Theatre in Chipping Campden and the Barn Theatre in Cirencester. The sector spans from venues to festivals, and from classical to popular, with venues like the Tetbury Goods Shed and New Brewery Arts, and events such as the Longborough Opera Festival and the Phoenix Festival.

Creative Cotswolds is an open partnership for local organisations engaged in creative and cultural activity. Creative Cotswolds will bring together a network of partners to realise opportunities to collaborate on events, to work together on promotion, and explore opportunities to expand the reach and impact of the sector.

Values:

- 1). Sustainability: Sustaining the operation of partners, whilst reducing our sector's impact on the planet
- 2). Connecting: providing the opportunity and time for partners to connect to mutual benefit
- 3). Nurturing: providing support for friends and allies to thrive
- 4). Inclusive: working together to improve access and inclusion within the cultural sector
- 5). Creativity and Freedom: proving opportunity to work together without stifling organisational autonomy

Theme	Action	Lead	Due Date	Status
Leadership and coordination	Develop the Partnership through regular meetings	CDC	Start May 2025 – ongoing	Live
Leadership and coordination	Use the Partnership to give the cultural sector in Cotswold a voice, eg to respond to changes in Local Government Landscape. <i>This action will need to evolve to reflect the LGR timetable and local consultation processes</i>	CDC	Start May 2025 – ongoing.	Live
Sharing best practice	Share information on accreditation and training experience	All	Ongoing	
Sharing best practice	Case studies and partner updates at meetings	All	Start May 2025 – ongoing	Live
Sharing best practice	Share organisational data (e.g. footfall patterns, campaign data etc) to develop sector wide intelligence	All, CDC to collate data	To start from the next meeting	
Sharing best practice	Use partnership data and other resources to demonstrate impact of Culture on the Cotswold Economy	All	Subject to success seeking funding	

Stimulate local economy and tourism	Explore opportunity to develop cultural offer on Cotswolds.com, to highlight the cultural offer [see for example 'Dog Friendly' and 'Family Friendly' drop downs.]	Cotswold Tourism	Launch from May 2025	Live
Stimulate local economy and tourism	Share funding updates	All	To start from September 2025	
Stimulate local economy and tourism	Develop cross promotion opportunities between partners – building on the 'open forum' to share information	All	To start from September 2025	
Stimulate local economy and tourism	Use forum to test and develop ideas for joint work	All	To start from September 2025	
Stimulate local economy and tourism	#CreativeCotswolds to be used widely on websites and social media to get added traction for Cotswolds arts and culture events and organisations	All	Ongoing	
Inclusion and opportunity	Access, promote and develop opportunities for residents to engage in cultural activity	All	To start from September 2025	
Inclusion and opportunity	Work with GCC Libraries service to develop promotion of cultural opportunities to residents	All		



COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 10 JULY 2025
Subject	CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE 2024 – PROGRESS REPORT
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Every, Leader of the Council Email: mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Report 2024P
Annexes	Annex A – Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Report 2024
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Notes the report at Annex A
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering Good Services
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet, Corporate Leadership Team and those able to attend Peer Challenge Feedback session (officers and Councillors)



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** The Local Government Association Peer Review process supports councils in a 'critical friend' capacity, identifying areas that could be improved and setting out recommendations. Progress reports seek to assess the extent to which those recommendations have been embedded. This report provides the progress report undertaken at the end of last year. In summary, the review team was satisfied that good progress had been made by the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge in October 2022. The feedback report and an associated Action Plan was presented to Council in January 2023.
- 2.2** It is good practice to have a follow up or 'progress review' 6-12 months after the original peer review to assess progress against the original recommendations. Following discussion with the Local Government Association, it was agreed that the progress review would be undertaken after the first group of services were repatriated to the Council. (This was scheduled to take place in July 2024, with services operating council-side from 1st November 2024).
- 2.3** This report details the outcomes of a progress review that was undertaken on 19th and 20th November 2024.
- 2.4** 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.
- 2.5** A Progress Review is an integral part of the corporate peer challenge process and is designed to provide space for the Council's senior leadership (officers and members) to:
- Receive feedback from peers on the progress made by the Council against the recommendations and the Council's related action plan.
 - Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team was on-site including any further support needs.
 - Discuss the early impact and learning from the progress made to date.



3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 The following peers were involved in the Progress Review:

- John Robinson, Chief Executive, Newark and Sherwood District Council
- Councillor Alan Connett, Devon County Council
- Sarah Pennelli, Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer, Blaby District Council
- Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer, East Devon District Council
- Chris Bowron, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

3.2 A corporate peer challenge forms a key element of sector-led improvement. The team provides feedback as critical friends, not as assessors, consultants or inspectors. The team reported that it had been made to feel welcome and had been very well supported throughout the peer review process and they found those they engaged with to be open and honest.

3.3 The Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Report 2024 is provided at Annex A. Cabinet is asked to note the Feedback Report.

3.4 Feedback from the peer review team was positive and noted the following

- **Governance:** The feedback team commented on the significant change and improvements made following the October 2022 report "*The council has clearly embraced the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge in October 2022 and driven forward significant change and improvement*"
- **Financial Management and Planning:** Whilst acknowledging that the Council has a clearer understanding of the financial position, the progress report does note the scale of the funding gap identified in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and in particular "*plans need to be put in place to close the substantial gap that remains*".
- **Publica Transition:** The progress review was conducted shortly after the transfer of staff and services under Phase 1 of transition with the report noting the need to take stock and understand the potential impact from the (at the time) forthcoming White Paper.
- **Organisational Culture:** With a growing number of staff employed directly by the Council as a result of the Publica Transition, the progress report notes that "It is of crucial importance for the 'growing' organisation that there is constructive



dialogue around the leadership style and organisational culture that is right for Cotswold District Council.”

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 Not applicable.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 It is recommended the progress report is noted.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 Not applicable.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 Nothing specifically in relation to this report.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None directly associated with this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Cotswold District Council

19th and 20th November 2024

Feedback



Corporate Peer Challenge

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A Progress Review is an integral part of the corporate peer challenge process and is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

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The LGA would like to thank Cotswold District Council for their commitment to sector led improvement. The Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support. It took place at a very timely moment that was well chosen by the council.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at Cotswold District Council took place on 19th and 20th November 2024. It focused on the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge as follows:

- 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

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3. Progress Review - Feedback

Governance

The council has clearly embraced the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge in October 2022 and driven forward significant change and improvement in

response to them, not least in relation to its approach to a number of aspects of governance.

Amongst all of the elected members that we met, there was recognition and a valuing of the councillor induction and the elected member training and development arrangements that have been put in place. People praised the comprehensive induction pack that was provided to them on the night of the election count in May 2023 and the induction programme that was delivered in the weeks that followed. These arrangements were supplemented with a 'buddying' system that linked newly elected members with experienced council officers.

A wide-ranging and on-going training and development programme has followed on from the induction activity and there is also a programme of monthly briefings open to all councillors on pertinent issues within the organisation and the district. The latter has been seen as a positive step that now enables Overview and Scrutiny to concentrate on its core business rather than as a means of briefing elected members on key issues, as had previously often been the case.

The challenge around elected member training and development now seems to have shifted to councillors embracing in greater numbers what is available to them. That said, there are really positive signs of a changing culture around this, including a growing number of elected members who are participating in training and development activity provided at the national level, through the likes of the Local Government Association and the Planning Advisory Service.

The corporate peer challenge in 2022 highlighted the Extraordinary Council meeting held in the October of that year to "authorise the Monitoring Officer to publish a final clean version of the Constitution" that incorporated the revisions agreed at various points over the previous few years. Since that meeting, a review of the Constitution has been undertaken and completed, shaped through the cross-party Constitution Working Group and culminating in the adoption of a 'definitive' version of the document.

The council has also re-positioned the Audit and Governance Committee. This has seen its remit being revised to include governance explicitly, in a switch from 'Audit Committee'. This change is more profound than a revision of the title and the committee has embraced the governance element of the role. The appointment of

two co-opted members has injected alternative perspectives and sent strong messages around the council's commitment to openness and transparency and embracing independent external challenge.

There have been tangible improvements in Democratic Services. This is a function that is widely held in high regard now by councillors, with officers there being seen to be easy to approach and responsive to elected members' needs. Arrangements for council meetings, including the dissemination of papers in a timely manner, flow much more smoothly than previously and trust and confidence on the part of councillors has therefore increased. There is recognition that capacity is about to be lost temporarily in this function, as a result of career progression – which in itself is a success story.

The corporate peer challenge highlighted mixed views about the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny. As touched on earlier, it was previously largely valued as a means of keeping councillors informed of key developments across the district and within the council. Overview and Scrutiny has been transformed since the corporate peer challenge, with a number of important contributory factors here. The approach of the Chair is seen to have been absolutely integral and an element within this is the remit given, through the Constitution, for the Opposition to hold that position. There is good officer support and effective work programming. Cabinet value the role of Overview and Scrutiny, reflected in it carefully considering recommendations that it puts forward, and there is a capitalising upon the role pre-decision scrutiny can play in the functioning of the council. All of this combines to see effort and focus now being centred upon the probing of important issues in the Cotswolds, such as the reduction by Great Western Railway in ticket office availability and public toilet provision in the district.

Financial Management and Planning

The council now has a clearer understanding of its financial position, aided by the changes that have taken place to transfer aspects of the finance function back to the council from Publica, with the direct insight that this has provided for the council.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy published in February 2024 indicated a budget gap of just under £4.2m. An updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy has been drafted for the four-year period from 2025/26 to 2028/29 and this was presented to Cabinet in November. Some savings and income opportunities have been identified

to help address the medium-term funding gap, including proposals to increase car parking and garden waste charges. However, plans need to be put in place to close the substantial gap that remains.

Thinking around a 'transformation programme' is emerging, reflected in the role of the Finance Cabinet Member (who is also Deputy Leader) being retitled to that of 'Finance and Transformation'. Plans around such a programme need to be developed much further and then made concrete if it is to become a recognised and reliable source of savings and/or increased revenue streams.

The latest version of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy outlines that the return to the council from Publica of the majority of services is likely to have increased the unfunded budget gap in the last six months. People we spoke to within the organisation are very attuned to the cost being added to the council's budget through investment being made in a number of service areas as the organisational transition takes place – at a time when the council is needing to save money.

Overall, increased collective ownership of the financial challenge by Cabinet and the senior managerial leadership is required in order to supplement the leadership in this area being shown by the Deputy Leader, who is working closely with the Section 151 Officer.

Publica Transition

'Phase 1' of the transition of services back to the council has been delivered on a short timescale. This has seen around 70 people joining the council under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment rights). Whilst complex and demanding in its own right and featuring the largest proportion of staff likely to transfer relative to any further phases, 'Phase 1' is seen as having been more straightforward than any future phases to come. This is because it has involved services and functions that are core to a local council in its place leadership role and fulfilling its governance remit and has largely involved staff whose roles could be

seen essentially to be dedicated to Cotswold District Council and thus, for whom, a TUPE case could relatively easily be made.

Partner councils appreciate the drive that Cotswold's political and managerial leadership has provided around the transition, prompting the initial thinking and discussion and then really making it happen. They also value the 'heavy lifting' that the council has undertaken in relation to some of the detailed work, including providing the financial focus.

Inevitably, given the magnitude and significance of the undertaking, the transition has been a very significant focus for the council in the last couple of years and that continues to be the case.

There is widespread understanding on the part of council staff, Publica staff and elected members that there was always an intention to 'take stock' upon the conclusion of 'Phase 1'. It is now unclear to people what the intention is, with much dialogue and thinking around an immediate move to a further phase and for that to be delivered on relatively short (although not yet clearly defined) timescales of a few months.

We would encourage the council to take the time to consider where that 'taking stock' now sits. This is, in part, in a context of the imminent Government White Paper, which may signal a move to undertake wider change in local government. Also, it is clear from our discussions with staff and elected members that there is a desire to see the learning being drawn out around what has worked well and less well during 'Phase 1'. In saying this, we recognise the dilemma around prolonging uncertainty for employees through any such period of 'taking stock' relative to expediting things and concluding the period of change.

Currently, there are competing narratives and a lack of shared understanding around the transition. As an example, the concept of the council 'taking back control' has a high profile and features heavily in the communication and dialogue around the transition. Whilst the peer team understand the ambition that this communicates – placing services and functions more directly back under local democratic control – some staff have interpreted it negatively. Another narrative is that of the council undertaking the transition to secure savings, which contrasts with the additional investment that people are seeing being made in certain services currently.

The council's political and managerial leadership is dynamic, energetic and passionate for its place and its people. This is the type of narrative that is more compelling for staff and would benefit from being articulated.

In addition, further change must be founded upon an in-depth options appraisal that enables informed decision-making. The council has delivered and continues to deliver on a broad and exciting agenda but there is a risk that the Publica transition becomes all consuming. This is not a criticism, rather a reflection that a change programme of such strategic significance to the council could become too great a distraction from the many other positive interventions that the council is leading.

Organisational Culture

As mentioned above, the council has ambitious, driven and strong political and managerial leadership, reflected, as an example, in the way the Publica transition has moved forward and the council has responded to the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge.

The council's Corporate Plan provides clear direction through its Objectives and Principles. This focuses on the difference to be made in the district and its communities through effectively and appropriately positioning the council.

Objectives

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

Principles

- Rebuilding trust and confidence in the council by promoting a culture of openness and transparency
- Providing value for money for our residents and businesses by using our resources wisely and investing in the district's fabric and future
- Listening to the needs of our community and acting on what we hear

The organisational change that is taking place currently requires a leadership style and approach that carries the council's current and potential future workforce through times of uncertainty. Ultimately, the Publica transition is about fulfilling the above objectives and principles through capitalising upon the potential and the opportunities that the organisational change provides.

People we met, both internally and externally and covering elected members as well as staff, were very direct and clear about the leadership style and organisational culture as they see and experience them. This mirrors the openness and honesty that staff provided during a series of externally facilitated workshops aimed at developing a set of values and behaviours as part of the work on a People Strategy for the council. It is of crucial importance for the 'growing' organisation that there is constructive dialogue around the leadership style and organisational culture that is right for Cotswold District Council.

There are a variety of reasons as to why such a dialogue and getting the response right are important but key within them is ensuring people feel valued, cared for and motivated and want to work for Cotswold District Council. The council now has 70 new employees who should be acting as advocates for the council as a place to work. Through the Publica transition, some people are having to make choices as to which organisation to join – and Cotswold District Council needs to be as attractive as possible in a competitive employment market. Organisational culture will always be a key factor for people. Key considerations for the council here are:

- On-going engagement with staff around developing the new organisational culture
- An embracing of different styles and approaches in the way people work and the value and benefits that such diversity offers – with a lot to be gained by ensuring that the sort of drive needed to get the Publica transition to the stage it has is complemented through an embracing and valuing of more reflective styles and approaches
- Developing 'wider top team' working to strengthen delivery of the council's objectives led by the Chief Executive – which would be relevant anyway but the need for which is increased by the anticipated appointment of a Director of Place and Communities. There are other dimensions to the development of 'top team' working too. This

includes at Cabinet level, given recent changes there and the opportunity on the back of that to develop greater insight to one another's styles and approaches. Another strand is joint working across the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team as collectives to supplement bilateral relationships between Cabinet Members and senior officers.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Cotswold District Council for undertaking the Progress Review.

We appreciate that the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Paul Clarke, Principal Adviser for the South-West region, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Paul is available to discuss any further support the council requires and can be reached via paul.clarke@local.gov.uk

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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Cotswold District Council

19th and 20th November 2024

Feedback



Corporate Peer Challenge

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Inevitably, given the magnitude and significance of the undertaking, the transition has been a very significant focus for the council in the last couple of years and that continues to be the case.

There is widespread understanding on the part of council staff, Publica staff and elected members that there was always an intention to 'take stock' upon the conclusion of 'Phase 1'. It is now unclear to people what the intention is, with much dialogue and thinking around an immediate move to a further phase and for that to be delivered on relatively short (although not yet clearly defined) timescales of a few months.

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Organisational Culture

As mentioned above, the council has ambitious, driven and strong political and managerial leadership, reflected, as an example, in the way the Publica transition has moved forward and the council has responded to the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge.

The council's Corporate Plan provides clear direction through its Objectives and Principles. This focuses on the difference to be made in the district and its communities through effectively and appropriately positioning the council.

Objectives

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

Principles

- Rebuilding trust and confidence in the council by promoting a culture of openness and transparency
- Providing value for money for our residents and businesses by using our resources wisely and investing in the district's fabric and future
- Listening to the needs of our community and acting on what we hear

The organisational change that is taking place currently requires a leadership style and approach that carries the council's current and potential future workforce through times of uncertainty. Ultimately, the Publica transition is about fulfilling the above objectives and principles through capitalising upon the potential and the opportunities that the organisational change provides.

People we met, both internally and externally and covering elected members as well as staff, were very direct and clear about the leadership style and organisational culture as they see and experience them. This mirrors the openness and honesty that staff provided during a series of externally facilitated workshops aimed at developing a set of values and behaviours as part of the work on a People Strategy for the council. It is of crucial importance for the 'growing' organisation that there is constructive dialogue around the leadership style and organisational culture that is right for Cotswold District Council.

There are a variety of reasons as to why such a dialogue and getting the response right are important but key within them is ensuring people feel valued, cared for and motivated and want to work for Cotswold District Council. The council now has 70 new employees who should be acting as advocates for the council as a place to work. Through the Publica transition, some people are having to make choices as to which organisation to join – and Cotswold District Council needs to be as attractive as possible in a competitive employment market. Organisational culture will always be a key factor for people. Key considerations for the council here are:

- On-going engagement with staff around developing the new organisational culture
- An embracing of different styles and approaches in the way people work and the value and benefits that such diversity offers – with a lot to be gained by ensuring that the sort of drive needed to get the Publica transition to the stage it has is complemented through an embracing and valuing of more reflective styles and approaches
- Developing 'wider top team' working to strengthen delivery of the council's objectives led by the Chief Executive – which would be relevant anyway but the need for which is increased by the anticipated appointment of a Director of Place and Communities. There are other dimensions to the development of 'top team' working too. This

includes at Cabinet level, given recent changes there and the opportunity on the back of that to develop greater insight to one another's styles and approaches. Another strand is joint working across the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team as collectives to supplement bilateral relationships between Cabinet Members and senior officers.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Cotswold District Council for undertaking the Progress Review.

We appreciate that the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Paul Clarke, Principal Adviser for the South-West region, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Paul is available to discuss any further support the council requires and can be reached via paul.clarke@local.gov.uk

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Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 10 JULY 2025
Subject	ENDORSEMENT OF THE PAS PLANNING SERVICE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT (MAY 2025) AND ACTION PLAN
Wards affected	All wards
Accountable member	Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Email: Juliet.Layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Geraldine LeCointe, Assistant Director – Planning Email: Geraldine.LeCointe@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Helen Martin, Director of Communities and Place Email: helen.martin@cotswold.gov.uk Geraldine LeCointe, Assistant Director – Planning Email: Geraldine.LeCointe@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To seek the Council's endorsement of the findings of the PAS (Planning Advisory Service) Planning Service Peer Challenge report (May 2025) and the proposed Action Plan.
Annexes	PAS Planning Services Peer Challenge report CDC Action Plan
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Endorse the PAS Planning Service Peer Challenge Report (May 2025) and its recommendations, and to endorse the resultant Action Plan for implementation. 2. Agree to publish the report and the accompanying Action Plan on the CDC Planning and Building web pages.



Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide socially rented homes• Make our local plan green to the core• Support health and wellbeing• Enable a vibrant economy
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	The PAS Planning Service Peer Review involved extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, internal and external.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The PAS Planning Service Peer Challenge report summarises the findings of the Planning Peer Challenge (PPC) that took place over three days on 25th to 27th March 2025. This followed a corporate Peer challenge conducted in October 2022, and a progress review completed November 2024.
- 1.2 The purpose of the PPC was to conduct a more focused review of the Planning Service to gain insights on the significant strengths of the service as well as to identify potential areas for improvement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The aim of the PCC was to help the service play a leading role in the delivery of CDC's corporate aims to create a Council that is proactive and responsive to the needs of its residents and businesses in a fast-changing environment and to build for the future whilst respecting its heritage. The Peer challenge sought to identify where ambitions can be stretched and where improvements need to be made so that planning is at the forefront of practise in shaping the future of the Cotswolds.
- 2.2 The team, composed of experienced elected members and officer Peers, feedback against four themes: -
 - Vision and leadership
 - Performance and management
 - Engagement (partners and the community); and
 - Achieving outcomes.
- 2.3 Peer challenges are improvement focused; they are not an inspection.
- 2.4 The Peer Team reviewed a range of documents and information to ensure that they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. During the three days the team spent on site they gathered information and views from more than 29 meetings and spoke to more than 75 people including a range of Council staff, elected members and external stakeholders.

3. MAIN POINTS

The full report is attached as a background paper, and the key recommendations have been extracted and are included in the table below.

1	<p>Enhance internal communication and understanding</p> <p>To foster a clearer understanding of the Council's vision and corporate priorities, the Council should implement regular internal communication sessions, workshops, and training focused on the Corporate Plan and its alignment with the planning service. These sessions can help staff members understand their roles and how they contribute to the overarching goals of the Council.</p>
2	<p>Provide for the planning service to have an active involvement in the Corporate Plan refresh</p> <p>As the Corporate Plan is set to be refreshed, the Council must ensure that the planning service is actively involved in this process. Establish a cross-departmental working group that includes planners, managers, and political leaders to encourage collaboration and ensure that planning insights are integrated into corporate objectives. This collaborative approach will create a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for achieving the Council's ambitions.</p>
3	<p>Conduct an options appraisal to inform the development of the Local Plan</p> <p>Initiate a thorough options appraisal focused on developing an up-to-date comprehensive Local Plan. Engage with PAS for support in conducting this appraisal to assess the implications of various approaches and identify potential risks associated with local plan development.</p> <p>Following the options appraisal, we recommend commencing the development of a cohesive Local Plan that specifically addresses identified challenges, including the increase in local housing needs. Establish a strategic timeline to prioritise this initiative, ensuring that adequate resources and staffing are allocated throughout the process.</p>
4	<p>Implement robust project management and governance frameworks</p> <p>Establish a comprehensive project management and governance structure to oversee the Local Plan development process. This should provide strategic oversight,</p>

	<p>secure necessary resources, and ensure accountability including a clear decision-making framework with defined roles for senior leadership, elected members, and key stakeholders.</p> <p>Adopt project management practices to oversee the local plan development process. This includes using project timelines, milestones, and regular progress reviews to ensure that the development of the local plan remains on schedule. Create transparency in the progress of the local plan to mitigate any uncertainties or misalignment within the Council and among stakeholders.</p>
5	<p>Review and revise staff terms and conditions</p> <p>To enhance the stability and effectiveness of the planning service it is important the Council undertakes or commissions a comprehensive review of team structures, staff terms and conditions. Addressing recruitment challenges and clarifying career progression opportunities are essential for retaining talent and fostering team cohesion. The Council should ensure parity within teams and consider re-evaluating existing terms of employment to align them with those of other local authorities, especially for staff who have transitioned from Publica. Establishing clear and transparent career advancement pathways will not only improve morale but also empower staff to see a future within the organisation, reducing turnover and the associated pressures on the team.</p>
6	<p>Enhance formal collaboration among teams and establish service level agreements</p> <p>The planning service can benefit from increased formal collaboration to complement the positive existing informal relationships. While the informal dynamic is valuable, it can be inconsistent and reliant on individual initiative. It can also lead to perceptions of siloed working when in fact communication channels are open, albeit informally. A structured approach will not only improve service delivery efficiency but also ensure that teams are effectively coordinated, reducing confusion regarding task ownership and response times.</p>
7	<p>Prepare to reduce the use of Extensions-of-Time (EoTs)</p> <p>Prepare to reduce reliance on extensions of time for planning applications in anticipation of stricter government targets while maintaining constructive and transparent applicant dialogue.</p>

8	<p>Review and improve the Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) process</p> <p>Ensure consistency, reliability, and clear value for stakeholders using Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) and structured pre-application processes. This approach will ensure early alignment on design principles and policy compliance, reducing delays and limiting post-submission negotiations. To further encourage engagement, the Council should consider making no allowance of Extensions of Time (EoTs) for applications submitted without prior pre-application consultation or a PPA and minimal tolerance for redesigns on sub-optimal schemes.</p>
9	<p>Strengthen Planning Enforcement resources</p> <p>Address resource issues to help reduce the backlog of cases and enhance response times. This investment will enable the team to focus on proactive enforcement efforts and explore innovative solutions. Creating a structured forum for staff to share insights and recommendations will foster collaboration and empowerment.</p>
10	<p>Maximise digital capabilities and embrace technological innovation</p> <p>Implement a comprehensive digital strategy that seeks to optimise the use of existing software investments (IDOX, CRM, and Uniform) while embracing emerging technologies. This should include a full audit of current systems to identify underutilised features, implementation of standardised protocols for data entry and management, and staff training to ensure maximum system utilisation.</p> <p>Actively engage with digital planning initiatives to modernise the planning services. This includes capitalising on learnings from recent funding and initiatives, such as those awarded by the PropTech Engagement Fund, to explore AI-powered solutions for handling routine enquiries, automating standard correspondence, and intelligent document processing.</p>
11	<p>Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan</p> <p>Create a structured stakeholder engagement plan that ensures meaningful participation from all key partners, including elected members. This should align with the current Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and establish clear communication channels, roles, and responsibilities.</p>

	<p>A key component should be the establishment of a regular Developers Forum, bringing together major developers, agents, and Council representatives to discuss emerging issues, share updates, and maintain constructive dialogue.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council could organise regular partnership forums across Gloucestershire, involving both officers and members, to share best practices and promote innovative discussions. This collaborative approach will help build stronger relationships, identify shared priorities, and facilitate effective problem-solving.</p>
12	<p>Develop a comprehensive service plan with robust performance monitoring</p> <p>Create a comprehensive service plan that clearly outlines priorities, timelines, and resource needs, underpinned by specific, measurable performance targets that are regularly monitored and reported to senior management on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should extend beyond statutory processing times to include metrics on pre-application engagement, plan-making milestones, and service improvement initiatives. The plan should detail the acceleration of the Local Plan's progression while enhancing stakeholder engagement, with clear accountability for delivery at all levels. It may also be helpful to develop a more detailed service plan for each core area of the planning service where appropriate.</p> <p>A thorough resource planning assessment should ensure teams are appropriately staffed and aligned with key objectives, with regular performance reviews enabling senior management to make informed decisions about resource allocation and service improvement priorities.</p>
13	<p>Enhance financial transparency and accountability</p> <p>To improve budget management and accountability, the Council should provide managers with detailed insights into the financial position of their services. This transparency will enable them to make informed decisions regarding income generation and resource allocation that align with the Council's strategic objectives. Furthermore, establishing a framework for assessing income generation opportunities across departments can help identify potential savings and efficiencies. Linked to recommendation 11, partnership working with authorities across Gloucestershire may also support innovation and best practice in this area.</p>

The context for these recommendations is set out below under the key four themes.

3.1 Vision and Leadership

- The Peer Team acknowledge the Chief Executive has articulated a clear vision for the future of CDC and it is evident that both the political and managerial leadership are dedicated to fostering the right conditions for staff to thrive. The emerging People Strategy will establish a set of values and behaviours which is particularly important as CDC continues to grow and further services transition back to the Council. The Corporate Plan provides direction through its objectives and principles.
- However, this commitment to the culture is not always fully understood by the staff themselves. Officers are generally aware of the Corporate Plan but a noticeable disconnect exists between the Planning Service and its role in supporting the delivery of specific corporate priorities. This can create uncertainty and misalignment, ultimately limiting opportunities for effective collaboration. The involvement of the Planning Service in the refresh of the Corporate Plan presents an important opportunity to address these issues.
- The Peer Team noted a lack of senior managerial and political leadership in the development of a comprehensive and up-to-date local plan. The plan is crucial for articulating the spatial interpretation of CDC's corporate priorities and establishing the development framework that guides decisions made by the Planning Service and Council. Without a robust and up-to-date local plan, there is a risk that efforts to align the Planning Service with corporate objectives may falter.

3.2 Performance and Management.

- The transition of most of the Planning Service into the Council in November 2024 along with the permanent recruitment of the Director of Communities & Place and the Assistant Director of Planning Services are positive developments that have contributed to increased stability.
- The team exhibit high morale, a spirit of mutual support, and a strong commitment to achieving positive outcomes. There have been recruitment challenges, due in part to terms and conditions, partly due to limited career

development opportunities and non-competitive terms compared to other Councils. This has led to high turnover, stress and increased pressure within the team. There is an opportunity to re-evaluate staff terms and conditions whilst enhancing career progression pathways. This is vital to foster team cohesion and to retain valuable talent.

- The Planning Policy Team manage a wide range projects which affects their ability to focus on core tasks such as the development of the local plan. It is essential the Council addressed the resource constraints and capacity issues if it intends to act on one of the fundamental recommendations of the report - to proceed without delay on developing a comprehensive and up-to-date local plan.
- The Development Management (DM) service is performing well against the government's national performance indicators for speed of processing planning applications. This is a significant improvement following the joint DM review in 2022 and the potential risk of designation. However, the service currently relies heavily on extensions of time (EOTs). This reliance is unsustainable and must be reduced.
- Staffing challenges within Planning Enforcement must be addressed to effectively support the work of the Local Enforcement Plan. The report recommends the Council prioritises the recruitment and allocation of additional resource within the Enforcement Team to reduce the backlog of cases and provide staff with the capacity to explore and implement ideas for improvement.
- It is recommended that CDC actively engages in Government initiatives relating to digital planning and adopts best practice and innovation to support an efficient Planning Service.
- Performance management lacks consistency, and appraisal processes are unclear along with their connection to the broader corporate performance management framework. Defining specific key performance indicators that align with corporate objectives and emerging People Strategy is vital. Creating an environment which encourages staff engagement is crucial alongside a structured performance management system.

3.3 Engagement

- The Peer Team was impressed with the wider corporate approach to partnership working. The team met with some well-informed community

groups who had a good understanding of the planning process. However, there is evident confusion among stakeholders regarding the local plan which is complicated relationships and engagement efforts for communities, Parish and Town Councils, and developers.

- The Council should establish a structured and well publicised engagement programme with Parish and Town Councils.
- A regular Developer's Forum bringing together major developers, agents, and CDC representatives to facilitate constructive dialogue on emerging issues and maintain open channels of communication is recommended.

3.4 Achieving Outcomes

- The Planning Service demonstrates a strong commitment to the overarching principle of "green to the core".
- The service has successfully secured grant income to support critical projects such as local plan progression and Greenbelt review.
- The recent senior management appointments focused on community and place shows a clear ambition to advance and cultivate sustainable growth within CDC.
- Clarity regarding the local plan and the future development framework for the area is essential to mitigate the risk of unplanned developments
- Budget management is a critical area that requires attention. Managers need to effectively consider income generation opportunities and savings.
- To drive these initiatives forward, the Council and service should develop a comprehensive Service Plan that outlines clear priorities and timelines.
- Accelerating the local plan progression whilst engaging both internally and externally with stakeholders is vital for achieving successful outcomes.

3.5 Implementation and Next Steps

- 3.6 To support openness and transparency PAS recommends that the Council shares the report with officers and that it is published for information for wider stakeholders.
- 3.7 There is also an expectation that the Council responds to the findings in the report and develops an action plan to be published alongside the report. An initial action plan is included in the background papers. This is a live document that will be used as an ongoing improvement plan and updated as required.
- 3.8 The plan sets out activity underway, or proposed, against each of the 13 recommendations. Some of the recommendations and proposed actions will require investment. These will be subject to business cases and further approval processes once the preferred option and full costs are known.
- 3.9 Progress against the plan (and any updates) will be reported to the Cabinet Member on a quarterly basis, and on an annual basis to the Planning Committee.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The alternative option is not to endorse the Peer Challenge Plan and Action Plan.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Planning Advisory Service Peer Review report makes a number of recommendations to ensure the Planning Service is able to support delivery of the Council's priorities and Corporate Plan.
- 5.2 Recommendations and actions that focus on improving the way in which the service operates will need to be supported by a business plan outlining the resources required, delivery timescale, and outlining the cashable and non-cashable benefits. Specifically, the plan will need to identify those actions that can be delivered within existing resources and those that may require additional funding (whether one-off or ongoing).
- 5.3 IT and process improvements that may require additional system enhancements will need to consider the investment required and payback period.
- 5.4 Recommendations 5 and 13 will need to be feed into wider reviews of both staff terms and conditions and enhancements to the financial reporting framework to ensure the Planning Service actions are considered and included in any Council-wide programme.

- 5.5 Cabinet will consider proposals on the Local Plan under Agenda Item 14. This is a significant undertaking for the Council and will need to be planned, managed, and adequately resourced to ensure key milestones are achieved and the Local Plan can be finalised prior to submission in 2026 and adoption by the end of 2027.
- 5.6 The balance on the Local Plan Reserve (as at 31 March 2025) is £1.005m. Whilst it is anticipated the Local Plan Reserve is sufficient to finalise the Local Plan based on the Project Plan (which sets out the evidence base and staffing resource required) it would be prudent at the stage to ensure adequate contingency funding is identified and held in the event that elements of the delivery plan require further support to ensure the wider project remains on target.
- 5.7 Whilst it is outside the scope of this report to allocate additional contingency funding, given the importance of the Local Plan to the Council's aims and priorities/Corporate Plan, a review and reprioritisation of the review of Council's Earmarked Reserves will be undertaken as part of the Balances and Reserves Strategy supporting the 2026/27 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This will help mitigate any additional pressures on the Council Revenue budget arising from the preparation of the Local Plan.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Regular peer reviews are good practice across local government and good governance requires the Council to consider and – where relevant - to take up and implement the conclusions reached by the reviewing team. Following the recommendations of this review, considering the change of circumstances, will evidence good governance and prepare the team for the upcoming Local Government Re-organisation.
- 6.2 Some of the employees within Planning Services were transferred from the employment of Publica to CDC as part of Phase 1 transition of services. This was a "relevant transfer" for the purposes of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2002 (as amended) and as such these employees transferred to CDC under their existing terms and conditions. It was accepted in the measures letter that CDC may need in the future to carry out organisational reviews to ensure structures remain suitable to meet ongoing and future business needs. In the event this is deemed necessary employees would be informed and consulted along with recognised trade unions accordingly.

7 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 No risks identified arising directly from the PAS report. There are risks associated with non-implementation of some of the proposed actions, for example not progressing with a comprehensive and up to date local plan. This issue is covered in more detail in the Local Plan report on the same cabinet agenda (Agenda item 14).

8 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 No issues identified.

9 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 LGA Corporate Peer Review – progress report November 2024.
10.2 Planning Service Peer Challenge Final Report May 2025
10.3 CDC Action Plan

(END)

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		monthly Directorate meetings.			
2	<p>Provide for the planning service to have an active involvement in the Corporate Plan refresh</p> <p>As the Corporate Plan is set to be refreshed, the council must ensure that the planning service is actively involved in this process. Establish a cross-departmental working group that includes planners, managers, and political leaders to encourage collaboration and ensure that planning insights are integrated into corporate objectives. This collaborative approach will create a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for achieving the council's ambitions.</p>	<p>Share draft at C&P Directorate meetings.</p> <p>Thread of Corporate Plan to run through service plans, individual appraisals and one to ones.</p>	<p>June 2025 and monthly thereafter.</p> <p>Preparation started in June 2025 but awaiting corporate update in Autumn 2025</p>	Late Oct 2025	

	adequate resources and staffing are allocated throughout the process.				
4	<p>Implement robust project management and governance frameworks</p> <p>Establish a comprehensive project management and governance structure to oversee the Local Plan development process. This should provide strategic oversight, secure necessary resources, and ensure accountability including a clear decision-making framework with defined roles for senior leadership, elected members, and key stakeholders.</p> <p>Adopt project management practices to oversee the local plan development process.</p>	<p>Seek Cabinet endorsement of a single Local Plan</p> <p>Review of Local Plan project plan and governance arrangements including: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of project sponsor, senior responsible officer, and project lead, • process mapping of boards, steering groups and approval routes (membership, ToR and frequency), • Creation of admin support. • review of constitution and onward delegations. • Development of engagement and communications plan (internal and external). 	<p>Summer 2025</p> <p>New oversight board to be created July 2025</p>	<p>Autumn 2025</p> <p>Board to oversee the whole local plan project to December 2026</p>	

	<p>This includes using project timelines, milestones, and regular progress reviews to ensure that the development of the local plan remains on schedule. Create transparency in the progress of the local plan to mitigate any uncertainties or misalignment within the council and among stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of synergies and impacts with or on other service areas. • Realignment of resource and reprioritisation of activity. 			
5	<p>Review and revise staff terms and conditions To enhance the stability and effectiveness of the planning service it is important the council undertakes or commissions a comprehensive review of team structures, staff terms and conditions. Addressing recruitment challenges and clarifying career progression</p>	<p>Mapping of comparable roles and grades across service.</p> <p>Ensure all Job descriptions and Person Specifications are up to date and accurate.</p> <p>Benchmarking with neighbouring authorities on structure and gradings.</p> <p>Develop a proposed new structure to ensure operational resilience and sustainability and succession planning. To include provision of admin support.</p>	<p>July 2025</p> <p>July 2025</p> <p>Spring 2025</p> <p>Summer 2025</p>	<p>Autumn 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p> <p>Winter 2025</p> <p>Spring/Summer 2026</p>	

	<p>opportunities are essential for retaining talent and fostering team cohesion. The council should ensure parity within teams and consider re-evaluating existing terms of employment to align them with those of other local authorities, especially for staff who have transitioned from Publica. Establishing clear and transparent career advancement pathways will not only improve morale but also empower staff to see a future within the organisation, reducing turnover and the associated pressures on the team.</p>	<p>Assessment of grading and consideration of measures to address any discrepancies including for example, the use of market supplements, constancy of spot points versus grade bandings and the career grading of posts.</p> <p>Costing of new structure (amend/realign to fit financial envelope or seek growth).</p>	<p>Linked to corporate actions Summer/ Autumn 2025</p> <p>Winter 2025</p>	<p>Spring 2026</p> <p>Spring 2026</p>	TBC
6	<p>Enhance formal collaboration among teams and establish service level agreements</p> <p>The planning service can benefit from increased formal</p>	<p>Stakeholder mapping to identify those partnerships where a Service Level Agreement (SLA) would be beneficial. (some of these will be internal)</p>	Summer 2025	Autumn/Winter 2025	

	<p>collaboration to complement the positive existing informal relationships. While the informal dynamic is valuable, it can be inconsistent and reliant on individual initiative. It can also lead to perceptions of siloed working when in fact communication channels are open, albeit informally. A structured approach will not only improve service delivery efficiency but also ensure that teams are effectively coordinated, reducing confusion regarding task ownership and response times.</p>	<p>Draft SLA for each setting out expectations (of both parties), agreeing process for performance management, amendment and review.</p> <p>Approval of each SLA and communication of roles and expectations and training for parties involved.</p> <p>Agreed actions fed into Service Plans.</p> <p>Monitoring of response times for key stakeholders and performance management.</p> <p>Communicate with key stakeholder's local plan timetable and peaks of activity affecting key partners.</p>	<p>Winter 2025</p> <p>Winter 2025</p> <p>Autumn 2025</p>	<p>Spring 2026</p> <p>Spring 2026</p> <p>Amend existing service plans Spring 2026, feed into new for 2026/27.</p> <p>Spring 2026 and at agreed intervals thereafter.</p> <p>Autumn/Winter 2025</p>	
7	<p>Prepare to reduce the use of Extensions-of-Time (EoTs)</p> <p>Prepare to reduce reliance on extensions of time for planning applications in anticipation of</p>	<p>Review options for improved performance management data and reporting (i.e. Enterprise and Power BI).</p> <p>Developing reporting protocols.</p> <p>Process mapping of DM: -</p>	<p>Summer Autumn 2025</p> <p>Summer/Autumn 2025</p> <p>Summer/Autumn 2025</p>	<p>Summer/Autumn 2026</p> <p>Winter 2025</p> <p>Autumn 2026</p>	TBC - licence and software costs.

	<p>stricter government targets while maintaining constructive and transparent applicant dialogue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximise use of ICT systems for automation and workflow, • Amend validation checklist and consultation protocols to reduce workloads and allow officers to focus on value add/increasing processing time. • Work with consultees and stakeholders on SLA to improve response times. • Work with legal on capacity and options to outsource during peaks. • Use of PPAs for majors. • Agree updated protocols for early refusals if no pre application discussions and one option to amend before determining. • Create admin role to support. • Pre application advice process improvements 			
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve web pages and advice/signposting to allow customers to self-serve where possible. 			
8	Review and improve the Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) process Ensure consistency, reliability, and clear value for stakeholders using Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) and structured pre-application processes. This approach will ensure early alignment on design principles and policy compliance, reducing delays and limiting post-submission negotiations. To further encourage engagement, the council should consider making no allowance of Extensions of Time (EoTs) for	PPA training session being set up. Agree standard templates and protocol setting out requirements and expectations of all parties. As above agree protocols for early refusals if no pre application discussions and one option to amend before determining. Annual review of fees and charges	Summer 2025 Autumn 2025 Autumn 2025 Autumn/winter 2025 and annual thereafter	Autumn/Winter 2025 April 2026	

	applications submitted without prior pre-application consultation or a PPA and minimal tolerance for redesigns on sub-optimal schemes.				
9	Strengthen Planning Enforcement resources Address resource issues to help reduce the backlog of cases and enhance response times. This investment will enable the team to focus on proactive enforcement efforts and explore innovative solutions. Creating a structured forum for staff to share insights and recommendations will foster collaboration and empowerment.	Agency contracts for temporary staff extended for 6 months Internal promotion from Assistant to Officer following unsuccessful external recruitment. Review DM and Enforcement structure and options for long term sustainability of the team including provision of admin support. Review and update the Local Enforcement Plan. Complaints analysis (by type and proportion of no breach complaints). Agree a plan for the clearance of backlog including triage of cases, closing extant historic cases over an agreed age (TBD)	May 2025 May 2025 Autumn/Winter 2025 Summer 2025 Summer/Autumn 2025 Summer/Autumn 2025	Spring/Summer 2026 Winter25/Spring 26 Winter25/Spring 26 Winter 25/Spring 26	

		<p>where there has been no recent action or complaint. Prioritisation of new cases.</p> <p>Process mapping of enforcement and maximise use of ICT systems for automation and workflow.</p> <p>Training for officers and members</p>	Winter 2025	Summer 2026	
10	<p>Maximise digital capabilities and embrace technological innovation</p> <p>Implement a comprehensive digital strategy that seeks to optimise the use of existing software investments (IDOX, CRM, and Uniform) while embracing emerging technologies. This should include a full audit of current systems to identify underutilised features, implementation of standardised protocols for data</p>	<p>Process mapping and audit to ascertain where existing technology could be better utilised.</p> <p>Introduce new software to support local plan process - Consultation software which uses AI to reduce time consider consultation responses.</p> <p>Explore the use of Enterprise and Power BI/Idox Insights to support improved performance reporting and management. Implement preferred option.</p> <p>Review Digital Improvement Fund and PropTech.</p>	<p>Winter25/Spring 26 and beyond.</p> <p>Autumn 2025</p> <p>Summer/Autumn 2025</p> <p>Winter 2025</p>	<p>Continuous process</p> <p>Spring/Summer 2026</p> <p>Winter 2026</p>	

	<p>entry and management, and staff training to ensure maximum system utilisation.</p> <p>Actively engage with digital planning initiatives to modernise the planning services. This includes capitalising on learnings from recent funding and initiatives, such as those awarded by the PropTech Engagement Fund, to explore AI-powered solutions for handling routine enquiries, automating standard correspondence, and intelligent document processing.</p>	<p>Explore hiring a dedicated GIS officer – to support a channel shift to self-serve.</p> <p>Explore/create a Technical Support role within the service as part of the restructure review.</p>	<p>Winter 25/Spring 26</p> <p>Winter 25/Spring 26</p>		
11	<p>Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan</p> <p>Create a structured stakeholder engagement plan that ensures meaningful</p>	<p>Stakeholder mapping to identify key partnerships and organisations, aligned with the SCI.</p> <p>Mapping of existing forums and touchpoints.</p>	<p>Autumn/Winter 2025</p> <p>Autumn/Winter 2025</p>	<p>Spring 2026</p> <p>Winter 2025</p>	

<p>participation from all key partners, including elected members. This should align with the current Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and establish clear communication channels, roles, and responsibilities.</p> <p>A key component should be the establishment of a regular Developers Forum, bringing together major developers, agents, and council representatives to discuss emerging issues, share updates, and maintain constructive dialogue.</p> <p>Additionally, the council could organise regular partnership forums across Gloucestershire, involving both officers</p>	<p>Review and amendment of web content (intranet and internet).</p> <p>Seek feedback from partners of how they want to be engaged with and development communications strategy with communications team. This may include the establishment of forums (virtual or actual).</p>	<p>Winter 2025</p> <p>Winter 2025</p>	<p>Spring/Summer 2026</p> <p>Spring/Summer 2026</p>	
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	and members, to share best practices and promote innovative discussions. This collaborative approach will help build stronger relationships, identify shared priorities, and facilitate effective problem-solving.				
12	<p>Develop a comprehensive service plan with robust performance monitoring</p> <p>Create a comprehensive service plan that clearly outlines priorities, timelines, and resource needs, underpinned by specific, measurable performance targets that are regularly monitored and reported to senior management on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</p>	<p>Draft Planning Services Service Plan with agreed KPIs to be communicated to and cascade via teams and individual agreed actions and targets. Monitored via one to ones and annual appraisals.</p> <p>Explore the use of Enterprise and PowerBi/Idox Insights to support improved performance reporting and management. Implement preferred option.</p> <p>Review DM and Enforcement structure and options for long term sustainability of the team including provision of admin support.</p>	<p>June 2025</p> <p>Summer 2025</p> <p>Autumn/Winter 2025</p>		TBC

	<p>should extend beyond statutory processing times to include metrics on pre-application engagement, plan-making milestones, and service improvement initiatives. The plan should detail the acceleration of the Local Plan's progression while enhancing stakeholder engagement, with clear accountability for delivery at all levels. It may also be helpful to develop a more detailed service plan for each core area of the planning service where appropriate.</p> <p>A thorough resource planning assessment should ensure teams are appropriately staffed and aligned with key objectives, with regular performance reviews</p>				
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	enabling senior management to make informed decisions about resource allocation and service improvement priorities.				
13	<p>Enhance financial transparency and accountability</p> <p>To improve budget management and accountability, the council should provide managers with detailed insights into the financial position of their services. This transparency will enable them to make informed decisions regarding income generation and resource allocation that align with the council's strategic objectives. Furthermore, establishing a framework for assessing income generation opportunities across</p>	<p>Review of budget reports on ABW (finance system) and amend to reflect: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new budget areas post transition, (including reports on funds/grants held in reserves) • to allow real time reporting on approved budget, spend to date, commitments. • to allow budget holders to monitor and assess actual and projected spend, the profile of spend across the year and the management of budgets to ensure on budget or underspent at year end. <p>Agree new reporting process including: -</p>	<p>Reliant on colleagues in Finance</p> <p>Winter 2025</p>	<p>.</p> <p>Summer 2026</p>	

<p>departments can help identify potential savings and efficiencies. Linked to recommendation 11, partnership working with authorities across Gloucestershire may also support innovation and best practice in this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identified and responsible budget holders. • Budget training for all budget holders on roles, responsibilities, expectations and systems. • Monthly one to one meeting between budget holders and finance • Monthly C&P Management meetings with finance attendance for reporting by exception. • Where feasible realignment of Directorate resource to areas of need/pressure. • Review of existing fees and charges. • Consideration of new charges – for example for providing local plan advice and increasing the use of PPAs. 	<p>Autumn 2025</p> <p>Summer 2025</p>	<p>Spring 2026</p> <p>April 2026</p>	
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Supplement for

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 8 JULY 2025

Agenda No	Item
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8.	PAS Peer Review and Action Plan 3 - 20
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Purpose

That the Committee scrutinises the report and agrees any recommendations it wishes to submit to Cabinet on 9 July 2025.

Cabinet Member

Councillor Juliet Layton

Lead Officer

Geraldine LeCointe

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Planning Service Peer Challenge

Cotswold District Council

25th – 27th March 2025

Final Report 20 May 2025

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1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the findings of a planning peer challenge (PPC) of Cotswold District Council (CDC) planning service that took place over three days on 25 to 27 March 2025. The PPC was organised at the request of CDC by the Local Government Association (LGA) with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and undertaken on site by a team of councillor and officer peers.
- 1.2 The PPC follows a corporate peer challenge of CDC, conducted in October 2022, and a progress review completed in November 2024. The latter review noted that the council had effectively embraced the recommendations from the corporate peer challenge, leading to important change and improvement. The purpose of the PPC was to conduct a more focused review of the planning service to gain insights on the significant strengths in the service as well as identify potential areas for improvement.
- 1.3 A notable achievement has been the transfer of most of the planning service back to the council from Publica¹, which has instilled a greater sense of stability among the staff who returned. The planning service is an enthusiastic, dedicated, and professional team who are clearly proud to work for CDC. We observed significant improvements in Development Management performance since a separate review was conducted in 2022, and we recognise the successful delivery of several objectives of the 2018 Local Plan. This includes consistently meeting housing delivery test targets, a national measure that assesses whether planned housing requirements have been met within a defined timeframe.
- 1.4 The permanent recruitment of the Director of Place and Communities and Assistant Director of Planning Services is a positive development that will contribute to greater stability for staff, particularly after an extended period of interim management. This should not diminish the significant progress the service has made under the guidance of recent interim leaders. With a permanent senior leadership team in place, the service is well-positioned to build on these achievements and establish a robust foundation for becoming the planning service that the council aspires to deliver.
- 1.5 We identified several areas for improvement that we recommend should be addressed. Most notably, there appears to be a disconnect between the planning service and broader corporate priorities, which can create confusion due to a lack of alignment in goals and changing priorities. At times, the service encounters internal reputational challenges stemming from perceived isolated working practices, which can obscure its vital role as an enabler of corporate projects. It is essential to cultivate a shared understanding of how the planning service can help facilitate the achievement of key corporate objectives while ensuring that its regulatory functions are not compromised. This includes implementing regular internal communication sessions, workshops, and active involvement of the planning service in the Corporate Plan refresh. There is a recognition, both corporately and within the planning service, that proactive place-shaping is fundamental to maintaining CDC as a desirable and sustainable area for residents, businesses, and visitors alike. Therefore, it is crucial to align these ambitions wherever possible.
- 1.6 Additionally, both internal and external stakeholders have expressed concerns regarding the progress of developing an up-to-date Local Plan. This delay poses risks not only to the delivery of key corporate objectives but also to the planning service itself, as not having an up-to-date Local Plan can lead to unplanned development. The council faces several important challenges that require a strategic focus and for which the local plan is an important delivery tool. These include an increase housing need in nationally mandated figures and the exploration of growth options for residential and economic development, all within the context of ongoing national changes to the planning system. An up-to-date Local

¹ Publica is a not-for-profit Teckal company owned by Cotswold, Forest of Dean, and West Oxfordshire District Councils and Cheltenham Borough Council.

Plan is essential for establishing the spatial framework for the area, ensuring development occurs in appropriate locations. Consequently, it is critical for the council to prioritise options that facilitate the creation of a comprehensive and up-to-date Local Plan without delay. Conducting an options appraisal and implementing robust project management and governance frameworks will be essential to this process.

- 1.7 With local government reorganisation on the horizon, it is essential for the council to remain proactive in its efforts to develop an up-to-date Local Plan. The council can use the local plan to effectively guide the transition and supporting long-term growth during this period of change. It is crucial to ensure that local communities in the area and developers who use the service continue to receive the best possible support from CDC, regardless of any changes to administrative boundaries. Success will depend on strengthened engagement on the development of the Local Plan from both officers and members of the senior leadership team. This includes the development of a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan and the creation of a Developer's Forum to foster regular dialogue with key partners.
- 1.8 We heard that the transition from Publica back to the council has posed challenges for officers in accessing career progression opportunities. It remains unclear whether this stems from the terms and conditions inherited during the transition, but it is causing significant concern among staff. There is a risk that officers will leave CDC to pursue career advancement opportunities in other councils. This would represent a loss for CDC, as it is evident that the affected employees take pride in their roles and wish to remain with the organisation. We recommend a review of staff terms and conditions to address recruitment and retention challenges. Additionally, there is a lack of evidence indicating that a robust performance management process is in place for all individuals and teams. Strengthening performance management and enhancing career progression opportunities are essential for fostering team cohesion and retention.
- 1.9 Enhancing financial transparency and accountability can further support effective budget management and resource allocation aligned with strategic objectives. By providing managers with detailed insights into the financial position of their services, CDC can better align income generation and resource allocation with strategic objectives. Furthermore, establishing a framework for assessing income generation opportunities across departments can help identify potential savings and efficiencies, fostering innovation and best practice.
- 1.10 In summary, the transition of the planning service back to the council from Publica has provided CDC with a strong foundation and a dedicated workforce to realise its vision for an effective planning service. By proactively addressing the identified areas in this report for improvement and effectively navigating the forthcoming challenges, the council can further enhance its planning capabilities for the future. This moment represents a significant and exciting opportunity for the development and growth of the area, and the planning service is essential in shaping and facilitating this progress with the support of officers and members from the senior leadership team. The development of a comprehensive service plan with robust performance monitoring will help in achieving these aims.

2. Key recommendations

- 2.1 This section summarises the key / priority recommendations. More detail on each one can be found in the main body of the report. It is important that the planning service integrates these recommendations into its own action plan or business service plan and is clear about 'what success looks like'. This will help to ensure that the recommendations in this report are in context and are aligned to a clear set of outcomes and measures.

1	Enhance internal communication and understanding To foster a clearer understanding of the council's vision and corporate priorities, the council should implement regular internal communication sessions, workshops, and
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	<p>training focused on the Corporate Plan and its alignment with the planning service. These sessions can help staff members understand their roles and how they contribute to the overarching goals of the council.</p>
2	<p>Provide for the planning service to have an active involvement in the Corporate Plan refresh</p> <p>As the Corporate Plan is set to be refreshed, the council must ensure that the planning service is actively involved in this process. Establish a cross-departmental working group that includes planners, managers, and political leaders to encourage collaboration and ensure that planning insights are integrated into corporate objectives. This collaborative approach will create a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for achieving the council's ambitions.</p>
3	<p>Conduct an options appraisal to inform the development of the Local Plan</p> <p>Initiate a thorough options appraisal focused on developing an up-to-date comprehensive Local Plan. Engage with PAS for support in conducting this appraisal to assess the implications of various approaches and identify potential risks associated with local plan development.</p> <p>Following the options appraisal, we recommend commencing the development of a cohesive Local Plan that specifically addresses identified challenges, including the increase in local housing needs. Establish a strategic timeline to prioritise this initiative, ensuring that adequate resources and staffing are allocated throughout the process.</p>
4	<p>Implement robust project management and governance frameworks</p> <p>Establish a comprehensive project management and governance structure to oversee the Local Plan development process. This should provide strategic oversight, secure necessary resources, and ensure accountability including a clear decision-making framework with defined roles for senior leadership, elected members, and key stakeholders.</p> <p>Adopt project management practices to oversee the local plan development process. This includes using project timelines, milestones, and regular progress reviews to ensure that the development of the local plan remains on schedule. Create transparency in the progress of the local plan to mitigate any uncertainties or misalignment within the council and among stakeholders.</p>
5	<p>Review and revise staff terms and conditions</p> <p>To enhance the stability and effectiveness of the planning service it is important the council undertakes or commissions a comprehensive review of team structures, staff terms and conditions. Addressing recruitment challenges and clarifying career progression opportunities are essential for retaining talent and fostering team cohesion. The council should ensure parity within teams and consider re-evaluating existing terms of employment to align them with those of other local authorities, especially for staff who have transitioned from Publica. Establishing clear and transparent career advancement pathways will not only improve morale but also empower staff to see a future within the organisation, reducing turnover and the associated pressures on the team.</p>
6	<p>Enhance formal collaboration among teams and establish service level agreements</p> <p>The planning service can benefit from increased formal collaboration to complement the positive existing informal relationships. While the informal dynamic is valuable, it can be inconsistent and reliant on individual initiative. It can also lead to perceptions of siloed working when in fact communication channels are open, albeit informally. A structured approach will not only improve service delivery efficiency but also ensure</p>

	that teams are effectively coordinated, reducing confusion regarding task ownership and response times.
7	<p>Prepare to reduce the use of Extensions-of-Time (EoTs)</p> <p>Prepare to reduce reliance on extensions of time for planning applications in anticipation of stricter government targets while maintaining constructive and transparent applicant dialogue.</p>
8	<p>Review and improve the Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) process</p> <p>Ensure consistency, reliability, and clear value for stakeholders using Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) and structured pre-application processes. This approach will ensure early alignment on design principles and policy compliance, reducing delays and limiting post-submission negotiations. To further encourage engagement, the council should consider making no allowance of Extensions of Time (EoTs) for applications submitted without prior pre-application consultation or a PPA and minimal tolerance for redesigns on sub-optimal schemes.</p>
9	<p>Strengthen Planning Enforcement resources</p> <p>Address resource issues to help reduce the backlog of cases and enhance response times. This investment will enable the team to focus on proactive enforcement efforts and explore innovative solutions. Creating a structured forum for staff to share insights and recommendations will foster collaboration and empowerment.</p>
10	<p>Maximise digital capabilities and embrace technological innovation</p> <p>Implement a comprehensive digital strategy that seeks to optimise the use of existing software investments (IDOX, CRM, and Uniform) while embracing emerging technologies. This should include a full audit of current systems to identify underutilised features, implementation of standardised protocols for data entry and management, and staff training to ensure maximum system utilisation.</p> <p>Actively engage with digital planning initiatives to modernise the planning services. This includes capitalising on learnings from recent funding and initiatives, such as those awarded by the PropTech Engagement Fund, to explore AI-powered solutions for handling routine enquiries, automating standard correspondence, and intelligent document processing.</p>
11	<p>Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan</p> <p>Create a structured stakeholder engagement plan that ensures meaningful participation from all key partners, including elected members. This should align with the current Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and establish clear communication channels, roles, and responsibilities.</p> <p>A key component should be the establishment of a regular Developers Forum, bringing together major developers, agents, and council representatives to discuss emerging issues, share updates, and maintain constructive dialogue.</p> <p>Additionally, the council could organise regular partnership forums across Gloucestershire, involving both officers and members, to share best practices and promote innovative discussions. This collaborative approach will help build stronger relationships, identify shared priorities, and facilitate effective problem-solving.</p>
12	<p>Develop a comprehensive service plan with robust performance monitoring</p> <p>Create a comprehensive service plan that clearly outlines priorities, timelines, and resource needs, underpinned by specific, measurable performance targets that are regularly monitored and reported to senior management on a quarterly basis.</p>

	<p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should extend beyond statutory processing times to include metrics on pre-application engagement, plan-making milestones, and service improvement initiatives. The plan should detail the acceleration of the Local Plan's progression while enhancing stakeholder engagement, with clear accountability for delivery at all levels. It may also be helpful to develop a more detailed service plan for each core area of the planning service where appropriate.</p> <p>A thorough resource planning assessment should ensure teams are appropriately staffed and aligned with key objectives, with regular performance reviews enabling senior management to make informed decisions about resource allocation and service improvement priorities.</p>
13	<p>Enhance financial transparency and accountability</p> <p>To improve budget management and accountability, the council should provide managers with detailed insights into the financial position of their services. This transparency will enable them to make informed decisions regarding income generation and resource allocation that align with the council's strategic objectives. Furthermore, establishing a framework for assessing income generation opportunities across departments can help identify potential savings and efficiencies. Linked to recommendation 11, partnership working with authorities across Gloucestershire may also support innovation and best practice in this area.</p>

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1 The peer team

3.1.1 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:

- **Councillor Paula Widdowson**, Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change at City of York Council
- **David Atkinson**, Director of Planning and Regeneration, Harborough District Council
- **Kath Lawless**, Interim Lead Local Plans, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
- **Rachel Jones**, Principal Consultant, Planning Advisory Service
- **Rachael Ferry-Jones**, Peer Challenge Manager, Planning Advisory Service

3.2 Scope and focus

3.2.1 The aim of this PPC is to help the service play a leading role in the delivery of CDC's corporate aims to create a council that's proactive and responsive to the needs of its residents and businesses in a fast-changing environment and to build for the future while respecting its heritage. The peer challenge sought to identify where ambitions can be stretched and where improvements need to be made so that planning is at the forefront of practice in shaping the future of the Cotswolds.

3.2.2 The scope of the review was developed following initial conversations and correspondence with CDC as well as consideration of the background documents supplied to the peer team in advance of the review. These helped the peer team to shape their focus of the peer challenge around the following core components as they relate to the functioning of the planning service. The peer team feedback is presented against these key themes:

- Vision and leadership
- Performance and management
- Engagement (partners and the community); and
- Achieving outcomes.

3.3 The peer challenge process

- 3.3.1 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.
- 3.3.2 The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information 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 29 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
 - Spoke to more than 75 people including a range of council staff, elected members and external stakeholders
- 3.3.3 There was however limited engagement with some stakeholders; a limited number of councillors were engaged and there was no interview with the Leader of the Council. Additionally, interactions with external partners were minimal, and no meetings were conducted with the County Council. This should be considered when reviewing the feedback, although opportunities were made available for comments to be submitted to the PPC Manager separately.
- 3.3.4 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 Detailed findings

4.1 Vision and leadership

- 4.1.1 The Chief Executive has articulated a clear vision for the future of CDC, and the recent appointments of the Director of Place and Communities and Assistant Director of Planning Services is pivotal in advancing CDC's ambitions through their leadership of the planning service. It is also evident that both the political and managerial leadership are dedicated to fostering the right conditions for staff to thrive; however, this commitment is not always fully understood by the staff themselves. The emerging People Strategy will establish a set of values and behaviours for employees, which is particularly important as CDC continues to grow and further services transition back to the council from Publica.
- 4.1.2 The council's Corporate Plan (2024 to 2028) provides direction through its objectives and principles. This focuses on the difference to be made in the district and its communities through effectively and appropriately positioning the council. The key objectives of the Corporate Plan include:
- Delivering good services
 - Responding to the climate emergency
 - Delivering housing
 - Supporting communities
 - Supporting the economy
- 4.1.3 While officers are generally aware of the Corporate Plan, a noticeable disconnect exists between the planning service and its role in supporting the delivery of specific corporate priorities. This may stem, in part, from the fact that the Corporate Plan was developed during a time when the planning service was managed by Publica, and it is further compounded by the limited marketing materials available within the council offices. This is not however unique to CDC, as other councils experience similar challenges where

planning services are viewed as primarily regulatory rather than enabling, sometimes operating in isolation from broader corporate objectives. National Planning Policy requires the planning system to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development addressing economic, social and environmental objectives. Corporate plans typically encompass similar objectives, sometimes leading planning services to assume an implicit alignment with corporate priorities, even if they do not directly engage with them.

- 4.1.4 Disconnect between the council's corporate priorities and the planning service can however create uncertainty and misalignment, ultimately limiting opportunities for effective collaboration across the council. We were advised that the Corporate Plan is set to be refreshed, presenting an important opportunity to actively involve the planning service in its development. This involvement can foster a greater sense of ownership over shared ambitions. With the planning service now mostly integrated back into the council, there is an ideal opportunity to cultivate a collective vision and adopt a unified "one council" approach to achieving these objectives. It is critical that staff within the planning service understand their role and contribution to delivering on this including opportunities to support growth and investment in the area.
- 4.1.5 The need for improved engagement between the planning service and corporate priorities at CDC works both ways and there is a noticeable lack of senior managerial and political leadership in the development of a comprehensive and up-to-date local plan. A local plan sets out the vision for how a specific area should develop over a set period, typically 15-20 years. It is a key planning document that guides decisions on where, how much, and what type of development should occur, ensuring it aligns with national policy and local need. Such a plan is therefore crucial for articulating the spatial interpretation of CDC's corporate priorities and establishing the development framework that guides decisions made by the planning service. Without a robust and up-to-date local plan, there is a risk that efforts to align the planning service with corporate objectives may falter, leading to inconsistencies in decision-making and potential conflicts between regulatory requirements and community needs.
- 4.1.6 We recognise that developing a local plan takes time, and that projects may emerge outside the planned framework. Notwithstanding, the development of a comprehensive local plan will provide the necessary structure for meaningful discussions and informed decision-making. This is vital for fostering collaboration and ensuring that all key stakeholders are engaged in the process. By doing so, the planning service can better understand how corporate priorities can be aligned to sustainable development objectives for the area. Ultimately, it is not a case of corporate objectives prevailing above all else. Rather, it is critical that the planning service is fully engaged, ensuring that all perspectives are considered and that decisions align with broader corporate ambitions and regulatory frameworks. This will also help to ensure that planning services are better engaged in future updates to the Corporate Plan and objectives aligned where appropriate.
- 4.1.7 CDC's current Local Plan was adopted in 2018. In 2020, following a review by CDC, work began on a partial update of the local plan to take account of (then) new corporate objectives and national planning policy changes with the aim of making the plan "green to the core". The current Local Development Scheme (LDS) (March 2025) anticipates that this update will be submitted for examination in the summer of 2026. This is some six years after work began albeit meeting the Government's timetable for submitting plans in the current plan-making system by December 2026.
- 4.1.8 The partial update of the Local Plan would not provide a comprehensive update of all policy areas. The LDS sets out that a second development plan document, the development strategy and site allocations plan, will be developed to set out the overall framework for future development growth in Cotswold District to 2046. It states that the partial Local Plan update and the development strategy and site allocations plan will cover different parts of the Local Plan. The aspiration is to combine the two Local Plan projects into a single Local

Plan document at an unspecified later date, but in the meantime the two Local Plan projects are being progressed separately.

- 4.1.9 The timetable for bringing forward the development strategy and site allocations plan is however outside of the current plan-making system. The LDS sets out that preparation and submission for examination will be after the December 2026 deadline set by government for submission of plans prepared under the current system. If the LDS timetable is retained this plan will be prepared in the new plan-making system. This is important as in the new plan-making system instead of separate development plan documents authorities must develop a single comprehensive local plan and only one local plan may have effect in relation to a local planning authority's area at any one time². Consequently, any plans developed under the new plan-making system will supersede previously adopted plans which emphasises the need for them to be comprehensive strategies.
- 4.1.10 There is a pressing concern that the current focus on a partial update of the existing local plan may hinder the capacity to produce a comprehensive up-to-date Local Plan at the earliest opportunity. Focussing on a partial update diverts limited staff resources from developing a comprehensive Local Plan, whether that be in the current or new plan-making system. It is advisable to abandon attempts to produce two separate local plan documents, which is not feasible under the new system, and instead concentrate resources on developing one district-wide local plan document. While submitting a single comprehensive local plan for examination by December 2026 represents an ambitious timeline, it could be achievable with focused leadership, dedicated resources, and appropriate investment in both in-house capacity and external expertise. This approach would provide a clear strategic direction, and any work undertaken would remain valuable even if the plan preparation extended into the new plan-making system.
- 4.1.11 It is essential for CDC to urgently explore its options for developing an up-to-date and comprehensive local plan, as it is currently facing several significant challenges that demand strategic attention. Among these challenges is the rise in local housing need figures calculated under the national standard methodology and the consequent impact on CDC's 5-year housing land supply. Without a robust local plan that outlines a clear development strategy for future growth, the council risks speculative and unplanned development, which could lead to development in less sustainable locations. It could also give rise to substantial resource implications, for example, staff time and risks of costs associated with planning appeals. A comprehensive approach is vital for establishing the council's strategy regarding the amount, type, and location of development, all while addressing the new housing figures and aligning with broader economic, environmental, and social objectives.
- 4.1.12 We acknowledge that there are complex decisions to be made and that options will need to be appraised against any potential risks to the council and all within the context of ongoing national changes to the planning system. We are expecting Government to publish National Development Management Policies this year which will have an impact on local plan content. Local government reorganisation and the preparation of strategic spatial development strategies at a wider than local level will also impact plan-making. The reality is however that there is never a truly "stable time" for plan-making as things are constantly changing and evolving.
- 4.1.13 It is crucial for the council to maintain a proactive stance in its planning efforts, even when faced with unexpected changes or uncertainty. By creating an up-to-date comprehensive Local Plan, the council can establish a framework that promotes sustainable development in the area over time. This will effectively guide future transitions and support long-term growth during this dynamic period of local government reorganisation. Ensuring that local

² Schedule 7 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023

communities and developers using the service continue to receive optimal support from CDC, regardless of any changes in administrative boundaries.

- 4.1.14 As part of our government grant-funded program, PAS provides assistance to councils in developing local plans within the current planning-making system, and we are also working with planning authorities to prepare for upcoming plan-making reforms. We recommend that CDC engage with PAS to explore how to conduct an options and risk appraisal that will support the advancement of the local plan effectively.

4.2 Performance and management

The team

- 4.2.1 In November 2024, most of the planning service transitioned back to the council from Publica's management. Conversations with staff indicate that this change has contributed to increased stability, complemented by effective interim management throughout the 12-month period leading up to our visit. The permanent recruitment of the Director of Place and Communities and Assistant Director of Planning Services is a positive development that will enhance staff stability and support the ongoing integration of the service within the council.
- 4.2.2 The planning team exhibited high morale, a spirit of mutual support, and a strong commitment to achieving positive outcomes. Staff take pride in their work, demonstrating genuine dedication to securing the best results for CDC and its historic and complex environment. The location and its associated planning challenges interest staff members, which is evident in the team's enthusiasm and the lengthy tenure of some employees. We heard that staff often work additional hours as good-will.
- 4.2.3 We learned that there have been recruitment challenges, partly due to the terms and conditions of the previous employer, Publica. Staff shared that career progression opportunities were often limited, typically available only when a promotion became vacant. This, along with non-competitive terms compared to other councils, has led to periods of high staff turnover and stress, illness, and increased pressure within the team. While the situation has improved considerably, some legacy terms and conditions have been carried over into the council, and staff continue to express concerns about the lack of career advancement opportunities. As a result, some employees are contemplating job options elsewhere. Additionally, disparities in terms and conditions exist, depending on when staff were employed by the council or Publica, further complicating morale and cohesion within the team.
- 4.2.4 The reintegration of the planning service into the council presents a valuable opportunity to reevaluate staff terms and conditions while enhancing career progression pathways. We recognise that this may require a broader examination across the council and that there may be contractual complexities related to the transition from Publica. However, we believe it is crucial for the council to explore ways to improve these aspects, as robust career progression opportunities are vital for fostering team cohesion and retaining valuable talent.
- 4.2.5 Informal relationships within the various areas of the planning service appear to be very strong. This positive dynamic is bolstered by shared office space and designated touchpoint days when different teams come together. While flexible and agile working arrangements are appealing to staff and should be preserved, we recommend creating additional opportunities for in-person collaboration that serve a clear purpose. Examples of this could include joint team meetings, service briefings, and collaborative workshops.
- 4.2.6 However, we observed that while these informal relationships are beneficial, the service relies heavily on individual initiative to foster them, and more formal working arrangements are not consistently embraced across the board. For instance, the Ecology, Heritage, and Design Team is well-resourced and provides critical support to Development Management regarding the review and determination of planning applications. Although this support is invaluable, we learned that response times from the team can lead to delays in the

decision-making process, causing case officers to request extensions of time that may not always be necessary. Given that performance monitoring falls on the case officer, it is understandable that they are concerned when timelines are stretched. While the Ecology, Heritage, and Design Team takes pride in their contributions and recognises the positive outcomes from improving schemes through their input, it would be more effective to address these discussions during the pre-application phase or earlier in the decision-making process. Striking a balance between encouraging constructive amendments and ensuring timely application determinations is essential.

- 4.2.7 There appears to be some confusion between these teams regarding their responsibilities for report writing when submitting applications for determination. We understand that the Ecology, Heritage, and Design Team is tasked with determining Listed Building applications submitted in isolation; however, when a planning application is submitted alongside such a request, the responsibility falls to Development Management to handle both. This has led to a disconnect and frustration among the teams concerning who should take ownership of specific tasks. While it is common for these functions to be organised into separate teams, many councils successfully integrate ecology, heritage, and design teams within Development Management, thereby clarifying roles and responsibilities. Each structural approach has its advantages and disadvantages, but regardless of the model adopted, it is crucial to establish a formal service level agreement. This agreement will help ensure that staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and how these relate to the work performed by their colleagues. Fostering a more collaborative understanding of how the teams interconnect, along with defined responsibilities, will enhance overall effectiveness and help deliver corporate priorities.
- 4.2.8 The Planning Policy team is currently managing a wide range of projects, which is affecting their ability to focus on core tasks, including the development of the Local Plan. It is essential for the council to address the resource constraints and capacity issues facing this team if it intends to act on one of the fundamental recommendations of this report, to proceed without delay on developing a comprehensive and up-to-date Local Plan. The team is positive, dedicated, and has fostered strong relationships throughout the service. Their collaboration is evident, particularly in the use of a shared database linking policy and Development Management, which records feedback on the implementation of specific planning policies. Such joint working is not always common between these services in councils and should be commended. Additionally, we noted the valuable support provided to the team by their colleagues in Ecology, Heritage, and Design.
- 4.2.9 We were pleased to see a dedicated infrastructure delivery lead, technician, and monitoring officer within the Planning Policy and Infrastructure team. This area of planning services is often under-resourced, making it essential for the team to receive strong backing from senior leadership to ensure they have the necessary resources and governance framework to deliver an effective service. While our evaluation did not specifically focus on this aspect of the service, it is worth noting should CDC find it beneficial, that PAS currently offers a support programme aimed at councils in this field. This program is designed to assist councils in enhancing the governance of developer contributions and promoting improved infrastructure planning and delivery through infrastructure delivery plans.
- 4.2.10 Although the transition from Publica has successfully brought the majority of the planning service back to the council, the administration and validation roles have remained with Publica. This arrangement has understandably met with mixed reactions from both the staff retained by Publica and the council employees who rely on these crucial roles to ensure effective service delivery.
- 4.2.11 While addressing the contractual arrangements with Publica is beyond the scope of this PPC, if these services cannot be brought back in-house, it is essential to establish robust governance arrangements and clear lines of accountability. A formal framework should be developed between Publica and CDC to ensure CDC maintains appropriate control over

processes, costs, and service standards. This should address the current inconsistencies in processes between councils, such as neighbour consultation and validation procedures. Additionally, focused effort must be made to fully integrate Publica staff into the wider planning team, ensuring they receive adequate support and recognition for their contributions, and understanding of their importance to the overall success of the service. This integration is crucial for maintaining service quality and fostering a unified team approach.

Overall performance - Development Management

4.2.12 The Development Management (DM) service is performing well (see Table 1 below) against the Government's national performance indicators for speed of processing planning applications. This is a significant improvement following the joint DM review in 2022 and the potential risk of designation. This provides a strong foundation for further enhancements.

4.2.13 Table 1 – Speed of processing Major and Non-Major Planning Applications

Criteria: Speed									
Council Cotswold District Co									
District matter Majors (151a)									
	All Major Decisions	Major Decisions within 13 weeks	PPA, EoT or EIA Decisions	PPA, EoT or EIA Decisions in time	Out of time (allowing EOTs)	Out of time (excluding EOTs)	Result (allowing EOTs)	Result (excluding EOTs)	
Q1 Oct - Dec 2023	7	2	5	3	2	5	71%	29%	Q1 Q1
Q2 Jan - Mar 2024	9	2	7	7	0	7	100%	22%	Q2 Q2
Q3 Apr - Jun 2024	10	3	7	7	0	7	100%	30%	Q3 Q3
Q4 Jul - Sep 2024	11	3	7	7	1	8	91%	27%	Q4 Q4
Q1 Oct - Dec 2024	4	1	3	3	0	3	100%	25%	Q1 Q1
total (allowing EOTs)	41	11	29	27	3		93%		
total (excluding EOTs)	41	11				30		27%	
Min. level required (inc. EOTs) 60%									
Assessment is made late December 2025, for designation announcement early 2026									
Non-majors (153)									
	Non-major Decisions	Non-major Decisions within 8 weeks	PPA, EoT or EIA Decisions	PPA, EoT or EIA Decisions in time	Out of time (allowing EOTs)	Out of time (excluding EOTs)	Result (allowing EOTs)	Result (excluding EOTs)	
Q1 Oct - Dec 2023	272	122	137	122	28	150	90%	45%	Q1 Q1
Q2 Jan - Mar 2024	271	97	149	135	39	174	86%	36%	Q2 Q2
Q3 Apr - Jun 2024	268	109	139	128	31	159	88%	41%	Q3 Q3
Q4 Jul - Sep 2024	291	146	123	113	32	145	89%	50%	Q4 Q4
Q1 Oct - Dec 2024	258	134	113	108	16	124	94%	52%	Q1 Q1
total (allowing EOTs)	1360	608	661	606	146		89%		
total (excluding EOTs)	1360	608				752		45%	
Min. level required (inc. EOTs) 70%									

Things to highlight from Table 1:

- Current performance **comfortably above** targets – 93% for major applications and 89% for non-major applications.
- Current performance, **excluding extensions of time** is 27% for Major applications and 45% for non-major applications.

4.2.14 Like many other planning services, current performance levels rely heavily on 'extensions of time' (agreements with applicants to extend the decision-making timeframe). Messages from Government suggest that future performance will rely less on extensions of time and had previously proposed stricter targets excluding extensions of time as 60% for major applications and 50% for non-major application. In December 2024 the Government published an update to the designation criteria, which retained the existing targets. CDC, like most other local planning authorities, now has additional time to reduce reliance on extensions before stricter metrics are introduced.

- 4.2.15 While there is still work to be done, we acknowledge the progress made as part of the DM improvement initiatives to improve the percentage of decisions made 'in time' without reliance upon extensions of time. This effort has been bolstered by the publication of the "Negotiating Submitted Applications Procedure Note" (2023). This guidance provides clarity to applicants regarding the circumstances under which the council will engage in negotiations for minor amendments. Officers have found this particularly beneficial, as it offers applicants a clear framework and solid rationale that aids in managing their caseloads. Furthermore, it encourages proactive engagement in the pre-application process, which is the ideal setting for initial negotiations. We recommend that this guidance be made more easily accessible on the website and that all teams within the planning service be informed of and adhere to the guidelines outlined in the procedure note.
- 4.2.16 We acknowledge and commend the significant efforts made to reduce the backlog of expired cases, increase the rate of decision-making and improve the number of cases that individual officers have in hand. These improvements have brought about meaningful progress in this area and contribute to greater stability within the service. As a result, staff are able to manage their caseloads more effectively, leading to a more efficient and productive work environment.

Overall performance – Enforcement

- 4.2.17 We have been informed that the number of open enforcement cases has gradually decreased since peaking in October 2024. While efforts are underway to expedite this process through the development of the Local Enforcement Plan, it is evident that staffing challenges must be addressed to effectively support this work. Staff members possess valuable insights and innovative ideas for enhancing this aspect of the planning service; however, due to resource constraints, they often lack the time and opportunity to develop and implement these suggestions.
- 4.2.18 To improve the situation, we recommend that the council prioritise the recruitment and allocation of additional resources within the enforcement team. This would not only reduce the backlog of cases more swiftly but also provide staff with the capacity to explore and implement their ideas for improvement. Additionally, establishing a structured forum for staff to share their insights and recommendations could empower them and foster a more collaborative environment focused on reinforcing the enforcement process. Care should also be taken to ensure that members are closely involved in setting and agreeing enforcement priorities. This will foster a closer working relationship and should address any tensions between what members expect of the enforcement service and what is achievable.

Overall performance – Local Plan

- 4.2.19 Section 4.1 of this report details our recommendations on the pressing need for the council to spearhead the development of a comprehensive and up-to-date Local Plan. This is critical for the future of planning in the area; however, it does not detract from the acknowledgment of the successful achievement of numerous objectives outlined in the 2018 Local Plan. This has included the council consistently meeting the housing delivery test targets which are a national benchmark that evaluates whether planned housing requirements have been fulfilled within a specified timeframe. While circumstances have evolved and a revised development strategy is necessary, CDC has demonstrated its ability to successfully implement local plan policies, establishing a solid foundation for the future.

Streamlining services - Income generation and digital capacity

- 4.2.20 In April 2024 a [pre-application and discretionary fees charging schedule](#) was published on the council's website. Staff advised that it is used by repeat planning agents and architects and usually for more complex householder pre-applications, often dealing with schemes with a significant heritage input. The protocol includes scope for additional written reports and meetings, although this is an area where uptake is not high and is something CDC would like to work on improving. Feedback on the pre-app service is generally good, and the 2023 Negotiation procedure note also indicates that CDC may be more lenient when it

comes to negotiating planning applications that have been subject to pre-app where schemes can be made acceptable through minor amendments.

- 4.2.21 The charging schedule generally aligns with best practices recognised by PAS and adheres to the guidance available on our website. To strengthen its offerings, CDC might consider introducing scoping meetings to discuss the principles of development, which tend to be well-received by developers, especially for larger sites. These meetings could include a fixed hourly fee, with varying rates based on the expertise and role of different officers. Additionally, the current schedule does not incorporate Planning Performance Agreements (PPA's), which are crucial for efficiently managing large-scale applications and ensuring that income generation is sufficient to cover the associated resource requirements. Further guidance on PPA's is available on the [PAS website](#).
- 4.2.22 Our discussions did not reveal any particular focus on digital innovation within the planning services. This is a fast-evolving area and separately we discovered that West Oxfordshire and CDC were awarded funding from the PropTech Engagement Fund in 2022. This was used to explore improvement to the back-office functionality to enhance the submitting, processing and analysing of representations gathered through consultation in the plan-making process. The implementation of the platform significantly increased the volume of responses to planning consultations. Building on this work, the councils explored Artificial Intelligence solutions to support the management and analysis of responses to consultations. The LGA have [published a case study](#) of this work.
- 4.2.23 While this work is being recognised nationally as a best practice, other teams within CDC's planning service remain unaware of its existence. For CDC to enhance its planning operations and effectively leverage digital innovations to improve efficiency, engage the community more successfully, and achieve better outcomes, it is crucial that this work be better disseminated and understood throughout the entire service.
- 4.2.24 The government is committed to developing a digital planning programme aimed at creating a modern and efficient planning system in England. This initiative seeks to transition from a document-based approach to a data-driven, standards-based system that utilises contemporary, user-centred products and services. The goal is to speed up the planning process through improved decision-making, faster plan-making, greater access to planning data, and enhanced community engagement. Regular updates on the programme are available on the [Open Digital Planning](#) website and MHCLG's [data platform](#). We recommend that CDC actively engage in these initiatives to adopt best practices and innovations that support an efficient planning service. This engagement should include ensuring that appropriate resources are allocated to lead these efforts across the service.

[Performance management](#)

- 4.2.25 Performance management within the service currently lacks consistency, with some staff members enjoying regular or ad hoc one-on-one meetings with their line managers, while others have no such opportunities. Furthermore, the processes for appraisals are unclear, along with their connection to the broader corporate performance management framework. To address these issues, it is essential for CDC to develop a unified and transparent performance management system.
- 4.2.26 The implementation of regular team meetings and one-on-one sessions between staff and their line managers will foster open communication and provide a platform for addressing performance-related concerns. A clear and consistent appraisal process should be established, aligned with the corporate performance management framework and incorporating feedback from staff. Defining specific key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with corporate objectives and the emerging People Strategy is vital, as these metrics should be communicated to all staff members to enhance their understanding of expectations and responsibilities.

4.2.27 Creating an environment that encourages staff engagement is crucial, as it fosters a sense of ownership and value among employees, who are CDC's most significant asset. Alongside a structured performance management system, all staff should have access to personal development plans and clear career progression opportunities. Investing in a corporate performance management system can aid in integrating various performance metrics and facilitating progress tracking. Additionally, utilising infographics for the clear communication of performance data will make it easier for staff to understand their achievements and objectives. By implementing these measures, CDC can create a more equitable and effective performance management system that values employee contributions, fosters professional growth, and aligns with the organisation's strategic objectives.

Planning committee

4.2.28 Planning committee is a significant investment of time and resources for most councils, necessitating close collaboration among the planning, democratic services, and legal teams. It serves as an important conduit for the council, playing a crucial role in ensuring democratic and transparent decision-making on often controversial issues.

4.2.29 The revised scheme of delegation has proven effective in enhancing the management of CDC's planning committee, ensuring that the appropriate applications are discussed publicly. However, this change has not been universally embraced by some town and parish councils, who have expressed concerns that it has led to reduced transparency and diminished local democratic participation.

4.2.30 Reports to committee are presented clearly and transparently, and there is a noticeable positive rapport between officers and committee members. Officers deliver effective presentations, and the committee is well organised. While the length of questioning and debate during the meetings we observed sometimes reached challenging levels, this did not detract from the overall operation of the committee. For additional guidance on planning committee processes, including focused support available through PAS, further resources can be [found on our website](#).

4.3 Engagement

4.3.1 The engagement of the local community has been supported through initiatives like the Cirencester Town Centre Framework Masterplan consultation, and Neighbourhood Plans, demonstrating where community involvement can lead to positive outcomes. The developers we met also showed a keen interest in engaging with the council, which provides a platform to foster effective collaboration. In addition, we were impressed with the wider corporate approach to partnership working which has led to innovative ideas for stakeholder engagement, including the current partnership framework for delivering affordable housing schemes. It is important that the planning service understand the ambitions of this partnership and how their role can support the delivery of much needed affordable housing in CDC.

4.3.2 While we heard that the policy team is actively working with neighbouring authorities and the County Council, there is evident confusion amongst stakeholders regarding the local plan which has complicated relationships and engagement efforts for communities, parish and town councils, and developers. There are also challenges receiving comments from statutory consultees on planning applications in a timely manner which further pressurises the use of extensions of time. This is not uncommon across councils and is a challenge that the government is currently examining.

4.3.3 The peer challenge team met with some well-informed community groups, who had a very good understanding of the planning process. Engaging with and consulting communities is an essential part of the planning process and from those we met there is an underlying frustration in terms of the effectiveness of CDCs community engagement on planning applications, access to planning documents and the changes to the scheme of delegation.

This may not be representative of all parish and town councils but to address this, the council should establish a structured and well-publicised engagement programme with parish and town councils. While resource constraints must be carefully balanced, there may be opportunities to utilise existing relationships and processes.

- 4.3.4 CDC's Statement of Community Involvement was published in January 2024. We recommend reviewing the SCI to consider its effectiveness and to use it inform a clear, more structured stakeholder engagement plan with all key partners. A key element of this should be the establishment of a regular Developers Forum, bringing together major developers, agents, and CDC representatives to facilitate constructive dialogue on emerging issues and maintain open channels of communication.
- 4.3.5 Where resources would allow the engagement plan could also include partnership forums across Gloucestershire with the aim of sharing best practice. This may help to support innovative discussions, providing space to explore bold ideas and solutions to CDC's complex planning challenges. This could leverage the expertise of key stakeholders including, where feasible, statutory consultees. This might usefully identify and address shared - and indeed competing - priorities and develop potential solutions. This might foster a more inclusive, collaborative, and forward-thinking planning culture, aligned with both local and regional priorities.

4.4 Achieving outcomes

- 4.4.1 The planning service demonstrates a strong commitment to the overarching principle of 'Green to the Core,' a key message that resonates across all levels of the organisation and that has been embedded in the work on the partial update to the Local Plan. This initiative highlights the council's dedication to sustainability and environmental stewardship in its planning processes.
- 4.4.2 Furthermore, the service has successfully secured grant income to support critical projects such as local plan progression and Green Belt Review. This funding reinforces the council's commitment to developing sustainable communities but also highlights the strategic importance of these initiatives within the broader developmental framework.
- 4.4.3 With the recent appointment of a new Director and Assistant Director focused on place and communities, there is a clear ambition to advance and cultivate sustainable growth within CDC. This leadership role will play a pivotal part in enhancing the council's capacity to manage growth effectively while ensuring that community needs are met in a sustainable manner.
- 4.4.4 Clarity regarding the local plan and the future development framework for the area is essential to mitigate the risk of unplanned developments. Ensuring that all stakeholders are informed and engaged is crucial for maintaining a cohesive planning strategy. Enhanced internal relationships and working arrangements, especially regarding consultation responses, processes, and engagement with specialist officers, will further improve the council's ability to make well-informed decisions that align with corporate goals.
- 4.4.5 Budget management is another critical area that requires attention. For managers to effectively consider income generation opportunities and savings, they need access to a detailed understanding of the financial position of their operations. This capability will empower managers to make informed decisions that align with the council's strategic objectives while also ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently. Accountability for departmental budgets must be a priority, with a focus on identifying further opportunities for income generation.
- 4.4.6 To drive these initiatives forward, the council should develop a comprehensive service plan that outlines clear priorities and timelines. Accelerating the local plan's progression while enhancing engagement with both internal and external stakeholders is vital for achieving

successful outcomes. Additionally, conducting a thorough resource planning assessment across the service will ensure that all teams are aligned with key priorities, ultimately leading to more effective and streamlined operations. This should also include consideration of resources required to support the planning service, including legal services where we know there are challenges that are not unique to CDC.

- 4.4.7 The council should actively celebrate successes, both big and small, as this will motivate staff and stakeholders alike. This can be achieved through various channels, such as newsletters, social media, and public announcements. Highlighting case studies that demonstrate sustainable planning outcomes will not only recognise the contributions of various stakeholders but also motivate continued participation in future engagement efforts. This approach cultivates a culture of collaboration and shared success that benefits the entire community.

5 Implementation, next steps and further support

- 5.1 It is recognised that the Council and service will want to consider and reflect on these findings.
- 5.2 To support openness and transparency, we recommend that the council shares this report with officers and that they publish it for information for wider stakeholders. There is also an expectation that the council responds to the finding in the report and develops an action plan to be published alongside the report.
- 5.3 Where possible, PAS and the LGA will support councils with the implementation of the recommendations as part of the Council's improvement programme.
- 5.4 A range of support from the LGA and PAS is available on our websites. Some specific areas of support that CDC might wish to look at includes:
- [Support for Plan-Making](#)
 - [Development Management Challenge Toolkit](#)
 - [Improving governance of developer contributions](#)
- 5.5 It is recommended that CDC discuss ongoing PAS support with Rachael Ferry-Jones, PAS Principal Consultant, rachael.ferry-jones@local.gov.uk and any corporate support with Paul Clarke, Principal Adviser, paul.clarke@local.gov.uk
- 5.6 As part of the LGA's peer review peer impact assessment and evaluation, PAS and the LGA will contact the Council in 6-12 months to see how the recommendations are being implemented and the beneficial impact experienced.
- 5.7 The author of this report is Rachael Ferry-Jones (rachael.ferry-jones@local.gov.uk), on behalf of the peer challenge team.
- 5.8 This report was finalised in agreement with the Council on XXXXXX
- 5.9 We are grateful for the support of everyone that contributed to this review.



COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 10 JULY 2025
Subject	Local Plan Update
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Juliet Layton Deputy Leader of Cotswold District Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Email: Juliet.Layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Geraldine LeCointe – Assistant Director of Planning Services Email: Geraldine.LeCointe@cotswold.gov.uk
Report authors	Jo Symons – Head of Planning Policy and Infrastructure Email: Jo.Symons@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To confirm the way forward for the Local Plan Update
Annexes	Local Plan Oversight Board Terms of Reference July 2025
Recommendation(s)	<p>That Cabinet recommends for Council to resolve merge the two ongoing Local Plan projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the partial update of the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan (2011-2031); and the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan, <p>into a single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update in conjunction with incorporating work of the Gloucestershire Strategic Plan, where appropriate, with a view to submission in 2026 and adoption in 2027.</p> <p>That, if this is approved by Council, Cabinet resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Update the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy in parallel with the Local Plan process.



	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Invest in additional resources to accelerate the delivery of the Local Plan to enable the December 2026 submission deadline to be hit.3. Confirm the delivery of the Local Plan as a Council priority.4. Establish a Local Plan Oversight Board and confirm a new Terms of Reference.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responding to the Climate Emergency• Delivering Housing• Supporting Communities• Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Local Management Team



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Cotswold District Council began updating its Local Plan¹ in June 2020. Since then, significant progress has been made.
- 1.2** Initial work was primarily to make the adopted Local Plan 'Green to the Core' in response to the Council's climate change and ecological emergency declarations. In January 2024, the Council also began making preparations to deliver development requirements beyond 2031 (the end of the adopted Local Plan period).
- 1.3** Due to a deadline to submit Local Plans under the current planning regulations, which were considered to be more advantageous to the Council than the new planning regulations, and uncertainty around expected national planning policy changes at the time it was decided to keep the two Local Plan projects separate but progress them in parallel. The intention was to combine the two Local Plan projects into a single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update further down the line if it was possible to do so, allowing the Council to keep its options open and 'hedge its bets'.
- 1.4** Since then, the government has undertaken radical changes to national planning policies. These included:
- Introducing a new centralised calculation of the number of homes needed in each local planning authority area, which more than doubled the number of homes the government calculates to be needed in the district to 1,036 homes a year²; and
 - Extending the deadline to submit Local Plans to the Secretary of State for independent examination in public from June 2025 to December 2026.
- 1.5** As a result, Cotswold District no longer has a five-year housing land supply. The adopted Local Plan policies governing the supply of housing are now out-of-date and must be updated. There may still be justification to refuse planning applications for new homes. However, the harms of granting planning permission must now significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The 1,036 home a year target has potential to harm the district with an increase of unplanned developments. The

¹ Cotswold District Local Plan (2011 to 2031) – adopted 3 August 2018

² Note, this figure is updated annually to incorporate updated housing affordability data.



Council is already receiving a large increase in planning applications for new homes on greenfield sites next to towns and villages in the district.

1.6 Cotswold District is a truly special place, and the district has many “areas and assets of particular importance” that the Council must protect. For example, the district has:

- 80% of its land area within the Cotswolds National Landscape (a greater coverage by a National Landscape designation than any other district in England);
- 144 Conservation Areas (more than any other district in England);
- Over 5,000 entries on the statutory list of buildings of special architectural and historic interest (second after City of Westminster);
- 239 Scheduled ancient monuments;
- 32 registered historic parks and gardens;
- 38 Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Over 260 locally designated wildlife sites;
- 1 registered battlefield; and many more.

1.7 Further land is susceptible to high flood risk, where development should be avoided.

1.8 National planning policies specify that all these areas and assets of particular importance can justify a lower housing requirement in the adopted Local Plan than the 1,036 homes a year that the government calculates to be needed in the district. However, until a new Local Plan is adopted, the Council must continue to use the 1,036 home a year target as the basis for measuring its five-year housing land supply.

1.9 Local Government Reorganisation is also on the horizon. Cotswold is currently set to become part of a unitary authority in April 2028.

1.10 Council is not being asked to support a new Local Plan. It is being asked to combine the two ongoing Local Plan projects into a single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update – something which was always the intention to do. The key ask is that, in making this decision, Cabinet commits itself to prioritising and resourcing the Local Plan so that the updated Local Plan can be submitted for examination by December 2026.



1.11 This is an ambitious target, and its delivery will require some streamlining of the current Local Plan process, as well as investment in staff resources³. However, it also has significant benefits to the Council:

- i. The Council will be able to adopt its Local Plan and regain its five-year housing land supply as fast as possible.
- ii. The Council will have an adopted Local Plan that can be transferred to the new unitary authority, which will provide a long-lasting legacy for Cotswold District Council.
- iii. There is an opportunity to increase the amount of affordable housing, especially social rented housing, from developments, whilst also increasing the proportion of smaller and more affordable house types.
- iv. The district's areas and assets of particular importance will have greater protection, and these may provide justification to set a lower housing requirement in the Local Plan.
- v. The Council will be able to deduct any previous over-delivery of housing on its Local Plan housing requirement from the remaining requirement that its five year housing land supply is measured against.
- vi. The Council will be able to update its Community Infrastructure Levy to help secure infrastructure first development.

1.12 Aiming to deliver this target is also not without risk. For example, there have been various national policy consultations and rule changes that have already delayed the delivery of the Local Plan, and there may be further changes ahead. However, even if the Council does not submit the Local Plan by December 2026, all is not lost. There may be other opportunities including through the new government regulations to submit a Plan, particularly if government reorganisation is delayed. The important issue is that progression on the Plan needs to continue at pace to ensure that a legacy is set for Cotswold District that ensures development takes place in the right places with an infrastructure first approach.

³ Any necessary staff resources would be fixed term for two years. Any other additions are being made from the existing budget.



SUMMARY TIMELINE

Cotswold District Council began updating its Local Plan⁴ in June 2020. This report recommends the Council to continue updating its adopted Local Plan through the merger of the ongoing Partial Local Plan Update and the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan and progress a single, unified Local Plan to submission. With 80% of the district designated as National Landscape and a further 4% with other nationally protected characteristics or constraints, there may be justification for the Council to set a lower housing requirement figure, thus enabling the Council to locate development and its associated infrastructure in the right places.

- 2018: Plan adopted
- 2020: Decision to do partial review to make Plan green to core
- 2023: Review of housing requirement – no significant change to housing need so no need to update housing requirement
- 2024: Decision to do Site Allocations Document – Feb/March 2024 Reg 18 Issues and Options Consultation on DM policies & on Development Strategy
- December 2024: Government introduces new standard method for calculating housing need – significant change with Cotswold District Council now needing to provide 1,036 homes a year, triggering statutory requirement to update the Plan.
- April 2025: Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review – concludes it is critical for the Council to prioritise options that deliver an up-to-date Local Plan without delay.
- June 2025: Development management policies 'green to core' and substantially ready for Regulation 19 draft Plan consultation BUT site allocations required to meet new housing requirement figure. Now require further evidence for site allocations and selection of site allocations > further consultation required on approach to site selection in area – to take place in Autumn 2025
- Spring 2026: Consultation on Draft Plan and allocated sites
- December 2026: Submission of Local Plan for examination through existing regulations⁵ (the new regulations expected may provide an alternative route for submitting the Plan although there is currently only one option of submitting a Plan under the current regulations in December 2026)
- 2028: Adoption

⁴ Cotswold District Local Plan (2011 to 2031) – adopted 3 August 2018

⁵ Government response to the proposed plan-making reforms: consultation on implementation - GOV.UK
Government response to the proposed plan-making reforms: consultation on implementation - GOV.UK



2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Terminology: This report refers to several types of plan-making terms, so the following definitions provide a useful reference:

- **Adopted Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (the adopted Local Plan):** The extant plan used to determine planning applications.
- **Partial update of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (Partial Local Plan Plan):** The plan the council has been preparing to date. It updates parts of the adopted Local Plan, mostly the development management policies, and it does not extend the plan period or alter the development strategy.
- **Development strategy:** This is a core component a local plan. It specifies the quantum and location of development to meet identified needs.
- **Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan:** Specifies the quantum and location of development in Cotswold District during the period 2026 to 2041.
- **Full Local Plan Update:** It combines the Partial Local Plan Update and the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan into a single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update that meets development needs beyond 2031. To achieve this the Full Local Plan Update would need to be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in public by 31 December 2026.
- **New Style Plan:** The government is changing how future local plans are made. From 1 January 2027 authorities that haven't already submitted their draft local plan for independent examination in public will need to prepare and submit their local plan using new plan-making regulations. A New Style Plan would include a new/updated development strategy and a few development management policies of local importance that are not covered by the new National Development Management Policies (a new sister document to the National Planning Policy Framework, which the government proposes to consult on in 2025).

2.2 Progress on the Local Plan: The following sets out the timeline of work that has been undertaken on the Local Plan update so far:

- **August 2018:** Cotswold District Council adopts its Local Plan⁶.

⁶ [Cotswold District Local Plan \(2011-2031\)](#)



- **June 2020:** A review of all the adopted local plan policies⁷ was completed to assess whether they required updating. In response, the Council commenced a partial update of the adopted Local Plan (the Partial Local Plan Update), primarily to make the Local Plan 'Green to the Core' in response to the Council's climate change and ecological emergency declarations. The Partial Local Plan Update also responded to national planning policy changes and made improvements to the Local Plan in response to feedback from the Council's Development Management team from their experience of using the newly adopted Local Plan.
- **February / March 2022:** The Council undertook an initial consultation (known formally as a Regulation 18 consultation) on the Partial Local Plan Update to identify 'Issues and Options' that the Local Plan needed to respond to.
- **August 2023:** A further review of the adopted Local Plan housing requirement was completed to establish whether this required updating. A relatively small percentage increase of 4.95% was found to be well within the bounds of flexibility, and the change was not deemed to be "significant". It was concluded that the adopted Local Plan housing requirement did not require updating and could continue to be used as the basis for measuring the five-year housing land supply.
- **January 2024:** As there would soon be less than five years remaining of the Local Plan period, it was decided to proactively begin the process of planning for development requirements beyond 2031 before a lack of a five-year housing land supply became an issue. The Council therefore approved the commencement of a Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan (2026-41). It was decided to keep the two Local Plan projects separate due to a government-imposed deadline of June 2025 to submit Local Plans to the Secretary of State for examination in public under the current Local Plan regulations. Plans submitted after this date would be examined under new planning regulations, which although the detail had not been published were believed to be less advantageous for the Council's aspirations. It was recommended to keep the situation under review in the hope of being able to

⁷ Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 makes it a legal requirement for planning authorities to review their local plan every five year.



combine the two Local Plan projects. It was highlighted that doing so would bring considerable financial savings.

- **February / March 2024:** The Council undertook consultations on both the 'Draft Policies' of the Partial Local Plan Update and 'Issues and Options' for the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan, the latter considering development options beyond 2031. This concluded that the Local Plan should focus development in and around the district's principal settlements and transport nodes, as well as exploring whether strategic scale development around Moreton-in-Marsh as a Principal Settlement with a railway station would be feasible. This strategy was based on the housing target of the previous government, which at that time was 493 homes a year.
- **December 2024:** The newly elected Government produced a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (the NPPF). The changes included a new, mandatory Standard Method for calculating the number of homes needed in each local planning authority area. Areas with the highest levels of unaffordable housing were given increased housebuilding targets. As a result, and due to high house prices in Cotswold District, the district received a more than 100% increase in its target. more than doubling of its target. The number of homes needed in the district is now calculated to be 1,036 homes a year. Due to this being a significant change, the NPPF requires an update to the local plan housing requirement. The national policy changes also extended the deadline from June 2025 to December 2026 to submit local plans to the Secretary of State for examination in public under the current planning regulations Authorities that do not meet the December 2026 submission deadline will need to prepare plans under the new planning regulations, although the detail of these is still awaited⁸.
- **March 2025:** The Planning Advisory Service completed a review of the Planning Service, which concluded that: *both internal and external stakeholders have expressed concerns regarding the progress of developing an up-to-date Local Plan. This delay poses risks not only to the delivery of key corporate objectives*

⁸ [Government response to the proposed plan-making reforms: consultation on implementation - GOV.UK](#) (note Chapter 2 and Chapter 6)



but also to the planning service itself, as not having an up-to-date Local Plan can lead to unplanned development. The council faces several important challenges that require a strategic focus and for which the Local Plan is an important delivery tool. These include an increase housing need in nationally mandated figures and the exploration of growth options for residential and economic development, all within the context of ongoing national changes to the planning system. An up-to-date Local Plan is essential for establishing the spatial framework for the area, ensuring development occurs in appropriate locations. Consequently, it is critical for the council to prioritise options that facilitate the creation of a comprehensive and up-to-date Local Plan without delay. Conducting an options appraisal and implementing robust project management and governance frameworks will be essential to this process.

- **July 2025:** The partially updated Local Plan policies and their evidence base are substantially complete in readiness for the final stage of public consultation (formally known as Regulation 19 consultation). The Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan has undergone an Issues & Options (Regulation 18) consultation. Various evidence is completed or is in train, including a Settlement Role and Function Study to assess the sustainability of settlements; a Broad Locations Study and Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Update to identify sites; Moreton-in-Marsh Feasibility Study to assess the feasibility of development in Moreton; Infrastructure Delivery Plan to ensure the right infrastructure is provided to support developments; Housing and Economic Needs Assessment to ensure the Local Plan provides for the right homes and job types to support the district's population; a Town Centres Study to protect our town centres whilst enabling them to diversify and remain viable; and many more.

In summary, a substantial amount of work has already been completed or is underway on both Local Plan projects, which can be transferred into the single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update.

- 2.3** The proposed option in this report builds on the work completed since the Local Plan update commenced in 2020. It demonstrates that by merging the two ongoing Local Plan projects into a single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update, the Council will be able to submit a Local Plan for examination that is green to the core and that addresses



the district's significantly increased housing target. Once adopted, the Local Plan can be carried forward into the new Unitary Authority as the adopted Plan for the Cotswold District. This Plan would then be the Plan by which development applications are determined and will remain so until such time as the new unitary authority produces its own plan, which may take up to five years post vesting.⁹

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** It is a statutory requirement for all local planning authorities to have an up-to-date local plan. A significant amount of work has already been completed to proactively deliver a single and comprehensive Full Local Plan Update through the two ongoing Local Plan projects. Given the government's significantly increased housing target for the district, which mean the Council can no longer use some of the most important policies from its adopted Plan to determine planning applications, an updated Local Plan is now urgently needed.
- 3.2** Paragraph 34 of the NPPF provides: *Relevant strategic policies will need updating at least once every five years if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly; and they are likely to require earlier review if local housing need is expected to change significantly in the near future."*
- 3.3** Furthermore, members will be aware that due to the new Government housing figure, the Council no longer has a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) of deliverable housing sites. The recently published 5YHLS report established that the Council has a 1.8 year supply. This means that the tilted balance in favour of granting planning permission to sustainable housing developments now applies. The balance is whether the harms 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits of granting permission. This is where the decision-maker will afford varying degrees of weight to the harms and benefits associated with a proposed development (NPPF, paragraph 11d). The result is that the Council is already receiving a significant uplift in speculative applications for housing developments, and this can be expected to continue. Each

⁹ *Town and Country planning: The Transition Regulations make clear that a local development document (such as a development plan) adopted by a predecessor council prior to re-organisation shall continue to apply after reorganisation as if it had been adopted by the unitary authority in relation to the area the plan covers. Additionally, the new unitary must adopt its own local development plan within 5 years of the re-organisation date.*



application must now be considered on its merits, and with no 5YHLS, the presumption would be in favour of granting planning permission in unplanned locations.

- 3.4** National Landscapes are a location where the harm caused by the proposed development may significantly outweigh its benefits. However, it is a nuanced and subjective process, and not as clear-cut as one benefit outweighs one harm. Each would require a specific individual assessment to be undertaken, on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.5** The Council has enjoyed a long period with a low number of appeals, but this is likely to change because the Council no longer has an up-to-date Local Plan or a 5YHLS.

Additional benefits of fast tracking the Local Plan

- 3.6** Through updating the Local Plan, the Council has the opportunity to seek to reduce its housing requirement figure.
- 3.7** Paragraph 11 of the NPPF specifies that, "*Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:*
- a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;*
 - b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas⁶, unless:*
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area⁷; or*
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."* (emphasis added)

Footnote 7: "*The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: **habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as***



Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.”(emphasis added to show the protected areas and assets of particular importance in Cotswold District that may justify a lower housing requirement).

- 3.8** This means that if a local planning authority has evidence to show that it cannot meet the government’s housing requirement figure, then a reduced figure would be allowed if the Plan was found sound at examination. The Plan would then be adopted on that basis.
- 3.9** Officers are currently undertaking a Broad Locations study which looks at the constraints of the district and assesses where appropriate locations may be situated for new settlements or extensions to existing settlements.
- 3.10** Paragraph 189 of the NPPF provides that: *Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.* Therefore, there can be no strategic sites within the National Landscape which covers 80% of the district.
- 3.11** This leaves 20% of the district. However, a further 4% is either land covered by other protected areas and assets of particular importance referred to in NPPF Footnote 7 or land which is already developed, leaving only 16% of the district as possible options for strategic sites. In addition, this remaining land will have further constraints which may limit development options (e.g. land not being available for development). Therefore, it is highly likely that the Cotswold District will not be able to provide for the full 1,036 homes per year in the district and that the Council would then have to provide for a reduced housing figure, whilst looking to other adjoining authorities to help in providing for the district’s housing need; the Planning Policy and Infrastructure team has already reached out to other districts in this regard. Notably, Exmoor National Park Authority, which has the same status of protection in the NPPF as the Cotswolds National Landscape, successfully argued for a significantly reduced housing requirement when they adopted their plan in 2017, arguing that the National Park has the highest status of protection and therefore has exceptional circumstances.



Community Infrastructure Levy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update

- 3.12** 'Infrastructure First' is a prominent ambition of the Council. This approach to planning development provides an opportunity to improve the district's local infrastructure and the regeneration of our towns and villages, whilst expanding the modal shift from cars to public transport and active travel. This can be achieved by coordinating the Local Plan with infrastructure providers, enabling them to make long-term investment decisions and plan their delivery programmes based on the pipeline of development set out in the Council's Local Plan. Development that is not plan-led is less likely to benefit from this longer-term infrastructure planning and is unlikely to provide the infrastructure benefits that would be secured in an updated Local Plan. Local services, such as hospitals, doctors, schools, transport infrastructure and sewage treatment works would therefore be likely to be further stretched due to the lack of planned investment and new facilities.
- 3.13** Cotswold District is a highly desirable place to live and work, and our residents rightly expect that the infrastructure to meet their needs is delivered alongside economic and residential growth. Infrastructure must keep up the pace, so the Council can maintain truly sustainable, cohesive communities with their own identity. Sometimes our residents have mixed or less-positive feelings about development in their area, but they do appreciate the infrastructure improvements which flow from it. This is a positive outcome that the Council can provide to its residents.
- 3.14** To deliver on this promise, and to mitigate the impact of developments, the Council relies significantly on financial contributions from developers via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- 3.15** CIL is a set charge on the developer per square metre of built development (with some exceptions). The rate of charge was last set in the Council's CIL Charging Schedule in 2018. This was based on a 2016 assessment¹⁰ of the infrastructure that was required to support the now adopted Local Plan. The cost of that infrastructure and the funding gap was also assessed. The Council's annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) monitors what has been delivered and what remains in the pipeline.
- 3.16** Whilst the Council's CIL rate is indexed to reflect the market, it does not (and cannot) reflect the changing overall cost of infrastructure or changing infrastructure needs. For

¹⁰ Cotswold District Infrastructure Delivery Plan (Arup, 2016)



example, infrastructure needs can change over time with the constant rate of growth. There can also be changing circumstances, such as the need to respond more urgently to climate change and reduce private car travel rising up the priority list.

3.17 Irrespective of this, planning for growth beyond 2031 will have additional infrastructure requirements. It is therefore fundamentally important that the district's infrastructure requirements for the new Local Plan period are reassessed, and that this assessment takes consideration of the district's current priorities. It is only by following this process that the Council can review its CIL rate of the charge.

3.18 The following actions are therefore proposed:

- Update the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (last updated 9 years ago); and
- Review the CIL charging schedule (last updated 7 years ago).

3.19 The cost of updating the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy charging rate is built into the costings provided in the Financial Implications section. There are no existing deadlines for submitting the CIL Charging Schedule for examination. It is envisaged that new Charging Schedule would be consulted at Regulation 19 alongside the Local Plan and the submission of the CIL Charging Schedule will follow on from the submission of the Local Plan and the examination again will follow after. The same evidence will be required to support both CIL and the Local Plan. Previously, the CIL examination followed on after the local plan examination using the same Inspector.

Local Plan Update Timetable

3.20 Officers will not be starting from scratch when updating the Plan: the Local Plan update began in 2020 with the partial update of the adopted Local Plan's development management policies and this is now substantially complete, with these policies green to the core. This part of the plan is ready for a Regulation 19 consultation. Work on the Development Strategy and Site Allocations aspect of the Local Plan commenced in January 2024 and has already undergone a Regulation 18 consultation in February/March 2024 when a call for sites was undertaken. Various evidence base work has also already been completed or is nearing completion.

3.21 In terms of what is required going forwards, given the significant increase to the number of homes the government calculates to be needed in the district, a further



Regulation 18 consultation is required. As noted above, Officers are currently undertaking a Broad Locations Study which looks at the constraints of the district and assesses where appropriate locations may be situated for new settlements or extensions to existing settlements. It is intended that this study will have an Integrated Impact Assessment. A Settlement Role and Function Study is also being undertaken, and this consults our parishes on their facilities and looks at public transport to establish the sustainability of each settlement. From this Study, it is intended that a settlement hierarchy will be established to help in allocating a sustainable level of development across the district whilst considering constraints.

- 3.22** The Regulation 18 consultation will publish these documents alongside a consultation questionnaire to seek views on the most appropriate locations for development; another call for sites will also be undertaken. Further relevant pieces of evidence will be consulted on as and when they are ready including the updated Gypsy and Traveller Assessment, the Town Centre Study, and the Housing and Employment Needs Assessment. These will provide the necessary requirement figures for gypsy and travellers, retail and employment as well as the types of housing required.
- 3.23** Sites will then need to be assessed and allocated and appropriate evidence produced to support a draft Plan. A Regulation 19 consultation of the draft plan and its evidence can then be undertaken in Spring 2026 with a view to submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination in December 2026.
- 3.24** In previous local plan consultations, processing the consultation responses has been a labour intensive and time-consuming, and this is a primary reason why local plans across the country take so long. This has been recognised by the government as an issue, and Cotswold District Council has been part of a government funded pilot scheme (Protech) to speed this process up through the use of AI. The Council now has specialist software (Go Vocal and Konveio) that uses AI to both input and then summarise consultation responses. This will bring a considerable time and cost savings compared to past consultations.
- 3.25** To deliver the Local Plan update by the required deadlines, the Local Plan project plan has been streamlined to include essential items and activities only. Similarly, the staff resources needed to accelerate the delivery the Local Plan have been considered. Details of funding these posts are set out in the financial implications of the report.



Governance

- 3.26** To ensure the delivery of the Local Plan remains on track, a Local Plan Oversight Board will be reinitiated. This will include a new Terms of Reference. Monthly updates will be provided to the Board to monitor progress and discuss any arising issues.
- 3.27** A detailed project plan for delivering the Local Plan by the December 2026 submission deadline has been drawn up, alongside a budget and risk register. This will be reviewed monthly and will be shared with the Board. A full time Planning Project Manager will be secured to progress the Plan at pace and minimise any risks.

Summary

- 3.28** In summary, Officers recommend that the work to date on the two ongoing Local Plan projects is merged into a single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update with the intention to go out to Regulation 18 consultation in Autumn 2025 and Regulation 19 consultation in Spring 2026, ahead of submitting the Plan in December 2026. A detailed timetable is available in section 5 and will need to be brought before Cabinet at a later date in the form of an updated Local Development Scheme. Although the timetable may seem ambitious and does contain risk, it needs to be remembered that a significant amount of work has already been completed since 2020, and the Council is already in a relatively advanced position. This is therefore an opportunity for the Council to build on its legacy; to set a deliverable housing requirement figure; to ensure the Plan is green to the core; to take ownership of the Plan without any Government intervention; and to provide an adopted Plan for the Unitary Authority with a five-year housing land supply which will protect the district against inappropriate, unplanned development and will in turn provide the necessary infrastructure required.
- 3.29** A risk register which looks at the risks of progressing the Plan is provided in section 8 with appropriate mitigation measures.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** Cabinet may choose not to merge the two Local Plan projects or to look to join with other local planning authorities in the local plan update or to work alongside the other



Gloucestershire Authorities in drawing up a Gloucestershire Strategic Plan whilst updating the Local Plan; they may therefore choose to consider:

a) Joining with other Gloucestershire Planning Authorities

- i. The Strategic and Local Plan (SLP) Authorities (formerly known as the Joint Core Strategy Authorities) of Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council, took a report to their Joint Advisory Board on 12 June 2025 to look at options of joining with other authorities to take the Plan forward. They have opted to progress the SLP with the three authorities only, whilst taking consideration of the Gloucestershire Strategic Plan.
- ii. Stroud District Council is currently in examination and has its Plan paused due to concerns with transport issues on the M5. They are looking to resolve these issues whilst at the same time exploring taking their plan forward with adjoining authorities.
- iii. Forest of Dean District Council does not adjoin Cotswold District and is looking to take their plan forward for submission in December 2026.

There are many risks with joining with these authorities:

- The need to agree a Plan across one or more authorities will take more time and increase the risk of not meeting the December 2026 deadline. For example, if joining with the SLP authorities, it will take several months to agree the Regulation 19 consultation by all three authorities of the SLP alone. In addition, there is then the need to collate all the consultation responses across three or more authorities, which again takes more time.
- There are numerous unresolved transport issues particularly along the M5 corridor and its junctions that must be overcome, both from the development planned in Tewkesbury through to the Tewkesbury Garden Town, but also in Stroud District, if we were to look to join in a Gloucestershire wide Plan. Stroud has recently had its examination paused due to such concerns.



- The budget of the SLP is £5.5 million over the next three years, which is substantially more than the budget for the delivering Cotswold Plan Update, even when split three ways.

or

b) Undertaking a Local Plan Review in tandem with and to accord with the Gloucestershire Strategic Plan where appropriate

Due to local government re-organisation, and the likelihood of joining with another or all the Gloucestershire Authorities to form a Unitary, the Gloucestershire councils are looking to work together to provide a Gloucestershire Strategic Plan. Cotswold District Council is committed to this process and there is therefore the option to update the Cotswold Local Plan whilst taking account of the Gloucestershire Strategic Plan. This may include, for example, a Gloucestershire wide vision and aligned strategic objectives for the respective Local Plans across Gloucestershire.

Irrespective of this option, the Council is already undertaking various joint evidence base studies with the other Gloucestershire councils, which not only builds a picture of Gloucestershire at a point in time in preparation for a Unitary but also saves on cost. This work can contribute to the Gloucestershire Strategic Plan. However, undertaking a Gloucestershire Strategic Plan will have its own resource and financial costs and implications.

or

c) Awaiting the new regulations to progress the Plan

At the time of writing the new regulations for progressing a Plan are yet to be revealed. Currently there is only one option in terms of submitting the Plan by December 2026. There may be other options in terms of submitting the Plan under the new regulations at a later date, and if government reorganisation gets delayed this may be a favourable option for the Council, particularly if there is delay in progressing the plan. PAS are providing workshops to advise on how to align evidence to ensure it complies with the new regulations, and council officers will be attending PAS's Southwest workshop in regard to this. This option may be appropriate to explore further in the future, but at present does



not provide the accelerated timetable option to progress the Plan at pace to ensure the Council has an up-to-date Plan and a 5YHLS.

or

d) Not undertaking a Plan Update

This is not a reasonable alternative option but has been included for completeness. The Government has made clear the intention to make rapid progress towards universal local plan coverage both through support and using Government's powers of intervention when needed. Within the new planning reforms, the Government introduced new powers for government intervention where progress on local plans is not being made, bringing in government officers and attributing the bill to the council in question. By not undertaking a review of the Plan, the Council runs the risk of reputational damage through government intervention, being overrun with unplanned development and appeals, and the possibility of judicial review of such a decision and being required to foot the bill for an external organisation delivering the Council's Local Plan.

4.2 A SWOT analysis for updating the Plan and the various options is provided in Table 1.



Table 1: SWOT analysis for updating the Local Plan

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The team began a partial update of the Local Plan in 2020, and much work has already been done.• Development Management policies are ready for Regulation 19 consultation.• Regulation 18 consultation on the development strategy and call for sites undertaken in 2024.• Much evidence work has been undertaken and jointly with the other Gloucestershire Authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a need to undertake further evidence work to support the housing allocations.• There would be a need to update some evidence that is deemed out-of-date (more than 2 years old) or overtaken by events.• A lack of development opportunities due to the district's constraints and lack of land suitable that is available for development.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide evidence to set a realistically deliverable housing requirement for the district.• Developers are already coming forward with large scale strategic sites in areas that may be appropriate for development.• If we are already undertaking a Plan update, there may be other opportunities to progress the Plan through the new gateway assessment process, particularly if local government re-organisation is delayed.• To align with adjoining councils' local plans and look to deliver the Council's housing need figure through allocations in neighbouring authority plans through the duty to co-operate and memorandums of understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local plans often take a long time to progress and time, and risks will have to be carefully managed to ensure the Council meets the submission date of December 2026.• The Government may introduce new guidance or legislation which the Council may have to take account of.• Either the Council cannot agree with developers or multiple developers cannot agree with each other on the way forward to progress a strategic site.• Unresolvable objections from major stakeholders, such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England.• Consultants delaying the production of evidence.• Issues with major infrastructure providers which means we cannot provide the



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To align the Council's evidence with other Gloucestershire authorities to provide a strong evidence base for Gloucestershire for going into a Unitary Authority.• To align with the Gloucestershire strategic plan in particular with the vision and objectives.• The deadline for forming a Unitary Authority may change.• To create a long-lasting legacy for Cotswold District.	<p>necessary infrastructure to progress our housing sites.</p> <p>Threats if we do not review the Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Costly appeals.• Unplanned development in inappropriate locations.• Lack of investment in infrastructure.• Government intervention.• Reputational damage.• Judicial review.• Special measures.
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5. Project Timeline

- 5.1** The Local Plan must be progressed at pace to achieve the December 2026 submission deadline. Updating the Plan started with the partial review in 2020, and all the development management policies are now substantially complete and ready for a Regulation 19 consultation. The update of the Development Strategy and sites began in 2024 with a consultation in February/March of that year. Further consultation on the development strategy and where sites are located is required due to the significant increase to the calculation of the number of homes needed in the district. Therefore, it is intended to undertake a further Regulation 18 (Issues and Options) consultation on the broad locations for development and the methodology for establishing a settlement hierarchy. This will take place in Autumn 2025.
- 5.2** Further evidence will need to be completed to support the draft Plan, and site allocations will need to be identified for development. These will be consulted on formerly at the Regulation 19 stage alongside the draft Plan. This consultation will take place in Spring 2026. The Local Plan will then be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in December 2026.
- 5.3** Some of the required evidence base documents to be produced are dependent on other evidence; the viability assessment for example will be one of the last pieces of evidence to be completed, as all the sites and infrastructure will need to be identified before this work can be completed. After the Regulation 19 consultation and prior to

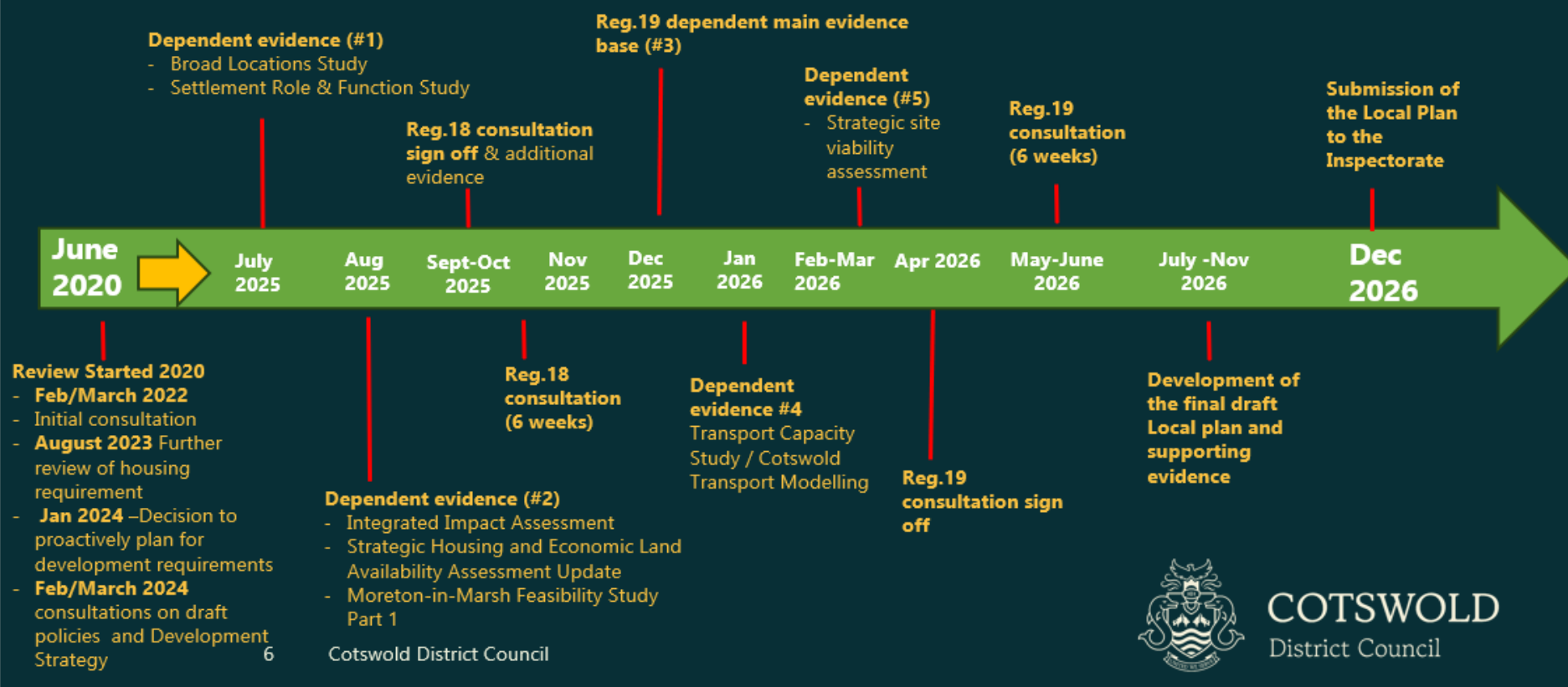


submission, time needs to be allowed to ensure the Council can address any issues raised from the consultation including a schedule of proposed modifications to the draft Plan and producing any necessary additional evidence.

- 5.4** Once the Plan is submitted, progress on the Plan is mainly in the control of the Planning Inspectorate. Further work can be expected throughout the examination process – e.g. responding to Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) from the Inspector and the public hearing sessions.
- 5.5** The Government is keen to progress Plans at pace and all Plans submitted under the current regulations will need to be submitted by December 2026. This timing will then allow the Plan to form the adopted Development Plan for the district under the new Unitary Authority.
- 5.6** Please see below the timetable from now until submission and from submission to adoption.



Local Plan Timeline





Local Plan timeline from submission to adoption

Submission of the
Local Plan to the
Planning
Inspectorate

Hearings

Main
modifications
consultation

Adoption

Dec
2026

Jan - Mar
2027

Apr
2027

May - June
2027

Jul - Sept
2027

Oct - Nov
2027

Dec
2027

Preparing
responses to
Matters,
Issues and
Questions
(MIQs)

Inspector's
initial report

Inspector's
final report





6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Money spent to date and remaining reserve balance.

6.1 Since commencing the update of the adopted Local Plan in 2020, the Council has spent £762k on the Local Plan. This does include other work and commitments including on the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan but does reflect the amount of work that has already been completed and demonstrates the level of financial commitment the Council has given to updating the Local Plan.

6.2 As of 1 April 2025, there was a remaining earmarked reserve of around £1 million to complete the Partial Local Plan Update and the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan with an estimated cost of £1.3 to £1.4 million.

6.3 Switching to a Full Local Plan Update brings a large cost saving of around £300,000 to £400,000 on the Local Plan process, bringing the projected spend back within the £1 million budget. In addition, the work done to date on the Partial Local Plan Update and the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan is not abortive work. It can also be translocated into the single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update without cost.

Cost savings from combining the two Local Plan projects and streamlining the Local Plan process.

6.4 The cost savings come from a range of factors, including:

- Requiring only one Local Plan examination instead of two;
- Avoiding the duplication of some evidence base documents (e.g. the viability assessment of the Local Plan policies);
- Streamlining the Local Plan process to doing only what is necessary;
- Needing to undertake only two additional public consultations before submitting the Local Plan for examination, instead of three;
- The use of AI to process and summarise Local Plan consultation responses; and
- Delivering the Local Plan more quickly (i.e. submitting both Local Plan projects by December 2026, instead of the current programme which prioritises the delivery of the Partial Local Plan Update followed by the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan after December 2026). This will avoid the cost of having to update / refresh some of the older evidence base documents.

Recent funding allocated / awarded for the delivery of the Local Plan



- 6.5** In February 2024, Cabinet resolved to add £500,000 to the Local Plan reserve. This was to ensure the next stages of the Local Plan preparation could be delivered in accordance with the timetable set out in the Cotswold District Local Plan Update report to Council in January 2024. It was highlighted in the January 2024 Council report that *"additional funding will be required should the council need to use the fall-back approach... [i.e. producing a single comprehensive Full Local Plan Update]. This may require up to an additional £500,000, although it is difficult to quantify at this stage as it requires far greater clarity on the new plan-making system. The new system is being advertised as being quicker and more efficient, but this remains to be seen in the absence of secondary legislation. Furthermore, the planning system will continue to operate within a legal framework, where planning judgements need to be justified / evidenced. This is often where the costs and resources sit."*
- 6.6** In February 2025, Cabinet resolved to add a further £250,000 to the Local Plan earmarked reserve. This was to ensure the next stages of the Local Plan preparation could be delivered following the update to the NPPF in December 2024.
- 6.7** In March 2025, the Council was awarded £227,962.50 of grant funding from the MHCLG's Local Plans Delivery Fund (Regulation 18). This funding was contingent on the Council submitting its Local Plan for examination by December 2026. The purpose of this funding is also to accelerate the delivery of the Council's Local Plan in response to the increased housing target.
- 6.8** In March 2025, the Council was awarded a further £70,000 of grant funding from the MHCLG's Green Belt Review Fund. A review of the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Green Belt, which extends into Cotswold District, is now underway.
- Estimated costs of accelerating the delivery of the Local Plan Update*
- 6.9** The estimated costs for the Plan are provided in Table 2 below. Currently the Local Plan reserve stands at approximately £1 million and the projected spend on the Full Local Plan Update comes broadly within this allocation. This excludes any contingency and does not account for any additional spend resulting from needing to undertake stage 2 of the Moreton-in-Marsh Feasibility Study, which is currently estimated at £215,000.
- 6.10** Costs have been included in the Local Plan budget reserve for additional fixed-term posts to ensure the Plan can be developed at pace. This includes additional hours for



part-time staff in the team; administrative support and the reprovion of hours for other posts. The budget for any permanent posts will come from the existing establishment budget as part of a growth bid; within this we will seek to engage the services of an experienced full-time Project Manager, an Urban Designer and an additional Principal Policy Officer to secure the strategic sites and ensure we can progress the Plan at pace.

Table 2: Estimated remaining costs of delivering Full Local Plan Update

Evidence costs	£566,946*
Regulatory Consultations & Examination	£327,000
Additional staffing	£217,075
Local Plan Total	£1,111,021
Other including Cirencester Masterplan	£61,762
Local Plan + Other Total	£1,172,783
Income – Funding	£229,463
Total minus income	£943,320*
LOCAL PLAN RESERVE	£1,004,827
Expenditure 2020 to date	£761,782
Additional costs required if Moreton Feasibility Study Stage two is required	£215,000

*N.B. Awaiting further costs on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Assessment

Note, figures exclude any contingency, and any additional expenditure required to progress a Gloucestershire Strategic Plan, as this is unknown to date.

- 6.11** The use of the Local Plan reserve will be kept under review to ensure sufficient funds are set aside to deliver the Local Plan. In doing so, as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process, the Deputy Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer will identify further one-off funding (following the review of earmarked reserves) to be held as a contingency should additional resources be required to accelerate the delivery of the Local Plan to meet the December 2026 submission deadline. In the event of the contingency budget being required, this will only be released subject to the agreement of the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader, and Director of Communities and Place.



6.12

Costs of not having an up-to-date Local Plan and no five-year housing land supply

- 6.13** As noted in paragraph 4.1(d) above and 7.2 below, the Government has introduced new interventionist powers if a Plan is not progressed quickly enough. The Secretary of State can now prepare the Local Plan for the Council or direct the Council on the preparation of its Local Plan. In either case, this would almost certainly have an increased cost compared to the Council preparing its Local Plan in-house, and the Council would be required to foot the bill of the intervention (e.g. the use of consultants rather than officers to deliver the Local Plan).
- 6.14** It is estimated that the Local Plan Update will be adopted in December 2027, and it is likely that the Council will also regain its 5YHLS at this point. There will therefore be a period of around two and a half years when the Council does not have an up-to-date Local Plan or a 5YHLS. During this period, the Council can expect to receive an increase in speculative planning applications for new homes and appeals and this will incur additional costs for the Council.
- 6.15** Whilst there will be a corresponding increase in planning application fee income, there is expected to be an overall net resource and financial cost to the Council. This is both in terms of uplift in workload for the Development Management team to manage the increase in applications and appeals (e.g. this may require more agency workers), as well as the increased financial cost of appeals (e.g. the need for representation by specialist planning consultants, Counsel to defend the Council's decisions, and the risk of the Council being ordered to pay the appellant's costs).
- 6.16** The cost of appeals can vary depending on the issues being contested and whether a public inquiry is required. For comparison, there is currently a non-residential appeal relating to the Steadings which is likely to cost between £10-12,000. However, as an example; three appeals in Tewkesbury Borough, where the 5YHLS was contested, cost Tewkesbury Borough Council £500,000¹¹.
- 6.17** The last time Cotswold District Council did not have a 5YHLS in 2014, the Council was in danger of going into special measures due to the number of appeals lost. At that time, it was confirmed that there had been 11 planning appeals in the district during

¹¹ [BBC article: Gloucestershire will struggle to stop housing developments' \(8 October 2023\)](#)



2012 and 2013 with the total cost amounting to £257,368.¹² Although the Council regained its 5YHLS in April 2015 appeals continued as developers successfully argued that the Council did not have an up-to-date local plan in place. It was not until 2018 when the Plan was adopted that the appeals stopped.

- 6.18** Recent research indicates that between 2010 and 2017, there were at least 28 appeals, 18 of which were allowed, and two Judicial Reviews where the lack of a 5YHLS and / or an up-to-date local plan was a significant determining factor. The Council was required to pay the appellant's costs on several occasions.
- 6.19** In contrast, since the Local Plan was adopted in 2018, the Council's 5YHLS has not been challenged at appeal. A landmark appeal¹³ also found that, despite a development proposal being acceptable in all other respects and having considerable benefits, the Council having an up-to-date Local Plan and a 5YHLS meant the conflict with the adopted Local Plan development strategy and the plan-led approach was sufficient for the Inspector to uphold the Council's decision to refuse the application. The Council has subsequently received little challenge in this regard. Having an up-to-date Local Plan and a 5YHLS also provides a strong basis to refuse planning applications where there are other issues that weigh against granting planning permission.
- 6.20** If it is left to the new Unitary authority to produce the Council's Local Plan, it could be five further years from vesting day until the district has an adopted Local Plan (so over eight years in total from July 2025). During this extended period, the Council and the new Unitary Authority would continue to be open to speculative planning and an ongoing pipeline of appeals. It would be speculative to provide a cost estimate but, suffice to say, it is likely the cost would be much larger in the long-term than if the Council were to adopt its Local Plan as soon as possible.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

¹² <https://www.wiltsglosstandard.co.uk/news/11036676.cotswold-district-council-spends-250000-on-planning-appeals-in-the-district-over-the-last-two-years/>

¹³ Outline planning application for residential development of up to 40 dwellings (including details of access to be determined) at Moore Land, Collin Lane, Willersey, WR12 7PE (application ref: 17/04765/OUT; appeal ref: APP/F1610/W/19/3229031)



- 7.1** It is a statutory requirement for the Council to produce a Local Plan and keep it up to date¹⁴. Local Plans, prepared by a local planning authority in consultation with its community, set out a vision and a framework for the future development of an area. Once in place, Local Plans become part of the statutory development plan. The statutory development plan for the area is the starting point for determining local planning applications.
- 7.2** The Government has made clear the intention to make rapid progress towards universal local plan coverage both through support and using Government's powers of intervention when needed. Within the new planning reforms¹⁵, the Government introduced new powers for government intervention where progress on local plans is not being made, bringing in government officers and attributing the bill to the council in question. By not undertaking an update of the Plan quickly enough, the Council runs the risk of reputational damage through government intervention, being overrun with unplanned development and appeals, and the and the risk of intervention from the government.

¹⁴ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 – Section 19

¹⁵ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 – Section 27



8. RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk Assessment for progressing a Local Plan at pace.

Risks to take account of when progressing the Local Plan								
ID	Key risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk score	Action to mitigate risk	Perceived mitigated likelihood	Perceived mitigated impact	Perceived mitigated risk score
LPR01	Local Plans can take a long time to progress and time and risks will have to be carefully managed to ensure we meet the submission date of December 2026	4	4	16	The reserved budget accounts for additional resource inc. a Strategic Planning and Engagement Project Manager. In addition the project plan provides for contingency. Working with PINS and PAS to ensure we have an effective and efficient project plan.	3	4	12
LPR02	The Government may introduce new guidance or legislation which we may have to take account of	4	4	16	The reserved budget accounts for additional resource and any change in government regulations may provide a different route for the Council secure the local plan.	4	3	12
LPR03	Consultants delaying in the production of evidence	4	4	16	The reserved budget accounts for additional resource inc. a Strategic Planning and Engagement Project Manager. In addition the project plan provides for contingency.	3	4	12
LPR04	Issues with our major infrastructure providers which means we cannot provide the necessary infrastructure to progress our housing sites	3	5	15	Early engagement and the employment of the Strategic Planning and Engagement Project Manager will reduce the impact of this.	3	4	12
LPR05	Unresolvable objections from our major stakeholders of Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England	3	4	12	Early engagement and the employment of the Strategic Planning and Engagement Project Manager will reduce the impact of this.	3	3	9
LPR06	Reg.18 responses may raise issues with the development strategy.	3	3	9	Going out to consultation early and dealing with responses as and when they are received.	3	2	6
LPR07	Reg.19 responses raising issues with regard to soundness issues or legality for evidence or the plan	3	3	9	Early meeting with PINS and PAS and regular contact with Counsel. Allowing additional contingency time prior to submission.	2	2	4
LPR08	Either we cannot agree with developers or multiple developers cannot agree with each other on the way forward to progress a strategic site	3	3	9	Adding contingency time within the Local Plan project plan and to agree Statements of Common Ground with developers which will acknowledge disagreements. The Inspector will have to recommend a way forward.	3	3	9



Risk Assessment if a Local Plan is not progressed at pace.

Risks to take account of <i>not</i> progressing the Local Plan								
ID	Key risk	Likelihood	Impact	Risk score	Action to mitigate risk	Perceived mitigated likelihood	Perceived mitigated impact	Perceived mitigated risk score
NLPR1	Costly appeals	5	5	25	To develop a Local Plan at pace and make it a priority for the Council	5	3	15
NLPR2	Unplanned development in inappropriate locations	5	5	25		4	3	12
NLPR3	Lack of investment in infrastructure	5	5	25		4	3	12
NLPR5	Special measures	5	5	25		2	4	8
NLPR6	Government intervention with costs to the Council	5	5	25		1	2	2
NLPR7	Reputational damage	5	5	25		1	1	1
NLPR8	Judicial review	5	5	25		1	1	1



9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** The policies of the Plan will require an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). The purpose of an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) is to ensure we comply with the law, taking account of equality, human rights, children's rights and socioeconomic disadvantage (poverty) implications when making decisions. It also ensures decision makers are fully informed, at a formative stage in the decision making process.
- 9.2** This process will allow us to critically assess whether a 'proposal' has wider impacts beyond its intended outcomes and if it impacts differentially on different groups in our communities.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** The Council has declared a climate change emergency, which commits it to preparing an action plan to show how it will support the district to become carbon neutral. It has also declared an ecological emergency. The Council has also committed to make the Local Plan green to its core. An update to the Local Plan will directly support local communities and businesses to mitigate and adapt to climate change, whilst also making a positive response to the ecological emergency.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[National Planning Policy Framework \(December 2024\) - GOV.UK](#)

Full Council Report (24 January 2024): Cotswold District Local Plan Update

(End)

LOCAL PLAN OVERSIGHT BOARD – TERMS OF REFERENCE (JULY 2025)

The purpose of the Local Plan Oversight Board ("the Board") is to oversee the update of the Council's Local Plan, and to address any emerging programming issues.

Terms of reference:

1. Strategic management

- A. Understand the project plan for updating the Cotswold District Local Plan;
- B. Receive updates on, and monitor progress against, the project plan, key tasks and critical paths;
- C. Agree remedial actions to be taken in the event of any slippage against the project plan;
- D. Receive updates on and results of key pieces of evidence.
- E. Act as a sounding board for any specific issues requiring Member input prior to the submission of formal reports to Cabinet;
- F. Oversee and report to Cabinet on progress made; and
- G. Make recommendations to Cabinet in relation to work programming.

2. Accountability

The Board is accountable to Cabinet where it will be represented by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning.

3. Performance management

The Board will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing performance against the Council's Local Plan project plan. This will also include an oversight of risks.

4. Financial management

The Board will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Local Plan budget in line with the project management plan. This will also include an oversight of risks.

5. Membership

The Board will comprise:

Cotswold District Council Members

- Chair: Cllr Mike Evemy, Leader of Cotswold District Council, Liberal Democrats Group.
- Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Leader of Cotswold District Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, Liberal Democrats Group
- Two additional Cabinet members, Liberal Democrats Group: Andrea Pellegram, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regulatory Services;

LOCAL PLAN OVERSIGHT BOARD – TERMS OF REFERENCE (JULY 2025)

and Tristan Wilkinson, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation.

Cotswold District Council Officers

- Head of Planning Policy and Infrastructure (Project Lead)
- Assistant Director – Planning Services (Accountable Officer)
- Director of Communities and Place (Project Sponsor)
- Chief Executive Officer
- Strategic Planning Project Manager
- Specialist Officers who are required on an ad-hoc basis

6. Arrangements for meetings

- A. Board meetings will be held monthly as appropriate.
- B. The Board is not a decision making body;
- C. Administrative support (minutes and booking meetings) will be provided by Committee Services; and
- D. Project support will be provided by the Head of Planning Policy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Planning Project Manager.



COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 10 JULY 2025
Subject	HMO LICENCE FEE AND PERIOD
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Andrea Pellegram Environment and Regulatory Services Email: andrea.pellegram@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing, Executive Director Email: jon.dearing@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Philip Measures, Service Leader Email: philip.measures@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To review the HMO Licensing fees and the licence period.
Annexes	Annex A – Equality Impact Assessment
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amend the HMO Licence Fees as set out in this Report and for them to apply from 1 September 2025; 2. Approve the HMO licence period increases from 3 years to 5 years.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Good Services • Delivering Housing • Supporting Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Business Manager Housing Portfolio Holder



	<p>There has been no external consultation. The policy increases the fee by £100, but extends the licence period by two years, offering value and certainty. The impact on interested groups is therefore low, and a consultation exercise was not thought necessary.</p>
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report is about the renewal of the House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licence fee policy. It sets a new fee to take account of the increase in resource costs and the policy extends the licence period from three years to five.
- 1.2** The Policy introduces an additional room fee for larger HMOs to take account of the extra time required to determine and inspect such premises. It proposes a reduced 'renewal fee' for well managed HMOs, subject to conditions.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** An HMO is a House in Multiple Occupation where 2 or more tenants of different household share facilities. Where there are 5 or more tenants sharing facilities, a licence is required. These are issued by local authorities, who administer, regulate and inspect such accommodation. Councils are entitled to charge a fee to cover the costs of these duties (see S. 6). Currently there are 42 HMOs licensed by the Council.
- 2.2** The procedure for setting the HMO licence fee and the HMO licence period was last approved in 2018 and since then there has been an annual increase in the fee as part of the budget setting process. The policy is therefore due for renewal and revision.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** A licence is currently approved for a period of three years, after which, if the premises still requires a licence, a new application must be applied for. The fee is required to cover the costs of providing a licence which include the Officer time for the following:
- Receipt of application documentation check and administration of licence
 - Inspection and compliance checks
 - Annual Operating Costs (of HMO licensing service)
 - Consumables and external costs
- 3.2** It is now considered a better focus of resources and fairer to landlords to set the licence period at five years and to adopt a risk rating approach prioritising the inspection of higher risk premises. For HMOs which require works to meet the required standard, a shorter period for the licence can be designated by Officers. This approach will change the fee structure, where it is also proposed that well run



licensed premises, will benefit from a lower renewal fee provided there are no changes to the licensed premises.

- 3.3** The methodology adopted for setting the fee, whether three or five years was one developed by Derby City Council and referred to by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The fee is in two parts; the initial application fee and the successful licence issue fee. The application fee is non-refundable even if the application is refused. The existing and new fees are outlined in Table 1.

3.4 Table 1

	Application Fee	Licence Issue Fee
Current Licence	£310	£430
Proposed 5 Years licence	£250	£590

- 3.5** Where an HMO is letting seven or more rooms and planning permission is required, more time is required for the assessment of the application and inspection of the premises. The officer time to conduct this work is calculated at £40 per letting room which is proposed as an additional fee to the application.
- 3.6** A discount is proposed, to encourage and reward landlords of well managed premises, when they apply for a new licence when their existing licence expires. This is provided the following conditions are met:
1. No structural or significant changes to the HMO such as extensions and new rooms.
 2. No outstanding enforcement action.
 3. The application is complete and duly made and received no later than 28 days before the expiry date of the existing licence.

A reduction of £70 is proposed. A discount to the additional room fee is also recommended.



3.7 Table 2 details the new fees proposed in full.

Fee	For
£840: Application fee - 250 Licence issue fee – 590	New Application
£40	Additional room fee, per letting room, 7 rooms or more.
£770 Application fee - 250 Licence issue fee - 520	Renewal application, if made up to 28 days of expiry of existing licence subject to S 3.6 .
£20	Renewal application, additional room fee, per letting room, 7 rooms or more.

3.8 This fee should be reviewed annually as part of the budget cycle to reflect changes in staffing and resource costs. Each fee shall be rounded to the nearest £1.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The Council may approve, amend, or reject the proposed policy as they see fit.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The current income is £10,360 when divided over the licence period of three years. This changes to £7056 at the new fee divided over five years. Each individual licence will be due at a different time.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a building or part of a building occupied by two or more households as their main residence and who share basic amenities such as a bathroom or a kitchen (Housing Act 2004 part 7).

6.2 When 5 or more people occupy an HMO, the HMO requires a licence, to be provided by the Local Housing Authority. These are the properties relevant to this report.

6.3 Section 63(7) Housing Act 2004 clarifies that the Local Housing Authority can take



into account the administrative costs of issuing a licence and the Derby calculation of the fee in two parts has been used and tested as the correct basis for fee calculation.

- 6.4** Section 68(4) Housing Act 2004 provides that a licence can be granted for up to five (5) years and does not require uniformity for all HMOs, so the proposal to increase the licence from 3 to 5 years with exceptions fully complies with the legislation.
- 6.5** If a property is being used as a licensable HMO without a licence, the Council can prosecute the relevant person. The suggested lower fees for renewal of licences when applied for early, should therefore increase compliance but also lower enforcement costs for the Council.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** The risk of not having a current fee policy which is not supported by the costs of administering the service is that the fee will be successfully challenged.
- 7.2** It is good practice for the licence fee to be reviewed regularly to reflect on actual costs to further reduce the risk of challenge.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** Provided in Annex A.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Better regulation of the private rented sector will include ensuring standards are met concerning for example excess cold, which is about heating a home more efficiently. The policy will therefore have a positive effect in this regard. There are no negative implications identified from the changes.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None

(END)

Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the 'protected characteristics' may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Philip Measures	
Date of assessment: 19 th May 2025	Telephone: Email: philip.measures@publicagroup.uk

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Review of HMO Licence Fee and Licence period
--

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

This report seeks to review and set the HMO licence fee and licence period, extending this period from three to five years.

4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

<p>The Housing Act 2004</p> <p>The Housing and Planning Act 2016</p> <p>LACORS guidance</p> <p>The Renters Rights Bill. This legislation currently passing through both houses, introduces new standards and expectations on Councils in the delivery of their Private Sector Housing duties.</p>

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	✓	Private Sector Housing Stock Conditions Survey.
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	✓	Ist Tier Property Tribunal decisions, meaning the current Private Sector Housing policies are out of date.

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

n/a

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

Discussion with the previous portfolio holder Councillor Layton and the report is circulated to the Housing Business Manager

If NO please outline any planned activities

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	✓
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
The policy renews an existing, so the impact should be positive. Landlords who are non-complaint, may face additional sanctions as a result of this policy being in place.	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			✓	The policy is concerned with the regulation of conditions in private sector housing, for the benefit of all residents. It does not introduce anything new that would have either a positive or negative impact on individuals with protected characteristics.	
Age – Old People			✓		
Disability			✓		
Sex – Male			✓		
Sex – Female			✓		

Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓		
Religion or Belief			✓		
Sexual Orientation			✓		
Gender Reassignment			✓		
Pregnancy and maternity			✓		
Geographical impacts on one area			✓		
Other Groups			✓		
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			✓		

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
n/a			

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:		Date:	
Line Manager:	Phil Measures	Date:	19/05/25
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:		Date:	

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 10 JULY 2025
Subject	COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2024-25 QUARTER FOUR (JANUARY-MARCH 2025)
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Every, Leader of the Council Email: mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive Email: robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Email: democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance
Annexes	Annex A - Corporate Plan Action Tracker Annex B - Council Priorities report Annex C - Performance indicator report
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Note overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2024-25 Q4 (January-March 2025).
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Good Services • Responding to the Climate Emergency • Delivering Housing • Supporting Communities • Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Cotswold District Council retained senior managers, Publica Directors, Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.



1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** A high-level commissioning statement was approved by Cabinet in January 2020 which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica must ensure that it provides the necessary information to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard. In essence, Publica as contracting agent for the Council must ensure that the Council has sufficient information to challenge the performance of services provided by Publica and others. Publica also provides performance data on services transferred back to the Council. A similar approach is taken in relation to financial performance data, which will be presented to the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer; and where it will be for the Chief Finance Officer to advise in terms of assurance.
- 1.2** The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

- 2.1** The Council adopted Our Cotswolds, Our Plan 2024-28 ('the Plan') in January 2024. The Plan sets out the Council's Aim, and key priorities, and sets out the key measures of success.
- 2.2** Progress on key actions identified in the Corporate Plan for Q4 (January-March 2025) include:

Delivering good services

- The comprehensive Phase 2 transition plan was presented to Cabinet and Full Council in March, where it received full approval. Formal consultation with employees affected by Phase 2 commenced in April, with their transfer to Council employment scheduled to take effect from July.

Responding to the climate emergency

- The first draft of the Electric Vehicle Taxi Policy has been completed and is currently under officer review. Following this, it is expected to be brought forward for committee consideration in the first half of 2025–26.
- A proposal to establish a Climate Board has been drafted.
- The Council continues to actively support community energy initiatives across the district, including its ongoing partnership with Thames Head Community Energy—a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society based in the Cotswolds. The organisation focuses on developing local renewable energy projects that deliver environmental and community benefits. The Council's support has included policy



backing, financial contributions via Crowdfund Cotswold, and engagement in regional efforts such as the Community Energy workstream under Climate Leadership Gloucestershire.

- Cotswold Home Solar is being actively promoted and delivered, with 27 households having already installed solar panels. Additionally, 18 more households have placed deposits for installation.
- The Council has partnered with Gloucestershire authorities to launch a retrofit support service, live since January 22nd. The service provides energy efficiency plans, vetted installers, and project management. To date, 7 households have requested plans. CDC has also employed a Retrofit Engagement Officer, who will offer community events and free home visits until September 2025 to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy installations. Severn Wye Energy Agency (SWEA) will provide free energy advice for low-income households through the Warm and Well Scheme for the next five years.

Delivering Housing

- Planning consent for the zero-carbon affordable housing development in Down Ampney was granted on 12th March, but Bromford needs to address issues with the surface water drainage design and coordinate with Thames Water on infrastructure upgrades. These factors may delay the start of work until 2027, unless Thames Water accelerates their upgrade plans. Negotiations are also ongoing with Bromford regarding the CDC land transfer and S106 agreement.
- Work is ongoing to support all refugees, whether through a resettlement scheme or dispersed asylum. In addition to ensuring that families and individuals are properly housed, continuous wraparound support is being provided to aid with resettlement and foster community cohesion.
- The Cotswold Housing First project is widely recognised across the county as an exemplary model for projects of this type. Its success rates exceed national averages, and the Housing Team continues to collaborate closely with Bromford and P3 to ensure its ongoing success. Currently, 6 individuals are accommodated through Housing First, with external funding awarded to P3 to extend the service to an additional 2 clients, bringing the total number of spaces to 8. Referrals are currently being considered.



Supporting communities

- The first two of fourteen 'Strengthening Communities' events took place over February half term, bringing together statutory and community organisations to promote services in the district's larger settlements. These events focus on empowering residents to engage in positive local activity, with strong support from health partners. The team also worked with partners to secure the local Digihubs contract for the Churn and Cotswold Friends, ensuring continued digital inclusion support across the district.
- The Spring Round of Crowdfund Cotswold closed on 9th April, with 5 to 6 project proposals currently being verified before launch on the platform. The February project creator workshop was well attended and generated several ideas expected to come forward later this year or early next.
- Round three of the Unsung Heroes Awards received strong submissions, with winners recognised at the Council meeting in January. Due to the County Council elections and the Council's Annual General Meeting in May, the next round will take place in July. A new 'Young Hero' category is being considered to celebrate the contributions of young people to their communities.

Supporting the economy

- Officers continue to work with businesses from key sectors, including agritech, cyber/digital, and sustainable aviation, to promote employment opportunities. Discussions with key stakeholders about promoting apprenticeship opportunities are ongoing, and a campaign is planned once the new government's intended changes to apprenticeships have been announced.
- The final version of the refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in March 2025.
- 14 projects have been allocated funding by the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) grant scheme for village halls. A number have been completed and others are at various stages of delivery.
- The outline planning application for the Royal Agricultural University's Innovation Village is currently progressing through the process. Officers and representatives from the RAU and its advisers have met to resolve outstanding issues, including comments from consultees.
- Officers meet monthly with representatives from the RAU and Growth Hub to monitor progress, with performance currently on track to meet targets. Cirencester Growth Hub remains one of the most successful in the network by



several measures. Outreach Navigators continue to operate across the district, holding well-attended events and discovery meetings at the Moreton Area Centre. Cabinet has approved a further year of funding for 2025–26

- 2.3** Off-target actions of the Corporate Plan behind schedule at the end of Q4 (January-March 2025) are detailed below. Whilst this report is a retrospective account of progress in Q4, where possible, the current status is also included for assurance.

Delivering good services

Instigate the second phase of activity to replace worn and damaged street nameplates

Q4 update: A backlog in sign replacements remains, but an update on progress and a forward plan is currently being agreed with Ubico.

Responding to the climate emergency

Develop and deliver an Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy

Q4 update: Delivery of On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme-funded Electric Vehicle charge points across four sites is progressing well. An extension to the original 31st March deadline has been granted due to delays by the Distribution Network Operator, Scottish and Southern Electric (SSE). Two sites—Market Way (Moreton-in-Marsh) and Maugersbury Road (Stow-on-the-Wold)—are expected to be connected mid-April, while connection dates are still awaited for Brewery (Cirencester) and West Street (Tetbury).

Develop a new Cotswold Design Guide – building for the future in the Cotswolds

Q4 update: The Cotswold Design Code is now half-way through being updated. Draft Design Codes have been shared with the council for comment. The national planning policy consultation meant work had to be temporarily paused. Consideration is now being given to the new national planning policies and the implications these have on the Design Code.

Work with Cirencester Town Council on the coordination of the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan and the Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan policies

Q4 update: A consultation was held on the draft masterplan between 1 Feb 2024 and 7 Apr 2024. Following the consultation, it was decided that a master plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is required. Work is currently ongoing to draft the SPD ahead of a final consultation, ahead of adopting the SPD by September 2025. Mace, a highly experienced consultancy with a proven track record of delivering masterplans, have been appointed to assist with the delivery



of the SPD. CDC continues to work closely with Cirencester TC to align the SPD with their emerging Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Consult and adopt the Council's new Housing strategy

Q4 update: The finalisation of the Housing Strategy has been passed to the Strategic Housing Manager. It is being updated in light of the emerging options review, the Govt National Planning Policy Framework consultation outcome and will be coordinated with other related strategies/policies (e.g. Homelessness/Empty Properties etc)

Supporting communities

Continue to work with Gloucestershire County Council on the creation of a safe crossing of the Spine Road

Q4 update: Design work is underway, but implementation is dependent on resolving issues with the bridge. UK Shared Prosperity Funds earmarked for the project were reallocated to other initiatives to meet the year-end spend target and ensure local benefits.

Commence development of the cultural strategy

Q4 update: The strategy will be restructured into a Plan, focusing on short-term actions and joint working between partners to achieve positive outcomes amid the longer-term uncertainty of LGR. A stakeholder meeting is scheduled for late May to move the work forward and review the draft plan, which will be presented to members in the summer.

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

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Overall, the Council's performance for the quarter has been largely positive. Highlights include strong results in Gym Memberships, visits to the Leisure Centres and customer satisfaction. Planning determination times, with all application types remain strong and Inspections of high-risk food premises exceed target. However, processing times for Council Tax Support new claims and the delivery of affordable homes are showing a negative trend.

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (4 days against a target of 5 days)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.31% against a target of 0.35%)



- Customer Satisfaction (98% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (83% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (88% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (90% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (21% against a target of 30%)
- Percentage of high-risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 95%)
- Number of gym memberships (4,441 against a target of 4,000)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (159,862 visits against a target of 145,000)

3.2 Service Performance near target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (98.18% against a target of 99%)
- Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (97.45% against a target of 99%)

3.3 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (23 days against a target of 20 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (5 days against a target of 4 days).

Previous Quarter: In Q3, processing times for both Council Tax Support New Claims and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances did not meet the targets, with processing taking 21 and 7 days, respectively.

Q4: Although the Council is currently above the 20-day target for processing new Council Tax Support (CTS) claims, with an average of 22.82 days in Q4 2024/25, performance remains stable and shows steady improvement compared to the peak of over 30 days in Q1 2023/24 and the high of 47 days during 2021/22. The slight increase in Q4 processing times can largely be attributed to two factors: the temporary shutdown of the Council offices over Christmas, which created a backlog, and a spike in customer phone enquiries, which tend to peak during Q4 and required the redeployment of staff resources.

Despite these pressures, the service has effectively managed workloads, and turnaround times remain significantly improved compared to pandemic-era levels. Continued stabilisation of processing times is expected as operational pressures ease and service adjustments take effect.



It is also important to note that the volume of Housing Benefit (HB) change of circumstances has significantly declined, as applications are progressively transitioning to Universal Credit under the managed migration process. As a result, delays in processing HB applications now have a more pronounced impact on average processing times.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (86% against a target of 90%)

Previous Quarter: During Q3, the Council continued to exceed its target for completing land charge searches within 10 days with 95.77% completed within target timeframes.

Q4: During Q4, the Council fell slightly below its target for completing land charge searches within 10 days, achieving just under 86%, down from 96% in Q3. This dip in performance is primarily attributed to increased workloads and operational challenges. However, the Council has taken proactive steps to improve the situation. Efforts to strengthen communication and collaboration with the answering teams have proven successful, enhancing workload management and enabling team members to handle tasks more efficiently. These improvements are expected to contribute to higher productivity moving forward.

Additionally, the Council has begun working on the HMLR (His Majesty's Land Registry) project, which aims to establish a national local land charges service. While still in its early stages, this initiative is expected to help accelerate the land charge search process and improve overall service delivery in the future.

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (56 delivered against a target of 100).

Previous Quarter: During Q3, no affordable homes were delivered within the District, bringing the total to fifty for April–December 2024.

Q4: During 2024–25, a total of 56 affordable homes were delivered across the district with 6 delivered in Q4, falling short of the 74 initially forecasted by Registered Providers (RPs). The shortfall is primarily due to delays caused by project re-phasing, which have pushed some planned completions into the 2025–26 financial year. A notable example of this is the Down Ampney site, where 22 affordable homes were originally expected to be completed in 2024–25. However, 18 of these have been re-phased for delivery between April and December 2025.

The delivery of affordable housing is subject to fluctuations, as most developments take over a year to complete and often progress in multiple phases over several



years. Early over-delivery at the beginning of the current strategy has also contributed to the dip in recent annual outputs, as the early years set a higher baseline.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2018, the district has delivered a total of 886 affordable homes, averaging 126 homes per year. Despite the recent dip in completions, this continues to reflect the Council's ongoing commitment to delivering affordable housing and meeting long-term housing needs in the area.

Missed bins per 100,000 Collections (101 against a target of 80).

Previous Quarter: During Q3, the Council exceeded its targets despite a notable reduction in missed bin collections, recording 94 misses against a target of 80.

Q4: The rate of missed bin collections rose to 101 per 100,000 collections—exceeding the target of 80. This increase was primarily driven by operational challenges, including staffing shortages and the prolonged absence of a narrow access vehicle, which was off the road for two months. These issues particularly affected properties on routes that require specialist vehicles. Recruitment efforts are actively underway, with recent interviews held to address the staffing gap and improve service resilience. Additionally, flooding in January caused temporary disruption to collection schedules, further contributing to the spike in missed bins during the period.

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

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 July 2025. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to Cabinet.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications from this report.



6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** Contained in this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** None

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Contained in this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None

(END)

Our Cotswolds, Our Plan: Action Plan 2024 Update - Progress by end of Q4 2024-2025

Green	On target
Amber	Off target but action being taken to ensure delivery (where this results in a reviewed target date, this is made clear in the table)
Red	Off target and no action has yet been agreed to resolve the situation
Complete	Action completed
Not Scheduled to Start	Workstream not Scheduled to Start during Quarter
Cancelled	
On Hold	

Objectives	Priorities	Actions	Commencement	Target Date	Cabinet Member, Lead officer(s)	RAG Rating	Comment for Q4
Delivering good services	Ensure our workforce can deliver for the council and our community	Deliver a programme to bring Council services back in-house, maximising responsiveness and democratic accountability	Nov-23	Projected timeframe of two years, until 2025	<div> <div>CLlr Mike Evemy</div> <div>Robert Weaver</div> </div>	On Target	The comprehensive Phase 2 transition plan was presented to Cabinet and Full Council in March, where it received full approval. Formal consultation with employees affected by Phase 2 commenced in April, with their transfer to Council employment scheduled to take effect from July.
		Lease spare office space at Trinity Road	Dec-23	Jul-24	<div> <div>CLlr Patrick Coleman</div> <div>Claire Locke Suzanne Barton</div> </div>	Complete	Completed
	Ensure effective oversight of our services, to ensure value for money and good standards	Review the waste service, and undertake an options appraisal	Dec-23	Jun-24	<div> <div>CLlr Andrea Pellegram</div> <div>David Stanley</div> </div>	Complete	Completed
					<div> <div>CLlr Patrick Coleman</div> <div>David Stanley</div> </div>	Complete	MTFS approved by Council 24/02/2025
	Enhance our financial resilience and make best use of our assets	Continue to ensure that the Council's MTFS five year strategy reflects economic conditions and the government's funding settlement	Feb-24	Reviewed annually	<div> <div>CLlr Patrick Coleman</div> <div>David Stanley</div> </div>	Complete	
		Implement the Council's new asset management strategy and asset plans	Apr-24	Review April 2025	<div> <div>CLlr Patrick Coleman</div> <div>David Stanley</div> </div>	Complete	Completed
	Play our part in maintaining and enhancing the public realm across the district	Instigate second phase of activity to replace worn and damaged street nameplates	Feb-24	Feb-25	<div> <div>CLlr Mike Evemy</div> <div>Claire Locke</div> </div>	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	There remains some backlog in the replacement of signs. An update on progress and a plan for future replacements is being agreed with Ubico.
					CLlr Mike McKeown		Delivery of ORCs funded EVCPs across four sites is progressing well, although an
Responding to	Reduce CO2 from Transport: We will actively encourage and support						

the climate emergency

the climate emergency	the transition to EVs and increased use of public and sustainable transport such as cycling and walking.	Develop and deliver an Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy	Jan-24	Jul-24	Claire Locke	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	extension to the original 31st March completion has been agreed due to delays with connection by the DNO, Scottish and Southern Electric (SSE). Two sites should be connected mid-April (Market Way, Moreton in Marsh and Maugersbury road, Stow on the Wold) with two further sites awaiting connection dates (Brewery, Cirencester & West Street, Tetbury).
		Work with partners to implement the Sustainable Transport Strategy	Adoption as part of the Local Plan - projected June 2025	Apr-28	Cllr Mike McKeown Jon Dearing Matthew Britton	Not Scheduled to Start During Quarter	Workstream not scheduled to start this quarter
		Taxi Transition - explore the opportunity for the creation of an EV Taxi policy	Apr-24	Jun-25	Cllr Mike McKeown Jon Dearing Mandy Fathers	On Target	First draft of Policy has been written and officers reviewing. Aim to have draft updated and discussed with Portfolio Holder during Q1 2025/2026 and put on Committee forward plans towards the end of Q1, beginning of Q2 2025/2026
	Cut Council Carbon Footprint, implementing sustainable practices in all council operations, emphasising energy efficiency and renewable energy adoption, across our buildings, fleet and suppliers.	Create a Climate Board, agree governance arrangements and key outcomes.	Jan-24	Review January 2025	Cllr Mike McKeown	On Target	Proposal for creation of a Climate Board has been drafted and is due to be presented to May 2025 Cabinet meeting.
					Olivia McGregor		
	Increase renewable energy generation within the district, ensuring local benefit	Support and promote community owned renewables initiatives	Dec-23	Review June 2024	Cllr Mike McKeown	On Target	Cotswold District Council has been actively supporting community energy initiatives within the district, including Thames Head Community Energy. This not-for-profit Community Benefit Society (CBS) organisation, based in the Cotswolds, aims to develop local renewable energy projects to benefit the community and the environment. CDC's support has included policy backing, financial contributions through Crowdfund Cotswolds, and participation in broader regional initiatives such as Climate Leadership Gloucestershire's Community Energy workstream.
					Olivia McGregor		
		Explore the business cases for the installation of solar panels on Council owned assets.	Jan-24	Jul-24	Cllr Mike McKeown Claire Locke	Complete	Completed
	Champion initiatives to address the ecological emergency and nature recovery, focusing on reducing CO2 and conserving and enhancing the district's biodiversity and natural beauty.	Implement the new requirements around Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	Jan-24	Review July 2024	Cllr Juliet Layton	Complete	Completed
					Geraldine LeCointe		
		Continue to promote and deliver Cotswold Home Solar in partnership	Jan-23	Review July 2024	Cllr Mike McKeown	On Target	Cotswold Home Solar continues to be promoted and delivered. 27 households have

Delivering Housing	Reduce CO2 from Buildings: Foster community-led climate action, supporting residents and businesses adopting renewable heating and improving energy efficiency.	Cotswold Home Solar, in partnership with MakeMyHouseGreen	Jan-23	Review July 2024	Olivia McGregor	On Target	now installed solar. A further 18 have put down a deposit.
		Consider the business case on optimising the delivery of high quality retrofit advice and support	Jul-24	Jul-25	Cllr Mike McKeown Cllr Juliet Layton	On Target	The Council has partnered with Gloucestershire authorities to launch a retrofit support service which has been live since 22nd January. This service offers energy efficiency plans, project specifications, vetted installers, and installation management. To date 7 households have requested energy efficient house plans. Additionally, CDC has employed a Retrofit Engagement Officer who is engaging communities and providing retrofit advice until September 2025. She is delivering community events and offering free home visits to identify opportunities to install renewable energy and make energy efficiency improvements. Severn Wye Energy Agency (SWEA) are the chosen contractor to deliver free energy efficiency advice for low-income households through the Warm and Well Scheme for the next 5 years.
					Olivia McGregor		
	Ensure our planning policies deliver our corporate priorities and promotes both carbon neutral development and infrastructure	Subject to proposed legislative changes, complete full review of the Local Plan	Jan-24	Jun-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	CDC is currently partially updating its adopted Local Plan to make it green to the core. A consultation was held on the draft Local Plan policies between 1 February 2024 and 7 April 2024. Consultation responses are currently being considered and further supporting evidence is being produced before a final version of the Local Plan will be consulted on early in 2025. The Local Plan update will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate before June 2025 for an Independent Examination in Public led by a government appointed Inspector.
					Geraldine LeCointe Matt Britton		
		Develop a new Cotswold Design Guide – building for the future in the Cotswolds	Sep-23	May-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	City Science have been commissioned to help deliver the new Cotswold Design Code (note guide!). A draft Design Code has been shared for comment. The final Design Code is currently being worked up.
					Geraldine LeCointe Matthew Britton		
	Work with Cirencester Town Council on the coordination of the Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan and the Cirencester Neighbourhood Plan policies	Jan-24	Sep-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	A consultation was held on the draft master plan between 1 February 2024 and 7 April April 2024. Consultation responses are currently being considered, which will inform a more detailed version of the masterplan. Mace, a highly experienced consultancy with a proven track record of delivering masterplans, have been appointed to assist with the delivery of the masterplan. CDC has also been working with Cirencester TC on their Neighbourhood Plan policies and comments have been provided on the draft NDP policies.	
				Geraldine LeCointe Matthew Britton			
	Working with our partners to	Explore innovative approaches to housing delivery	Feb-24	Aug-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	On Target	CDC Strategic Housing Manager developing strategies and options for a more interventionist Housing Delivery approach including collaborations with landowners, developers and Registered Providers.
Robert Weaver Alan Hope							

Supporting communities	explore innovative routes to deliver more affordable homes	Deliver an exemplar zero carbon affordable housing development in Down Ampney	Dec-23	Apr-28	Cllr Juliet Layton	On Target	Planning consent was granted on 12 th March, however Bromford need to resolve issues with the surface water drainage design and are discussing the timeline for Thames Water Infrastructure upgrades to accommodate the development. This may delay commencement of works until 2027 unless Thames Water will bring their upgrade plans forward. Heads of Terms for the CDC land transfer and the S106 are being negotiated with Bromford.
	Understanding everyone's housing needs	Support refugees to retain adequate housing	Jul-23	Review March 2025	Cllr Claire Bloomer	On Target	Work is ongoing to support all refugees whether on a resettlement scheme or dispersed asylum. In addition to working to ensure the families and individuals are adequately housed there is ongoing wraparound support being provided to assist with resettlement and community cohesion
					Jon Dearing Caroline Clissold/ Paula Massey		
		Continue to monitor housing needs, using Homeseeker Plus, to inform housing strategy and implementation	Jan-24	Mar-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	On Target	The Housing Team prevent homelessness for an average of 50 households per quarter. By preventing homelessness before it occurs, this reduces the number of families who need to be accommodated in expensive B&B accommodation, which can also be outside of the district. This approach minimises both disruption for our clients, and reduces the cost burden on the local authority. The Housing Team also have a strong approach to rough sleeping ensuring that when it does occur, it is brief and non recurring. CDC continue to report low to zero rough sleeping in the district.
					Jon Dearing Caroline Clissold		
	Continue to build on the success of the Housing First Project with a new county wide approach	Jan-24	Mar-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	On Target	The Cotswold Housing First project is recognised accross the county as being an exemplary example of how projects of this type should be approached. Successful outcomes are above national averages and the Housing Team continue to work closely with Bromford and P3 to ensure the continued success of this project. There are currently 6 individuals accommodated in Housing First, however external funding has been awarded to P3 to extend the offer to a further 2 clients, giving us 8 spaces in total. Referrals are currently being considered.	
			Jon Dearing Caroline Clissold				
	Adopting and implementing our new housing strategy	Consult and adopt the Council's new Housing strategy	Dec-23	Jun-24	Cllr Juliet Layton	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	The finalisation of the Housing Strategy is being updated in light of the emerging options review, the Govt NPPF consultation outcome and will be coordinated with other related strategies/policies (e.g Homelessness/Empty Properties etc)
		Alan Hope Matthew Britton					
Supporting communities	Strengthen our links with town and parish councils and key stakeholders	Continue the annual programme of Town and Parish Council Forum engagement events	Jan-24	Jan-25	Cllr Mike Every	On Target	Plans for the Summit are progressing well with a confirmed dated of Wednesday 4th and keynote speakers confirmed including Jackie Weaver. Invites to be sent w/c 7th April.
				Angela Claridge			
	Address the challenges of flooding and water quality and sewerage discharges	Identify opportunities to influence policy and host a sewage summit with the outcome being reported to the Council in May.	Jan-24	Oct-24	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Complete	Completed
					Matthew Britton		
		Identify gaps and bolster the			Cllr Tristan		

		Identify gaps and deliver the Cotswold Flood wardens programme	Jan-24	Jun-24	Robert Weaver	Complete	Completed
	Enhance connectivity, and biodiversity in the Cotswold Water park	Continue to work with Gloucestershire County Council on the creation of a safe crossing of the Spine Road	Jan-24	Review in January 2025	Cllr Juliet Layton	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	Design work underway, but implementation dependant upon issues with the bridge being resolved. UK Shared Prosperity Fund earmarked for the project were reallocated to other projects to ensure the year end spend target was met, and local benefit realised.
					Joseph Walker		
		Install cycle racks, in consultation with the local community	Jan-24	Mar-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	Complete	Installations completed
					Joseph Walker		
		Work with partners to embed the Nature Recovery Plan for Cotswold Lakes	Jan-24	Review every six months	Cllr Juliet Layton		
					Geraldine LeCointe Sophia Price		
	Healthy place making through the Local Plan	Embed Healthy Homes Act into the Cotswold Design Code	Jun-25	Jun-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	Not Scheduled to Start During Quarter	Workstream not scheduled to start this quarter
					Geraldine LeCointe		
		Introduce a requirement for Community Access Defibrillators in new developments	Jun-25	Jun-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	Not Scheduled to Start During Quarter	Workstream not scheduled to start this quarter
					Geraldine LeCointe		
		Focus on green infrastructure, to enhance biodiversity and community wellbeing	Jun-25	Jun-25	Cllr Juliet Layton	Not Scheduled to Start During Quarter	Workstream not scheduled to start this quarter
					Geraldine LeCointe		
	Develop and deliver a District Council cultural strategy	Commence development of the cultural strategy	Feb-24	Sep-24	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Off Target, but action being taken to ensure delivery	The strategy will be reconfigured as a Plan, with a focus on short term actions and joint working between partners, to ensure positive outcomes in the context of the longer term uncertainty of LGR. A stakeholder meeting is being planned for later May, to start to take work forward and sense check the draft plan which will be presented in members in the summer.
					Joseph Walker		
	Encourage resilient, well-connected and active communities that take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing				Cllr Claire Bloomer		The first two of fourteen 'Strengthening Communities' events took place over the February half term. These events bring together a wide range of statutory

		Continue to deliver an asset based community development approach	Jan-24	Apr-28	Joseph Walker	On Target	and voluntary/community sector service providers to promote their services to local residents, across the district's larger settlements. There is a strong focus on empowering and engaging residents in positive local activity to improve health and wellbeing, and thus buy-in from health colleagues. The Team have liaised with partners to support the local 'Dighubs' contract going to two local partners, the Churn and Cotswold Friends, which will secure a digital inclusion over for the district.
		Celebrate success - promote the work being done by partners across the district to inspire communities	Feb-24	Review August 2024	Cllr Claire Bloomer Joseph Walker	On Target	There were some very strong submissions, to the third round, and the winners attended Council in January. Due to the GCC elections and the Council's AGM on May, the next round will be in July. We are looking at introducing a young hero category, to ensure young people's contributions are picked up by the scheme.
		Continue to promote community activity through Crowdfund Cotswold	Feb-24	Review August 2024	Cllr Claire Bloomer Joseph Walker	On Target	The deadline for the Spring Round was on 9th April. At the time of writing, project proposals were still being verified prior to launching on the Crowdfund Cotswold platform, but we anticipate 5/6 projects for the spring round. The February Project creator workshop was well attended, and identified a few project ideas which we anticipate will come forward later this year/early next.
	Promote healthy lifestyles, fun and self-care for all ages	Monitor and review delivery of the District leisure contract with Freedom Leisure	Aug-23	Aug-25	Cllr Paul David Stanley Joseph Walker	On Target	Regular meetings have taken place, to review performance and to identify and mitigate any risks. These meetings have also presented an opportunity to pick up on complaints, and have prompted a timely response from the contractor.
		Continue to deliver the Healthier District and Connected Communities objectives and priorities set out in the Active Cotswolds Action Plan, and implement the Playing Pitch Strategy's action plan.	Jan-24	Review January 2025	Cllr Paul Helen Martin Joseph Walker	On Target	The Active Cotswold Support Officer has convened a number of meetings to support projects looking to address the evidenced Playing Pitch deficits identified in the PPS. The Council has also met with Sport England and representatives of the sports governing bodies to assess progress with the action plan.
		Work with partners to develop a consistent, countywide approach to identify opportunities to support to care leavers	Jun-24	Review December 2024	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson David Stanley Joseph Walker	On Target	Work is progressing with the Cotswold Youth Network, to enhance information sharing about youth voice between partners
		Continue to be a proactive member of the Cotswold Food Network		Review January	Cllr Claire Bloomer		The CFN has hosted meetings with local partner organisations to share information and promote VCSE engagement and support in the Council's

	Work with partners to ensure vital services cover the district, and offer support to our residents if crises hit	Steering Group and support initiatives under the network's umbrella	Jan-24	Review January 2025	Joseph Walker	On Target	proposed LIFT campaigns, to assist Cotswold families with the cost of living. Worrying about Money, the national leaflet has been updated as a Cotswold specific version. Copies will be online and distributed in print.
		Continue to work with the NHS Integrated Locality Partnership to support youth mental health	Jan-24	Review January 2025	Cllr Claire Bloomer	On Target	The ILP hosted a monthly subgroup focused on Children and Young People to ensure partnership activity supporting young people's mental health is well trgeted and aligned across providers. In quarter, CDC has launched a grant scheme to allocate SLC funding alinged to the ILP, with CYP being one of the two priorities - there has been a steady stream of applications, which will be reviewed in May.
					Joseph Walker		
	Maintain a multi-service response to the cost of living crisis, and other challenges to community wellbeing	Jan-23	Review January 2025	Cllr Claire Bloomer	On Target	A second campaign ran in Jan/Feb, to flag availability on the Warm Homes Discount. THe updated data snapshot shows a increase in take-up of Pensions Credit, but due to national demand, and processing time, it will be some months before we can see the settled picture as a result of the national and local awareness raising carried out in later 2024. Work has commencing planning the next campaigns, which, follwing conversation with partners are likely to address rising costs of water and fuel bills.	
				Claire Locke Joseph Walker			
	Keep residents safe, through awareness raising around domestic abuse and fraud	Continue to raise the profile of the Community Safety Partnership to reduce the fear of crime and ensure residents know how, and where, to get support	Feb-24	Review February 2025	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	On Target	The Cotswold CSP met in late January, under the new chairmanship of Councillor Paul Hodgkinson. Good egagmenet from partners, and discussion to take forward priorities from the action plan including speeding traffic. The CCSP meets next, in person, on 15th April
					Joseph Walker		
		Denver Rural Domestic Abuse Champions programme in partnership with other rural Gloucestershire districts and	Feb-24	Mar-25	Cllr Claire Bloomer	On Target	The Council is working with GDASS to raise awareness - for example through promotional materials at Strengthening Communities Events
					Joseph Walker		
		Train frontline staff to identify Domestic Abuse and review internal processes to recognise and support victims of abuse	Feb-24	Jul-24	Cllr Claire Bloomer	On Target	Local partner staff and some CDC staff undertook rural domestic abuse training in February - 2 x 2hr training to raise understanding of domestic abuse and its rural dynamic.
				Joseph Walker			
Coordinate activity under Home Office's safer Streets Fund to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and violence against women and girls	Feb-24	Review February 2025	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson/Cllr Claire Bloomer	On Target	Most activity being supported by Safer Streets has now concluded. We anticipate signing off the final projects in April.		
			Joseph Walker				
Supporting the economy	Work with partners to develop the skills of our residents	Work with key sectors to create new highly skilled jobs, through promotion of apprenticeship opportunities	Feb-24	Apr-28	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	On Target	Officers continue to work with businesses from key sectors, including agritech, cyber/digital and sustainable aviation to promote employment opportunities. Discussions have taken place with key stakeholders about how to promote apprenticeship opportunities articles about apprenticeships have appeared in recent Business Matters newsletters. Apprenticeships are being promoted as a way of mitigating higher employers' NI contributions.
					Joseph Walker Paul James		
	Deliver a programme of activities in year 3 of the Shared Prosperity Fund to help those furthest from the employment market	Apr-24	Mar-25	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	On Target	This project was delivered through Gloucestershire County Council's Employment and Skills Hub Outreach programme in partnership with The Churn Project with agreed outputs and outcomes. Cabinet has approved an additional year of funding for the project in 2025-26 working directly with The Churn Project.	
				Joseph Walker Paul James			
	Attract and manage investment to boost the local economy	Consider the results of the digital and green survey of community buildings, and enable improvements through Rural England Prosperity Fund	Apr-24	Mar-25	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	On Target	14 projects have been allocated funding by the REPF grant scheme for village halls and all are now completed. The grant scheme is now closed. There may be further opportunities for village halls and community buildings through the 2025-26 REPF funding.
					Joseph Walker Paul James		

	Support local businesses and farms, to enhance the vibrancy of our towns and villages, and to manage the opportunity and impact of the visitor economy	Continue to deliver against the six priorities set out in the Cotswold Tourism destination management plan	Jan-24	Mar-25	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	On Target	Three UKSPF funded projects are now underway: one to identify and promote businesses as Sustainability champions; one to encourage the development of new experiences; one to bring enhancements and new functionality to the tourism website (www.cotswolds.com)
					Joseph Walker Chris Jackson		
		Continue to support the Local Visitor Economy Partnership, to ensure better coordination of tourism activity and delivery against national growth targets	Jan-24	Review January 2025	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	On Target	Seven workstreams have been agreed by the partnership, each with an agreed action plan: these include two sustainability strands (one on transport & active travel, the other on business practices & biodiversity), business support and travel trade.
					Joseph Walker Chris Jackson		
	Work with local and county partners to grow a strong and sustainable economy	Undertake a refresh of the Green Economic Strategy	Feb-24	Apr-24	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	Complete	The final version of the refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in March 2025.
					Joseph Walker Paul James		
		Continue to support the development of the Royal Agricultural University's Innovation Village	Jan-24	Jan-25	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	On Target	The outline planning application is working its way through the process. Officers and representatives from the RAU and its advisers continue to meet in order to resolve outstanding issues including comments from consultees. It is hoped the application will be able to be determined in the near future.
					Joseph Walker Paul James		
		Continue to work with The Growth Hub to support existing businesses and encourage the growth of start-ups, with a focus on the outreach provision supported by the Shared Prosperity Fund	Jan-24	Mar-25	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson	On Target	Officers meet monthly with representatives from the RAU/Growth Hub to monitor progress against outputs/outcomes and are pleased with progress against targets. Cirencester Growth Hub is, by a number of measures, the most successful Growth Hub in the network. Outreach Navigators continue to work across the district and have held a number of events and discovery meetings at the Moreton Area Centre, which are being well-supported. Cabinet has agreed another year of funding for 2025-26.
					Joseph Walker Paul James		



COTSWOLD

District Council

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REPORT

January - March 2025

Our Cotswolds, Our Plan 2024-28

Our Ambition

To tackle some of the big challenges faced by our residents while providing a good level of key services.

Our Priorities



**Delivering Good
Services**



**Responding to the
Climate Emergency**



Delivering Housing



**Supporting
Communities**



**Supporting the
Economy**

Executive Summary Highlights

- Cotswold Home Solar remains actively promoted and delivered, with 27 households having already installed solar panels. Additionally, 18 more households have placed deposits for installation.
- The Council has partnered with Gloucestershire authorities to launch a retrofit support service, live since January 22nd. The service provides energy efficiency plans, vetted installers, and project management. To date, 7 households have requested plans.
- The installation of cycle parking concluded, with a total of 78 racks installed across the area, and across a wide range of destinations, ranging from community assets to new or established businesses.
- During the quarter, the rebranding of the Water Park to 'Cotswold Lakes' officially took place, with an event on 28th March to promote the new branding and the variety of activities the 'Lakes' offer.
- The Spring Round of Crowdfund Cotswold closed on 9th April, with 5 to 6 project proposals currently being verified before launch on the platform. The February project creator workshop was well attended and generated several ideas expected to come forward later this year or early next.
- The first two of fourteen 'Strengthening Communities' events took place over February half term, bringing together statutory and community organisations to promote services in the district's larger settlements. These events focus on empowering residents to engage in positive local activity, with strong support from health partners. The team also worked with partners to secure the local Digihubs contract for the Churn and Cotswold Friends, ensuring continued digital inclusion support across the district.
- The final version of the refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in March 2025.

Delivering Good Services



The Context

As a council, our purpose is to provide vital services to our residents, businesses, and visitors. The council is committed to delivering services effectively and efficiently, ensuring they reflect our dedication to addressing climate change and offering value for local taxpayers. The council's services will uphold high standards and deliver value for money. We will collaborate with our contractors and partners, including town and parish councils, to sustain valuable services and contribute to the preservation of the Cotswolds environment that we all take pride in.

Actions we are taking

During the quarter, the rebranding of the Water Park to 'Cotswold Lakes' officially took place, with an event on 28th March to promote the new branding and the variety of activities the 'Lakes' offer. The installation of cycle parking concluded, with a total of 78 racks installed across the area, and across a wide range of destinations, ranging from community assets to new or established businesses.

Participating businesses have been surveyed soon after installation. This work confirms that the stands are perceived to have improved security, and consequentially have helped increase cycling levels at the destination, with some use across the week, and confirms businesses have been satisfied by the installation process. We work expect usage to pick up incrementally, as potential users become aware of their availability, and adapt/increase cycle travel to take in these destinations.

The overarching aim of the improvement work in the Planning service is to provide a trusted, inclusive, and transparent planning service. In that regard, performance has improved markedly, and the Government has confirmed that it is no longer minded to consider designating the Council for poor performance. Following the work already undertaken on the pre-application service, validation checklist, fee schedule, communication with applicants, and timeliness of communication at key stages of the process, the recent priority has been the reduction in backlogs in the enforcement function and designing and testing the new enforcement form. These have now been introduced and are expected to deliver a reduction in repeat customer contact and chasing, as well as a reduction in the number of non-breach cases from the improved online reporting facilities and back-office triage. The main piece of work that has recently gone live is the new process associated with the requirements to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) alongside the determination of Planning Applications.

The Development Management Improvement Plan, initiated after the PAS report, is actively progressing with a focus on streamlining enforcement. Efforts to reduce the case backlog have been supported by the introduction of a "Harm Checklist" to prioritise cases more effectively. A new interactive digital form for submitting complaints, now live on the website, allows users to upload photos, map locations, and access clearer guidance on the enforcement process and timeframes. These enhancements help manage customer expectations and free up staff to focus on investigations. The next phase of the plan will refine case management to concentrate on high-priority cases, with a tracking system in development to boost transparency and responsiveness.



Responding to the Climate Emergency

The Context

The climate crisis, and the related ecology crisis, present an existential threat to all Cotswold district residents, but particularly our young people, and future generations beyond them. There is an urgent imperative to act. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), have repeatedly outlined the catastrophic impacts that people and nature will face should the world warm by 2 degrees. They plead to limit global temperature rise through urgent, unprecedented, systemic change to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. Cotswold District Council's climate strategy set a 2020-2030 timeframe, reflecting the importance of this crucial 'Decade to Make a Difference'. The Council's Climate Emergency Strategy of September 2020 identified the Council's different spheres of influence over carbon emissions. These range from emissions under the council's control (for example emissions produced from its own operations) through to those it can have an influence over by enabling District-wide climate mitigation action. Here below is a summary of actions we are taking in response.

'Direct Control' actions

The Council's Climate Emergency Strategy of September 2020 contained a target to make emissions from the Council's own operations net-zero carbon as soon as possible, aiming for an 80% reduction by 2030 against a 1990 baseline, and a 100% reduction by 2045. An updated report of progress against the net zero target has been carried out which identified the Council will fail to reach net zero should remedial action not be taken. In May, Cabinet will be reviewing the recommendation to launch a Corporate Net Zero Transformation Programme overseen by a Climate Board to address the identified risk and strengthen governance arrangements in this space. A number of activities to reduce council carbon emissions are in development. A business case has been agreed and an offer has been made to New Brewery Arts for the provision of solar PV. A funding proposal has been submitted to the Waste and Resources Partnership for an waste fleet EV transition feasibility study.

'Indirect Control' actions

Work is progressing with preparing the climate change policies of the partial update of the adopted Local Plan for a final stage of public consultation, ahead of submitting the updated policies to the Secretary of State for examination in public. This work has included consideration of feedback to the previous public consultation on the draft Local Plan, and taking on-board the findings of evidence base studies that inform the policy updates.

Part of the work to underpin this has involved the creation of a Renewable Energy Study which will be presented to Cabinet in May. This contains an assessment of existing and potential renewable energy resources (including a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment) across the district as well as an assessment of current and projected future energy demands and emissions in Cotswold District. It considers renewable energy deployment scenarios and opportunities within Cotswold District alongside the benefits and challenges of renewable energy development in relation to environmental, social and economic impacts on the local area and its assets. A suite of strategic recommendations for renewable energy development has been produced alongside specific energy policy recommendations to underpin proposals for policies in the Local Plan review and for future revisions up to 2041, to reflect the district's net zero ambitions for consideration in the current Local Plan review.

Colleagues from both planning policy and community wellbeing & economic growth teams attended a CCRI led net zero food and farming workshop in April to examine how actors across Gloucestershire can collaborate with each other and wider partners, on a policy approach that supports the transformational changes needed in the production and consumption of food.

To help building owners and tenants improve the energy efficiency and climate resilience of their buildings, the Local Planning Authority produced some guidance specifically for listed buildings, buildings located in a conservation area and those which are traditionally built. The guidance provides a general introduction to the topic, highlighting key points to consider when considering making energy efficiency and climate adaptation improvements to a building, and to provide guidance about where to go for good quality, independent advice, as well as where to find suitably qualified tradespersons.

'Place Shaping' actions

EV charging infrastructure provision

The Council is working to provide residents without off-street parking with EV charging facilities to enable the uptake of EVs across the District. Plans to install electric vehicle charge points in Council-owned carparks have progressed. The Council have entered into a contract with Connected Kerb for delivery of EVCPs in 4 Council owned car parks in Tetbury, Cirencester, Stow-on-the-Wold and Moreton in Marsh respectively. Installation within these car parks is currently taking place and is due to be completed in May.

Solar PV support

The Council is also working to enable residents to install solar PV by helping them to understand their options, find a reliable installer and secure a fair price through the Cotswold Home Solar scheme. The scheme continues to be promoted and delivered. As a result of the scheme 27 homes have already installed solar panels, and a further 18 have paid a deposit. Residents are on track to save nearly £450,000 across the district.

Energy efficiency support

Low carbon retrofit of the District's domestic building stock is an essential component of national emissions reduction but remains a huge challenge. The Council is undertaking significant work in this area. In partnership with all other Gloucestershire authorities, a contractor has been procured to provide a Gloucestershire-wide retrofit support offer for residents. The service launched on the 22nd of January and offers residents the opportunity of a whole house energy efficiency plan, project specification and vetted installer selection as well as an installation management service. In addition, a Cotswold District Retrofit Engagement Officer has been recruited to engage communities directly and provide a series of awareness raising events and bespoke advice between now and September 2025. In March we delivered Drive and Thrive event at the Corn Hall which provided residents with the opportunity to see feel and touch low carbon home technologies. The programme of retrofit engagement events is available to view here <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/retrofit-engagement-scheme/>. We have also reappointed Contractor Severn Wye Energy Agency (SWEA) to deliver free energy efficiency advice service specifically for low-income households via the Warm and Well Scheme until 2027.

Net zero energy planning

The Council is also working in partnership with other Gloucestershire-based councils on Local Area Energy Planning which is vital to enabling net zero within Cotswold District since it is needed to build the case to District Network Operators for investment and expansion in electricity grid infrastructure. A contractor has been appointed to undertake the first 3 stages (of 7) required for Energy Planning and is currently carrying out stakeholder engagement exercises and energy baselining. In tandem we have launched our engagement with Distribution Network Operators (DNOs)/Distribution System Operators (DSOs), Northern Powergrid (NGED) & Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), to inform their Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES) 2025 projections to ensure electricity grid infrastructure is adequate to meet our net zero ambitions.

Transport decarbonisation

Work also continues through Climate Leadership Gloucestershire on delivering the Statement of Shared Intent (SoSI) in which all seven local authorities expressed an ambition to reduce surface transport emissions by 80% by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2050. Gloucestershire councils are strengthening their collaboration regards EV charging infrastructure by considering opportunities for enhanced coordination. Life Cycle have been administering the Take a Stand scheme in the Cotswolds since 2022, showing the commitment of the council to encourage sustainable travel in the region. With CDC support, 78 cycle parking stands have been installed recently across a number of locations in the Cotswold District.

Affordable housing

We are strengthening our partnership with Bromford to ensure existing homes and communities are resilient and ready to respond to the challenges presented by the Climate Emergency.

‘Engaging’ actions

This remains a very important part of the Council’s overall climate crisis response, and there is much work to do to help build confidence and momentum among all District-wide stakeholders, from staff to residents and from businesses to public sector bodies. We regularly run communication engagement campaigns to encourage behaviour change amongst District stakeholders. For example, in January 2025 a campaign was run to encourage people and showcase the small positive changes that can be made for the environment.

We continue to provide funding for a business net zero engagement support programme. We have also relaunched Crowdfund Cotswolds which supports and enables local communities to invest in carbon reduction technology and activity. The latest round has just closed and funding will be announced shortly. Carbon literacy training continues to be rolled out to staff and councillors. We also developed a web resource to communicate to all stakeholders on the work of the council regards climate change. Finally, a District-wide network of individuals and organisations motivated by the climate challenge has been formed, aiming to replicate the success of West Oxfordshire District Council’s ‘Green Light’ communications platform.

Delivering Housing



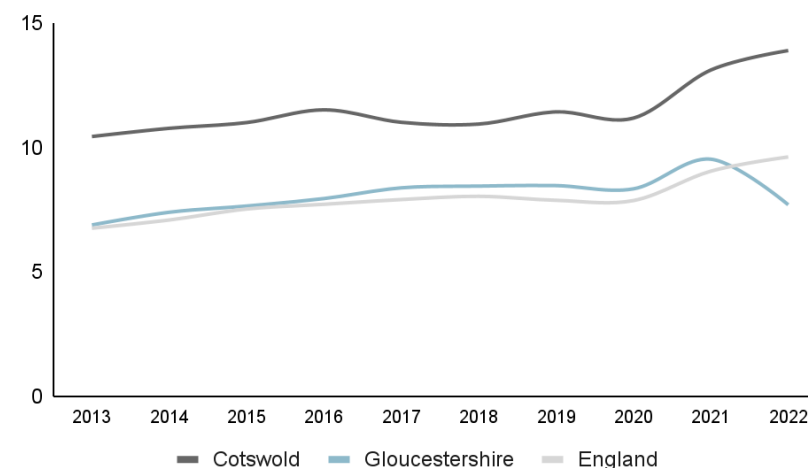
The Context

The high quality natural and built environment makes the District a desirable place to live. Cotswold District has a high number of properties owned outright (37.8% vs. the 30.6% national average), reflecting the attractiveness of the District as a place to retire or to purchase a second home.

House prices and rents are relatively high. At the end of September 2022, the median property price in Cotswold District was £400,000, compared to £275,000 in England. House prices are falling due to the cost of living crisis, while rents are increasing. There is a shortage of good quality rented accommodation, that is genuinely affordable. Affordable housing helps to meet the District's housing needs and can include low cost home ownership or rented accommodation which typically has a discount of around 20% on the market rent; however, this may still not be truly affordable for some residents. Social rented homes have a rent that is lower than affordable rent and therefore provide homes for those on lower incomes or in receipt of full Housing Benefits.

The relatively high house prices and increasingly high rents, coupled with the lower than average earnings from local jobs, mean housing affordability is a significant challenge for residents in the District and is being made worse by the cost of living crisis.

Ratio of median house price to median gross annual residence-based earnings



Actions we are taking

The Council's Affordable Housing Delivery Strategy and Action Plan was adopted by Cabinet on 8 February 2021 and set out the delivery strategy for the Council to accelerate the provision of social rented and affordable homes for local people. The current focus is to facilitate the affordable housing identified

within the Local Plan and through rural exception sites and community-led housing opportunities, and to work with Housing Associations to maximise affordable housing delivery. The Council plans to go further and bring forward additional affordable homes through enabling and direct intervention, which may include the provision of land and other funding. In addition, any development the Council acquires or builds must be carbon zero in support of the Council's Climate Change emergency commitment. Although this will increase the cost of affordable housing, it will reduce ongoing revenue costs for tenants. Based on the outcomes from the councillor workshop in October 2020, discussions with local Registered Providers (RPs), and a review of delivery options, Officers recommended that the Council establish a formal partnership with one lead Registered Provider.

The partnership with Bromford to deliver carbon zero affordable homes at a site in Down Ampney will a vacant plot owned by CDC and a neighbouring site which has domestic garages on it, which is owned by Bromford developed with 13 social rented homes. The carbon efficiency of these dwelling means tenants will have low utility bills, with electricity generated by the roof mounted Solar PV. Planning consent was granted on 12th March, however Bromford need to resolve issues with the surface water drainage design and are discussing the timeline for Thames Water Infrastructure upgrades to accommodate the development. This may delay commencement of works until 2027 unless Thames Water will bring their upgrade plans forward. Heads of Terms for the CDC land transfer and the S106 are being negotiated with Bromford.

The Old station, Sheep street was previously assessed for service provision such as homelessness accommodation and other housing options, but the conversion was found to be unaffordable. Despite attempts to bring forward proposals for cultural and community use, no affordable scheme could be identified so in July 2024 Council took the decision to market the Old Station and Memorial Cottages for sale. The successful bidders are now engaged with the Council in the legal process to complete the sales. It is anticipated the sale will complete in April 2025 enabling the new owners to deliver plans to bring the buildings back into use.

Supporting Communities



The Context

The health and wellbeing of our residents is generally good and above the England and the county average in most measures. Cotswold District is one of the safest districts with very low crime levels and is surrounded by beautiful countryside. However, there are some challenges. Cotswold District has an ageing population; over the last 10 years, it has experienced greater growth across all 65+ age groups compared to England and Wales. Many older residents live alone, and coupled with the rurality of the District, loneliness and access to services are issues for the District.

The wider determinants of health also need to be taken into account - social, economic and environmental factors such as unemployment, low income, poor housing, and lifestyles which have an impact on people's health and wellbeing. This means that the Council needs to work with a wide range of partners, to pool resources and to apply a whole systems and asset-based approach to address challenges together.

Actions we are taking

We want Cotswold District to be the best in the country for health and wellbeing, and promoting healthy lifestyles and providing opportunities for people of all ages to be active is key. A Leisure Strategy, determined by local priorities and outcomes, was developed with the aim of providing effective and sustainable physical activity and sport opportunities for local communities through investment in our stock of leisure facilities and other non-facility interventions. In March 2021, the Cabinet authorised officers to work in partnership with other organisations on the feasibility of the projects in the Strategy. Specialist Leads for each of the three themes (Healthier District, Connected Community, and Active Environment) have developed action plans for each area. Progress on the projects is being monitored by the Active Cotswolds Programme Board and reported to the Portfolio Board.

Crowdfund Cotswold

The deadline for the Spring Round was 9th April. At the time of writing, project proposals are still undergoing verification before being launched on the Crowdfund Cotswold platform. However, we anticipate that five or six projects will be confirmed as part of this round once the checks are complete.

The Project Creator Workshop held in February was well attended and proved to be a valuable opportunity to support and inspire potential applicants. Several promising project ideas emerged during the session. While these were not ready in time for the spring deadline, we expect some to come forward in future rounds—either later this year or early next year.

Holiday Activity and Food Programme & Strengthening Communities Events

Funding for the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme was extended for 2025 and Easter HAF plans are already in place to continue the great work alongside World Jungle and other providers. In the event that HAF would not take place we secured £50,000 through the Strengthening Local Communities fund to offer 14 events throughout 2025, equally distributed between the south and north of the district. Even though HAF is continuing we are still going ahead with the events which are multi-generational, offering activities for children, young people, and adults providing information from key support organisations and include food. We will also offer a forum for all ages to share their thoughts on what's good and what could be better in their communities. Using the Asset-Based Community Development model, we will work with local community champions to target the needs of each community. The first event took place in Moreton-in-Marsh at the Redesdale Hall on 18th February, and the second in Cirencester at The Bingham Hall on 20th February. Both events were successful and received positive feedback and good all-round participation from residents and partner organisations. The next 2 events are at Bourton Cricket Club (15/4/25) and Fairford Community Centre (22/4/25).

Rural Domestic Abuse Champions

Cotswold, in collaboration with Tewkesbury, Stroud, and Forest of Dean, funded a joint post to promote Rural Domestic Abuse Champions across districts. The rationale for this post is that in rural areas, victims of domestic abuse are less likely to seek help and support due to lack of transport and isolation. The post, offering training via Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS), helps identify and support individuals in abusive relationships in rural areas. There are currently 35 champions in Cotswold. GDASS continues to offer numerous training dates online, to train both Cotswold employees and staff at partner organisations.

Cotswold Food Network

The Council's work to improve food sustainability in the district continues to be directed through the Cotswold Food Network (CFN). The main work themes remain improving financial inclusion and cost of living support, and food provision.

Specific activity since the new year has included on financial inclusion: meeting local partner organisations to share information and promote VCSE engagement and support, in the Council's proposed LIFT-informed campaigns, to assist Cotswold families with the cost of living. Worrying about Money, the national leaflet

has been updated and in the first time, will feature as a Cotswold specific version (previously the leaflet was Stroud & Cotswold). Copies will be online and distributed in print.

Under food provision, there has been substantial progress to collect information on local organisational capacity to accept surplus food when it becomes available. This should improve the re-distribution of surplus food to local communities and reduce waste.

Cotswold Food Network since March now produces two monthly newsletters, based on the topics above. These are emailed to the relevant mailing lists. Finally Roz Savage MP, has asked to meet with Lizzie Dyer (freelance, strategic support for CFN) and Martin Hawkins (CDC Support Officer) on the topic of food sustainability activity in the South Cotswolds, which has been arranged in May.

Community Building

The team is actively supporting the Cotswold Youth Network by enhancing mental health and youth services and fostering collaboration among organisations. Specifically, the team is working with Northleach Teen Space to implement training for their team and introduce interventions from the Ernest Cook Trust. Additionally, the team continues to support the Digital Inclusion work in communities by collaborating with the Digital Hubs Project Manager from Forest Voluntary Action Forum and Gloucestershire County Council to establish Digital Hubs in the Cotswolds – The Digi Hub work has been awarded along with funding to a joint bid by Cotswold Friends and The Churn and we will continue to work with these partners to support Digital Inclusion in the District. We are utilising the Strengthening Communities events to engage with residents on topics such as the cost of living, health and wellbeing, community enhancement, and reducing isolation and continuing collaboration with partner organisations like Citizens Advice, Cotswold Friends, The Churn Project, Glos Fire & Rescue, Falls Prevention, Foodbanks, and Carer's Hub etc. to build on the work already done in the Community Building Roadshow in 2024 where residents received valuable advice, support, and signposting, and the council gathered important feedback on how they feel about their communities.

Supporting the Economy

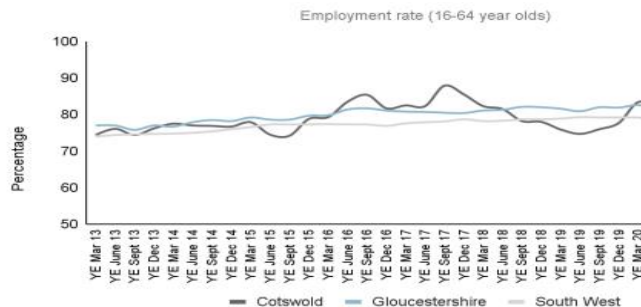


The Context

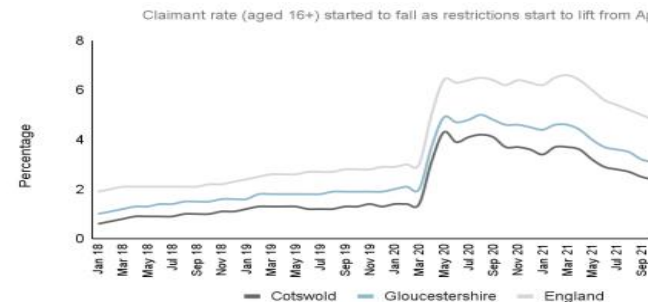
The District supports an economically active population of an estimated 42,600 and has strengths in finance and business services, ICT including science and technology, retail, and accommodation and food services. Around 90% of businesses are micro businesses employing fewer than 10 people. Median wages for people working in the district are below the national average, and affordability of housing is a significant issue for the district, which can result in skill and labour shortages.

Historically, unemployment has been relatively low but increased during the pandemic. It has fallen back significantly and now stands at just over 2% - the lowest in the county, but still slightly above the pre-pandemic level. The claimant count did see a proportionally significant rise in February 2025 of just over 100 (based on around 1000 total unemployment). This is believed to be due to businesses anticipating the employers' national insurance rise.

The national and global economies have faced uncertainty as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and sharply rising prices, particularly for energy, fuel and food, which continues to impact on disposable income and living standards. Although energy and fuel costs, and the overall inflation rate, have dropped back, prices are still significantly higher than prior to the invasion.



Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey

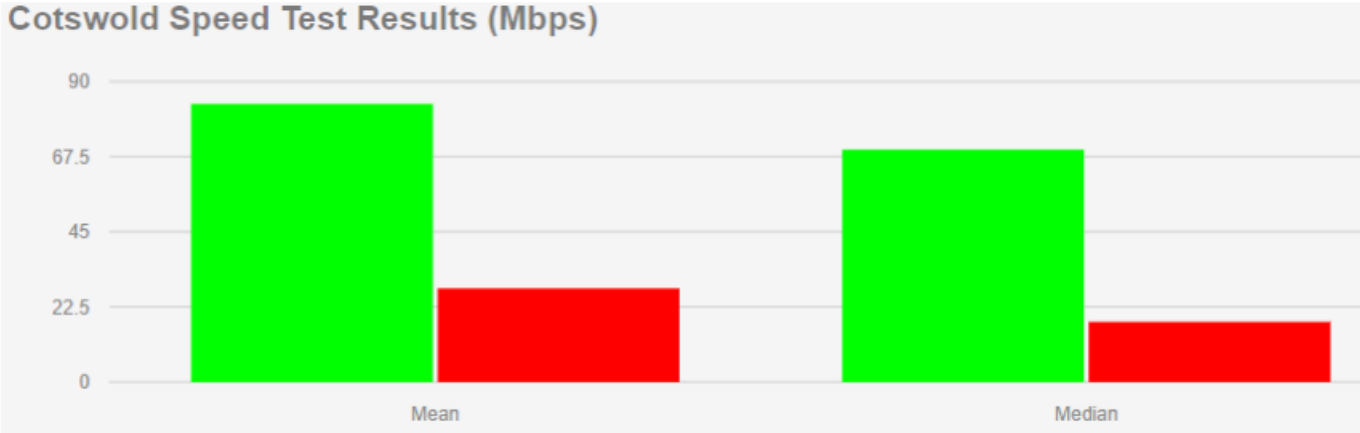
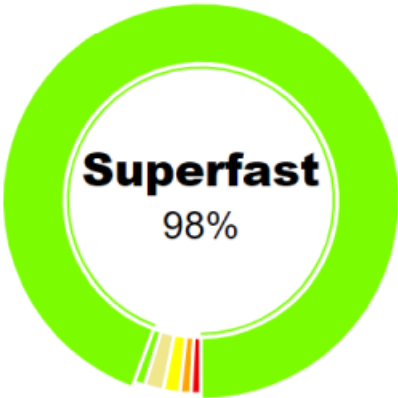


Source: ONS, Crown Copyright Reserved (Nomis)

The number of job postings remains high, reflecting continuing challenges in recruitment, but has fallen back from its peak. There are many companies at the cutting edge of innovation and the opportunity to grow key sectors like agritech, cyber and digital, medical equipment and environmental technologies.

The lack of a reliable broadband connection especially in rural districts can add to social isolation as well as reduce opportunities to be economically active. Openreach has been working in Cirencester and has announced plans to deliver full fibre to Tetbury, South Cerney, Lechlade, Northleach, Fairford and Bourton-on-the-Water by 2026 at the latest. However, there are still some areas where broadband is poor and even superfast connectivity is not sufficient for some businesses to operate in the way they wish to. The Council has been working with the Fastershire Project to address these areas. The Fastershire Project ceased at the end of March 2024 and has been replaced by Project Gigabit, run by BDUK. The contract for Project Gigabit’s ‘Lot18’, which includes parts of the Cotswold District was awarded to Gigaclear in February 2024. We are seeking details of how their programme is going to be rolled out.

The County Council has introduced the Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant to use 4G technology to deliver connectivity in remote locations where fibre is not practical or is prohibitively expensive and residents have speeds of less than 30mbps. The first phase of the scheme started in the Forest of Dean but has been extended to qualifying households across Gloucestershire. The coverage of superfast (>30mbps) has increased slightly and ultrafast (>100mbps)/full fibre has moved up quite quickly according to figures on the ThinkBroadband website. This reflects the ongoing work by the infrastructure providers and the fact that commercial activity is concentrated on providing a full fibre service to the ‘easier to reach’ areas whereas the last 1.5% who do not yet have superfast broadband fall firmly within the ‘difficult to reach’ category, which the County Council scheme is seeking to address.



Much of our work to enable a vibrant economy will be achieved in partnership with key stakeholders ranging from the County Council to Chambers of Commerce and other business groups, town and parish councils, institutions like the Royal Agricultural University and Cirencester College and individual businesses.

Actions we are taking

The refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy 2025-29 was adopted by Cabinet in March 2025. It sets out the challenges and issues for the district and how they will be addressed. The strategy has been informed by the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy, which was approved by the County Council's Cabinet in May 2024 and was noted by the new City Region Board in September 2024.

The Cotswold Economic Advisory Group, which was set up to advise, oversee and challenge the implementation of the Strategy and provide a link to the main institutions and the wider business community in the District, continues to meet regularly and provide valuable advice and assistance. The group has representation from key stakeholders including Cirencester College, the Royal Agricultural University (RAU), Cotswold Airport, Fairford and Lechlade Business Club, the Federation of Small Businesses and Gloucestershire County Council. Most recently, the Group met at the Cotswold Lakes Brew Co and discussed business resilience, looked at the latest economic health dashboard and considered the approach to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund for 2025-26.

In 2022, the Council was awarded £1 million over three years from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for the period 2022-23 to 2024-25. The Council's Local Investment Plan, which sets out how the Council proposes to use the money, was approved by the government in early December 2022. The fund has three themes – Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and, in year three, People and Skills. Completed projects including 'Clean and Green' initiatives, new offices at The Growth Hub/Farm49, a feasibility study and works to the Old Station building in Cirencester, works to restore the clocktower on the Redesdale Hall in Moreton-in-Marsh, a significant contribution to bringing the former House of Fraser in Cirencester back into and a new website for the Cotswold Lakes area to reflect its change in branding from the Cotswold Water Park. Cabinet in March 2023 agreed to allocate up to £135,000 a year for 2023-24 and 2024-35 to the Growth Hub in Cirencester to provide business support. One positive benefit of this funding is that the Growth Hub has been able to expand its outreach programme across the district, particularly in the north in areas like Moreton-in-Marsh and Chipping Campden. The Business Navigators for the outreach programme have been using the Council's Moreton Area Office as their base when working in the area. A number of events have taken place in the north of the district.

The Council has been awarded a further £327,146 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for 2025-26. Cabinet has already agreed to fund the Growth Hub and the initiative with The Churn Project to help people furthest away from the labour market into jobs, training and volunteering. An open application process has been run for the remaining unallocated funding of around £120,000 and decisions will be made soon after the County Council elections.

A further £764,292 was allocated to the Council from the Rural England Prosperity Fund over the financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25. This is a capital-only fund to support rural businesses to diversify with new products and services and to provide new community infrastructure. An addendum to the Local Investment Plan was submitted to the government at the end of November 2022 and it was approved in early April 2023. The approach has been to allocate funding for business grants, for active travel and for community projects, including assisting village halls with sustainability-related improvements. The Council procured a delivery partner for the business grants (ALP Synergy Ltd) and the village hall grants (GRCC – formerly Gloucestershire Rural Community Council) jointly with the Forest of Dean District Council. All of the business grant-funded projects have now been completed. Fourteen grants for village halls have been approved and all of these projects have been delivered. A number of active travel and community and heritage buildings applications have been approved, with the projects in question now completed.

A further £229,240 has been allocated to the Council from the Rural England Prosperity Fund for 2025-26. A report is going to Cabinet in May to agree the approach to using this funding.

Town centres are crucial, both economically and for civic pride. The number of vacant retail units in town centres serves as an indicator of their health and reflects the Council's efforts to support their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey conducted in August 2021 revealed that Cirencester had a town centre vacancy rate of 11%, which was three percentage points below the national average. This rate improved to just under 6% in April 2022 and to just under 5% in October 2022. At the end of March 2025, the vacancy rate stood at 4.8%, with several of the remaining units either under offer or undergoing refurbishment. The former House of Fraser in the Market Place, which was the longest-standing vacant building, has now been leased to the Grace Network who have now opened under the branding of Monastery & Co. The building houses a number of social enterprises including food-related, bikes, children's clothes and second-hand furniture. A number of other new entrants have opened in the town, including The White Company, The Works and a number of independent businesses. In the smaller towns within the district, vacancy rates are generally low, though even a few vacancies can significantly impact percentages. Currently, there are no major concerns, but we remain vigilant about the pace of high street changes and the potential effects of the cost-of-living crisis. We will continue to monitor these developments closely. Additionally, the conversion of retail spaces to residential use in smaller towns is a concern as it may impact the town's 'critical mass' and its ability to attract visitors.

The Cotswolds.com website run by the tourism team is firmly established as the leading site for the Cotswolds, no1 on Google with 1.6 million users and 3.8 million views in the last 12 months. However constant updating and improvements are needed to maintain and improve on this position. To this end, Cotswolds Tourism has successfully bid for two separate funding pots: UKSPF funding for website enhancements and via the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) a Visit England grant for asset creation.

The Asset Creation Grant has allowed us to commission new imagery for the website and the UKSPF funding has allowed us to invest in a visual refresh for the website and additional functionality. The new functionality will include a microsite builder allowing better promotion of key strategic priorities, such as sustainability and accessibility, and give us the ability to better highlight niche and specialist interests and activities. Behind the scenes work has started and the improvements will go live at the end of the summer.

Other UKSPF funding has been secured to create Sustainability Champions and for Help to Thrive. The Sustainability Champions have been chosen to represent all areas of the visitor economy and businesses at very different stages on their sustainability journey. They will act as exemplars for other similar businesses as part of our efforts to encourage more sustainable business practices with the visitor economy. The Help to Thrive project is two pronged, helping businesses – and not necessarily businesses that would traditionally be thought of visitor economy businesses - to create new experiences that will appeal to visitors; the second prong is looking at helping businesses understand the best ways to get these new (or any existing experiences) to a wider audience via digital marketing and working with the group and trade market.:

Cotswolds Tourism operates as a membership organisation with all marketing paid for by the income generated. Membership currently stands at 418 businesses and income generated in the last year at £100k. The main marketing tools are the Cotswolds.com website and the Cotswolds Tourism social media channels that now have over 160k followers. With the new membership manager in post we have also restarted networking events and were delighted to see a total over 150 businesses signed up to the first two events.

The Cotswolds Plus LVEP, working across the wider area and led by Cotswolds Tourism, is now firmly established with a seven workstreams and associated action plans agreed: these include two covering Sustainability (public transport & active travel; business practices & bio-diversity), Business Support, Data & Research, Travel Trade, Accessibility & Inclusion, Skills & Training.

The Council is working with partners to bring sites forward which will support the Council's ambition to grow high value, highly skilled, low environmental impact businesses in key areas including agritech, digital/cyber, medical equipment and environmental technologies, and to enhance the opportunities available for local people, particularly young people so that they have the skills they need to secure employment in the District. The Council is working with:

- The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) to bring forward their Innovation Village project. The plans include teaching and research space, incubator and grow-on business units, although the exact make-up of the development is likely to evolve as the project progresses. The Council assisted the RAU to secure £100,000 from the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee Strategic Economic Development Fund to assist with the cost of project management over a two-year period. A public launch of the project took place on 20 January 2023 and attracted considerable media attention. The council continues to liaise actively with the university on this project. A planning application has been submitted for the scheme in April 2024 (Ref: 24/01143/OUT). It is hoped that the application will be determined within the next few months.
- The former Mitsubishi site in Cirencester, is now renamed Watermoor Point and is home to a significant number of businesses. The office element is now over 90% let. The owners have also introduced an innovative and flexible co-warehousing solution, offering businesses a private, secure space within the warehouse, ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 square feet. Businesses also benefit from shared mechanical handling equipment and an on-site qualified forklift driver. Watermoor Point has been granted planning permission to install an additional 310 PV solar panels in addition to its existing 50kWh array, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability.
- ZeroAvia, which relocated from Cranfield to Cotswold Airport in 2021, is a leading innovator in decarbonising aviation and is developing a hydrogen-electric powered aircraft. The Council has been working with the Inward Investment Team at Gloucestershire County Council to support ZeroAvia which has increased its staff numbers from 15 to 150 onsite, with the plans to continue to grow significantly. The Council and Inward Investment Team will continue to support ZeroAvia in its ongoing growth. Other sustainable aviation businesses, such as Vertical Aerospace and S&C Thermofluids, are already based at Cotswold Airport and the council is working with the airport's owners and others to promote it as a hub for such innovative businesses.
- The Fire Service College/Capita regarding the potential for a wider Centre for National Resilience at Moreton-in-Marsh.

Kier Highways are continuing to progress the A417 Missing Link project on behalf of National Highways. The project, which at around £460m, is due to complete in 2027 and is the biggest infrastructure investment in the district and indeed the whole county for a generation. It is designed to reduce congestion and improve road safety on this important link between Cirencester and Gloucester and, more widely, the M4 and M5 motorways. The value to the local economy is being tracked by Kier, who are using local suppliers and sub-contractors wherever possible.



COTSWOLD

District Council

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:

January - March 2025

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A note on performance benchmarking

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

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

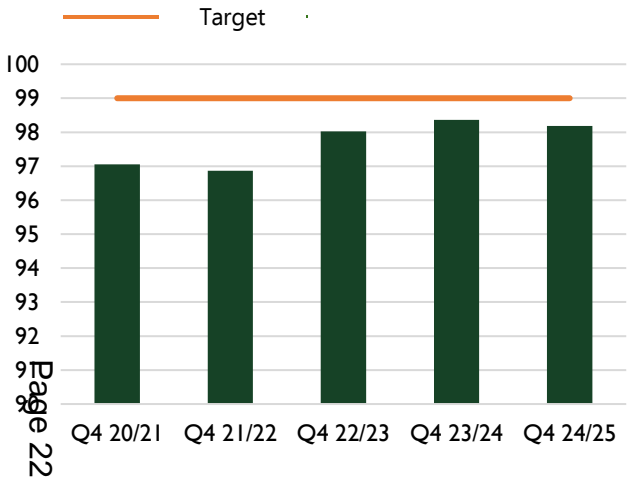
A RAG (red, amber, green) status has been applied to each KPI to provide a quick visual summary of the status of that KPI for the quarter. Additionally, RAG status has been added to the direction of travel for each metric to show how the performance against last quarter and the same quarter compared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

Overall Performance

Overall, the Council's performance for the quarter has been largely positive. Highlights include strong results in Gym Memberships, visits to the Leisure Centres and customer satisfaction. Planning determination times, with all application types remain strong and Inspections of high-risk food premises exceed target. However, processing times for Council Tax Support new claims and the delivery of affordable homes are showing a negative trend.

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

Percentage of Council Tax Collected



Direction of Travel

Against last Year
Slight decrease since last year



Higher is Good

Target	99%
Actual	98.18%

How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using CIPFA Nearest Neighbours – Latest dataset is 2023-24 Collection Rates

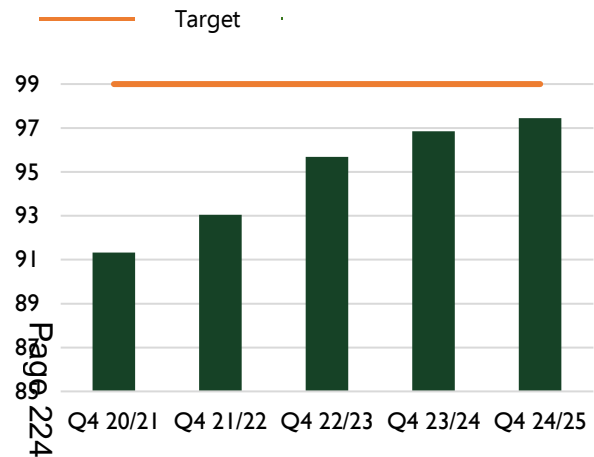
2023-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Ribble Valley	99.12	1/12	Top
Cotswold	98.36	3/12	Top
West Devon	98.3	5/12	Second
Derbyshire Dales	97.82	8/12	Third
Malvern Hills	96.67	12/12	Bottom

At the end of Q4, the Council achieved a council tax collection rate of 98.18%, slightly below the 2023/24 outturn of 98.36%, and just short of the 99% target. Despite this marginal decrease, performance has remained strong and consistent throughout the year, with quarterly trends reflecting the continued effectiveness of in-year collection strategies.

The Council's recovery cycle remains on track, with ongoing efforts to recover outstanding balances from previous years. This ensures that collection performance remains robust while contributing to overall financial resilience. The table below outlines the percentage of tax collected for prior years alongside the total remaining balance.

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	Total Outstanding
Balance at Quarter End	£460,388.95	£639,665.37	£710,551.14	£1,018,706.42	£2,829,311.88
% collected	99.48%	99.30%	99.27%	99.01%	7

Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected



Direction of Travel

Against last Year
Improved since last year



Higher is Good

Target	99%
Actual	97.45%

At the end of Q4 2024/25, Cotswold District Council achieved a Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) collection rate of 97.45%, marking an improvement from 96.85% in 2023/24. Although slightly below the Council’s annual target, this result reflects continued recovery and a positive post-pandemic trend.

The Council remains focused on refining its in-year recovery processes and working with local businesses to manage payments efficiently, contributing to overall financial sustainability.

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

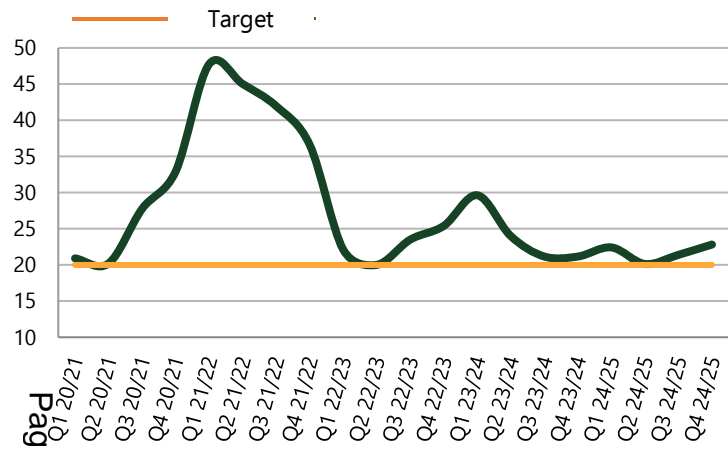
	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	Total Outstanding
Balance at Quarter End	£100,743.27	£219,901.23	£273,047.86	£290,955.18	£884,647.54
% collected	99.36%	99.22%	99.15%	99.16%	

How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using CIPFA Nearest Neighbours - Latest dataset is 2023-24 Collection Rates

2023-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Lichfield	99.53	1/12	Top
Ribble Valley	98.69	3/12	Top
East Hampshire	97.81	5/12	Second
Cotswold	96.91	11/12	Bottom
Stratford-on-Avon	96.44	12/12	Bottom

Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Increased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

Target

20

Actual

22.82

How do we compare?

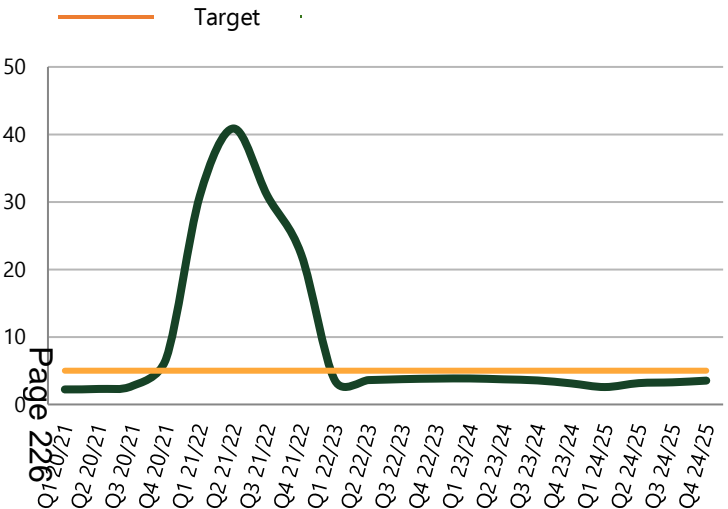
Gov.uk produces tables to show a snapshot of the number of CTS claimants at the end of each financial year. The below table shows number of claimants at the end of December 2024 and the percentage change from December 2023 for each authority.

Q3 2024-25 Benchmark	Number of Claimants at end of Dec 2024	Percentage Change since Dec 2023	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank (Higher = biggest reduction)
Maldon	2,981	-4.21%	1/12
Cotswold	3,869	-0.95%	4/12
Stratford-on-Avon	3,920	-0.39%	7/12
East Hampshire	4,946	2.76%	12/12


In Q4 2024/25, Cotswold District Council reported an average processing time of 22.82 days for new Council Tax Support (CTS) claims. This is a slight increase from 21.4 days in Q3, but it still represents a significant improvement compared to the pandemic-era peak of over 47 days in 2021/22.


The minor rise in processing times was largely influenced by operational pressures, including a backlog caused by the office shutdown in December and a seasonal spike in customer phone enquiries, which are typically high during Q4. Despite these challenges, the council continues to show a positive long-term trend, demonstrating ongoing improvements in processing efficiency.

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter but improved since last year

Lower is Good

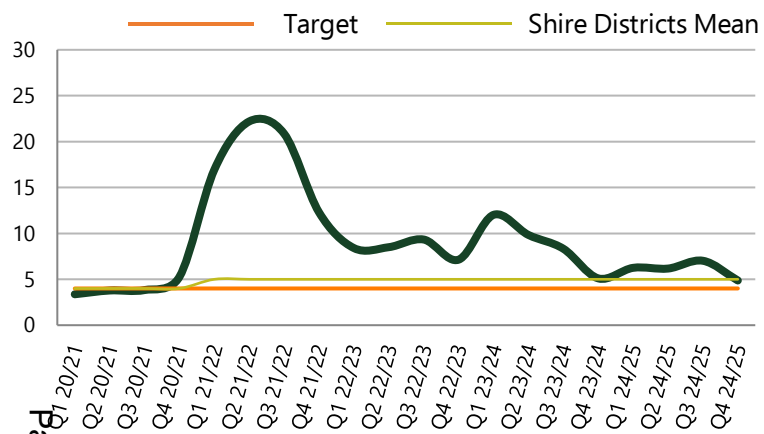
Target	5
Actual	3.53

How do we compare?

Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.



The processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events consistently remain well below the 5-day target.

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter
Against last Year

Lower is Good

Target
Actual

4

4.87

Improved since last quarter and last year

How do we compare?
Speed of processing for HB CoCs – LG Inform. Latest dataset is July - September '24 (Q2 2024-25)

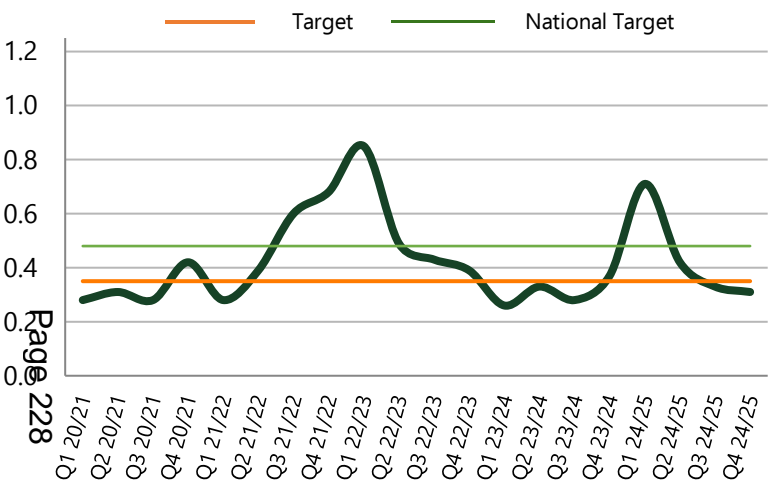
Q2 2024-25 Benchmark	Days	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank	Quartile
Derbyshire Dales	2.31	1/12	Top
West Devon	4.22	3/12	Top
Maldon	5.29	6/12	Second
Cotswold	6.09	7/12	Third
East Hampshire	9.43	10/12	Bottom
Malvern Hills	15.57	12/12	Bottom

Please see [Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims.](#)


In Q4, the Council maintained steady performance in processing Housing Benefit changes of circumstances, with turnaround times slightly above target, but reflecting a consistent improvement trend. Cotswold also ran a successful Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) campaign, helping 22 residents claim £88,000 in unclaimed benefits, with a lifetime impact of over £421,000.


The managed migration of Housing Benefit to Universal Credit began in April 2024, with some system errors identified. The expedited process may reduce the volume of changes but could increase processing times. A training session on Universal Credit batch processing is scheduled for Q1 2025/26 to address these issues.

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Improved since last quarter and last year

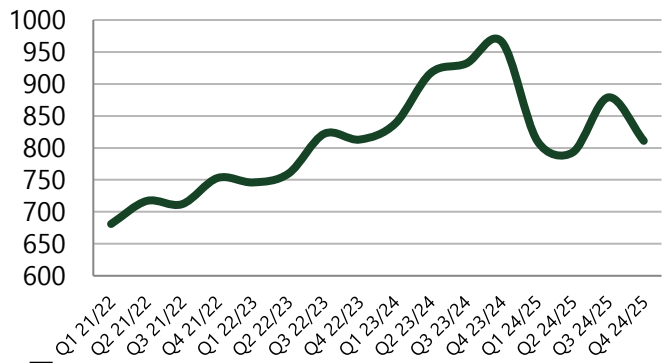
Lower is Good	
Target	0.35%
Actual	0.31%

The Council sits comfortably below the national target of 0.48% and the stricter service target of 0.35%.

To minimise Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments resulting from local authority error, several measures are in place. Approximately 20% of the HB caseload is reviewed by Quality Assurance officers, who focus on high-error areas such as earnings calculations. Additionally, the service participates in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Housing Benefit Award Accuracy (HBAA) initiative to address fraud and error.

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

(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year

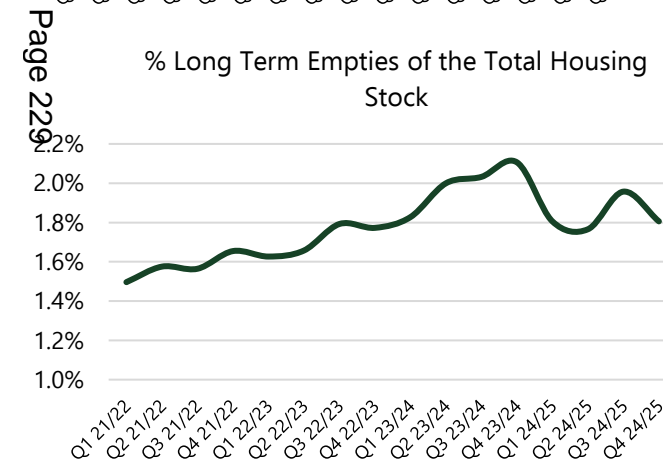


Decreased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

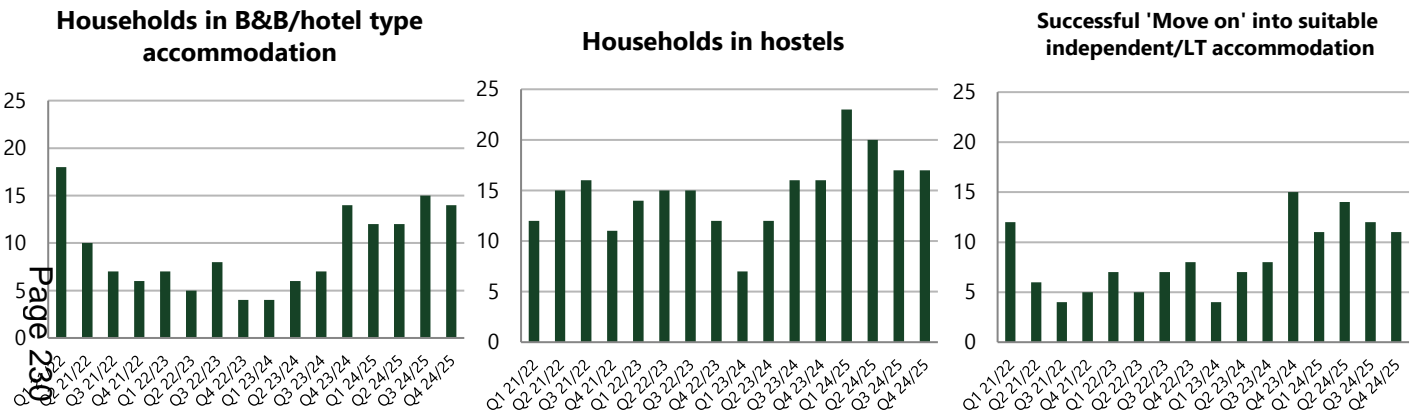
No Target

811



In Q4 2024/25, Cotswold District Council saw a reduction in long-term empty properties, with the number falling to 811, down from a peak of 966 in Q4 2023/24. This improvement is attributed to the proactive efforts of the Long-Term Empty Properties Officer, who has been instrumental in reducing vacant properties. The council's ongoing focus on addressing this issue has contributed to the positive shift in long-term empty property numbers.

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



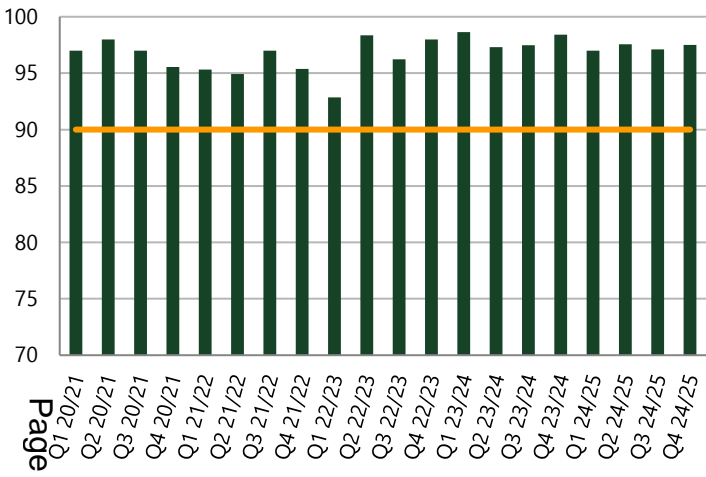
Direction of Travel		
Against Last Quarter	B&Bs/Hotels	⬇️
Against Last Year	B&Bs/Hotels	➡️
Against Last Quarter	Hostels	➡️
Against Last Year	Hostels	⬆️
Against Last Quarter	Move Ons	⬇️
Against Last Year	Move Ons	⬇️

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

Homelessness continues to present a challenge in Cotswold, though there was a slight reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation during Q4. The issue is exacerbated by factors such as full hostels, limited capacity within adult homelessness pathways, and a lack of affordable housing options beyond the social rented sector. Despite these pressures, the council has made encouraging progress in tackling rough sleeping, with consistently zero or very low numbers reported across the district.

The council’s housing team remains committed to early intervention and prevention, having successfully prevented homelessness for approximately 200 households over the financial year. This includes 142 cases resolved within the statutory 56-day prevention period, and a further 58 cases addressed before legal duties were triggered. These figures are provisional, pending final confirmation through government reporting channels.

Customer Satisfaction - Telephone



Target

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter

Against last Year

Higher is Good

Target

Actual

Improved since last quarter but slightly decreased since last year

90%

97.51%

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

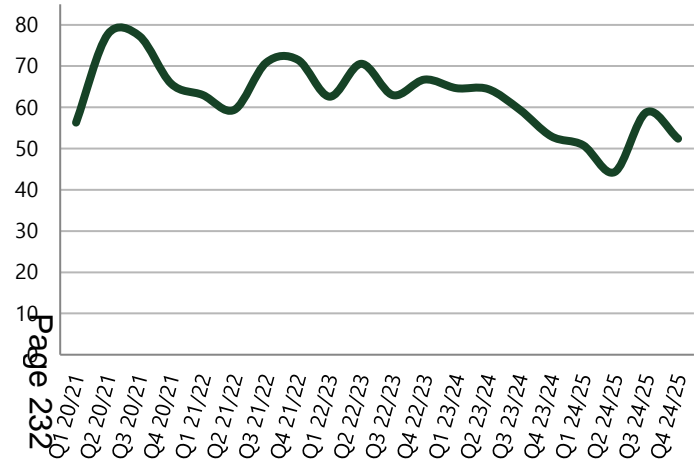
A total of 602 residents participated in the survey, of these, 587 customers reported being satisfied with the service, reflecting a high level of overall satisfaction.

The Council continues to achieve top-tier performance levels when a sufficient number of surveys are included in the Satisfaction Index. Although this is a very small proportion of our calls, the numbers are comparable to those of other Councils, hence the 'league tables' being a useful comparator.


This consistent performance highlights the partnership's ongoing commitment to delivering excellent customer care across all channels.


	Jan Rank	Jan Net Sat.	Feb Rank	Feb Net Sat.	Mar Rank	Mar Net Sat.
Cotswold	3	95%	5	92%	2	97%
Forest	N/A	N/A	1	96%	1	99%
West	1	95%	2	94%	3	95%

Customer Satisfaction - Email



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Declined since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

No Target

52.4%

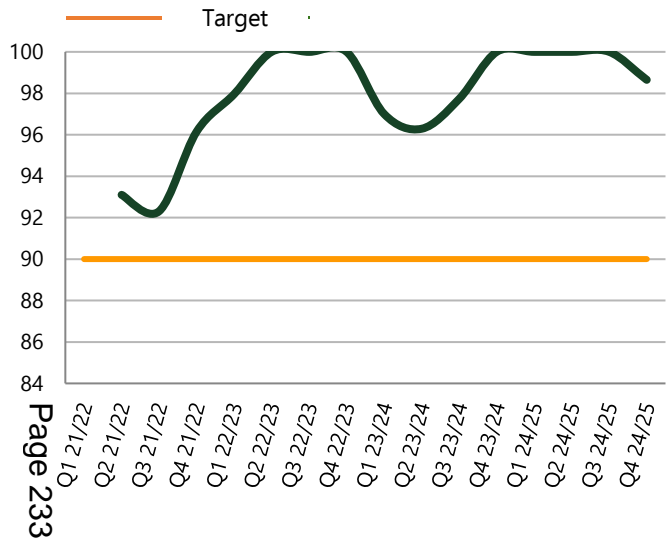
542 residents responded to the survey, of which 284 were satisfied. This equates to a rate of 52.4% satisfaction for the quarter, down from 58.28% during Q3.

All outbound emails sent by customer services from Salesforce contain a link to the survey.


Previously, rising levels of negative feedback prompted a review to identify the underlying causes of dissatisfaction. The analysis highlighted that dissatisfaction primarily arose from service failures, such as missed bin collections, delays in container deliveries, and insufficient responses from Planning and Housing services.


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

Customer Satisfaction - Face to Face



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

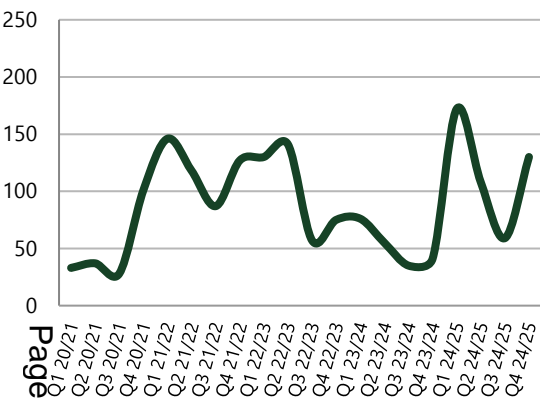
Slightly decreased since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	100%

Customer satisfaction with face-to-face interactions remains consistently high, reaching 98.65% in Q4 2024/25. Of the 74 customers surveyed during the quarter, 73 reported being satisfied with the service received—demonstrating continued strong performance in delivering quality, in-person support.

Customer Call Handling - Average Waiting Time

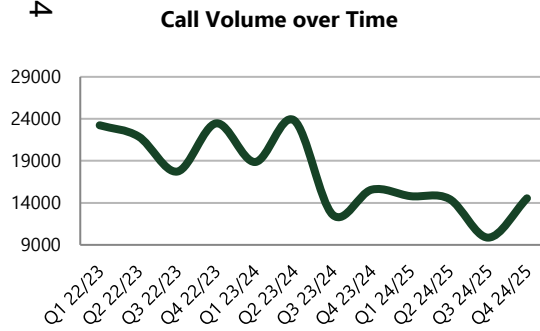


Direction of Travel

- Against last Quarter 
- Against last Year 
- Increased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

No Target
130 Seconds



How do we compare?

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

During Q4, average wait times increased to around 130 seconds due to a seasonal rise in demand driven by annual billing, garden waste renewals and a surge in council tax queries related to second home premiums.

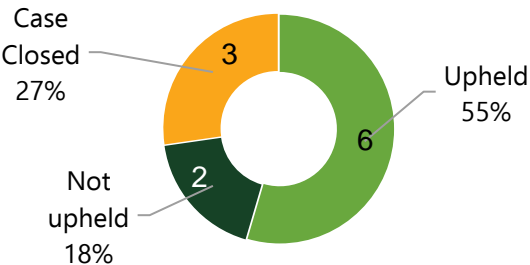
The team experiences heightened demand during Q4 due to seasonal pressures, with call volumes increasing by 49% between January and March, leading to a natural rise in average wait times. The following data highlights this pattern.

	Jan	Feb	March
Number of calls presented	854	959	1276
Average speed to answer	57	164	249

The Council continues to meet its £125,000 annual savings target from the reduction of the phone lines, and recent vacancies have now been filled, with teams operating effectively. The upgraded Alloy system went live in April, supporting further service efficiencies.

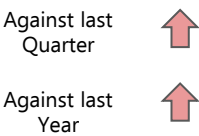
Number of complaints upheld

Complaints by Status



Direction of Travel

Complaints upheld or partly upheld at Stage 1



Increased since last quarter and last year

Page 23 of 35

How do we compare?

The table outlines the complaints received by the Ombudsman over the period, the decisions made on these cases, and the Council's compliance with any recommendations issued by the Ombudsman during this time. Complaints received by the Ombudsman reflect cases where customers, having completed the Council's complaint process (see to the right), feel that the Council has not satisfactorily resolved the matter.

During Q4, the Council experienced an increase in the number of complaints received in comparison to last quarter. See the table on the following page for a breakdown of those upheld and partially upheld.

2023-24

	Complaints Investigated	Percentage Upheld	Upheld decisions per 100,000 residents	Percentage Compliance with Recommendations	Percentage Satisfactory Remedy	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Derbyshire Dales	1	0%	0	N/A	N/A	1/8	Top
Chichester	3	33%	0.8	100%	0%	4/8	Second
Cotswold	1	100%	1.1	100%	0%	6/8	Third
Wychavon	4	100%	3	N/A	100%	8/8	Bottom

A new Customer Feedback Procedure went live on the 1st October 2021.

The new process has the following stages:

- Stage 1: Relevant service area responds to complaint within 10 working days
- Stage 2: Complaint is reviewed by Corporate Responsibility Team, response is signed off by relevant Business Manager, and sent to complainant within 10 working days
- Stage 3: Complaint is reviewed by relevant Business Manager, signed off by relevant Group Manager, and sent to complainant within 15 working days

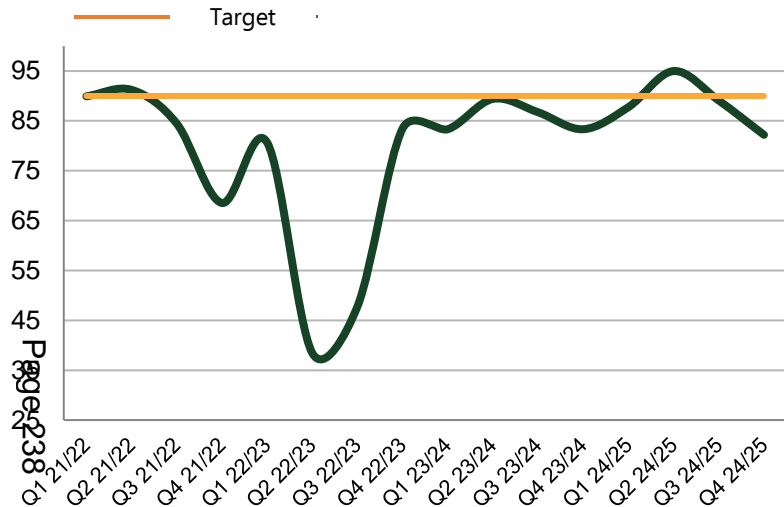
Complaints Upheld or Partially Upheld Breakdown

Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Decision	Response time (days)
Housing	Upset with treatment by staff	It was acknowledged that the staff member could have communicated more clearly with the complainant. Further training will be provided on interacting with customers with autism and an apology was extended.	Upheld	10+
Page 236 Housing	Unhappy with bidding process	Although the complaints process is not intended for challenging housing decisions, it was noted that more evidence should have been requested earlier in the process. Training will be updated accordingly.	Upheld	1
Housing	Treatment by officer	Additional training will be offered to ensure staff handle customers with domestic abuse issues in a more empathetic and inclusive manner.	Upheld	10+
Revenues and Benefits	Unhappy with treatment by staff	It was recognised that a confirmation email should have been sent along with the revised bill, and an apology was offered for this oversight	Upheld	4

Complaints Upheld or Partially Upheld Breakdown Contd.

Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Decision	Response time (days)
Waste	Bins constantly not being collected	The customer's address was added to a monitoring list and an apology was extended.	Upheld	1
Revenues and Benefits	Erroneous council tax calculation/call to staff	An apology was offered for the phone call that, while not the fault of the staff member, led to a dissatisfactory experience.	Upheld	1

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Declined since last quarter but
steady since last year

Higher is Good

Target

90%

Q4 Actual

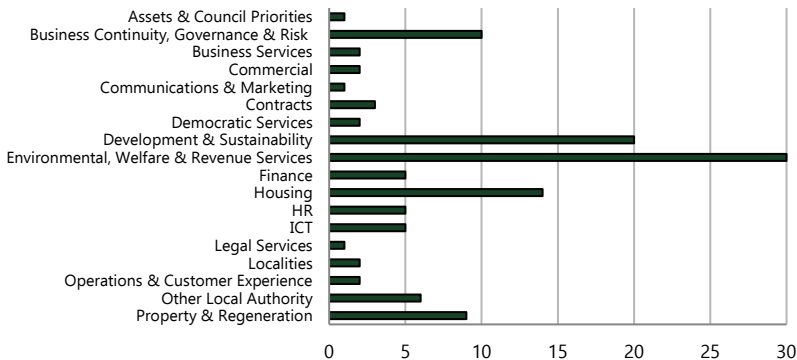
82.2%

2024-25

Actual

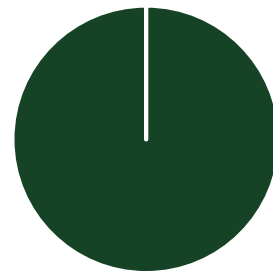
88.26%

Requests by Service Area



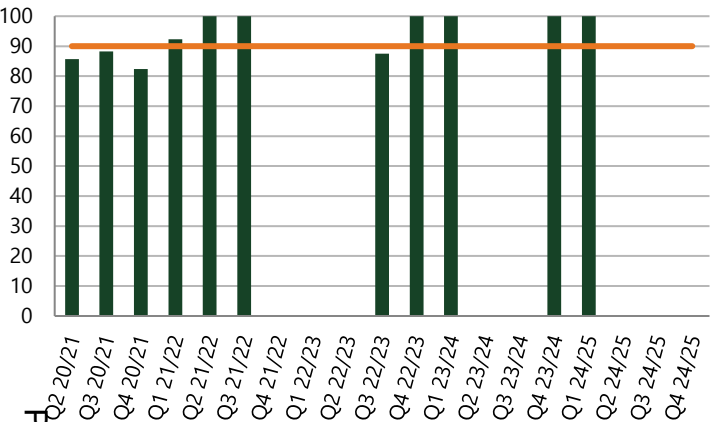
Reasons for Delays in Responding to FOI Requests Beyond the 20-Day Deadline

Service Area
not provided
Information in
time



100%

Building Control Satisfaction



Direction of Travel		Higher is Good	
Against last Quarter	N/A	Target	90%
Against last Year	N/A	Actual	No Data
No Data			

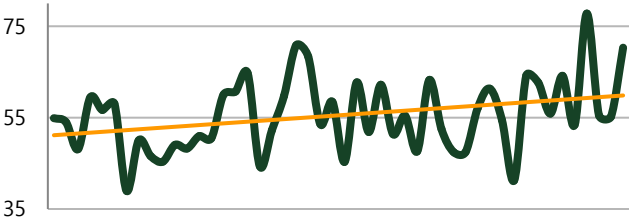
the team has used various methods to engage customers for satisfaction surveys, including paper forms, electronic forms, and phone calls. However, the response rate remains low, with no surveys returned in Q4. To address this, the team has collaborated with the Data Team to create a webform that will be emailed to customers with their completion certificate, aiming to improve the response rate.

In Q4, the market share averaged 61%, with 137 applications processed, showing an 8% increase from Q1 and a 9% rise from the same period last year. Despite this growth, Building Control's income fell short of the £260,000 target, reaching £230,781. To enhance efficiency, the team has invested in new software and handheld devices for on-site use, helping officers maximise their time and improve service delivery.

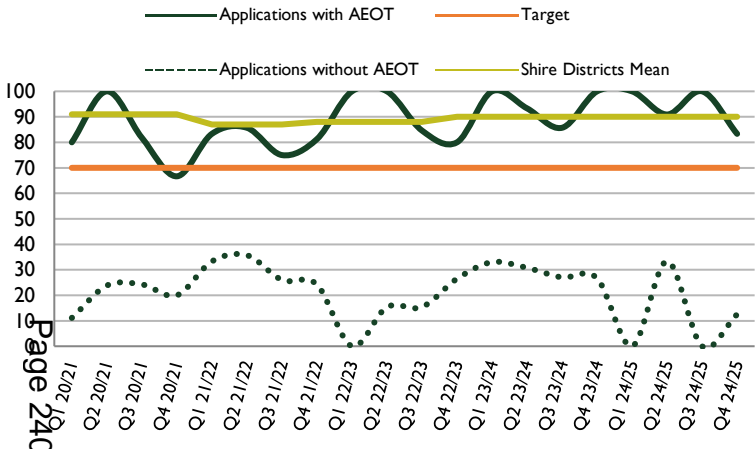
The below chart shows market share over time from April 2021

How do we compare?
Percentage of share in the market



Jan	Feb	March	Number of Apps for Quarter
56%	55%	70%	137



Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including Agreed Extensions of Time (AEOT))



Direction of Travel

- Against last Quarter 
- Against last Year 
- Declined since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target	70%
Q4 Actual	83.33%
2024-25 Actual	93.55%

How do we compare?

Major Developments - % within 13 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform. Latest dataset is October - December '24 (Q3 2024-25)

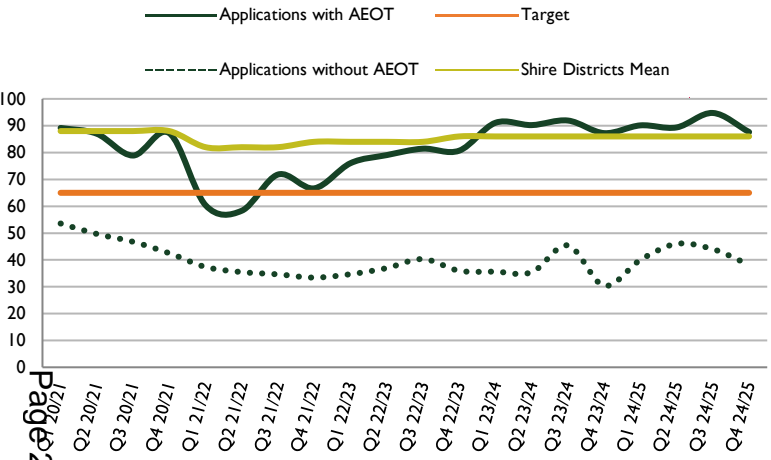
Q3 24-25 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	100	1/12	Top
West Devon	100	1/12	Top
Malvern Hills	93	5/12	Second
Wychavon	85	8/12	Third
Maldon	80	10/12	Bottom
Derbyshire Dales	58	12/12	Bottom

The service has maintained strong performance in processing Major applications within the agreed timeframes.


During Q4, six major applications were determined.


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

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Declined since last quarter but slightly improved since last year

Higher is Good

Target	65%
Q4 Actual	87.64%
2024-25 Actual	89.94%

How do we compare?

Minor Developments - % within 8 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform. Latest dataset is October - December '24 (Q3 2024-25)

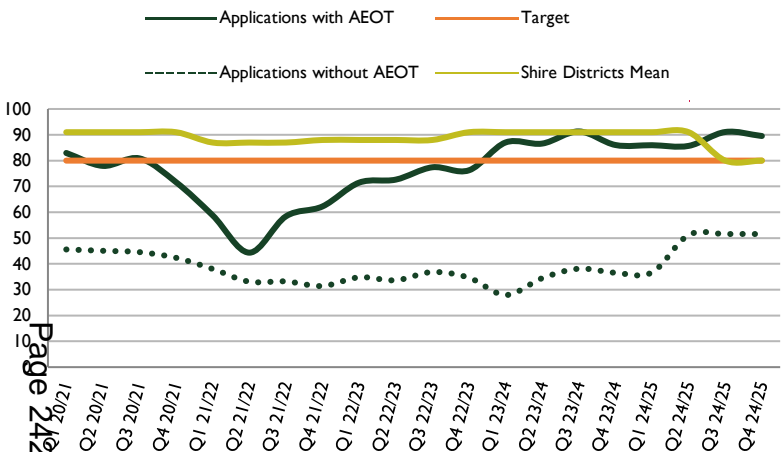
Q3 24-25 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Lichfield	100	1/12	Top
Cotswold	96	2/12	Top
Wychavon	87	4/12	Second
Maldon	85	8/12	Third
East Hampshire	82	10/12	Bottom
Stratford-on-Avon	77	12/12	Bottom

This quarter, the Council has continued to demonstrate strong performance in processing minor applications within the required timeframes. Focused efforts on addressing long-standing applications and optimizing workflows have resulted in significant improvements. Notably, the proportion of applications awaiting a decision beyond statutory timeframes has decreased from 51% in October to just 24% by the end of Q4.


As of Q4 2024-2025, the Council's rolling average stands at 93.55%, well above the government's 70% threshold, highlighting the service's robust performance.


In total, 89 minor applications were determined during Q4.

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Slightly declined since last quarter but improved since last year

Higher is Good

Target	80%
Q4 Actual	89.53%
2024-25 Actual	86.68%

How do we compare?

Other Developments - % within 8 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform. Latest dataset is October - December '24 (Q3 2024-25)

Q3 24-25 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Maldon	96	1/12	Top
Ribble Valley	95	3/12	Top
Wychavon	93	5/12	Second
Cotswold	90	8/12	Third
Stratford-on-Avon	89	10/12	Bottom
Malvern Hills	79	12/12	Bottom

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

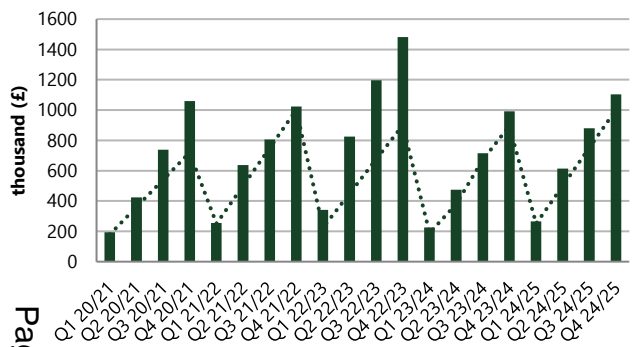
Notably, the proportion of applications determined without an agreed extension of time has consistently remained at around 50%, marking a 14% increase from the previous year. This highlights the effectiveness of the improvements implemented under the Development Management Improvement Plan.

In Q4, a total of 259 Other applications were determined

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


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


Total planning income




Direction of Travel


Total Planning Income

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Pre-Application Income

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Total Income slightly declined since last quarter but increased since last year
Pre-App Income increased since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Total Planning Income (£)

Target 1,001,877

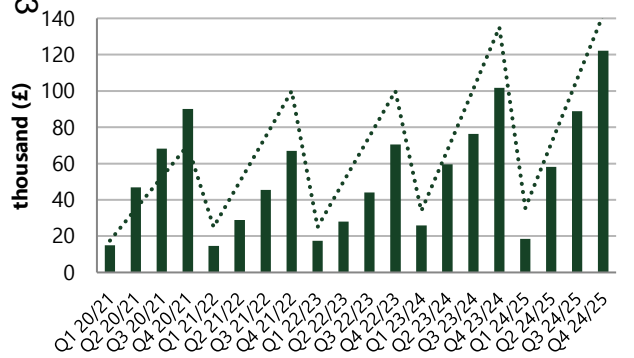
Actual 1,104,109

Pre-Application Income (£)

Target 142,000

Actual 122,202

Pre-application income

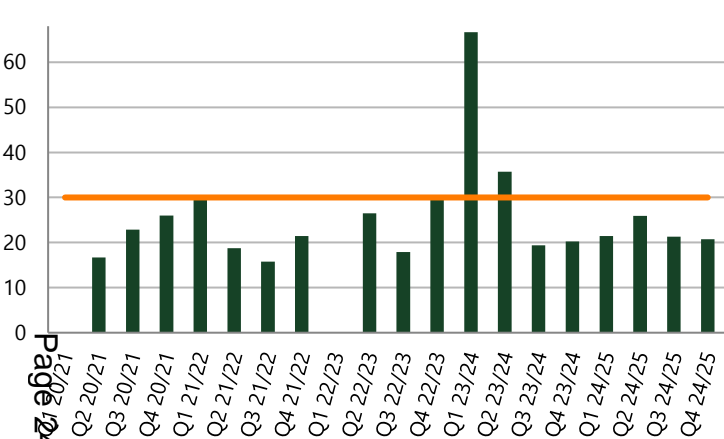


At the end of Q4, total planning income for the Council exceeded its target. Compared to Q4 of 2023-24, total planning income saw an increase of approximately £110,000, while pre-application income rose by around £20,000.

How do we compare?

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

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative)



Target

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter

Against last Year

Improved since last quarter but slightly increased since last year

Lower is Good

Target

Actual

30%

20.75%

How do we compare?

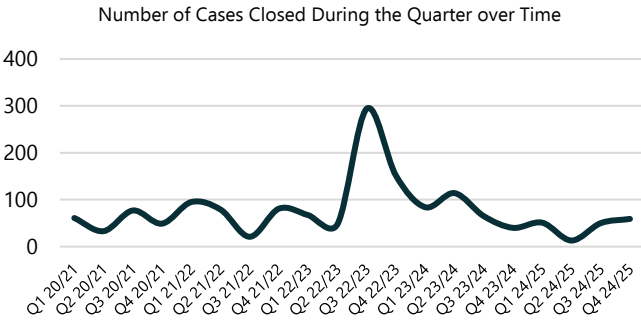
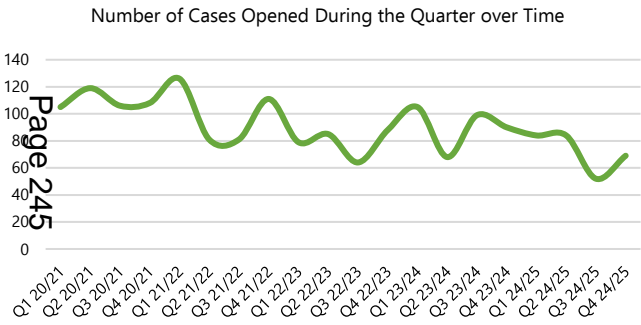
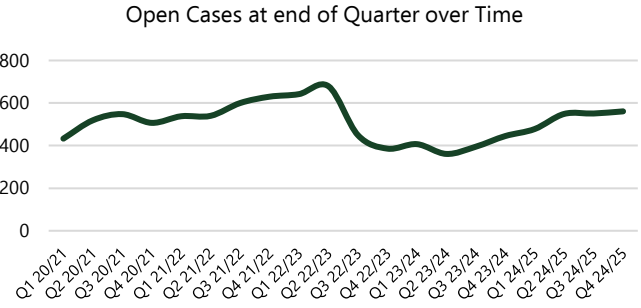
Percentage of planning appeals allowed – LG Inform. Latest dataset is October - December '24 (Q3 2024-25)

Q3 24-25 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Devon	17	1/12	Top
Cotswold	19	2/12	Top
Stratford-on-Avon	26	6/12	Second
Malvern Hills	50	8/12	Third
West Oxfordshire	60	10/12	Bottom
Ribble Valley	67	12/12	Bottom

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

Between 1 January and 31 March 2025, six appeals were decided, with one allowed in favour of the applicant, resulting in a 16.67% allowance rate for the quarter. As this metric is cumulative, the end of year total stands at 53 appeals, with 11 allowed.

(Snapshot) Planning Enforcement Cases



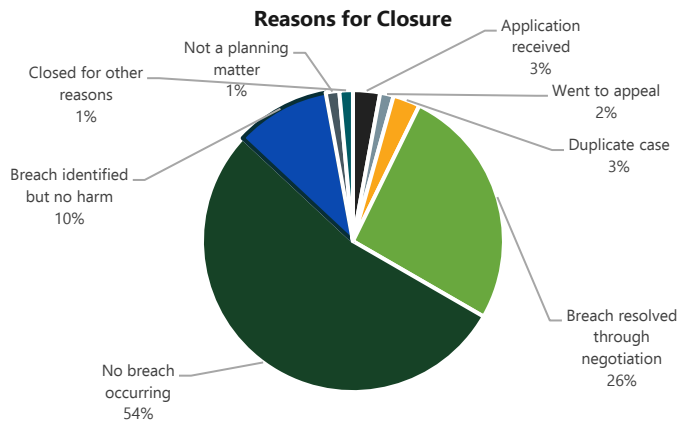
Direction of Travel for Open Cases at end of Quarter

Against last Quarter
Against last Year



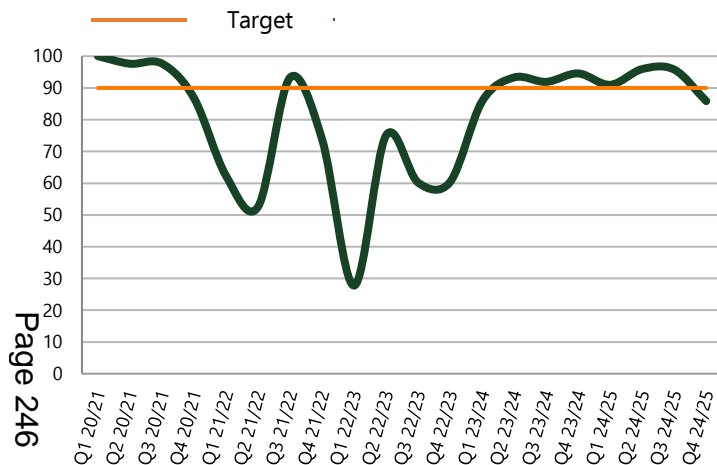
Lower is Good

No Target
Open Cases at End of Quarter 561



The enforcement team has faced extended staff shortages, leading to a backlog of cases. However, with staffing levels now approaching full capacity, the team is actively addressing the backlog. Efforts are also underway to update and review the enforcement plan to enhance both service efficiency and effectiveness moving forward.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Steady since last quarter but improved since last year

Higher is Good

Target

90%

Q4 Actual

85.85%

2024-25
Actual

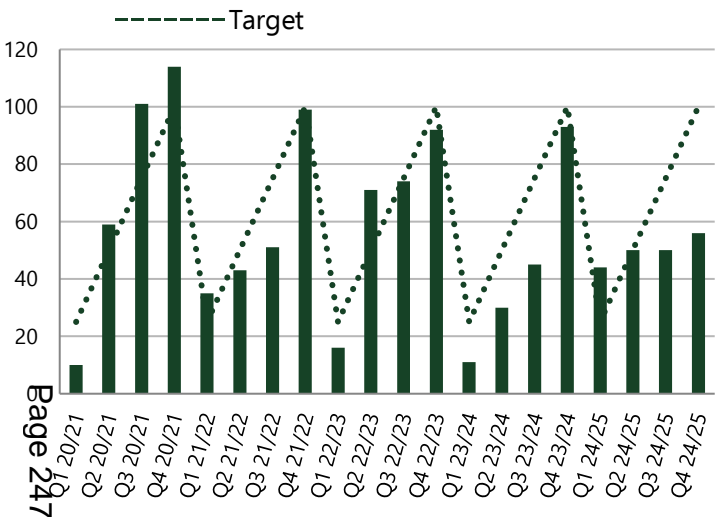
91.95%

During Q4, the Council fell slightly below its target for completing land charge searches within 10 days, achieving just under 86%, down from 96% in Q3. This dip in performance is primarily attributed to increased workloads and operational challenges. However, the Council has taken proactive steps to improve the situation. Efforts to strengthen communication and collaboration with the answering teams have proven successful, enhancing workload management and enabling team members to handle tasks more efficiently. These improvements are expected to contribute to higher productivity moving forward. Additionally, the Council has begun working on the HMLR (His Majesty's Land Registry) project, which aims to establish a national local land charges service. While still in its early stages, this initiative is expected to help accelerate the land charge search process and improve overall service delivery in the future.

How do we compare?

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

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative)



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Number of completions
increased since last
quarter but declined
since last year

Higher is Good

Target

100

Actual

56

During 2024–25, 56 affordable homes were delivered across the district, compared to the 74 initially forecast by Registered Providers (RPs) at the start of the year. Delays at key sites—such as Down Ampney—due to project re-phasing have pushed some completions into 2025–26.

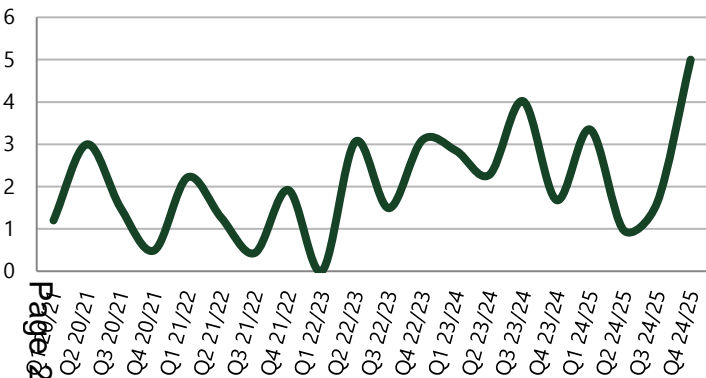
Affordable housing delivery tends to fluctuate, as most developments take over a year to complete, often progressing in multiple phases over several years. Early overdelivery at the start of the current strategy has also contributed to a dip in recent annual outputs. Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2018, a total of 886 affordable homes have been delivered in the District, averaging 126 per year.

How do we compare?

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

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

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





How do we compare?
 Number of Fly Tips reported for year 2022-23 for Local Authorities in England – Gov.uk. The latest dataset available is 2023-24

2023-24 Benchmark	Total Fly Tips	Total Enforcement Actions	Total FPNs	% FPNs per Fly Tip	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank	Quartile
Maldon	364	392	13	3.57	1/12	Top
Cotswold	972	58	12	1.23	5/12	Second
Wychavon	835	192	3	0.36	8/12	Third
West Devon	346	0	0	0	12/12	Bottom


Direction of Travel


Number of Fly Tips

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Percentage Enforcement Action

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

No Target

Number of Fly Tips Collected

178

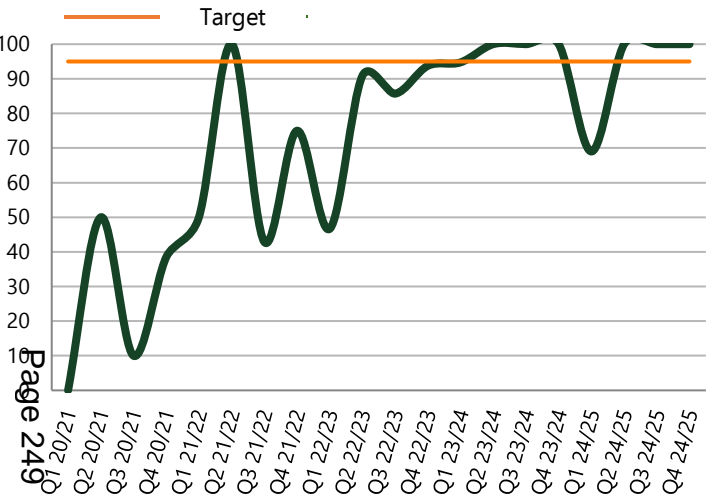
Percentage Enforcement Action

5%

Fly Tips – Increased since last quarter but decreased since last year
 Enforcement Action – Improved since last quarter and last year

Fly-tipping incidents in Cotswold rose to 178 in Q4, up from 137 in Q3. While this marks a short-term increase, overall levels remain well below historic highs. At the same time, enforcement action reached 5%—the highest rate in over five years—demonstrating strengthened efforts supported by the S.C.R.A.P. campaign, 20 Fly-tipping Guardians, and £38,000 in government funding for enforcement and education.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales



Direction of Travel

- Against last Quarter
- Against last Year
- Steady since last year and last quarter

Higher is Good

Target	95%
Q4 Actual	100%
2024-25 Actual	87.07%

The Council conducted two inspections during Q4, both of which were completed within the timescale.

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

How do we compare?

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

% High risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day

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



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter

N/A

Against last
Year

N/A

No Data

Higher is Good

Target 90%

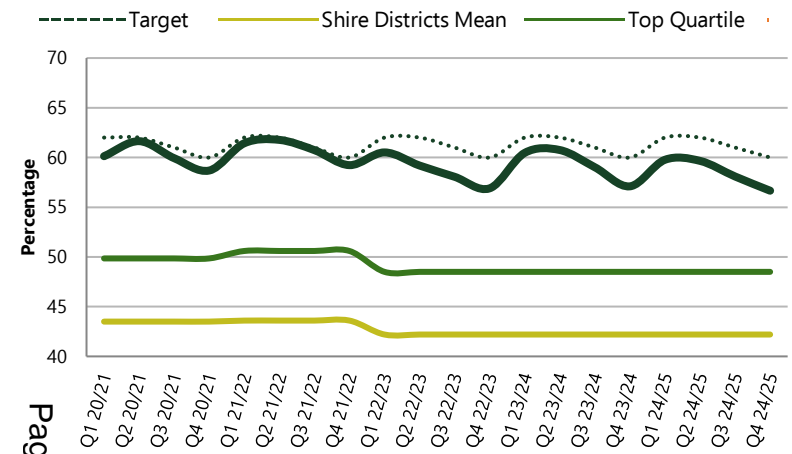
Actual N/A

No high-risk notifications were received during Q4.

How do we compare?

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

Percentage of household waste recycled



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter
↓
Against last Year
↓
Declined since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target	60%
Actual	56.66%

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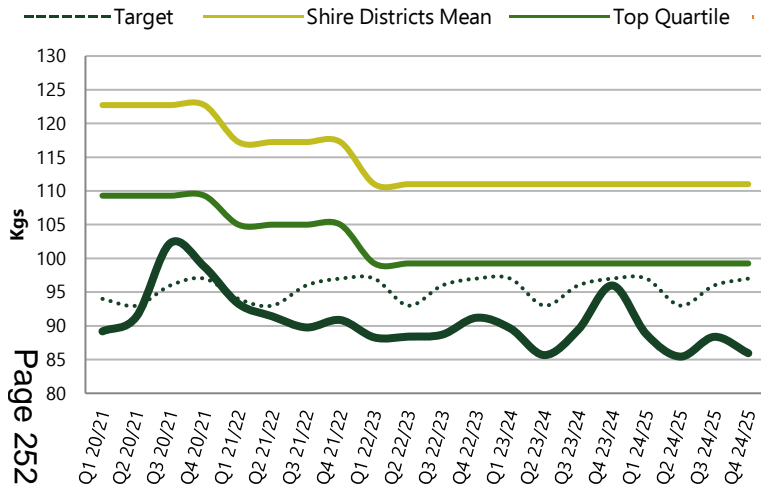
How do we compare?

Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting – LG Inform. The latest dataset available in January-March '24 (Q4 2023-24)

Q4 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Stratford-on-Avon	55.18	1/12	Top
Maldon	52.47	3/12	Top
Cotswold	50.73	5/12	Second
Wychavon	38.14	8/12	Third
Lichfield	36.07	10/12	Bottom
East Hampshire	31.67	12/12	Bottom

The recycling rates for 2024–25 stand at 56.66%, which is approximately 0.4% lower than the same period last year. Within the quarter, rates dipped slightly in February to 47.98% after starting at 50.88% in January, but recovered strongly to 55.49% in March.

Residual Household Waste per Household (kg)



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Decreased since last quarter and last
year

Lower is Good

Q4 Target

80

Q4 Actual

85.94

2024-25
Target

383

2024-25
Actual

348.48

How do we compare?

Residual household waste per household (kg/household) –
LG Inform. The latest dataset available in January-March '24
(Q4 2023-24)

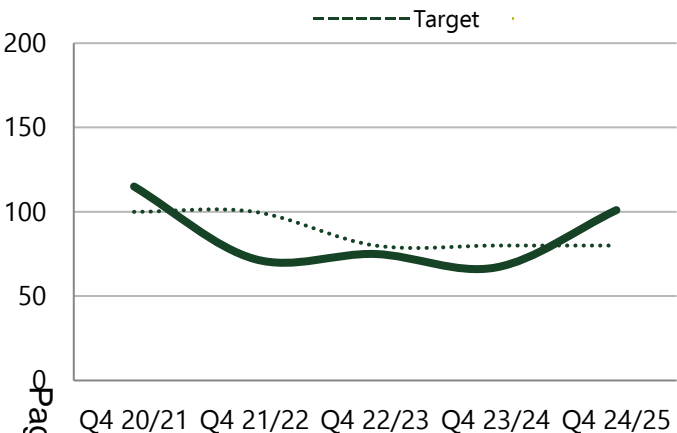
Q4 23-24 Benchmark	Kg	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
Stratford-on-Avon	79.41	1/12	Top
West Oxfordshire	85.42	3/12	Top
Cotswold	95.27	5/12	Second
Chichester	106.79	8/12	Third
Lichfield	119.37	10/12	Bottom
Ribble Valley	133.97	12/12	Bottom

Residual waste follows a cyclical pattern throughout the year, with targets set accordingly.

Residual waste per household decreased steadily over the quarter, from 31.92 kg in January to 27.50 kg in February, and 26.52 kg in March. January typically sees higher levels due to post-Christmas waste, so the downward trend that followed is in line with seasonal expectations.

Despite this seasonal fluctuation, the Council remains well within the first quartile of all English authorities, maintaining a comfortable margin of approximately 14kg.

Missed bins per 100,000



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter

Against last Year

Increased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

Target

Q4 Actual

2024-25 Actual

80

101

169.7

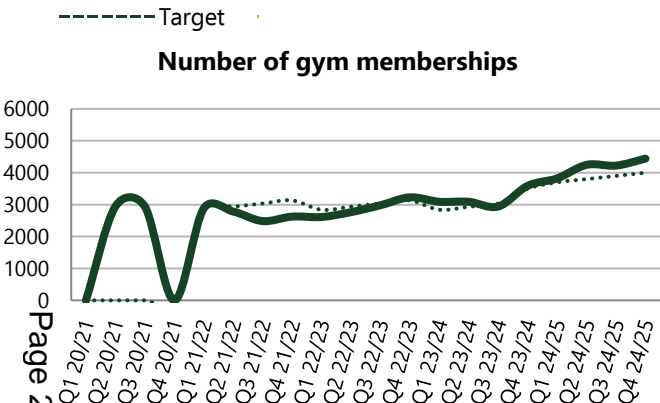
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How do we compare?
Missed collections per 100,000 collections (full year) - APSE

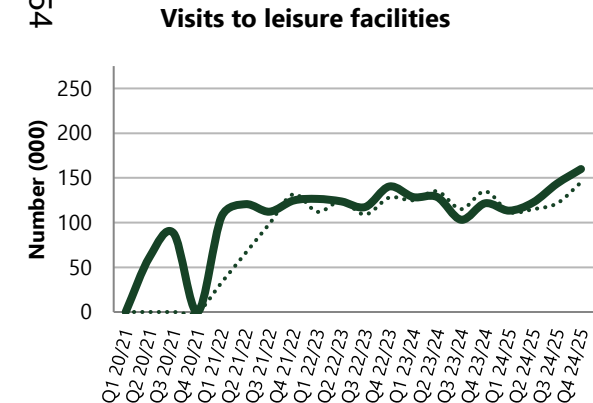
2022-23 Benchmark	Missed collections per 100,000 collections	Family Group Rank	Family Group Quartile	Whole Service Rank	Whole Service Quartile
Cotswold	109.89	12/14	Bottom	39/45	Bottom

The rate of missed bin collections rose to 101 per 100,000 collections—exceeding the target of 80. This increase was primarily driven by operational challenges, including staffing shortages and the prolonged absence of a narrow access vehicle, which was off the road for two months. These issues particularly affected properties on routes that require specialist vehicles. Recruitment efforts are actively underway, with recent interviews held to address the staffing gap and improve service resilience. Additionally, flooding in January caused temporary disruption to collection schedules, further contributing to the spike in missed bins during the period.

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



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Direction of Travel

Gym Memberships

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Leisure Visits

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Gym Memberships – Increased since last quarter and last year

Leisure Visits – Improved since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Gym Memberships

Target

4,000

Actual

4,441

Leisure Visits

Target

145,000

Q4 Actual

159,862

2024-25 Target

493,500

2024-25 Actual

539,319

In Q4, the Council recorded strong growth in gym memberships and leisure centre usage, reflecting continued recovery and rising engagement with local facilities. Gym membership rose by 218 members to reach a record high of 4,441—surpassing the target of 4,000. Compared to the same period last year, this marks a substantial increase of 851 members, underscoring the effectiveness of recent programming improvements and facility investments.

Leisure centre visits also saw a significant rise, climbing by over 18,000 from the previous quarter to a total of 159,862. This represents the highest quarterly figure on record and exceeds the target by nearly 15,000 visits. Year-on-year, visits increased by more than 35,000, highlighting growing community participation and a return to pre-pandemic activity levels.

How do we compare?

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

The service conducts monthly site inspections, assessing areas such as maintenance, staffing, and cleanliness. Each is rated from 1 to 5, with an average site rating for Q4 of 2.99.



COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 10 JULY 2025
Subject	FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT – Q4 2024/25
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance Email: patrick.coleman@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Email: david.stanley@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Michelle Burge, Chief Accountant and Deputy Section 151 Officer Email: michelle.burge@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report sets out the outturn position for the 2024/25 financial year.
Annexes	Annex A – Capital Programme Outturn Annex B – Non-Treasury Management Prudential Indicators Annex C – Summary of Earmarked Reserves
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the outturn financial position set out in this report. 2. Note the Non-treasury Prudential Indicators in Annex B. 3. Approve the transfer to and from reserves as set out in paragraph 2.15 to 2.18 and 6.1 to 6.6 and Annex C. 4. Approve the carry forward of unspent capital budget included in paragraph 6.5 of £0.565m into the 2025/26 Capital Programme. 5. Note the change in provisions as set out in paragraph 2.14
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Good Services
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No



COTSWOLD
District Council

Consultees/ Consultation	None
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** This report provides members with the outturn position statement for the 2024/25 financial year and should be viewed in the context of the [2025/26 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) report approved by Council in February 2025.
- 1.2** This reports updates members on the significant budget variations identified in the quarterly financial reports considered by Cabinet during the 2024/25 financial year.
- 1.3** Section 2.15 – 2.18 and 6.1 to 6.6 of this report proposes transfers to and from earmarked reserves, with Section 6 requesting approval of capital slippage to be carried forward and included in the 2025/26 capital programme.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1** This report sets out the outturn position for the 2024/25 financial year and will be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 07 or 08 July 2025.
- 2.2** The revenue outturn position is a positive variation of £0.262m. This represents an improved financial position for the year and is a marked improvement on the Q3 forecast (adverse variation of £0.081m). This provides the opportunity additional financial sustainability over the MTFS-period.
- 2.3** Members will be aware from the Medium Term Financial Strategies approved by Council in February 2023, 2024 and 2025 that a significant unfunded budget gap from 2026/27 (which increases over the MTFS-period) was identified. The latest MTFS (February 2025) indicated a budget gap of £1.589m in 2026/27 which is forecast to increase to £4.879m in 2027/28 and £6.282m by 2028/29. Without further cost reductions or savings measures, the Council would be reliant on earmarked reserves to close the budget gap – this is not sustainable and is not considered a credible strategy.



- 2.4** The Government published 2 consultations on 20 June 2025 which will have a significant impact on the level of funding over the next 3 years.
- 2.5** [The Fair Funding Review 2.0](#) consultation seeks views on the approach to determining new funding allocations for local authorities, building on the local authority funding reform: objectives and principles consultation which the government has formally responded to in parallel.
- 2.6** The second consultation, [Modernising and improving the administration of council tax](#), seeks views on the administration of council tax including changing the ways council tax is billed, collected and enforced, modernising the support available in the system, and supporting councils to improve efficiency.
- 2.7** Whilst it is too soon to judge the exact impact on Cotswold District Council, members should view these consultations in the context of the broad 'direction of travel' set out in the February 2025 MTFS of reducing levels of funding over the MTFS-period.
- 2.8** Therefore, the revenue outturn position and recommendations on additional transfers to reserves should be considered against the backdrop of likely reductions in funding, although acknowledging this was reflected in the February 2025 MTFS as the most likely scenario.



Table ES1 – Revenue Budget Outturn

	2024/25 Latest Net Budget (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Q3 2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3
Revenue Budget					
Subtotal Services	17,848	18,004	156	451	(296)
Less: Reversal of accounting adjustments	(1,865)	(1,797)	68	0	68
Revised Subtotal Services	15,983	16,207	224	451	(228)
Corporate Income & Expenditure	203	(283)	(486)	(370)	(116)
Provisions and Risk Items	0	5	5	0	5
Net Budget Requirement	16,186	15,929	(258)	81	(339)
Funded by:					
Council Tax	(6,597)	(6,597)	0	0	0
Retained Business Rates	(6,139)	(6,139)	(0)	0	(0)
Government Funding - Grants	(3,206)	(3,214)	(8)	0	(8)
Government Funding - NHB	(287)	(287)	0	0	0
Collection Fund (surplus) / Deficit	(473)	(469)	5	0	5
TOTAL Funding	(16,702)	(16,706)	(4)	0	(4)
Budget shortfall/(surplus)	(516)	(778)	(262)	81	(343)



Table ES2 – Revenue Budget – Reconciliation of variations

Variations at a glance	Positive variation (£'000)	Adverse Variation (£'000)	Q3 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3 (£'000)
Service Variations				
Fees & Charges	(106)	109	35	(32)
Car Parks (Fines and Permits)	0	82	87	(5)
Car Park (EVCP income)	(16)	0	(14)	(2)
Car Park (duplicates refunded)	0	20	0	20
Car Park Expenditure	(71)	36	(35)	0
Commercial Property - Rental income shortfall (risk)	(31)	201	176	(6)
Elections	0	93	88	5
Development Management				0
Development Management Fees	0	(68)	(47)	(21)
Development Management Appeals	0	(25)	(20)	(5)
Forward Planning Consultancy	0	39	25	14
Trinity Road, service charges and utilities	(130)	32	(65)	(33)
Ubico Forecast	0	62	71	(9)
Mobilisation costs - rezoning of Waste and Recycling	0	50	50	0
Consultancy - rezoning of Waste and Recycling	0	61	0	61
Recycling Income - Scrap	0	18	18	0
Recycling Income - Thamesdown	(30)	0	0	(30)
Recycling - Minor Contracts	(32)	0	(38)	6
Garden Waste - Printing	0	16	16	0
Street Naming	0	13	0	13
Scrap Vehicle receipts	(26)	0	0	(26)
South Cerney Depot - Repairs	0	35	12	23
Cotswold Crowdfund	(30)	0	(30)	0
Public Conveniences (Cleaning Contract)	0	18	18	0
Housing Strategy Role	0	42	41	1
Communications - Cotswold News	(15)	0	(15)	0
Legal	(11)	0	(24)	13
ICT	(69)	0	(60)	(9)
Corporate Finance Subscriptions	0	12	18	(6)
External Audit (Accounts and Housing Benefit)	0	52	38	14
Housing Benefit overpayments recovered	(236)	0	0	(236)
Postage and Printing	0	79	0	79
Court Cost Income (Council tax and Business Rates)	(45)	0	0	(45)
Discretionary Pension Payments	0	8	8	0
Other service variations	(73)	0	53	(126)



	Positive variation (£'000)	Adverse Variation (£'000)	Q3 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3 (£'000)
Variations at a glance				
Non-Service/Corporate Variations				
Publica underspend (net of savings target)	(277)	0	(182)	(95)
Publica annual leave accrual returned	(42)	0	0	(42)
Contingency	0	(175)	(200)	25
Street Service savings (included in Service)	0	150	150	0
Treasury Management income	(342)	0	(402)	60
Publica Review - Phase 1 - provision	0	182	182	0
Less: Vacancy Management Saving	0	(50)	(50)	0
Less: Other Vacancy Savings (net of Agency)	(227)		(160)	(67)
Add: Planning Agency Costs (net of vacancy)	0	112	102	10
Add: Recruitment Costs	0	78	78	0
Add: Communications Services	0	11	12	(1)
Add: Rebranding	0	17	20	(3)
Unbudgeted grant income (Transparency Grant)	(8)	0	0	(8)
Increase in Bad Debt Provision/Release of Legal Provision associated with challenge to Local Plan housing requirement.	(100)	105	0	5
MRP: lower than forecast as a result of lower level of capital expenditure.	(7)		0	(7)
Correction of depreciation reversal error	0	67	0	67
Transfer to Reserves (TM, Planning Appeals, Cotswold Crowdfund)	0	180	125	55
Subtotal	(1,924)	1,662		
Net Outturn Variation		(262)	81	(343)

2.9 Members should note that whilst the outturn has improved since the quarter three forecast, there remain concerns around financial performance in certain service areas – particularly services where the Council's net revenue budget is dependent on income from fees and charges.



- 2.10** Whilst the focus of this report is on the 2024/25 Outturn, it is important members continue to review and challenge service financial performance. As set out in the CIPFA Financial Management Code, performance reporting is important for the Council to remain financially sustainable. Members must receive timely information on its financial and operational performance so that corporate priorities are delivered within budget. Early information about emerging risks to financial sustainability are key to ensuring the Council can take effective decisions and carefully consider an effective response.
- 2.11** Ahead of the Q1 Financial Performance Report (due to be considered by Cabinet at the September meeting), Heads of Service should take steps to identify management action(s) that will address underperformance and discuss these with the finance team and the relevant Director. Financial Performance Reports for 2025/26 will include options and recommendations for corrective action where underperformance against the budget has been identified, and options for improving financial performance even if the service is achieving income and expenditure targets.
- 2.12** A key aspect of this will be to explain financial performance in the context of service performance and outcomes. There is a risk with the current performance framework that aspects of service performance may be reported as on or above target, with little or no reference to financial performance. During 2025/2026 the Finance team will work with the Business and Intelligence unit to consider how best to review and report finance and service performance.
- 2.13** Updated material variations are outlined below with further details in Section 4 of this report.
- **Income variations** – underachievement: Public Conveniences (£33k) Land Charges (£17k), Cemeteries (£30k), Building Control (£29k). Additional Income: Bulky Waste (£46k), Green Waste (£46k), Licensing (£13k)
 - **Car Parks** income – underachievement of fines and permit income (£82k) and accrual for refund of £20k of potential duplicate payments caused by fault in the pay and display machines.



- **Development Management fees** - overachievement of planning fees by £64k (increase of £21k from Q3).
- **Commercial Property** rental income and vacant property costs (£170k adverse variation)
- **Elections** – Overspend of £93k due to expenditure with Civica on the trial of tablets that cannot be claimed through the parliamentary expenses scheme, overspend due to Chesterton by-election and higher than budgeted postage and canvassers fees.
- **Trinity Road Offices** – higher than budgeted income from service charges to tenants and lower than forecast business rates and energy costs (£98k)
- £62k of overspend in respect of vehicle hire, premises and insurance costs as part of the **Ubico Waste and Recycling contract**.
- £61k additional consultancy expenditure associated with **Waste and Recycling rezoning** in July 2024.
- **Miscellaneous Waste and Recycling** related variances – under achievement of income sale of scrap materials (£18k), expenditure associated with landlord obligations for South Cerney depot (£35k), reduced cost of recycling material contract (£32k), receipts from scrap sale of waste and recycling vehicles (£25k) and overachievement of recycling credits (£30k).
- **Postage and Printing costs**, costs exceeded budget, £59k overspend within revenues service and underachievement of postage savings target of £19k. (£78k)
- **Income from Court Costs (Council tax and Business Rates)** income achieved exceeded budget by £45k.
- **Housing Benefit overpayments recovered**, amounts recovered exceeded budget by £236k.
- Net underspend on the **Publica contract sum** (net of savings target) of £192k.
- **Contingency** Budget is forecast to remain unutilised (£175k underspend) which mitigates costs associated with the Waste and Recycling rezoning and overspend on Ubico contract.
- Cost reduction associated with the **Street Services** are shown in Table 5 of the report (net underspend of £0.098m) and to avoid double counting the savings target is shown as an adverse variation of £0.150m.



- **Treasury Management** and interest receivable performance (£0.342m positive variation), movement from Q3 of £60k due to interest in respect of Cottsway Housing Association Loan is payable in 2025/26 when loan converts to a secured loan. £1.125m (£1.00m budgeted and an additional £0.125m) to be transferred to the Treasury Management Reserve.
- **Publica Review** impact (part-year) of £0.182m included as a provision.
- Less: **Vacancy Management** underspend (Director of Communities and Place) £50k
- Less: Other vacancy savings (net of Agency costs) £227k
- Additional costs of **Planning Agency Costs** (net of vacancy) £112k
- Additional costs of **Communications** service (net of vacancy managements underspend of £40k) – £11k net adverse variation
- Additional **recruitment costs** of £78k for Phase 1 posts (Director of Communities and Place and senior Development Management roles.)
- Expenditure associated with the rollout of the **refreshed corporate branding** of £17k.
- Return of provision set aside in Publica budget for **annual leave accrued** and not taken. (£42k positive variation).
- Underspend on **Publica contract** (net of savings target) (£277k positive variation)
- Correction of accounting error in budget (reversal of impact of capital charges on General Fund results in adverse impact of £67k)

2.14 With the improvement in the outturn position at year end and recognising the need to set aside balances to mitigate risk and uncertainty, the following changes to provisions have been made:

- Bad Debt provision – Increase in sundry debtor provision of £105k.
- No longer required - Provision of £100k included in respect of Legal costs associated with challenge to Local Plan housing requirement.

2.15 Financial Sustainability Reserve – The outturn position enables the budgeted transfer of £0.516m from the General Fund to the Financial Resilience Reserve to be made. This will increase the balance on the reserve to £2.943m and provides one-off reserve



funding to mitigate the budget gap identified in the MTFS and enable the Council to maintain financial sustainability over the MTFS-period/until 2027/28.

2.16 Transformation Reserve– It is proposed that the additional surplus from the General Fund (£0.262m) is transferred to the Transformation Reserve. The purpose of this reserve is to provide funding to support the Council's Savings and Transformation programme. It is proposed that reserve funding is utilised more broadly to address potential financial pressures arising from Local Government Reorganisation, to provide further one-off/up front funding (pump priming) on an Invest-to-Save basis.

2.17 The 2024/25 revenue budget includes a net transfer from earmarked reserves of £0.301m to fund future commitments and make provisions for future financial pressures and risks – predominantly around Business Rate Income and Treasury Management income. The latest net budget has increased this figure to a net transfer to earmarked reserves of £2.146m (excluding transfer of surplus outlined in 2.9 and 2.10 above)

2.18 Annex C details the reserves held by the Council at 31 March 2025 and the proposed movements to/from and between reserves. The largest of these which affects the outturn position is a transfer of £1.125m (including £0.478m surplus on the Business Rate pool and S.31 grant which will be utilised in 2025/26 and 2026/27 to fund forecast business rate income deficit) to the Business Rate Risk Reserve.

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



Table ES3 – Capital Programme Outturn

Capital Programme	2024/25 LAB (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Q3 2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3 (£'000)
Leisure & Communities	1,491	1,451	1,451	(40)	12	(52)
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing	2,643	2,516	2,516	(127)	(66)	(61)
Environment	1,606	1,339	1,339	(267)	(85)	(182)
ICT, Change and Customer Services	150	138	138	(12)	0	(12)
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	752	752	752	0	0	0
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	134	216	216	82	0	82
Land, Legal and Property	517	499	499	(18)	79	(97)
Transformation and Investment	257	211	211	(46)	(45)	(1)
TOTAL Capital Programme	7,550	7,122	7,122	(428)	(105)	(323)

2.20 The 2025/26 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy report approved by Council in February 2025 provided members with an updated capital budget for the financial year and is shown in the table above. Movements from Q3 includes the following:

- **Trinity Road, Carbon Efficiency works** (Solar PV), underspend of £126k to be carried forward in 2025/26 to the Asset Management Strategy capital budget.
- **On Street Residential Charging Scheme (ORCS)**, expenditure of £0.182m (previously reported at Q3 as £0.170m) delayed to Q1 of 2025/26 due to delays experienced with the supplier and the distribution network operator. (Cost for Council expected to be £93k)
- **Private Sector Housing Renewal Grants (Disabled Facility)**, budgeted expenditure of £127k to be carried forward to the 2025/26 capital budget. (£0.066m reported at Q3).

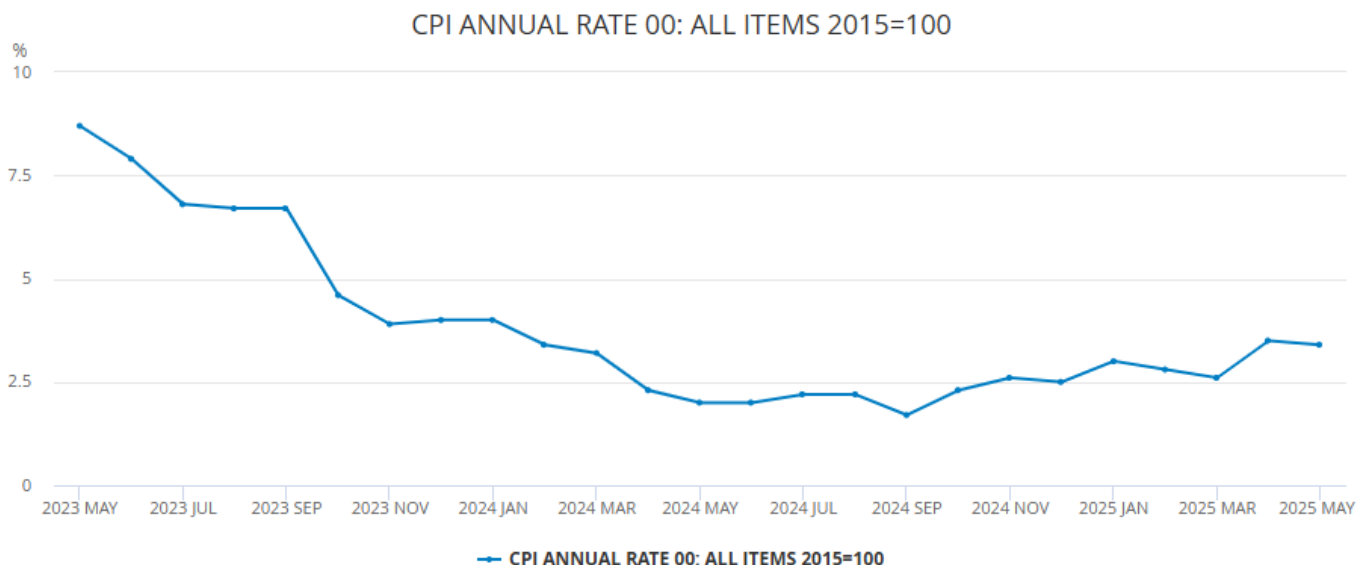


3. EXTERNAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Inflationary Pressures

- 3.1** The level of inflation, as measured by the Consumer Prices Index, for May 2025 is 3.4% (down from 3.5% in April 2025). Although it is not the Government's preferred measure of inflation, the Retail Prices Index is 4.3% (4.5% in April 2025). Core inflation (as defined by the Office for National Statistics as the CPI Rate excluding energy, food, alcohol, and tobacco) rose to 3.5% (3.8% in April 2025).

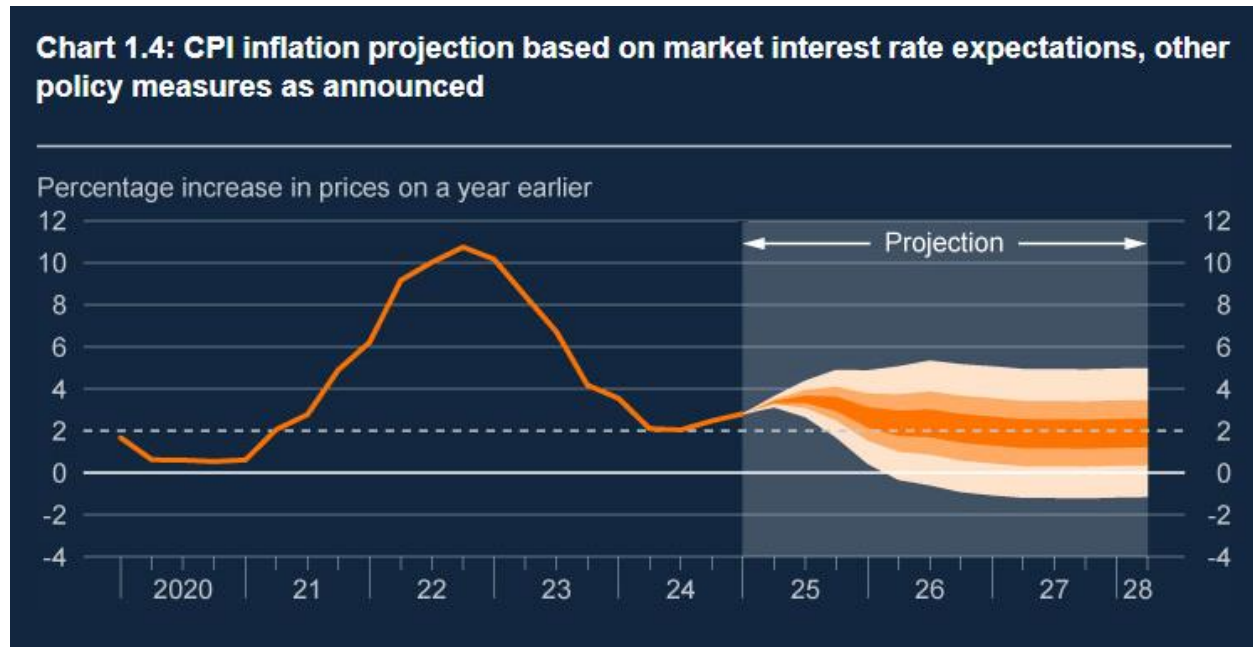
Graph A – CPI Inflation



- 3.2** In the May 2025 Monetary Policy Report, the Bank of England indicated the rate is likely to remain above the 2% target during 2025 (peaking at 3.5%) as the impact from energy price increases and other utility increases comes through. The graph below shows the different CPI forecasts that are published in the quarterly Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee report (May 2025).



Graph B – Bank of England Fan Chart - Inflation

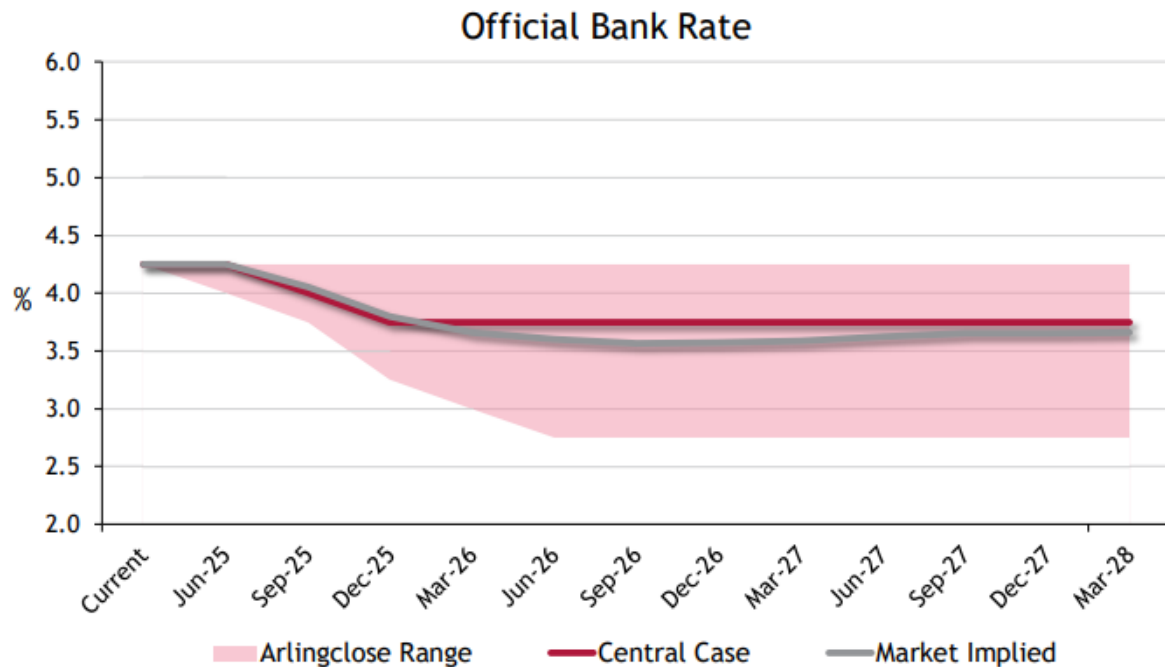


Interest Rates

- 3.3** The Bank of England reduced the Base rate in May 2025 by a further 0.25% in response to a slowing down of price rises taking the base rate to 4.25%. At the June MPC meeting the decision was to hold the base rate at 4.25%. The council's treasury management advisors have forecast that the rate will continue to reduce, but more slowly and by less. Uncertainty in the global economy (trade policies, escalating tension in the Middle East) may reduce the likelihood of further interest rate changes in the immediate short-term.
- 3.4** Up until June, the expectation has been for further rate reductions during 2025 (aligned to the publication of the Monetary Policy Report each quarter) to a low of 3.75%.



Graph C – Interest Rate Forecast



3.5 The Council has limited and reducing internal resources to support the capital programme (capital receipts, earmarked reserves). Unless further capital receipts are received as a result of asset disposals, the Council will need to undertake prudential borrowing.



4. 2024/25 REVENUE BUDGET FORECAST

- 4.1** The Revenue Budget was approved by Council at their meeting on 21 February 2024 with no adjustments made during the financial year to date.

Table 1 – Revenue Budget reconciliation

Budget Item	(£'000)
Original Budget (Council, 21 February 2024)	15,061
Adj:	
Adj:	
Adj:	
Adj:	
Latest Budget	15,061

- 4.2** The revenue budget has been in a state of flux during the financial year as budgets are amended to reflect the transfer of services from Publica to the Council in Phase 1 of the Publica Transition. Whilst the net budget position (£15.061m) has not changed, the composition of the budget (i.e. subjective split between Pay and Non-Pay budgets) and net service budgets has been amended.
- 4.3** As of 31 March 2025 (Q4) the Council is reporting net expenditure (excluding Funding and Parish Precepts) of £15.929m against the latest net budget of £16.186m. The budget is adjusted to reflect technical accounting adjustment such as depreciation and movements to/from reserves. These adjustments have no overall impact on the net budget. Funding from Council Tax, Business Rates and Government Grants received is £16.706m against the latest budget of £16.702m (original budget of £15.577m adjusted by £1.125m to reflect additional Business Rate income transferred to the Business Rate Reserve), £0.004m more than budgeted
- 4.4** The revenue outturn for 2024/25 results in a in an underspend of £0.778m – an improvement of £0.342m against the Q3 forecast. A positive variation of £0.262m is reported against a budgeted surplus of £0.516m. Table 2 provides members with an overview of the significant outturn variations that have been forecast across services with Tables 3 and 4 providing detail on the non-service revenue expenditure and income budgets.



Table 2 – Revenue Budget Outturn Summary

	2024/25 Latest Net Budget (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Q3 2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3
Revenue Budget					
Environmental & Regulatory Services	614	653	39	54	(15)
Business Sup. Svcs - Finance, HR, Procurement	1,288	1,300	12	42	(30)
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,421	2,328	(93)	(60)	(33)
Assets, Property & Regeneration	808	706	(102)	(49)	(53)
Publica Executives and Modernisation	123	122	(0)	0	(0)
Revenues & Housing Support	893	646	(246)	0	(246)
Environmental Services	4,629	4,676	48	17	31
Leisure & Communities	2,257	2,219	(38)	(5)	(32)
Planning & Strategic Housing	846	1,053	207	143	64
Democratic Services	1,150	1,245	95	85	10
Retained and Corporate	2,820	3,055	235	226	9
Subtotal Services	17,848	18,004	156	451	(296)
Less: Reversal of accounting adjustments	(1,865)	(1,797)	68	0	68
Revised Subtotal Services	15,983	16,207	224	451	(228)
Corporate Income & Expenditure	203	(283)	(486)	(370)	(116)
Provisions and Risk Items	0	5	5	0	5
Net Budget Requirement	16,186	15,929	(258)	81	(339)
Funded by:					
Council Tax	(6,597)	(6,597)	0	0	0
Retained Business Rates	(6,139)	(6,139)	(0)	0	(0)
Government Funding - Grants	(3,206)	(3,214)	(8)	0	(8)
Government Funding - NHB	(287)	(287)	0	0	0
Collection Fund (surplus) / Deficit	(473)	(469)	5	0	5
TOTAL Funding	(16,702)	(16,706)	(4)	0	(4)
Budget shortfall/(surplus)	(516)	(778)	(262)	81	(343)



Table 3 – Corporate Income and Expenditure

	2024/25 Revised Budget (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Corporate Income and Expenditure			
Other non-service savings	(7)	(7)	0
Contingency, other non-service income and expenditure	208	47	(161)
Savings & Transformation Items	(714)	(811)	(97)
Treasury Management - Interest Payable	9	8	(1)
Treasury Management - Interest Receivable	(1,458)	(1,679)	(221)
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	12	5	(7)
Transfer to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	2,147	2,147	0
	203	(283)	(486)

Key Variations

- 4.5** As outlined in paragraph 2.2 the forecast outturn position is a net underspend/favourable variance of £0.262m which increases the level of budgeted surplus in-year.
- 4.6** The outturn allows for the planned transfer to the Financial Resilience Reserve (FRR). It is proposed that the additional surplus from the General Fund (£0.262m) is transferred to the Transformation Reserve. Members should take into consideration the financial performance of certain service areas (i.e. services which are more reliant on income from fees and charges as outlined in Section 2 and Section 4 of the report). The net outturn for these services is a cause for concern and represents a weaker financial position than would otherwise have occurred. This is not a desirable outcome and management action will need to be taken by the Council, Publica and Ubico should the weaker financial performance continue in 2025/26.
- 4.7** The material items which have had an impact on the Council's revenue budget are summarised at **table ES2** with narrative explaining the reasons(s) for the variation in the paragraphs that follow.



- 4.8** Following changes to **Waste and Recycling** rounds in July 2024, Ubico have confirmed through financial reporting that the part-year efficiency saving of £0.375m has been achieved.
- 4.9** The cost reduction of £0.150m included in the 2024/25 revenue budget for the **Street Cleaning** service has not been achieved in full this financial year. Initial scoping work has identified cost reductions and service efficiencies which is shown as a net underspend (£0.098m). in **Table 5** of the report. A wider review of service options is being undertaken to ensure service standards are clearly defined with corresponding cost reductions. Further analysis will be undertaken on the scope and delivery of cost reductions for consideration by Cabinet in 2025/26.
- 4.10** Where income shortfalls have been reported, it is expected that Business Managers and Assistant Directors evaluate options for corrective action in 2025/2026 and the medium term to avoid a detrimental impact on the Council's finances over the medium-term. The evaluation must include an assessment of the service cost and income, market positioning, and unit cost and benchmarking data analysis. Options should outline, if possible, how the service can be financially sustainable.
- 4.11** Income from **Land Charges** is below budget with net income received £18k below budget at the end of the financial year. The income budget was reduced for the year by £19k (from £0.208m to £0.189m) recognising the downward trend on income in 2023/24 in part to the rise in free unofficial Personal Searches (through Personal Search Agents).
- 4.12 Building Control** – Market share is averaging 65% in Q4 with 137 applications processed. There has been an 8 per cent increase in market share since Q1 and a 9 per cent increase compared to the same period last year. Expenditure was on budget but an income shortfall of £29k is reported. The team have invested in software and handheld devices for site use which is expected to make officers time on site and the service more efficient. Considering the budget shortfall, the building regulation fees



have been increased for the 2025-26 financial year to better reflect the costs of running the service. The service has also identified an opportunity to increase market share.

4.13 Public Conveniences – income shortfall due to reduced footfall of £33k. The service is also reporting an overspend (£18k) in its cleaning costs following a contract renewal because of inflationary pressures. The service was subject to a review by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Public Conveniences Review Group) and the review and recommendations were reported to Cabinet in January 2024. This report made a series of recommendations and recognised the financial pressures of the service needed to be reduced but that a fully cost recoverable service was not achievable. A reduction in facilities where there were multiple facilities in towns or villages was agreed and toilets have now been closed in both Cirencester and Stow-on-the-Wold as a means of mitigating cost pressures.

4.14 Further options will need to be considered during 2025/26 to ensure the net subsidy required to operate the Public Conveniences can be minimised or reduced entirely.

4.15 Cemetery fees – shortfall in income of £30k due to lower service provision.

4.16 Green Waste and Bulky Waste fees have achieved £92k more income than budgeted by the end of the financial year.

4.17 The Council has not received the budgeted level of commercial rental income from **Investment Properties** given the challenging economic conditions across retail and office sectors and downward pressure on rents. A combined income shortfall and empty property costs of £170k is reported.

4.18 An overspend of £93k is reported on **Elections**. This is due to expenditure with CIVICA on the trial of Tablets at the Police and Crime Commissioner election in May 2024 and the General Election in July 2024. These costs cannot be claimed through the national election expenses scheme. Trials have been undertaken to assess whether the use of



Tablets and software would streamline the election process by reducing the opportunity for polling station errors and streamlining the count process with ballot paper accounts reconciled through the Tablet and software. Other overspent election costs including postage and canvassers fees were reviewed and increased for the 2025/26 budget. Whilst the use of tablets can be seen as contributing to delivering a safe and efficient election process, it is too soon to quantify the value of any cost reduction of efficiency in the wider count process.

4.19 Income from the Council's **Car Parks** remained positive in Q4. Income from Car park permits, and Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) is below target for financial year and is underachieved by £82k in 2024/25. Income budgets for 2025/26 were reduced to reflect current financial performance and ensure the budget estimates approved by Council in February 2025 were robust. However, the service will need to develop an action plan setting out options to address the financial performance including a review the car park strategy and approach to enforcement.

4.20 Recruitment Costs - £78k of additional spend not covered through vacancy management. These costs cover the cost of recruitment for the Director of Communities and Place and three senior planning roles. The recruitment and appointment of the above roles will reduce reliance on expensive interim(agency) staff.

4.21 Rebranding – costs of £17k associated with the corporate refresh of branding which is funded from cost savings/additional service charge income at Trinity Road.

4.22 Communications service is overspend by £11k. Following the transfer of services in Phase 1, the Communications service has been reviewed with additional interim support provided by an external communications agency (Conteur). Whilst there was an underspend on staff costs (£40k) the total cost of external support was £51k.

4.23 ICT – £69k underspent during 2024/25 predominantly because of lower than budgeted IT licence and equipment costs following careful management and negotiation of licence renewals.



4.24 Postage and Printing is overspent by £79k. Although the budget has been increased by a further £30k in 2025/26, further overspends are anticipated. Additional analysis will be required in 2025/26 to better understand spend and explore potential cost saving opportunities.

4.25 Housing Benefit overpayments recovered amounts recovered exceeded budget by £236k.

4.26 Ubico Contract – the Council’s Environmental (grounds maintenance, street cleaning, domestic waste collection, recycling collections etc) are provided by Ubico Ltd. The contract with Ubico for 2024/25 of £8.738m with an outturn reported of £8.425m – a net underspend of £0.313m This is predominantly due to the savings achieved of £0.375m from the rezoning but is offset by additional costs of £62k due to higher than estimated vehicle hire, premises insurance and property lease costs.

4.27 The Council also incurred additional expenditure of £50k for communications and customer service support in relation to the **mobilisation of the Waste and Recycling rezoning** and £61k of consultancy costs which will be partly funded from the £92k contingency balance held in relation to Ubico cost.

4.28 The table below provides members with an overview of the financial performance of the Ubico Contract (table 5). The net variation on the contract excluding the rezoning saving is an overspend of £62k.



Table 5 – Ubico Contract Outturn

Waste, Recycling, Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance Services	Ubico Contract Costs OB (£'000)	Ubico Contract Costs CS (£'000)	Outturn (£'000)	Outturn Variance (£'000)
Car Parks GM [CTW668]	77	77	68	(9)
CCM001 Cemetery/Churchyards GM [CTW688]	188	188	165	(23)
RYC002 Garden Waste Collection [CTW634]	1,423	1,423	1,302	(121)
WST001 Household Waste [CTW611]	1,722	1,722	1,756	33
RYC001 Recycling [CTW633]	3,089	3,089	2,977	(111)
RYC003 Refuse/Recycling/Food Waste [CTW635]	661	661	679	18
STC001 Street Cleaning [CTW666]	1,558	1,558	1,461	(98)
Trinity Road Offices GM [CTW668]	20	20	17	(2)
Grand Total	8,738	8,738	8,425	(313)
Less: Rezoning savings				375
Net variation on contract (excluding Rezoning)				62

Treasury Management

4.29 Dividends from the Council's longer-term investments (Pooled funds and Real Estate Investment Trusts) of £0.503m were received in the twelve months to the 31 March 2025 year achieving a return of 4.85%. Interest from short term cash deposits including the Debt Management Office (DMO) was £1.109m due to interest rates remaining at a higher level than assumed in the budget and MTFS and cash balances remaining higher than anticipated.

4.30 It is not expected that the current interest rate level will be maintained over the MTFS period, as set out in Section 3 of this report, with expectations of investment income in 2025/26 reducing to around £1.1m with a further reduction to £0.5m by 2027/28.

4.31 The level of investment income achieved for the year is a result of the performance of both short-term investments (Money Market Funds, deposits with the DMO) and dividends from the long-term investment. The table below provides members with a high-level overview of the Council's Treasury Management investments on 31 March 2025.



Table 6 – Treasury Management Investments

Investment type	Balance invested at 31/3/25 (£'000)	Investment Income received to 31/3/25 (£'000)
Bank of England DMDAF	2,570	622
Money Market Funds		
Federated Money Market Fund	3,000	144
DGLS Money Market Fund	3,000	135
Insight Liquidity Money Market Fund	2,160	89
Lloyds Instant Access	50	36
Royal Bank of Scotland Call Account	0	2
Other Short-term deposits	0	81
Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT)		
Fundamentum Housing REIT	690	30
Cash Plus Fund		
Federated Cash Plus Fund	1,213	N/A
Pooled Funds		
CCLA Property Fund	2,195	109
Shroders Income Maximiser Fund	862	60
CCLA Cautious Multi Assets FUnd	933	31
M&G UK Income Fund	1,847	102
Ninety-One Investec Diversified Fund	1,808	91
Columbia Threadneedle Bond Fund	1,929	80
	22,257	1,612

4.32 As Treasury Management investment returns were significantly above the budgeted level, £1.125m (£1.00m budgeted and an additional £0.125m) has been transferred to the Treasury Management Risk earmarked reserve to manage higher borrowing costs and potential reduced investment income from lower interest rates in the short-term and to mitigate any potential realised losses from pooled funds were they to be disposed.



4.33 Council approved the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Management Strategy (including the Non-Treasury Management Investment Strategy) at their meeting on 21 February 2024. Audit and Governance Committee have responsibility for reviewing and monitoring treasury management arrangements in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and receiving performance reports. The Council adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve, as a minimum, treasury management semi-annual and annual outturn reports.

4.34 The CIPFA Code was updated in 2021 and includes the new requirement, mandatory from 01 April 2023, of quarterly reporting of the treasury management prudential indicators. The non-treasury prudential indicators are expected to be included in the Council's usual revenue and capital monitoring reports. Section 7 and **Annex C** of this report provides members with an overview on the non-treasury position.

Corporate Income and Expenditure, Provisions, and Risk

4.35 As outlined in Tables 3 and 4 there are variations reported across the Corporate Income and Expenditure budgets. These budgets support the General Fund Revenue budget and are typically the non-service items such as Treasury Management, financing, contingency budget, and provisions for risk.

4.36 A contingency budget is held centrally to mitigate any in-year cost pressures from inflation or other unforeseen events. This is reported as uncommitted (£53k) to in-part offset the recruitment and Publica transition additional expenditure highlighted in the paragraphs below.

4.37 Savings and transformations are forecast to be overachieved by £127k because of a forecast underachievement of Street Cleaning savings (£150k) and underspend from Publica of £386k against target saving of £109k (£277k).



4.38 As outlined earlier in this section, the performance of the Council's Treasury Management Investments is a result of higher than anticipated interest rates and surplus balances to invest. £1.125m (£1.00m budgeted and an additional £0.125m) has been transferred to the Treasury Management Risk earmarked reserve to manage higher borrowing costs in the short-term and to mitigate and to mitigate any potential realised losses from pooled funds were they to be disposed.

4.39 As outlined in section 5 below, forecast additional expenditure of £0.182m (£436m for full year impact) for Phase 1 of the Publica transition was included as a risk provision in the Q3 outturn forecast. This provision should be considered against the following.

- Underspend from the vacancy of the Director of Communities and Place (£50k).
- Communications service costs including vacancy management underspend (£42k) and £53k overspend for interim support (£11k net overspend)
- Planning Agency costs of £288k against vacancy savings of £176,000 (£112k net cost)
- Planned saving from other vacancies where roles transferred to the Council under Phase 1 of the Publica transition net of Agency expenditure (£227,000 underspend).

4.40 The actual net cost of Phase one of the Publica Transition in 2024/2025 is £27k, after adjusting for savings from vacant post expenditure, pay award, and agency costs.

4.41 Recruitment Costs - £78k of additional spend not covered through vacancy management. 3 x senior planning roles, Director, and Head of Waste and Environment role. These can be partly offset against the forecast underspend of £50k as a result of the vacancy within the Director of Communities and Place role. The recruitment and appointment of the above roles will reduce reliance on expensive interim(agency) staff.

5. PUBLICA REVIEW

5.1 Following reports from Human Engine (November 2023) and Local Partnerships (March 2024), Council approved the Detailed Transition Plan ("DTP") report at its



meeting on 31 July 2024. This set out the process that would be followed to return the majority of services to the Council with an initial transfer of services taking place in November 2024.

- 5.2** The DTP and covering report provided members with an initial estimate of additional cost of Phase 1 (enduring impact) and the one-off costs (provision for redundancy).
- 5.3** These cost estimates have been monitored and reviewed, with members receiving updates in the November 2024 and December 2024 financial reports.
- 5.4** The table below provides members with a reconciliation between the financial implications set out in the July 2024 DTP and the current estimate (February 2025). This report includes the actual outturn costs incurred since November 2024 for Phase 1, with the full year estimate included in the 2025/26 revenue budget and MTFS remaining unchanged.

Table 7 – Reconciliation of Phase 1 Cost Estimate (February 2025)

Reconciliation of movement in additional cost	July 2024 DTP (£'000)	November 2024 update (£'000)	December 2024 update (£'000)	Change (£'000)
Phase 1 Baseline Cost	3,674	3,616	3,701	27
Sharing + Pension Impact	326	318	321	(5)
New Roles	553	619	663	110
New Model Total	4,553	4,553	4,686	132
Publica Savings (Direct)	(240)	(240)	(221)	19
Indirect Savings	(283)	(282)	(282)	1
Enduring Impact	4,030	4,031	4,182	152
Indicative Annual Increase / (Decrease)	356	415	481	125

- 5.5** There have been no changes to the cost estimate for Phase 1 since the February 2025 update. It should be noted that the table above only covers Phase 1.



- 5.6** Phase 2 financial reporting will be provided during 2025/26 following the transfer of services and staff on 01 July 2025.

6. GENERAL FUND AND EARMARKED RESERVES

- 6.1** **Annex C** details the reserves held by the Council at 31 March 2025 and the proposed movements to/from and between reserves. The Council's general fund balance remains at £1.760m. Earmarked revenue reserves has increased by £2.924m to £12.912m.
- 6.2** Financial Sustainability Reserve – The outturn position enables the budgeted transfer of £0.516m from the General Fund to the Financial Resilience Reserve to be made. This will increase the balance on the reserve to £2.943m and provides one-off reserve funding to mitigate the budget gap identified in the MTFS and enable the Council to maintain financial sustainability over the MTFS-period/until 2027/28.
- 6.3** Transformation Reserve– It is proposed that the additional surplus from the General Fund (£0.262m) is transferred to the Transformation Reserve. The purpose of this reserve is to provide funding to support the Council's Savings and Transformation programme. It is proposed that reserve funding is utilised more broadly to address potential financial pressures arising from Local Government Reorganisation, to provide further one-off/up front funding (pump priming) on an Invest-to-Save basis.
- 6.4** The 2024/25 revenue budget includes a net transfer from earmarked reserves of £0.301m to fund future commitments and make provisions for future financial pressures and risks – predominantly around Business Rate Income and Treasury Management income. The latest net budget has increased this figure to a net transfer to earmarked reserves of £2.146m (excluding the transfer of surplus outline in 6.2 and 6.3 above).



6.5 Annex C details the reserves held by the Council at 31 March 2025 and the proposed movements to/from and between reserves. The largest of these which affects the outturn position is a transfer of £1.125m (including £0.478m surplus on the Business Rate pool and S.31 grant which will be utilised in 2025/26 and 2026/27 to fund forecast business rate income deficit) to the Business Rate Risk Reserve.

6.6 In setting the budget for 2025/26 a review of reserves was undertaken to assess whether the levels were appropriate considering the needs and risks of the organisation. The movements between reserves detailed in **Annex C** reflect transfers to/from reserves budgeted for in 2024/25 and transfers between reserves as proposed in the 2025/26 Medium-term financial strategy. Other movements are summarised in table 8 below.

Table 8 – Earmarked Reserves Movements versus Budget

Reserve	Summary of Revised Budget Movements To / (From)	(£'000)
Business Rates Risk	BR Pool Surplus	478
Business Rates Risk	S31 Business Rate Relief Grant to set aside for future business rate deficit funding.	392
Business Rates Risk	Business Rate levy payable lower than estimated, underspend set aside to support future business rate deficit.	255
Treasury Management Risk	Additional Treasury Management income	125
Grants and Contributions	Revenue grants and contributions received but not spent, carried forward to 2025/26	
Grants and Contributions	Neighbourhood Area Plan	20
Grants and Contributions	Planning Skills Delivery Grant	100
Grants and Contributions	MHCLG Local Plans Fund Grant	228
Grants and Contributions	Flytipping Grant	16
Grants and Contributions	Digital Improvement Fund	50
Grants and Contributions	Food Network	20
Grants and Contributions	ICT Cyber Security Training	15
DEFRA Biodiversity Net Gain	Underspend earmarked as future contingency	45
Asset Management	Underspend earmarked as future contingency	42
Planning Appeals	Set aside for planning appeal costs	25
Habitat Regulations Assessment	Sc111 HRA contributions	97
Local Plan	Transfer from Local Plan reserve to fund expenditure in 2024/25	(153)



Reserve	Summary of Revised Budget Movements To / (From)	(£'000)
Grants and Contributions	Revenue grants and contributions received in prior years applied to 2024/25 expenditure	
Grants and Contributions	Neighbourhood Area Plan	(16)
Grants and Contributions	Habitat Regulations Assessment	(26)
Grants and Contributions	GDASS Rural Domestic Abuse Champion Network Contribution funded from earmarked grant	(41)
Grants and Contributions	Cotswold Connected Community and Food Network expenditure funded from reserve	(60)
Grants and Contributions	Council contribution from Climate Change reserve to Retrofit engagement programme	(18)
Grants and Contributions	Community Safety Expenditure funded from earmarked reserve (grants and contributions)	(41)
Grants and Contributions	RAU PPA consultancy funded from Planning Reserve	(33)
Council Priorities - Publica Review	Publica Review and share of redundancy/pension strain costs	(363)
CIL Contributions	CIL contributions set aside to finance administration costs (5% of contributions)	158
Partnership Income	Net Income from Cotswold Tourism Partnership (Accommodation Guide contributions) set aside to fund future expenditure.	101
Financial Resilience	Other transfer (from)/to reserves and balance sheet review (dr/cr balances)	154
		1,571
	Variance to Budgeted	
	Cotswold Crowdfund - underspend	(30)
	Posts funded from reserves due to vacancies	(66)
	Homeless roles not required to be funded from reserves due to funding via HPG	(41)
	Roles funded from grants held within Receipts in advance.	(75)
	Roles funded from underspend	(32)
	CIL resource costs now funded from 5% CIL contributions	(30)
		(274)



7. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 7.1** Council approved the revised Capital Programme for 2024/25 at their meeting on 24 February 2025. The Capital Programme has been updated to reflect adjustments as set out in Table 9 below.
- 7.2** The revised capital programme for 2024/25 is £7.550m with a total net spend at £7.122m for the 2024/25 financial year.

Table 9 – Capital Programme budget reconciliation

Capital Programme Reconciliation	(£'000)
Original Budget (Council, 21 February 2024)	6,813
ORCS Grant Scheme (Council, 15 May 2024)	383
Slippage from 2023/24 (Cabinet 25 July 2024)	1,513
Disabled Facilities Grant (Cabinet 7 November 2024)	800
CLC Decarbonisation Work Swimming Pool Support Fund (Cabinet 7 Dec 2024)	208
Revised Capital Programme (Council, 24 February 2025)	(2,405)
Disabled Facilities Grant (Proposed Cabinet 3 April 2025)	238
Latest Budget	7,550

Table 10 – Capital Programme Outturn

Capital Programme	2024/25 LAB (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Q3 2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	Movement from Q3 (£'000)
Leisure & Communities	1,491	1,451	(40)	12	(52)
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing	2,643	2,516	(127)	(66)	(61)
Environment	1,606	1,339	(267)	(85)	(182)
ICT, Change and Customer Services	150	138	(12)	0	(12)
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	752	752	0	0	0
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	134	216	82	0	82
Land, Legal and Property	517	499	(18)	79	(97)
Transformation and Investment	257	211	(46)	(45)	(1)
TOTAL Capital Programme	7,550	7,122	(428)	(105)	(323)



7.3 The outturn for 2024/25 is an underspend of £0.428m (£0.105m at Q3).

7.4 The Capital Programme was significantly revised in the budget papers considered by Council at their meeting on 24 February 2025. The significant variations on the Capital Programme are:

- **Additional Electric Vehicle Charge points** are being installed through the On Street Residential Charge points Scheme (ORCS), underspent by £0.042m due to installation at certain sites having specific constraints that cannot be addressed within the current deadline. Delays from the supplier and the distribution network operator contributed towards the postponement of the work. The unspent budget and deferred expenditure of £0.183m will be carried forward into the 2025/26 financial year budget to complete the installations. Due to delays, the Council has had to request further extension to the deadline for claiming the grant funding for this scheme. Consequently, there is a continuing risk that the Council may be required to finance the £0.090m originally forecast to be grant-funded through its capital receipts reserve.
- **Private Sector Housing Renewal Grants (Disabled Facility)** – underspend of £0.127m against revised budget due to timing of work.
- **Investment in Leisure Centres** – additional expenditure of £0.071m due to requested expenditure approved by S.151 officer for accessible fitness equipment and gym bikes.
- **Asset Management Strategy** – overspend of £0.095m against revised budget due to additional costs for Trinity Road roof repairs and ancillary expenditure in respect of Old Station prior to sale of asset (financed from UKSPF capital funding).
- **Trinity Road Agile Working** –underspend of £0.045m due to timing of expenditure which will be carried forward to 2025/26.

7.5 This report recommends to members that £0.565m of the unspent capital budget is carried forward into 2025/26 as detailed below:

- Spa Pool, Bourton Leisure Centre (£0.034m)
- Cotswold Crowdfund (£0.030m)
- Disabled Facility Housing Adaptions (£0.127m)
- Provision for financing of Ubico vehicles (£0.019m)



- Off Street Residential Charge point Scheme (£0.183m)
- Trinity Road Carbon Efficiency Works and Agile project underspend to allocate to the 2025/26 Asset Management Strategy Budget (£0.172m)

7.6 Annex A sets out the detailed outturn with commentary from budget holders and is summarised in table 9 above.

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

Capital Financing Statement	2024/25 LAB (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Capital receipts	3,628	3,421	(207)
Capital Grants and Contributions	3,507	3,406	(101)
Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO)	0	0	0
Community Municipal Investments (CMI)	415	295	(120)
Prudential Borrowing		0	0
	7,550	7,122	(428)

Capital Receipts and Disposals

7.8 There were no asset disposals during the 2024/25 financial year. However, the Council received £25,000 from the scrap sale of Ubico vehicles. Members should note that three asset disposals have been pursued, with capital receipts of £0.322m received in Q1 of 2025/26 from the sale of the former Visitor Information Centre in Bourton-on-the-Water and the Old Station. The sale of Memorial Cottages in Cirencester is expected to complete in Q2 of 2025/26

Table 11 – Capital Financing Forecast



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

8. NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

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

Prudential Indicators

- 8.2** The detailed Non-Treasury Management prudential indicators are included in **Annex B** with the commentary below providing members with a high-level summary.
- 8.3** Whilst there is no underlying need to borrow until 2026/27 with the Capital Programme being financed through internal resources and external grants and contributions, any additional capital expenditure proposed during in the future will need to consider the availability and cost of capital financing. The outturn Treasury Management report to Audit and Governance Committee in July will set out the wider impact on the Capital Financing Requirement.

9. RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES

- 9.1** The reported financial outturn for the 2024/25 financial year remains provisional, pending completion of the external audit by Bishop Fleming. As part of their review of the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts, there remains a possibility that the final financial position may be subject to audit adjustment



10. CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1** This monitoring report presents an update on the Council's financial position. As the report sets out, an underspend of £0.262m for the 2024/2025 financial year. The outturn allows for the planned transfer to the Financial Resilience Reserve (FRR). It is proposed that the additional surplus from the General Fund (£0.262m) is transferred to the Transformation Reserve
- 10.2** Members should note that whilst the outturn position has improved, there remain concerns around financial performance in certain service areas – particularly services where the Council's net revenue budget is dependent on income from fees and charges. The report has provided reference to mitigation or actions that will be discussed with service leads to address and agree management actions.
- 10.3** Members will be aware from the Medium Term Financial Strategies approved by Council in February 2023, 2024 and 2025 that a significant unfunded budget gap from 2026/27 (which increases over the MTFS-period) was identified. The latest MTFS (February 2025) indicated a budget gap of £1.589m in 2026/27 which is forecast to increase to £4.879m in 2027/28 and £6.282m by 2028/29. Without further cost reductions or savings measures, the Council would be reliant on earmarked reserves to close the budget gap – this is not sustainable and is not considered a credible strategy.
- 10.4** The Government published 2 consultations on 20 June 2025 which will have a significant impact on the level of funding over the next 3 years.
- 10.5** [The Fair Funding Review 2.0](#) consultation seeks views on the approach to determining new funding allocations for local authorities, building on the local authority funding reform: objectives and principles consultation which the government has formally responded to in parallel.
- 10.6** The second consultation, [Modernising and improving the administration of council tax](#), seeks views on the administration of council tax including changing the ways council tax is billed, collected and enforced, modernising the support available in the system, and supporting councils to improve efficiency.



- 10.7** Whilst it is too soon to judge the exact impact on Cotswold District Council, members should view these consultations in the context of the broad 'direction of travel' set out in the February 2025 MTFS of reducing levels of funding over the MTFS-period.
- 10.8** Therefore, the revenue outturn position and recommendations on additional transfers to reserves should be considered against the backdrop of likely reductions in funding, although acknowledging this was reflected in the February 2025 MTFS as the most likely scenario.
- 10.9** In some instances, income budgets for 2025/26 have been adjusted downward to reflect historic underachievement of income. However, this should not be seen as a desirable outcome – more that it recognises in setting the budget for the forthcoming financial year the estimates need to be robust in the context of current financial performance. During 2025/26 the Business and Intelligence unit will support the quarterly finance reporting process and will work with service leads to identify potential mitigations and resolutions to improve performance.
- 10.10** Heads of Service should take steps to identify management action(s) that will address underperformance and discuss these with the finance team and the relevant Director. Financial Performance Reports for 2025/26 will include options and recommendations for corrective action where underperformance against the budget has been identified, and options for improving financial performance even if the service is achieving income and expenditure targets.
- 10.11** A key aspect of this will be to explain financial performance in the context of service performance and outcomes. There is a risk with the current performance framework that aspects of service performance may be reported as on or above target, with little or no reference to financial performance. The Section 151 Officer is in the process of reviewing the financial reporting and performance reporting with a view to integrating data from the Business and Intelligence Unit into the quarterly Financial Performance reports.



10.12 As set out in the CIPFA Financial Management Code, performance reporting is important for the Council to remain financially sustainable. Members must receive timely information on its financial and operational performance so that corporate priorities are delivered within budget. Early information about emerging risks to financial sustainability are key to ensuring the Council can take effective decisions and carefully consider an effective response.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

13. RISK ASSESSMENT

13.1 Section 8 of the report set out the risks and uncertainties.

14. EQUALITIES IMPACT

14.1 None



COTSWOLD
District Council

15. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

15.1 None

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None

(END)

Annex A- Capital Programme 2024/25 - Q.4							
Capital Programme by Service Area	2024/25 Budget [Incl. 23/24 slippage] (£'000)	2024/25 Schemes approved in-year (£'000)	2024/25 Revised Budget [Council Feb 25'.] (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2025/26	Commentary
Leisure and Communities							
Investment in Leisure Centres	1,150	0	1,119	1,190	71	0	Main projects complete. Capital expenditure includes additional costs for accessible fitness equipment and gym bikes. Additional spend was requested and authorised by S.151 officer.
CLC Pool Works	110	0	80	80	0	0	Scheme to address flaking paint from the steel structural support in the Cirencester Leisure Centre pool area. Freedom Leisure [FL] agreed to incorporate these works into their capital scheme, using the same contractor[s]. Recharge included in invoices for the main scheme above.
CLC Decarbonisation works [Solar PV and Triple Glazing]	0	208	208	161	(47)	0	Project complete and fully operational. The triple glazing part of the scheme was discounted as it wasn't financially viable.
Spa pool - Bourton Leisure Centre	0	0	34	0	(34)	34	Scheme commenced in May 2025. There are delays due to a leak underneath the ground where the existing Spa Pool was located. Investigatory and restorative works currently underway.
Crowdfund Cotswold	50	0	50	20	(30)	30	The spring round of Crowdfund Cotswold closed on 9th April, with 5 to 6 project proposals being verified before they launch on the platform. There was a project creator workshop held in February that was well attended and generated several ideas expected to be put forward in future rounds.

Capital Programme by Service Area	2024/25 Budget [Incl. 23/24 slippage] (£'000)	2024/25 Schemes approved in-year (£'000)	2024/25 Revised Budget [Council Feb 25'.] (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2025/26	Commentary
Housing/Planning and Strategic Housing							
Private Sector Housing Renewal Grant (DFG)	700	800	1,938	1,811	(127)	127	The decision by Gloucestershire County Council [GCC] to use external occupational therapy [OT] agency to clear the waiting list for adaptations had led to an influx of new referrals. Expenditure hit £1.8m this financial year. Additional funding was drawn down from the centrally held Bettercare Fund at GCC. There was also £199k of additional in-year funding transferred to Cotswold from GCC. The underspend will be carried forward to 2025/26.
Affordable Housing - Davies Road MiM (S106)	291	0	291	291	0	0	First 50% 'Start on Site' tranche grant was transferred to Cotsway Housing Association last year [2023/24]. The remaining 50% has now been transferred following notification of completion.
Cotsway Housing Association Loan	840	0	414	414	0	0	Lower net amount borrowed due to grant received by Cotsway Housing being used to repay loan. Loan balance of £1.897m to be converted to secured loan within Q2 of 2025/26.
Bromford Joint Venture Partnership	720	0	0	0	0	0	Planning consent was granted on the 12 March, However Bromford need to resolve issues around drainage which is delaying the commencement of the work. This may delay commencement of works until 2027 unless Thames Water will bring their upgrade plans forward. Budget was carried forward to future years as part of 2025/26 budget setting process.
Environment							
Waste & Recycling receptacles	80	0	80	57	(23)	0	Rolling budget for the purchase of waste receptacles due to growth in properties or replacements.
Provision for financing of Ubico Vehicles	1,660	0	1,169	1,150	(19)	19	This budget is to fund the Capital Fleet Replacement Programme for Ubico. One panel van and five garden waste collection vehicles delivered to date. There is one Street Cleansing vehicle due for delivery in Q.4, and a vehicle ramp for Packers Leaze Depot workshop. Delivery and installation of the vehicle ramp will be in Q.1 2025/26. Underspend will be carried forward to 2025/26.
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	188	0	79	79	0	0	Installations at Rissington Road and Trinity Road are now complete. Costs reduced from original estimates due to changing supplier.

Capital Programme by Service Area	2024/25 Budget [Incl. 23/24 slippage] (£'000)	2024/25 Schemes approved in-year (£'000)	2024/25 Revised Budget [Council Feb 25'.] (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2025/26	Commentary
On Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS)	0	383	225	0	(225)	183	Installation of charging points commenced during 2025/26 at Mangersbury Road [Stow-on-the-Wold] and Old Market Way [Moreton-in-Marsh], Brewery [Cirencester] and West Street [Tetbury]. This scheme will provide 24 electric vehicle charging points [EVCP's]. Underspend of £0.042m due to installation at certain sites having specific constraints that cannot be addressed within the current deadline. Delays have also been experienced due to the supplier and the distribution network operator. Three sites completed in Q1 of 2025/26 with further delays at Brewery (progressing with metering and final commissioning). The Expenditure of £183k will fall into 2025/26 and the budget carried forward. £93k to be paid by the Council and £90k financed through the ORCS grant.
In cab technology (Street Cleaning)	60	0	0	0	0	0	Project slippage. Budget carried forward to 2025/26 as part of 2025/26 budget setting.
Public Toilets - Card Payment (bc)	34	0	0	0	0	0	No works planned to date. Any future proposals will be subject to a Cabinet report. Budget carried forward to 2025/26 as part of 2025/26 budget setting.
Changing Places Toilets	53	0	53	53	0	0	All schemes now complete.

	2024/25 Budget [Incl. 23/24 slippage] (£'000)	2024/25 Schemes approved in-year (£'000)	2024/25 Revised Budget [Council Feb 25'.] (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2025/26	Commentary
Capital Programme by Service Area							
ICT, Change and Customer Services							
ICT Capital	150	0	150	138	(12)	0	Expenditure on networking equipment and the ongoing laptop replacement programme.
Planning Documents and Scanning Solution	200	0	0	0	0	0	Scheme to replace or upgrade of the IDOX system used by Development Management and is likely to be subject to a detailed options appraisal following the transfer of the Development Management service to the Council as part of Phase 1. No expenditure during the current financial year. Budget carried forward to 2025/26 as part of 2025/26 budget setting.
UK Prosperity schemes:							
UK Rural Prosperity Fund Projects	752	0	752	752	0	0	All funding has now been allocated to the following grant schemes: Community Infrastructure Grants; Active Travel and Heritage and Cultural Buildings Grant; Business Grants. An additional years funding of £229,240 has been allocated to the Council for 2025/26
UK Shared Prosperity Fund Projects	134	0	134	216	82	0	Funding has been split over 14 projects, across three themes – Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills. Reported overspend is funded fully from UKSPF capital allocation. Additional years funding of £327k has been allocated to the Council for 2025/26.
Land, Legal and Property							
Trinity Road Carbon Efficiency Works (Council March 2022)	370	0	370	244	(126)	0	Solar PV installation complete. Further works will now be reviewed as part of a wider assessment of decarbonisation of the Councils Estate. Underspend to carry forward to the Asset Management Strategy 2025/26 budget (see below).
Asset Management Strategy	497	0	147	242	95	172	£123k expenditure for timber repairs, render and other ancillary works required at Old Station prior to sale of the asset. £119k expenditure on Trinity Road roof repairs. £84k of overspend will be financed from UKSPF grant. Carry forward of £172k relates to underspend on Trinity Road Carbon Efficiency works [£126k] and Agile Working [£46k]
Transformation and Investment							

Capital Programme by Service Area	2024/25 Budget [Incl. 23/24 slippage] (£'000)	2024/25 Schemes approved in-year (£'000)	2024/25 Revised Budget [Council Feb 25'.] (£'000)	2024/25 Actuals to Q.4 (£'000)	2024/25 Outturn Variance (£'000)	C/Fwd to 2025/26	Commentary
Trinity Road Agile Working (Council March 2022)	274	0	257	211	(46)	0	Scheme complete. Tenants now starting to occupy the agile work space.
Trinity Road Roof Repairs	13	0	0	13	13	0	Works complete, additional work of £119k funded from Asset Management Strategy budget line.
	8,326	1,391	7,550	7,122	(428)	565	

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ANNEX B NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

ANNEX B: Non-Treasury Prudential Indicators

1. BACKGROUND

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

2. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

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

Capital Expenditure	2023/24 actual (£)	2024/25 outturn (£)	2025/26 budget (£)	2026/27 budget (£)
General Fund services	5,654,676	7,121,500	4,592,000	7,744,000
Capital investments	328,000	0	0	0

- 2.2** The main General Fund capital projects to date have included investment in Cirencester Leisure Centre, expenditure in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants, purchase of Ubico Vehicles, Trinity Road Agile Working Project and Carbon Efficiency works.

3. CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT

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

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	2023/24 actual (£)	2024/25 outturn (£)	2025/26 budget (£)	2026/27 budget (£)
General Fund services	70,969	360,000	469,000	4,618,000
Capital investments	0	0	0	0
TOTAL CFR	70,969	360,000	469,000	4,618,000

4. GROSS DEBT AND THE CAPITAL FINANCING REQUIREMENT

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

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NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

	31/03/2024 actual (£)	31/03/2025 outturn (£)	31/03/2026 budget (£)	31/03/2027 budget (£)
Gross Debt and CFR				
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	357,255	260,000	16,000	5,000
Capital Financing Requirement	70,969	360,000	469,000	4,618,000

5. DEBT AND THE AUTHORISED LIMIT AND OPERATIONAL BOUNDARY

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

	Maximum Debt Q2 2024/25 (£)	Debt as at 31/03/2025 (£)	2024/25 Authorised Limit (£)	2024/25 Operational Boundary (£)	Complied? Yes/No
Debt, Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary					
Borrowing	10,000,000	260,000	10,000,000	5,000,000	Yes
PFI and Finance Leases	0	0	0	0	Yes
TOTAL Debt	10,000,000	260,000	10,000,000	5,000,000	

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

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

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

	2023/24 actual (£)	2024/25 outturn (£)	2025/26 budget (£)	2026/27 budget (£)
Total net income from service and commercial investments	491,778	237,992	380,000	390,000
Proportion of net revenue stream	3.46%	1.42%	2.60%	2.80%

- 6.2** The 2024/25 outturn is lower than the £380,000 budgeted due to additional costs in respect of vacant properties (vacated Wilkinson property, Old Memorial Cottages and Bourton on the Water Visitor Information Centre) and in-year rental fluctuations.

7. PROPORTION OF FINANCING COST TO NET REVENUE STREAM

- 7.1** Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue.

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NON-TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

- 7.2** The net annual charge is known as financing costs, this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e., the amount funded from Council Tax, Business Rate, and general government grants.

	2023/24 actual (£)	2024/25 outturn (£)	2025/26 budget (£)	2026/27 budget (£)
Financing costs (£)	14,000	13,447	40,000	53,000
Proportion of net revenue stream	0.10%	0.08%	0.27%	0.48%

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Annex C General Fund and Earmarked Reserves					
	Balance 31/03/2024 (£'000)	Budgeted transfer (to)/from reserves	Transfer (to)/from reserves	Transfer between (MTFS review)	Balance 31/03/2025 (£'000)
General Fund	(1,760)	0	0	0	(1,760)
Council Priorities	(2,959)	(63)	270	0	(2,753)
Financial Resilience Reserve	(2,512)	(219)	(212)	0	(2,943)
Risk Mitigation	(550)	(1,100)	(1,307)	0	(2,957)
Ringfenced Earmarked Reserves	(57)	0	0	0	(57)
Other Revenue reserves	(2,151)	291	(583)	0	(2,443)
Subtotal Earmarked Reserves	(8,228)	(1,091)	(1,833)	0	(11,152)
TOTAL GF Balance + Earmarked Reserves	(9,988)	(1,091)	(1,833)	0	(12,912)
Reserve Type	Balance 31/03/2024 (£'000)	Budgeted transfer (to)/from reserves	Transfer (to)/from reserves	Transfer between (MTFS review)	Balance 31/03/2025 (£'000)
General Fund Balance	(1,760)	0	0	0	(1,760)
Corporate Priorities/Investment					
Council Priorities Fund - Allocated	(151)	55	14	0	(82)
Council Priority: Transformation and Change	(200)	(118)	(262)	0	(580)
Council Priority: Publica Review	(471)	0	363	0	(108)
Council Priority: Climate Emergency	(250)	0	18	0	(233)
Council Priority: Housing Delivery	(750)	0	0	250	(500)
Council Priority: Local Plan	(908)	0	153	(250)	(1,005)
Council Priority: Regeneration/Infrastructure	(200)	0	0	0	(200)
ICT/Digital	(30)	0	(15)	0	(45)
	(2,959)	(63)	270	0	(2,753)

Reserve Type	Balance 31/03/2024 (£'000)	Budgeted transfer (to)/from reserves	Transfer (to)/from reserves	Transfer between (MTFS review)	Balance 31/03/2025 (£'000)
Risk mitigation					
Financial Resilience Reserve (MTFS)	(2,512)	(219)	(212)	0	(2,943)
Business Rates Risk	0	(954)	(1,125)	0	(2,079)
Elections	0	(46)	0	0	(46)
Asset Management & Property	(350)	0	(32)	0	(382)
Treasury Management Risk	(150)	(100)	(125)	0	(375)
Housing Benefit	(50)	0	0	0	(50)
Planning Appeals	0	0	(25)	0	(25)
	(3,062)	(1,319)	(1,519)	0	(5,899)
Revenue Grants Unapplied					
Business Rates s31 Grants	(496)	0	0	0	(496)
COVID/COMF Reserves	(203)	0	21	0	(182)
New Burdens	(143)	193	0	(50)	(1)
Homelessness	(190)	0	0	0	(190)
Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit	(100)	0	3	0	(97)
Planning	(13)	0	(423)	0	(436)
Other	(863)	63	(78)	50	(828)
	(2,008)	256	(477)	0	(2,229)
Ringfenced Earmarked Reserves					
GCCG District schemes linked to ILP objectives (including inequalities) [COM405]	(43)	0	0	0	(43)
Local Authority Parks Improvement [MHCLG]	(14)	0	0	0	(14)
	(57)	0	0	0	(57)

Reserve Type	Balance 31/03/2024 (£'000)	Budgeted transfer (to)/from reserves	Transfer (to)/from reserves	Transfer between (MTFS review)	Balance 31/03/2025 (£'000)
Other Revenue Reserves:					
Cotswold Tourism LVEP	0	0	(10)	0	(10)
Accommodation Guide Glos.	(142)	35	(96)	0	(204)
	(142)	35	(107)	0	(214)
	(9,988)	(1,091)	(1,833)	0	(12,912)

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