



**Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on
Monday, 7 September 2026**

Members present:

Gina Blomefield (Chair)	Angus Jenkinson (Vice Chair)
Tony Slater	Jon Wareing
Michael Vann	Len Wilkins

Officers present:

Simon Harper, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer
Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer	Gemma Moreing, Business Information, Performance & Improvement Manager
Tyler Jardine, Trainee Democratic Services Officer	Alan Hope, Head of Strategic Housing, Property and Assets
Jane Portman, Chief Executive Officer	James McQuaid

Observers:

Councillor Patrick Coleman and Mike Every

OS.367 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors David Cunningham, Naomi Bloomer, Lisa Spivey and Claire Bloomer.

OS.368 Substitute Members

Councillor Len Wilkins substituted for Councillor David Cunningham.

OS.369 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were made.

OS.370 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 29 June 2026 were discussed. Councillor Tony Slater proposed accepting the minutes and Councillor Michael Vann seconded the proposal which was put to the vote and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2026.

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The minutes of the meeting on 3 August 2026 were discussed. Councillor Jon Wareing proposed accepting the minutes and Councillor Angus Jenkinson seconded the proposal which was put to the vote and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2026.

OS.371 Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The matters arising from the meeting on 29 June were noted.

OS.372 Chair's Announcements

The Chair thanked Claire Turner for her contribution to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and advised that a replacement member would be appointed following the Blockley by-election. The Climate Change report had been deferred to November. It was noted that UBICO would attend the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting and would welcome any complex questions being submitted in advance.

OS.373 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

OS.374 Member Questions

There were no Member questions.

OS.375 Report back on recommendations

Councillor Jon Wareing, responding to the Deputy Leader's comments on the recommendation to Cabinet, clarified that his proposal was not specifically about tourism management. He explained that it was intended to address the wider issue of community stewardship and how existing communities could manage the impacts of over-intensity of use, including visitors, traffic and other pressures.

The Chair requested the quarterly updates on planning enforcement, particularly the backlog clearance strategy, be shared with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

OS.376 Council Performance report Q1 2026-2027

The purpose of the report was to set out the financial and service performance, and the strategic risk register for Q1 2026/27.

The report was introduced by Councillor Mike Every, Leader of the Council and Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance, and David Stanley, who highlighted the following points:

- The Leader advised that the report included information relating to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and advised that the Secretary of State had announced that LGR had been paused in Gloucestershire.
- Financial performance in the first quarter was broadly a continuation of the previous year's position. Car park income was around £400,000 above budget.

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- Planning fee income remained positive, reflecting a high level of planning applications, although this was placing additional pressure on the service and required agency staff to cover vacancies.
- The Council's vacancy factor was forecast to be around £150,000 below the budgeted level.
- The Ubico contract was showing a £171,000 adverse variation, largely due to increased fuel costs.
- There was a potential funding risk relating to Disabled Facilities Grants.
- Purchase orders had been raised for new waste vehicles, with a lengthy lead-in time expected.
- Cabinet approval was sought for £27,000 from the Cotswold Market Infrastructure balance to fund new pool covers at Chipping Campden and Bourton-on-the-Water Schools.
- Delegated authority was being sought from the Cabinet to complete the disposal of the Council's property in Hereford.

In questioning and discussion, the following points were noted:

Waste and Recycling

- The £40,000 variance for waste and recycling receptacles reflected insufficient budget for the level of demand rather than an overspend. Usage was comparable with other districts and developer contributions were sought for new developments.
- The £171,000 forecast overspend on the Ubico contract was primarily due to increased fuel costs, with some staffing pressures also identified.
- Officers acknowledged that there were wider, systemic issues affecting the Ubico contract, with the Council retaining the financial and service performance risks. Measures such as reinstating a fuel bunker could reduce costs through bulk purchasing, enable the use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil and provide greater resilience to fuel shortages. The fuel bunker was expected to be operational by the end of the calendar year, subject to planning and installation requirements. Officers highlighted the need for Ubico to work more proactively with the Council to identify opportunities to mitigate costs and share good practice.
- Most purchase orders for the replacement Ubico fleet had been raised, with the electric vehicle order pending confirmation of suitable charging facilities. The £6 million budget included an element of risk provision, and vehicle costs were currently below the amount budgeted.

Planning Enforcement

- A member of staff had been commissioned to undertake a review of the planning enforcement backlog, including how cases could be triaged and the backlog reduced while preventing it from increasing. It was expected that this work would result in improved enforcement performance over the following two to three quarters.

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- Monthly planning enforcement reports could be reinstated to enable Members to monitor outstanding cases and progress in addressing the enforcement backlog.

Staff Vacancies

- The vacancy factor forecast was based on current staffing and agency expenditure and confirmed that the position would be kept under review. The Corporate Leadership Team would apply a robust approach to approving recruitment and review vacant posts to determine whether they remained necessary. A staff retention strategy was also in place to support workforce stability through to March 2028.

Local Government Reorganisation

- The pause to LGR created uncertainty regarding the Council's future arrangements and resource requirements. The Council had received £900,000 in Government funding towards LGR preparations, but further funding was considered unlikely.

Long term Empty Properties

- The Council actively worked to bring long-term empty properties (938 properties) back into use, with a dedicated housing officer and measures including increased Council Tax premiums. Properties could remain empty for a range of reasons, including probate or difficulties selling. Exemptions from the Council Tax premium were available in certain circumstances, and officers worked with homeowners to ensure that these were fully considered before a premium was applied.

Land Charges

- Members agreed that service performance was currently inadequate. Officers explained that the performance of the Land Charges service was affected by resource-intensive processes and staffing challenges, with a strategic recovery plan in place. Recruitment had been undertaken to increase staffing levels, and improvements were expected during the year. It was noted that increased complexity had not been matched by sufficient resources, contributing to the decline in performance and income.

Car Parking

- The increase in penalty charge notice income was largely due to increased staffing levels and a more visible and frequent enforcement presence. A breakdown of the reasons for the notices would be provided to establish whether there had been changes in the main causes, such as problems making payment, non-payment or overstaying.

Community Infrastructure Levey (CIL)

- The £65,000 CIL underspend reflected the administrative support for CIL being provided through the wider planning service rather than a dedicated post. Members were anxious that sufficient resources remained available to support the effective distribution of CIL funds and collection of future payments.

Other

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- The Capacity Building Reserve held approximately £700,000. Commitments against the reserve were being reviewed, particularly in relation to service delivery, recruitment and retention pressures, and planning resources, with the position to be reported as part of the Budget Strategy Report in October.
- A concern was raised that the current use of graphical presentations within performance reporting did not provide sufficient statistical information to establish whether services were consistently operating within expected parameters or whether variations indicated a systemic issue. Reference was made to established statistical process control methods, including the use of appropriate data points and control limits, and it was suggested that the Council consider whether these could provide a more robust approach to assessing performance. Officers acknowledged that information on the underlying causes of performance issues could be beneficial and agreed to consider what additional data was available to be presented.

Risk

- The Council's preparedness for potential civil disturbance formed part of its wider civil contingencies arrangements. Any significant incident would be managed through the established multi-agency response arrangements with the Local Resilience Forum and other public sector partners.

Resolved to inform the Cabinet of the following:

Land Charges

Concern at extended processing times for Land Charges at a time the number of requests had fallen. Extended lead times had been highlighted in previous performance reports and members sought an assurance that this was being addressed as a priority.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Noted that the underspend of £65k on the budget for CIL administrative support was being used to fund a staff underspend elsewhere in Planning and Infrastructure.

Members recognised the importance of distributing CIL funds to local communities in a timely way and they sought an assurance that adequate staffing arrangements were in place to facilitate this.

Supporting information

Contextual information drawn from other sources that would aid members' understanding of service performance, notably where it had changed significantly since the last quarter.

Recommendation to Cabinet on Local Government Reorganisation:

The Committee proposed that Cabinet consider writing to the Government to highlight the financial cost and disruption caused by the Local Government Reorganisation process, together with the continuing uncertainty and impact on officers and the Council.

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The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Tony Slater and seconded by Councillor Michael Vann.

Voting Record

6=For

OS.377 Asset Management Strategy Update

The purpose of the report was to provide the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a report of the Cotswold District Council's Property & Assets Portfolio.

The report was introduced by Councillor Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance, and Alan Hope, Head of Strategic Housing, Property and Assets and Harry Penman, Estates and Valuation lead, who highlighted the following points:

- Council assets were managed in line with the 2024 Asset Management Strategy, whilst taking account of the potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation. Decisions were made with regard to the future unitary authority and that arrangements had been developed to avoid inappropriate disposal of assets. The recent Government announcement had created further uncertainty over the future approach.

In questioning and discussion, the following points were noted:

Many Members considered that the asset schedule would be more useful if it included additional information such as market and book values, income generated, capital expenditure and the purpose and strategic value of individual assets.

Members supported the development of a more systematic approach to the management of Council assets, including thoughtful classification of assets and relevant information to support strategic decision-making by officers and Cabinet. Officers advised that bringing information together from existing systems was possible, but that a fully integrated database would require significant time and resources and was not considered feasible in the short term, particularly given the uncertainty around LGR. It was suggested that a proportionate approach should focus on strategically significant and higher-value assets, while considering how a more effective system could be developed over the longer term.

Members also highlighted examples of assets where their purpose or management was unclear and emphasised the need for a more comprehensive, multidimensional asset strategy.

A request to identify the ward that each asset is located was received.

Concern was raised that where a Council asset generated significant revenue from tourism, there could be a perceived conflict between maximising income from the asset and the impact of its use on the local community. It was suggested that greater clarity

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on the revenue generated and the wider community impact would be important should the matter be subject to further challenge.

Officers advised that further information could be provided on individual assets, including capital values, income and the strategic approach to their management. There had been a focus on addressing compliance issues identified through internal audit, alongside work to identify assets for potential disposal.

Officers explained that the disposal of the Hereford property was progressing with a preferred bidder and was expected to be brought to Cabinet for approval to proceed. The other two out-of-district investment properties were being actively marketed. The value achieved for the Hereford property was above its net book value but below the £1 million threshold.

Councillor Jenkinson proposed that Cabinet consider developing a more comprehensive system for classifying and managing Council assets, bringing together information such as value, income, use, costs and future options. He suggested that this would support more informed strategic decisions and improve efficiency, including in the context of LGR. Officers advised that relevant information was currently held across different systems and could be brought together to provide a more comprehensive picture, but that developing a single consolidated database would require significant time and resources.

Recommendation:

To ask officers to identify the capital assets of most strategic value to the Council and provide relevant background information. This should include the district ward in which they are located, current use, capital value and income generation along with additional information as appropriate.

Proposed by Councillor Jon Wareing seconded Councillor Michael Vann

Voting Record

4= For, 1= Abstain, 1=Against

OS.378 **Updates from Gloucestershire County Council Scrutiny Committees**

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Dilys Neill

Councillor Neill was thanked for her HOSC report, which was noted as providing useful information on local health services and supporting communication between health providers and the Council. Members highlighted the position regarding midwifery provision and the potential impact of consolidating services in Gloucester. It was suggested that consideration be given to recruiting midwives to work across the county, including from local hospitals, which could improve access for local mothers and support recruitment and retention.

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Gloucestershire Joint Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Gina Blomefield

The Chair advised that the Panel had held an initial meeting to agree its terms of reference, with a Chair appointed. A draft work plan had been prepared, but that this would be reviewed in light of recent developments.

OS.379 Work Plan and Forward Plan

The Committee Work Plan was noted.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 6.43 pm