



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2 SEPTEMBER 2024
Subject	COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2024-25 QUARTER ONE
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council Email: joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive Email: robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	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 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2024-25 Q1.2. Agree any recommendations it wishes to submit to Cabinet ahead of the meeting on 5 September
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. 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 Q1 include:

Delivering good services

- Works are largely complete for the leasing of the spare office space at Trinity Road, although BT is still trying to resolve a fault in the line. Occupation by Watermoor Point was delayed due to the temporary use of the space for election preparation; however, the space is due to be handed over in July.
- The detailed transition plan, building on the recommendations from the Local Partnerships report, has been finalised and was presented to and approved by Cabinet and Full Council in July.
- The Asset Management Strategy was presented and approved by Cabinet in May. The Council has adopted the strategy and instructed its consultants, Carter Jonas, to review its existing assets in line with the strategy.

Responding to the climate emergency

- On street residential charge point scheme (ORCS) funding has been secured for last tranche of installations for Electric Vehicle Charge Points, with the business case approved at July Cabinet recommending site allocation. Work to prepare for the installations is underway to ensure Distribution Network Operator (DNO) connections can be secured within the required timeframes.



- Terms of reference are currently under development to create a Climate Board.
- Options to optimise the delivery of high-quality retrofit support are currently being explored and considered. A successful Gloucestershire-wide consortium bid to the South West Net Zero Hub (SWNZH) has enabled the Council to employ a retrofit engagement officer. Additionally, the Council is contributing to the development of a Gloucestershire-wide retrofit support offer through the Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG) partnership.
- The partial Local Plan update to prioritise environmental sustainability is ongoing with the public consultation held on the draft Local Plan policies from 1st February to 7th April. Consultation responses are now under review, and further supporting evidence is being gathered for the final version of the plan prior to submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

Delivering Housing

- New Strategic Housing Manager was appointed in May and work has begun exploring alternative models and financing for additionality, along with seeking partnerships to support the Council's ambitions.
- Monitoring of housing needs continues, with recent increases in homelessness across local authorities. Housing is collaborating with Strategic Housing to secure more long-term temporary accommodation and is also working with local businesses to boost short-term options. A potential property in Cirencester is currently under review for suitability.
- The Cotswold Housing First project is praised countywide as a model of success, with outcomes exceeding national averages. The Housing Team is collaborating with Bromford and P3 to maintain this success. Currently, 6 individuals are accommodated, with external funding awarded to P3 for 2 additional spaces, bringing the total to 8, with referrals currently being considered.
- A Planning Application for the zero carbon affordable housing development in Down Ampney was submitted in June.

Supporting communities

- A Town and Parish forum event was originally scheduled for 19th June, but postponed due to General Election and was rescheduled for 16th July with a focus on health interventions.
- The sewage summit took place on 8th July at the Corinium Museum in Cirencester, with all three water companies—Thames Water, Severn Trent Water, and Wessex Water—in attendance, along with the Environment Agency and representatives from Earth Watch. A report on the summit is expected to be presented to the Council in September.



- On going collaboration with Life Cycle has enabled a further 10 new community bike stands to be installed across the District with funding available for a final 14 stands.
- Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) have appointed a new officer to support the flood warden programme with an initial focus on consolidating the scheme, and ensuring registered flood wardens are still active.
- Site meetings have been held with Gloucestershire County Council and Cotswold Lakes Trust to discuss the design details for a new crossing on the Spine Road.
- The Spring Round for Crowdfund Cotswold closed in April with one early submission quickly meeting its target and a further six projects as part of the main round, collectively worth over £110k. Four projects were awarded a total of £23,000 grant, with two deferred. As of 1 July, one of the four has already hit its funding target.
- The 'Getting Connected' courses for digital inclusion have positively impacted over 60 older adults, with notable participation in Bourton on the Water, Fairford, and Tetbury, where attendees have formed social groups and increased digital inclusion.

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.
- A legal agreement between Cotswold District Council and Gloucestershire County Council has been agreed to deliver a programme of activities using grant funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund to help those furthest from the employment market.
- Three UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funded projects are underway. The first project aims to identify and promote businesses as Sustainability Champions. The second project is focused on encouraging the development of new experiences. The third project aims to enhance and add new functionality to the Cotswolds tourism website (www.cotswolds.com).
- The report for the update to the Green Economic Strategy is being finalised and is expected to be presented to Cabinet in October with a draft strategy for consultation, with the aim of bringing a final version to Cabinet in December/January.

2.3 Off target actions of the Corporate Plan behind schedule at the end of Q1 are detailed below. Whilst this report is a retrospective account of progress in Q1, where possible, the current status is also included for assurance.

Delivering good services

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



Q1 update: Following a review of processes and signs currently completed and pending, roll out of a further 71 replacement street signs has now been agreed and a delivery plan is being prepared by Ubico.

Current Status: The delivery plan is ongoing, with necessary checks on underground services required for any civil works as part of health and safety requirements. A meeting is scheduled for early September to review progress.

Responding to the climate emergency

Explore the business cases for the installation of solar panels on Council owned assets.

Update: The installation of solar panels at Trinity Road has commenced with the battery pack and controls having been installed. Scaffolding will be erected in July for the installation of PV panels, which will be completed in phases to limit on site disruption. Terms have provisionally been agreed with New Brewery Arts and a Power Purchasing agreement is being prepared by legal, however, final agreement is not yet in place.

Current Status: The Solar PV and battery installation at Trinity Road is nearly complete and is expected to be commissioned by September, if not sooner.

- 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, with notable progress in Collection Rates, Planning Determination Times, and Gym Memberships. Customer Satisfaction continues to be strong, with the Council topping the Gov Metric league table in May. However, the number of missed bins per 100,000 collections and the percentage of high-risk food premises inspected within target timescales are showing a negative trend.

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (Tracking Well Toward Achieving the Year-End Target. 33.75% collected in Q1)
- Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates Collected (Tracking Well Toward Achieving the Year-End Target. 29.12% collected in Q1)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (4 days against a target of 5 days)
- Customer Satisfaction (99% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (100% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (100% against a target of 70%)



- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (90% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (85% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (21% against a target of 30%)
- Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (91% against a target of 90%)
- Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (29 delivered against a target of 25)
- Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 90%)
- Residual Household Waste per Household (kg) (88.74 against a target of 97)
- Number of gym memberships (3,823 against a target of 3,700)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (113,340 visits against a target of 112,000)

3.2 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (22 days against a target of 20 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (6 days against a target of 4 days)

Although the Council is currently above target for processing times, there has been an improvement compared to the same period last year, with processing times decreasing by approximately 7 days for Council Tax Support New Claims and 6 days for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances.

(Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events however remains well within the target of 5 days.)

The Resolution: Q1 commenced with the usual small backlog of work for changes in circumstances at the end of Q4 due to end-of-year processing, which is expected to be cleared over the next few weeks. The reduction in HB Change applications means that any delay in assessing an application due to outstanding evidence has a more noticeable impact on the average processing days. Additionally, the managed migration of HB to Universal Credit commenced in April, with some minor glitches reported in the system. While the migration was planned in stages, some stages have been brought forward, which will further decrease the number of changes received and may potentially increase processing times.

Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.71% against a target of 0.35%)

The Council has exceeded its target for this quarter, largely due to a significant overpayment identified by officers early in the period. At the time of writing, the overpayment percentage stood at 0.56%. While this figure is gradually decreasing each week, it is anticipated that levels will remain above the target until Q3. Any penalties imposed by the Government for exceeding the target will be based on the end-of-year figures.



The Resolution: To address the issue of overpayments, the service is implementing several key measures. Approximately 20% of the Housing Benefit (HB) caseload is undergoing Quality Assurance checks, with a focus on areas prone to high error rates, such as earnings calculations, to identify and correct errors before they lead to overpayments. Enhanced training and ongoing support are being provided to staff to ensure accurate and efficient processing of HB claims, reducing the likelihood of errors. The service is also refining internal processes to streamline HB assessments and minimise delays, including the implementation of automated systems where possible. Additionally, the Council is actively participating in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Housing Benefit Award Accuracy (HBAA) initiative, which aims to combat fraud and error through close collaboration with the DWP.

The service remains aware of the potential impact of increased workloads on delays in processing HB changes, which could affect HB subsidy. These combined efforts are intended to reduce overpayments due to local authority errors and help ensure that the Council meets its targets in the upcoming quarters.

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (88% against a target of 90%)

In Q1, the Council answered 88% of FOI requests within 20 days, up from 83% in Q4, falling below the national target of 90%. Most FOI requests continue to be received by Development Management and Environmental, Welfare, and Revenue Services. To reduce the number of information requests, the Council is reviewing the information currently available on its website and aims to publish additional guidance and Frequently Asked Questions.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (69% against a target of 95%)

During Q1, The Council completed 9 out of 13 high-risk food inspections within the target timescale.

The Resolution: Despite high-risk work being prioritised, the team experienced resourcing challenges during Q1, resulting in some inspections missing the target deadlines. To address this and enhance overall performance, the target deadline for inspecting high-risk food businesses has been advanced by 28 days. This proactive measure provides management with additional time to address any outstanding inspections before the original deadline, ensuring that all high-risk inspections are carried within the target timescales. To further support the team and mitigate the effects of these resourcing challenges, extra resource has been brought in to assist with the workload. As a result, the previously missed inspections have now been completed.

High-risk work is naturally prioritised, which can have an impact on lower-risk scheduled inspection rates. To improve the management of these inspections, the service has implemented a useful dashboard. This tool is instrumental in monitoring team performance and tracking the progress of lower-risk inspections, ensuring that they are not overlooked despite the focus on higher-priority tasks. With these combined efforts, the service aims to



maintain a balanced approach to inspections, addressing both high- and low-risk areas effectively.

Missed bins per 100,000 Collections (141 against a target of 80)

The Council experienced a notable increase in missed bins in comparison to last quarter and the same period last year.

The Resolution: The rise in missed bins this quarter is primarily due to challenges with Garden Waste collections, which experienced a high number of missed pickups, particularly in June. To address these issues, additional training has been provided for the affected crews, supported by increased supervisory presence, and the optimisation of collection rounds is expected to improve performance.

Furthermore, the recent reorganisation of collection routes, which affected approximately 60% of households, has contributed to the increase in missed bins. Although this reorganisation only impacted five days of QI, it has caused significant disruption as crews adapt to the new routes. The effects of this disruption continued into July and August, resulting in elevated levels of missed collections.

To manage and mitigate these issues, the service has implemented daily stand-up meetings with both the internal team and Ubico. These meetings focus on addressing current problems, tracking performance, and ensuring timely resolution of ongoing issues. As a result of these efforts, the number of missed collections is gradually decreasing. Further improvements are anticipated as crews become more familiar with the new routes and optimisation strategies take effect.

The team remains dedicated to closely monitoring the situation and taking additional steps as needed to ensure reliable and efficient waste collection going forward.

- 3.3 A full performance report is attached at Annex C.
 - 3.4 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. **CABINET**
- 4.1 This report will be reviewed by Cabinet at its meeting on 5 September 2024. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the Cabinet meeting.



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)