

Member Questions for Council – 31 July 2024

Any supplementary questions are noted within the document where applicable

Question	Response
<p>Question 1 from Councillor Jon Wareing to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council (on behalf of Councillor Dale)</p> <p>The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines over-tourism as “the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitor experiences in a negative way”.</p> <p>Does the Cabinet Member responsible for the Economy and Council Transformation agree with me that Bourton-on-the-Water suffers from over-tourism on this basis, and will he commit to ensuring that Bourton can develop an approach to sustainable tourism whilst building a more resilient economy with retail services for the residents of Bourton and the wider North Cotswolds? This should include</p>	<p>I share Cllr Wareing’s concerns about over-tourism in Bourton-on-the-Water.</p> <p>Bourton-on-the-Water is a popular destination, evidenced by high visitor footfall. While we lack specific survey data on perceptions of over-tourism, we acknowledge the strong sentiments of residents regarding the negative impacts on their quality of life due to excessive visitor numbers.</p> <p>Balancing the needs of local businesses benefiting from tourism with the quality of life of residents is crucial. Our administration has taken initial steps to address this issue, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism Levy on Parking: We have introduced a tourism levy on car parking in Bourton-on-the-Water, specifically allocated for initiatives to mitigate the impact of tourism on the village. This is a unique measure within our district. 2. Visitor Dispersal and Public Transport Promotion: Our Tourism Team actively discourages additional visitors to Bourton and promotes other parts of the district to spread the visitor load. We also

prioritising parking for residents and looking to support parking for visitor traffic on the periphery of the village.

encourage the use of public transport whenever possible.

However, more comprehensive measures are needed. To begin addressing these challenges, I will ask the Chief Executive to arrange a meeting with you to discuss and develop effective strategies for Bourton-on-the-Water.

Potential Approaches and Ongoing Initiatives:

- **Local Plan Review:** The ongoing review of our local plan may offer opportunities to influence planning policy in favour of sustainable tourism.
- **Parking Strategy Review:** Cotswold District Council is reviewing its parking strategy to optimize the use of council assets for the benefit of both residents and the local economy. Input from residents, town and parish councils, and visitors has been sought to address immediate and long-term needs.

Cllr Paul Hodgkinson, who is leading this effort, is well-versed in the issues facing Bourton as the local county councillor. Collaboration with Gloucestershire County Council will be essential in addressing broader parking issues.

While there is no simple solution to the problems outlined by Cllr Wareing, Cotswold District Council is committed to supporting Bourton-on-the-Water in its pursuit of sustainable tourism and a more resilient local

economy.

Question 2 from Councillor Dilys Neill to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services

Here is a quote from the submitted Neighbourhood development plan for Stow & The Swells

MAIN PLANNING ISSUES

- During the mid Twentieth Century a substantial amount of social housing was built in two major

Thank you, Cllr Neill, for raising these crucial issues affecting Stow. The Council is committed to addressing the challenges of providing genuinely affordable housing, particularly social rented housing.

National policies like Right to Buy, and the lack of restrictions on second home ownership and short-term lets, have significantly reduced the availability of family housing in Stow, making remaining properties unaffordable for many, especially young families.

developments – King Georges Field and the Park estate. A substantial number of these properties have passed into private hands under the Right to Buy and have not been replaced. There is only limited turnover in the remaining social housing.

- Stow, a compact hilltop community within the AONB, has a tight development boundary. Most developments in recent years have been minor infill developments within the development boundary. Stow's attractiveness has resulted in high prices well beyond the reach of almost all local residents. There has been an increase in the number of second homes. The private rented sector has seen a significant shift towards holiday lettings pricing local people out of that market also. This has forced many young people away from Stow leaving an increasingly ageing population.

- Stow's working age population has fallen over the last decade and the Primary School rolls have declined with an increasing number of pupils coming from outside the parish. Only two significant developments have been permitted outside the development boundary both of which have been restricted to

Stow's hilltop location and its designation within the AONB present significant challenges for new housing development due to national policies aimed at protecting the landscape. However, where opportunities arise, the Council is dedicated to capitalizing on them to benefit the community.

Steps Taken and Planned Initiatives:

1. **Housing Needs Survey:** An independent housing needs survey for the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) identifies a need for 37 affordable homes in Stow, including 17 for social rent, 5 for affordable rent, and 15 for affordable ownership by 2031.
2. **New Affordable Housing Approvals:** In December 2023, planning permission was granted for 37 affordable homes at Land north of Oddington Road, with 22 affordable rented and 15 shared ownership homes. Additionally, land for 15 co-housing units is earmarked for the Stow Community Land Trust.
3. **Recent Developments:** In July 2022, 18 energy-efficient social rent homes were completed at Chamberlayne Close, replacing 16 outdated sheltered housing units.

retirement living. Taken together the McCarthy and Stone development north of Tesco and the Brio development on Stow Hill (for which approval was given on appeal) will add some 200 elderly residents to

Stow's population (currently about 1900).

- There is a strong case for seeking to improve Stow's sustainability by providing a significant number of houses that local people, people of working age and essential workers can afford. This can only be achieved by substantial development of affordable housing, primarily social rented, outside the current development boundary.

Our primary school received an impressive Ofsted report last month, yet the numbers on role have fallen to less than 100, they can take 140 children. Last year, they had to lose a teacher & unless something is done to allow more families to live in Stow, the viability of the school is threatened.

In addition to the shortage of genuinely affordable housing, the neighbourhood plan sight to address the

4. **Partial Local Plan Update:** The ongoing update includes policies to lower the development size threshold for affordable housing contributions and increase the percentage requirement for affordable housing within developments. It also aims to increase the availability of smaller, more affordable housing types.
5. **Local Plan Policy S13 Review:** The Council is considering further updates to emphasize Stow's housing and community needs, highlighting the necessity for more affordable homes.
6. **Development Strategy and Site Allocation Plan:** Extending the Local Plan period to 2041, this strategy aims to identify additional land for housing. For example, the site at 'Land adjoining Tall Trees, Oddington Road' is under consideration for development, potentially including affordable homes.
7. **Exploring Nearby Options:** The Council is exploring affordable housing developments in accessible nearby locations, such as Moreton-in-Marsh, to support Stow's housing needs.

lack of employment opportunities in Stow & parking.

Our Market Square the jewel in the crown of Stow's built development is spoilt by the fact that it is effectively a large car park.

The neighbourhood plan's proposal for a strategic site for housing, a car park & a community hub which included employment opportunities was turned down by the inspector. I have been the Ward Councillor for Stow since 2016, & have been told by members of this administration as well as the previous administration & officers from the forward planning team that these concerns, particularly housing, should be a priority for this council. Yet year by year, under the SHELAA process, sites put forward around Stow are turned down.

My question to the Cabinet member with the responsibility for the local plan is what are you going to do to support the residents of Stow in terms of allowing more affordable, & in particular social, housing to be built?

8. **New Housing Strategy:** This comprehensive strategy addresses housing affordability by increasing genuinely affordable housing and improving energy and water efficiency to reduce household bills.

9. **Support for the NDP:** The Council has actively supported the Stow and the Swells NDP, despite challenges in securing major development sites. Council officers remain committed to assisting the NDP, which will soon proceed to a referendum.

10. **Advocacy and Policy Changes:** The Council has actively participated in national policy consultations, advocating for changes to address local issues. This includes introducing a 100% council tax premium on substantially furnished second homes.

The Council will continue to explore all available options and take necessary actions to support the residents of Stow by enabling the development of more affordable and social housing.

I'd welcome a meeting with you and Alan Hope, the Council's new Strategic Housing Manager, to look at how we identify and deliver more social rented and other affordable homes in Stow.

Question 3 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Mike Evely, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Please set out the number of missed refuse and recycling collections, broken down by ward, since the new refuse collection timetable was introduced on 24 June 2024.

It would be helpful to have a percentage figure as well as the number.

Please find below a list of the number of missed containers per ward for the first five weeks of the new collection cycle. The number of containers missed has continued to fall over this period.

We recognise that there has been a small percentage of missed collections and apologise to any residents affected for the inconvenience that this may cause. We are working with UBICO to ensure mitigation is put in place to avoid problems going forward.

Containers missed by week

Count of Ward	Column Labels							
Row Labels	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Grand Total	No Properties	
Abbey	142	45	25	5	43	260	1273	
Blockley	15	8	9	10	21	63	1393	
Bourton Vale	73	14	58	12	39	196	1373	
Bourton Village	40	11	85	2	51	189	1606	
Campden and Vale	99	14	55	13	58	239	3113	
Chedworth and Churn Valley	64	105	17	46	17	249	1146	
Chesterton	16	1	8	7	5	37	1053	
Coln Valley	55	16	10	22	27	130	1270	
Ermin	209	220	87	108	8	632	1205	
Fairford North	29	5	37		27	98	1131	
Fosseridge		54	1	19	3	77	1393	
Four Acres	11	1	6		11	29	963	
Grumbolds Ash with Avening	23	83	53	53	46	258	1195	
Kemble	9	48	6	12	2	77	1389	
Lechlade, Kempsford and Fairford South	101	20	57	10	21	209	3018	
Moreton East	10	38	2	36	2	88	1602	
Moreton West	1	94		51	1	147	1361	
New Mills	8	2	7	1	13	31	1093	
Northleach	20	49	2	43	9	123	1442	
Sandywell	61	50	88	113	2	314	1274	
Siddington and Cerney Rural	7	32	4	19	3	65	1555	
South Cerney Village	1	50	1	13		65	1255	
St Michael's	87	1	84		23	195	1417	
Stow	51	22	24	13	33	143	1594	
Stratton	72	115	23	29	1	240	1201	
Tetbury East and Rural	9	64	63	35	19	190	1454	
Tetbury Town	5	4	5		1	15	1166	
Tetbury with Upton	1	12	30	35	42	120	1107	
The Ampneys and Hampton	32	33	3	65	8	141	1263	
The Beeches	20		4		1	25	1256	
The Rissingtons	1	8		17	1	27	1132	
Watermoor	69	2	44	4	23	142	1507	
Grand Total	1341	1221	898	793	561	4814	45200	

Containers missed by week

Ward	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Abbey	11.15%	3.53%	1.96%	0.39%	3.38%
Blockley	1.08%	0.57%	0.65%	0.72%	1.51%
Bourton Vale	5.32%	1.02%	4.22%	0.87%	2.84%
Bourton Village	2.49%	0.68%	5.29%	0.12%	3.18%
Campden and Vale	3.18%	0.45%	1.77%	0.42%	1.86%
Chedworth and Churn Valley	5.58%	9.16%	1.48%	4.01%	1.48%
Chesterton	1.52%	0.09%	0.76%	0.66%	0.47%
Coln Valley	4.33%	1.26%	0.79%	1.73%	2.13%
Ermin	17.34%	18.26%	7.22%	8.96%	0.66%
Fairford North	2.56%	0.44%	3.27%	0.00%	2.39%
Fosseridge	0.00%	3.88%	0.07%	1.36%	0.22%
Four Acres	1.14%	0.10%	0.62%	0.00%	1.14%
Grumbolds Ash with Avening	1.92%	6.95%	4.44%	4.44%	3.85%
Kemble	0.65%	3.46%	0.43%	0.86%	0.14%
Lechlade, Kempsford and Fairford South	3.35%	0.66%	1.89%	0.33%	0.70%
Moreton East	0.62%	2.37%	0.12%	2.25%	0.12%
Moreton West	0.07%	6.91%	0.00%	3.75%	0.07%
New Mills	0.73%	0.18%	0.64%	0.09%	1.19%
Northleach	1.39%	3.40%	0.14%	2.98%	0.62%
Sandywell	4.79%	3.92%	6.91%	8.87%	0.16%
Siddington and Cerney Rural	0.45%	2.06%	0.26%	1.22%	0.19%
South Cerney Village	0.08%	3.98%	0.08%	1.04%	0.00%
St Michael's	6.14%	0.07%	5.93%	0.00%	1.62%
Stow	3.20%	1.38%	1.51%	0.82%	2.07%
Stratton	6.00%	9.58%	1.92%	2.41%	0.08%
Tetbury East and Rural	0.62%	4.40%	4.33%	2.41%	1.31%
Tetbury Town	0.43%	0.34%	0.43%	0.00%	0.09%
Tetbury with Upton	0.09%	1.08%	2.71%	3.16%	3.79%
The Ampneys and Hampton	2.53%	2.61%	0.24%	5.15%	0.63%
The Beeches	1.59%	0.00%	0.32%	0.00%	0.08%
The Rissingtons	0.09%	0.71%	0.00%	1.50%	0.09%
Watermoor	4.58%	0.13%	2.92%	0.27%	1.53%
Total	2.97%	2.70%	1.99%	1.75%	1.24%

Question 4 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

Please could the Leader confirm when he expects to meet the new Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government, and the main issues he intends to raise in any meeting?

I haven't yet met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government however I hope to in the next few months as part of my role at the Local Government Association.

Issues I intend to raise are:

- Local government funding - the sector and our council needs certainty about how much money we'll be getting from Government over the next few years. I'll be pressing for a 'multi-year funding settlement' so we're able to put our medium-term financial strategy on a firmer footing.
- Affordable housing – many councils like Cotswold want to deliver more affordable housing to help tackle the affordable housing crisis. I'll ask for more power and resources to deliver social rented homes, particularly support for council's that don't have any housing stock.
- Devolution – I'll seek a commitment from Government to work with both county and district councils as equal partners whose expertise, local networks and knowledge – for example supporting local economic development, housing and planning - are key to a successful outcome, and for district councils to have a seat at the table of Combined County Authorities and be constituent members of them.

<p>Question 5 from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Mike Evey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Has the Council and UBICO investigated the use of HVO fuels for its refuse collection fleet?</p>	<p>The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has a desire to transition the waste fleet to zero carbon energy by 2030. HVO is a potential way of facilitating the transition.</p> <p>Cllr Evey and Cllr McKeown have held meetings with officers and are working to explore ways to replace our current fleet with zero carbon alternatives.</p> <p>The waste collection fleet currently use standard forecourts to refuel vehicles, therefore HVO (Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil) is not a viable option. Officers are reviewing whether a fuel tank can be used at the depot for refuelling and a business case will then be prepared on this.</p> <p>All vehicles on the waste fleet can use HVO as an alternative fuel without implication for the vehicles' performance or warranty but the cost of HVO has been significantly more expensive than standard diesel, although there are significant environmental benefits, principally including a reduction in carbon emitted from vehicle tailpipes.</p>

<p>Supplementary Question from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Mike Every, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Councillor Stowe recognised the financial case for HVO fuel use was not clear, but emphasised that other local authorities had made the switch for the environmental benefits that their use brings. Councillor Stowe then asked:</p> <p>Given that the Council declared a climate emergency several years ago, why has it taken the administration 5 years to investigate this, and adopt or discount the idea?</p>	<p>Councillor Every noted that he could only speak to his time as the portfolio holder for waste and recycling services when he took over 12 months ago. It was highlighted he was made aware of and had discussions with the relevant officers. It was noted that some Councils had taken on HVO fuels but it was noted that HVO fuels do have significant financial implications in order to move to this fuel and to operate it with the vehicles. It was outlined that whilst the administration was open to the idea, the aim was to eventually move to a 100% zero emission electric fleet whilst balancing this against the financial pressures the Council is facing.</p>
<p>Question 6 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council</p> <p>Several months ago, I asked a supplementary question about Cotswold News to which I did not receive an answer. Given the Administration’s pledge to be ‘green to the core’ please could you confirm that the latest issue of Cotswold News was produced on 100% Recycled Material and the paper and production were</p>	<p>The paper used to produce Cotswold News is ‘FSC certified’ and carbon balanced. This ensures that the paper used is sustainably produced and minimises the impact on the environment.</p> <p>The advice we have received is that this is an environmentally sustainable solution while also providing the required quality for the publication at an affordable cost.</p>

<p>Carbon Balanced to ensure the environmental impacts of the publication were kept to a minimum?</p>	
<p>Supplementary from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council</p> <p>Councillor Fowles noted that FSC certified whilst being sustainably sourced is not 100% recycled paper which is the most environmentally friendly producing this. The supplementary question was in two parts:</p> <p>At what cost is the ambition of being 'green to the core' and whether the most sustainable model would be a digital subscriber based model for Cotswold News as opposed to the current model?</p>	<p>Councillor Joe Harris responded by saying that he didn't agree with assertions about the current model as the magazine was about reaching the most vulnerable people who can't access digital channels which can't be targeted. It was noted that communications from the Council needed to be on multiple fronts. It was stated that the Council would explore sustainable paper options but the financial costs for any change needed to be examined carefully before proceeding.</p>
<p>Question 7 from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p> <p>Following recent news in the National Press that CDC has pledged to "identify suitable areas for wind energy development" in the district, given the constraints on</p>	<p>A Renewable Energy Strategy is being prepared that will provide the evidence base for the identification in the Local Plan of broadly suitable areas for renewable energy development.</p> <p>The Strategy and the Local Plan will have full regard to the constraints on such development. Planning for renewable energy in Cotswold District will assist in delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. Preparation of a</p>

<p>development across much of the district as evidenced in the ongoing Local Plan update, where do you foresee these Wind Farms being built?</p>	<p>Renewable Energy Strategy as part of a Local Plan is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, para 160).</p>
<p>Supplementary from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p> <p>Councillor Stowe noted that policy CC25B2.35 within the draft Local Plan aimed to have a minimum target of 21% of the District’s electricity consumption from renewable generation. His question was:</p> <p>Please can you confirm how much land is required to meet this target by either solar or wind energy?</p>	<p>Councillor Layton noted that she did not have that information to hand but would write him with an answer. It was noted that renewable energy generation would need to take place in the right location in order to manage them and to make them as efficient as possible. It was also highlighted that the UK Government’s policy change had only just be announced and officer’s were still processing the impact of the Council’s draft Local Plan policies.</p>
<p>Written Response to Councillor Stowe sent on 27 August 2024 by email.</p> <p>I am sorry that there has been a little delay in coming back to you with an answer to your question to Council with regards to wind turbines. Officers had to do some research and ask questions to consultants. The response from the Forward Planning Team can be found below:</p>	

In response to Cllr Stowe's question regarding the amount of land required to accommodate the equipment needed to generate at least 20% of the District's energy requirements from wind and solar energy by 2041, it is not possible to respond in quantifiable terms to the question posed.

The reasons are that it is not possible to predict/forecast the total amount of equipment required as, for example, different sizes of turbines or solar PV arrays take up a different site area and it is not known in what size the future equipment would come forward. In addition, some equipment may be placed on existing buildings, the size of the equipment required could change over time as technology becomes more efficient and it might be that alternative technologies replace the need for wind and/or solar energy.

If there is anything further Cllr Stowe would like to ask, officers would be happy to assist.

Question 8 from Councillor Jeremy Theyer to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

At a recent Audit and Governance Committee meeting, concerns were raised around Gas Safe and Electrical Safety Tests on some CDC buildings. Please can you confirm the Council has robust systems in place to ensure these tests are up to date and recorded in line with Health & Safety legislation to ensure our buildings are safe for visitors and staff?

Since the audit the council's property team has started using the Uniform software system to record all property information including compliance data such as when gas and electrical safety checks were last undertaken, when the next tests are due and what the outcomes and actions (where required) of those tests were. The system will be used to trigger alerts several months before routine tests are due so these are not missed. The Audit team are being kept informed of progress against the audit recommendations.

<p>Supplementary Question from Councillor Theyer to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Councillor Theyer asked whether Council properties were up to EPC standards and whether there was plan to ensure all properties were compliant with any future regulations?</p>	<p>Councillor Evemy stated that a written response would be provided as the information was not available to him.</p>
<p>Written Response to Councillor Theyer sent by email on Friday 2 August 2024</p> <p>All of the Council's tenanted properties comply to the current legislation. The expectation is that the Government will enact further legislation to set a higher standard of B by 2030, but this has so far not emerged. The Council has approved an Asset Management Strategy under which we are reviewing properties based on a number of factors including their EPC and carbon efficiency.</p>	
<p>Question 9 from Councillor Julia Judd to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>In March this year we were told that a number of interested parties had been in touch in response to</p>	<p>Unfortunately, none of the interested parties came forward with a viable scheme.</p> <p>There is an exempt report on this Council agenda considering the Old Station.</p>

<p>the 'Call for Interest' regarding the Council owned Old Station building.</p> <p>At least £150,000 has already been spent to address urgent repairs and the building is in a poor state of repair, it would be prudent therefore to find a way forward to progress matters as soon as possible in order to avoid further expense.</p> <p>Have any of the interested parties come forward with a viable scheme which can be taken forward?</p>	
<p>Question 10 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>At a recent Cabinet meeting a decision was taken to appoint an external company to market the space at Trinity Road that had been made available for commercial letting. What progress has been made?</p>	<p>The Council is entering into a management agreement with local company Watermoor Point who provide serviced office accommodation.</p> <p>The space has been redecorated and has now been fitted out with desks, chairs and ICT. It is anticipated that the Management Agreement will be finalised by the first week in August and tenants will then start to move into the building.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p>	<p>Councillor Evemy noted that this was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when the report was presented to them around the</p>

<p>Councillor Blomefield asked a supplementary question what the difference was in expected income from the letting of office space using Watermoor Point against the previous budgeted figure from the original proposal in March 2022?</p>	<p>change in financial assumptions. But it was noted that he would provide a written answer to the question.</p>
<p>Written Response sent to Councillor Blomefield by email on Friday 2 August 2024</p> <p>The February 2024 Cabinet report provides the answer to your question in paragraph 6.4:</p> <p>“The projected income is lower than that originally estimated when the business case for releasing office space was prepared. This is due to the broader economic picture, the changing rental market over the last 18 months and the fact attempts to secure one or two larger tenants to enable direct letting of all available space, has not been successful. The MTFS includes income/savings of £151,000/year. Whereas service office accommodation is projected to deliver in the region of £114,882/year.”</p>	
<p>Question 11 from Councillor Daryl Corps to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p> <p>What is the status of the Moreton-in-Marsh Working Group set-up in respect to the Local Plan update?</p>	<p>It is intended to set up the Moreton-in-Marsh Working Group following a Moreton Planning for Real event, which is being organised for late September or early October 2024.</p> <p>The Planning for Real event will assist in the selection of the Working Group members.</p>
<p>Supplementary from Councillor Daryl Corps to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p>	<p>Councillor Layton noted that there was a list drawn up of individuals the Council wished to invite to the event that represented a range of</p>

<p>Councillor Corps asked what was the criteria for selecting residents to be on the Moreton-in-Marsh Working Group and to attend the Planning for Real event? It was noted that the Working Group needed to be a broad mix of individuals.</p>	<p>stakeholders to overseen by GRCC. It was highlighted that the group would oversee the work being undertaken.</p>
<p>Question 12 from Councillor Tony Slater to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p> <p>The CDC Local Enforcement Plan 2022 states that “Planning Enforcement is a vital function of the Council’s overall planning strategy and service. It underpins the planning decisions and policies of the Council, while helping protect the district’s built and natural environments.”</p> <p>Although performance against targets is not included in the quarterly performance figures, it is clear, and acknowledged on the CDC website, that despite their best efforts the enforcement team faces huge challenges in providing an effective service across the district due to a critical lack of resources.</p>	<p>We will be reviewing the Local Enforcement Plan in Autumn 2024 which will include considering whether quarterly reporting on performance within the Planning Enforcement Team would be appropriate and if so which measures should be included.</p> <p>It is widely recognised that there is currently a national shortage of trained and experienced Planning Enforcement Officers. It is hoped as the member recognises that returning planning and planning enforcement to the Council, will aid recruitment and retention. In addition, the Council has is taking the opportunity to support career development from within, that will hopefully provide the next generation of planning enforcement officers.</p>

<p>It is acknowledged that the transition of Publica back to CDC has the potential to attract suitable candidates, but this in itself will not resolve the issue.</p> <p>Please can you advise what actions the administration is taking locally to resolve the shortage of skilled staff in the department and will you pledge to include statistical information in the quarterly performance report against the published targets in the Enforcement Plan?</p>	
<p>Supplementary from Councillor Tony Slater to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p> <p>The initial signs for a long term solution was welcomed. It was noted in 2022 that Councillor Judd provided details around the Army Veterans Charity and the skills that could be offered to the enforcement role. It was noted that this could be a good source for future employees for these positions. The question was:</p>	<p>Councillor Layton welcomed the idea and said she would look at the details of any proposal sent to her carefully.</p>

<p>Would Councillor Layton like the details of this proposal to look at this option for recruitment?</p>	
<p>Question 13 from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p> <p>In April, CDC introduced a new planning protocol with the intention of making the process more efficient so decisions could be made in most cases within the statutory six-week period. As part of this process, pro forma Call Ins were introduced whereby a ward member could call in an application early in the process if they felt there might be serious concerns. This pro forma Call In could be annulled later if these concerns were found to be unwarranted or addressed by the applicant.</p> <p>As Members we received a Briefing on this in April and were told that Town and Parish Councils would shortly also be given training on the new protocol so that they understood the importance of examining planning applications as soon as possible after</p>	<p>A point of clarification is that the statutory timeframe to determine planning applications is 8 weeks, 13 weeks or 16 weeks respectively. Other planning related applications, notifications and prior approvals have different statutory determination periods of 8 weeks or less and most of these are not subject to the call-in process.</p> <p>It is important to recognise that the call-in procedure is for District Councillors to request an application be considered by the Review Panel as to whether it would be appropriate to be considered by the Planning and Licensing Committee.</p> <p>Town and Parish Councils are notified of and consulted on every application in their area that the District Council receives and can submit their comments to be considered as part of the assessment of the individual application. There has been no change to the consultation process for Town and Parish Councils.</p> <p>Town and Parish are not able to call in planning applications, it is Ward Members who are to do so and must submit their request within 28 days of the application being valid. This is a longer period for Ward Members to consider whether they wish to call in an application than the former process</p>

<p>validation and quickly raising any concerns they might have with their ward councillor.</p> <p>As far as I am aware from the Town and Parish Councils in my area, they have not been invited to attend training on the new protocol yet. Planning is a core service provided by CDC and Town and Parish Councils have an important role to play in assessing planning applications.</p> <p>When do you plan to provide this important training on the new planning protocol to the Town and Parish Councils?</p>	<p>which gave only 7 days and there are now two meetings of the Review Panel each month rather than one previously.</p> <p>A presentation to Town and Parish Councils could be scheduled for early Autumn 2024 if there is sufficient interest.</p>
<p>Supplementary from Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services</p> <p>It was noted that engagement with Town and Parish Councils was valued by the administration. Please could assurance be given that Town and Parish Councils would be provided training on the Planning Protocol as important sources of knowledge in the District to spot any issues arising?</p>	<p>Councillor Layton stated that there wasn't certainty about the amount of interest for training. It was highlighted that Members would now have 28 days to respond to planning applications. It was noted that Town and Parish Forums could be used to discuss the Planning Protocol.</p>

Question 14 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council

During the recent General Election, the North Cotswold Conservatives received a number of complaints from voters who had applied for postal votes and found that their packs did not include ballot papers. This was immediately reported to the CDC elections office who stated that the packs had been collated by hand and that there were no omissions. Whilst we don't wish to criticise the highly professional organisation of the election by the Elections department there is always the chance of human error. That said, we were instructed to tell postal voters to return their postal vote packs and new ones would be issued. The Liberal Democrat candidate Cllr Hodgkinson stated on social media that he was also aware of others who had reported problems and that there should be a review carried out. Given it is of paramount importance to get the process 100% accurate, would the leader support a cross-party review into the postal voting process?

At the Parliamentary election, around 28,000 postal votes were issued across the two constituencies, North Cotswolds and South Cotswolds and around 90% of these were returned.

When preparing postal packs for issue, the team receive printed packs with the postal vote statement and return envelopes in them. The ballot paper is then added to the pack by hand. Around 70 staff working in pairs are given small batches of around 150 packs to issue. Each batch is issued and checked before being sealed. The packs are then issued to Royal Mail for delivery.

Unfortunately, some people mislay their ballot papers when opening the pack.

When this happens, we ask them to return the whole pack to us for a replacement to be issued. Postal vote replacements were issued for a number of reasons including packs which didn't arrive, packs which were spoilt in some way by the electorate and those where the ballot paper had been mislaid.

Where electors contacted the team, they were given instructions on the process for obtaining a replacement. In total around 100 replacement packs were issued across the two constituencies – this is a similar figure to previous Parliamentary elections.

	<p>For the reasons outlined above I don't believe there is need for a cross-party review into the postal voting process nor do I believe it would be appropriate.</p>
<p>Supplementary from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council</p> <p>Councillor Fowles noted that it was a subject of interest to Members, and it wasn't seen as harmful to examine this as part of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group. It was noted that there were upcoming elections in 2025, this would become important with the differences in votes. It was highlighted that review in processes would potentially help make sure that people check their ballot packs. Councillor Folwes asked if the issue could be taken to a Task and Finish Group?</p>	<p>Councillor Joe Harris said no and emphasised that Members should not get involved in the administration of the working of elections. It was noted that in the event there were significant issues, these needed to be investigated by officers rather than Members. It was stated that officers weren't aware of significant issues. It was emphasised that residents would need to report to the Elections Team if they don't receive a ballot paper.</p> <p>The Chief Executive also provided a reply on the question. The Chief Executive provided assurance to Members that the team look incredibly carefully at the packs going out and was confident in the processes being carried out by staff. Therefore it was felt that a review was not a good use of resources.</p>
<p>Question 15 from Councillor Andrew Maclean to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability</p>	<p>No, I do not believe the Climate Action Scorecard is a fair reflection of CDC's performance. While we certainly have room for improvement, the Council has been actively delivering projects that contribute significantly to</p>

(Submitted after the deadline for a guaranteed written response before the meeting)

Climate Emergency UK (CE UK) was set up in response to the climate emergency declarations that councils started making from the end of 2018. CE UK began by collecting these declarations, and the Climate Action Plans that followed, on its website. They published the Council Climate Plan Scorecards in January 2022, measuring the strength of councils' written climate action plans.

CE UK have created a Climate Action Plan Explorer (CAPE) and the Climate Action Plan Checklist with the support of Friends of the Earth, Ashden, the Centre for Alternative Technology and APSE Energy. This outlines the elements of a strong Climate Action Plan and highlights best practice from councils all over the world. Using CAPE and the Checklist, CE UK assessed the quality of all UK councils' written climate action plans.

CE UK hope that the Council Climate Action Scorecards will:

carbon reduction since the Liberal Democrat administration took over in 2019.

The Scorecard assessment is conducted by volunteer researchers, meaning if our actions and projects are not easily identifiable on the Council's website, the scores may not accurately reflect all our activities.

Earlier this year the Council Leader, via the Local Government Association, met with a representative from Climate Emergency UK and raised concerns about their mechanism for compiling the data.

At this meeting the CEUK representative recognised that the way they compile data can understate the efforts of many councils.

Many councils comparable to Cotswold District Council raised similar concerns.

Notwithstanding this, we are addressing this issue by compiling comprehensive responses to all the questions that the Council will be scored against and will publish this information on our website under [Climate action - Cotswold District Council](#) to facilitate easy access for researchers and residents.

- Effectively hold councils to account on their claimed climate action and provides credible and transparent data on council climate action in the UK.
- Allow councils to use the results of the Council Climate Action Scorecards to improve their current Climate Action Plans and implement effective policies to help them reach net-zero in a just way within their current constraints.

Unfortunately CDC is not one of the best performing councils with a score of only 24% with 3 areas of particular concern: Transport (2%), Planning and Land Use (8%) and Biodiversity (0%).

Would you agree that the Scorecard is an accurate reflection of the progress we have made towards achieving our climate emergency goals? Have you got any firm plans in place that would make a significant difference to this score? And most importantly what can we learn from this Scorecard that will help us improve our performance in achieving our goals in responding to the Climate Emergency?

There is a lot of positive activity being undertaken by the Council to address the Climate Emergency:

1. **Cotswold Climate Investment:** Raised £500,000, a model of best practice I've presented at Climate Emergency UK events.
2. **NetZero Carbon Toolkit:** Published practical guidance for house builders, architects, and homeowners to achieve net-zero carbon homes, covering steps from pre-planning to construction, including retrofitting advice - [How to achieve net zero carbon homes - Cotswold District Council](#)
3. **EV Charging Infrastructure:** We've rolled out EV chargers to support EV adoption and secured additional grant funding this year to expand this network.
4. **Solar Panels and Batteries Installation:** Installed on Trinity Road, saving taxpayers over £40,000 annually and reducing our carbon footprint by over 30 tonnes a year.
5. **Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme:** Received over £1.2M in funding used to fit heat pumps and energy efficiency measures, such as heat recovery systems and LED lighting, to leisure centres and

council buildings.

6. **Retrofit Program:** Secured funding from the Southwest NetZero Hub in collaboration with Cheltenham Borough Council, Forest of Dean District Council, and Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, which I chair. The program, launching this autumn, includes hiring a Retrofit Officer to educate and encourage the community to retrofit homes with heat pumps, solar panels, and insulation.
7. **Warm and Well Partnership:** Providing free energy advice and access to funding for retrofitting low-income, inefficient homes to reduce energy costs and carbon footprints - [Warm and Well - Cotswold District Council](#)
8. **Local Plan Revision:** A key part of our revised local plan work is to introduce new planning policies aimed at reducing CO2 emissions and energy costs by promoting improved development planning and more efficient, fossil fuel-free buildings. Something the previous Tory government took little action on.
9. **Climate Board:** Establishing the Climate Board to drive action across all portfolio areas.

- 10. **Cotswold Climate Action Network:** Recently set up to increase public engagement and action, with more details to be announced shortly.
- 11. **Cotswold Home Solar:** Launched last year to promote the uptake of solar panels and batteries in Cotswold homes - [Cotswold Home Solar - Cotswold District Council](#)
- 12. **New Web Pages:** Creating web pages to detail our climate actions for Climate Emergency UK and residents, alongside a Climate Action Guide for residents and businesses on how to reduce their CO2 footprint and energy costs.
- 13. **Waste Fleet Transition:** Working with UBICO to transition our waste fleet to electric vehicles before 2030, addressing our biggest source of council emissions.

I am confident that the new climate scorecard marking starting this month will reflect our ongoing efforts more accurately. Our improved organisation, significant actions and clear communication of our activities should significantly enhance our score.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Andrew Maclean to Councillor Mike McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability

Councillor McKeown stated that he would provide a written response on the details mentioned but agreed with the concept of sustainable transport of projects. It was noted that the Council was working with Gloucestershire

<p>Councillor Maclean welcomed the changes to the website. It was noted that there was a low score particularly in the area of sustainable transport. It was noted that the decommissioned railway line between Bourton and Kingham had a study awaiting sign-off for use as a recreational path. Councillor Maclean asked if action could be taken fast so that sustainable transport options could put into place as soon as funds become available?</p>	<p>County Council to promote other projects like a Kemble to Cirencester Cycle Path which would help delivery in this area.</p>
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Written Response sent by email to Councillor Maclean on 5 August 2024

Cotswold District Council (CDC) has received the necessary funds for the Bourton to Kingham Cycleway Feasibility Study from Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), Great Western Railway (GWR), and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Feasibility Study is being undertaken by Sustrans. The invoice from Sustrans will be paid on Tuesday 13th August and will arrive in their bank account no later than Thursday 16th August. Sustrans have been kept up to date with progress with paying the invoice. The Feasibility Study is already at an advanced draft stage. CDC's former Sustainable Transport Lead, who used to work on this project, has offered to volunteer her time to provide feedback on the draft Feasibility Study.