



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 5 DECEMBER 2024
Subject	COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2024-25 QUARTER TWO
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 Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2024-25 Q2.
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 Q2 include:

Delivering good services

- The detailed transition plan, building on the recommendations from the Local Partnerships report, was presented to and approved by Cabinet and Full Council in July. The formal consultation process for employees included in Phase 1 began in September, with employees transferred to Council employment effective from 1st November.
- Works are complete for the leasing of the spare office space at Trinity Road, following a short delay the first tenant has moved in. Regular meetings will now take place between S.151, Assistant Director, Estates team and Watermoor Point to monitor and manage onboarding of new tenants and income against projections.
- The Adopted Asset Management Strategy is now being actively used to consider assets. A report was presented to Cabinet in May, seeking approval for the disposal of Bourton VIC, which has since been marketed, with offers received. In July, Asset Management Plans (AMPs) were submitted with a report to Cabinet and then to



Council, recommending the disposal of the Memorial Cottages and Old Station on Sheep Street, Cirencester. Both properties are now on the market. Additionally, an AMP is currently being prepared for properties on Dyer Street, Cirencester.

Responding to the climate emergency

- Cabinet approved the proposed delivery and associated costs for the Electric Vehicle Charge Point (EVCP) project, and the Council has now entered into a contract with Connected Kerb to install EVCPs at five car parks in Tetbury, Cirencester, Stow-on-the-Wold, and Moreton-in-Marsh. A detailed delivery plan from Connected Kerb is currently awaited. Additionally, the Portfolio Holder and officers met with Government representatives to request extended delivery timelines and funding into 2025/26, aiming to enable EVCP installations at sites with specific constraints that cannot be addressed within the current March 2025 deadline.
- Initial meetings have been held with representatives of all council services to inform terms of reference development for the Climate Board and identify opportunities for carbon reduction which will feed into an action plan.
- Solar PV has been installed on the Council offices at Trinity Road. The business case has been agreed and offer made to New Brewery Arts for solar PV installation. A decision from New Brewery Arts is pending with no further action required by the Council at this stage. If the power purchasing agreement proposal is accepted, the installation work will proceed promptly.
- The Cotswold Home Solar initiative continues to be actively promoted and delivered, with 17 homes already equipped with solar panels and 20 more having paid deposits. Through this scheme, residents are projected to save nearly £450,000 district-wide by installing energy-efficient measures in their homes.
- An externally funded Retrofit Engagement Officer has been appointed to engage approximately 800 households with Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) rated D or below.

Delivering Housing

- The Strategic Housing Manager is developing strategies and options for a more interventionist approach to housing delivery. This includes fostering collaborations



with landowners, developers, and Registered Providers to enhance housing availability and effectiveness.

- The finalisation of the Housing Strategy has been passed to the Strategic Housing Manager. It is currently being updated to reflect the emerging options review and the outcomes of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation. The strategy will also be coordinated with other related strategies and policies, such as those addressing homelessness and empty properties.
- A planning application for the zero-carbon affordable housing development in Down Ampney has been submitted. Drainage and sewerage challenges need to be addressed, requiring solutions from Bromford along with proactive engagement with the Parish Council and neighbouring residents. A broader communications plan is set to be developed in collaboration with Bromford.

Supporting communities

- A forum event was held in July, which was recorded and shared with attendees as well as other town and parish councils.
- The Sewage Summit took place in July, featuring representatives from all three water companies, the Environment Agency, Earth Watch, and WASP, who presented to a sold-out audience of residents and community leaders. A report summarising the event, along with details of two previous internal workshops and meetings held over the past 18 months with the water companies, was presented to the full Council in September, where all recommendations were approved.
- The Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) has appointed a Flood and Community Resilience Officer who has successfully recruited 18 Flood Wardens in the Cotswolds and is actively looking to recruit more. With the officer now in place and operational, the Council is no longer the lead in advancing the scheme; however, it will continue to be a key recipient of the information gathered by the Flood Wardens across the district.
- Agreement has been reached with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) to fund the survey and design work for the creation of a safe crossing of the Spine Road from the remaining Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).
- A closedown meeting was held with contractors to finalise the locations for the last eight cycle stands. Due to delays in receiving confirmation and necessary permissions from the GCC Estate Manager, two libraries were unable to have the



requested cycle stands installed. The agreed final locations for the cycle stands are Cotswold Airport, Westonbirt Arboretum, and the Neighbridge Car Park.

- The Spring Round for Crowdfund Cotswold was successful, with five out of six supported projects exceeding their funding targets. In July, the Cabinet agreed to re-contract with Spacehive to continue the Crowdfund Cotswold program, enabling an autumn round that closed on 16th October.

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 has been established between Cotswold District Council and Gloucestershire County Council to deliver a program of activities funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund, aimed at assisting those furthest from the employment market. The Employment and Skills Hub Outreach (ESHO) project will present its progress to the Cotswold Economic Advisory Group in November 2024.
- 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 outline planning application for the Royal Agricultural University's Innovation Village has been validated and will now proceed through the planning process. Concurrently, officers and the cabinet member are collaborating with the RAU on related matters, including exploring funding opportunities.

- 2.3** The only off target action of the Corporate Plan behind schedule at the end of Q2 is detailed below. Whilst this report is a retrospective account of progress in Q2, 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



Q2 update: Some street signs have been replaced, and Ubico has allocated additional resources to accelerate the replacement program. The percentage of completed replacements will be reported in Q3.

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, highlighted by progress in responding to Freedom of Information requests within 20 days, conducting timely inspections of high-risk food premises and strong gym membership numbers. Customer Satisfaction and Planning Determination Times continue to be strong. However, the number of missed bins per 100,000 collections and the number of affordable homes delivered are showing a negative trend.

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (Tracking Well Toward Achieving the Year-End Target. 60% collected up to Q2)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (3 days against a target of 5 days)
- Customer Satisfaction (99% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (95% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (90% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (87% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (86% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (26% against a target of 30%)
- Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (96% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 95%)
- Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 90%)



- Residual Household Waste per Household (kg) (88 against a target of 93)
- Number of gym memberships (4,247 against a target of 3,800)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (122,523 visits against a target of 115,000)

3.2 Service Performance below target:

Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (54% collected up until Q2 against a target of 58%). The service was performing well during Q1, with collection rates 2% above the target set for collections at the end of the quarter.

During Q2, the Council observed a decrease of approximately 14% in collections compared to the same period last year. Although this decline is significant, last year's collection figures were unusually high due to a substantial payment for previous years' arrears, which was credited to the 2023-24 collections. This was a result of pending adjustments and revaluations by the Valuation Office, which temporarily inflated last year's collection rate. Despite this anomaly, the Council's current collection rate remains 4.1% below pre-pandemic levels.

The Resolution: The service recently completed an intensive review, resulting in the implementation of dashboards that have streamlined operations and enhanced efficiency. This ongoing project now focuses on further improvements in collaboration with Customer Service to identify additional areas for optimisation. Committed to supporting businesses, the Council actively engages through reminders, phone calls, and emails to encourage dialogue. All in-year recovery processes are up to date.

Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (20.13 days against a target of 20 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (6.17 days against a target of 4 days). Processing times for both Council Tax Support New Claims and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances did not meet the target in Q1, with processing taking 22.42 and 6.25 days, respectively.

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 4 days for Council Tax Support New Claims and 4 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: In September, CIVICA system errors related to automation caused a backlog, resulting in longer processing times for claims. The Council is actively working with partners to resolve these issues and ensure timely support for residents. 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 (0.42% against a target of 0.35%). The Council exceeded the target set for Q1, resulting in an error rate of 0.71% for the quarter.

The Council's overpayment percentage has now fallen below the national target but remains slightly above the stricter internal service target following a significant overpayment identified by officers in Q1. The overpayment percentage continues to decrease steadily each week, and it is projected to fall below the service target by next quarter.

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.

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (35 delivered against a target of 50). During Q1, the number of affordable homes delivered exceed the quarterly target, however, a shortfall is forecasted for the end-of-year target.



During Q2, a total of six properties were delivered in Cotswold, bringing the year-to-date total to thirty-five, against a target of fifty. This includes six shared ownership properties completed in Cirencester. Completions fluctuate throughout the year, as housing developments typically take 12 months or more, with some projects phased over several years. An initial over-delivery of affordable housing at the start of the current strategy has resulted in reduced delivery in recent years. Additionally, projections from Registered Providers indicate a shortfall compared to the annual target of 100 homes.

Missed bins per 100,000 Collections (302 against a target of 80). The Council experienced an increase in the number of missed bins per 100,000 collections during Q1, recording 141 misses 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 can be attributed primarily to the recent reorganisation of collection rounds, which affected approximately 60% of households. Additionally, Ubico faced high levels of sick leave during July and August, resulting in new staff who were less familiar with the routes and locations of households. However, significant improvements have been made, with daily meetings implemented during the quarter to enhance communication and management oversight. These efforts have led to solid improvements, with the number of missed collections now reducing to more acceptable levels.

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. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 January 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)