



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 6 MARCH 2025
Subject	COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2024-25 QUARTER THREE (SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER 2024)
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: 1. Note overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2024-25 Q3 (September-December 2024).
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivering Good Services• Responding to the Climate Emergency• Delivering Housing• Supporting Communities• Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Cotswold District Council retained senior managers, Publica Directors, Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.



1. BACKGROUND

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

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

- 2.1** The Council adopted Our Cotswolds, Our Plan 2024-28 ('the Plan') in January 2024. The Plan sets out the Council's Aim, and key priorities, and sets out the key measures of success.
- 2.2** Progress on key actions identified in the Corporate Plan for Q3 (September-December 2024) include:

Delivering good services

- Employees in Phase 1 of the transition successfully transferred to Council employment on 1st November. A detailed transition plan for Phase 2 will be presented to members in March, with identified TUPE employees scheduled to be transferred to Council employment in July. Other staff in fragmented roles will be able to apply for roles in the new structures as part of this 2nd Phase of Transition.

Responding to the climate emergency

- Initial exploration for the creation of an electric vehicle (EV) Taxi policy began with meetings involving other local authorities that have already implemented incentives to encourage taxi operators to switch to EVs. These discussions covered the types of incentives offered, necessary regulatory changes, challenges faced during implementation, and the overall impact on both taxi operators and the environment.



- The Ecology team have focused on implementing the new Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) legislation. Decisions have been issued for some cases with non-significant on-site BNG, and the first biodiversity gain condition compliance application has been received. Drafting of Section 106 agreements is underway. An additional Biodiversity Officer has been appointed to increase capacity for BNG, Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA), the ecological emergency, and mandatory biodiversity action planning and monitoring for all Council services, as well as work on the Local Plan review.
- The Council has partnered with Gloucestershire authorities to launch a retrofit support service which went live on 22nd January. This service offers energy efficiency plans, project specifications, vetted installers, and installation management to support residents.

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. Additionally, a pipeline of potential Rural Exception Sites is being developed.
- Work is ongoing to support all refugees, whether they are on a resettlement scheme or dispersed asylum. In addition to ensuring families and individuals are adequately housed, ongoing wraparound support is being provided to assist with resettlement and community cohesion.
- A planning application for the zero-carbon affordable housing development in Down Ampney has been submitted. The timing of sewerage upgrades and their link to the occupation of homes need to be resolved with Thames Water, which could impact the start on site. Engagement with the Parish Council is being arranged, and the Heads of Terms for the CDC land transfer are being finalised.

Supporting communities

- The locations for the last of the district's community cycle racks have been finalised. Installations are scheduled for February, with 3 stands at Neighbridge, 4 at Cotswold Airport, and 4 at the Bakers Arms in Somerford Keynes.
- The Autumn Round for Crowdfund Cotswold ran slightly later than in previous years due to the timing of the Cabinet decision to continue the programme in July. As a result, the autumn round projects were still fundraising at the end of quarter



three. Following initial interest from a few more projects, four projects were taken forward and offered a pledge of support.

- The second round of Unsung Hero Awards took place in November, with the winner and runners-up attending Full Council. A third round is scheduled for January.
- In December, the Cotswold Youth Network held a meeting with a special focus on youth voice.
- The first campaign, using the online toolkit LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) ran in December and focused on identifying benefits customers likely to qualify for Pension Credit and, consequently, Winter Fuel Allowance.

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.
- In October, Cabinet approved a draft of the refreshed Green Economic Growth Strategy for consultation. The consultation period closed on 24th January 2025.
- 14 projects have been allocated funding by the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) grant scheme for village halls. A number have been completed and others are at various stages of delivery.
- The outline planning application for the Royal Agricultural University's Innovation Village is currently progressing through the process. Officers and representatives from the RAU and its advisers have met to resolve outstanding issues, including comments from consultees.

2.3 Off target actions of the Corporate Plan behind schedule at the end of Q3 are detailed below. Whilst this report is a retrospective account of progress in Q3, 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

Q3 update: In progress but some delays due to availability of Ubico staff to install signs. Regular progress updates being sought to try and ensure all listed signs are installed by end of Q4.



Responding to the climate emergency

Subject to proposed legislative changes, complete full review of the Local Plan

Q3 update: The Council is currently partially updating its adopted Local Plan to make it green to the core. A consultation was held on the draft Local Plan policies between 1 February 2024 and 7 April 2024. Consultation responses are currently being considered and further supporting evidence is being produced before a final version of the Local Plan will be consulted on early in 2025. The Local Plan update subsequently be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for an Independent Examination in Public led by a government appointed Inspector.

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

Q3 update: The Cotswold Design Code is now half way through being updated. Draft Design Codes have been shared with the council for comment. The national planning policy consultation meant work had to be temporarily paused. Consideration is now being given to the new national planning policies and the implications these have on the Design Code.

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

Q3 update: A consultation was held on the draft masterplan between 1 Feb 2024 and 7 Apr 2024. Following the consultation, it was decided that a master plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is required. Work is currently ongoing to draft the SPD ahead of a final consultation, which is aimed to commence in March 2025, ahead of adopting the SPD by September 2025. Mace, a highly experienced consultancy with a proven track record of delivering masterplans, have been appointed to assist with the delivery of the SPD. CDC continues to work closely with Cirencester TC to align the SPD with their emerging Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Consult and adopt the Council's new Housing strategy

Q3 update: The finalisation of the Housing Strategy has been passed to the Strategic Housing Manager. It is being updated in light of the emerging options review, the Govt National Planning Policy Framework consultation outcome and will be coordinated with other related strategies/policies (e.g Homelessness/Empty Properties etc)

Supporting communities

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

Q3 update: Concerns about the condition of an adjacent brick bridge and uncertainty regarding Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) approach to



addressing these issues have delayed progress, as pedestrian access to the crossing point depends on access beneath the bridge. GCC has confirmed that the crossing will not proceed independently of the bridge repairs. In the meantime, Cotswold District Council has funded design work for the crossing scheme, which is now underway.

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

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Overall, the Council's performance for the quarter has been largely positive. Highlights include progress in Planning Determination Times, inspections of high-risk food premises, and strong numbers of visits to the leisure centres. Customer satisfaction and land charge searches responded to within 10 days continue to be strong. However, processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances and the delivery of affordable homes are showing a negative trend.

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (Tracking Well Toward Achieving the Year-End Target. 85% collected up to Q3)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (3 days against a target of 5 days)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.33% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (98% 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 (96% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (90% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (21% against a target of 30%)
- Percentage of 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%)



- Number of gym memberships (4,223 against a target of 3,900)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (143,584 visits against a target of 121,000)

3.2 Service Performance near target:

- Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (77.03% against a target of 78%)
- Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (89.08% against a target of 90%)

3.3 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (21 days against a target of 20 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (7 days against a target of 4 days).

Previous Quarter: In Q2, processing times for both Council Tax Support New Claims and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances did not meet the targets, with processing taking 20.1 and 6 days, respectively.

Q3: 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 1 day for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances. Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events remain well within the target of 5 days.

The rise in processing times during Q3 can be attributed to higher-than-usual levels of sickness within the team and the shutdown of the Council Offices over Christmas. Additionally, the service is awaiting updates from the Universal Credit (UC) section of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) regarding file type changes for the data they provide. These updates are expected to enable more effective data capture and enhance the automation of related processes, thus bringing down processing times.

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (50 delivered against a target of 75).

Previous Quarter: During Q2, six properties were delivered within Cotswold, bringing the total to fifty for April – September 2024. It should be noted that Q1 delivered 44 properties rather than the 29 previously reported, as delays in completion reports from Registered Providers (RPs) meant these were not initially accounted for.

Q3: No affordable homes were delivered during Q3 due to delays encountered on the planned delivery sites. These delays, attributed to weather conditions and project re-phasing, have pushed the completion of some affordable homes to Q4 and early 2025/26. Of the original 13 affordable homes expected in Q3 at Evenlode Road,



Moreton-in-Marsh, and Down Ampney, two at Evenlode Road are now projected for completion in Q4. The remaining 11 at Down Ampney have been re-phased, with six expected in Q4. The remaining five, along with a further 11 originally scheduled for Q4, are now expected to be delivered between April and December 2025.

Consequently, the total number of affordable homes projected for 2024/25 has been revised from 74 to 58.

Housing completions tend to fluctuate throughout the year, as developments typically take 12 months or longer to complete, with some projects spanning several years in phases. The initial over delivery of affordable housing at the start of the current strategy has contributed to reduced delivery levels in recent years.

Missed bins per 100,000 Collections (94 against a target of 80).

Previous Quarter: During Q2, the Council saw a notable rise in the number of missed bins per 100,000 collections, recording 302 misses against a target of 80

Q3: The number of missed bins has exceeded its target in Q3, despite a notable reduction in comparison to Q2. While flooding issues in the district caused minor delays for crews earlier in the quarter, November marked a significant achievement with the lowest number of missed collections since the reorganisation of collection rounds. This highlights the success of the improvement initiatives introduced last quarter, such as daily meetings to enhance communication and management oversight. However, December saw a rise in missed bin collections, largely driven by the adjusted schedule during the Christmas period.

Current Status: The number of missed bins reported this quarter remains below the threshold and is projected to stay within target by the end of Q4.

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

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 3 March 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)