



# COTSWOLD

District Council

Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY – 01 SEPTEMBER 2025</b> <b>CABINET – 04 SEPTEMBER 2025</b>
Subject	<b>COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2025-26 QUARTER ONE (APRIL-JUNE 2025)</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Every, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk">mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Jane Portman, Interim Chief Executive Email: <a href="mailto:jane.portman@cotswold.gov.uk">jane.portman@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Email: <a href="mailto:alison.borrett@cotswold.gov.uk">alison.borrett@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
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 2025-26 Q1 (April-June 2025).
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivering Good Services</li><li>• Responding to the Climate Emergency</li><li>• Delivering Housing</li><li>• Supporting Communities</li><li>• Supporting the Economy</li></ul>
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 Q1 (April-June 2025) include:
- The Council's Phase 2 transition plan to bring services back in-house was approved by Cabinet and Full Council. Formal consultation with affected employees began in April, with employees successfully transferred on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025.
  - A proposal to establish a Climate Board was approved by Cabinet in July 2025. The Board will provide strategic oversight of the Council's climate work and help embed climate action across services and partnerships.
  - The Council continues to actively support community-led renewable energy initiatives, including Thames Head Community Energy, a local not-for-profit Community Benefit Society. The Council's backing includes policy support, financial contributions through Crowdfund Cotswold, and involvement in regional programmes such as Climate Leadership Gloucestershire's Community Energy workstream, helping to deliver environmental and community benefits across the district.
  - Work is progressing on the new Cotswold Design Guide, which will help shape future development across the district. An advanced draft of the Design Code has



been produced, and the final stage, reviewing consultation feedback and making necessary updates, is currently underway.

- A pipeline of around eight rural affordable housing sites is being developed. The Council is working with Bromford through a new Partnership Framework to boost delivery across both new-build and regeneration schemes. Engagement with Homes England is also underway to explore a package of measures that could enhance rural affordable housing delivery in the district.
- A successful Town and Parish Council summit was held in June, with over 100 attendees and a focus on local government reorganisation.
- On 16 July 2025, Full Council resolved to merge the partial update of the adopted Local Plan (2011–2031) with the Development Strategy and Site Allocations Plan into a single, comprehensive Full Local Plan Update. This unified approach will also incorporate elements of the Gloucestershire Strategic Plan where appropriate, with submission targeted for 2026 and adoption in 2027.
- The Young Unsung Hero Award was successfully launched, with three winners celebrated at the July Council meeting alongside recipients of the main Unsung Heroes Award.
- The Communities team worked closely with the Communications team to highlight local successes, including media coverage of the Parkinson Table Tennis Project at Cirencester Leisure Centre, which was featured by both ITV and BBC.
- The Council's Crowdfund Cotswold initiative launched five new projects this quarter, including the Phoenix Festival, which attracted around 150 pledges of support.

**2.3** Off target actions of the Corporate Plan behind schedule at the end of Q1 (April-June 2025) 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:** Ubico is progressing with outstanding signs.

Responding to the climate emergency

**Develop and deliver an Electric Vehicle Charge Point Strategy**

**Q1 update:** Delivery of ORCS funded EVCPs across four sites is progressing. An extension to end September beyond original 31st March completion has been agreed with funders. Delays multiple in nature but two most prominent were SSEN connection issues took a long time to rectify and CK suppliers taking months to



install a meter after connection. EVCPs in Market Way, Moreton in Marsh, Maugersbury road in Stow on the Wold and West Street in Tetbury have been commissioned. Awaiting sign off from Assets team who are to confirm they are operating effectively. The Commissioning of EVCPs at Brewery, Cirencester took place at the end of July.

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

**Q1 update:** Recent data from the Environment Agency has put the Waterloo Car park in Cirencester in the flood zone. The Waterloo Car Park, is an area proposed for major development in the Masterplan. Therefore, further work is required to establish if the issues can be resolved prior to taking the Masterplan any further. Work has been commissioned in this regard and is currently being undertaken.

Delivering Housing

**Consult and adopt the Council's new Housing strategy**

**Q1 update:** The Housing Strategy Document was prepared in early 2024 and needs to be updated to reflect the new Govt housing targets, the new NPPF, the emerging local plan and be coordinated with other related strategies/policies (e.g Homelessness/Empty Properties/Net Zero etc). It is proposed to condense the Housing Strategy document and focus it on Strategic actions with appropriate references to other related documents such as the Local Plan. The updated document will be prepared Autumn 2025.

Supporting communities

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

**Q1 update:** Design work for the Spine Road crossing is underway, with preliminary design completion expected by December 2025 and detailed design by April 2026. However, implementation remains dependent on resolving issues related to the adjacent bridge. Previously earmarked UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding was reallocated to other projects to meet year-end spending targets and deliver local benefits.

- 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 in Q1 2025/26 has remained broadly positive, building on the strong foundations laid in previous quarters. Continued improvements were seen in key areas such as Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates collection, planning determination times, and customer satisfaction. Leisure centre visits and gym memberships remained high, reflecting strong public engagement with health and wellbeing services. However, some challenges persist. Processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit change events exceeded targets, largely due to operational adjustments linked to Universal Credit automation. Additionally, the percentage of household waste recycled declined slightly, in line with seasonal patterns and national trends. The number of affordable homes delivered in Q1 was also below target, though long-term delivery remains strong.

#### **3.1 Service performance above target:**

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (33.09% against the quarterly target of 33%)
- Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (28.49% against the quarterly target of 27%)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (19.65 days against a target of 20 days)
- Customer Satisfaction (97.37% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (85.71% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (87.64% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (93.41% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (95.07% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 95%)
- Residual Household Waste per Household (kg) (85.94 against a target of 97) – Q4 figures as awaiting Q1 data from Gloucestershire County Council
- Missed bins per 100,000 (72.4 against a target of 80)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (140,226 visits against a target of 126,810)



**3.2** Service Performance near target:

- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.46% against a target of 0.35%)
- Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (86.99 against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of household waste recycled (56.66% against a target of 60%) – Q4 figures as awaiting Q1 data from Gloucestershire County Council
- Number of gym memberships (4,438 against a target of 4,441)

**3.3** Service Performance below target:

**Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (13.9 days against a target of 5 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (10.41 days against a target of 4 days).**

Previous Quarter: In Q4, Council Tax Support Change of Events were processed well within target, averaging around 3.5 days. However, Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances fell short of the target, with average processing times of approximately 5 days.

Q1: The Council experienced an increase in processing times for both Council Tax Support change of events and Housing Benefit changes of circumstances, exceeding the respective targets of 5 and 4 days. Council Tax Support changes averaged 13.9 days, while Housing Benefit changes averaged 10.41 days. This rise was primarily driven by a planned one-month pause in uploading Universal Credit (UC) applications, which allowed the team to focus on clearing a backlog of manual applications and to collaborate with partners on improving automation processes. The pause also provided an opportunity to accommodate changes introduced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), who had updated the UC data feed to include additional items.

Prior to the pause, UC automation rates typically ranged between 60% and 70%. Since resuming uploads, batch automation rates have consistently exceeded 90% and daily processing has stabilised. Notably, processing times for CTS change of events have significantly improved, with the average for July falling to just 3.59 days. However, given the cumulative nature of the metric, processing times are expected to improve steadily over the coming months, though they are unlikely to return to within target until Quarter 3.

The ongoing managed migration from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit has also introduced greater complexity into the remaining caseload, with many cases involving exceptional or nuanced circumstances. As the volume of Housing Benefit change of



circumstances continues to decline, any delays now have a more pronounced impact on average processing times. The service continues to explore targeted initiatives, including the use of the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) tool, to help residents access unclaimed benefits and improve financial resilience.

**Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (50% against a target of 30%)**

Previous Quarter: During Q4, six appeals were decided, with one allowed in favour of the applicant, resulting in a 16.67% allowance rate for the quarter. As this metric is cumulative, the end of year total stood at 53 appeals, with 11 allowed (20.75% allowance rate).

Q1: Between 1 April and 30 June 2025, seven appeals were decided, with three allowed in favour of the applicant and one resulted in a split decision, resulting in a 50% allowance rate for the quarter. As this metric is cumulative, it may decrease throughout the year depending on the number of appeal decisions received.

While the general target is for no more than 30% of appeals to be allowed, the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 introduced a formal system for assessing the performance of local planning authorities. Under the designation criteria, an authority may be identified as underperforming if 10% or more of its total planning decisions are overturned at appeal.

This measure of decision quality is assessed over a rolling two-year period and is applied separately to major and non-major development categories. It's important to note that the 10% threshold is based on the total number of decisions made, not just those that are appealed. Authorities exceeding this threshold in either category may be designated, allowing applicants to submit certain types of applications directly to the Secretary of State.

**Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (2 delivered against a target of 25).**

Previous Quarter: During Q4, six affordable homes were delivered within the district, bringing the total to fifty-six for 2024-2025.

Q1: In Cotswold, just two affordable homes were delivered in Q1, marking a slow start to the year. Registered Providers are currently projecting only 64 completions



for 2025/26—well below the annual target of 100—making it unlikely the district will meet its goal.

The delivery of affordable housing is subject to fluctuations, as most developments take over a year to complete and often progress in multiple phases over several years. Early over delivery at the beginning of the current strategy has also contributed to the dip in recent annual outputs, as the early years set a higher baseline.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2018, the district has delivered approximately 880 affordable homes, averaging around 125 homes per year. Despite the recent dip in completions, this continues to reflect the Council's ongoing commitment to delivering affordable housing and meeting long-term housing needs in the area.

**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 1 September 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.





**COTSWOLD**  
District Council

**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)