



Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 1 September 2025

Members present:

Gina Blomefield (Chair)	Angus Jenkinson (Vice Chair)	Jon Wareing
David Cunningham	Clare Turner	Joe Harris
Tony Slater	Michael Vann	Nick Bridges
Lisa Spivey		

Officers present:

Jane Portman, Interim Chief Executive Officer	Joseph Walker, Head of Economic Development and Communities
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer	Gemma Moreing, Business Information Lead
Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services	Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer

Observers:

Councillors Patrick Coleman and Mike Every

OS.213 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

OS.214 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

OS.215 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

OS.216 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 and 8 July 2025 were discussed. The minutes were reviewed for clarity in relation to a query on the funding required to address the budget deficit for 2022/23 and 2023/24, and were amended.

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Councillor Jenkinson proposed accepting the minutes and Councillor Slater seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED: to APPROVE the minutes of the meetings held on 7 and 8 July 2025.

OS.217 Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Actions from previous meetings included:

- A query was raised on the 1.7% increase in planning fees compared to 3.8% inflation; it was confirmed that fees were set nationally by the government.
- The election tablets trialled had been found to work well and improved efficiency, but with no scheduled elections they were unlikely to be used further at present.
- The review of capital receipts and related financing would be completed in the autumn, with outcomes expected to feed into the 2026–27 budget papers.
- Requests were made for the distribution of town and parish council newsletters to Members.
- Updates were requested for the outstanding actions from the July meetings
- Justine Mallinson, Retrofit Engagement Officer, was complimented for the Retrofit roadshow.

OS.218 Chair's Announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:

- The latest work plan included invitations to Ubico and Freedom Leisure.
- A report on the impact of tax changes on local businesses would be presented in March 2026.
- The Local Plan report was added to the October meeting agenda and it was proposed less urgent items to be deferred to an additional meeting 1 December 2025 2pm

The additional meeting, with a 2pm start time, was proposed by Councillor David Cunningham and seconded by Councillor Michael Vann.

RESOLVED: The Committee agreed the meeting 1 December 2025 at 2pm.

OS.219 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

OS.220 Member Questions

There were no Member questions.

OS.221 Report back on recommendations

The Cabinet had agreed all of the Committee's recommendations except for the enforcement recommendation, which was partially agreed. Enforcement officers would keep Members informed of ward activity within confidentiality constraints.

OS.222 Financial Performance Report 2025-26 Quarter 1

The purpose of the report was to set out the first budget monitoring position for the 2025/26 financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Patrick Coleman, and the Deputy Chief Executive, David Stanley introduced the report. They raised the following points:

- Cabinet would consider four recommendations, including reviewing and noting Q1 financial performance, which forecasted a £734,000 surplus. Key variations included delayed commercial property rental income (£61,000 adverse), higher development management fees (£249,000 positive), and Treasury management income.
- Risks flagged included the street services review savings and potential variability in development management fees; 50% of additional planning fee income would be set aside to mitigate appeal risks.
- Recommendations 2–4 sought Cabinet endorsement of the budget management approach, strengthened vacancy oversight, and preparing for future financial challenges including local government reorganisation.
- A correction to paragraph 4.36 noted one further interest rate cut was expected in 2025 (to 3.75%), with some risk of delay due to inflation and the energy price cap.

In questioning and discussion, the following points were noted:

- Treasury management income was higher than the budget forecast due to a cautious approach when setting the budget, anticipating interest rate reductions and limited investable cash; first-quarter performance reflected this prudence, with some short-term investments performing differently than expected, and a detailed review of individual funds would be provided.
- Interest rates on investments varied: Bank of England 5%, money market funds slightly lower, and pooled funds 3.5–4%. Prudential borrowing costs currently ranged from 4.5–6.3% depending on term, and borrowing strategies were tailored to the asset's lifespan, costs, and the capital programme, which included provision for the waste and recycling fleet.
- Heads of service were expected to take action on identified budget variations, with performance management in place to monitor this. Where change was not possible, directors were expected to identify alternative ways to manage the variation.
- The cemeteries service was underperforming last year due to lower demand and historical under-recovery of costs. Fees were reviewed and increased to align with

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neighbouring authorities. The bereavement manager was reviewing service costs, while comparative data for local crematoria would be provided to the Committee.

- The contract lawyer post remained vacant and was not expected to be filled. The reason and the impact on shared services across the three councils would be shared at a future meeting.
- The financial modelling of public conveniences considered contract, maintenance, and utility costs, but did not assign a value to individual usage. Closing facilities was not expected to significantly reduce usage.
- Town and parish councils were consulted on taking over public conveniences. One council had expressed interest in taking on a facility, while others had been notified that charging has been implemented across facilities. Discussions with interested councils were ongoing.
- The APSE street cleaning review had identified ways to deliver the service more efficiently. Savings may not be fully realised this year, but changes would focus on optimising service delivery rather than reducing quality. Cabinet would consider recommendations and service specifications before taking decisions.
- The APSES review highlighted that waste collection in Bourton-on-the-Water was disproportionately high due to visitor activity and local businesses. A detailed analysis would be undertaken to understand the specific costs and funding sources for this collection, including potential impacts of alternative strategies.
- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was expected to create additional workload and pressure on staff, but officers were preparing to manage risks.
- Strengthened oversight of vacancy management would ensure a consistent approach to filling posts. Decisions may include delaying, merging, or approving positions, balancing financial benefits with potential short-term impacts on service delivery.
- The 'authority to fill' process assessed whether vacancies should be filled permanently, temporarily, or via agency staff, considering costs, workload impact, and service needs. Agency use was managed through commissioning and procurement to ensure value for money.
- The Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) project cost the Council around £23,000 per year, largely covered by additional funding from the Integrated Care Board.
- The Bromford joint venture had been delayed due to infrastructure issues with Thames Water.
- The Council was currently storing Second World War artefacts from the Memorial Cottages. A formal cost breakdown would be provided. Members suggested exploring more publicly accessible display options in council buildings, considering insurance, best value, and the future of temporary locations.

Councillor Nick Bridges proposed supporting the recommendations in the Financial Performance Report 2025-26 Quarter 1 and submitting the following recommendations to Cabinet. Councillor Joe Harris seconded the proposal.

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Recommendation: That consideration is given to putting local social and/or archaeological artefacts on public display at the Council's offices, including artefacts related to the history of local government in the area.

RESOLVED: to NOTE the Financial Performance Report 2025-26 Quarter 1 and submit one recommendation to Cabinet.

OS.223 Service Performance Report 2025-26 Quarter 1

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mike Every, and Lead Performance analyst, Gemma Moreing, made the following points:

- Positive performances included council tax and business rates income, and processing planning applications on time.
- Areas below target included processing times for council tax support and housing benefit changes, planning appeals allowed (Q1 showed 50% of appeals lost vs. 20% last year), and the delivery of affordable homes, partly due to developer delays and Thames Water issues at Down Ampney.

In questioning and discussion, the following points were noted:

- There was limited feedback on cleanliness at Chipping Camden Leisure Centre and members questioned whether feedback cards fully captured customer experience at the three leisure centres operated by Freedom Leisure. Officers would check the progress toward more robust reporting.
- Producing quarterly service performance reports took around four weeks per quarter to collate and review. Operational improvements were driven by regular dashboards and ongoing monitoring rather than overview reports.
- Delays in processing council tax support changes were due to a temporary pause in applications, creating a backlog. Performance was now improving, with processing times in July at 3.5 days though cumulative metrics meant that overall tolerance may not be achieved until quarter three.
- The Spine Road crossing project was on hold because the intended government REPF funding could not be secured in time. Updates were requested by the Committee.
- The Waterloo car park was now in a designated flood zone, so plans for a multi-storey car park there had been removed. Future use of the site would be considered as part of the Cirencester town centre masterplan and the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation.
- An all-member briefing on planning enforcement was planned for September.
- Members received regular updates on planning appeals, including whether decisions were delegated or made by Committee. The Council recognised that

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overturns could be costly, so additional funds were allocated to cover appeal costs and ensure adequate legal representation.

- There was a request for a follow up on the biodiversity indicator for the Cotswold Lakes Nature Recovery Plan, as the six-monthly review had no status or update currently provided.
- Clarification of the process for reporting and supporting rough sleepers was sought from the homelessness team.
- Affordable housing delivery remained below target, largely due to factors beyond the Council's control, including developer viability negotiations and delays in project execution. Historical averages since the 2018 Local Plan showed around 125 completions per year on average.
- Solar PV support under the "Make My House Green" scheme saw 27 homes installing solar panels with a further 18 in progress. This was out of a total of 46,109 dwellings in the district. Bromford housing installations were not included in these figures and further information was sought on the installation of other homes across the District.

Break 18:22 – 18:30

Councillors Tony Slater and Lisa Spivey left the meeting.

OS.224 Corporate Plan 2024-2028 Update

The purpose of the report was to receive the refreshed Corporate Plan for the period 2025 through to 2028.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mike Every, and the Head of Economic Development and Communities, Joseph Walker, introduced the report and made the following points:

- There had been significant changes including potential local government reorganisation (LGR) and the transfer of services back from Publica since the last Corporate Plan.
- The plan assumed the Council would cease on 1 April 2028 (vesting day for new councils), though timelines may change depending on government delivery.
- A new priority, planning for the future, was added to reflect LGR and the Council's transformation agenda.
- The updated plan focused on achievable actions, streamlined business-as-usual items, and aligned with current circumstances.

In questioning and discussion, the following points were noted:

- The phrase "business focused" in the Council values was questioned. The intent was to convey professionalism, efficiency, and value for money, and it was agreed to review the wording to better reflect this.
- The "Preparing for the Future" section was discussed in relation to local government reorganisation. The challenges for rural communities, including

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reduced councillor representation, were acknowledged, with ongoing work outlined to address these, including member briefings and engagement with town and parish councils.

- The importance of community leadership and the viability of local services in a unitary authority context was emphasised. It was acknowledged that while engagement with town and parish councils was possible, non-statutory services risked being deprioritised once absorbed into a larger authority. Careful consideration of which services to hand over was highlighted as a key focus in preparing for the future.
- The importance of the farming community in the Cotswolds was noted for its economic contribution and role in addressing climate and ecological challenges. Officers would consider recognising farmers in future planning and the Council's transition work.
- The current fleet replacement programme was discussed. It was acknowledged that vehicle replacement must balance financial cost, carbon impact, service continuity, and future opportunities under local government reorganisation.
- The impact of tourism on certain communities, particularly Bourton-on-the-Water and Bibury was highlighted, with concerns about "over-tourism" affecting residents' quality of life and access to local services. It was acknowledged that while tourism supported the wider economy, the effects were uneven and some villages experienced significant impacts. Measures such as a car park levy had been introduced to mitigate pressures, and the Council continued to support community well-being through local initiatives and voluntary organisations.

OS.225 Updates from Gloucestershire County Council Scrutiny Committees

Councillor Angus Jenkinson reported that the last Gloucestershire Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee meeting was cancelled, so no report was available. A draft fifth version of the county economic strategy was circulated to members for information, noting it was not a final version.

A Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee update was received from Councillor David Fowles who highlighted the following key points:

- Key campaigns discussed included: Stay Well This Winter, Click or Call First, Pharmacy First, and No Place Like Home.
- The county population was projected to rise from 682,000 to 732,000 by 2030, increasing pressure on health services. The challenges noted included long-term conditions (obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes), mental health pressures, corridor care in hospitals, backlog maintenance (e.g. Cheltenham Hospital), and budget pressures. Positives included reduced ambulance handover times, high school immunisation rates, strong post-discharge follow-up, and the Trust being a high-rated employer.

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OS.226 Work Plan and Forward Plan

The updated work plan would be published to capture the meeting changes discussed under Chair's Announcements.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 7.30 pm