



Minutes of a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Monday, 13 October 2025

Members present:

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

Officers present:

Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services	Helen Martin, Director of Communities and Place
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)	Matthew Britton, Principal Planning Policy Officer
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer	Alan Hope, Head of Strategic Housing, Property and Assets
Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer	Geraldine LeCointe, Assistant Director - Planning Services
Matt Abbott, Head of Communications	

Observers:

Councillor Patrick Coleman, Juliet Layton, David Fowles, Nikki Ind and Mike Every

OS.227 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Jon Wareing and notification of late arrival from Councillors Lisa Spivey and Joe Harris.

OS.228 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

OS.229 Declarations of Interest

No declaration of interests were made.

OS.230 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 1 September 2025 were discussed. Councillor Angus Jenkinson proposed accepting the minutes and Councillor Michael Vann seconded the proposal which was put to the vote and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: to APPROVE the minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2025.

OS.231 Matters Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting

16:03 – Councillor Tony Slater arrived.

The Chair commented on the low uptake of the electric vehicle charging facilities at the Trinity Road offices and suggested that further action be taken to publicise their availability.

The UBICO fleet replacement was under review, with a decision expected shortly, and was also referenced within the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) agenda item.

A Member requested a clearer breakdown of the facilities provided by Freedom Leisure, particularly in relation to Chipping Campden Leisure Centre. The Chair reminded Members of the visit by Freedom Leisure to the next Committee meeting and to submit suitable questions in advance.

OS.232 Chair's Announcements

It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not need to consider the Council Tax Support Scheme 2026–27 at its next meeting, and therefore the item was removed from the agenda.

OS.233 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

OS.234 Member Questions

The question submitted by Councillor Ind was answered as part of the Bromford response.

OS.235 Report back on recommendations

The Committee received an update on previous Cabinet recommendations. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had suggested a display of the Cotswold District Council's archive to recognise the Council's work before the transition to the new unitary authority, possibly to include artefacts from the Corinium Museum. It was acknowledged that plans were at an early stage and that further discussion would take place within the Council, as the proposal related mainly to the Council, while the Museum had separate objectives.

It was noted that items were being stored on behalf of the Living History Memorial Association at external cost, despite available space within Council premises. A Member suggested that using the Council's empty rooms could save money and expressed that this option had not yet been explored.

The Deputy Leader noted that the storage of items on Council premises had been discussed previously, with security and environmental conditions identified as key considerations.

OS.236 Bromford Housing Update

The Chair welcomed the representatives from Bromford Flagship. She noted that improved communication and understanding would help the Council better support residents of the district.

Nick Woolridge – Head of Home Investment

Natalie Colfer – Head of Neighbourhood and Communities

Amanda Swann – Regional Director

The Bromford representatives discussed the questions that had been submitted to them in advance and circulated to the Committee, adding the following points:

- It was acknowledged that there had been difficulties in contacting the service by telephone, with long waits. Bromford offered to explore ways to improve access for Councillors and report back in due course.
- It was noted that the new homes built by Bromford on behalf of English Rural Housing were not managed by Bromford. They had acted only as a development agency. Allocation of the homes continued to be managed through the local authority, while ownership remained with English Rural Housing.
- The Neighbourhood coaching team aimed to provide help with benefit queries and to visit each customer to identify support needs.
- The Committee heard that Bromford had invested in methods to clean carpets in empty properties, and that in approximately 80% of cases, carpets were now retained rather than removed.
- Members were advised that Bromford's policy required urgent cases, such as domestic abuse or hate crime, to be responded to within two working days, and where possible within 24 hours. For antisocial behaviour, contact was aimed to be made within five working days.
- The average waiting time for a category 'Bronze' applicant was 12-24 months.
- Following the discussion regarding the replacement of carpets at the end of a tenancy, Councillor Ind suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee request that ward councillors receive an annual update from all housing providers, including information on ageing properties, issues such as mould, and plans for maintenance, to ensure councillors were aware of issues before they became severe.

- The Head of Strategic Housing, Property and Assets agreed to take forward the proposal for annual reporting from housing providers, subject to agreement on the information to be included.
- Neighbourhood coaches had been given access to the GIS mapping system which enabled them to identify land ownership responsibilities.
- Bromford confirmed that they did not currently have the facility to cut back hedges or maintain gardens but noted that they could explore ways to improve services and work with the community to address overgrown gardens.
- Bromford stated that when building new homes, they factored in the resources required and ensured that teams were in place to deliver properties as they expanded to meet affordable housing needs.
- Bromford reported that their new homes development programme included a wide range of property types, from one-bedroom flats to five-bedroom houses and bungalows, including accessible properties built to M standards. They noted that some properties could be internally adapted to meet changing needs over time, providing flexibility for residents.
- Bromford confirmed that they operated a disposals programme for homes where the investment required was too high or the properties were unsuitable for future customers, including some non-traditional constructions. Disposals were carried out in a hierarchical manner.
- It was explained that some garage sites were subject to pre-emptive rights of way, making redevelopment for new housing difficult.
- It was highlighted that the regeneration of Austin Road, Cirencester considered local demographics and demand, leading to the inclusion of houses alongside flats to provide more suitable housing while managing space constraints and safety requirements such as fire exits.

The Chair thanked the representatives of Bromford for attending the meeting and answering the Committee's questions and looked forward to more engagement with Bromford in the future.

OS.237 Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

The purpose of the report was to set out the Budget Strategy to support the preparation of the 2026/27 revenue and capital budgets and to present an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast.

The report was introduced by Councillor Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance, and David Stanley, the Deputy CEO and Section 151 Officer. The report was introduced and the follow points made:

- Since February 2025, consultations had taken place on Fair Funding 2.0 and modernising council tax administration.
- The budget gap for 2026-27 had reduced from £1.6 million to £950,000, although cumulative four-year figures remained under consideration.

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- Detailed funding from the Fair Funding Review was not expected until mid-December 2025. Extended Producer Responsibility funding for 2025-26 amounted to £1.6 million, with similar allocations anticipated for the following year.
- The budget strategy followed previous years, allowing for 3% pay inflation and otherwise maintaining a standstill budget.
- The transition of services from Publica to the Council continued, with Publica's budget being re-based for 2026-27. Modelling indicated this would reduce council costs.

In questioning and discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Section 151 Officer acknowledged the challenging financial position and noted that the budget gap would need to be addressed through budget reviews, reductions, efficiency savings, and outcomes from the Fair Funding Review.
- It was noted that the budget would cover 2026-27 and MTFS would cover the subsequent three financial years, extending beyond the anticipated reorganisation of local government. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer confirmed that it had been prepared on a going-concern basis to ensure continuity and flexibility should any delay to local government reorganisation occur.
- The MTFS had assumed a £500,000 reduction in the Council's employer contributions to the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- It was noted that the Government and MHCLG were confident the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation would achieve its intended objectives.
- The Local Plan reserve stood at just over £1 million at the end of the previous financial year, with an additional £230,000 secured in grant funding. The Council was likely able to meet Local Plan requirements within this resource.
- Provision for waste vehicle replacement was retained within the capital programme, with a detailed review underway to determine which vehicles required replacement and the appropriate timing.
- It was noted of the new additional second homes Council Tax income collected by the billing authority, approximately 7% was allocated to the District Council, 14% to the Police and Crime Commissioner, and 74% to the County Council.

17:15 – Cllr Harris and Cllr Spivey joined the meeting.

OS.238 Work Plan and Forward Plan

It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would not consider the Council Tax Support Scheme 2026–27 at its next meeting, and the item was removed from the work plan.

OS.239 **Updates from Gloucestershire County Council Scrutiny Committees**

Members were advised that OFCOM data on mobile signals was unreliable, and that a tool was available to check actual signal strength by postcode.

<https://www.signalchecker.co.uk/>

BREAK 17:52 – 18:04

OS.240 **Cotswold District Local Plan (2011-31) Regulation 18 Consultation**

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to consult on the Preferred Options for development in the Cotswold District for the Regulation 18 consultation and to approve the updated Local Development Scheme to progress the Plan.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mike Evemy, and the Deputy Leader, Councillor Juliet Layton, introduced the report. They raised the following points:

- It was noted that within the Regulation 18 consultation, it would be preferable to indicate potential development sites.
- It was noted that many Members had attended the all-member briefing the previous Tuesday, and thanks were given to those who participated and engaged in the process.
- Town and parish council forums were being set up for early November, with invitations due to be sent out. One forum was planned for the north of the district and one in Cirencester.
- The Council aimed to prevent problems caused by speculative housing development without supporting infrastructure in settlements through the Local Plan.

In questioning and discussion, the following points were noted:

- Delivering a Local Plan in a short timeframe carried risks, particularly the risk of delays and financial resourcing. The oversight board maintained an ongoing risk register, reviewed monthly.
- Much of the policy work had already been completed, including a previous Regulation 18 consultation. A few additional policies would be added for the current consultation.
- The upcoming consultation was a Regulation 18 consultation, followed by a further Regulation 19 consultation, providing two additional stages for public input.
- The Leader of the Council would continue to lobby and make representations to Government to highlight the impact of these numbers whilst continuing to plan responsibly.

- The development strategy assessed the 49 largest settlements based on services, facilities, employment, public transport, and size, categorising them as principal, non-principal, or rural settlements to locate development near existing infrastructure.
- Figures for Avening had included extant planning permissions, which were already counted in the total.
- The consultation focused on high-level development strategy options, avoiding site-specific allocations.
- Site-specific details would be considered at the Regulation 19 stage, with numbers based on current understanding and ongoing evidence-based studies, which could result in sites being added or removed.
- Ward members were recognised as playing an important role in the consultation process, supported by comprehensive briefing documents. Members were encouraged to use their leadership positions to influence discussions, attending village meetings where requested and when they felt their presence would be helpful, without needing to attend all.
- Feasibility studies are ongoing, assessing required infrastructure and costs to deliver sites. There were annual limits on how many homes each site could deliver, which were factored into housing projections to avoid overestimation.
- The planned level of growth in each settlement would reflect the services and facilities available there whilst for non-principal settlements, any planned development that adds new facilities (for example, a shop) would be factored into the final level of growth for that area.
- The Regulation 18 consultation was an important opportunity for residents to share their views and feedback on the proposed strategies with all input being carefully considered as plans were refined.
- As the Council could not accommodate all 18,000 homes locally, it must work with neighbouring authorities under the duty to cooperate to explore whether they can take some of the housing numbers, helping to evidence that the full figure was not feasible and supporting the case for a reduction to the target.
- There was genuine support for building new homes, especially smaller developments that help keep villages vibrant and support local families — however, the large-scale numbers currently proposed were seen as excessive and unrealistic for the area.
- The Council was keen to avoid development that could undermine longer-term opportunities, particularly around sites that may be needed for strategic infrastructure like a link road. However, without a five-year housing land supply, each planning application must be judged individually, increasing the risk of appeals if applications are refused.
- Officers acknowledged that the draft documents were technical but confirmed that extensive communication and engagement was planned to ensure residents could access clear, plain-English information. Every household would receive a newsletter about the Local Plan, explaining how to get involved and why it matters. Further communications would intensify ahead of the 5 November

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consultation launch. A live Q&A document had been issued to support members in responding to residents and parish councils.

- The Moreton-in-Marsh Working Group would meet as part of the wider consultation plans.
- The County Council's spatial planning team had identified land between Kemble Railway and Cirencester for a potential mass transport link, which would connect the railway to the town for the first time and significantly improve connectivity. Whilst the scheme remained under consideration and had received funding for part of the outline business case; further work on this was planned. A public transport study had found that the estimated £50 million cost of the link did not compare favourably with potential bus service improvements.
- While a new 5,000-home settlement would be of interest, only a proportion of those homes would count towards the Council's overall housing figure due to the expected timescales.

Recommendations:

That the Council continues to lobby government for a significantly lower housing target for the Cotswold District given:

- a) 80% of the district is within the Cotswold National Landscape area.
- b) The infrastructure challenges across the district (sewage capacity, rural roads, public transport, etc.)
- c) Lack of access to facilities and employment in many areas.
- d) The need for government support to address some of these challenges (e.g. funding for a bypass).
- e) The reality of what scale of development and supporting infrastructure will be deliverable in the remaining developable parts of the district.

Councillor Angus Jenkinson proposed supporting the recommendations in the Cotswold District Local Plan (2011-31) Regulation 18 Consultation and submitting the above recommendation to Cabinet. Councillor Michael Vann seconded the proposal which was put to the vote and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: to NOTE the Cotswold District Local Plan (2011-31) Regulation 18 Consultation and submit one recommendation to Cabinet.

The Meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 7.23 pm

Chair

(END)