



Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>CABINET – 16 APRIL 2026</b>
Subject	<b>COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2025-26 QUARTER THREE (OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2025)</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Evely, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:mike.evely@cotswold.gov.uk">mike.evely@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
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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 Q3 (October-December 2025).
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing for the Future</li><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	CDC Corporate Leadership Team, Publica Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.



## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** High-performing front-line public services are critical to the Council's role in supporting residents, businesses and communities. By ensuring our performance framework highlights variations from expected performance at the earliest opportunity, we can trigger targeted interventions that support improvement and recovery. This, in turn, strengthens our ability to provide modern, effective services for residents, businesses and communities.

Our performance framework covers the full range of public services delivered to communities through a variety of delivery models including the Council itself and the Council's Teckal companies (Publica and Ubico). The report aims to provide the necessary information for the Council to assess whether services are being delivered in line with agreed quality standards and expectations.

- 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 its Corporate Plan 2025–2028 ("the Plan") in September 2025. The Plan outlines the Council's purpose, vision, values, key priorities, and measures of success.

- 2.2** Progress on key actions identified in the Corporate Plan for Q3 (October-December 2025) include:

- Three proposals for Local Government Reorganisation were submitted to Government by the 28 November deadline. Following debate at Full Council, Cabinet selected a preferred option for one unitary authority for Gloucestershire. The statutory consultation will conclude in March and work is underway to establish a programme portfolio and governance for the next phase.
- The Climate Board held its inaugural meeting in November, considering options to reduce emissions from waste and buildings. As part of this, the Council announced plans to replace the district's diesel waste fleet with 30 lorries running on HVO and one electric vehicle, a £7.8m investment aligned to 2030 targets.
- Final grant submissions were made for the installation of 24 new EV charge points across Tetbury, Moreton-in-Marsh, Stow-on-the-Wold and Cirencester. A



safety issue affecting one charger at Brewery, Cirencester is being resolved with the supplier.

- Cabinet approved the updated Capital Fleet Replacement Programme, including replacements for the recycling and food waste fleets, and measures supporting decarbonisation such as use of HVO fuel and one electric vehicle.
- Significant progress was made against the Planning Advisory Service Action Plan, including updating the Development Management Negotiation Protocol, completing process mapping across the service, and advancing improvements to IT systems for Enforcement. Recruitment to new roles also commenced.
- Regulation 18 consultation on the new Local Plan was completed, with Development Management policies drafted to ensure the plan is “green to the core” and on track for submission in December 2026.
- Town and parish engagement intensified, with two district forums attended by over 150 clerks and 13 public meetings supported by senior members and officers. Local Plan toolkits and LGR newsletters were also issued to strengthen engagement.
- The leisure contract continued to perform strongly, exceeding targets for gym memberships, participation and Learn to Swim. The Corinium Museum also delivered a major programme of activity during the Cirencester History Festival and achieved multiple awards, including a silver award at the Bristol, Bath, Somerset and Gloucestershire Tourism Awards 2025.
- All UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund allocations are now fully committed and projects are progressing well, with no expectation that the Council will require the Government's extension to September 2026.

**2.3** 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 delivered strong performance across most key services in Q3. Council Tax and Business Rates collection were above target, planning applications were processed well within agreed timescales and customer satisfaction, regulatory compliance, waste services and leisure participation all remained strong.

A smaller number of services experienced ongoing pressures. Processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit change events, although improving, remain above cumulative targets due to earlier delays and case complexity. Land Charges performance dipped following staffing shortages but is now recovering, planning appeals allowed remain above target on a cumulative basis, affordable housing



delivery is below target and recycling rates were affected by seasonal reductions in garden waste.

**3.1** Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (85.08% against the quarterly target of 85%)
- Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (78.84% against the quarterly target of 78%)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.26% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (98.87% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (100% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (92.16% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (98.75% 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 95%)
- Residual Household Waste per Household (kg) (90.02 against a target of 96)
- Missed bins per 100,000 Collections (75 against a target of 80)
- Number of gym memberships (4,693 against a target of 4,250)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (140,485 visits against a target of 135,595)

**3.2** Service Performance near target:

- Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (20.07 days against a target of 20 days)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (86.11% against a target of 90%)

**3.3** Service Performance below target:

**Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (8.52 days against a target of 5 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (9.52 days against a target of 4 days).**



The Council saw a reduction in processing times for both Council Tax Support (CTS) change of events and Housing Benefit (HB) changes of circumstances compared to Q2. However, cumulative averages remain above the respective targets of 5 days for Council Tax Support and 4 days for Housing Benefit.

Although the cumulative processing time for Council Tax Support Change of Events remains above target, in-quarter performance continued to improve. The average processing time between October and December was 5.3 days, just slightly over the target. While further reductions are expected, the cumulative nature of the measure means it is unlikely to return within target before the end of the financial year.

Housing Benefit continues to experience pressure, driven by the complexity of cases and the volume of DWP-mandated Full Claim Reviews. Many of these reviews require extensive evidence, creating unavoidable delays even as the team works to keep cases moving. The remaining HB caseload is now highly concentrated among pension-age households and temporary accommodation, meaning fewer routine changes are coming through. With a smaller flow of day-to-day updates, any delay has a sharper impact on overall processing times, though the team continues to prioritise the most time-sensitive and higher-risk cases.

To strengthen financial resilience for residents, the Council continued to deliver targeted support through the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) during the quarter. Key campaigns included:

- Benefit Maximisation – Targeted outreach to households receiving Universal Credit who are not currently claiming Council Tax Reduction, encouraging take-up of available support.
- Financial Hardship Intervention – Proactive engagement with residents in Council Tax arrears to promote applications to the Council Tax Reduction Hardship Fund.
- Pension Credit Outreach – Direct contact with residents who may be eligible for Pension Credit to provide guidance and increase benefit take-up.
- Accuracy and Assurance – Ongoing checks on Severe Disability entitlements within the benefits system continued, with no impact on Quarter 3 performance.

These campaigns are helping the Council proactively identify financially vulnerable households and ensure residents receive the support they are entitled to.

**Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (42.65% against a target of 30%)**



Between October and December, ten planning appeals were determined. Of these, two were allowed in favour of the applicant, giving an allowance rate of 20% for the quarter. As this measure is cumulative, from April to December a total of 34 appeals have been decided, with 14 allowed and 1 split decision, resulting in a cumulative allowance rate of 42.65%. This figure may fluctuate throughout the year as more appeal decisions are 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. Currently, the Council is below the threshold for both major and non-major appeals, sitting at around 1.5% and 0.8%, respectively.

**Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (41 delivered against a target of 75).**

In Cotswold, twenty-one affordable homes were delivered during Q3, bringing the year-to-date total to forty-one. This included 6 homes by Sanctuary in Down Ampney and 15 homes by Cottsway Housing Association in Moreton-in-Marsh. Projections from Registered Providers show 70 completions for 2025/26, well below the 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.



**Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (46.98% against a target of 90%)**

The Council's performance against the 10-day target for completing official Land Charges searches declined in Q2, falling from 76.07% in Q2 to 46.98%, below the 90% target.

This was primarily due to the loss of a member of the Land Charges team in September, which created a significant backlog at a time when search volumes remained steady.

Additional administrative support from Customer Services and the Support Services Team has since helped stabilise the service by allowing specialist officers to focus on clearing older cases and managing workflow more effectively.

Following the sharp downturn in September, the Council has shown a clear and sustained recovery. Performance rose from 17% in September to 72% in December, indicating that service levels are steadily returning toward expected standards.

**Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (73.17% against a target of 90%)**

During Q3, the Council responded to 73.17% of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests within the 20-day timeframe, a decline from 82.61% in Q1 and below the target of 90%. The majority of requests continue to be directed toward Development Management, Environmental Services (ERS), Revenues and Benefits and Housing, reflecting sustained public interest in these areas.

To strengthen transparency and improve FOI performance, the Council is taking a proactive approach to reviewing internal processes and identifying opportunities for improvement. This includes exploring ways to streamline request handling, enhance coordination across high-volume service areas, and reinforce awareness of statutory response times. By embedding best practices and promoting a culture of responsiveness, the Council aims to restore compliance with national standards and ensure residents continue to receive timely access to information.

**Percentage of household waste recycled (55.64% against a target of 61%)**

During Q3, the Council's household recycling rate fell by 2.5% compared to the same quarter last year, reflecting a wider national trend influenced by seasonal and structural factors.



Despite the recent dip, the Council continues to demonstrate strong performance. According to the latest 2023/24 national results on local authority waste management, the district ranks within the top 25 councils in England for household recycling and remains firmly in the top quartile nationwide. This achievement underscores the Council's sustained commitment to environmental stewardship and effective waste management practices.

Nationally, recycling rates continue to vary widely: in 2023/24, councils in England recorded household recycling rates ranging from 15.8% to 62.9%, with a national average of 42.2%, highlighting the considerable spread between the highest- and lowest-performing areas. Against this backdrop, Cotswold continues to perform strongly with a recycling rate of 57.1%, placing the district firmly within the top tier nationally.

**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 13 April 2026. 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)