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| Council name | COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL |
| Name and date of Committee | PLANNING AND LICENCING COMMITTEE – JUNE 2026 |
| Subject | LOCAL ENFORCEMENT PLAN 2026 – 2028 |
| Wards affected | All |
| Accountable member | Councillor Juliet Layton - Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning |
| Accountable officer | Harrison Bowley – Head of Planning Services |
| Report author | Harrison Bowley – Head of Planning Services |
| Summary/Purpose | <p>This report presents the Council’s draft Local Enforcement Plan 2026–2028 for endorsement. The Plan establishes a clear and proportionate framework for investigating and responding to alleged breaches of planning control, in line with national guidance and best practice.</p> <p>The document sets out how enforcement cases will be prioritised, managed and resolved, ensuring that resources are focused on addressing breaches that cause the greatest harm while maintaining transparency and consistency in decision-making.</p> <p>The Planning Committee is asked to endorse the Plan as the Council’s formal policy approach to planning enforcement for the period 2026–2028.</p> |
| Annexes | Annex A – Local Enforcement Plan 2026 - 2028 |
| Recommendation(s) | That the Planning and Licencing Committee resolves to: 1. Endorse the Local Enforcement Plan |
| Corporate priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivering Good Services |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivering Housing• Supporting Communities |
| Key Decision | NO |
| Consultees/ Consultation | <p>No formal public or stakeholder consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this document. The Local Enforcement Plan does not introduce new policy or change the statutory powers available to the Council, but instead sets out how existing legislative powers and national guidance will be applied in practice.</p> <p>As such, the document is an operational framework intended to provide clarity and transparency on current processes rather than to establish new policy requirements. Internal officer input has informed its preparation to ensure alignment with relevant legislation, national guidance, and service delivery considerations.</p> |



1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** This report presents the Council's updated Local Enforcement Plan for the period 2026–2028. The Plan sets out how the Council will investigate and respond to alleged breaches of planning control, providing a clear, transparent framework for decision-making and service delivery.
- 1.2** Members are reminded that, due to the confidential nature of planning enforcement investigations and the need to maintain their integrity, it would not be appropriate to discuss or refer to specific cases when considering this report. The purpose of this item is to consider and endorse the overarching policy framework only, rather than individual enforcement matters.
- 1.3** The Plan reflects national guidance and reinforces that planning enforcement is discretionary, with action taken where it is proportionate, expedient, and in the public interest. It is not a punitive process, but one focused on remedying harm and maintaining confidence in the planning system.
- 1.4** Key elements of the Plan include:
- Clear principles for enforcement: ensuring decisions are proportionate, consistent, transparent, accountable and targeted.
 - Defined scope of enforcement: clarifying what constitutes a breach of planning control and what falls outside the Council's remit.
 - Prioritisation framework: introducing a structured triage system and priority categories so that resources are focused on cases causing the greatest harm, with defined response targets.
 - Investigation process: setting out how cases are assessed, including a strong emphasis on resolving matters informally where appropriate before progressing to formal action.
 - Transparency for service users: outlining how reports can be made, what information is required, and what complainants and those subject to investigation can expect.
- 1.5** The Plan also reflects recent legislative changes, including updated time limits for enforcement action introduced through the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- 1.6** Overall, the document provides a clear and robust framework to ensure that enforcement activity is fair, proportionate, and focused on addressing harm, while making best use of limited resources.



1.7 For clarity, this report does not seek to review or assess the operational performance of the planning enforcement service. The purpose of the report is solely to present the draft Local Enforcement Plan 2026–2028 and to seek the Committee’s endorsement of the proposed policy framework. Matters relating to service performance are considered separately through the Council’s established performance monitoring and management processes.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1 To continue operating without an updated Local Enforcement Plan: This option is not preferred because it would reduce clarity and transparency for Members, service users and officers about how alleged breaches are prioritised, investigated and resolved. It would also miss the opportunity to formally align the Council’s approach with recent legislative changes, including updated enforcement time limits and a clearer triage and prioritisation process.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The draft Local Enforcement Plan 2026–2028 provides a clear, proportionate and transparent framework for how the Council will investigate and respond to alleged breaches of planning control.

3.2 Endorsing the Plan will ensure that enforcement activity is guided by an up-to-date policy framework that reflects current legislation, national guidance and the need to focus limited resources on cases causing the greatest planning harm.

3.3 The Committee is therefore invited to endorse the Local Enforcement Plan as the Council’s formal approach to planning enforcement for the period 2026–2028.

4. EQUALITIES IMPACT

4.1 The draft Local Enforcement Plan does not create new enforcement powers or new planning policy; rather, it sets out how existing statutory powers will be applied in a clear, consistent and proportionate way. In doing so, it supports the Council’s duties under the Equality Act 2010 by helping to ensure that decisions are made fairly,



transparently and on the basis of planning harm and material considerations, rather than personal characteristics. There are no specific adverse impacts identified for any protected characteristic group.

- 4.2** In implementing the Plan, officers will need to remain mindful of the Public Sector Equality Duty, including the need to make reasonable adjustments where required, communicate in an accessible way, and have due regard to the needs of vulnerable individuals when carrying out investigations and engagement. Enforcement activity must also be compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998, in particular the rights to respect for private and family life and the peaceful enjoyment of possessions, balanced against the wider public interest in maintaining confidence in the planning system. On that basis, no separate Equalities Impact Assessment is considered necessary for endorsement of this operational framework, although equality and human rights considerations will continue to be taken into account in individual casework and decision-making.

5. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Climate and ecological emergency implications of this report:

- Impact on land use, wildlife and habitats
- Changes to energy use in buildings
- Use of any renewable energy (e.g. solar panels)

- 5.2** The Enforcement Plan will not result in any negative impacts upon the aforementioned emergencies, but will create a framework that seeks the proportionate enforcement of planning regulations and decisions, which are made in the public interest in order to deliver sustainable development

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1** The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- Cotswold District Council Local Enforcement Plan January 2018



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6.2 These documents will be available for inspection online at www.cotswold.gov.uk or by contacting democratic services democratic@cotswold.gov.uk for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.

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