



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:
April 2021 - June 2021

A note on performance benchmarking

Benchmarking can be a useful tool for driving improvement; by comparing our performance with other similar organisations, we can start a discussion about what good performance might look like, and why there might be variations, as well as learning from other organisations about how they operate (process benchmarking).

A selection of readily available benchmarking data for the most recent period (2019-20) was included in the 2020-21 Q4 performance report on a trial basis. The 2020-21 benchmarking data has started to be released and will continue over the year until around December 2021. An annual exercise will be undertaken to update the CIPFA benchmarking charts and the Shire Districts' median /top quartile lines.

Two comparator groups that are commonly used to benchmark Councils' performance are: all shire district councils and CIPFA Nearest Neighbours (NN). The CIPFA NN Model is based on family groups; it adopts a scientific approach to measuring the similarity between councils taking into account a range of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. The standard model provides the 15 nearest neighbours to each council. In contrast, the all shire districts comparator group is a much larger dataset of 192 councils, and there will inevitably be a much greater variation between the councils in this group.

When we embark on performance benchmarking, it is important to understand that we are often looking at one aspect of performance i.e. the level of performance achieved. Although the CIPFA NN Model groups councils on the basis of similarity, these factors are external and based on 'place'. The model does not take into account how services are resourced or compare in terms of quality or level of service delivered, for example, how satisfied are residents and customers? Furthermore, each council is unique with its own vision, aim and priorities, and services operate within this context.

Therefore, benchmarking data should be viewed as a 'guide' and as a starting point for discussion. It is important to understand performance within context, and there will be a variety of internal factors that determine performance including costs, workloads and quality.

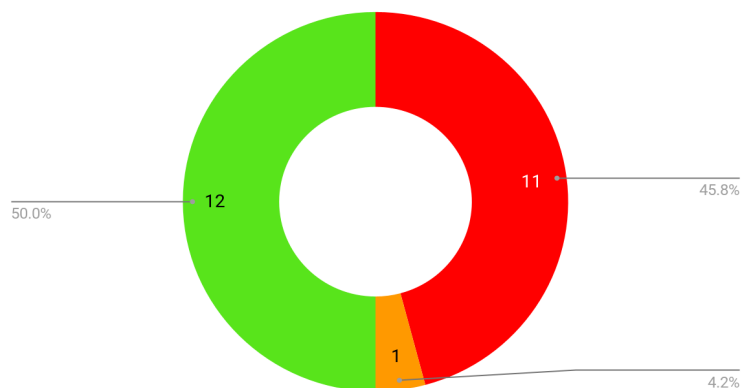
Note

The data benchmarks have been extracted from LG Inform, a benchmarking tool, which contains a range of routinely published data. The median and top (best 25%) quartile lines are based on annual outturns but applied to the quarterly data.

KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS

At a glance...

Summary of Performance



OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Although the 19 July marked the end of the lockdown restrictions, with high infection rates over the last few weeks, the majority of staff are continuing to work from home which is still presenting a challenge for some services such as planning.

Overall, performance has been mixed over the last six months. There has been a shortage of resources in some services to deal with high workloads; for example, there has been an upward trend in both planning applications and land charge searches since summer 2020. Backlogs have built up in some services due to a number of reasons including the suspension of site visits due to the pandemic e.g. Food Safety; as well as backlogs that built up while implementing new systems e.g. Benefits team.

Some services such as Planning and Food Safety have found it difficult to recruit to vacant posts. The Benefits team was able to access some external resources from Civica OnDemand, and further requests have been made. Temporary staff will be used to reduce the backlog of HB change events

Indicators with targets	Status
Customer satisfaction - phones	Green
Customer satisfaction - F2F	No data
Customer satisfaction - website	Red
Satisfaction for Building Control service	Green
CT collection rate	Green
NNDR collection rate	Red
Average days to process CTS new claims	Red
Average days to process CTS change events	Red
Average days to process HB change events	Red
% HB overpayment	Green
% major applications determined within time	Red
% minor applications determined within time	Red
% others applications determined within time	Red
Total planning income	Orange
Pre-application advice income	Red
% appeals allowed	Green
Affordable homes delivered	Green
% land charge searches dispatched within time	Red
% high risk notifications assessed within time	Green
% high risk food premises inspected within time	Red
Residual waste per household (kg)	Awaiting data
% combined recycling rate	Awaiting data
Missed bins per 100,000	Green
Leisure visits	Green
Gym memberships	Green
Parking enforcement hours	Green

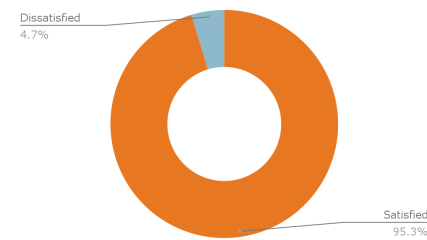
CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer satisfaction

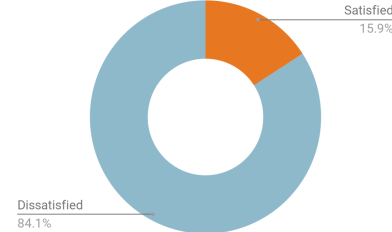
Face to face - no surveys due to Covid19



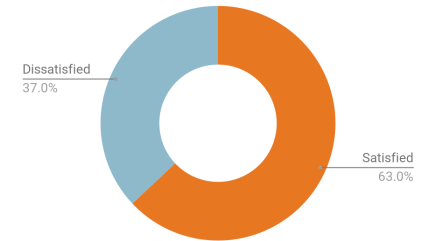
Phone - 171 respondents



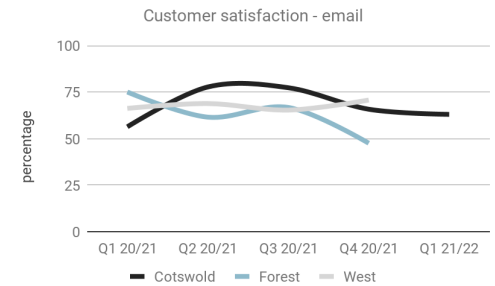
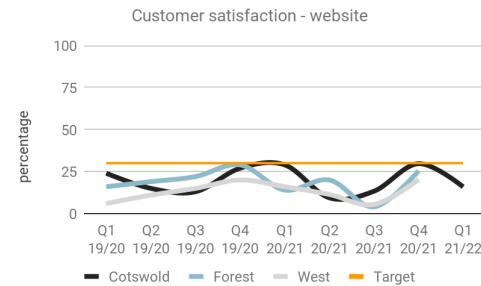
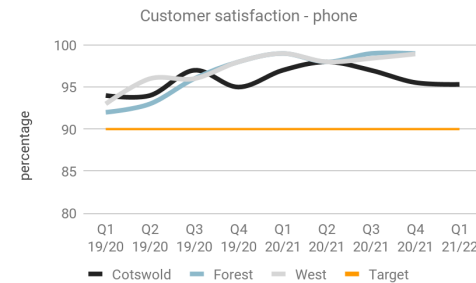
Website - 208 respondents



Email - 254 respondents



What's the trend?



OBSERVATION:

Due to Covid-19, the Council closed its reception areas in March 2020 and therefore face to face surveys were temporarily suspended. The nation emerged from the third lockdown on the 29 March 2021 in phased stages; and although Trinity Road and Moreton Area Centre re-opened to customers from 12 April 2021, usage is currently low. As 19 July marked the end of the lockdown restrictions, the service is considering re-commencing face to face surveys.

Overall, satisfaction ratings for services delivered via the phone continue to be high, while satisfaction for services via the website appears to be low. The number of feedback responses continues to be extremely low compared to the large proportion of visitors to the website. The 'Dissatisfied' feedback received this quarter was again analysed to establish the cause (website content issues, data processing issues, failure in service provision, user error etc.). These findings are being collated and will feed into a new digital take up framework in which a range of channel shift data including web service interaction information will form a baseline which can then be continually monitored to give a more accurate picture of digital take up across our online services. This data will then enable us to understand where we can do more targeted feedback around particular online services to ultimately improve the online take up and change behaviours to a digital first approach.

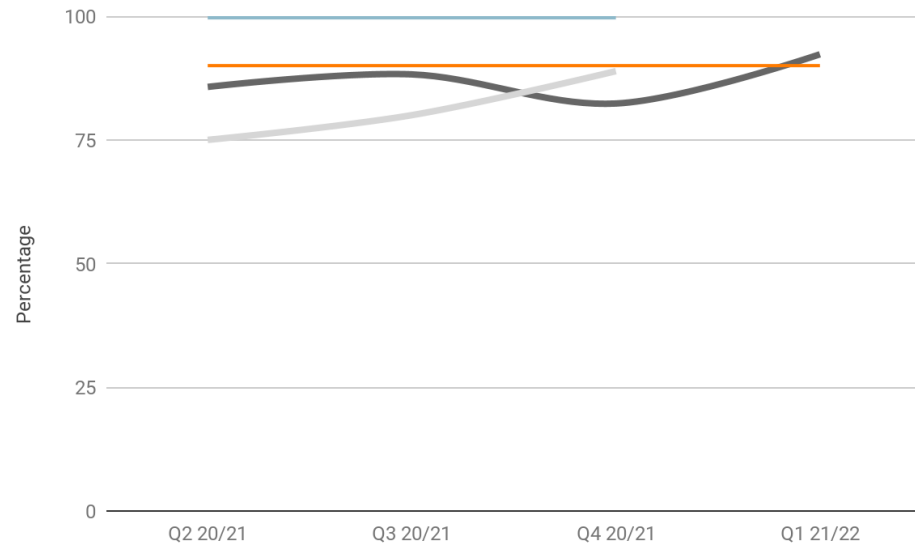
Customer satisfaction for the Building Control service

Cotswold Target

Cotswold

Forest of Dean

West Oxfordshire

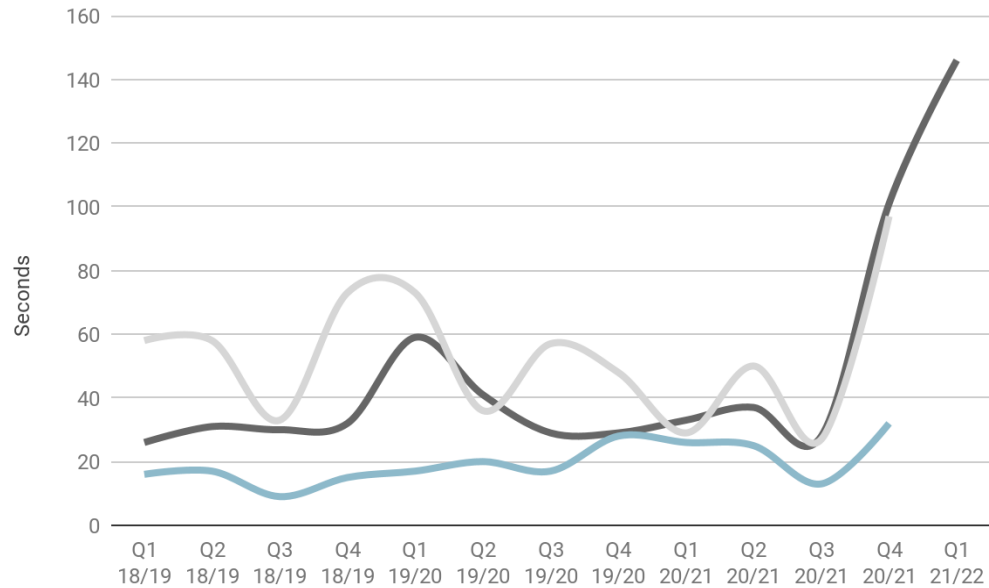


OBSERVATION:

Each month, the service conducts telephone interviews with customers who have received a completion certificate during the month. The customer rates the service on helpfulness of staff, quality of technical advice and other information, responsiveness, value for money, and overall satisfaction.

The Q1 data indicated that 12 out of 13 customers were fully satisfied with service, and one was partly satisfied. Overall, satisfaction for the service is high amongst those surveyed; however, the low number of survey responses will make it more difficult to consistently achieve the target of 90%

Telephone calls - average waiting time



OBSERVATION

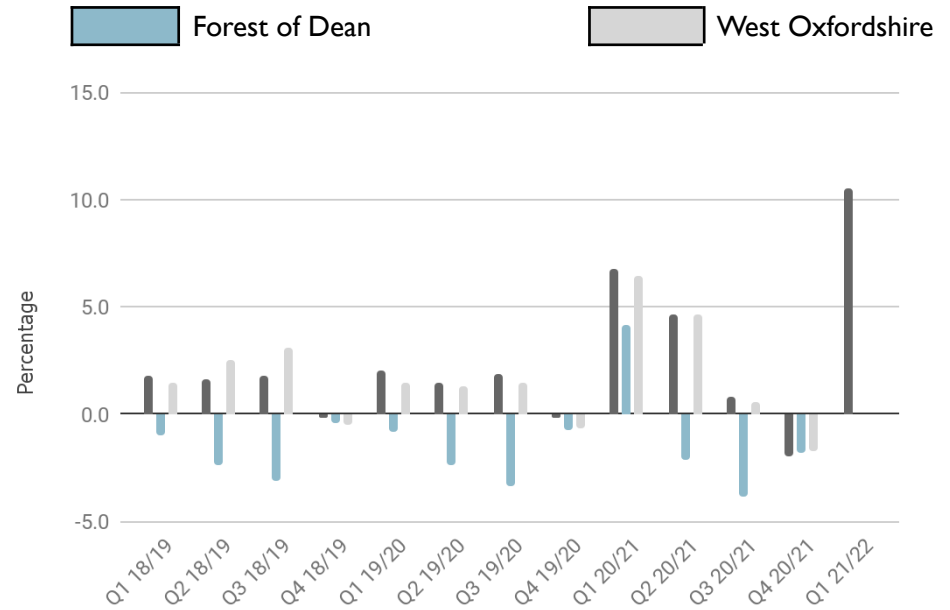
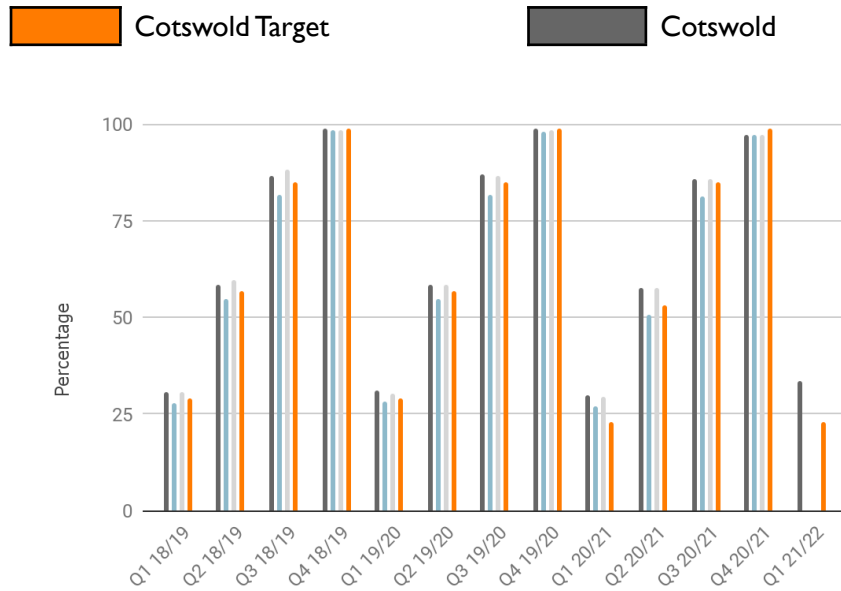
The service reviewed its indicators and targets in preparation for 2021/22 to ensure that they are appropriate to customers' needs; so for example, ensuring that satisfaction for our services remains high while also taking into account the benefits of channel shift and providing more options for accessing our services. Over the next few months, officers will be developing a framework for measuring digital take-up so that we can understand better the impact of digitisation on demand for customer services.

The average wait time has increased over the last six months but has now started to improve. In July, the average wait time reduced significantly to 71 seconds; and our understanding is that a wait time under three minutes is considered to be good standard for local authorities (GovMetric). The service will shortly start work to identify causes, as well as solutions to reduce call waiting time.

Workloads are generally higher in the fourth quarter due to normal annual billing processes, and call volumes related to Covid-19 also increased. Issues with turnover of staff in Q4 have mostly been addressed, however, another recruitment drive is required; staff in this service take opportunities to progress to other roles in the organisation or secondments. Furthermore, it takes around six months to train each advisor with significant support required from experienced staff

Revenues and Benefits

(Cumulative) Percentage of council tax collected & the difference between the percentage of council tax collected and the target



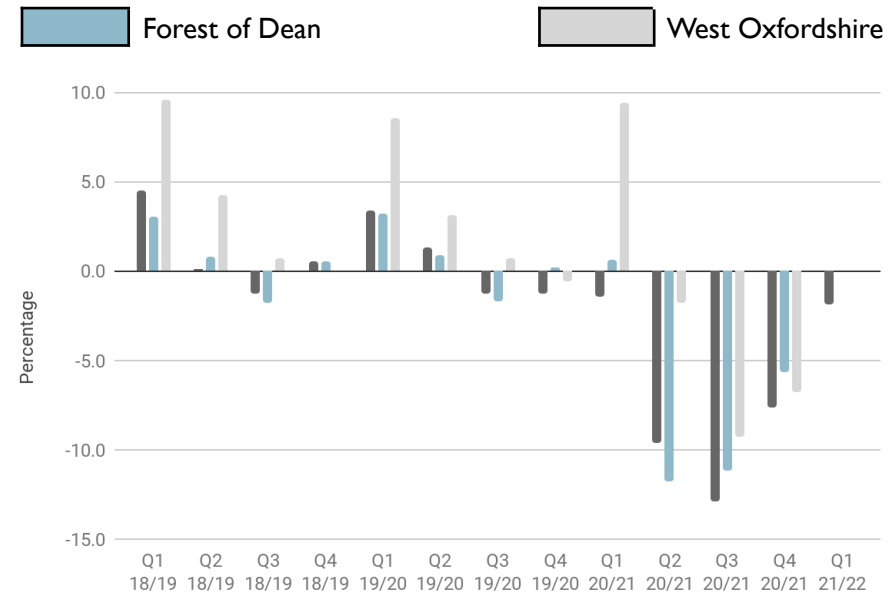
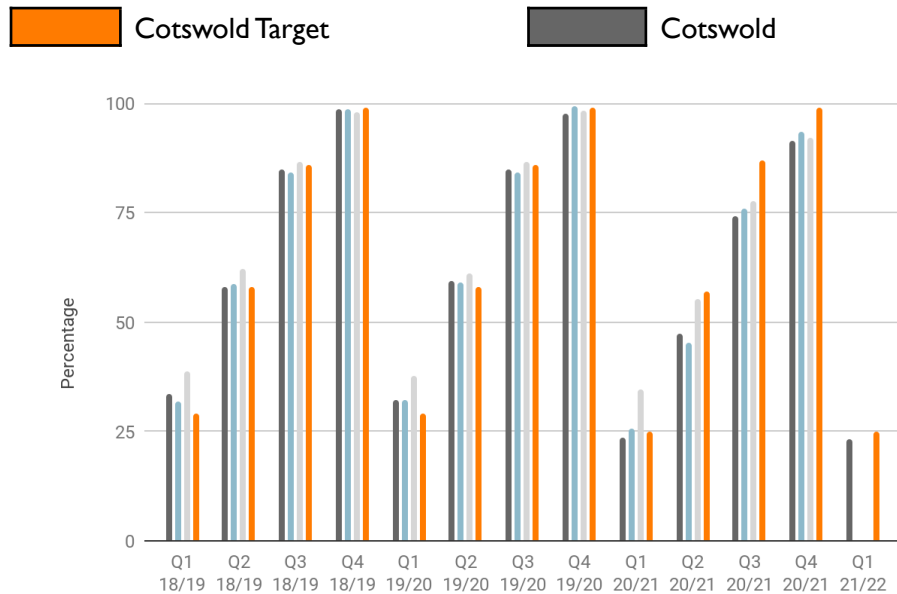
OBSERVATION:

The collection rate appears to be returning to more normal levels, and is up on the same period of the previous year, and historically.

The service continues to support residents, contacting customers by phone and email, as well as including a letter with reminders to encourage customers to contact the Council if they are experiencing problems with council tax payments.

Recovery action re-commenced at the beginning of Q1; and Magistrates Courts have re-opened for liability order hearings

(Cumulative) Percentage of business rates collected & the difference between the percentage of business rates collected and the target



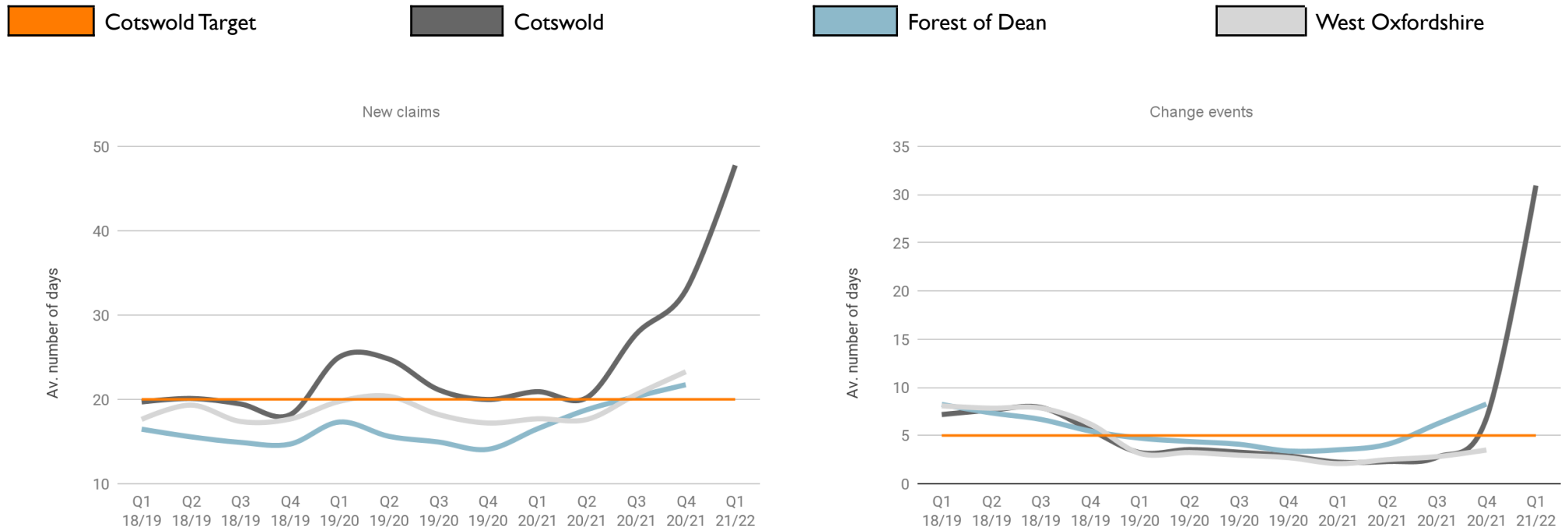
OBSERVATION:

At the end of Q1, the collection of business rates continues to be lower than pre-Covid times. In addition, the Council has had to make some refunds due to changes in rateable value.

The service is continuing to support businesses; sending out reminders, phoning and emailing businesses to encourage them to contact the Council so that we can support them via manageable repayment plans. The Magistrates Courts have re-opened for liability order hearings which will mean the Council can start to formal recovery action and enforce debts that are owed.

The Government has helped certain businesses with 100% business rate relief; the relief was reduced to 66% at the end of June 2021 for the remainder of the financial year. In addition, the window for applying for business grants closed at the end of June with final payments by the end of July 2021

(Cumulative) Average number of days taken to process Council Tax Support new claims and change events



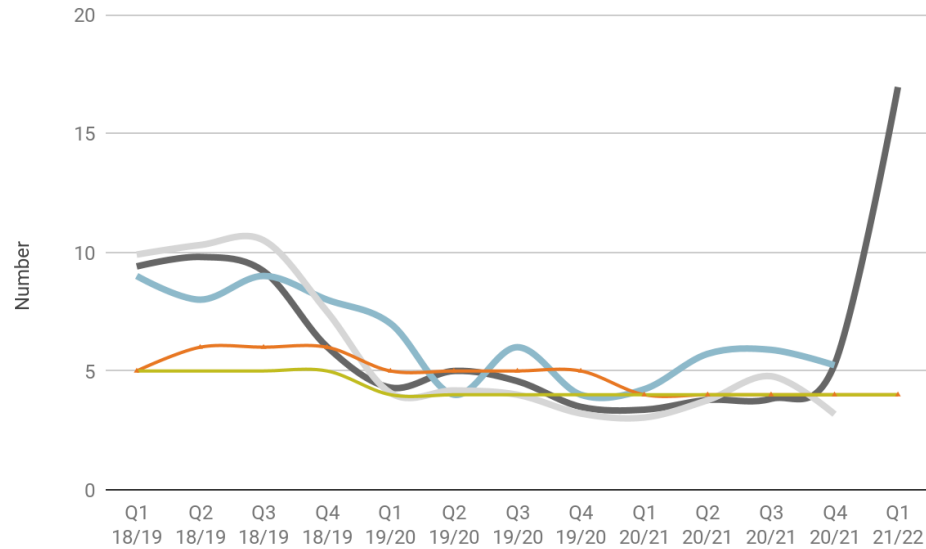
OBSERVATION:

Processing times have increased due to high workloads in the service due to a combination of reasons, as well as a backlog that built up during the implementation of the new revenues and benefits system. Since the start of the pandemic, Universal Credit claims have doubled which has resulted in a significant increase in CTS new claims and changes. In addition, the team has had to prioritise the administration of discretionary housing payments and providing welfare support to the Council's most vulnerable residents.

The backlog is being managed and cleared with the support of Civica OnDemand, and further resources have been requested; however, many councils are trying to access additional resources at this time. Furthermore, team members are still involved in systems work related to the new revenues and benefits system, as well as processing 'Test and Trace' claims which was due to finish at the end of June but has been extended to the end of September. Changes of circumstance have also been impacted by an automated software failure which is discussed in more detail on the following page.

The aims of the new revenues and benefits system are to improve service delivery and make efficiencies and this is still anticipated as workloads ease post pandemic. The new system has been implemented which allows resources to be directed to where it needs to be; and work continues on the open portal which will offer better facilities for clients to self-serve, which is expected to reduce service workloads and improve processing times

(Cumulative) Average number of days taken to process Housing Benefit changes of circumstances



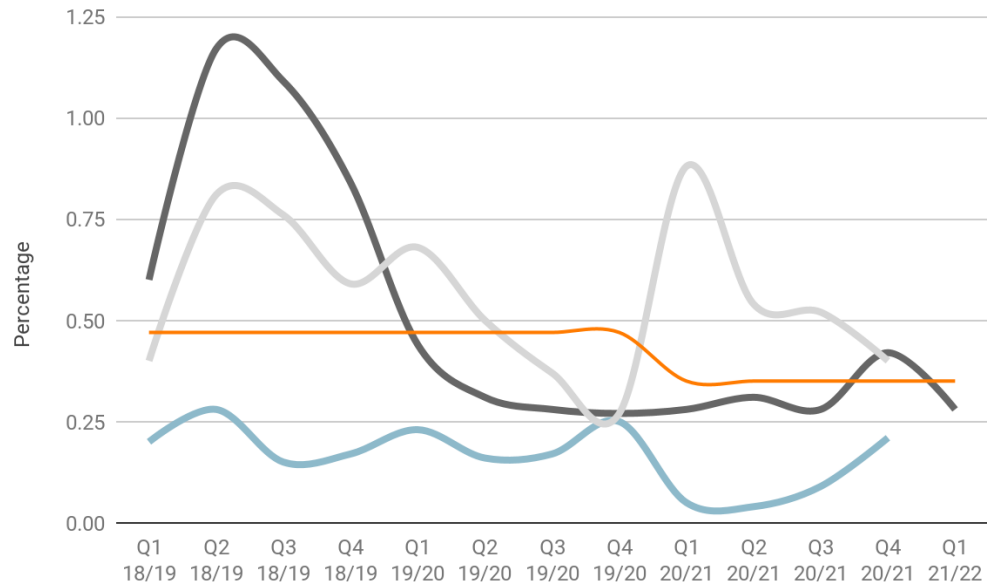
OBSERVATION:

Workloads are higher in Q1 due to end of year changes such as rent increases, pension amendments and earnings amendments; and additional workloads related to the implementation of the new revenues and benefits system, combined with Covid-19 related work, including processing 'Test and Trace' has continued to affect processing times. 'Test and Trace' was due to end on 30 June but has been extended to the end of September.

During the latest stage of the implementation of the new system, the facility to automatically upload and apply changes of circumstances to system records, has stopped functioning. Around 80% of changes are applied in this way which makes the process much more efficient than manual handling. This has now been resolved and should start to impact positively in Q2..

The backlog is being managed and cleared with the support of Civica OnDemand, and further resources have been requested. The service will also be using temporary staff to process the simpler cases and help reduce the backlog.

(Cumulative) Percentage of housing benefit overpayment due to LA error/Admin delay



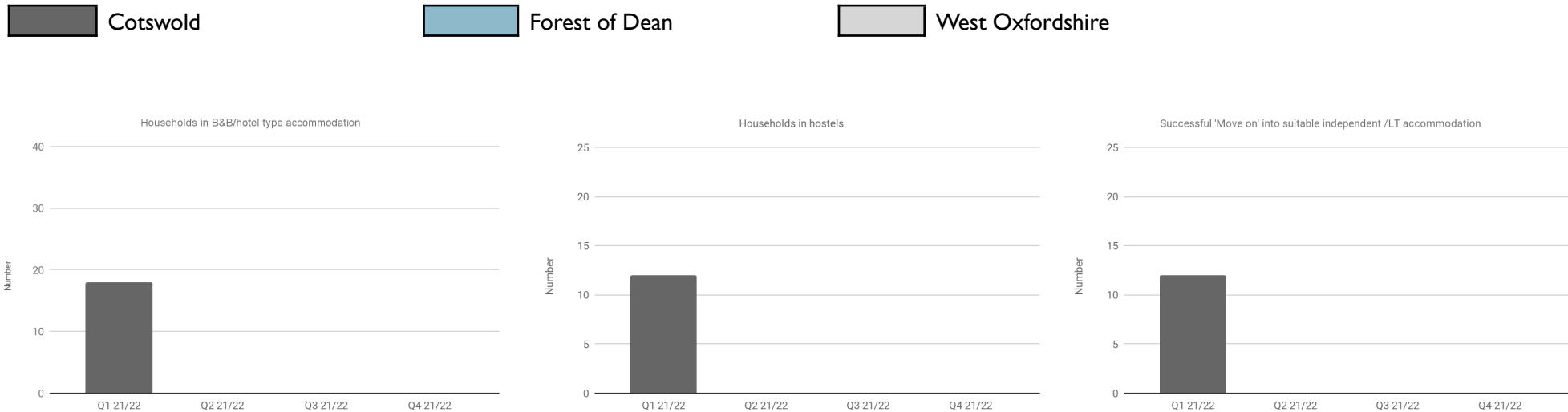
OBSERVATION:

Due to the high volume of HB change of circumstances, we take a sampling approach and target areas which we know have high error rates such as calculation of earnings.

Overall, the Council has performed well considering the backlog of HB change of circumstances that was created during the implementation of the new revenues and benefits system, and the potential for admin delay

Housing Support

(Snapshot) Number of households in B&B/hotel-type accommodation & Hostels (LA owned or managed); and Number of successful 'Move On' into suitable independent/long-term accommodation from B&Bs/hotels/hostels



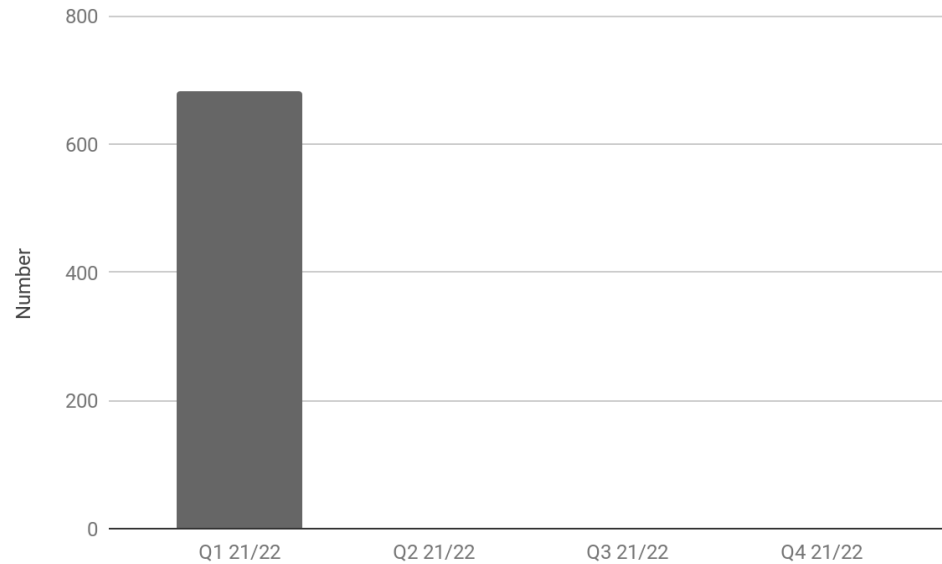
OBSERVATION:

At the beginning of the first lockdown, councils were required to place all clients who are rough sleeping or at risk of imminent homelessness regardless of priority need who have approached the Council, into emergency accommodation, which resulted in a spike in numbers.

The Housing Team created exit plans to move households into more secure tenancies including housing association, supported accommodation, and private rented accommodation. However, the availability of social housing stock is low due to low turnover and households not moving as much during the pandemic. It also takes time to prepare accommodation for new tenants. Furthermore, it is often difficult to place clients in private rented accommodation as these properties require a guarantor.

The County has received funding from MHCLG including funding for Next Steps Accommodation including Housing Led accommodation. The funding is being used to deliver accommodation for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping. Examples of schemes funded by this award are 'Somewhere Safe to Stay Hubs', support provided in specific housing properties to assist clients address issues preventing them from moving on into longer term tenancies, and countywide specialist officers who assist entrenched rough sleepers to 'come in' or provide upstream advice in order to prevent homelessness.

(Snapshot) Number of Long Term Empty properties (six months and over)



OBSERVATION:

The transition of the new Revenues and Benefits system from Northgate to Civica has presented the opportunity to cleanse the data including de-duplication, as well as streamlining the process for the three partner Councils. This work has identified inconsistencies in historical reporting; therefore, reporting will commence from Q1.

The new LTE officer (in post for three months) is contacting landlords/homeowners to ensure that the Council's data is accurate and up to date. Work is also being undertaken to segregate those properties where no further work is required; for example, Bromford is undertaking an intensive redevelopment of their older properties so some properties are awaiting demolition, Some properties such as retirement properties remain vacant.

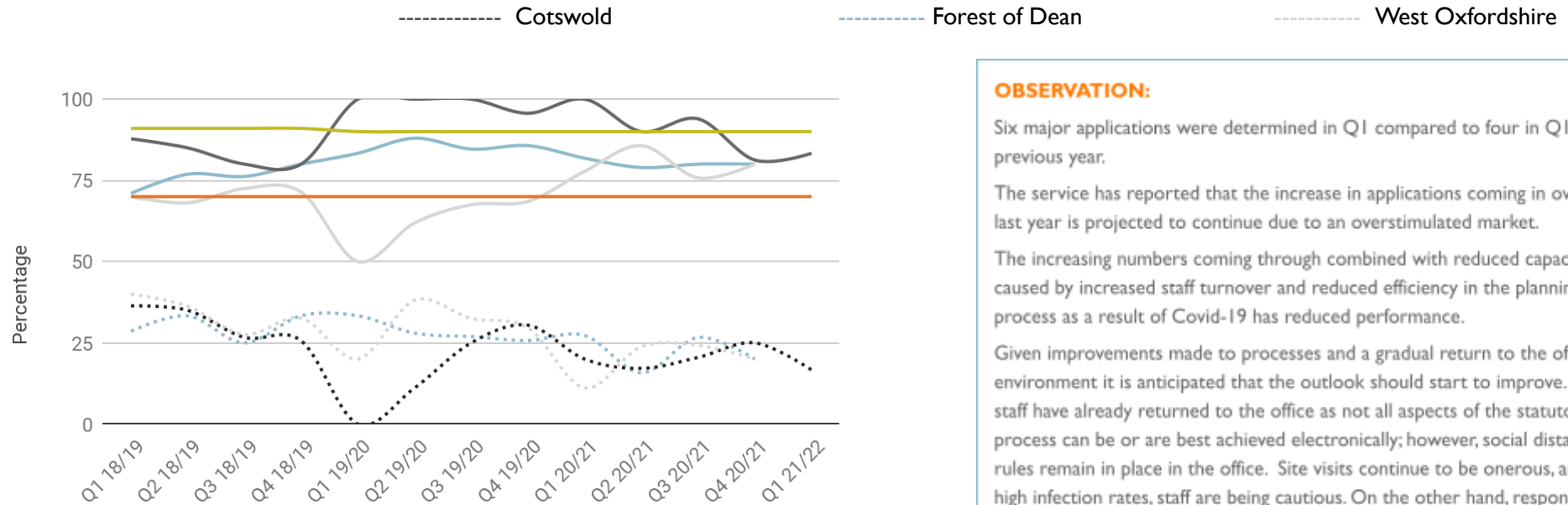
Planning and Strategic Housing

(Cumulative) Percentage of major planning applications determined

% of all applications completed within 13 weeks or an agreed timeframe



% of all application completed within 13 weeks



Note

The charts for the planning performance measures have been separated to demonstrate the number of applications that are completed within the set time frames and the number that are completed as a result of an agreed extension of time.

Extensions of times are often a result of consultees requesting changes to the scheme or because the consultee response is essential but has not been received within the timetable. They are also used where officers are working proactively with applicants to improve schemes and make developments acceptable

OBSERVATION:

Six major applications were determined in Q1 compared to four in Q1 in the previous year.

The service has reported that the increase in applications coming in over the last year is projected to continue due to an overstimulated market.

The increasing numbers coming through combined with reduced capacity caused by increased staff turnover and reduced efficiency in the planning process as a result of Covid-19 has reduced performance.

Given improvements made to processes and a gradual return to the office environment it is anticipated that the outlook should start to improve. Some staff have already returned to the office as not all aspects of the statutory process can be or are best achieved electronically; however, social distancing rules remain in place in the office. Site visits continue to be onerous, and due to high infection rates, staff are being cautious. On the other hand, response turnaround times from consultees such as the County and the Environment Agency have improved.

There are a number of improvement projects scheduled and underway which the Customer Experience Improvement Team (CEIT) will help to deliver alongside the planning service, which has already addressed the build up of applications awaiting validation and improved workflow in general.

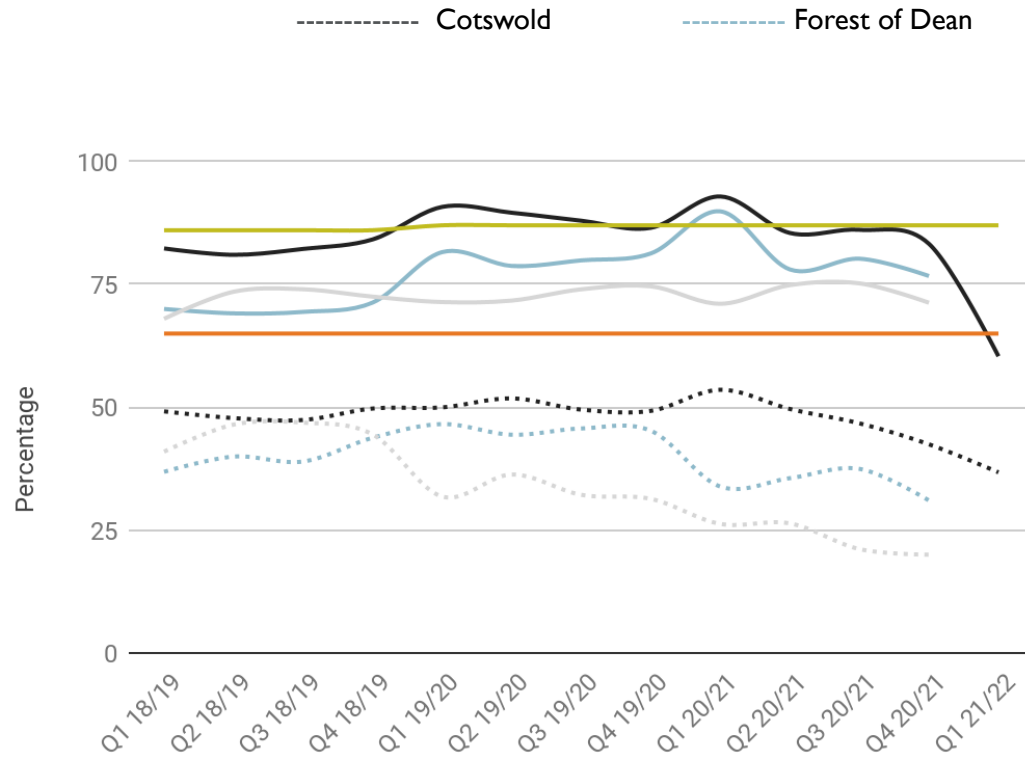
Furthermore, approval has been given for additional resources and recruitment has commenced

(Cumulative) Percentage of minor planning applications determined

% of all applications completed within 8 weeks or an agreed timescale



% of all applications completed within 8 weeks



OBSERVATION:

106 minor applications were determined in Q1 compared to 94 in Q1 of the previous year.

Due to high workloads, there has been an increase in the use of extensions of time.

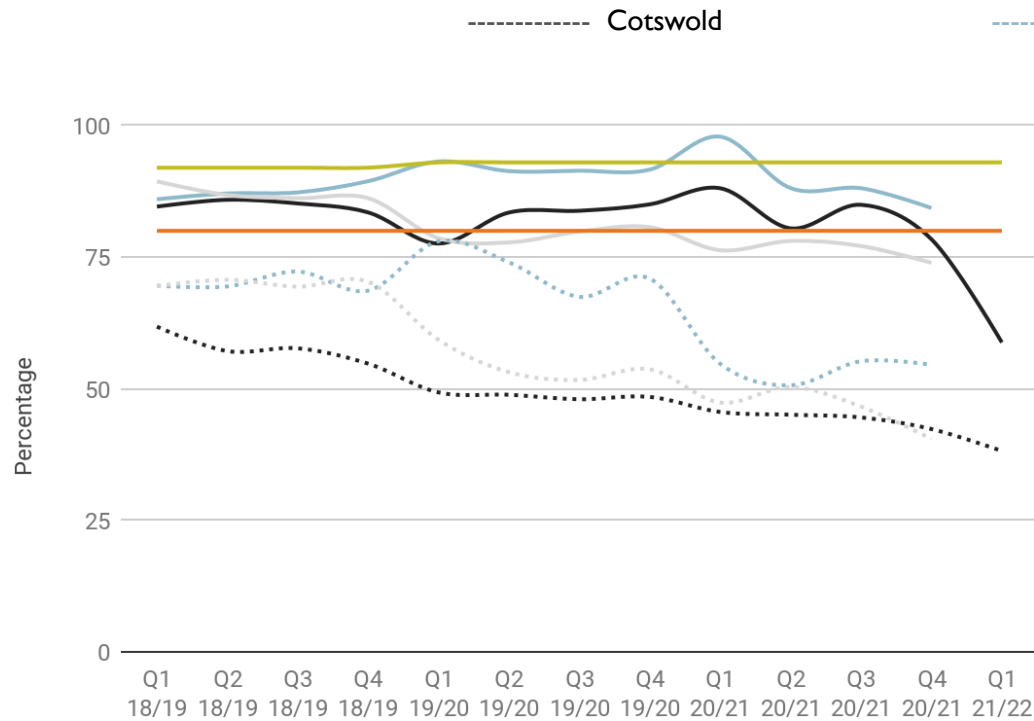
See Observation for Major applications for further explanation

(Cumulative) Percentage of other planning applications determined

% of all applications completed within 8 weeks or an agreed timescale



% of all applications completed within 8 weeks



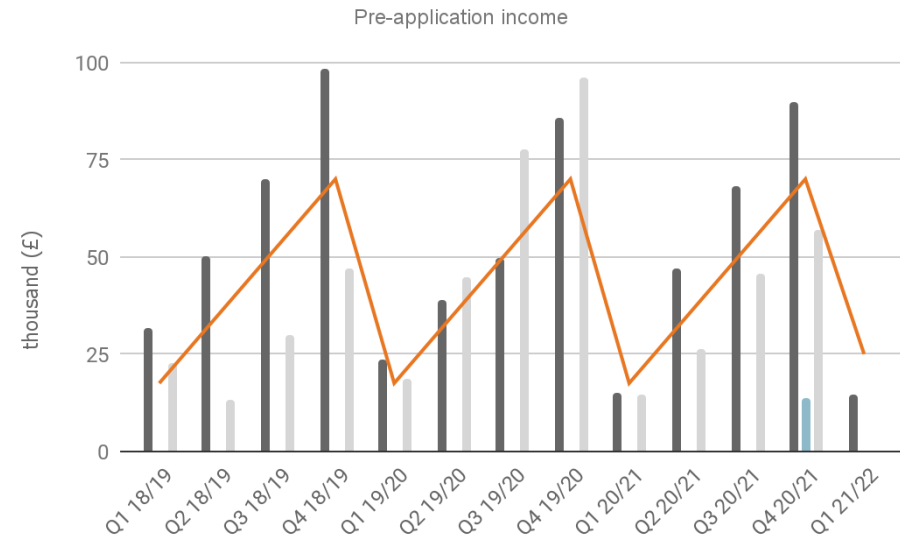
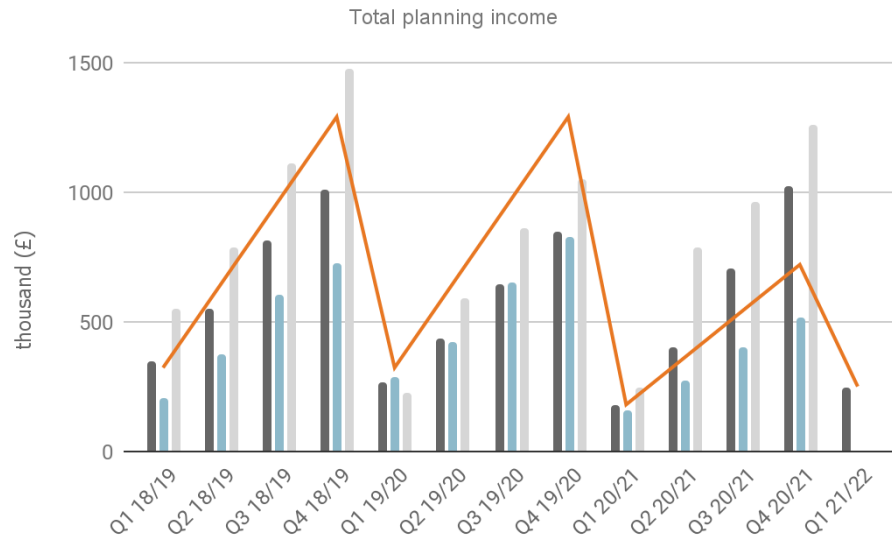
OBSERVATION:

364 other applications were determined in Q1 compared to 211 in Q1 of the previous year.

Due to high workloads, there has been an increase in the use of extensions of time.

See Observation for Major applications for further explanation

(Cumulative) Planning income



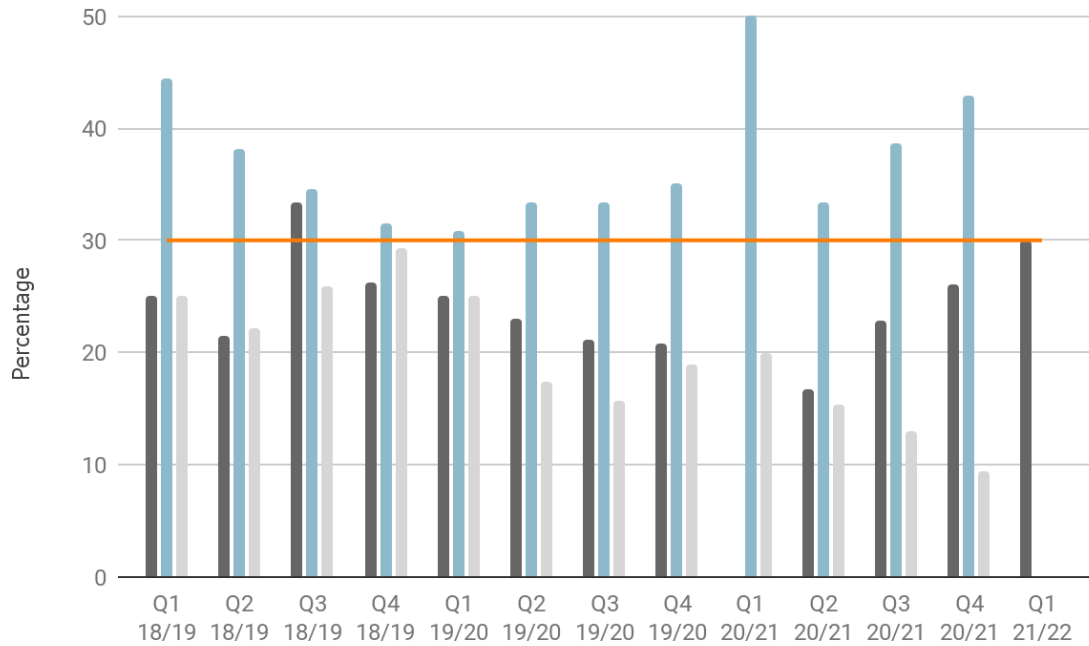
OBSERVATION:

At the end of Q1, total planning income, although marginally down on the target, was higher than the same quarter of the previous year when the number of planning applications dipped as the nation went into the first lockdown, and then rebounded over the summer months to the end of 2020-21.

The service reports that higher volumes are continuing to come through and are projected to remain at high levels. Although some vacant posts were filled during the quarter, there are still two vacant posts

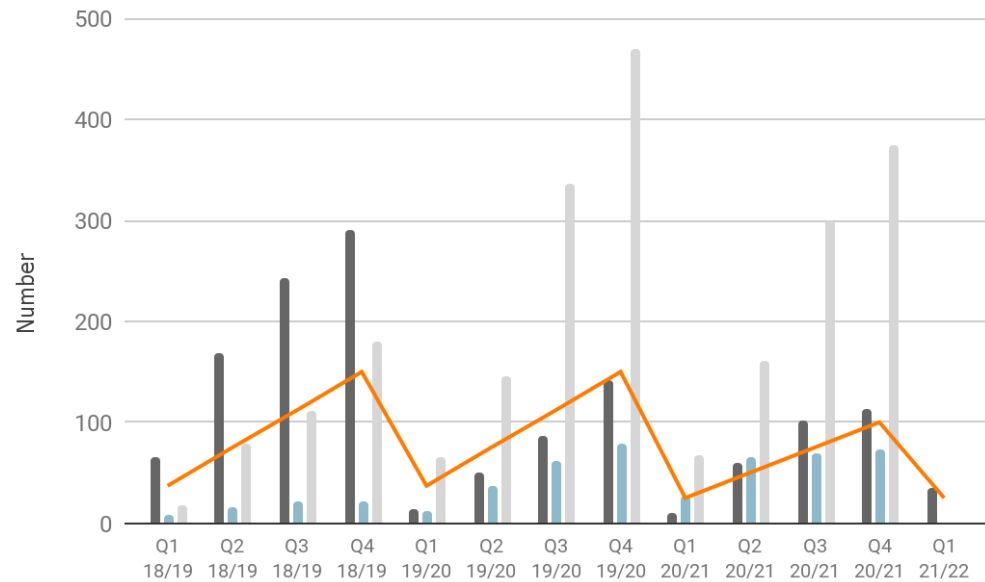
(Cumulative) Percentage of planning appeals allowed

Cotswold Target
 Cotswold
 Forest of Dean
 West Oxfordshire



OBSERVATION:
Three out of 10 planning appeals were allowed in Q1

(Cumulative) Number of affordable homes delivered



OBSERVATION:

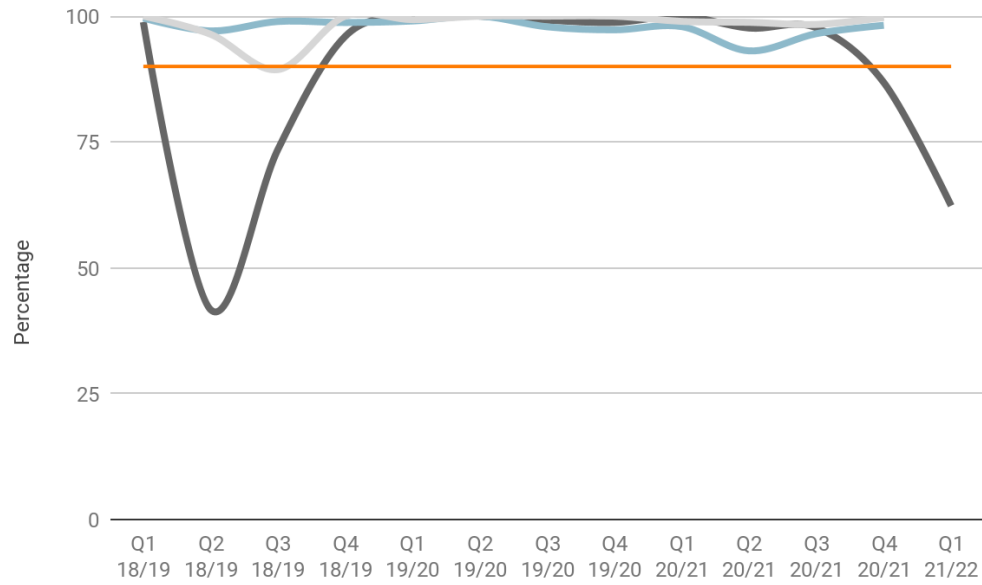
Thirty-five affordable homes were delivered in Q1 for families, couples and single people, including the final three social rented homes at Bath Rd, Tetbury, 14 rented and shared ownership homes in South Cerney including two social rent, and the first six affordable rented homes at the Dyers Lane site in Chipping Campden.

The Council also supported a bid to Homes England for grant funding to acquire unsold private market units which resulted in 12 new shared ownership homes in Moreton in Marsh, supporting delivery of the Council's affordable housing target and providing additional low cost home ownership properties in the District.

In addition, the first eight social rented homes commenced on the 100% affordable housing site at Quercus Rd, Tetbury.

As with many sectors, the construction industry has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, delaying work on site and new schemes commencing. This has effected the planned programme of completions for 2021/22. The majority of schemes due to complete were expected to start on site in 2020, however this did not happen. Those delayed sites are slowly beginning to come forward and the Council is working with Registered Provider partners to deliver the annual target of 100 homes

Percentage of land charge searches dispatched within 10 working days



OBSERVATION:

The service processed 446 official land charge searches in Q1; 278 searches were dispatched within 10 working days.

There was a significant fall in performance in Q1 due to reduced capacity in the service, which has since been resolved with the appointment of new team members. The data for July indicates that performance has returned to the previous high standard with all land charge searches processed within the target of 10 working days.

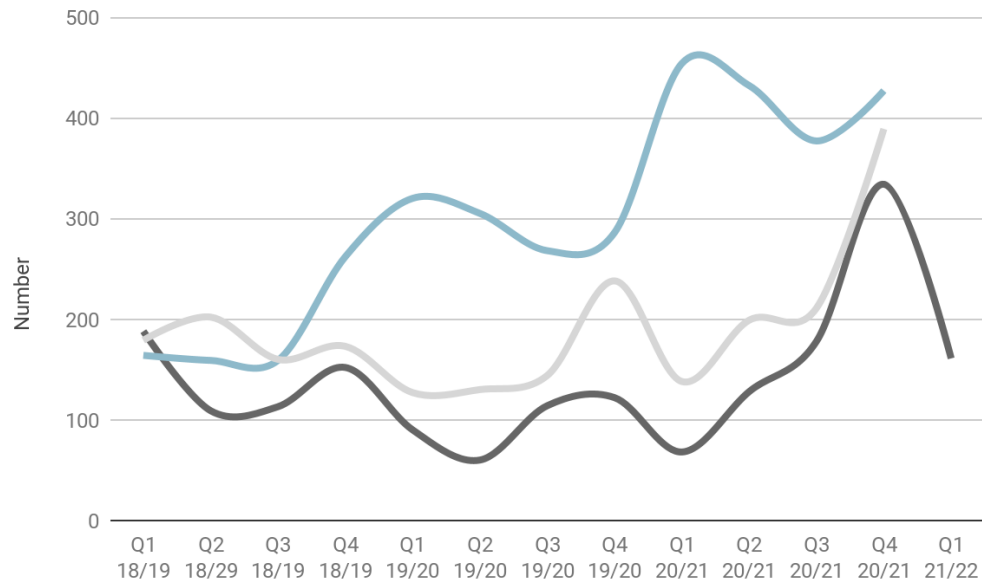
The service is still receiving higher volumes of land charge searches which is likely to be due to the 'stamp duty holiday' which will be phased out from the end of June 2021.

There was a dip in performance in 2018-19 as the planning element of the search had to be done manually while awaiting an upgrade to the Uniform system

Environmental and Regulatory

Number of fly tips collected

Cotswold Forest of Dean West Oxfordshire



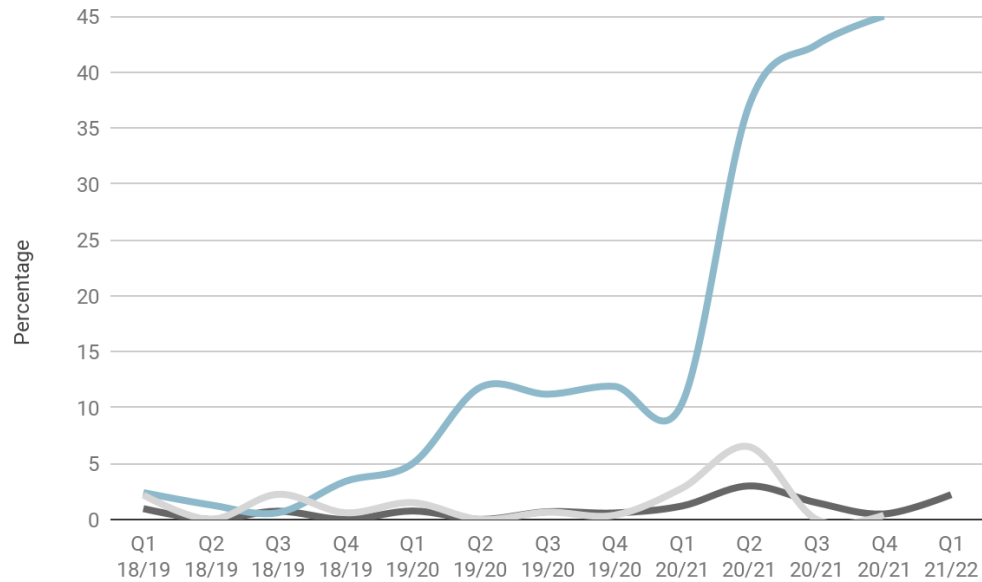
OBSERVATION:

An increase in fly tips has been reported nationally which coincided with the start of Covid-19, and this appeared to be reflected locally. In the most recent quarter, there has been a sharp decrease which again has coincided with the start of the lifting of restrictions in April 2021.

The Council has an Enviro-crime programme designed to tackle a range of enviro-crime including fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and dog fouling. Following a pause due to Covid-19, the Lead Officer has re-commenced duty of care work with businesses and households to support them to manage their waste responsibly; and more investigative work into fly tipping incidents is also being undertaken.

Forest of Dean appears to collect a higher number of fly tips than Cotswold and West as it counts fly tips at recycling sites

Percentage of fly tips that result in an enforcement action taking place (defined as a warning letter, fixed penalty notice, simple caution or prosecution)



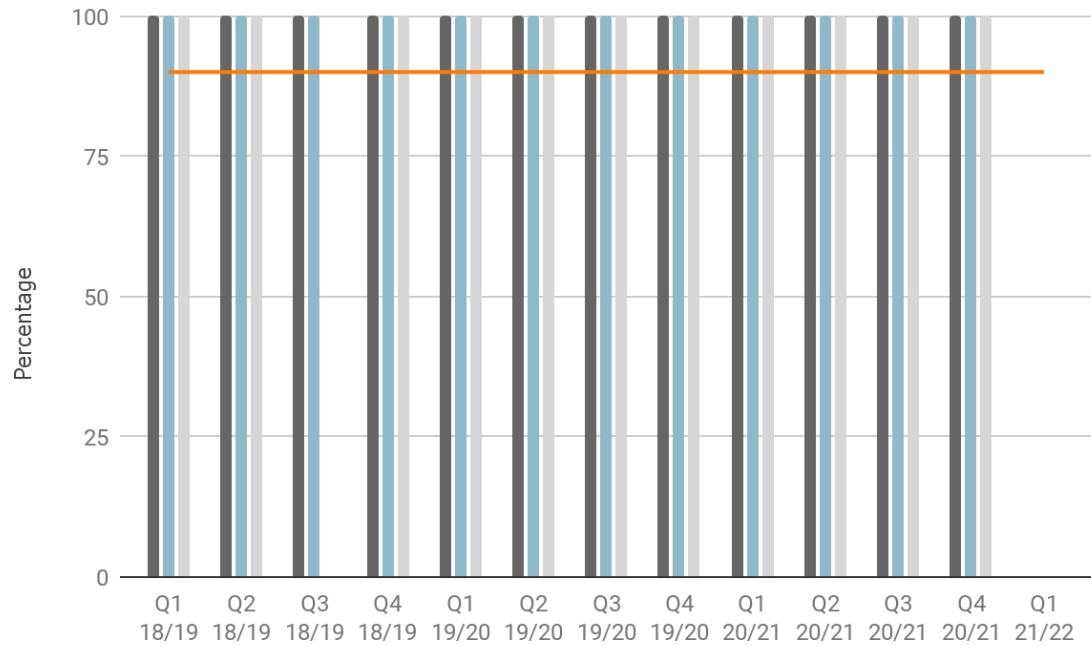
OBSERVATION:

There were 225 notifications of fly tips, down from 412 in the previous quarter; which resulted in five enforcement actions. Following a pause due to Covid-19, the Lead Officer has re-commenced duty of care work with businesses and households to support them to manage their waste responsibly; and more investigative work into fly tipping incidents is also being undertaken.

The Council will always take enforcement action if fly tipping is witnessed.

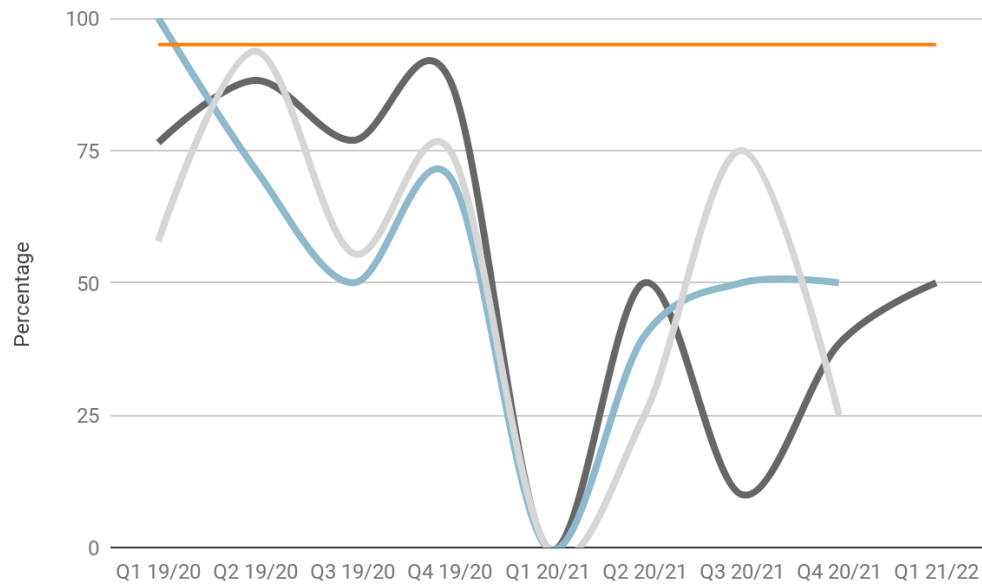
Currently, Cotswold and West operate a small multidisciplinary team. In contrast, at Forest of Dean, there is a dedicated Community Warden team. As part of Cotswold's new 'Clean and Green' agenda, there will be two new community warden type roles to support the Lead Enviro-Crime programmes officer in tackling fly tipping and other enviro-crimes

Percentage of high risk notifications (including food poisoning outbreaks, anti-social behaviour, contaminated private water supplies, workplace fatalities or multiple serious injuries) risk assessed within 1 working day



OBSERVATION:
There were no high risk notifications during Q1

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales



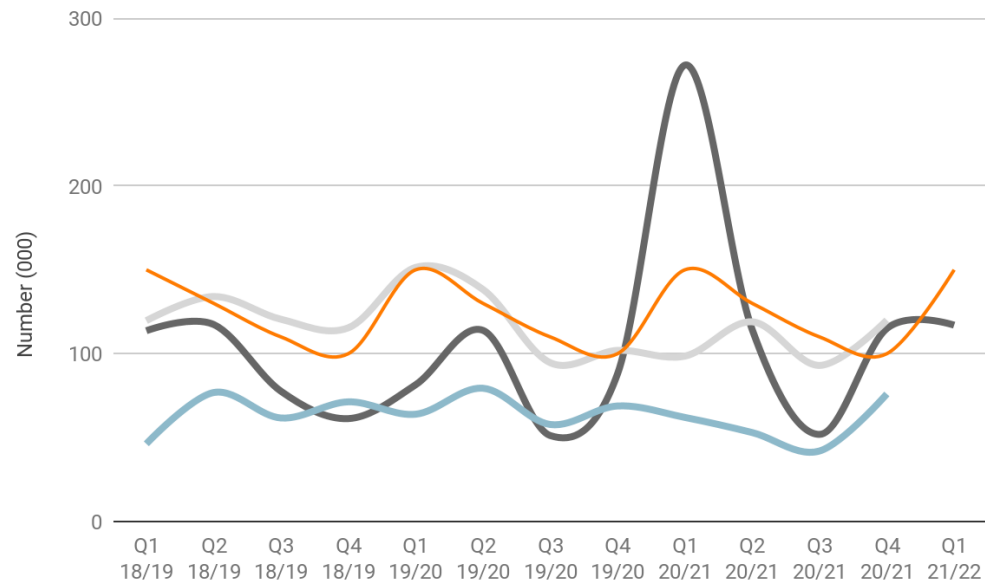
OBSERVATION:

During Q1, Cotswold completed one of the two high risk food inspections due within the timescale; the other inspection has since been completed. There is a small backlog of high risk food inspections which have received a remote inspection but require a site inspection. These inspections have been prioritised.

The FSA has put in place a recovery plan to ensure that both new businesses are prioritised based on risk; and the backlog of the highest risk categories (A's and B's) are cleared by 31 March 2022 and 30 June 2022 respectively. Although officers have cleared the majority of high risk inspections, a backlog of the lower risk categories has started to build up. In addition, reactive work/service requests have to be dealt with.

The service is experiencing some capacity and skills issues, and the recruitment of senior officers is proving difficult. There have been two recruitment campaigns over the last six months, and another one is underway targeted at newly qualified officers who will be trained up

Number of missed bin per 100,000 scheduled collections



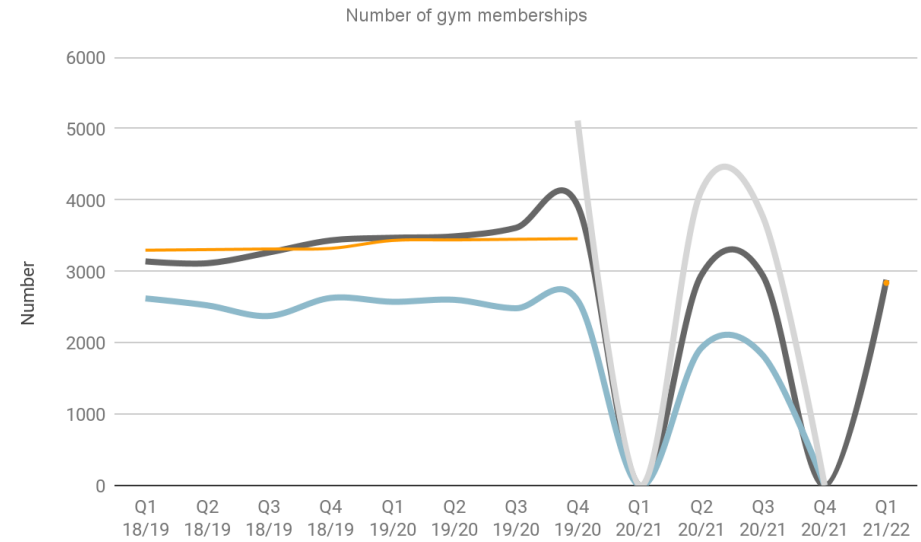
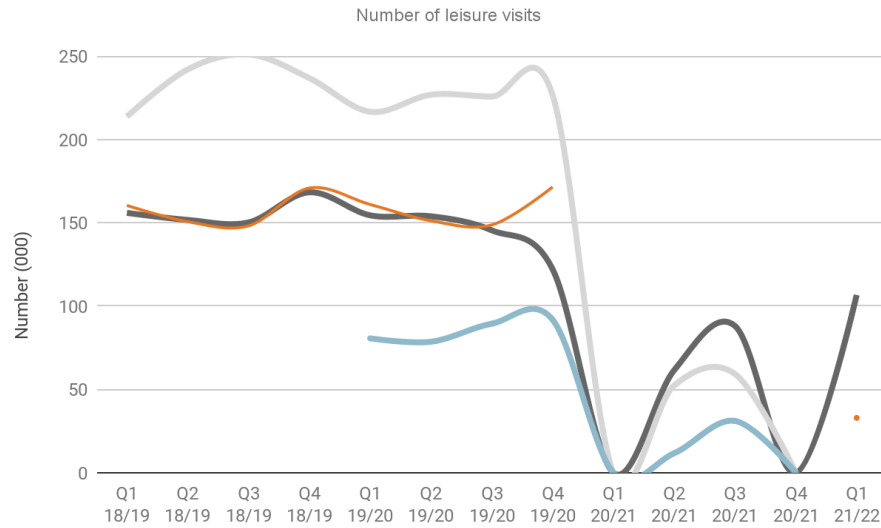
OBSERVATION:

In Q1, the number of missed bins per 100,000 was comfortably within the target, despite staffing issues related to positive Covid-19 cases, and crew members working within the same bubble having to self-isolate, as well as a national shortage of drivers. Some crew members and agency staff were unfamiliar with the allocated rounds, although they were supported by the new In-Cab technology which was introduced in 7 April. The system is still undergoing improvements; and once embedded is expected to reduce the number of missed bins.

There was a spike in missed bins a year ago. As expected, the introduction of the new waste and recycling service on 18 March 2020 resulted in an increase in the number of missed collections in Q1 as residents and Ubico staff got used to the changes. Concurrently, there was an increase in the amount of waste being produced due to the large number of home-workers and others self-isolating or shielding

Leisure

Number of visits to the three leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships



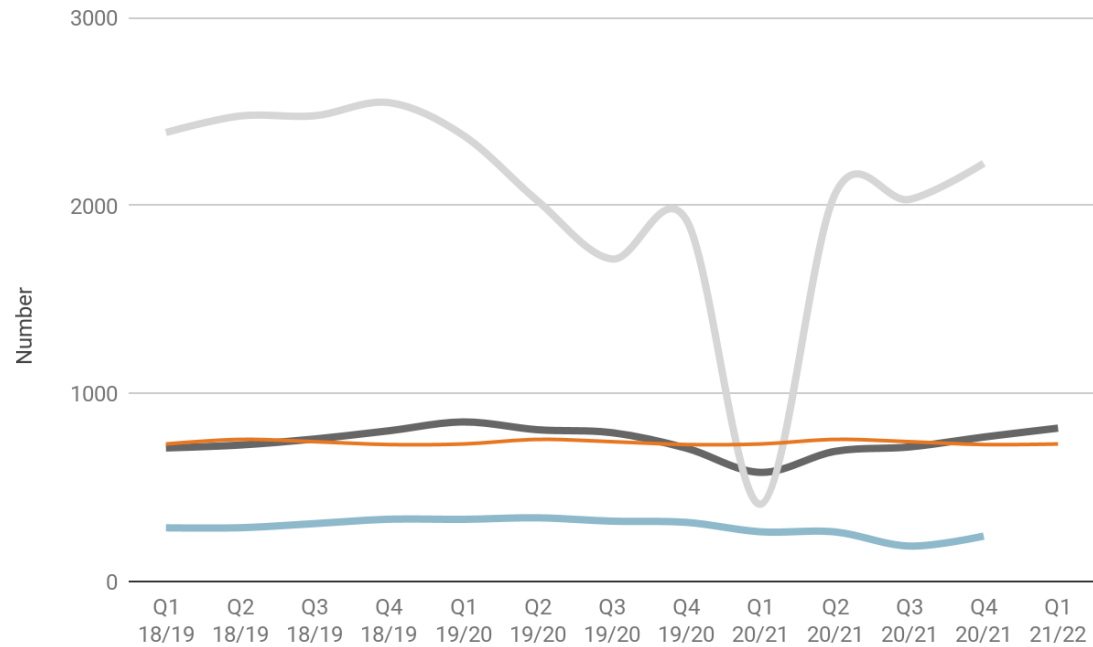
OBSERVATION:

Since April 2021 leisure centres have been following the Government Roadmap and have been able to relax Covid measures, with the final date for relaxation of all measures set for 19 July 2021. The return of customers has been encouraging with many users feeling protected under the new Covid protocols (one-way systems, sanitiser stations, pre-booking etc.) The space available within the facilities has also helped to allow increased numbers without contravening social distancing requirements. As targets were set prior to the end of the last lockdown they were conservative and we have seen a strong return in usage. Although the targets are set to increase each quarter, it may become more challenging over the year should there be further Covid restrictions. Gym memberships are lower than pre-Covid levels and may face a further challenge in September 2021 when PureGym is due to open a new facility in Cirencester.

Note: Gym memberships were frozen during the first and third lockdowns. No targets were set for 2020-21

Parking

Total hours spent undertaking on and off-street parking enforcement visits



OBSERVATION:

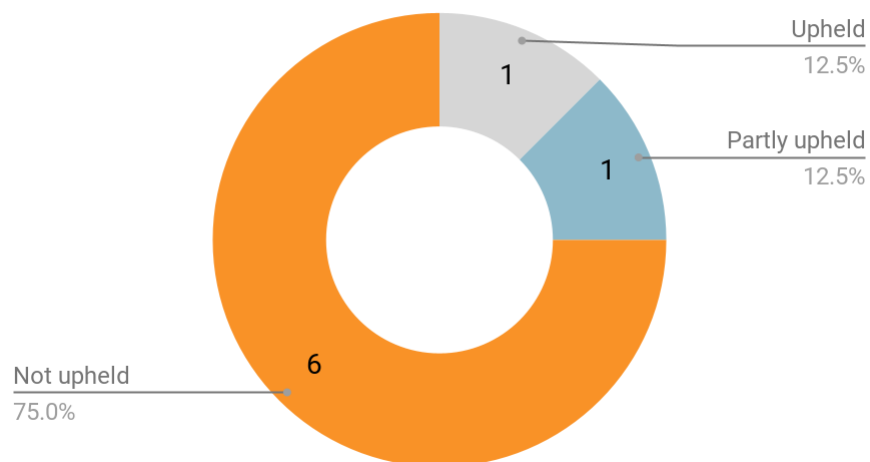
Officers are undertaking their usual enforcement duties of regulating car parks, maintaining pay and display machines and replenishing tickets.

There was a slight increase in enforcement hours in Q1 to support the introduction of cashless parking.

One part-time post (on contract) is being held vacant until usage levels increase

COMPLAINTS - ARE WE DOING THE 'DAY JOB' REALLY WELL FOR OUR COUNCILS?

Complaints decisions at Stage 2



OBSERVATION:

A new Customer Feedback Procedure went live on the 1st July 2020. The Corporate Responsibility team is managing all complaints allowing services to focus on delivery.

The new process has the following stages:

Stage 1: Acknowledgement and Assessment

Stage 2: Investigation

Stage 3: Appeal

The complaints shown below only include upheld or partially upheld complaints

Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Stage	Decision	Response time (days)
Revenues & Benefits	Complainant unhappy with lack of communication with regards to Council Tax Support payments	It was acknowledged that there had been a system error which meant that communications regarding the complainant's support payments were not sent out when they should have been. An apology was offered for the inconvenience caused	2	Upheld	10 days
Estates	Complainant unhappy with the high number of memorial benches at Chesterton Cemetery, and their locations. The complainant also expressed concern over the absence of a Cemetery Management Policy at the Council.	The part of the complaint relating to memorial benches was not upheld. The benches were placed on ground that could not otherwise be used for interment. The number of benches in each section of the cemetery depends on the number of applications received from relatives of those laid to rest; and applications are considered on a case by case basis. The Council does not currently have a Cemetery Management Policy, however all cemeteries are governed by	2	Partly upheld	29 days

		The Local Authorities Cemeteries Act 1977. The Council is reviewing the need for a Cemetery Management Policy and may adopt one to provide greater clarity on these matters.			
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