COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT
October 2021 - December 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.
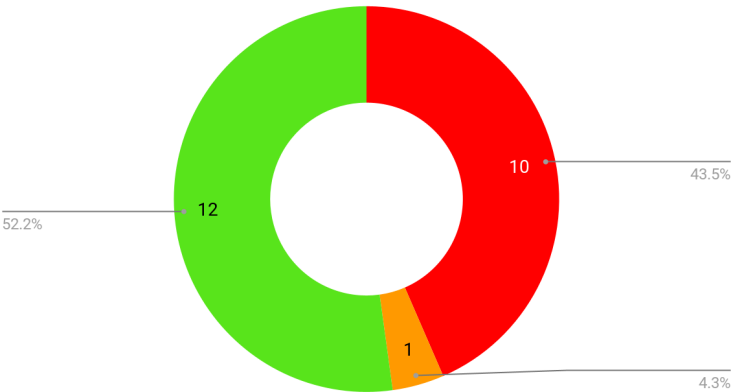
Note

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

- 10 — 43.5%
- 12 — 52.2%
- 1 — 4.3%

Indicators with targets	Status
Customer satisfaction - phones	🟩
Customer satisfaction - F2F	🟩
Satisfaction for Building Control service	🟩
CT collection rate	🟩
NNDR collection rate	🟥
Average days to process CTS new claims	🟥
Average days to process CTS change events	🟥
Average days to process HB change events	🟥
% HB overpayment	🟥
% major planning applications determined within time	🟩
% minor planning applications determined within time	🟧
% other planning applications determined within time	🟥
Total planning income	🟩
Pre-application advice income	🟥
% planning appeals allowed	🟩
Affordable homes delivered	🟥
% land charge searches dispatched within time	🟩
% high risk notifications assessed within time	🟩
% high risk food premises inspected within time	🟥
Residual waste per household (kg)	Awaiting data
% combined recycling rate	Awaiting data
Missed bins per 100,000 collections	🟩
Leisure visits	🟩
Gym memberships	🟥
Parking enforcement hours	🟩

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Over the last year, some services have been unable to achieve their targets due to high workloads and a shortage of staff. An injection of additional resources, both temporary and permanent, as well as the implementation of improvement plans has had a positive effect on performance in those services such as the benefits service, planning and land charges in Q3. However, despite the introduction of career graded posts in the planning service, the service is experiencing difficulties in recruiting suitable staff which is being addressed by a bespoke recruitment programme.

Further improvements in benefit processing times are expected in Q4 facilitated by the software fix and the launch of the Open Portal which allows clients to self-serve. However, at this stage of the year, it will not be possible to recover the shortfall in performance.
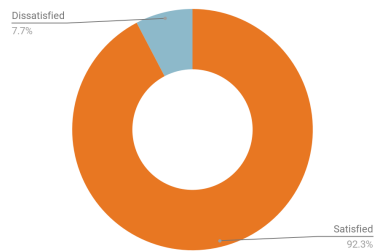
Business rates collection rate continues to be affected by the impact of Covid-19 on businesses, and more recently the Omicron variant. A range of grants and relief is available to support businesses including £1.95m of Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) to be distributed to those businesses that are not eligible for the extended retail relief but have been affected by Covid-19. These businesses will have their business rates accounts credited before the end of the year.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer satisfaction

Face to face - 52 respondents

Dissatisfied
7.7%

Satisfied
92.3%

Phone - 323 respondents

Dissatisfied
3.4%

Satisfied
96.6%

Email - 216 respondents

Dissatisfied
29.2%

Satisfied
70.8%

What's the trend?

Customer satisfaction - face to face

percentage

Q1 19/20, Q2 19/20, Q3 19/20, Q4 19/20, Q1 20/21, Q2 20/21, Q3 20/21, Q4 20/21, Q1 21/22, Q2 21/22, Q3 21/22

Cotswold — Forest — West — Target

Customer satisfaction - phone

percentage

Q1 19/20, Q2 19/20, Q3 19/20, Q4 19/20, Q1 20/21, Q2 20/21, Q3 20/21, Q4 20/21, Q1 21/22, Q2 21/22, Q3 21/22

Cotswold — Forest — West — Target

Customer satisfaction - email

percentage

Q1 20/21, Q2 20/21, Q3 20/21, Q4 20/21, Q1 21/22, Q2 21/22, Q3 21/22

Cotswold — Forest — West

OBSERVATION:

Trinity Road and Moreton Area Centre re-opened to customers from 12 April 2021, and although footfall continues to be relatively low, face to face surveys re-commenced at the end of July. The number of surveys completed remains relatively low but is indicating that satisfaction for services delivered using this channel is high.

Overall, satisfaction ratings for services delivered via the phone continue to be high; Cotswold frequently ranks within the top 10 councils on the GovMetric Telephone Channel Satisfaction Index.

Work continues on the Choice Channel project which is focussing on those services that have high call volumes and trialling ways of moving customers to more efficient ways of communicating where appropriate

Customer satisfaction for the Building Control service

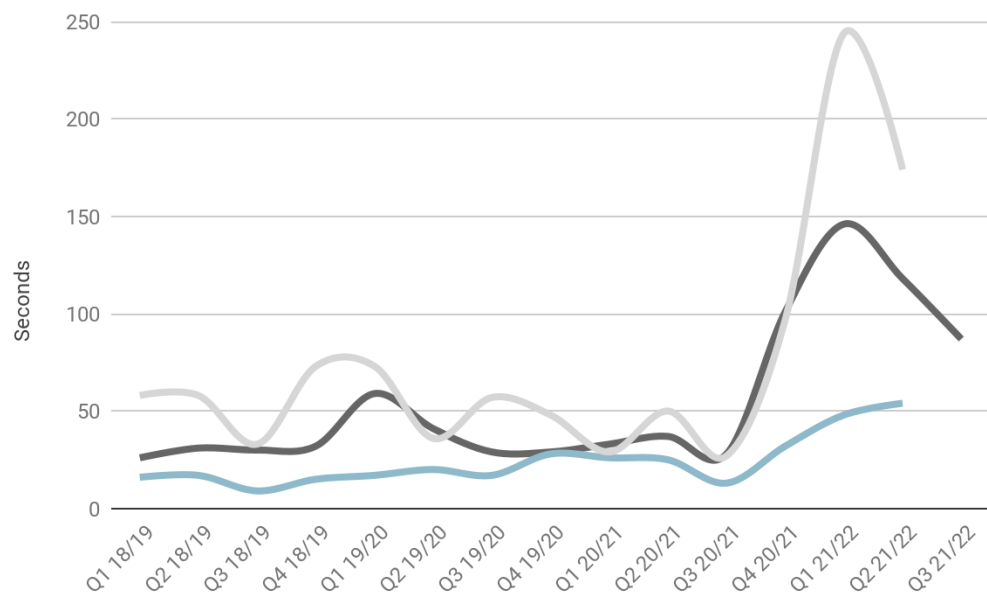|			
■ Cotswold Target	■ Cotswold	■ Forest of Dean	■ West Oxfordshire
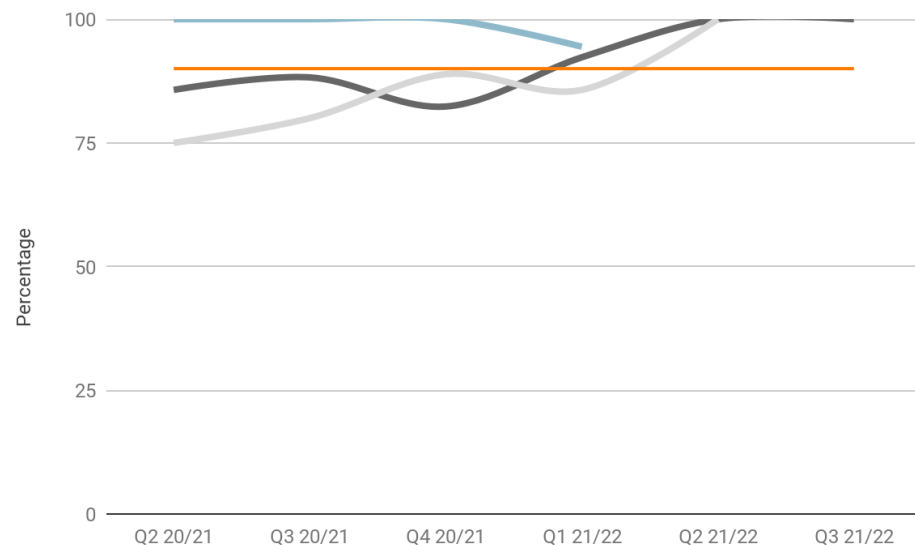
OBSERVATION:

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.

Eleven surveys were complete, and all 11 customers were fully satisfied with the service. It is difficult to assess satisfaction for the service based on such low numbers each quarter; however, the data captured over a longer period of time and presented as a trend can provide some indication of satisfaction.

Overall, the telephone survey is not yielding a high response rate, and better ways of getting feedback are being explored

Telephone calls - average waiting time

Legend: Cotswold Target | Cotswold | Forest of Dean | West Oxfordshire

Revenues and Benefits

(Cumulative) Percentage of council tax collected at the end of the quarter & the difference between the % of council tax collected and the target

Legend: Cotswold Target | Cotswold | Forest of Dean | West Oxfordshire
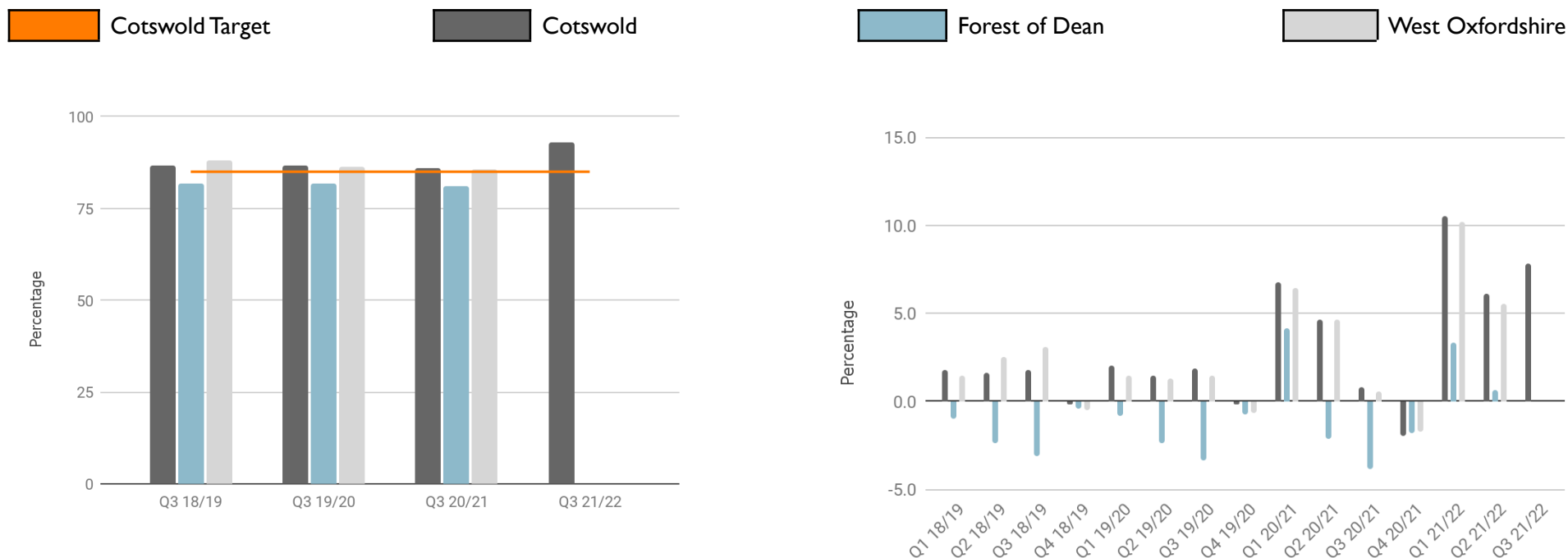
OBSERVATION:

The collection rate appears to be exceptionally healthy and is exceeding previous collection rates at the end of Q3, although the end of furlough, the removal of the Universal Credit uplift, and higher cost of living could potentially have an impact. 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.

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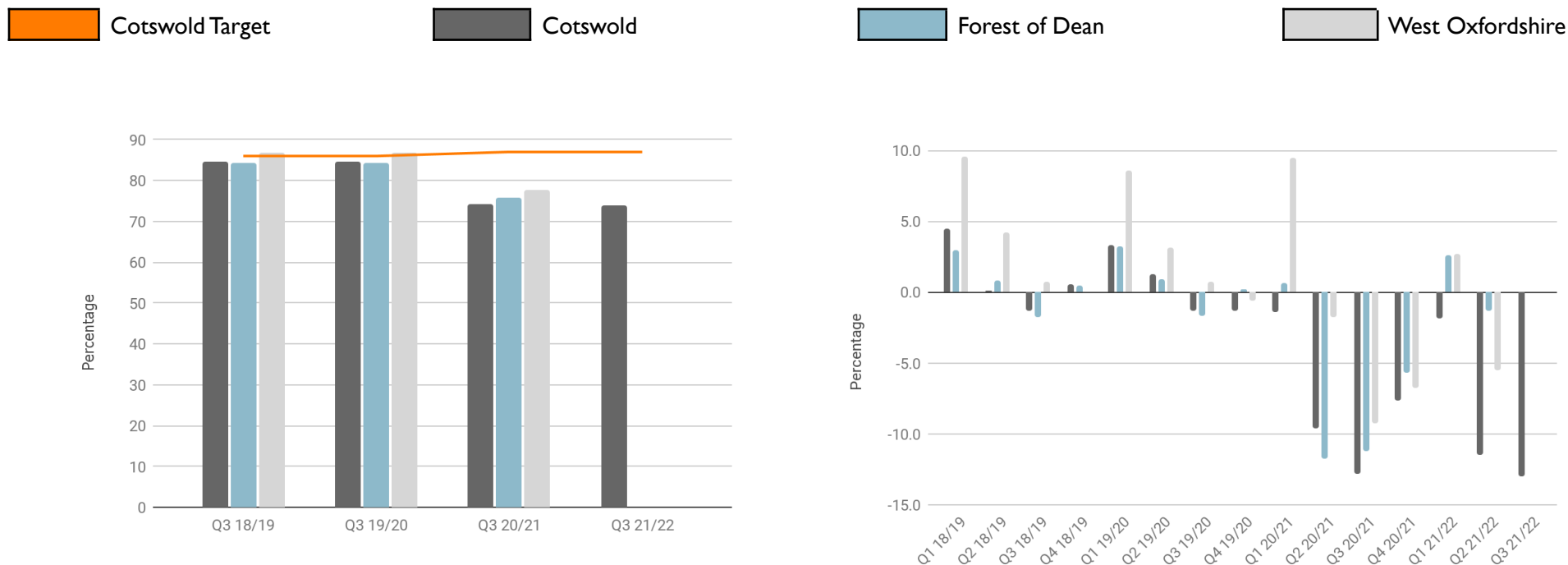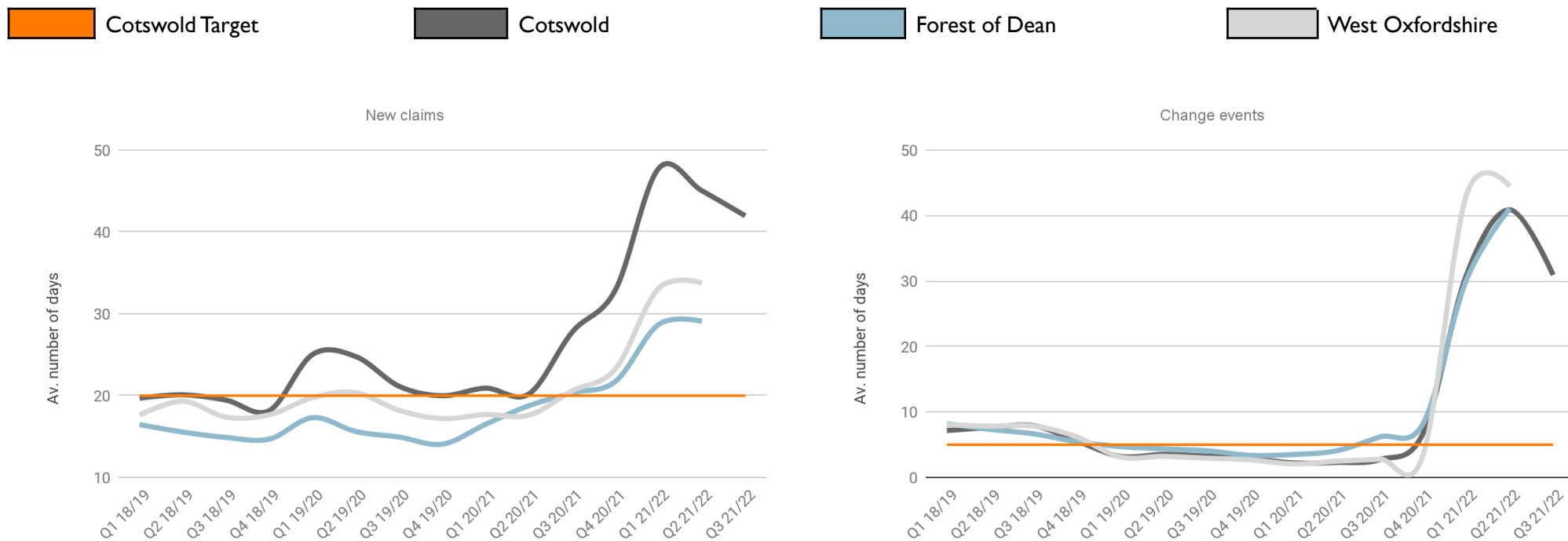

OBSERVATION:

At the end of Q3, the collection of business rates continues to be lower than pre-Covid times. The backlog of business rates work that was created due to the implementation of the revenues and benefits system has been cleared. However, the collection rate is expected to remain depressed as businesses are struggling financially due to the impact of Covid-19, and more lately the Omicron variant. In addition, the Council has had to make some refunds due to changes in rateable value.

During the pandemic, the Government helped certain businesses with 100% extended retail rate relief; which was reduced to 66% at the end of June 2021 and will be in place for the remainder of the financial year. The Council has recently received £1.95m in Covid-19 additional relief fund (CARF) for those businesses which did not receive the extended retail rates relief and have been impacted by Covid-19. These businesses will have their business rates accounts credited before the end of the year. Cabinet approved the CARF Policy in February 2022. In addition, there will be a relatively small amount of Additional Restrictions Grant for distribution.

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

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

Cotswold Target ▮ **Cotswold** ▮ **Forest of Dean** ▯ **West Oxfordshire**
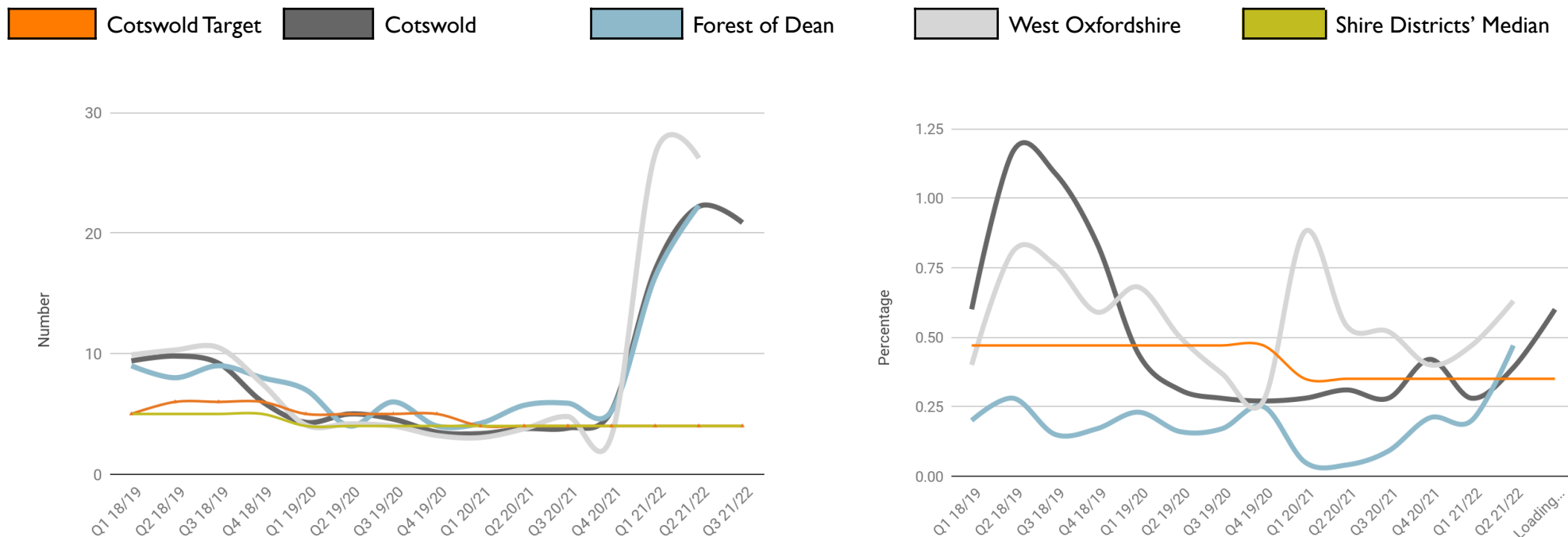

New claims

Change events

OBSERVATION:

With the injection of additional resources during the previous quarter, the service is managing the backlog of work and has successfully reduced it from 5296 benefit cases awaiting action in April 2021 to 471 cases in the lead up to the Christmas break.

The backlog was created following the implementation of the new benefits system, as well as high workloads related to the increase in Universal Credit claims since the start of the pandemic (with much of the New Claims time delays beyond our control), Covid-19 related work, and supporting the administration of discretionary housing grants to the most vulnerable residents in the District. The slower processing times were exacerbated by a software failure that prevented the automatic upload of changes of circumstances (for all LAs using this software). While awaiting a further fix in December, some cases had to be processed manually. The December fix has been applied as well as a patch in January, which is undergoing testing but is expected to resolve the problem.

A recovery plan is in place which should result in an improvement in performance although this will not be notable this year. A soft launch of the OpenPortal on 22 November will mean that clients can start self-serving; 215 clients have already signed up for an account (to 1 January 2022). This was followed by external promotions and comms across the District in January 2022

(Cumulative) Average number of days taken to process Housing Benefit changes of circumstances & % HB overpayments due to LA error /delay

Legend: Cotswold Target · Cotswold · Forest of Dean · West Oxfordshire · Shire Districts' Median

OBSERVATION:

Please see commentary for Council Tax Support new claims and changes

Due to an increase in 'admin delay', performance for HB overpayments has fallen, and is now outside the national target of 0.47%. The admin delay was caused by the backlog of work created by the implementation of the new benefits system, an increase in benefit changes related to Universal Credit claims during Covid-19, as well as a software failure. The majority of changes were being assessed manually while all councils awaited a further system release. An additional patch has since been applied and is now being tested Once fixed, the majority of changes will be automated and processed the same day which will improve performance

Note: the national target is 0.47%. In 2020-21, the service set a more stringent target of 0.35%

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

Cotswold   Forest of Dean   West Oxfordshire

Households in B&B/hotel type accommodation

Households in hostels

Successful 'Move on' into suitable independent /LT accommodation
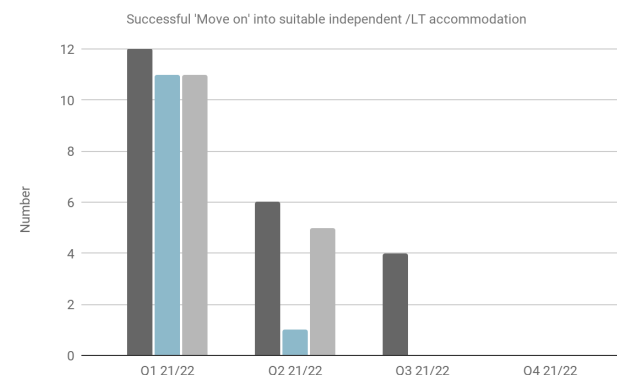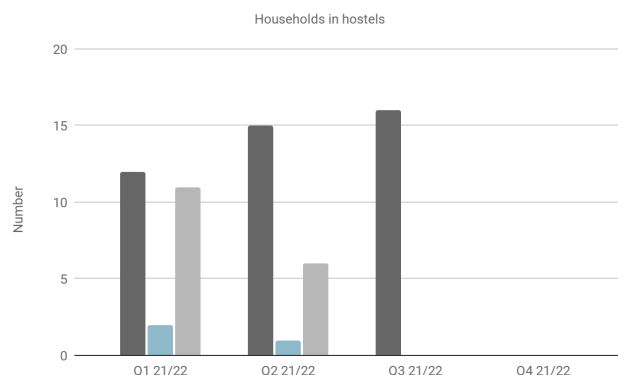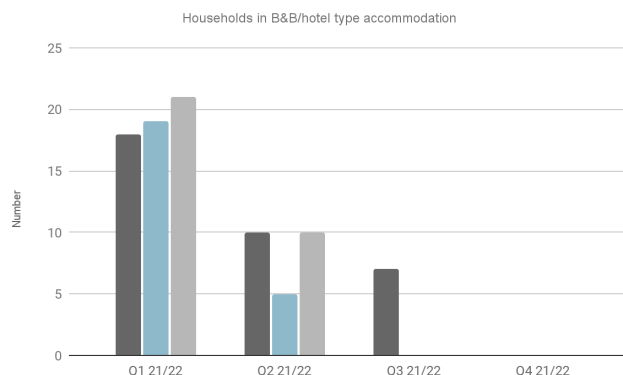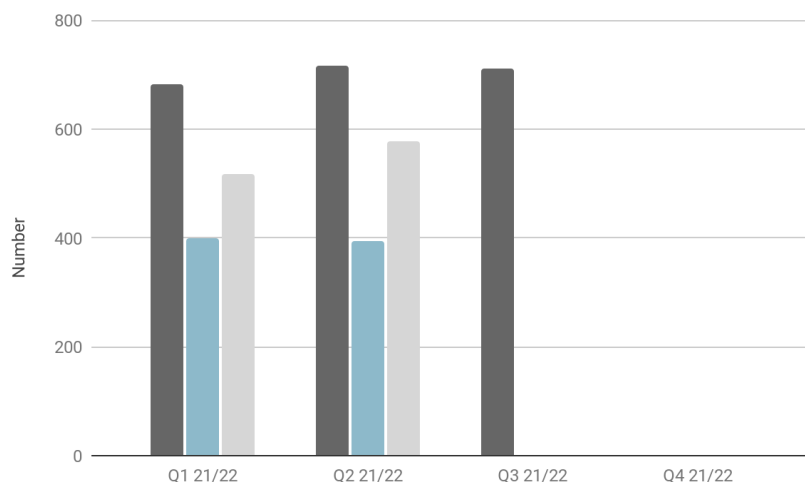
OBSERVATION:

The number of people contacting the Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness is continuing to increase due to initiatives such as the Government's recent Protect and Vaccinate directive in December. This was in response to the concerns surrounding the Omicron variant and its impact on those who were at risk of rough sleeping. However, the Housing Team is still focusing on the Prevention approach where possible and also moving people on from emergency accommodation as quickly as possible. The use of specialist temporary accommodation officers who are able to offer dedicated support and bespoke solutions for helping clients move on successfully from emergency accommodation is proving invaluable in this task.

The availability of social housing stock however remains low. This is due partly to prevention measures being put in place and the targeted Winter Uplift payment provided to assist those affected by Covid with reducing rent arrears or covering the costs of increased bills; and it is often difficult to place clients in private rented accommodation as these properties require a guarantor.

The Eviction ban was lifted on 1 October 2021 so numbers of people with families approaching for assistance with their housing continue to rise and domestic abuse cases coming through for re-housing. The Housing Team has also been providing targeted provision for rough sleepers as part of its Severe Weather Emergency Protocol response and will continue to do so during the Winter months and beyond

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

Cotswold | Forest of Dean | West Oxfordshire

OBSERVATION:

During Q3, 163 properties were removed from the long term empty homes list and 158 added.

A range of proactive work is being undertaken to both reduce the number of LTE properties in the District as well as ensuring that the Council's data is up to date; for example, the LTE coordinator is cleansing the Bromford Housing database to ensure that demolished properties have been removed from the LTE list.

Work is also being undertaken to understand the reasons why properties are coming onto the list so that they can be proactively managed. A three month rolling action plan is in place, and includes tackling some of the complex cases (property on LTE levy, accounts in arrears, and unresponsive owner), contacting those householders whose properties are about to slip into LTE status or an increased levy, and raising awareness amongst estate agents dealing with the sales of these types of properties
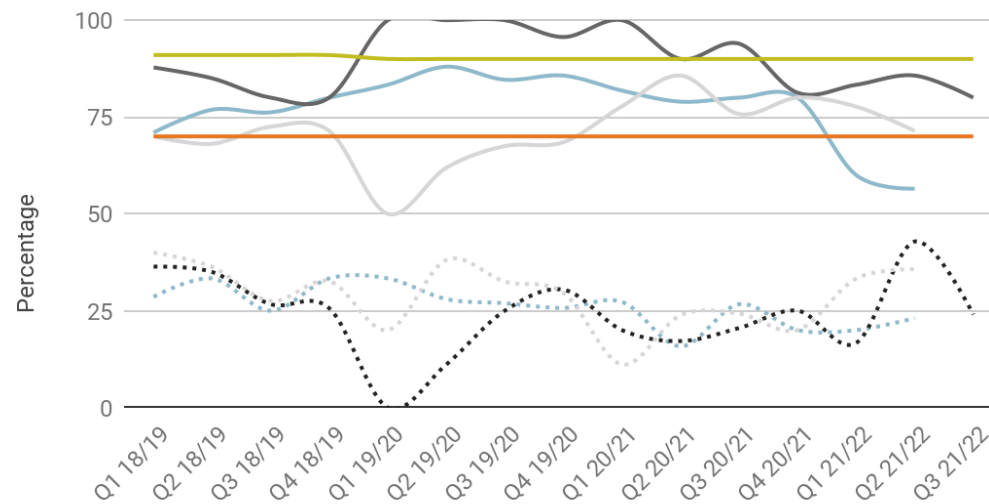
Planning and Strategic Housing

(Cumulative) Percentage of major planning applications determined

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

■ Cotswold Target	■ Cotswold	■ Forest of Dean	■ West Oxfordshire	■ Shire Districts' Median

% of all application completed within 13 weeks

-------------- Cotswold ---------- Forest of Dean ---------- West Oxfordshire

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:

Twelve major applications were determined in Q3 compared to 11 in Q3 in the previous year.

At the end of Q3, there were some signs that planning determination times in particular for 'minor' applications and 'other' applications have improved. This follows a downward trend in performance due to a high number of applications coming in since the summer 2020 which the service reports may be beginning to slow with around 2-3% fewer applications nationally than a year ago.

There are currently four vacant DM posts despite multiple rounds of recruitment to improve capacity levels (including successfully filling the two additional posts agreed by the Council in August 2021) and the introduction of career graded posts with a wider pay scale band designed to help with staff retention. Due to a combination of poor quality applications, withdrawals and 'no-shows' on the interview day, a bespoke recruitment programme is being designed before a further external round is commenced later in the year.

There is an improvement programme and roadmap in place and many elements have been completed. During Q3, a new validation team was established across the partnership, both improving validation times and reducing the number of applications awaiting validation.
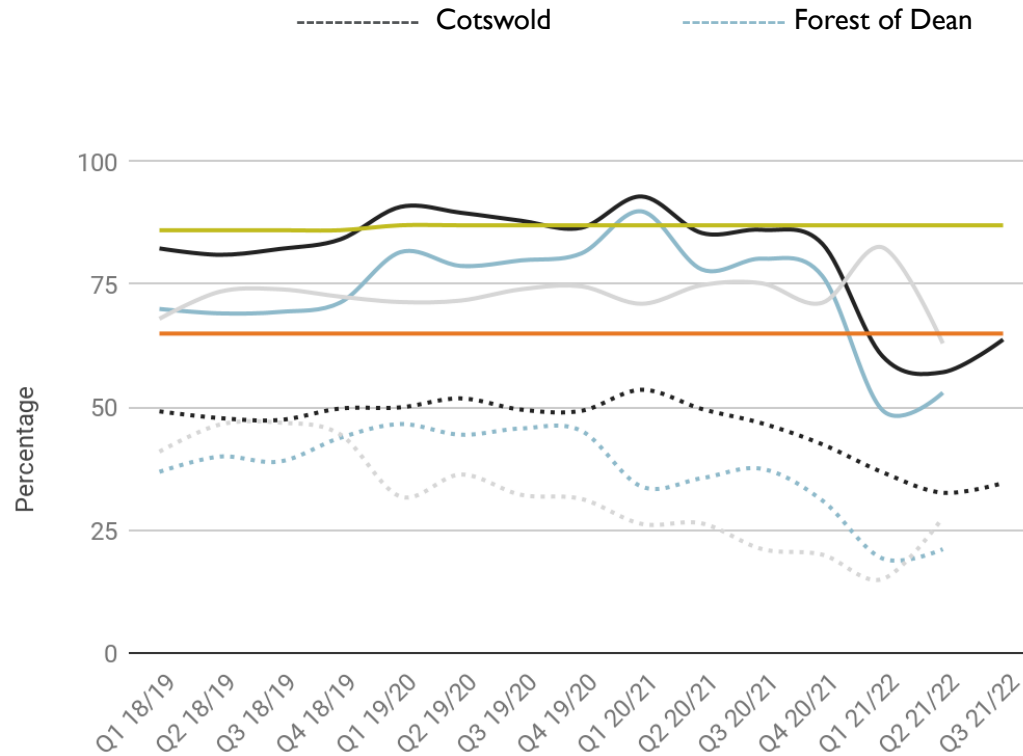
Given the number of new starters, a new training programme has been created to build the professional capacity of the service and support the new recruits across the partnership to reach their full potential and deliver a great service for the Council

(Cumulative) Percentage of minor planning applications determined

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

Cotswold Target	Cotswold	Forest of Dean	West Oxfordshire	Shire Districts' Median

% of all applications completed within 8 weeks

------------- Cotswold ---------- Forest of Dean ---------- West Oxfordshire

OBSERVATION:

110 minor applications were determined in Q3 compared to 88 in Q3 of the previous year.
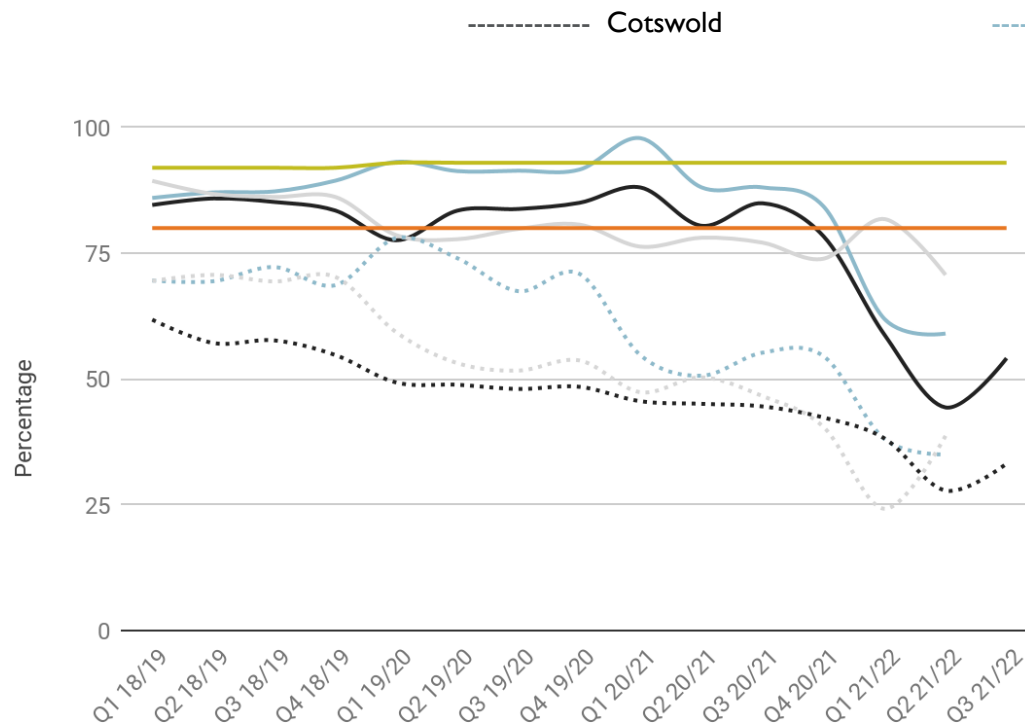
See Observation for Major applications for further explanation

(Cumulative) Percentage of other planning applications determined

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

| | Cotswold Target | | Cotswold | | Forest of Dean | | West Oxfordshire | | Shire Districts' Median |

% of all applications completed within 8 weeks

------------- Cotswold   ----------- Forest of Dean   ---------- West Oxfordshire
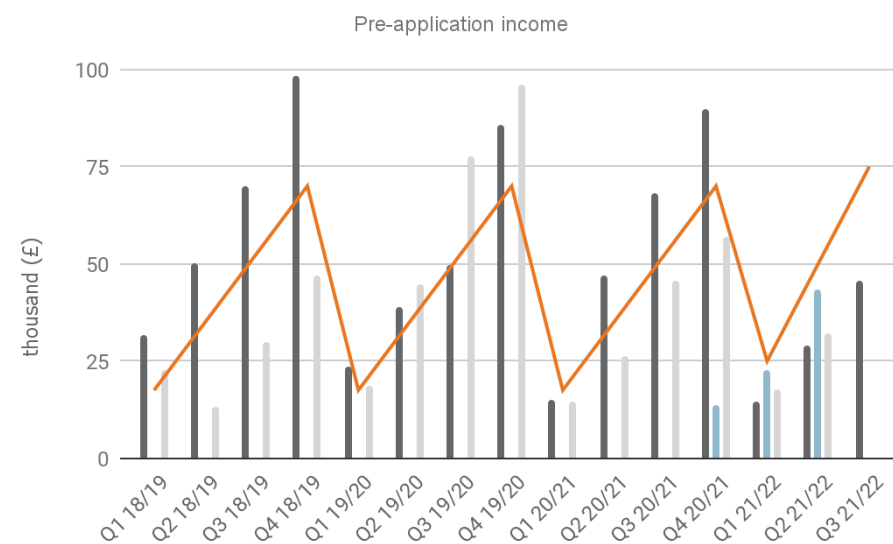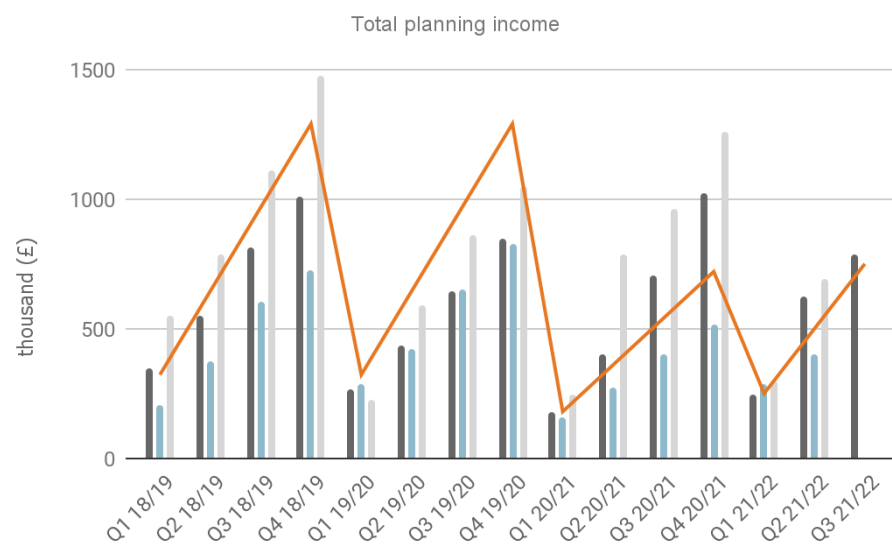

OBSERVATION:

404 other applications were determined in Q3, over 120 more applications than in Q3 of the previous year.

In the first nine months of the year, a total of 1112 other applications were determined compared to 733 for the same period of the previous year, and 881 in 2019/20.

See Observation for Major applications for further explanation

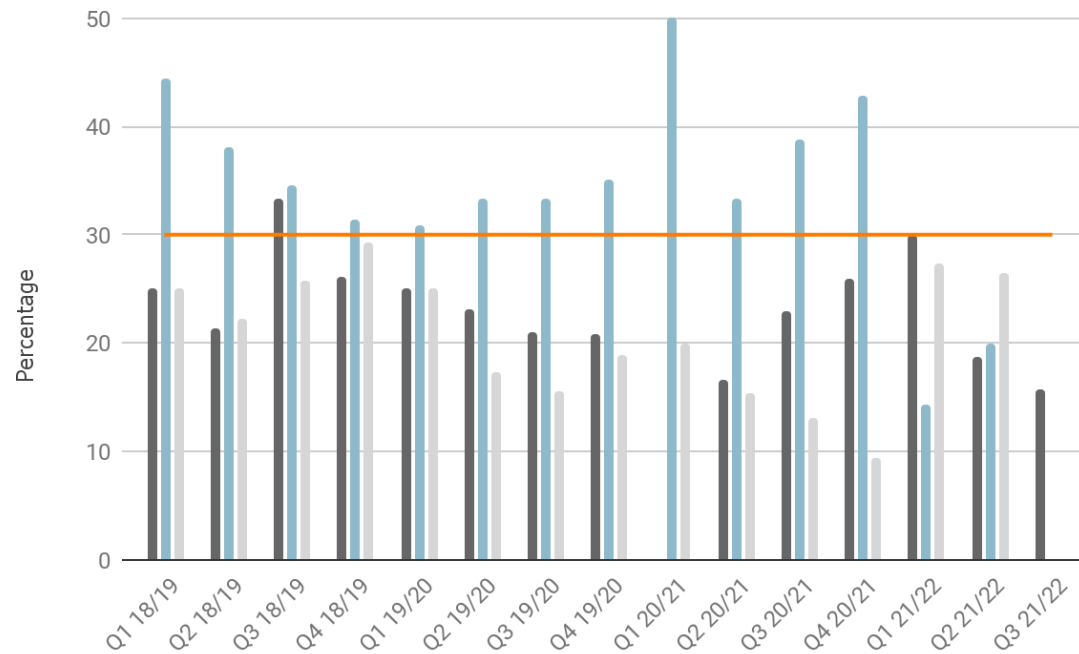# (Cumulative) Planning income

Legend: Cotswold Target | Cotswold | Forest of Dean | West Oxfordshire

OBSERVATION:

At the end of Q3, total planning income was ahead of the target as well as exceeding the Q3 income of the previous two years

(Cumulative) Percentage of planning appeals allowed

■ Cotswold Target   ■ Cotswold   ■ Forest of Dean   ▢ West Oxfordshire

OBSERVATION:

This indicator seeks to ensure that no more than 30% of planning appeals are allowed.

In Q3, all three (100%) of the appealed decisions were supported.

Cumulatively, 16 out of 19 planning appeals were supported, and just three appeals were allowed in the first nine months of the financial year

(Cumulative) Number of affordable homes delivered

Legend: Cotswold Target (orange) · Cotswold (dark grey) · Forest of Dean (blue) · West Oxfordshire (light grey)
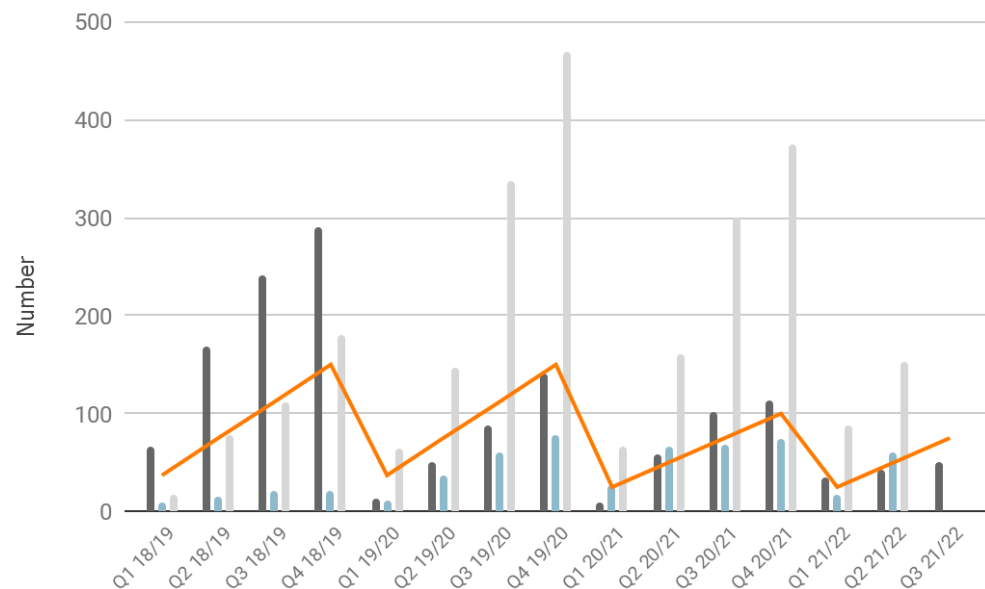
OBSERVATION:

Eight affordable homes, a mixture of 2, 3 and 4 bed family homes for discounted sale to local people were completed this quarter at the Fire College site in Moreton in Marsh. A total of 51 affordable homes have been completed in the year.

Work commenced on redevelopment of the former Chamberlayne House site in Stow on the Wold. This will provide 9 new 2 bedroom family houses, 7 x 1 bedroom houses and flats and 2 x 1 bedroom bungalows.

Work continues on sites in Chipping Campden, South Cerney, Tetbury and Cirencester, however construction delays through Covid and the rising cost and lack of availability of building materials has affected delivery programmes.

With the majority of this year's affordable housing units originally forecast to complete in Q4, it is very likely that these delays will impact on this year's affordable housing target of 100 completions with many of the Q4 homes now forecast for completion in Q1 and Q2 of 2022/23.

Note: this data is collected cumulatively from the beginning of the financial year to account for peaks and troughs

Percentage of land charge searches dispatched within 10 working days

Cotswold Target   **Cotswold**   **Forest of Dean**   **West Oxfordshire**
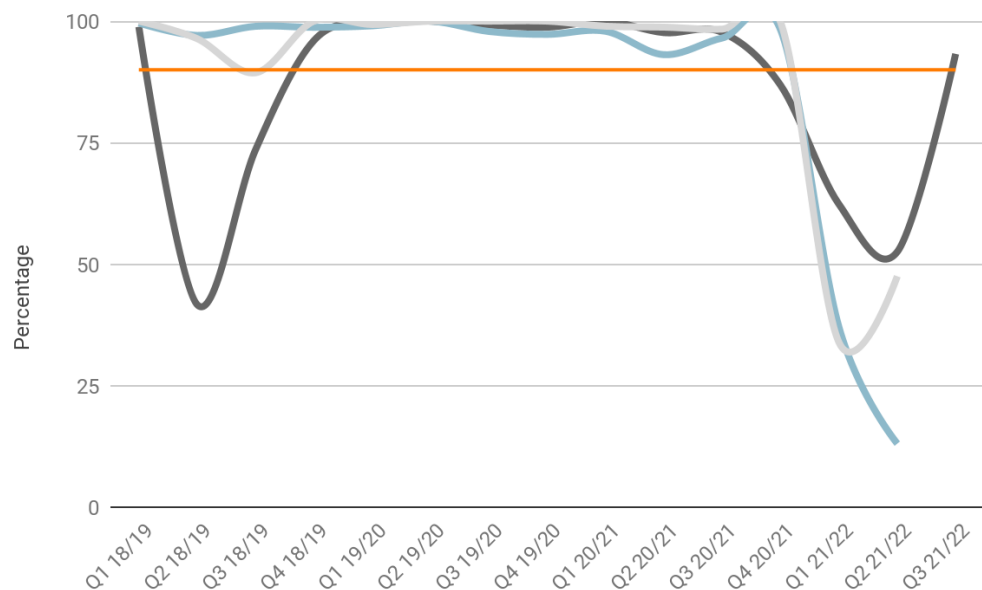
OBSERVATION:

Performance has started to stabilise and has now achieved the target, following the significant increase in land charges searches caused by the 'stamp duty holiday'.

Although the 'stamp duty holiday' finished at the end of September 2021, the numbers for the current quarter indicate that they are higher than pre-Covid times.

Training of two members of staff recruited in Q1 is underway and is going well, with full training anticipated to be completed 12 months from appointment.

A Service Designer has also started to review the land charge search process to identify improvements in efficiency and customer communication.

Going forward, the Her Majesty's Land Registry (HMLR) project will commence. This involves the migration of LLC1 searches to HMLR for all Local Authorities. The project will utilise specialist experience within the team, and will be closely and carefully managed internally, and by HMLR to help mitigate any potential impacts to service delivery

Environmental and Regulatory

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

■ Cotswold   ■ Forest of Dean   ■ West Oxfordshire
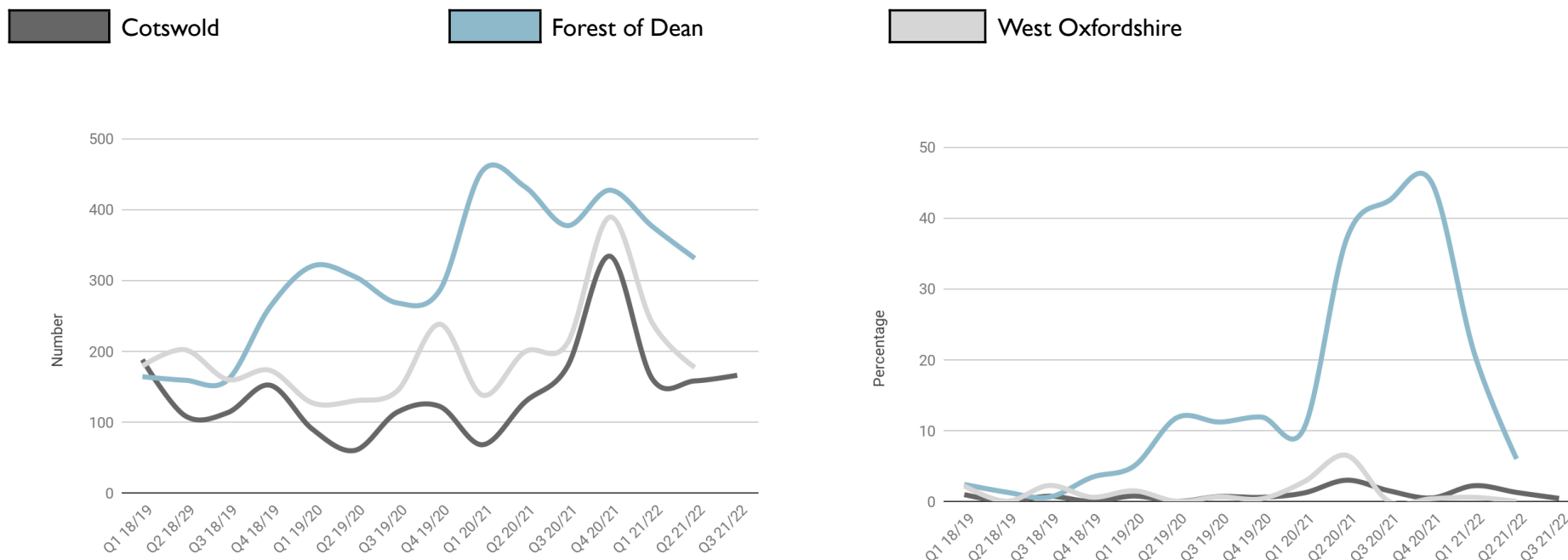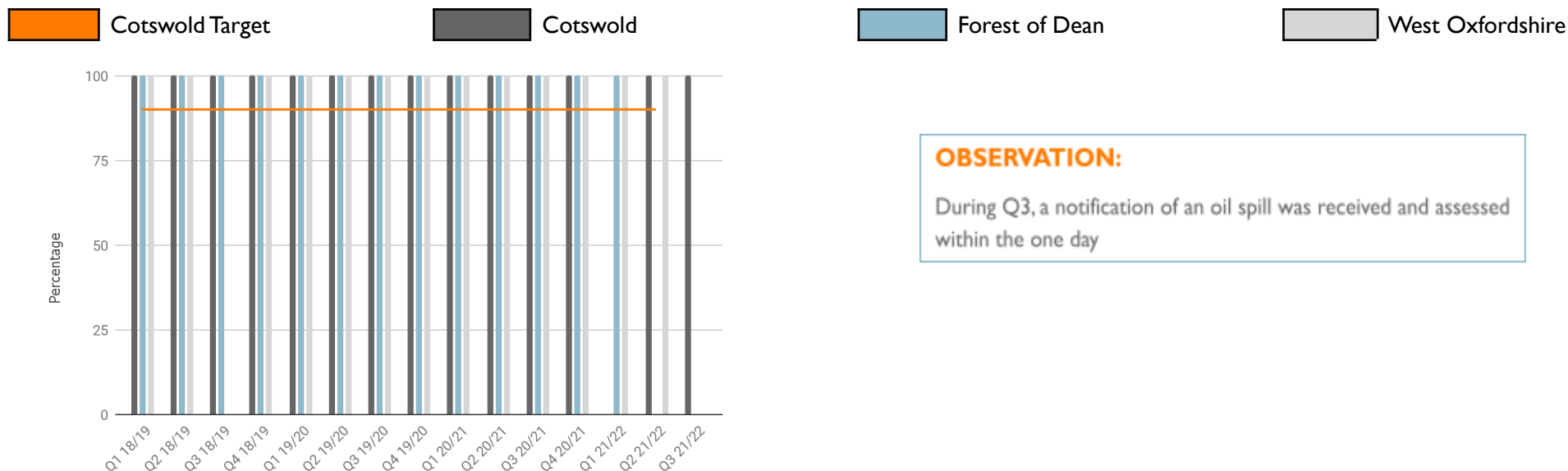

OBSERVATION:

An increase in fly tips reported nationally coincided with the start of Covid-19. This trend appears to be reflected more locally and continued throughout 2020/21. Over the last nine months, the number of fly tip collected by Ubico has decreased which may reflect the easing of restrictions.

The Council's 'Clean and Green' initiative is designed to tackle a range of enviro-crime including fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and dog fouling through engagement with communities and enforcement. The Council takes a proactive and preventative approach to fly tipping, and duty of care work has been carried out with businesses and households to support them to manage their waste responsibly. In Q3, one FPN was served, making a total of eight FPNs served and one warning letter since the start of 2021/22.

More recently, the Council has commenced some targeted work in locations which are attracting high levels of fly tipping using a combination of proactive measures to deter fly tipping such as signage as well as enforcement activity.

Note: This data source does not contain all types of fly tips e.g. asbestos, at all locations e.g. bring sites. Forest of Dean appears to collect a higher number of fly tips than Cotswold and West as it counts fly tips at bring sites

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

Legend: Cotswold Target | Cotswold | Forest of Dean | West Oxfordshire

OBSERVATION:

During Q3, a notification of an oil spill was received and assessed within the one day

# Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales
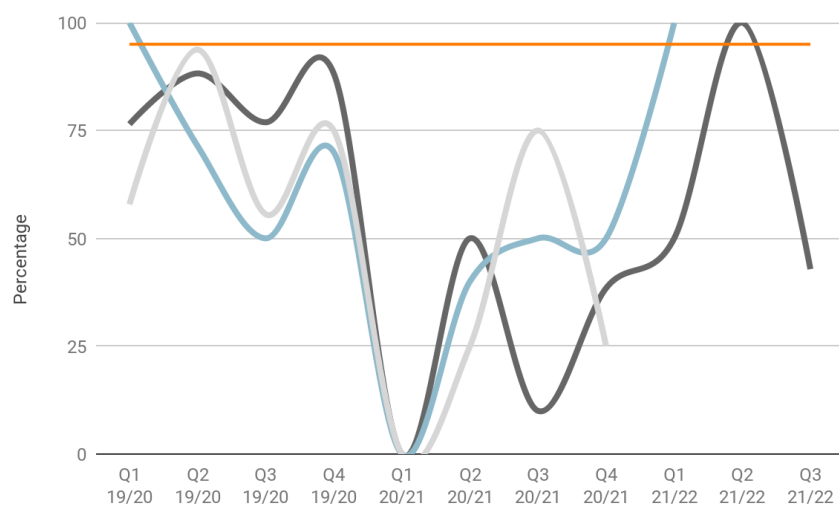
OBSERVATION:

During Q3, seven high risk food premises required an inspection; three were completed within the target timescale, three have since been completed, with just one outstanding.

Previously, the service had been unsuccessful in recruiting to permanent senior posts, so as an interim measure, two contractors were appointed to help reduce the backlog of medium risk inspections across the partnership whilst the service is in the process of recruiting to two career graded posts, one of which started in January.

The service is prioritising inspections for high risk premises and new businesses in line with the FSA recovery plan. There are a number of high risk inspections due in the latter part of Q4; some of these will be brought forward in order to manage the workload and ensure that these inspections are completed within the timescale

Waste Management

Legend: Target, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, West Oxfordshire, Top Quartile, Shire Districts' Median
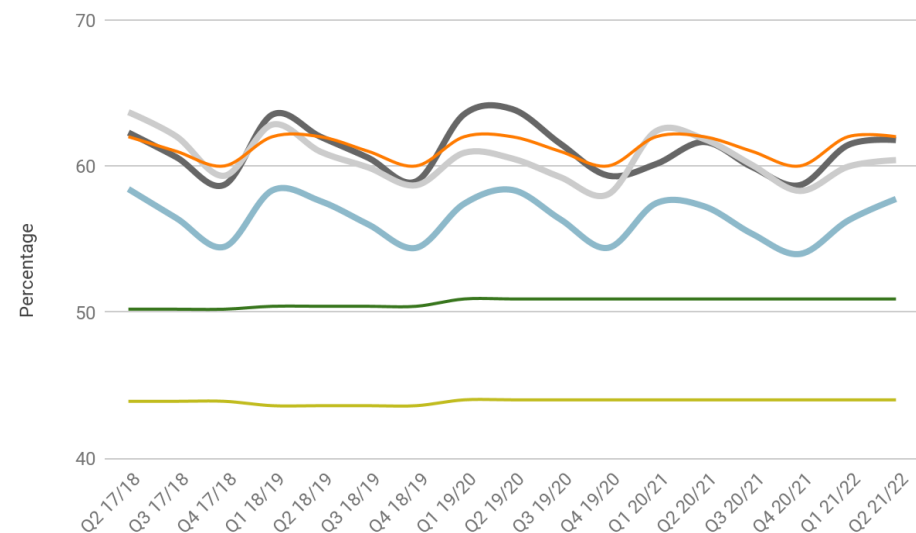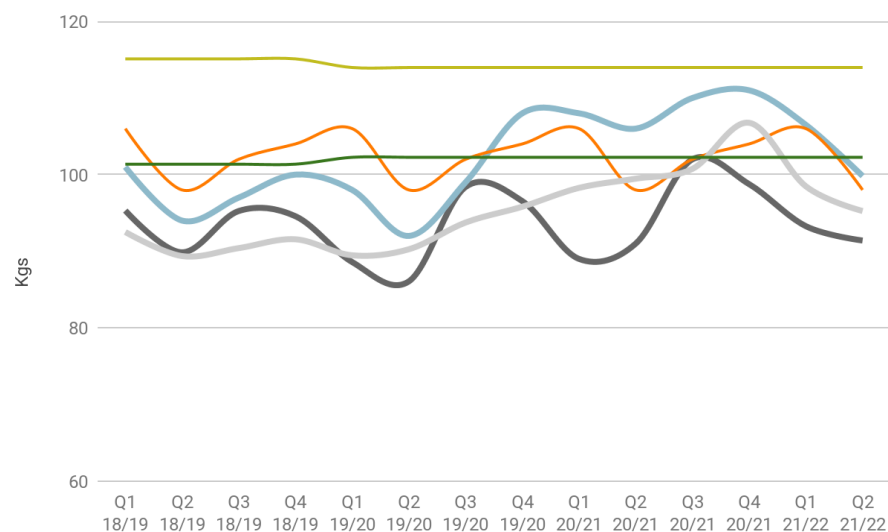
OBSERVATION:

Waste management data not yet available for December.

The combined recycling rate to November was 61.27% compared to 60.84% in the previous year when the garden waste service was suspended between 26 March 2020 and 12 May 2020.

In comparison to 2019-20, the combined recycling rate at the end of November 2021 was down by one percentage point due to a poorer composting rate which is affected by weather conditions, although it was offset by higher dry recycling rate.
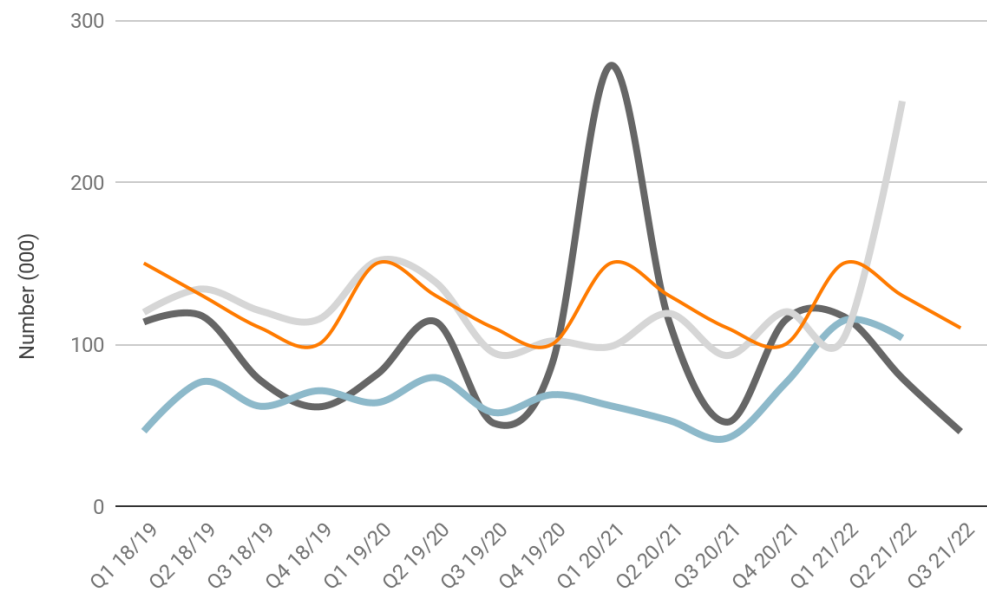
In 2020-21, households waste arisings collected at the kerbside increased nationally due to Covid-19 and households working from home or self-isolating. However, due to the increase in residual waste and the closure of Household Waste recycling Centres, the combined recycling rate for England decreased from 43.8% to 42.3%. In Cotswold District, the combined recycling rate was 58.7%; residual waste tonnages increased by 3.5% and dry recycling tonnages by 16.3% which would have been facilitated by the expansion of the dry recycling service in March 2020.

The first eight months of 2021-22 indicates that dry recycling tonnages have fallen by 5% compared to last year which may reflect workers returning to the office. Residual waste tonnages fell by less than 1%, which equates to 243 kg per household compared to 247 kg for the comparative period.

Notes: Composting and food waste was a single waste stream prior to 2020-21. The quarterly recycling targets are profiled to account for seasonal differences. The data is also presented cumulatively which will flatten out some of these differences

Number of missed bin per 100,000 scheduled collections

Legend: Target · Cotswold · Forest of Dean · West Oxfordshire

Y-axis: Number (000) — 0, 100, 200, 300

X-axis: Q1 18/19, Q2 18/19, Q3 18/19, Q4 18/19, Q1 19/20, Q2 19/20, Q3 19/20, Q4 19/20, Q1 20/21, Q2 20/21, Q3 20/21, Q4 20/21, Q1 21/22, Q2 21/22, Q3 21/22

OBSERVATION:

The number of missed bins per 100,000 is reducing in the context of a national shortage of HGV drivers.

The implementation of In-Cab technology in April 2021 is having positive benefits on waste and recycling collection rounds. The technology provides drivers with the information they need to work efficiently and provides the waste depot with real-time issues and performance information.

Following the introduction of the new waste and recycling service in March 2020, there was a spike in missed bins 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

Note: since the implementation of In-Cab technology, the data source for missed collections is Alloy, In-Cab's back office system. This data source is more accurate than the previous data source

Leisure

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

Target   **Cotswold**   **Forest of Dean**   **West Oxfordshire**

Number of leisure visits
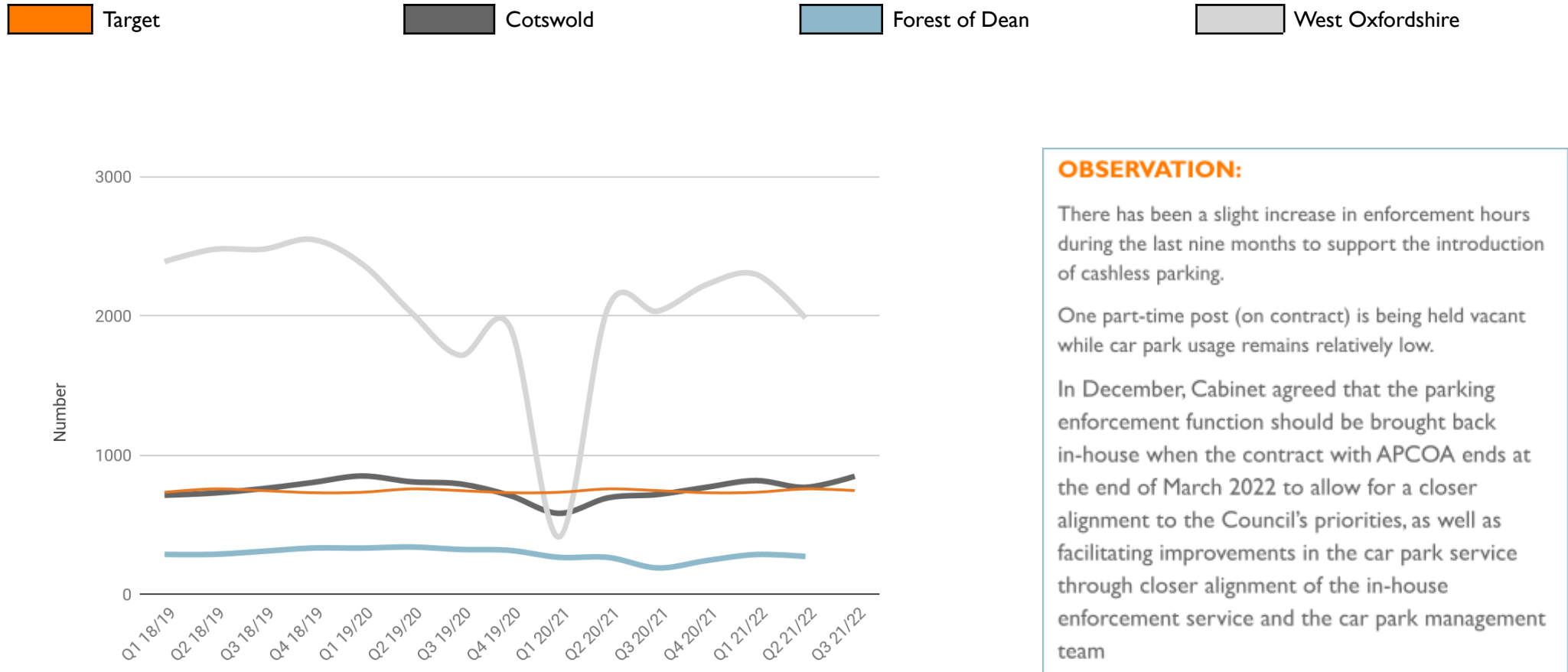

Number of gym memberships
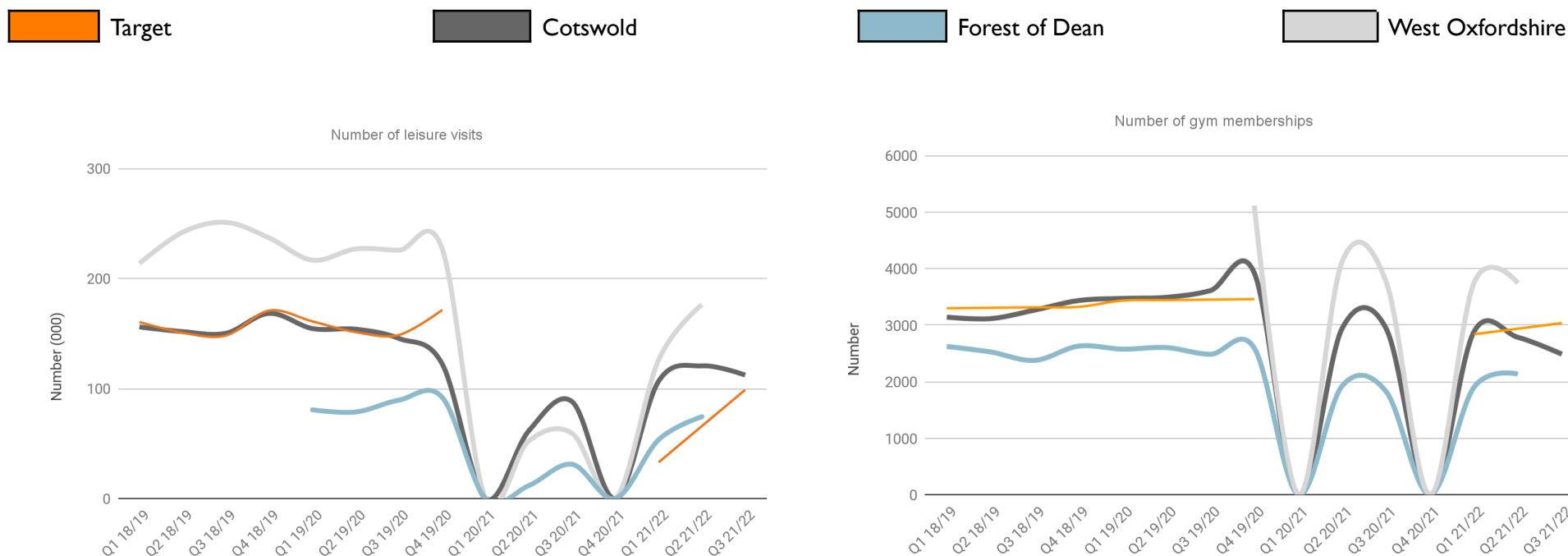
OBSERVATION:

The number of leisure visits for the quarter is about 68% of the comparative in the pre-Covid year (2019-20), and memberships 55%. The usual drop off in usage in December appears to have been exacerbated by people's reluctance to attend public areas in the run up to the festive break to avoid the Omicron variant at Christmas. The effects of the Coronavirus on reducing usage are being seen elsewhere in the country. Furthermore, competition from PureGym continues to have an impact on the services at Cotswold Leisure, Cirencester, and the recent opening of a PureGym in Evesham is now affecting membership numbers at Chipping Campden.

As part of the ongoing marketing and promotions, SLM employs two Membership Advisors, one at Cirencester and one at Bourton who are proactively selling membership; and a reduction in the membership price has helped to increase new sales, with January doing well so far. Over the past 6-9 months SLM has increased the spend on marketing to support the 'bounce back' which has included leaflet drops, digital marketing on multiple social media platforms as well as direct marketing via emails and texts.

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

■ Target   ■ Cotswold   ■ Forest of Dean   ■ West Oxfordshire

OBSERVATION:

There has been a slight increase in enforcement hours during the last nine months to support the introduction of cashless parking.

One part-time post (on contract) is being held vacant while car park usage remains relatively low.

In December, Cabinet agreed that the parking enforcement function should be brought back in-house when the contract with APCOA ends at the end of March 2022 to allow for a closer alignment to the Council's priorities, as well as facilitating improvements in the car park service through closer alignment of the in-house enforcement service and the car park management team

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

Six complaints decisions at Stage 1

Not upheld
100.0%
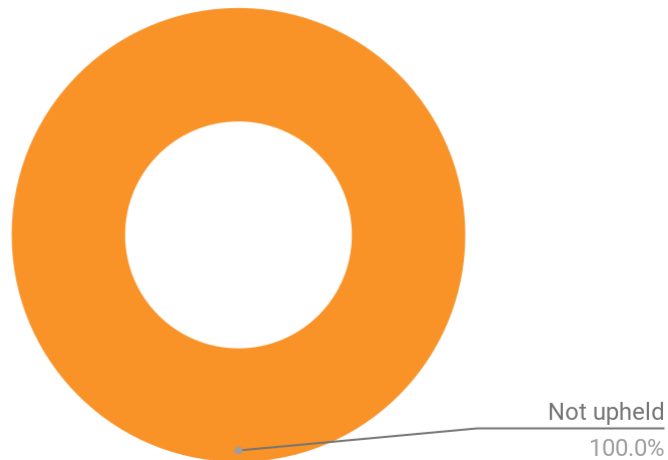
OBSERVATION:

A new Customer Feedback Procedure went live on the 1st October 2021..

The new process has the following stages:

Stage 1: Relevant service area responds to complaint within 10 working days
Stage 2: Complaint is reviewed by Corporate Responsibility Team, response is signed off by relevant Business Manager, and sent to complainant within 10 working days
Stage 3: Complaint is reviewed by relevant Business Manager, signed off by relevant Group Manager, and sent to complainant within 15 working days

In Q3, none of the six complaints were upheld or partly upheld.