



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 7 DECEMBER 2023
Subject	COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2023-24 QUARTER TWO
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council Email: joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive Email: robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Email: democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
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: I. Note overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2023-24 Q2.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver the highest standard of service• Respond to the climate crisis• Provide socially rented homes• Make our local plan green to the core• Support health and wellbeing• Enable a vibrant economy
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Publica Directors, Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.



1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** A high-level commissioning statement was approved by Cabinet in January 2020 which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica must ensure that it provides the necessary information to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard. In essence, Publica as contracting agent for the Council must ensure that the Council has sufficient information to challenge the performance of services provided by Publica and others. A similar approach is taken in relation to financial performance data, which will be presented to the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Finance Officer; and where it will be for the Chief Finance Officer to advise in terms of assurance.
- 1.2** The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.
- 1.3** Following a helpful discussion at Overview and Scrutiny it was agreed to explore options relating to how Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rate collection targets are presented to prevent any confusion. Additionally, it was agreed to review actions within the Corporate Plan Action Tracker with a view to remove those that are no longer in progress.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

- 2.1** The Council adopted the Corporate Plan 2020-24 ('the Plan') in September 2020, A spring 2022 'refresh' of the Plan was completed and approved by Council at its meeting in May 2022.
- 2.2** Progress on actions in the Corporate Plan for Q2 include:
 - "Spotlight on Planning" Town & Parish Council Forum events held during September in Cirencester and Moreton in Marsh.
 - Round I of Phase Two of the Water Park Strategy for installing cycle stands is complete, with 19 out of the 46 now in place across Fairford, Lechlade and South Cerney. Positive discussions have been held for the Spine Road Crossing between GCC and Cotswold District Council Officers to agree the next steps forward including options for allocation of funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support the design and delivery phases of the project.
 - The Planning Enforcement project to develop an ICT enabled proactive approach to the service recommenced in September.
 - The proposal for Solar PV on Trinity Road Council offices went to Cabinet and then on to Full Council in July with a resolution of approval of the funding.



- The Collaboration Agreement entered into by the Council and Bromford Housing to deliver the Down Ampney housing development had been delayed due to drainage concerns, but progress is now underway with drawings approved by members and a Planning Application due to be submitted in November.
- Housing Requirement paper approved by Council, concluding there has not been a significant change in housing needs since the Local Plan (LP) was adopted in 2018 and therefore the LP housing requirement remains up-to-date and does not need updating.
- The sixth edition of Crowdfund Cotswold concluded in September with four projects actively seeking community contributions, while an additional three are in the verification process. These projects offer a diverse thematic and geographical range, addressing issues from climate change to children's play provision in both the North and South of the district.
- The Cotswold Community Network (CCN), aimed at networking and sharing information about what is happening in communities throughout the district, has grown in members with successful presentations by Guest Speakers through Q2 including Fraud Awareness, Community Connexions Transport and Mental Health resources.
- The Community Safety Partnership has reviewed and drafted and update for its Action Plan for 2024/25 with the report presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October.
- Majority of shortlisted areas have been visited for the Safer Streets Cotswolds proposals. Once the visits have been completed, alongside more local engagement, the decision will be taken on which areas will receive the improvements to make them safer.
- Additional events and classes under the Active Cotswold Action Plan have been positively received, including a successful live event featuring Mr. Motivator.
- The Holiday Activity Food programme continues to be a success with the number of attendants doubling in comparison to last year.
- The Integrated Locality Partnership (ILP) held a workshop with service providers from both statutory and voluntary sectors to explore how partners can work together to provide better support to young people and families and in areas of high need.
- The Changing Places Toilet Facilities are complete at Cotswold Farm Park and Abbey Grounds, Cirencester with Birdland due to start in the coming month. Cotswold Country Park and Beach is in the planning and procurement stages and will be delivered early in 2024.
- Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) have successfully recruited a Rural Domestic Abuse Champions Network Co-Ordinator with training workshops to be organised for professionals and community leaders.
- The County Council Digital Household Grant scheme is now live, and Officers continue to liaise with Fastershire and the main infrastructure companies like Openreach and Gigaclear to bring forward improvements in the district.



2.3 Off target actions of the Corporate Plan behind schedule at Q2 include:

- **Develop and implement an Asset Management Strategy.**

Update: Costs are currently being finalised with a consultant to prepare the Asset Management Strategy. A broad strategy is expected to be completed by December, followed by a property-specific strategy in the New Year.

- **Develop support to owner-occupiers to invest in energy efficiency, retrofit and decarbonisation works.**

Update: A report was presented and approved at Cabinet on 17 July for the decision to set up district wide owner occupier rooftop PV scheme. The 'Make My House Green' scheme has since launched.

- **Install EV charging points across the District and Provide electric vehicle charging points at all Council premises.**

Update: There have been significant delays due to the previous supplier and more recently the Distribution Network Operator SSE. Phase one has been completed with installations at Rissington Road Bourton on the Water and at Trinity Road Cirencester. Phase 2 is due for completion during Q3 2023-2024.

- **Complete an options appraisal of community energy generation, Support community-led and community-owned renewable energy projects, and Support neighbourhood-wide climate action.**

Update: Options to support this being considered as part of work to refine priorities over the next four-year term

- **Adopt and implement the ecological emergency action plan.**

Update: The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) mitigation strategies are complete for Cotswolds Beechwoods and North Meadow so planning applications can be determined. A briefing note for HRA issues has been circulated to management. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) project is progressing, and interim guidance for developers has been completed.

- **Deliver a sustainable transport strategy.**

Update: The Sustainable Transport Decarbonisation Strategy is due to be completed by the end of October and a member briefing will be organised in the run up to Christmas. The strategy identifies a series of carbon reduction interventions in Cirencester and the



wider district. During the summer months the Council commissioned Systra to prepare an access and movement study to examine parking needs and opportunities to improve active travel. The council has completed a public transport study that examined the links between Kemble to Cirencester and an assessment of sites to locate a new public transport hub in Cirencester Town Centre.

- **Develop an updated Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) to inform planning and investment in pitch-based facilities.**

Update: The final version of the updated PPS has been received and signed off by Sport England with the strategy presented and approved at Cabinet on 2 November.

- **Work with our partners to ensure our young people have the skills they need to secure employment in the district.**

Update: Cirencester College T level building now completed. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding includes provision in Year 3 (2024/25) to support those furthest from the labour market and for green skills. Officers are liaising with key contacts in the County Council about this.

- **Develop and implement an action plan to improve digital inclusion.**

Update: Work is progressing through the partnership with a headline report produced outlining eight recommendations to help tackle the digital divide and frames a range of questions revolving around next steps. This is supported by digital exclusion risk mapping, community asset mapping (what's out there already) and a 'what we know about closing the digital divide report.

2.4 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

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (60.12% against a target of 53%)
- Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates collected (67.85% against a target of 57%)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (3.72 days against a target of 5 days)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.33% against a target of 0.35%)



- Customer Satisfaction (97% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (88.6% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (95% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (85.31% against a target of 80%)
- Number of visits to the three leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (3090 memberships against a target of 2936 memberships and 128512 visits against a target of 120000)
- Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (93.31% 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 90%)

3.2 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (23.98 days against a target of 20 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (9.83 days against a target of 4 days)

Q2's standalone figures show that Council Tax New Claims are being processed in 16.76 days, against the target of 20 days and Housing Benefit Changes of Circumstance are being processed in 6.83 days against a target of 4 days, however, as the targets are cumulative the rolling statistics are above target for average processing days.

(Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events however remains well within the target of 5 days.)

The Resolution: Following procedural changes to manage the work received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers, we are now achieving a level of 60-70% of automation for the DWP work up from 40-45% in Q1 allowing for more focus on applications and other reported changes. The Universal Credit (UC) section of DWP is currently investigating improvements to the data that is sent through to local authorities via a Working Group. Once the improvements have been made there is the potential, in conjunction with our software supplier, to automate additional DWP work items.

The outstanding workload is reducing week by week and management of the resource to support the reduction is underway. The improvements to the automation system have freed up officer capacity to help reduce the backlog of claims. It is anticipated that the trial for reduced phone line opening hours at Cotswold will further free up capacity for officers to process claims.

Publica remains committed to further improving its performance and service delivery and is actively investing in the development and implementation of automation and self-serve options



for customers. By providing accessible and efficient self-help tools, customers can address their queries and concerns independently, leading to a decrease in the need for repeated interactions with services. Publica will continue to monitor, assess, and report on the impact of improvement programs in reducing customer contact and enhancing operational efficiency.

Missed Bins per 100,000 (88 against a target of 80)

The number of missed bins per 100,000 remains unchanged at 88 from Q1 to Q2. This is above target and higher than this time last year. This has been attributed to a stand-in driver navigating unfamiliar routes due to sickness and a vehicle being off the roads. Both have now been rectified.

The Resolution: Additional training with crews and supervisors to bring the misses down. Performance will be continuously under review by the Contract Monitoring Team.

Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (30 against a target of 50)

Nineteen properties including 8 for affordable rent and 11 for shared ownership have been delivered in Cotswold at Evenlode and Siddington during Q2 with eleven delivered during Q1.

The Resolution: Delays were encountered at one housing development site due to the insolvency of the main contractor, leading to the site remaining inaccessible for several months before a replacement contractor could be legally engaged. The legal issues have since been resolved, a new contractor has been engaged, and construction has recommenced. It is anticipated that the 28 affordable units on the site will be delivered within the next quarter.

The service reports that completions fluctuate over the year. A housing development period is at least 12 months, with some schemes phased over several years.

3.3 A full performance report is attached at Annex C.

3.4 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

4.1 This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28 November 2023; and any comments from the Committee will be recorded and shared with relevant Cabinet Members.

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)