



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 25 JULY 2024
Subject	COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2023-24 QUARTER FOUR
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: <ol style="list-style-type: none">I. Note overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2023-24 Q4.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivering Good Services• Responding to the Climate Emergency• Delivering Housing• Supporting Communities• Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Cotswold District Council retained senior managers, 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 Chief Executive 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.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

- 2.1 The Council adopted Our Cotswolds, Our Plan 2024-28 ('the Plan') in January 2024. The Plan sets out the Council's Aim, and key priorities, and sets out the key measures of success.
- 2.2 Progress on key actions identified in the Corporate Plan for Q4 include:

Delivering good services

- In January, Full council approved the recommendations set out in the Local Partnerships report and agreed to instruct the Interim Programme Director to prepare a detailed transition plan to build on the recommendations set out in the Local Partnerships report.
- The Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2024-25 were presented and approved at the Full Council Budget meeting in February.

Responding to the climate emergency

- Progress persists in the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), especially concerning the allocation of secured funds to fulfil necessary mitigation measures. The first mandatory BNG applications have been received and are presently under review. The primary focus has shifted towards establishing necessary processes, providing training, and ensuring compliance with legal requirements.
- EV charge points are now installed and operational at Trinity Road and Rissington Road. On street residential charge point scheme (ORCS) funding has been secured for last



tranche of installations, with a business case being taken to July Cabinet recommending site allocation.

- Options to optimise delivery of high-quality retrofit support are currently being explored and considered. This includes the submission of a Gloucestershire-wide consortium bid to the South West Net Zero Hub (SWNZH), aimed at securing funding to employ a retrofit engagement officer at the Council.
- The partial Local Plan update to prioritise environmental sustainability is ongoing with the public consultation held on the draft Local Plan policies from 1st February to 7th April. Consultation responses are now under review, and further supporting evidence is being gathered for the final version of the plan prior to submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

Delivering Housing

- Proactive Approach to Affordable Housing Delivery paper approved by Cabinet with the suggestions to be explored, in order to increase the supply of affordable homes within the district. The recruitment process for the Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager is currently underway.
- A public consultation on the Housing Strategy ran from 10th January to 21st February to gather residents' views and understand housing challenges and priorities. Feedback will shape Council collaboration with partners, inform funding bids, and ensure priorities align with residents' needs for greater access to affordable housing.
- Planning Application for the zero carbon affordable housing development in Down Ampney was submitted in June.

Supporting communities

- A Town and Parish forum event took place on February 28th, with a subsequent event planned for mid-June. Following the May elections, a Town and Parish newsletter is planned for distribution.
- In collaboration with Life Cycle, the Council have installed 51 new community bike stands across the District including in Lechlade, Fairford and South Cerney.
- Grant funding from Safer Streets Round 5 has been distributed to local Town and Parish Councils (TPCs) following engagement efforts. Updates on initiatives are currently being received, indicating progress and the implementation of various safety measures in local communities.
- In collaboration with NHS Integrated Locality Partnership, £116k have been awarded for projects supporting children, young people and families. These projects are being delivered by local voluntary sector organisations. Projects include: youth provision in Chipping Campden and Cirencester, Digital Youth Work, Gloucestershire Young Carers Activity Days.
- Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) conducted training workshops for new champions in February, with over 70 individuals participating. In



March, a quarterly newsletter was launched to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders.

Supporting the economy

- Collaboration persists with businesses from key sectors, including agritech, cyber/digital, and sustainable aviation, to promote employment opportunities. The most recent meeting of the Cotswold Economic Advisory Group centred on apprenticeships, featuring a presentation by St. James's Place on their programme and the lessons for other employers.
- A legal agreement between Cotswold District Council and Gloucestershire County Council has been agreed to deliver a programme of activities using grant funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund to help those furthest from the employment market.
- Officers continue to liaise with the Royal Agricultural University on their Innovation Village with an outline planning application submitted for consideration in April.

2.3 Off target actions of the Corporate Plan behind schedule at Q4 are detailed below. Whilst this report is a retrospective account of progress in Q4, where possible, the current status is also included for assurance.

Delivering good services

Instigate second phase of activity to replace worn and damaged street nameplates

Q4 update: Currently, revised processes are being finalised with Ubico to prevent any delays in installations. Moreover, there is a comprehensive review of the overall processes to minimise errors in the wording and placement of signs. The list of signs earmarked for replacement is being cross-checked with those already completed. Subsequently, the second tranche of replacements will be planned, providing detailed budgets and timelines for implementation.

Current Status: Following a review of processes and signs currently completed and pending, roll out of a further 71 replacement street signs has now been agreed and a delivery plan has been requested from Ubico.

Responding to the climate emergency

Explore the business cases for the installation of solar panels on Council owned assets.

Update: The installation of solar panels at Trinity Road has experienced a slight delay due to proposed adjustments to the original design. Written confirmation is now awaited that the supplier will absorb the additional cost. Whilst this has delayed the scheme by a few weeks, it is hoped work will start on-site in May. Terms have provisionally been agreed with New Brewery Arts and Power Purchasing agreement being prepared by legal.

Current Status: The installation of solar panels at Trinity Road has experienced a slight delay; however, work commenced on-site in June. Terms have provisionally been agreed with New Brewery Arts and a Power Purchasing agreement is being prepared by legal.



Supporting communities

Identify opportunities to influence policy and host a sewage summit with the outcome being reported to the Council in May.

Update: The date for the sewage summit has now been finalised and will take place on the 8th July in the Corinium Museum in Cirencester. All 3 Water companies will be attending, along with the EA and representatives from Earth Watch. A report to Council will be present in September following the event.

- 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:

- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (4 days against a target of 5 days)
- Customer Satisfaction (99% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (100% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (84% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (84% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (20% against a target of 30%)
- Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (95% 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%)
- Missed Bins per 100,000 (67 against a target of 80)
- Number of gym memberships (3590 against a target of 3500)

3.2 Service Performance below target:

Percentage of Council Tax Collected (98.36% against a target of 99%) and Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (96.85% against a target of 99%)

At the end of Q4, the Council observed a slight improvement in their in-year collection rates for Council Tax compared to the previous year, with an increase of 0.34%. While the Council's collection rate fell just short of the year-end target of 99% by 0.64%, there has been a



consistent upward trend in collection rates over recent years, nearing pre-pandemic levels by a margin of 0.48%. For non-domestic rates the Council saw an increase of 1.17% in their collection rates compared to the same period of the previous year, albeit they have yet to reach pre-Covid-19 levels.

The Resolution: The service has recently concluded an extensive improvement programme aimed at refining operational procedures. This initiative has led to the successful implementation of dashboards, offering comprehensive insights into individual performance and setting smart targets for objective assessment of success. Through process mapping, areas for optimisation and efficiency were identified, resulting in the adoption of weekly work schedules and heightened automation. These efforts have enabled a more efficient approach to service delivery, ensuring that the in year recovery process remains up to date.

The service remains committed to supporting businesses, actively reaching out through reminders, phone calls, and emails to encourage dialogue with the Councils so that we can support them via manageable repayment plans.

Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (21 days against a target of 20 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (5 days against a target of 4 days)

Q4's standalone figures show that Council Tax Support New Claims are being processed in 16 days, against the target of 20 days and Housing Benefit Changes of Circumstance are being processed in 2 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: Automation of tasks received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers is currently operating at a level of 60–70%. This automation allows for a heightened focus on processing applications and addressing reported changes. Furthermore, the UC section of the DWP is actively exploring enhancements to the data sent to local authorities. Ongoing testing of the system is underway as part of these improvement efforts.

The automation of processing applications for the DWP and the trial for reduced phone line opening hours have released capacity for officers to process claims, contributing to the reduction in the processing times.

It's important to emphasise that the processing times commence from the moment the service receives an application, irrespective of its completion status. Therefore, even incomplete applications are included in the count from receipt, potentially exaggerating the figures.

Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (93 against a target of 100)

Forty-eight properties were completed in Cotswold, across Cirencester, Evenlode, Kempsford and Siddington. A total of 93 affordable homes have been delivered during 2023-24, against a target of 100.



The Resolution: Challenges with utility connections and heavy rainfall during Q4 have caused delays at two primary sites. Originally planned for completion this quarter, these projects are now anticipated to finish in Q1 of 2024-25.

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.

Number of visits to the leisure centres (121,561 visits against a target of 135,000)

During Q4 visits to the leisure facilities increased by just over 18,000 in comparison to last quarter but decreased by a similar figure compared in comparison to Q4 2022-23.

The Resolution: The leisure facilities underwent a management transition to Freedom Leisure at the outset of August, which presented inherent challenges. Despite these hurdles, the service reports that Freedom Leisure contractors have diligently promoted the leisure centres, leading to a steady increase in visits month on month. In total, visits reached 94% of the year-on-year target of 510,000 visits, amounting to 481,734 visits for the 2023–24 period. Currently, Freedom Leisure is developing plans to further promote their mental fitness activities, underscoring their commitment to fostering physical, mental, and social well-being.

- 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 22 July 2024; 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.



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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)