



Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY – 5 JANUARY 2026 CABINET – 8 JANUARY 2026</b>
Subject	<b>COUNCIL PRIORITY AND SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2025-26 QUARTER TWO (JULY-SEPTEMBER 2025)</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk">mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
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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"><li>1. Note overall progress on the Council priorities and service performance for 2025-26 Q2 (July-September 2025).</li></ol>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparing for the Future</li><li>• Delivering Good Services</li><li>• Responding to the Climate Emergency</li><li>• Delivering Housing</li><li>• Supporting Communities</li><li>• Supporting the Economy</li></ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/	CDC Corporate Leadership Team, Publica Directors, Business



**COTSWOLD**  
District Council

Consultation

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. Publica also provides performance data on services transferred back to the Council. 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 its Corporate Plan 2025–2028 ("the Plan") in September 2025. The Plan outlines the Council's purpose, vision, values, key priorities, and measures of success.

**2.2** Progress on key actions identified in the Corporate Plan for Q2 (July-September 2025) include:

- Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation have been prepared, including options for one and two unitary authorities. These were considered by Overview and Scrutiny on 17 November and Full Council on 26 November, with Cabinet making the final decision later that day. A new programme and portfolio management approach is being planned to support the next phase.
- People & Culture Strategy and Year 1 Implementation Plan were agreed by Cabinet in September 2025, alongside workforce values and a supporting Communications & Engagement strategy, helping embed organisational culture change.
- Digital Transformation initiatives are progressing, including exploration of AI solutions to improve council services and accessibility. Meetings with Lead Members and ICT are scheduled to assess feasibility and cost-benefit.



- Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2025–2030 was adopted in September 2025. Regular monitoring and annual reviews will ensure actions remain on target to support vulnerable residents.
- Town and Parish Council engagement strengthened through a June summit attended by over 100 councillors and clerks, followed by a new newsletter and ongoing dialogue to prepare for Local Government Reorganisation and Local Plan engagement.
- Crowdfund Cotswold autumn round launched in July, with four projects seeking funding and three undergoing verification checks, continuing to promote community-led initiatives.
- Green Economic Growth Strategy delivery is underway following Cabinet adoption in March 2025. Actions are overseen by the Cotswold Economic Advisory Group to drive sustainable economic development.
- Tourism Destination Management Plan refresh progressed with a joint bid for Strategic Economic Development Fund support submitted in summer. A decision is expected in November.
- Strengthening Local Communities events have delivered 10 of 14 planned sessions, engaging over 600 residents with free activities, food, and support from local partners, tailored to community priorities.

**2.3** 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** Overall, the Council's performance shows strong progress in key areas, alongside some ongoing challenges. Council Tax collection is ahead of expectations, and Non-Domestic Rates continue to improve year on year. Planning determination times for major and other applications remain above target, and customer satisfaction is exceptionally high. Leisure services also performed well, with sustained engagement in gym memberships and leisure centre visits. However, processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit change events, while improving, remain above target due to cumulative averages and operational complexities linked to Universal Credit migration. Land Charges performance was affected by staffing pressures late in the quarter, and environmental performance faces challenges, with household recycling rates impacted by seasonal factors and wider national trends.

**3.2** Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (59.29% against the quarterly target of 57%)



- Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (19.91 days against a target of 20 days)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.32% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (99.29% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (100% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (91.7% 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 95%)
- Residual Household Waste per Household (kg) (85.91 against a target of 97)
- Missed bins per 100,000 (49 against a target of 80)
- Number of gym memberships (4,774 against a target of 4,300)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (154,011 visits against a target of 129,000)

**3.3** Service Performance near target:

- Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (54.37% against the quarterly target of 57%)
- Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (87.69% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (88.24% against a target of 90%)

**3.4** Service Performance below target:

**Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (9.69 days against a target of 5 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (9.56 days against a target of 4 days).**

The Council saw a reduction in processing times for both Council Tax Support (CTS) change of events and Housing Benefit (HB) changes of circumstances compared to Q1. However, cumulative averages remain above the respective targets of 5 days for CTS and 4 days for HB, with CTS changes averaging 9.69 days and HB changes averaging 9.56 days.



The improvement in CTS processing times was largely driven by automation enhancements and the clearance of a backlog during Q1. Around 85% of income-related changes were batch processed during the quarter, significantly accelerating turnaround times. Notably, the average CTS processing time for July to September was just 3.45 days, well within target.

While further improvements are anticipated, the cumulative nature of the metric means it is unlikely to fall within target before the end of the financial year.

Housing Benefit continues to present challenges. The team are prioritising Full Claim Reviews mandated by the DWP, which are often complex and subject to delays in receiving full supporting evidence.

Working-age Housing Benefit claimants have fallen by around 97%, reducing to single figures as most claimants have migrated to Universal Credit. The HB caseload now primarily consists of pension-age claimants and temporary accommodation cases. With fewer HB changes occurring, any delay has a more pronounced impact on average processing times.

To support residents and strengthen financial resilience, the Council continues to deliver targeted initiatives through the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT). Campaigns include:

- Benefit Maximisation: Helping residents claim underclaimed benefits such as Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, and Council Tax Support, ensuring households receive their full entitlement.
- Pension Credit Campaign: Focused outreach to eligible pension-age households to increase take-up of Pension Credit and related benefits, unlocking significant financial support for residents.
- Healthy Start & Free School Meals: Promoting schemes that provide nutritious food for families with young children and school-age children.
- Warm Homes Campaign: Signposting residents to energy support, including the Warm Home Discount, to help reduce fuel poverty and energy costs.

These initiatives are helping to reduce financial vulnerability and ensure residents receive the support they are entitled to.

### **Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (52.08% against a target of 30%)**

Between 1 July and 30 September 2025, 17 planning appeals were determined. Of these, 9 were allowed in favour of the applicant and 1 resulted in a split decision, giving an allowance rate of 52.94% for the quarter.



As this measure is cumulative, from 1 April to 30 September a total of 24 appeals have been decided, with 12 allowed and 1 split decision, resulting in a cumulative allowance rate of 52.08%. This figure may fluctuate throughout the year as more appeal decisions are received.

While the general target is for no more than 30% of appeals to be allowed, the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 introduced a formal system for assessing the performance of local planning authorities. Under the designation criteria, an authority may be identified as underperforming if 10% or more of its total planning decisions are overturned at appeal.

This measure of decision quality is assessed over a rolling two-year period and is applied separately to major and non-major development categories. It's important to note that the 10% threshold is based on the total number of decisions made, not just those that are appealed. Authorities exceeding this threshold in either category may be designated, allowing applicants to submit certain types of applications directly to the Secretary of State.

**Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (20 delivered against a target of 50).**

In Cotswold, eighteen affordable homes were delivered during Q2, bringing the year-to-date total to 20. Projections from Registered Providers show 64 completions for 2025/26, well below the target of 100, making it unlikely the district will meet its goal. The delivery of affordable housing is subject to fluctuations, as most developments take over a year to complete and often progress in multiple phases over several years. Early overdelivery at the beginning of the current strategy has also contributed to the dip in recent annual outputs, as the early years set a higher baseline.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2018, the district has delivered approximately 880 affordable homes, averaging around 125 homes per year. Despite the recent dip in completions, this continues to reflect the Council's ongoing commitment to delivering affordable housing and meeting long-term housing needs in the area.

**Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (76.07% against a target of 90%)**



The Council's performance against the 10-day target for completing official Land Charges searches declined in Q2, falling from 95.07% in Q1 to 76.07%, below the 90% target.

Performance remained strong through July and August, consistently exceeding target (97.64%), but a sharp drop in September impacted the quarterly average. This was primarily due to the long-term absence of a Land Charges team member, which reduced resilience across the service. Despite these challenges, the average turnaround time for searches was only 6.82 days, remaining below the 10-day target. To address this, additional support has been deployed from the Customer Service and Support Service Team, enabling specialist staff to focus on completing searches. These measures are expected to stabilise performance and improve continuity going forward.

#### **Percentage of household waste recycled (56.29% against a target of 62%)**

During Q2, the Council's household recycling rate fell by 2.5% compared to the same quarter last year, reflecting a wider national trend influenced by seasonal and structural factors.

Despite the recent dip, Cotswold continues to demonstrate strong performance. According to the latest 2023/24 national results on local authority waste management, the district ranks within the top 25 councils in England for household recycling and remains firmly in the top quartile nationwide. This achievement underscores the Council's sustained commitment to environmental stewardship and effective waste management practices.

Nationally, recycling rates continue to face challenges, and Cotswold is no exception. During the summer months, the district experienced unusually dry weather, which led to a 25% drop in garden waste tonnage compared to the same period last year. Because garden waste represents a significant share of the recycling stream, this seasonal decline has had a noticeable impact on overall recycling performance.

- 3.5** A full performance report is attached at Annex C.
- 3.6** 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 5 January 2026. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to Cabinet.

#### **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

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