



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT
January 2023 - March 2023

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).

The second annual benchmarking exercise has been completed for the most recent data available (2020-21), and includes CIPFA benchmarking charts and revised Shire Districts' median /top quartile lines. The 2021-22 benchmarking data will be released over the course of the new financial year, and generally concludes around December time, ready for the 2022-23 Q4 performance report.

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 181 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 has been extracted from LG Inform, a benchmarking tool, which contains a range of routinely published data. It should be noted that:

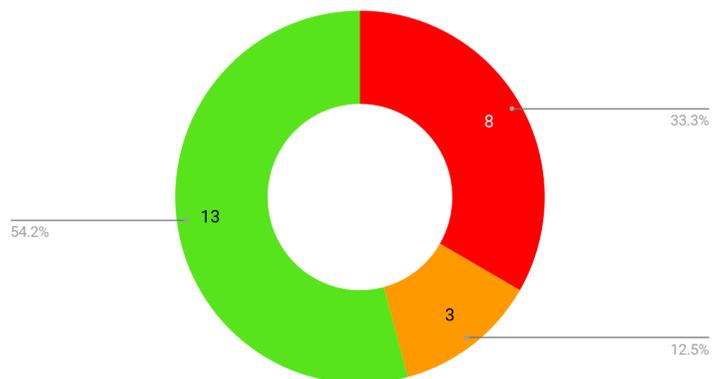
- the extracted data may differ from the Council's own data;
- the median and top (best 25%) quartile lines are based on annual outturns but applied to the quarterly data;;
- 2021/22 benchmarks are not yet available, so the previous year's benchmarks have been used, and will be revised during each benchmarking exercise.
- Where possible, from Quarter One 2023-24, additional benchmarking information will be included.

Note; some charts are missing data in this report as no data was collected at those variables.

KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS

At a glance...

Summary of Performance



OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Overall, performance appears to be mixed. No indicators progressed to 'Red' from last quarter's status.

Over the last year, a number of services have highlighted the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on households, businesses and the Council's services in particular Revenues and Benefits, Planning, Housing Support and Leisure. Some services such as Revenues and Benefits have reported increased customer contact and workloads while Planning has reported a slow-down in applications and potentially fewer applications for large developments due to a loss of confidence in the housing market. The business rates collection rate has been depressed over the last couple of years due to Covid and may now take longer to recover.

There are a number of improvement programmes in progress across services focussed on improving customer communication and increasing automation and self-serve options for customers which should help to reduce customer contact including repeat customer contact

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

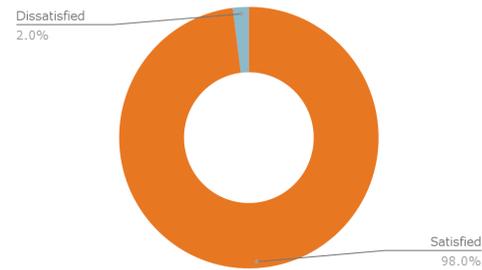
CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer satisfaction

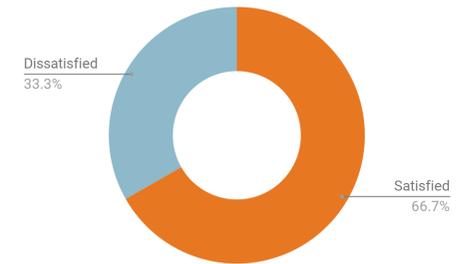
Face to face - 45 respondents



Phone - 338 respondents

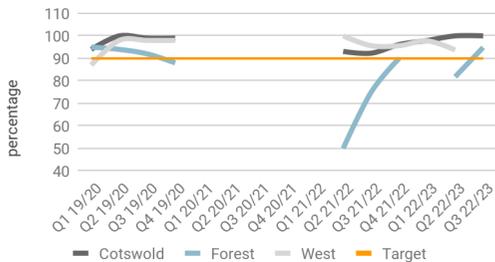


Email - 582 respondents

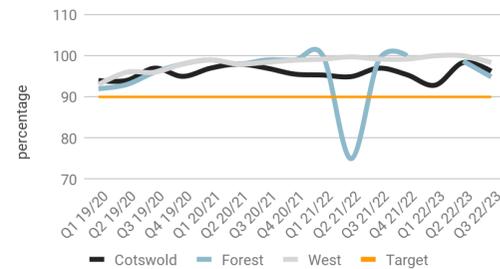


What's the trend?

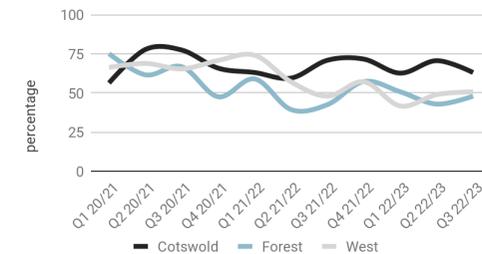
Customer satisfaction - face to face



Customer satisfaction - phone



Customer satisfaction - email



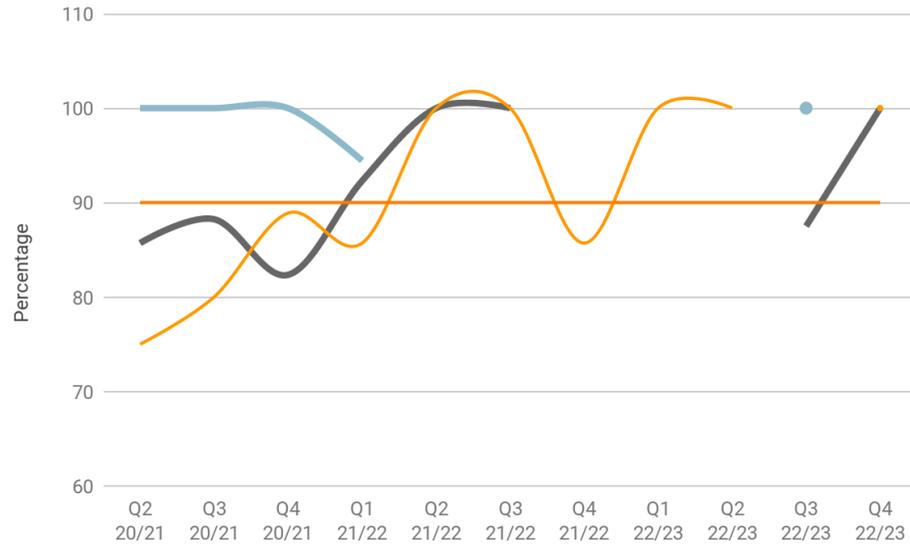
OBSERVATION

Services delivered face to face and telephone are indicating high satisfaction for services, and the number of survey responses has increased. Q4 saw significant impetus to get advisors to push the survey to residents.

F2F and telephone surveys require intervention from the advisor, while email surveys are automatically triggered.

In terms of email surveys, all outbound emails sent by customer services from Salesforce contain a link to the survey. A piece of work was undertaken to review the responses from the email surveys due to the more negative responses. Upon review it appears to be dissatisfaction surrounding service failure; missed bins, container deliveries, responses from Planning or Housing etc. System and process improvements by the individual services are being implemented which may affect these figures in the future.

Customer satisfaction for the Building Control service



OBSERVATION:

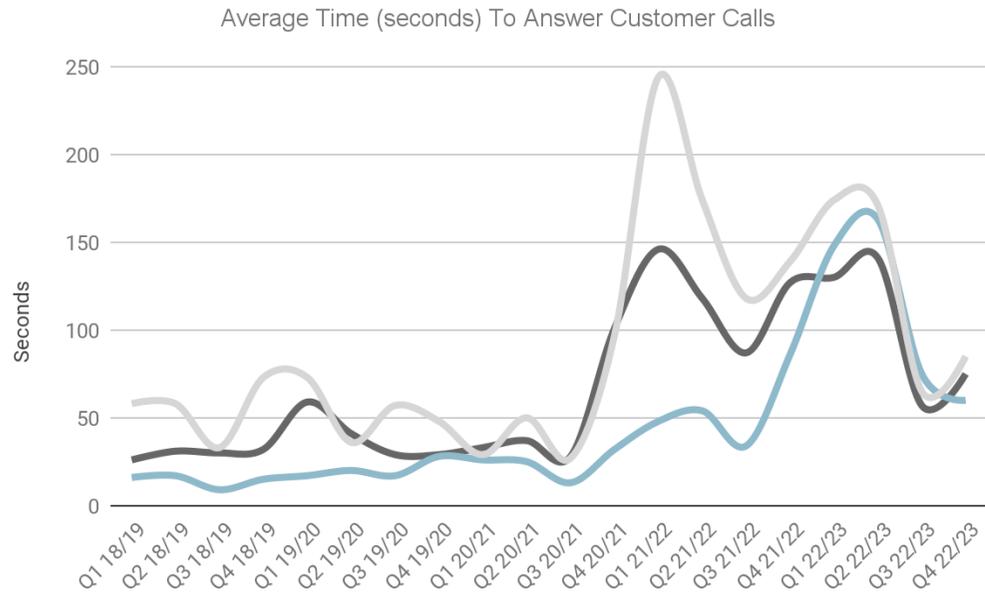
Each month, the service conducts telephone interviews with customers who have received a completion certificate during the month. The customer rates the service on helpfulness of staff, quality of technical advice and other information, responsiveness, value for money, and overall satisfaction.

Due to work pressures in the service, very few surveys have been completed over the last year.

During Q4, the Council had 3 surveys completed; all customers indicated that they were fully satisfied.

An alternative way of surveying customers needs to be identified. Survey Monkey has previously been used but did not yield a high response rate. This work needs to be included in the wider work on satisfaction in services.

Telephone calls - average waiting time



OBSERVATION

Average waiting time for increased slightly during Q4 as expected. Workloads were higher in Q4 due to annual billing, garden waste renewals and the introduction of voter ids.

The staggered approach to comms regarding annual billing and garden waste sign ups has had a positive impact surrounding managing demand.

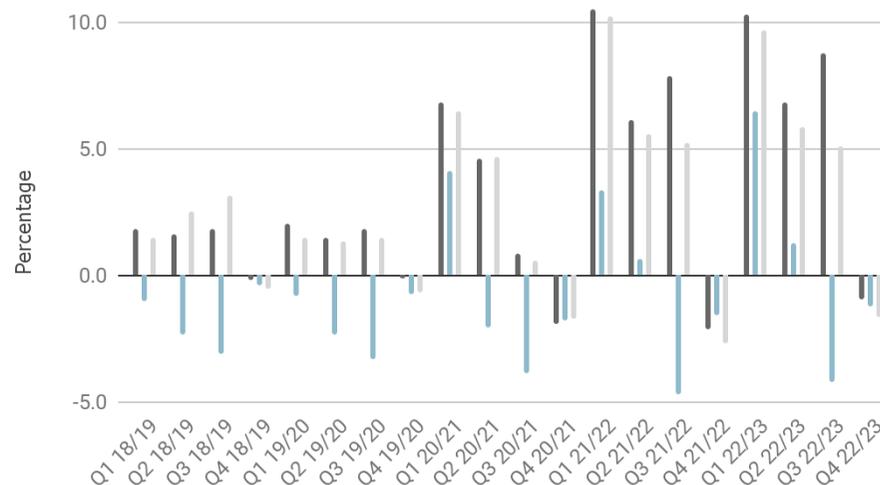
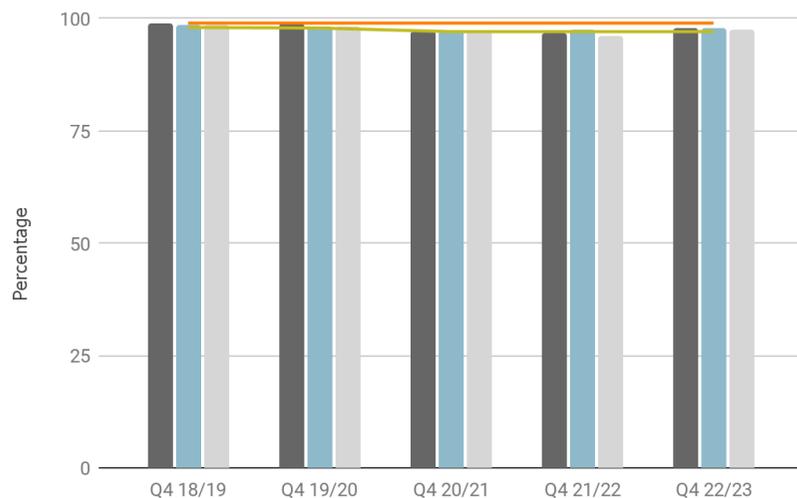
The service continues to have a higher turnover of staff as advisors move onto other roles within the business but a new highly structured training programme means that new starters can usually be ready for all phone lines within 3 months.

Despite an increase in calls from Q3, the annual number of calls continues to drop in line with improved online reporting and the advisors promoting the online services with leaflets and QR codes. There was a 13% drop in calls from 2021-22 to 2022-23

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

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



OBSERVATION:

The collection rates at the end of the year for the Council sits at 98.02% which is higher than the collection rate for last year. The improved collection rates will have been helped by the recovery cycle being up to date with those households in arrears now on repayment schedules, and potentially the roll out of the £150 council tax rebate (generally paid back to the householder's bank account but some will have had their accounts credited), which has now ended.

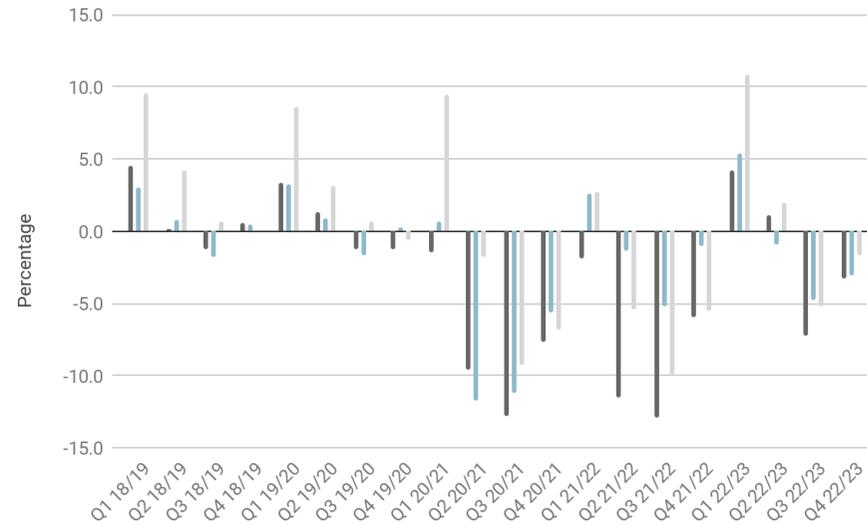
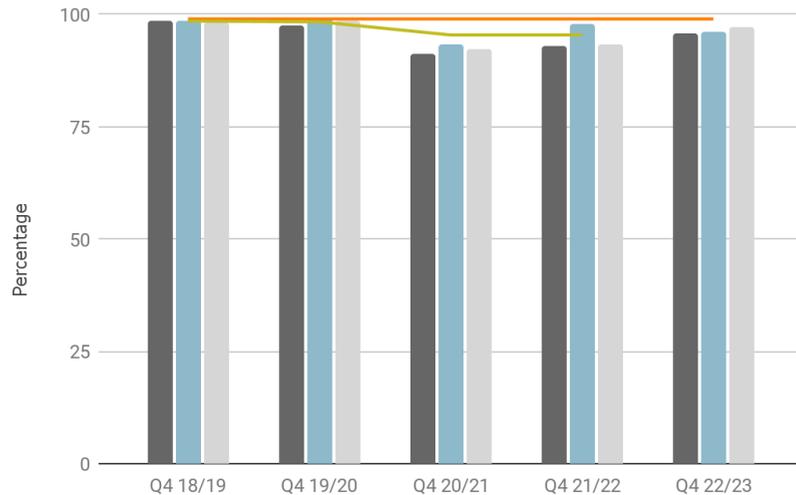
The rising cost of living has affected the annual in-year collection rates. The service reports that overall customer contact with the service has increased and the number of applications for reductions in council tax in special circumstance (Section 13A) is rising. The Council will be introducing a hardship fund from April 2023. The Council Tax Support schemes have been revised in line with inflation to support more households and will be introduced in 2023-24.

As expected, workloads did increase during Q4 as both the Revenues and Benefits teams implemented the additional £25 payment to all working age and pension age individuals in receipt of Council Tax Support; as well as the alternative energy payments. The payments were administered well but customer contact can impede the speed of payment.

Running a regular reminder schedule helps in maximising collection across the authorities.

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

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



OBSERVATION:

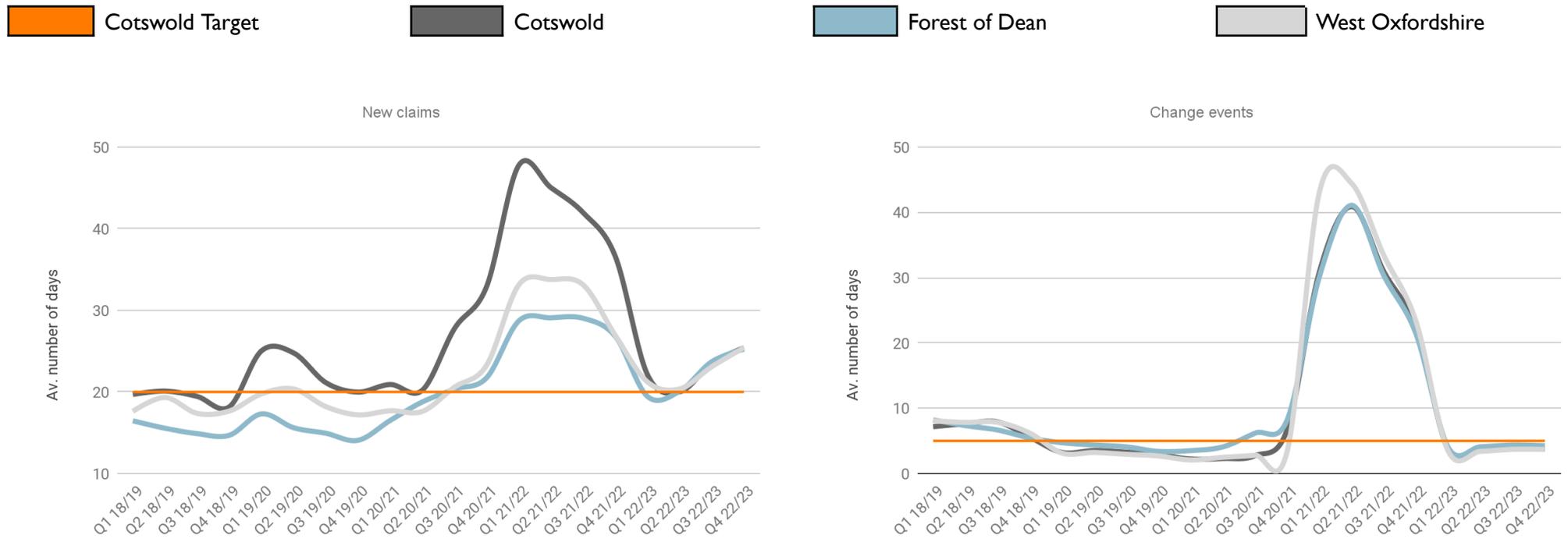
At the end of the year, the collection rates for the Council had increased compared to the same period of the previous year, although they have not yet returned to the level achieved pre-Covid-19.

It is likely that the Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) distributed during the year has contributed to the improved collection rate. These businesses have had their business rates accounts credited. Although the grant relates to 2021-22, the timing of the receipt has meant that some businesses have used it to offset the current year's account.

Extended retail relief continued through Q4 at a relief of 50%, and will increase to 75% in 2023-24 for leisure and retail businesses. However, the criteria for eligibility is more stringent than during covid times so some businesses will miss out. The service will be writing to those businesses affected. In addition, some businesses will see their rates increase as a result of the business rates revaluation 2023-24.

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. All in year recovery processes are up to date, and plans are in place to redesign the recovery process in the first part of 2023-24

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



OBSERVATION:

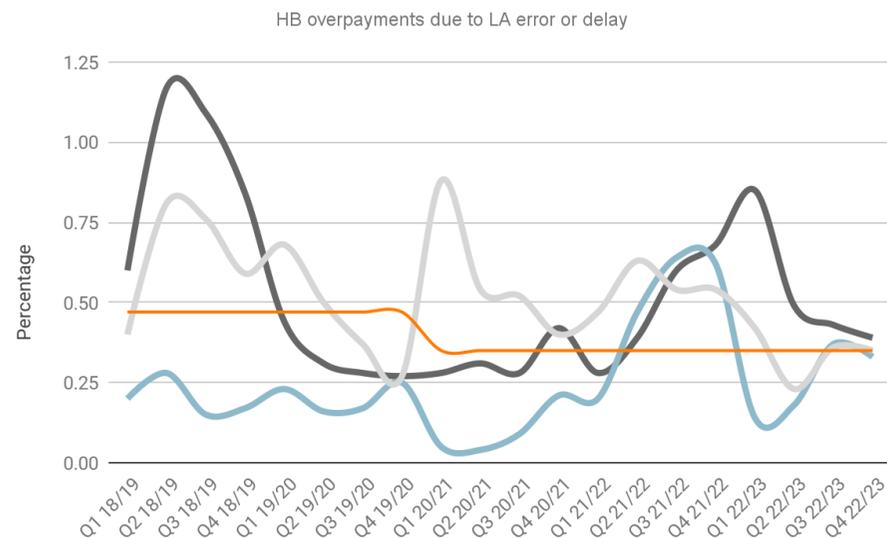
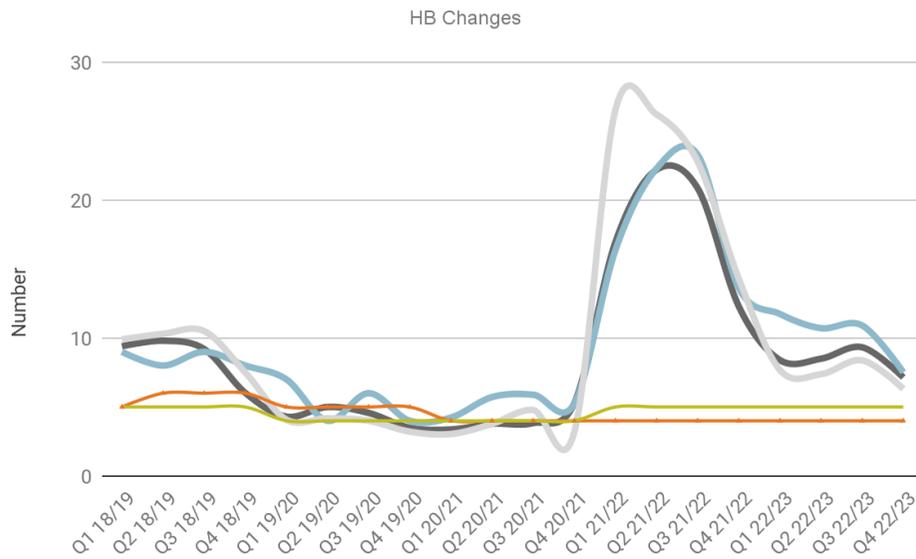
At the end of Q4, the average days to process new CTS claims increased for the Council while the average processing days for CTS changes remained within the target.

The service is heavily reliant on customers providing the correct information. A report has been developed around defective claims that will indicate where to focus website improvements etc.

The cost of living crisis has had an impact on overall customer contact and workloads in the service. However system improvements and automation are helping reduce repeat contact.

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

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



OBSERVATION:

The observation for CTS new claims and changes should be read in conjunction with the observation for HB indicators as the work is performed by the same team.

At the end of Q4, the average days to process HB changes decreased.

The majority of Housing Benefit customers will be moved over to Universal Credit which will eventually diminish the numbers of claims and changes for Housing Benefit.

The Council is within the national target of 0.47% following a sizable overpayment made in error identified early in the financial year.

The service is mindful of the impact of increased workloads on delays to processing HB changes which could impact on HB subsidy.

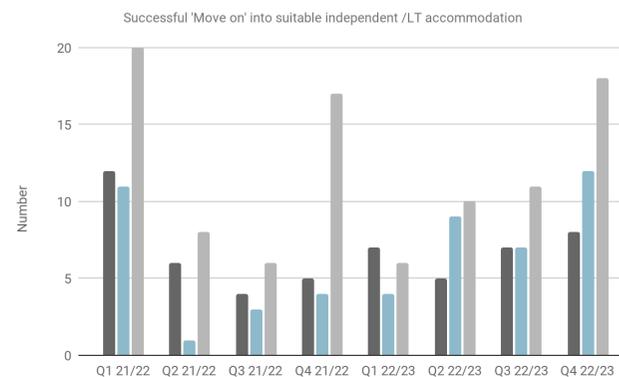
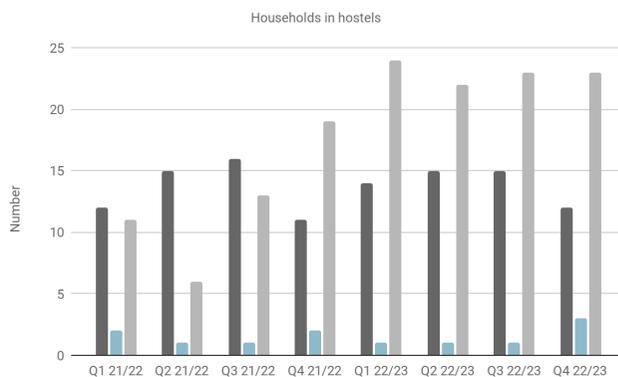
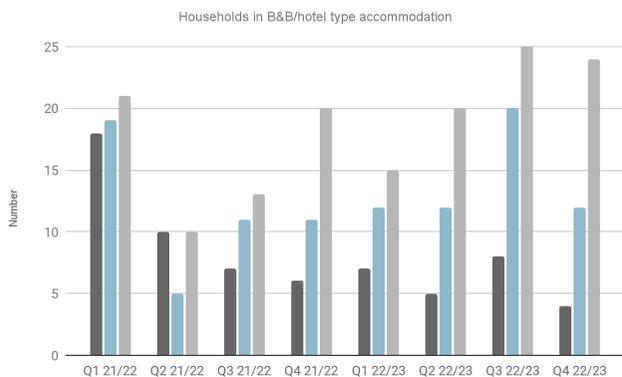
Measures are in place to ensure that HB overpayments due to local authority error are reduced as far as possible. Around 20% of the HB caseload is checked by Quality Assurance officers who target areas which have high error rates such as calculation of earnings. In addition to this work, the service is signed up to the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) Housing Benefit Award Accuracy (HBAA) initiative to tackle fraud and error.

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



OBSERVATION:

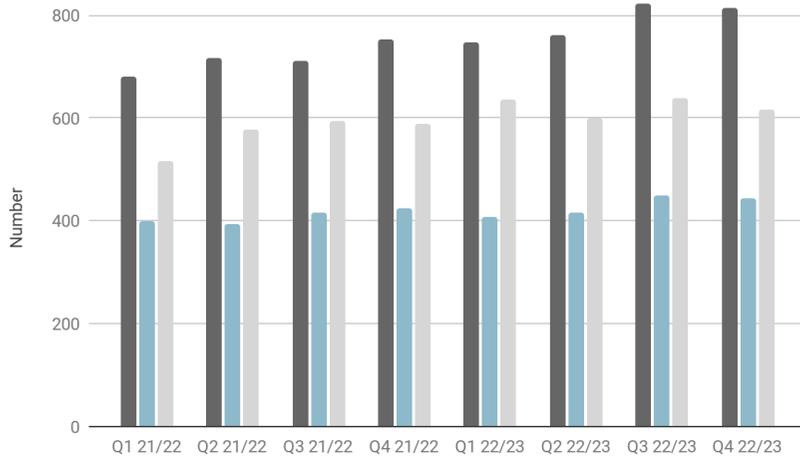
Although the numbers of people contacting the Housing Team are traditionally lower in Cotswold District compared to the Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire, contacts continue to rise across all three in the wake of the current cost of living crisis, and the evolving Refugee schemes, specifically Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Resettlement. The Council's owned and managed hostels continue to operate at capacity however the use of specialist Temporary Accommodation officers are able to offer dedicated support and bespoke solutions for helping clients move on successfully from emergency accommodation.

The Housing Team has refocused more resources on the prevention approach using our Homelessness Prevention Grants to put in place measures to assist those affected by the financial implications of the increasing cost of living. These measures are aimed at working with households to enable them to remain in their own home, with reducing rent arrears or covering the costs of increased bills. Accessing the Private Rented Sector in the District remains difficult due to affordability. Our grant funded Complex Needs officers continues to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage, ensuring that numbers of people needing emergency accommodation remains low.

The team is also providing advice and assistance to Ukrainian families who will need to source their own accommodation as the scheme moves through the initial 12 month period. The specialist Ukraine Housing Officer (funding secured from County) is working with families and hosts to prevent homelessness wherever possible and assist families to secure their own accommodation in the private sector. Where this is not possible, the Officer will assist in sourcing rematches to different Hosts through the Homes for Ukraine scheme or source emergency accommodation when needed until a longer term solution can be found.

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

Cotswold Forest of Dean West Oxfordshire



OBSERVATION:

During Q4, the total number of properties for the Council's long term empty homes is 813; 175 were added and 184 were removed.

The service reports that properties are staying on the LTE list longer; anecdotal evidence suggests there are difficulties in getting building supplies for refurb work as well as the impact of the cost of living crisis. Most properties are individually owned and have to be followed up individually which is resource intensive, and will not result in the removal of large numbers from the LTE list.

A range of proactive work is being undertaken to both understand the reasons why properties are coming onto the list so that they can be managed and reduced as well as ensuring that the data is up to date so that these properties are having the correct levy applied and charged for. Improved reporting is helping to identify and better target properties

Planning and Strategic Housing

(Cumulative) Percentage of major planning applications determined

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

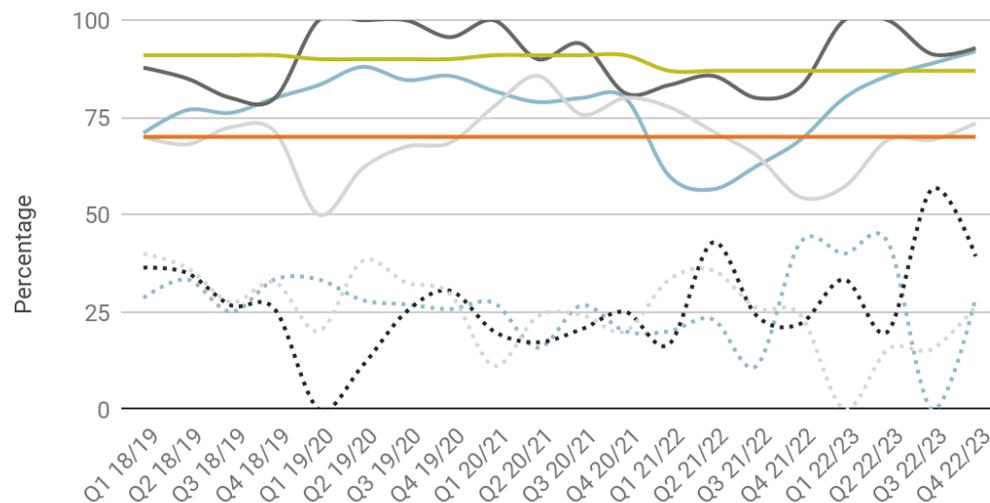


% of all application completed within 13 weeks

----- 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:

Five 'Major' applications were determined in the quarter, and 25 for the year so far.

Overall, planning determination times for all types of applications have made good improvements over the course of the year, with the majority of targets now being met or exceeded. In fact the last 5 quarters have seen improvements.

Workloads are more manageable as the number of applications continues to slow in line with the national trend. Better capacity in the DM team means that there is more scope for upskilling but a shortage of ecologists is still delaying response times for some planning applications.

As a result of the PAS report, further improvements and revisions have been compiled in a report which is due to go to cabinet in Q1 of 2023-24

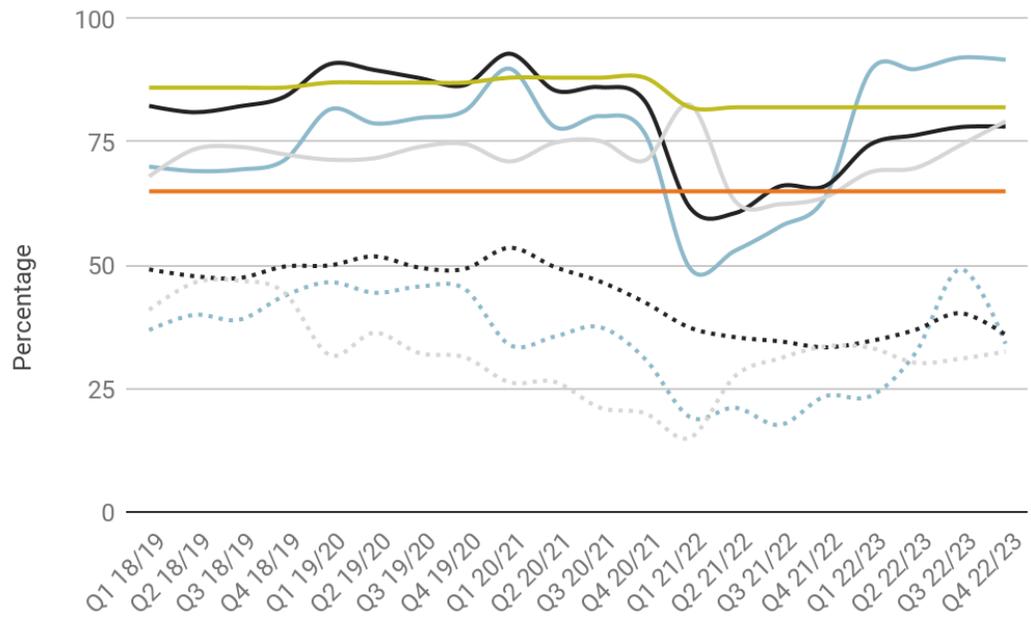
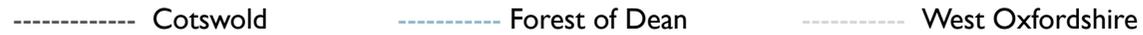
The validation checklist was launched in February as part of the improvement roadmap. It has largely been well received and a better quality of applications is being received. The sections around Biodiversity and Sustainability have had more significant changes and, following feedback from agents, these sections will be reviewed.

(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



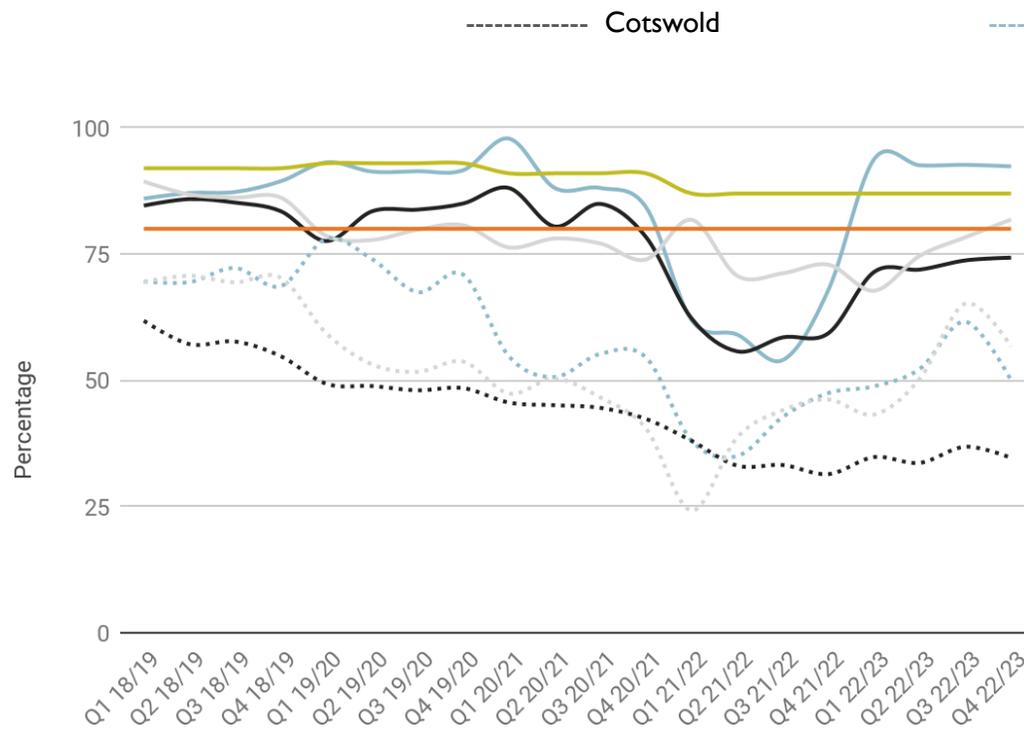
OBSERVATION:
 Performance for 'Minor' applications has been improving.
 119 minor applications were determined in Q4, compared to 83 applications in the same period of the previous year.
 See Observation for Major applications for further explanation

(Cumulative) Percentage of other planning applications determined

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



% of all applications completed within 8 weeks



OBSERVATION:

Improvements are being made but at a slower rate than for 'Majors' and 'Minors' partly due to being unable to secure extensions of times. In addition, this outturn is reported cumulatively from the beginning of the year which means that fluctuations and improvements are flattened. The cumulative outturn to the end of Q4 was 74.3% compared to 59.3% at the end of Q4 last year.

See Observation for Major applications for further explanation

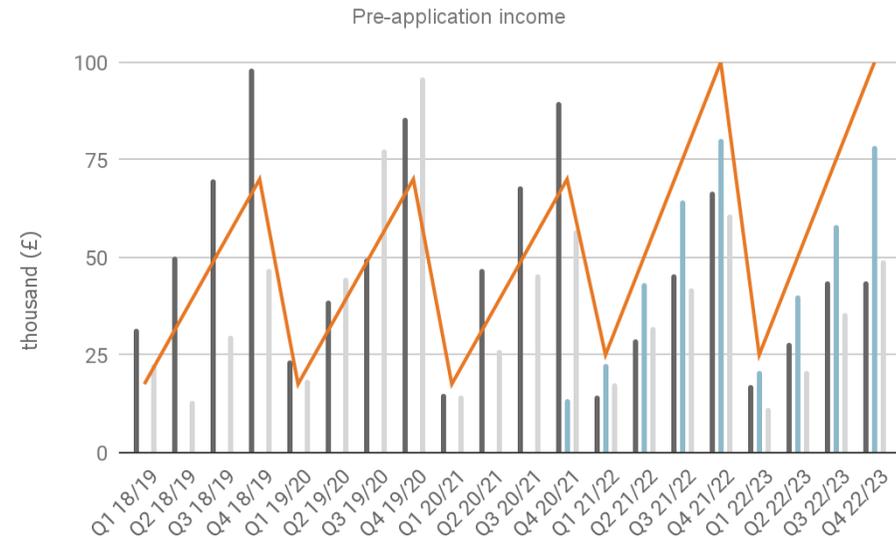
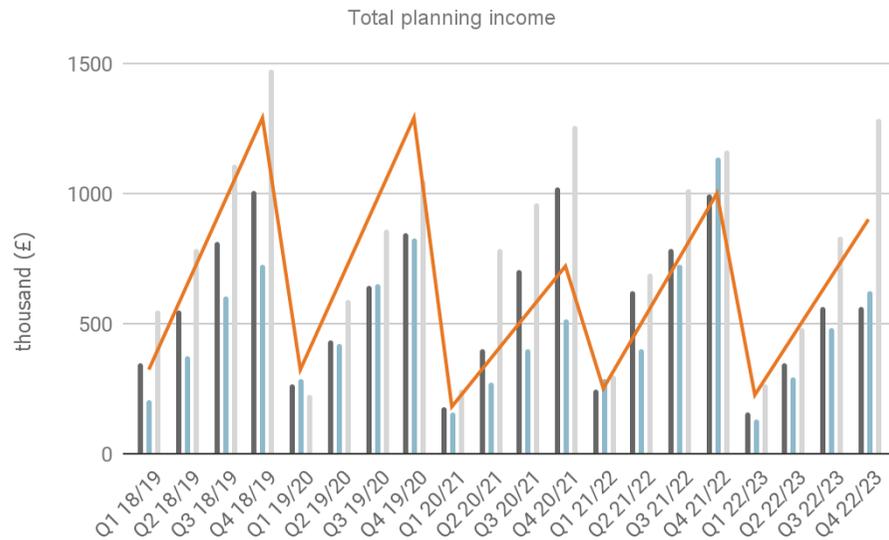
(Cumulative) Planning income

█ Cotswold Target

█ Cotswold

█ Forest of Dean

█ West Oxfordshire



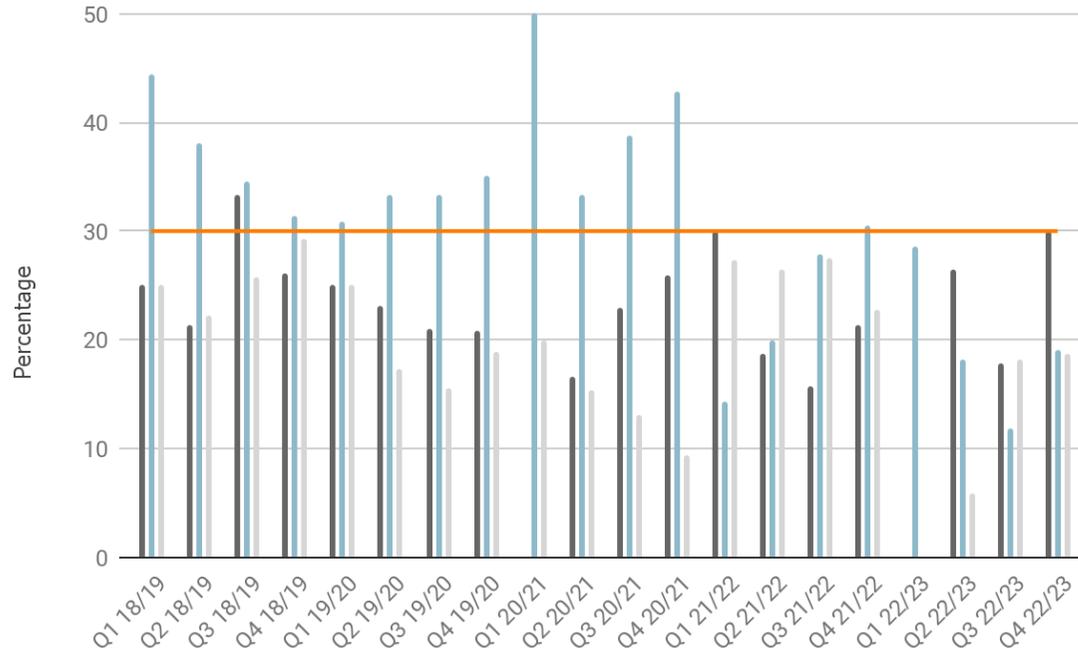
OBSERVATION:

At the end of Q4, total planning income for the Council was short of the target. Due to the cost of living crisis and the slow down in the economy, we may be seeing a slow down in larger developments in particular. Pre-application income target has also not been met, partly due to smaller scale pre-applications which attract a lower fee. In addition, the focus over the last few quarters has been on delivering other aspects of the service, especially the determination of applications. The pre-app process and charges have been reviewed and will be introduced in Q1 of 2023-24.

It is likely that we will continue to see fewer larger developments due to loss of confidence in the housing market coupled with the fact that Cotswold has a 5 year land supply so gets fewer speculative applications which tend to attract large fees.

(Cumulative) Percentage of planning appeals allowed

Cotswold Target
 Cotswold
 Forest of Dean
 West Oxfordshire



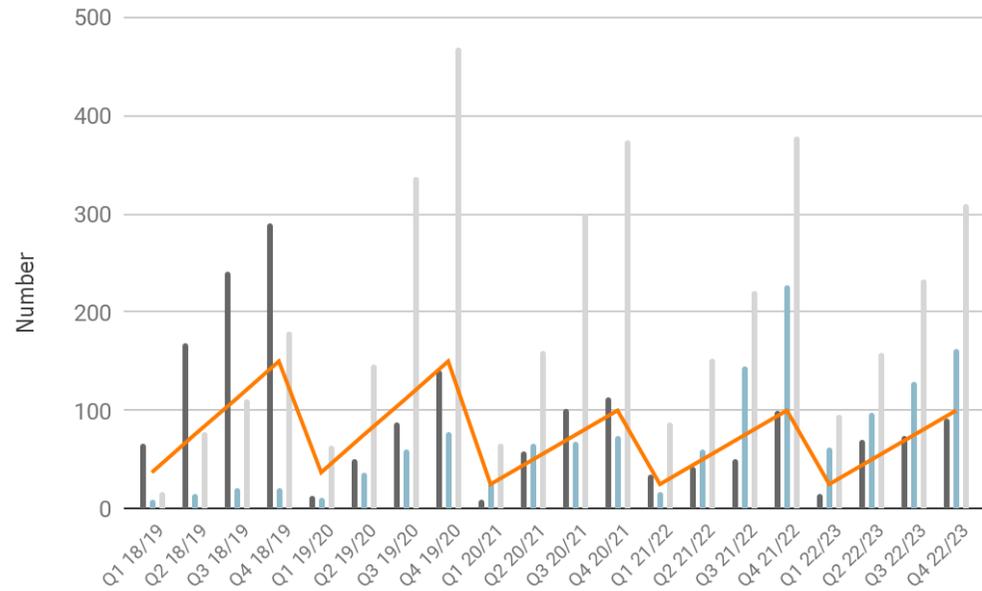
OBSERVATION:

This indicator seeks to ensure that no more than 30% of planning appeals are allowed (low is good).

Between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023, ten appeals were decided; of which seven decisions were supported.

Although, this is right on the target of 30%, numbers are low and this is the highest the level has been since Q1 2021-22

(Cumulative) Number of affordable homes delivered



OBSERVATION:

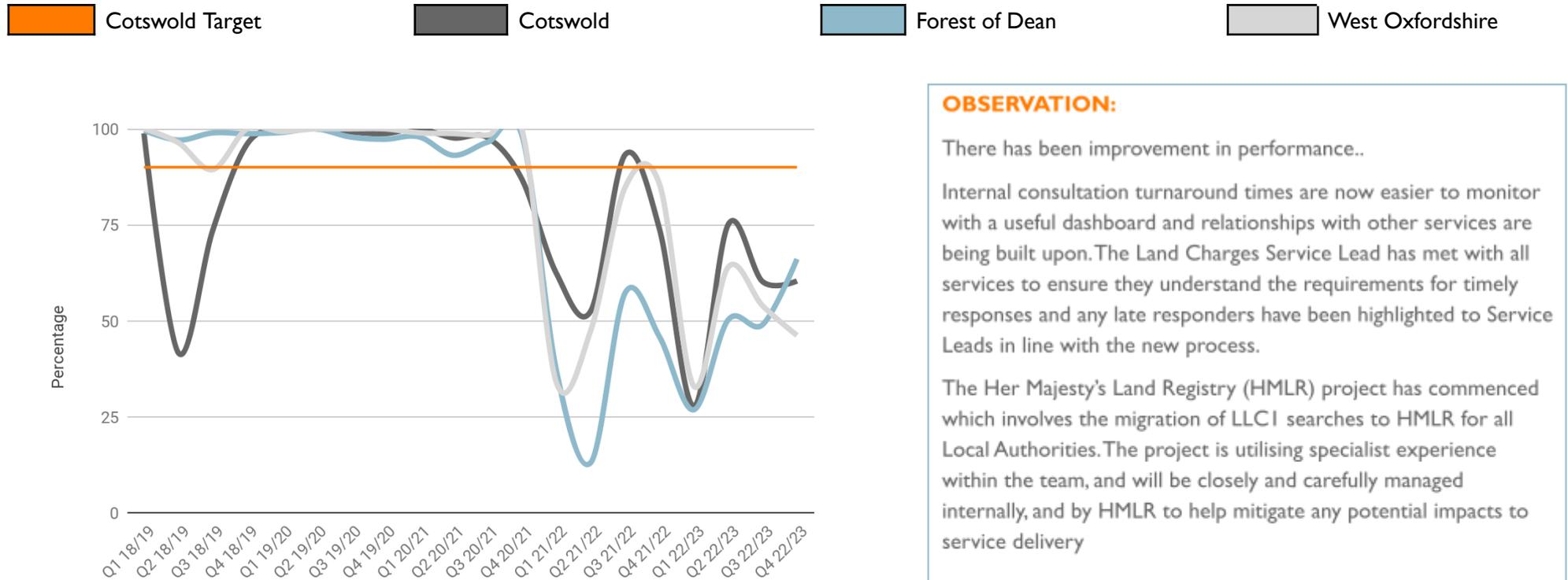
At the end of Q4, ninety-two affordable homes were completed against the annual target of 100. Eighteen properties were delivered in Q4; 8 Affordable Rent and 10 Social Rent.

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.

In partnership with Bromford Housing Association, the Council has started the redevelopment of Stockwells cul-de-sac in Moreton into 28 social rented homes.

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

Percentage of land charge searches despatched within 10 working days



OBSERVATION:

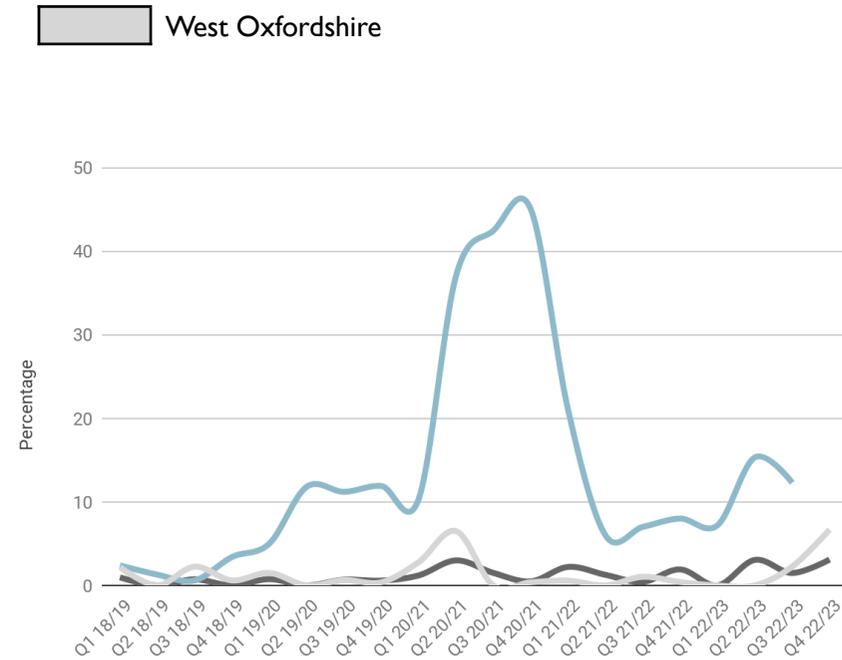
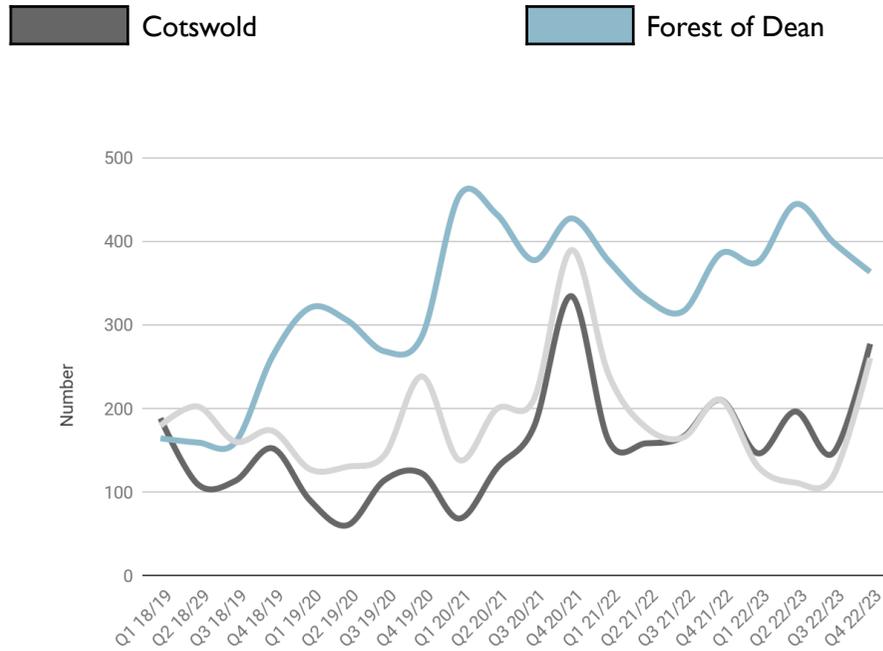
There has been improvement in performance..

Internal consultation turnaround times are now easier to monitor with a useful dashboard and relationships with other services are being built upon. The Land Charges Service Lead has met with all services to ensure they understand the requirements for timely responses and any late responders have been highlighted to Service Leads in line with the new process.

The Her Majesty's Land Registry (HMLR) project has commenced which involves the migration of LLCI searches to HMLR for all Local Authorities. The project is utilising 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)



OBSERVATION:

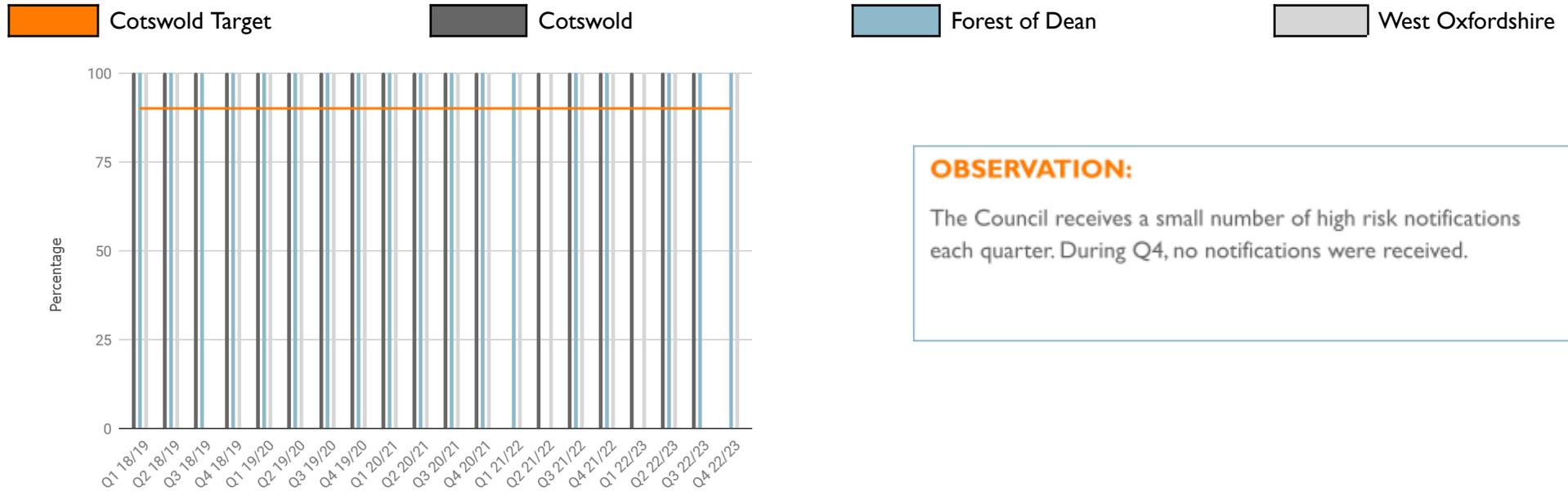
Fly tips increased during lock down and 'stay at home' messages. The number of fly tips collected has since reduced but does not appear to have fallen back to pre-Covid time.

Q4 saw a large spike in numbers of fly tips. The cost of living crisis may be keeping the numbers relatively high due to an inability or reluctance to pay for the disposal of both household and business waste.

In Q4, eleven enforcement actions were issued at Cotswold.

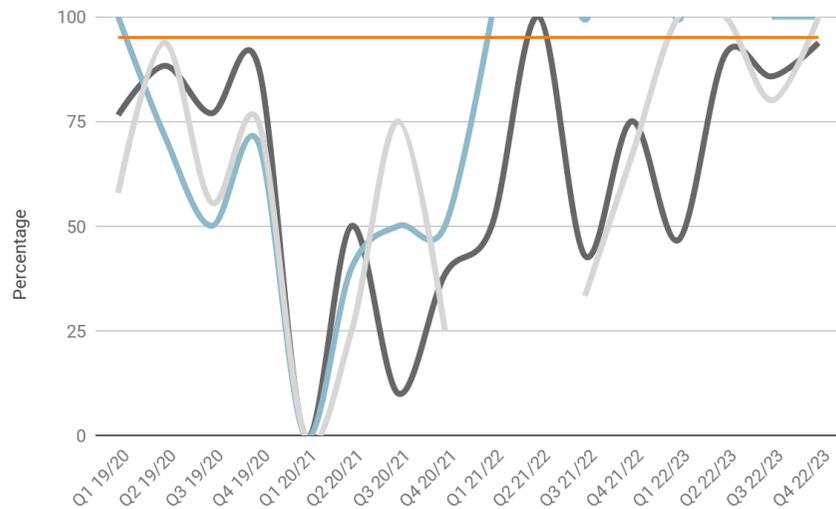
The surveillance cameras have delivered results by identifying potential perpetrators and PACE interviews have followed on the strength of the footage. There has been a reduction in fly tipping at the camera points.

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:
The Council receives a small number of high risk notifications each quarter. During Q4, no notifications were received.

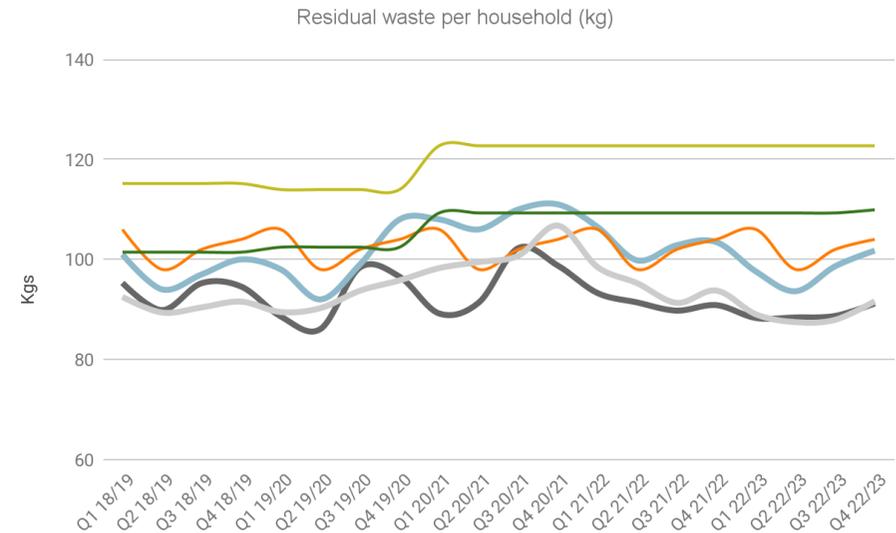
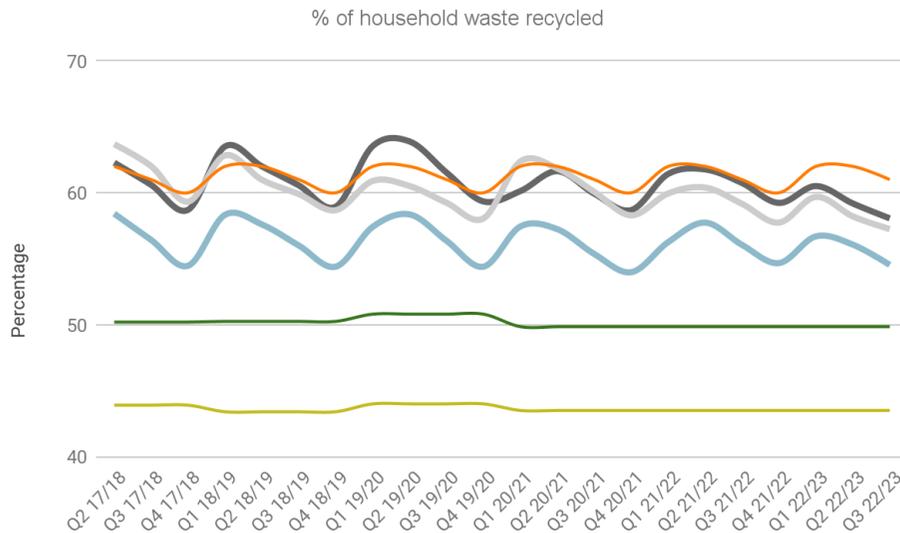
Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales



OBSERVATION:
During Q4, Cotswold completed fifteen out of sixteen high risk food inspections within the target timescale. The one inspection which was inspected 3 days after the timescale was slightly late due to issues with access and availability of senior officers who complete these inspections.

Waste Management

(Cumulative) Percentage of household waste recycled & Residual household waste per household (kg)



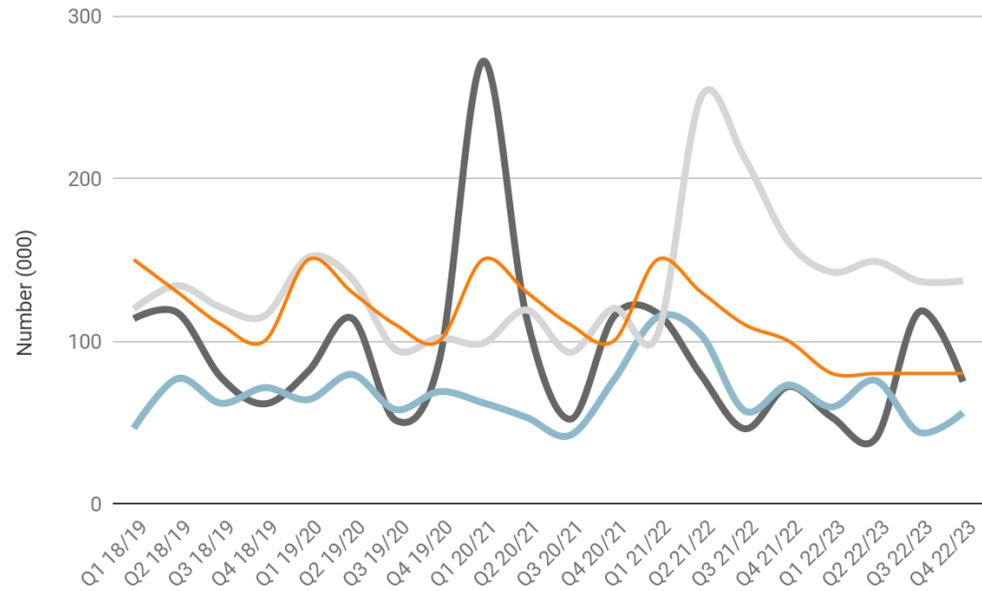
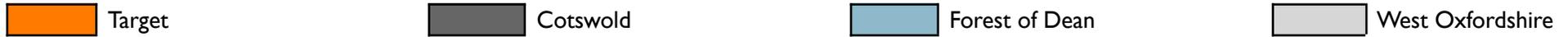
OBSERVATION:

The combined recycling rate for January to March 2023 was 56.90% compared to 59.23% in 2022. The lower rates have been mostly attributed to the cost of living crisis and the potential that consumers may view more sustainable options as a luxury they can no longer afford.

Since emerging from the pandemic, total household waste (tonnages) have fallen, however, residual waste has not fallen as fast as other waste streams. Taking into account the growth in households, the District produced nearly 5 kg less residual waste per household than last year.

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



OBSERVATION:

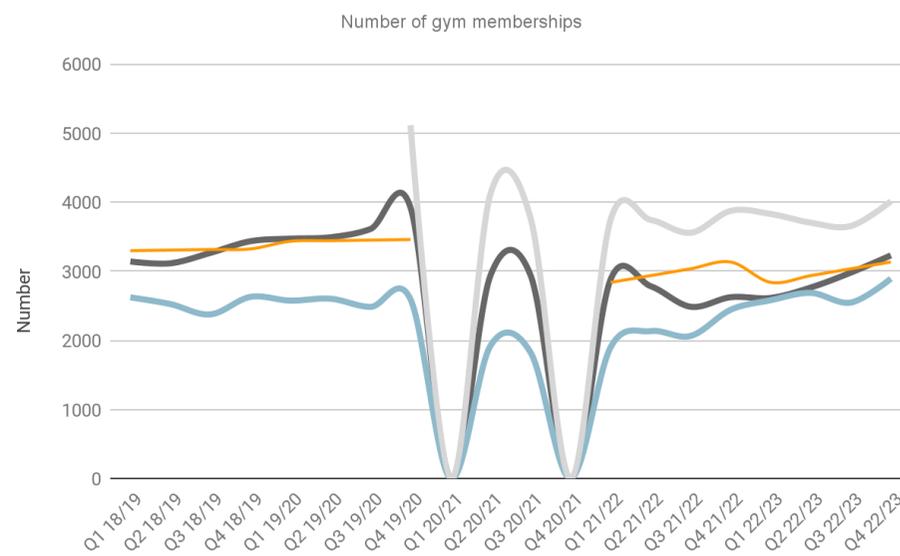
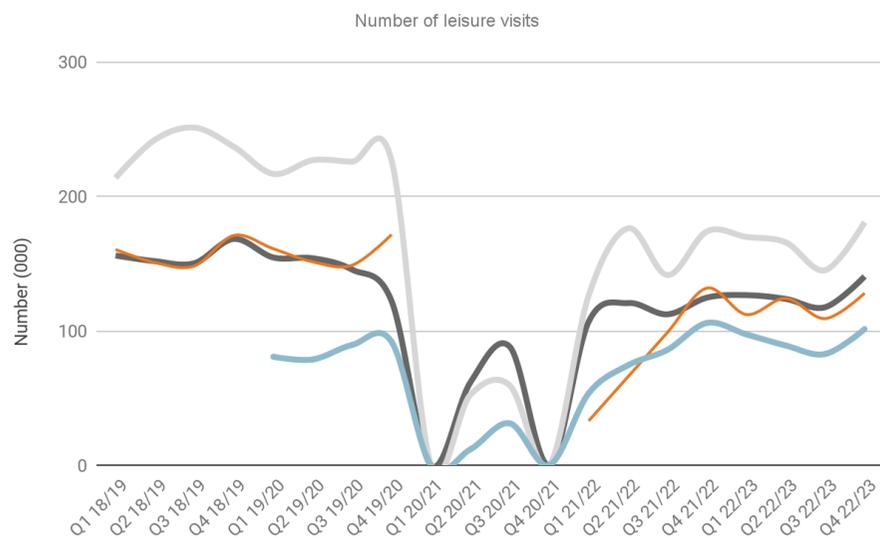
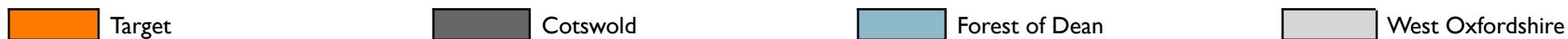
The number of missed bins per 100,000 decreased in Q4 .
 The number of missed bins for Q4 was 75 per 100,000, well within the target.

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.

The missed bins target was revised to 80 per 100,000 scheduled collections from 2022-23 Q1 to reflect improvements made over the previous year

Leisure

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



OBSERVATION:

The leisure targets were reviewed at the end of 2021-22 which resulted in increases in the target for visitor numbers.

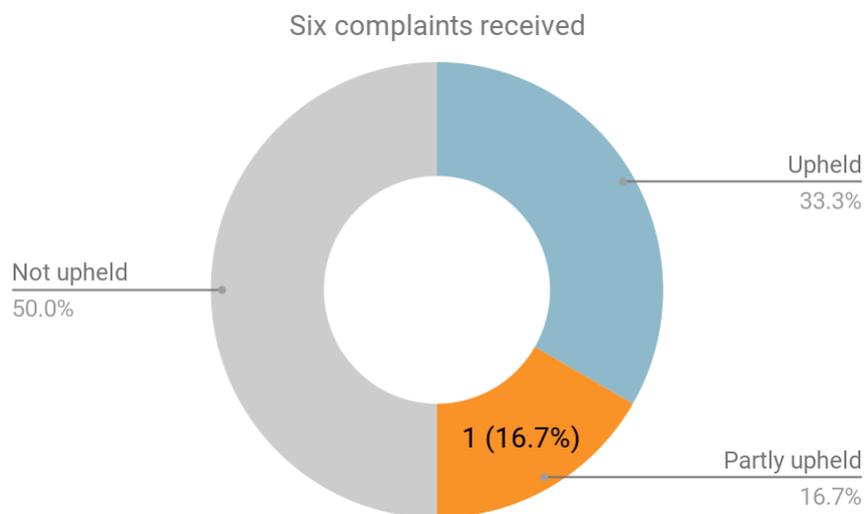
The cost of living crisis and impact on household budgets as well as high energy costs to run the leisure facilities are key issues for the Councils' leisure operators. As households have less disposable income, less pay to play activities may be undertaken.

Following the refurbishments at Cirencester Leisure and Bourton Leisure visits continued to increase and the number of gym memberships are over target.

The government has announced that leisure centres will not be protected under the scheme for high energy usage companies. The risk of current high prices will also impact on the Council where a risk share for higher than usual utility tariffs is included in the leisure contracts. The leisure operators will continue to raise its concerns with the relevant bodies

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

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



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

The complaints shown below only include complaints which were upheld or partly upheld at Stage 1.

Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Decision	Response time (days)
Waste & Recycling	Green Waste Bin not collected	Crew error/ reminders put in place for future collections	Upheld	12
Assets of Community Value	Upset with speed of decision for asset of community value status	Council accepts it did not respond within statutory timescale. Does not accept prejudice in decision.	Partly Upheld	30
Revenues & Benefits	Wrong Banding on Council Tax, now rectified and wants to be eligible for Rebate	Not continued as a complaint, dealt with by department using appeals process	Upheld	No response sent