



Public Document Pack STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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COUNCIL

To all Members of Stroud District Council

Wednesday, 12 November 2025

You are hereby summoned to attend Meeting of **STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL** in the Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud on **THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2025** at **7.00 pm**

Kathy O'Leary
Chief Executive

Please Note: The meeting is being held in the Council Chamber at Stroud District Council and will be streamed live on the Council's [YouTube Channel](#). A recording of the meeting will be published onto the [Council's website](#). The whole of the meeting will be recorded except where there are confidential or exempt items, which may need to be considered in the absence of press and public.

If you wish to attend this meeting, please contact democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk, this is to ensure adequate seating is available in the Council Chamber. Information about available parking and the location of the Council Offices can be found on our [website here](#).

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies for absence.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

To receive declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES (Pages 3 - 16)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2025.

4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To receive announcements from the Chair of Council, Leader of Council or Chief Executive.

5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Chair of the relevant Committee will answer questions from members of the public submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures laid out in Section 3, Paragraph 8, of the Constitution.

Deadline for Receipt of Questions - Noon, Thursday, 13 November 2025

Questions must be submitted to the Chief Executive, Democratic Services, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud and can be sent by email to
Democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

6. **MEMBER QUESTIONS**

The Chair of the relevant Committee will answer questions from Members submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures laid out in Section 3, Paragraph 9, of the Constitution.

Deadline for Receipt of Questions - Noon, Friday, 14 November 2025

Questions must be submitted to the Chief Executive, Democratic Services, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud and can be sent by email to
Democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

7. **APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND POLITICAL BALANCE (Pages 17 - 20)**

To update the allocation of seats in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and appoint changes to membership of committees with effect from 21 November 2025.

8. **FULL PROPOSALS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE (Pages 21 - 44)**

To resolve which of the three full proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire the Council supports, to agree the joint covering letter that will accompany the submission of the full proposals and to agree a further letter from the Council summarising its support for and views on the proposals.



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COUNCIL

Thursday, 23 October 2025

7.00 - 9.27 pm

Council Chamber

Minutes

Membership

Councillor Kate Kay (Chair)

- * Councillor Beki Aldam
- Councillor Shyama Ananthan
- Councillor Martin Baxendale
- Councillor James Boyle
- Councillor Catherine Braun
- Councillor Martin Brown
- Councillor Robert Brown
- * Councillor John Callinan
- Councillor Helen Caton Hughes
- * Councillor Linda Cohen
- * Councillor Terry Cook
- Councillor Fraser Dahdouh
- Councillor Maggie Dutton
- Councillor Jonathan Edmunds
- * Councillor Helen Fenton
- Councillor Marisa Godfrey
- Councillor Lindsey Green
- Councillor Ian Hamilton
- Councillor Chris Haynes
- Councillor Milly Hill
- Councillor Katy Hofmann
- Councillor Bob Hughes
- Councillor Steve Hyndside
- Councillor Cate James-Hodges
- * Absent

*** Councillor Matthew Sargeant (Vice-Chair)**

- Councillor Carol Kambites
- Councillor Pete Kennedy
- Councillor Terri Kinnison
- Councillor Gareth Kitchen
- Councillor Gary Luff
- Councillor Dave Mathews
- Councillor Cath Moore
- * Councillor Gill Oxley
- * Councillor John Parker
- Councillor Martin Percy
- * Councillor Nigel Prenter
- Councillor Steve Robinson
- Councillor Natalie Rothwell-Warn
- Councillor Mark Ryder
- Councillor Lucas Schoemaker
- Councillor Moya Shannon
- Councillor Holly Simkiss
- Councillor Elizabeth Stanley
- Councillor Gill Thomas
- Councillor Charlie Tuffin
- Councillor Paul Turner
- Councillor Chloe Turner
- Councillor Demelza Turner-Wilkes
- Councillor Tricia Watson

Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive
Strategic Director of Place
Monitoring Officer
Licensing Manager
Head of Community Services

Head of Community Services
Licensing Manager
Democratic Services & Elections Manager

CL.020

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aldam, Callinan, Cohen, Cook, Fenton, Oxley, Parker, Prenter and Sargeant.

CL.021 **Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Canning declared an interest in exempt minutes from the meeting held on 17 July 2025 regarding the Ubico Shareholder Decision.

CL.022 **Minutes**

RESOLVED That the Minutes and exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2025 were approved as a correct record.

CL.023 **Announcements**

The Chair, Councillor Kay, provided the following announcements:

- The Chair acknowledged the recent passing of Dame Jilly Cooper, a well-known author and long-time resident of Stroud District. Her death earlier in the month prompted tributes nationwide reflecting the impact she had both locally and nationally. She offered condolences to her family and friends.
- The Chair also reported the death of Sandra Creswell (Cowley), a respected former Officer who served the Council for over 30 years, including as Strategic Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer. She retired in 2016 due to ill health and was fondly remembered by colleagues. Members observed a moment of silence.
- Members were reminded to complete the Independent Remuneration Panel's survey on Members' allowances by Sunday 26 October 2025.
- Personal safety alarms were made available for Councillors in the Chamber as part of the Member Development Working Group's ongoing work on the Civility in Public Life action plan.
- Members were encouraged to complete their mandatory Prevent training, part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy. Completed certificates were to be sent to Democratic Services.

The Leader, Councillor Turner, provided the following announcements:

- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was continuing at a pace, with new Ministers Steve Reed appointed as Secretary of State and Alison McGovern as Minister. All three LGR options would be considered by the Council at the Council meeting on 20 November 2025. This included the single Gloucestershire Unitary, East-West, and Greater Gloucester proposals.
- Members were encouraged to attend briefings scheduled for 27, 28, and 29 October 2025. An additional briefing on 5 November 2025 would focus on the Greater Gloucester proposal. All briefings would be recorded and made available to Councillors.
- Members were asked to promote the Parish and Town Council Forum also being held on the 5 November 2025 to encourage parish representation and engagement with the locality model.
- It was noted that Stroud funding workshops had concluded that evening, and the application window remained open until 5th November. Members were asked to encourage local projects to submit applications.

CL.024 **Public Question Time**

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A public question was submitted and answered by the Chair, Councillor Kay. A supplementary question was also asked, and the Chair agreed to provide a written response. (Refer to the [recording](#) of the meeting and [Agenda Item 5](#)).

CL.025 **Member Questions**

There were none.

CL.026 **Recommendation from Community Services and Licensing Committee****CL.027** **Stroud District Council's Policy under Licensing Act 2003 – agree final and recommend adoption by Council**

The Chair of the Community Services and Licensing Committee, Councillor Martin Brown, introduced the report. The Statement of Licensing Policy outlined the principles that the Council would apply when dealing with applications under the Licensing Act 2003 and must be reviewed every five years. The current policy was due to expire on 7 January 2026, with the proposed version covering the period to January 2031. A draft had been approved by Community Services and Licensing Committee in June 2025. There were not any major changes recommended from the existing policy but amendments had been made to bring it up to date and include guidance on initiatives such as Ask for Angela and Martyn's Law. A public consultation had taken place between June 2025 and August 2025, comments raised had been included in the Appendix. Additional guidance on reducing single-use materials and promoting recycling was added following consultation feedback. The final draft had been agreed by the Committee on 25 September 2025 and recommended for adoption by Council.

Councillor Green asked whether there were any statistics available as to how many people had accessed the Ask for Angela scheme and whether the Council needed to do more to promote it. Councillor Martin Brown advised that the Council intended to write out to existing and new licence holders so that they understood the Ask for Angela scheme. The Licensing Manager confirmed that they did not hold any data on how many premises in the district operated the Ask for Angela scheme but they had planned to carry out engagement to promote the scheme with licensed premises so they understood how to operate the scheme and ensure that staff were trained.

Councillor Kitchen queried why Ward Councillors were not routinely notified of new licensing applications, noting that Parish and Town Councils, although not statutory consultees, received notifications as a courtesy. The Licensing Manager confirmed that all applications were published on the Council's website and that relevant Parish and Town Councils were notified by email.

In response to a question from Councillor Hofmann, the Licensing Manager confirmed that the Stroud Night Angels were a part of the Community Safety Partnership who had been consulted.

Proposed by Councillor Martin Brown and seconded by Councillor Hamilton.

Councillor Dutton commended the committee and Officers for the updated policy. She welcomed the strengthened recommendations for the Ask for Angela scheme and hoped it would encourage a more consistent take up of the training. She emphasised the importance of venue staff being aware of the scheme and its purpose, to ensure venues were a safe space.

Councillor Hamilton thanked officers for a thorough review and consultation process. He highlighted that the policy supported the district's night-time economy, reinforced safety and license holder responsibilities, and provided clear guidance for Members, applicants, and those making representations. He expressed support for the policy's adoption.

Councillor Martin Brown echoed comments in support of Officers work from Councillor Dutton and Councillor Hamilton and was pleased to see further guidance for Ask for Angela included.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To adopt the Statement of Licensing Policy for the period January 2026 to January 2031 (Appendix B)

CL.028 Recommendation from Strategy and Resources Committee

CL.029 Budget Strategy and Draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

Councillor Turner introduced the Budget Strategy report, which set the framework for budget setting and provided first look of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). She highlighted the following key points:

- The report focused on funding assumptions, inflationary uplifts, and known changes, but did not include service updates or new Council Plan items.
- The Fair Funding Review was expected to take effect from April 2026, full details would not be known until December but would result in lower funding for Stroud District Council and many other shire districts. It was expected that the Fair Funding Review would reduce the Council's spending power by 7% for 2026 to 2027 and would remain flat for following years.
- Business rates growth would be reset alongside the funding review. Business rate income was therefore expected to fall significantly, with retained income projected to drop from £7 million to around £3 million.
- Council Tax remained the Council's largest income source. A 2.99% increase was proposed in the Budget Strategy, in line with the expected 3% referendum limit. An assumed tax base growth of 1.5% had been included, this assumption along with collection rates would be updated in January. There were no planned changes to the Council Tax support scheme.
- Inflation was modelled at 4% for 2026/27, reducing to 3% and then 2% in subsequent years. These inflationary uplifts had been assumed for salaries, contracts and fees and charges.
- The draft MTFP was included in Appendix A with budget adjustments in Appendix B. There was a change to the adjustments to remove the unidentified modernisation savings of £500k over the next couple of years.
- The Equalisation Reserve and Business Rates Reserve had been built up in previous years in anticipation of funding changes. This will help the Council to adapt following the funding review.
- A new item had been included in the budget of £1.5m to cover Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) costs.
- The Council would need to make savings of around £45m due to the Fair Funding Review and LGR.
- It was important that the Council did not make decisions that would compromise the sustainability of the successor council.

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- They would be planning for the new council's vesting date of April 2028, whilst also preparing for potential delays to the timetable.
- A review of all earmarked reserves would take place. Where possible, reserves would be released to support Council Plan priorities. This work was dependent on the ability to set a balanced budget over the Medium-Term Financial Plan period. Members were advised that the Council must work towards balancing its core position, delivering priorities, and reducing the funding gap.

Councillor Godfrey left the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Robinson, the Strategic Head of Finance and S151 Officer confirmed that the second homes council tax payments were included within the council tax line.

Councillor Kitchen referenced paragraph 2.24 and asked whether council tax direct debits could be spread over 12 months rather than 10 as this could be beneficial for low income families. The Strategic Head of Finance and S151 Officer confirmed that this option was available to any resident.

In response to a question from Councillor Braun, Councillor Turner noted that the Fair Funding Review would not impact the Housing Revenue Account. Rents were assumed to increase by the maximum allowable amount of Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1%. At the time of writing, CPI was estimated at 4%, but had since been confirmed at 3.8%, resulting in an assumed rent increase of 4.8% from April 2026.

Councillor Kennedy asked whether any savings had been identified through the ongoing work on LGR, or whether the process would result in additional costs to the Council and ultimately to council tax payers. Councillor Turner advised that the work to date had focused on developing business cases for submission to the Minister by 28 November 2025 and had not yet reached the level of detail required to identify savings. She noted that future work would begin to explore potential savings through the aggregation or disaggregation of services, but research from the District Councils Network and a recent BBC report indicated limited evidence that unitarisation would lead to cost savings. The Chief Executive explained that current work was focused on modelling the transfer of existing services to the new councils as part of LGR. Most transformation decisions would fall to the future councils, depending on the final structure determined by government.

Councillor Turner confirmed that the financial position of the Council, including any debts and costs, would transfer in full to the new unitary authority.

Proposed by Councillor Turner and seconded by Councillor Hughes.

Councillor Baxendale paid tribute to Sandra Creswell (Cowley), recalling her role in strengthening the Council's finances by building up capital reserves and expressing gratitude for her foresight.

Councillor Watson expressed strong concerns for the imposed changes of devolution, funding pressures, the Fair Funding Review, business rates reduction and the use of Extended Producer Responsibility funds to make up for the shortfall. She stated these measures left the Council with no choice beyond service cuts and would therefore be abstaining from the vote, emphasising this was not a reflection on Councillors or Officers, whom she praised for their efforts in difficult circumstances.

Councillor Ryder acknowledged that as a District Council, Members wanted to look after the district they represented by ensuring that money raised by the Council was reserved for the benefit of the Stroud District. However, he raised concerns about the long-term financial impact on the successor authority. He noted the Council's strong financial position compared to others but felt the plan appeared to spend funds before the new unitary authority was established and was concerned for the future.

Councillor Schoemaker stated that successive governments were on the wrong course and taxation targeted the wrong people. He believed that LGR would therefore reduce diversity, community cohesion and democratic input. He warned that increased debt would lead to higher interest payments benefiting external parties rather than citizens and felt this should serve as a wake-up call.

Councillor Hughes commended the work of Officers in building the Council's strong financial position. He highlighted Councillor Turner's comments regarding planning for slippage but emphasised that the Council had a duty to plan beyond 1 April 2028. He raised concerns about the long-term outlook, noting a projected £4.5 million deficit beyond April 2028. He urged the administration to begin planning now to ensure financial stability whether the Council continued or transitioned to a new authority. He emphasised that LGR was about devolving powers from central government rather than cost savings and explained that the Council was particularly affected by the Fair Funding due to funding decisions made by previous Conservative governments.

Councillor Kennedy noted that the Council faced a new round of local government austerity, with significant funding reductions from central government. He warned that this would require difficult decisions on service provision and a rigorous review of services. He highlighted that LGR was creating immediate costs and preventing planned savings moving forward, alongside funds needing to be allocated to reserves for transition. He expressed concern that devolution without adequate funding would worsen the financial position and stated that the coming years would be very challenging.

Councillor Hofmann raised a point of order, questioning whether debate should have continued after the seconder had summed up. The Chair confirmed that this was correct, apologised for the error, and explained that she had not seen other councillors requesting to speak before the seconder had summed up and had therefore allowed debate to continue.

Councillor Turner advised that they had been given assurances from government that LGR for the non-priority programme would stick to the timetable. She considered it too early to make savings beyond the medium-term period but supported twin-track planning should slippage occur. She expressed concern about the potential loss of highly valued non-statutory services and expressed frustration at the government's position on local governance. She thanked Officers for the report and outlined the next steps in the budget-setting process, including an all Member budget session on 25 November 2025 and committee consideration in December leading to Strategy and Resources in January 2026 and full Council in February 2026. Members would also be provided with a briefing note in December following the draft settlement.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried with 33 in favour, 8 abstentions and 0 against.

RESOLVED To approve the Budget Strategy and Draft MTFP 2025/26 to 2029/30 as set out in this report and appendices.

CL.030 Gloucestershire Tackling Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025 - 2028

Councillor Martin Brown introduced Gloucestershire County Councils Tackling Domestic Abuse Strategy, developed in collaboration with local authorities and partners. He explained that the strategy built on the previous 2021 to 2024 strategy, reflecting progress and lessons learned, and was informed by a joint needs assessment, partner consultations, multi-agency workshops and lived experience of survivors. He confirmed that next steps for the Council would include reviewing current work programmes related to tackling domestic abuse, identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement and developing a single unified action plan to align work under the Strategy.

Councillor Turner advised that a local student had shadowed her for the day and wished to ask questions on the student's behalf. The first question concerned whether Stroud District Council had sufficient opportunity to contribute to the County's Tackling Domestic Abuse Strategy. The Head of Community Services confirmed that the consultation had taken place over an 18-month period and was extensive. She advised that all district councils in Gloucestershire were involved and that importantly the Strategy was based on the experiences of domestic abuse survivors.

Councillor Turner asked a further question on behalf of the local student regarding the victim centred approach and accommodation support. In response, the Head of Community Services advised that engagement with survivors was a key focus and confirmed that the County Council employed an Officer dedicated to involving and engaging with them. She explained that the next step would be to create a single action plan bringing together existing workstreams, including the domestic abuse working group, the violence against women and girls group, and the Council's housing policy. Councillor Luff, Chair of the Housing Committee, confirmed that he was keen to support the development of the Strategy within the Council's housing function.

Councillor Kambites raised concerns about whether sufficient funding would be available for accommodation provision. The Head of Community Services advised that she didn't know the full detail and would need to consult with the Housing Team regarding available funding for accommodation. She noted that with the development of any Strategy and action plan would need to consider what could be achieved within the available resources but that opportunities did arise from time to time for different funding streams.

Councillor Caton Hughes expressed support for the Strategy and noted that LGR would help reduce duplication by bringing related work under a single action plan. She asked whether the action plan would allow the Council to take a leadership role in encouraging local businesses and community hubs to support families through awareness raising, signposting, promoting through HR in workplaces, and training for trustees, staff and volunteers. Councillor Martin Brown agreed with the suggestions and noted that the extent to which they could be incorporated would become clearer during development of the action plan and consideration of available resources.

Councillor Schoemaker reported that the Beresford Group needed an additional house, possibly located further away from central Stroud. He raised a concern about the wording of the Strategy, noting that the title referred to 'tackling domestic abuse' but subsequent references omitted the word 'tackling'. He stressed that this should be addressed to avoid implying that the Council had a Domestic Abuse Strategy rather than a Strategy to tackle domestic abuse. Councillor Martin Brown noted that the document under discussion was

the County's Strategy and suggested that the feedback regarding wording could be passed to the County Council.

Proposed by Councillor Martin Brown and seconded by Councillor Moore.

Councillor Green welcomed the Strategy as a significant step forward and recalled that a motion on tackling domestic abuse had previously been brought to Council. She expressed appreciation for those who shared personal experiences to shape the Strategy and confirmed her wholehearted support.

Councillor Hofmann noted the Strategy's ambitious aim of creating a County free from domestic abuse and acknowledged the challenge of achieving this. She emphasised that collaboration across councils would be essential.

Councillor Stanley highlighted the Beresford Women's Refuge in Stroud District, which had been preserved through local efforts after government funding cuts. She paid tribute to the late Councillor Oostyhusen and his wife for their role, including inviting Desmond Tutu to be a patron. She acknowledged the challenges of tackling domestic abuse but expressed hope and described the Strategy as ambitious and exciting.

Councillor Haynes highlighted modern slavery as one of the worst forms of domestic abuse and noted that more people were enslaved today than in the 18th century. He asked whether the Strategy addressed slavery and gang related domestic abuse.

Councillor Moore praised the collaborative work behind the Strategy and noted its strength lay in partnership across organisations. She acknowledged funding and housing shortages but stressed the Strategy would still deliver improvements. She highlighted the importance of raising awareness about all forms of domestic abuse, including less visible types, and referred to Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service's campaign on rural domestic abuse, noting its significance given recent funding cuts.

Councillor Martin Brown noted that the resolution adopted the County's Strategy and committed the Council to develop an action plan for summer 2026. He acknowledged the significant work this would require from Officers and expressed appreciation in advance for their efforts.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To

- a) adopt the Gloucestershire Tackling Domestic Abuse Strategy 2025-28; and
- b) develop a local action plan for Stroud District Council, to be brought forward for consideration by the Community Services and Licensing Committee and Housing Committee in Summer 2026.

CL.031 Updates to the Constitution

Councillor Green, Chair of the Constitution Working Group, introduced the report proposing amendments to two sections of the Constitution. Section 9, Member Champion Protocol, which had been updated to provide clarification of the role, responsibilities, reporting requirements, access to training, and engagement with Ward Councillors.

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Section 18, formerly the Member Parental Leave Policy, had been revised and renamed the Member Leave Policy to include neonatal care, compassionate leave, carer's leave, and sickness absence. She noted that the changes aimed to reduce barriers to becoming a Councillor and support retention and diversity. She reminded members of the six-month attendance rule under the Local Government Act 1972. She also reminded Members of the six-month attendance rule under the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Luff and Haynes left the meeting for a short period.

Councillor Hofmann asked whether a template with guidance on content and length could be provided for the annual report required under section 6.1e. Councillor Green confirmed this would be possible.

In response to a question from Councillor Dutton about the process for a Member Champion wishing to propose an action, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that they should first raise it with the Lead Officer, who would assess available resources or funding. If additional funding was required, the proposal would need to be considered by Committee or Full Council.

Proposed by Councillor Green and seconded by Councillor Braun.

Councillor Caton Hughes thanked the Constitution Working Group and Monitoring Officer for their work. She supported the Member Leave Policy and noted that stress, grief, anxiety and bereavement did not follow strict timeframes, urging empathy and compassion for Members and Officers in such situations.

Councillor Braun thanked Councillor Green for her leadership of the Constitution Working Group. She supported the proposals on Member Champions, particularly the term of office and clarification of reporting to the parent Committee or Council, which would provide valuable opportunities for formal updates. She welcomed the widening of Member Leave provisions in the Constitution as a step towards removing barriers for those with caring responsibilities, ill health or other circumstances requiring compassion.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

The Chair, Councillor Kay, thanked officers for their hard work in supporting the Constitution Working Group.

- RESOLVED**
- a) To approve the revised Section 9 Member Champion Protocol (Appendix B)
 - b) To approve the revised Section 18 Member Leave Policy (Appendix D); and
 - c) To give delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary changes to the Constitution to reflect these decisions.

CL.032 Changes to Committee and Outside Bodies Membership and Appointment of Vice Chair of Audit and Standards Committee

The Chair advised that there were two changes to the Membership of Audit and Standards Committee which Council was asked to note:

- Councillor Callinan had been replaced by Councillor Caton Hughes
- Councillor James-Hodges had been replaced by Councillor Kennedy

The Chair confirmed that two nominations had been received for the Vice Chair of Audit and Standards Committee and that votes would be taken separately for Councillor Stanley and Councillor Kennedy.

Councillor Hofmann asked whether it was appropriate for the Vice-Chair of Audit and Standards to be held by a member of the administration, given the committee's scrutiny role. The Monitoring Officer confirmed there was no constitutional restriction preventing this.

Following a vote Councillor Pete Kennedy was appointed as the Vice Chair for Audit and Standards Committee.

Following a vote Councillor Terri Kinnison was appointed as the Member representative to the LGA Special Interest Group on Internal Drainage Board Levies.

- RESOLVED**
- a) **note the changes to the membership of Audit and Standards Committee**
 - b) **appoint Councillor Kennedy as the Vice Chair for Audit and Standards Committee**
 - c) **appoint Councillor Kinnison as the Member representative to the LGA Special Interest Group on Internal Drainage Board Levies**

CL.033 **Changes to Civic Timetable**

The Chair advised that a change had been proposed to the Civic Timetable, an extra meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee had been added on 15 January 2026.

Proposed by Councillor Kay and seconded by Councillor Turner.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED **To note the change to the Civic Timetable for 2025/26.**

CL.034 **Notice of Motions**

CL.035 **Motion on Improving Members' financial decision making by strengthening their understanding of the affordability of proposed expenditure - Proposed by Robert Brown and Seconded by Lindsey Green**

Councillor Robert Brown introduced the motion and explained that financial implications in reports often varied in detail and were sometimes insufficient to assess affordability. He emphasised that, particularly during a period of significant financial pressure, Members needed to be able to make informed and responsible spending decisions. The Motion proposed restructuring the financial implications section to consistently include an estimated cost, how the cost would be funded, and the impact on the Medium-Term Financial Plan and, where relevant, long-term debt. Councillor Brown noted that this aligned with the scheduled review of the Committee report template by Democratic Services, due to begin in November, with a new template expected by May 2026. He stated that the Motion sought agreement for the Constitution Working Group (CWG) to

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identify any procedural changes needed, Democratic Services were to consider recommendations and propose a format for the financial implications and that relevant groups including the CWG, Member Development Working Group and Group Leaders be consulted on the revised template. He concluded that these measures would improve transparency and affordability assessments and commended the motion to Council.

Councillor Robert Brown advised that a friendly amendment had been agreed to add 'and a new section to consider local government reorganisation implications' to the end of paragraph b of the decision. This was shown in red on screen for Members to view.

Councillor Watson asked for clarification as to why the issue had been brought as a Motion rather than being considered by CWG. Councillor Robert Brown explained that submitting it as a Motion would enable Members to vote on the issue and give greater weight to the process.

Proposed by Councillor Robert Brown and seconded by Councillor Green.

Councillor Hughes stated that he opposed the Motion with reluctance. He expressed concern that the work was already being undertaken by Democratic Services and that the seconder, as Chair of the Constitution Working Group, could progress this without a Motion. He considered the Motion unnecessary and was concerned it could constrain future consultation.

Councillor Watson asked whether she would need to raise a Motion in order for the Committee report template review to consider the environmental and equality implication sections on the report template.

The Chair provided clarification that Members of the opposition were able to raise issues through Motions to Council.

Councillor Turner stated that her group welcomed measures to increase financial transparency and noted that this aligned with the planned review. She supported Councillor Braun's addition to consider LGR in future decisions and confirmed she would support the Motion.

Councillor Luff indicated likely support for the Motion but highlighted that, while transparency was important, the process should acknowledge the uncertain and political environment and that outcomes may not always be predictable.

Councillor Dahdouh raised concerns about the lack of clarity in the Motion regarding the level of financial detail to be provided. He questioned whether assessments would cover only short-term budget implications or include medium to long term modelling of anticipated impacts and interactions with other commitments and how onerous a task this could be for Officers. He noted that, without clear guidance on these points, he would not feel comfortable supporting the Motion.

Councillor Kennedy emphasised the importance of clear information to enable Members to make good decisions and scrutinise effectively, particularly regarding transparency and value for money. He advised that the Motion aimed to provide a structured approach without constraining Officers, allowing them to continue giving full and frank advice. He supported the intention to make reports more user-friendly and consistent, helping Members to make the best decisions.

Councillor Hofmann expressed uncertainty about the need for the Motion, noting that a review of Committee report templates was already scheduled and would address similar issues.

Councillor Braun emphasised the need for clear financial information but advised that this was already provided in many reports and Members received excellent support from the finance team. However, she welcomed improvements to the way the information was presented and was reassured that the Motion had been developed with Officer input and would involve further Member consultation. She also advised that it was important that they gave a strong steer that they would like to have a section in the report related to LGR.

Councillor Martin Brown acknowledged the Motion's aim for greater transparency but questioned its necessity and practical application.

Councillor Haynes advised that he was going to vote against it as he was concerned what Members would be able to do if a report did not contain the information specified. He suggested that this issue would be better considered by the CWG.

Councillor Hyndside explained that he initially intended to support the Motion, considered abstaining after hearing concerns, but ultimately decided to support it. He noted the Motion expressed principles rather than final detail and that the constitutional review would provide further opportunity for Member input.

Councillor Hamilton commended the intention behind the Motion but stated he would vote against it, preferring the matter be considered by those with greater expertise through the constitutional review.

Councillor Kennedy raised a point of order regarding whether Councillors could give instructions to Officers outside of Council and Committee meetings. The Monitoring Officer advised that informal working groups can give instructions to Officers to consider matters but they cannot make decisions or ask Officers to make decisions.

Councillor Ryder supported the Motion, stating it signalled the Council's commitment to financial transparency and recognition of current financial pressures. He emphasised that the Motion aimed to improve consistency in reporting without imposing unrealistic requirements on Officers.

Councillor Green supported the Motion, advising that the more information Councillors receive the better decisions they can make. She stated the Motion strengthened the Council's commitment to careful management of resources and urged Members to support it.

Councillor Robert Brown stressed the opportunity to ensure that reports provided even better information that would help Councillors to make better financial decisions. He urged Members to vote for the principle, not reject it on procedural grounds. He agreed with comments that this stage was about establishing a principle that reports should identify funding costs and the impact of proposed expenditure. He noted that the details would be established through consultation which would help to avoid unnecessary burdens and ensure meaningful outcomes. He commended the proposal to Council.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried with 20 votes in favour, 17 against and 4 abstentions.

RESOLVED To

- a) Request that the Constitution Working Group review whether the structure and content of the 'Financial Implications' section in council reports should be formally defined within the Constitution and report back to Council following their review. The aim is to ensure that all Members fully understand the cost, funding, and potential financial impact of a decision.
- b) Request that the upcoming review of the Committee Report Template due to be undertaken by Democratic Services considers the structure and content of the 'Financial Implications' section in council reports following the recommendations of the Constitution Working Group to ensure that members fully understand the cost, funding, and potential financial impact of a decision and a new section to consider local government reorganisation implications.
- c) Request that consultation is held with the Constitution Working Group, Member Development Working Group, and Group Leaders on the proposed changes to the Committee Report Template following the review.

The meeting closed at 9.27 pm

Chair

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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2025

Report Title	Appointments to Committees and Political Balance			
Purpose of Report	To update the allocation of seats in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and appoint changes to membership of committees with effect from 21 November 2025.			
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES to a) approve the changes to Committee membership as set out in the report; and b) approve the change to the membership of the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging (EDIEB) Working Group and EDIEB Member Champion.			
Consultation and Feedback	The proposed appointments have been subject to consultation with the relevant Group Leaders and Independent Members			
Report Author	Jenna Malpass, Democratic Services & Elections Manager Email: Jenna.malpass@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	Members may make alternative nominations to the places available on committees subject to compliance with the allocation rules or following a Nem Con vote.			
Background Papers	None.			
Appendices	None.			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	No	No

1. Introduction / Background

- 1.1 The Council consists of a number of political groupings. The various groups comprise the following Members.

Conservative Group Councillors (6)		
Robert Brown	Gill Oxley	Charlie Tuffin
Lindsey Green	Mark Ryder	Demelza Turner-Wilkes
Green Group (24)		
Beki Aldam	Marisa Godfrey	Martin Pearcy
Martin Baxendale	Steve Hyndside	Natalie Rothwell-Warn
James Boyle	Cate James-Hodges	Matthew Sargeant
Catherine Braun	Carol Kambites	Lucas Schoemaker
Martin Brown	Kate Kay	Moya Shannon
Sarah Canning	Pete Kennedy	Gill Thomas
Jonathan Edmunds	Gareth Kitchen	Chloe Turner
Helen Fenton	Gary Luff	Tricia Watson

Labour & Cooperative Group (17)		
Shyama Ananthan	Ian Hamilton	Dave Mathews
John Callinan	Chris Haynes	Catherine Moore
Helen Caton Hughes	Milly Hill	Nigel Prenter
Terry Cook	Katy Hofmann	Steve Robinson
Fraser Dahdouh	Bob Hughes	Elizabeth Stanley
Maggie Dutton	Terri Kinnison	
Liberal Democrats Group (2)		
Linda Cohen	Holly Simkiss	

- 1.2 In addition to the above, there are two non-aligned Members, namely, Councillor Paul Turner and Councillor John Parker (known as 'Independent').

2. Committees

- 2.1 The Committees which are subject to political balance requirements currently comprise the following:

Committee	No. of Members on the Committee
Audit & Standards	11
Community Services & Licensing	12
Development Control	12
Environment	13
Housing	12
Strategy and Resources	14

3. Allocations to committees subject to political balance requirements

- 3.1 The seats on each committee must be allocated to each political group as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- 3.2 The Council must allocate seats to the political parties in accordance with the four principles of proportionality contained in sections 15 and 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, if there are any seats left over, they must then make appointments to the non-aligned Members.
- 3.3 Following Councillor John Parker's decision to become an Independent Councillor the political balance must be recalculated.
- 3.4 On the basis of the existing Committee structure, the changes to the political balance and following discussions with the relevant Group Leaders and Independent Councillors, the committee allocations are as set out below (changes are shown in red)

Committee	Total Seats	Green	Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrats	Independent
Audit & Standards	11	5	4	2	0	0
Community Services & Licensing	12	6	4	1	0	1
Development Control	12	6	4	2	0	0
Environment	13	6	4	1	1	1
Housing	12	6	4	1	1	0
Strategy and Resources	14	6	5	2	1	0
Total	74	34	27	9	3	1

- 3.5 Nominations for Committees and Positions were approved at Council in May 2025 and changes have been agreed at subsequent Council meetings.

4. Nominations for Committee Seat and Other Appointments

- 4.1 The Labour Group Leader has confirmed that Councillor Parker will step down from Labour Groups seat on the Environment Committee. Independent Councillors have confirmed that Councillor Parker has been nominated to take up the non-aligned Members seat on Environment Committee.
- 4.2 The Labour Group Leader has also confirmed that Councillor Hamilton has stepped down from the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging (EDIEB) Working Group and EDIEB Member Champion role. Nominations received by Democratic Services from Group Leaders and Independent Councillors will be reported to Council or otherwise made at the meeting on 20 November 2025.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this decision.

Lucy Clothier, Strategic Head of Finance and S151 Officer
Tel: 01453 754343 Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk

5.2 Legal Implications

As detailed in the report, the Council is required to ensure that the allocation of seats to committees is compliant with relevant provisions detailed in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and regulations made under that Act. The proposals in this report comply with those requirements.

Under the terms of the Constitution, the appointment of Members to committees is a decision for Full Council.

One Legal
Tel: 01684 272102 Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

5.3 Equality Implications

There are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision

5.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

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STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2025

Report Title	Full Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire
Purpose of Report	To resolve which of the three full proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire the Council supports, to agree the joint covering letter that will accompany the submission of the full proposals and to agree a further letter from the Council summarising its support for and views on the proposals.
Decision(s)	<p>Council RESOLVES to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to agree any minor alterations to the joint covering letter at Appendix A and to sign it on behalf of the Council for submission by 28 November 2025 b) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the four political Group Leaders to agree additions and alterations to the draft Stroud District Council letter at Appendix B for submission by 28 November 2025 c) Support one of the three full proposals for local government reorganisation which are to be submitted to the Government by 28 November 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A single unitary authority for the whole of Gloucestershire 2. Two unitary authorities, one for east and one for west Gloucestershire 3. Two unitary authorities, one for 'Greater Gloucester' city and one for the rest of the county surrounding it.
Consultation and Feedback	The Leader and Chief Executive, together with the Leaders and Chief Executives of the County Council and all six district and borough councils, have worked together to develop the single unitary authority and the two unitary authorities for east and west Gloucestershire full proposals (Appendices C and D respectively) based on the work of officer workstreams overseen by a Programme Management Office, all of which have involved SDC officers. The Leader of the Council has shared emerging drafts with the other three Group Leaders to seek input from all political groups. All Members were invited to attend countywide briefings on 27, 28 and 29 October to assist their understanding of the two jointly developed proposals, with the opportunity to ask questions about the two proposals.

	<p>The third full proposal, for two unitary authorities based on one for a 'Greater Gloucester' city and a second containing the rest of the county surrounding it (Appendix E), has been developed by Gloucester City Council. The draft full proposal was shared with Leaders and Chief Executives of the other six Gloucestershire principal authorities on 30 October 2025, discussed on 4 November 2025 and all Members were invited to a countywide briefing on 5 November 2025.</p> <p>To inform the development of the full proposals, all seven principal councils jointly commissioned the Cratus Group to design and deliver a countywide public engagement programme to seek views from residents and stakeholders on the future shape and priorities of local government in Gloucestershire. Between July and August 2025, residents and stakeholders across the county were engaged in 12 in-person events, two virtual webinars and a countywide survey which generated over 3,100 responses. The public engagement report and summary of how the findings were used to inform the first two proposals (one unitary and two unitaries east / west) forms part of the full proposals set out at Appendix C and D (see Appendix 3 of each).</p> <p>In addition, GCC has led consultation with other stakeholders identified in the Government's guidelines, which include elected representatives such as MPs, the Integrated Care Board, Police and Crime Commissioner, Higher Education and Further Education providers, Voluntary and Community Sector, and Town and Parish Councils (see Appendix 4 to the proposals at Appendix C and D).</p> <p>It should be noted that formal consultation on the full proposals submitted by Gloucestershire will be led by Central Government. It is anticipated that this will take place in early 2026.</p>
Report Author	<p>Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive Email: kathy.oleary@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Options	<p>Each council can propose only one full proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire, or could choose not to respond to the Minister's invitation to submit or support a full proposal at all.</p> <p>The four options are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the full proposal prepared by all seven principal councils for one unitary authority for Gloucestershire (Appendix C) 2. Support the full proposal prepared by all seven principal councils for two unitary authorities in Gloucestershire, based on East / West Gloucestershire (Appendix D) 3. Support the full proposal prepared by Gloucester City Council for a 'Greater Gloucester' city authority and a second authority for the remaining area of the county surrounding it (Appendix E), or 4. Not to support any of the above three options. This option, effectively to do nothing, is not recommended, as this would not best serve the communities of Stroud District and the county in shaping the future of local government in Gloucestershire.
Background Papers	<p>None.</p>

Appendices	<p>Appendix A – draft covering letter from six out of seven Gloucestershire Councils (to the proposals at Appendices C and D)</p> <p>Appendix B – draft letter from Stroud District Council to set out its support and views on the full proposals, to be completed after this meeting</p> <p>Appendix C – Full proposal for one unitary authority for Gloucestershire Final-LGR-proposal-single-unitary-authority.pdf</p> <p>Appendix D – Full proposal for two unitary authorities for Gloucestershire, east and west Final-LGR-proposal-two-unitary-authorities-east-west.pdf</p> <p>Appendix E – Full proposal for two unitary authorities for Gloucestershire, ‘Greater Gloucester’ city and the area surrounding it Microsoft Word - GG and GU DRAFT V5 clean</p>			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

1. Introduction / Background

- 1.1 The English Devolution White Paper was published on 16 December 2024. It sets out the Government’s intention to transfer powers and funding from central government to local government to create a devolution framework of Strategic Authorities across the country, based on the current pattern of Mayoral Combined Authorities, and devolving powers and funding to them.
- 1.2 Below Strategic Authorities, the Government plans to simplify and streamline the structure of local government by requiring the remaining areas of England which have county and district councils, and / or which have smaller or failing existing unitary councils, to combine these to create new unitary councils. Although the English Devolution White Paper outlined that new unitary councils should be created with a population of around 500,000, the Government has since confirmed that this is a guideline, and that deviation may be justified by local context. Two, three or more new unitary councils would combine to form Strategic Authorities of about 1.5m in population.
- 1.3 Government set out its expectation that new unitary councils would need to:
 - Be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks
 - Prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services
 - Meet local needs and be informed by local views
 - Support devolution arrangements
 - Enable stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment.
- 1.4 Gloucestershire's top two tiers of local government currently comprises Gloucestershire County Council, and the six districts and boroughs of Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Gloucester City, Stroud District and Tewkesbury.
- 1.5 On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State wrote to the Leaders of Gloucestershire County Council and the six districts and boroughs to formally invite them to work together to develop proposals for local government reorganisation to create a single tier of local government between them.

- 1.6 Members will recall that the report to Council on 20 March 2025 attached the letter at Appendix A together with its annex comprising the formal invitation and a schedule setting out Government guidance and criteria for unitary local government. The letter required interim plans to be submitted by 21 March 2025 in line with the guidance and criteria, and gave a deadline for the submission of full proposals by 28 November 2025.
- 1.7 Following endorsement at Council on 20 March 2025, the then Leader of the Council submitted a joint response, with the then Leaders of the County Council and the five other districts and boroughs, to the Minister of State's statutory invitation of 5 February 2025. The joint response, submitted on 21 March 2025 (a draft of which was attached at Appendix B to the Council report of 20 March 2025), outlined the three main options for local government reorganisation being considered by the seven principal councils:
- A single unitary authority for the whole county (population circa 650,000)
 - Two unitary councils on an east / west split, the east comprising Cheltenham, Cotswold and Tewkesbury (population circa 300,000) and the east comprising Gloucester City, Forest of Dean and Stroud District (population circa 350,000)
 - A city-based unitary for a 'Greater Gloucester' area with the remaining area of the county surrounding it split into one or two unitary authorities.
- 1.8 The joint response included two appendices:
- An independent options appraisal of a single unitary option and a two unitary option based on an east / west division of the existing districts, commissioned by GCC
 - A proposal for a two unitary model based on an east / west division of the existing districts, commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council.
- 1.9 This report introduces the three full proposals which have been developed for submission to the Government by 28 November 2025. The Government is then expected to lead a public consultation on the full proposals submitted for Gloucestershire early in 2026. Government is then expected to decide which of the three proposals will shape the future of local government in Gloucestershire by Summer 2026. Elections to the new 'shadow' unitary council(s) are then expected to take place in May 2027, with the vesting date for the new council(s) expected to be 1 April 2028.
- 1.10 It will be for the new unitary council(s) to make final decisions on their set up and operation. As such, the full proposals appended to this report are intended to set out the concept and key benefits of the respective options, and are not full business cases or blueprints.
- 1.11 Leaders and Chief Executives are continuing to explore Strategic Authority options for Gloucestershire with adjoining areas. It is to Strategic Authorities that the Government proposes to devolve powers and funding. Members will recall that Council agreed its preference for joining the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) at its meeting on 17 July 2025. Creating a new Strategic Authority by combining Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire remains an option. Forming a new Strategic Authority with Oxfordshire and Swindon to the east now seems less likely, given their focus on the Thames Valley corridor.

2. Development of the one unitary and two unitary east / west full proposals

- 2.1 The seven principal councils in Gloucestershire (the county council and the six districts and boroughs) worked together to establish a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme in early 2025 to ensure an organised and joined-up approach to developing proposals and meeting Government deadlines. The work has been overseen by a Chief Executives' Group reporting to a Political Leadership Board, comprising the leaders of the seven principal councils. There have been six main workstreams, all of which have involved officers from Stroud District Council and the other councils:

- Combined / Strategic Authority Options
- Vision and Ambition
- Place Models
- People and Culture
- Digital, Data and Technology
- Communications and Engagement.

- 2.2 Although the seven principal councils do not agree on one preferred future local government structure for Gloucestershire, there is significant common ground. This has enabled the councils to work together positively and collaboratively to develop the first two proposals for LGR in Gloucestershire, the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals, in the interests of all Gloucestershire residents and the staff working across the seven councils. This has also ensured that common data and information has been shared with Gloucester City Council to support their development of a 'Greater Gloucester' proposal.
- 2.3 Following the submission of interim plans to the Government on 21 March 2025, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) on behalf of all seven councils to undertake a detailed, independent and objective analysis for the first two proposals for LGR in Gloucestershire, the one unitary and the two unitary east / west proposals. This analysis was designed to support an evidence-based assessment of both options against the Government's published criteria, against which the full proposals will be assessed. The approach taken by PwC has been to evaluate all available data and evidence impartially, with no predetermined outcome.
- 2.4 Members will be aware that the Government's 'criteria for unitary local government' (annexed to the Minister's letter which formed Appendix A to the report to Council on 20 March 2025) focus on achieving financial savings. In headline the Government's criteria are:
1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
 2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
 3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
 4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
 5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
 6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.
- 2.5 In addition to PwC's support, Cheltenham Borough Council commissioned Plexal to assist with the development of a vision and ambitions for Gloucestershire, ensuring the proposals reflect a vision shaped by a broad range of perspectives.
- 2.6 Various methods have been used to draw upon the skills, knowledge and experience of elected Members and officers to develop the full proposals for LGR. In respect of the first two proposals, the one unitary and the two unitary east / west proposals, the LGR programme workstreams have involved officers from across the seven principal councils working alongside appropriate partners to develop a vision for Gloucestershire, understand our digital and data ambitions, design locality arrangements, and appraise devolution options. Webinars with elected Members across Gloucestershire and a public engagement

programme have helped shape the development of the proposals. Additionally, workshops have been held with service professionals across county and district services to help understand the impacts of bringing together council services (aggregation) and separating countywide services (disaggregation). The insights gained from these collective efforts have informed the development of the full proposals.

- 2.7 Financial scrutiny has been a critical component of the process, to ensure that proposals are deliverable and supported by a resilient financial case. Section 151 (Chief Finance) officers from all seven councils have been involved in a detailed review of the financial case for the first two proposals, the one unitary and the two unitary east / west proposals, and have provided the inputs, and assessed the assumptions made. There has been little time to carry out considered financial analysis of the 'Greater Gloucester' proposal at this stage.
- 2.8 To strengthen alignment and address complex issues, a series of workshops were held with Council leaders, Chief Executives and service leads from all seven principal councils. The workshops helped to build consensus and validate assumptions. Each section of the full proposals for the first two proposals, the one unitary and the two unitary east / west proposals, has been shared with Council Leaders and Chief Executives for review and sign-off to ensure collective challenge and ownership. Where practicable the Leader has shared these with the other three Group Leaders at SDC at review stage for comment and input from all political groups, working within the tight timetable set.
- 2.9 As a result of this process, the full proposals for both the one unitary (Appendix C) and two unitary east / west councils (Appendix D) are robust and directly comparable.
- 2.10 The third full proposal for LGR in Gloucestershire, the 'Greater Gloucester' proposal (Appendix E), has been developed separately from the joint programme arrangements. However, Gloucester City Council has actively and constructively participated in the development of the one unitary and the two unitary east / west full proposals. Should the 'Greater Gloucester' full proposal go forward for further consideration and public consultation by the Government in early 2026, it is anticipated that there would be more time for the other six councils to assess the merits and implications of the proposal as part of that process.

3. Similarities and differences between the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals

- 3.1 There are strong similarities in the drafting of the one unitary and two unitary east / west full proposals. This is because of the effort made to work in a unified and consensual way in the interest of Gloucestershire's communities and organisations, which means that key elements share common principles and approaches, including the overarching vision and ambition, locality working, future operating model(s), workforce assumptions and approach to using data and digital technology. The proposed implementation roadmap has also been developed collectively and shares key assumptions and elements.
- 3.2 Leaders also agreed not to draft the full proposals to read as documents promoting or 'selling' one full proposal over another, which has helped underpin the similarities between the proposals and promote their reliance on evidence.
- 3.3 As it will be the Government which ultimately will determine the future structure of local government in Gloucestershire, it is in the interests of everyone that all full proposals that go forward are capable of being delivered.
- 3.4 Although there are strong similarities between key sections of the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals, there are some main differences apart from the difference in geographic footprint, which Members may wish to focus on in the appended full proposals for one unitary council and two unitary councils east / west:

- Options Analysis (Appendix C, p36 and Appendix D, p35). For some of the Government's key criteria, the one unitary authority proposal is assessed as more closely aligned.
- Financial Case (Appendix C, p92 and Appendix D, p93). The one unitary authority proposal represents greater efficiency and savings, largely based on economies of scale, whilst the two unitary east / west proposal would have greater needs and costs.
- Disaggregation. The two unitary east / west option would mean that countywide services such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services would be disaggregated between the east / west councils.
- Fire and Rescue. The two unitary east / west proposal would require the creation of a separate Fire and Rescue Authority and service as this cannot be disaggregated.

3.5 Members are advised that these need to be taken into account in their considerations.

4. Financial considerations for the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals

4.1 Effective local government in Gloucestershire, both now and in the future, relies on strong and sustainable finances. The full proposals in the attached appendices include detailed financial cases. For the one unitary and the two unitary east / west proposals, these cover baseline financial positions, reorganisation impacts, transformation opportunities, funding mechanisms and Council tax alignment, concluding with an assessment of financial viability and sustainability for each option.

Baseline financial position

- 4.2 The Government's Fair Funding Review introduces significant uncertainty and is expected to reduce Gloucestershire's funding due to factors such as the reset of business rates baselines and prioritisation of urban deprivation, on which Gloucestershire scores lower than other parts of the country. Income projections have been prudently adjusted downwards to reflect this across the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals. Further updates are anticipated once Government has provided further information and guidance.
- 4.3 In a one unitary model, Gloucestershire would start with a balanced budget of approximately £851.4 million in both income and expenditure on reorganisation, assuming that the existing seven principal authorities meet their planned savings over the years prior to reorganisation.
- 4.4 Under the two unitary east / west proposal, the west faces a net budget gap of £23.3 million, while the east has a net surplus of £20.5 million, driven mainly by higher demand and spending in Adult and Children's Social Care in the west. Again, this assumes that the existing principal authorities meet their planned savings over the years prior to reorganisation. The gap projected for the west will require additional mitigations to be considered, which may include the identification of further savings. This modelling makes evidence-based assumptions of the impact of the Fair Funding Review, but the outcome of the review remains uncertain, and the estimated gap / surplus is subject to change (it could either be narrowed or increased between the two councils depending on the review).
- 4.5 In addition to total income and expenditure, it is important to consider assets and long-term liabilities. The one unitary proposal would inherit long-term assets with a total value of £4.4 billion on reorganisation, but would also take on long-term liabilities of £1.1 billion, which includes outstanding borrowing and a Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit of £234.3 million. In the two unitary east / west proposal, the west would inherit long-term assets with a total value of £2.3 billion on reorganisation, with the east inheriting £2.1 billion. The west would take on liabilities of £580.8 million and the east £563.9 million, including outstanding

borrowing and the DFG deficit of £234.3 million which has been allocated using the share of Education, Health and Care Plans based on location of schools as a proxy.

- 4.6 A further consideration for ensuring the financial sustainability of the new council(s) is the level of Council Tax income they require, and how this affects what residents will need to pay in the future. The new unitary council(s) will need to decide how to align the Council Tax for their areas. The detailed financial case in the appendices for the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals includes modelling to illustrate the options that will need to be considered. The assumptions and inputs used have been tested and agreed by all seven S151 (Chief Finance Officers) across Gloucestershire.

Reorganisation savings

- 4.7 A one unitary and two unitary authority proposals would reduce duplication and streamline governance, generating savings. In general, the larger the new authorities will be, the greater the savings they will generate.
- 4.8 The one unitary proposal generates annual gross savings of £21.1 million with no additional costs, whilst the two unitary east / west proposal saves £18.9 million per year and incurs £8.1 million annually in additional disaggregation costs due to duplicated services and leadership across both councils, creating a net saving of £10.8 million per year. Payback periods are shorter for the one unitary proposal at 2 years, compared to a payback period of 4.9 years for the two unitary east / west proposal. Cumulative net savings after 10 years would be £164 million for the one unitary proposal and £54.8 million for the two unitary east / west proposal.

Transition costs

- 4.9 Transition costs are estimated at £21.3 million for the one unitary proposal and £30.1 million for the two unitary east / west proposal, reflecting the duplication of governance and ICT integration in the latter proposal. These costs do not include an activity costing of senior officer time likely to be consumed in the reorganisation process.
- 4.10 The two unitary east / west proposal incurs ongoing disaggregation costs of approximately £8.1 million per year from duplicated statutory leadership and service teams.

5. Stroud District Council criteria

- 5.1 Members will recall that, in addition to the Government's published criteria, the report to Council on 20 March 2025 set out some additional principles for progressing the interim plans and deciding on full proposals in Gloucestershire, which Members will wish to consider as they assess the three LGR proposals for Gloucestershire. These criteria were developed to ensure that due consideration is given to the criterion that 'new unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment'.
- 5.2 These additional criteria have been highlighted as the full proposals have been developed, and have been built into PwC's assessment as far as this is possible at this concept stage. The additional criteria are based on whether the proposals demonstrate:
- Support for the development of inclusive economic prosperity, which meets the needs of all, particularly the most vulnerable members of society
 - An equitable and financially viable council structure which does not exacerbate wealth or service need imbalances
 - Ability to maintain the delivery of key services at a local level to our residents and businesses with a focus on long term effectiveness rather than short term efficiency. Savings to be achieved by economies of scale and not service reductions
 - Strengthening of participative democracy including adequate elected representation

- Alignment with other public service providers and structures which support our parish and town councils and the voluntary and community sector
- A structure which facilitates continued joint and ambitious working for our local environment, nature recovery and climate action
- A structure which builds local identity incorporating best practice from the current councils and ensuring valued local assets are retained for community use
- A structure which facilitates the delivery of the SDC Council Plan priorities; environment, climate and nature; communities and wellbeing, local economy, housing and working for our communities.

- 5.3 Members may wish to focus on the proposals' neighbourhood models and democratic arrangements when assessing how far these additional criteria are met at this stage. In the one unitary full proposal Democratic Arrangements are set out from page 80 and Locality Arrangements from page 83 of Appendix C; in the two unitary east / west full proposal they are set out from pages 81 and 84 of Appendix D respectively.
- 5.4 There is very little difference between the one unitary and the two unitary east / west proposals in respect of the locality models developed, although in the latter proposal, the financial deficit from day one for the west Gloucestershire unitary authority would make it more difficult to fund non-statutory work such as that centring on climate change and adaptation and nature.
- 5.5 Many of the criteria above will be more relevant in the transitional stage to come, when the shadow councils will need to focus on council structure, the delivery of key services at the local level, how to strengthen participative democracy given the anticipated reduction in the number of elected councillors, alignment with other public service providers that support town and parish councils and the voluntary and community sector, and the priorities of the predecessor councils to take forward (such as those set out in the Stroud DC Council Plan).

6. Greater Gloucester / Gloucestershire two unitary full proposal

- 6.1 Gloucester City Council commissioned Lyon Local Government Ltd to assist with the development of its 'Greater Gloucester' proposal. The county council and the five other districts and borough councils have not been involved. This full proposal was shared with the other councils at the beginning of the month (November 2025), which means that there has not been time for the other six councils to carry out due diligence work to confirm that this proposal is viable and deliverable, as has been done for the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals. It is anticipated that this will be ready in time to respond to the Government's consultation on the full proposals for Gloucestershire in early 2026.
- 6.2 This full proposal suggests two unitary councils:
- Greater Gloucester, comprising Gloucester City, and subject to Ministerial direction to expand its geography beyond its existing boundary, wards within Stroud District, Tewkesbury Borough and Forest of Dean District (total population 178,000)
 - Gloucestershire Unitary – the rest of Gloucestershire including Cheltenham Borough, Cotswold District and subject to Ministerial direction to change boundaries, the remaining parts of Stroud District, Tewkesbury Borough and Forest of Dean District (population 470,000).
- 6.3 There are some key differences between this full proposal and the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals which were highlighted at the fourth Member briefing on 5 November and / or which have been drawn out in meetings between Chief Executives, Leaders and S151 (Chief Finance) Officers. These are highlighted below.

Boundary changes

- 6.4 Firstly, boundary changes would be required, unlike the other full proposals which do not rely on these as a starting point. It is acknowledged that an east / west two unitary solution might propose subsequent boundary changes to rationalise the boundaries in areas such as Coopers Edge, currently split between Stroud District, Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Borough Councils.
- 6.5 Government has set out that local authorities proposing boundary changes as part of a proposal must include a strong justification, be robust and address the wider implications for services such as fire and rescue, with the justification outweighing the likely additional costs and implementation complexities.
- 6.6 If new boundaries are to be created, they need to be clearly defined in full proposals and they should consider functioning economic areas, financial viability, the impact on housing supply and meeting local needs, and identify a contiguous area. Transition costs and the potential efficiency savings from the boundary changes should be identified.

Different options appraisal

- 6.7 A different options appraisal (Appendix E, Section 6, p51) has been used to that for the other two full proposals. The methodology used is different and different scores and RAG ratings have been given to the one unitary and two unitary east / west full proposals. This has not been part of a process working with any other councils.
- 6.8 The assessment summary of the three proposals (Appendix E, p56) sets out:
- One unitary proposal – scores 51, lowest cost, shortest payback but most challenging for devolution
 - Two unitaries east / west – scores 52, presents lowest devolution risk, hardest to justify in terms of heritage and identity
 - Greater Gloucester / Gloucestershire two unitaries – scores 51, recognition that in focusing on the city area it does not align with Government criteria on population size and creates an imbalance.

Different democratic arrangements

- 6.9 It is proposed that Greater Gloucester Unitary would have 52 Members and the Gloucestershire Unitary 81 Members, 133 in total. This would mean the former would have a ratio of councillors to constituents of 1: 2,478 and the latter a ratio of 1: 4,489 (see Appendix E, p59). This is the only proposal that would leave Gloucester City unparished.

Different financial modelling

- 6.10 The proposal uses financial modelling (Appendix E, section 8, p81) which is based on Revenue Outturn returns for 2023/24, then inflated, whereas the other two proposals use the latest Medium Term Financial Plan / Strategy positions with adjustments for the anticipated funding changes likely to result from the Fair Funding Review.
- 6.11 The financial assessment therefore effectively reworks the financial assessment of the one unitary and two unitary east / west proposals, leading to different costs and savings.
- 6.12 This concludes that in this model, there would be:
- Fewer redundancies / lower redundancy costs (although the assumptions include much greater costs across all three proposals)
 - Lower annual savings due to additional cost of management teams, democratic costs and disaggregation
 - Higher staff numbers and associated costs
 - Higher one-off costs associated with transition (£6 million higher than the one unitary proposal)
 - Longer payback period of 4 years

- Lower additional ongoing costs for social care on the basis that bigger does not always mean economies of scale, although the evidence for this may not be robust and may not apply to the Gloucestershire Unitary given the difference in population sizes

6.13 There are some apparent omissions which may give rise to risks:

- The proposal does not include any assessment of the Fair Funding reforms
- There has been no assessment of the impact on Council Tax collection rates and harmonisation
- Financial modelling has not been shared with other S151 (Chief Finance Officers)
- Financial modelling does not appear to include Fire & Rescue
- Financial and other modelling does not appear to include consideration of impact on the Stroud District HRA and hundreds of Stroud District Council tenants in the identified wards.

Other points to note

- 6.14 There is a focus on the heritage and identity of the Greater Gloucester Unitary but no assessment of heritage and identity / impact on the rest of the county.
- 6.15 The proposal includes commentary on Adult and Children's services which does not reflect the recent (August) OFSTED inspection of Children's Services which rated services as good, with outstanding features.
- 6.16 The proposal includes a hyper-local, prevention first approach to Children's Services, Adult Social Services and SEND services.
- 6.17 An independent Fire & Rescue service is proposed, whereas the two unitary east / west proposal suggests that Fire & Rescue would transfer to the Police and Crime Commissioner. This needs clarification as options for Fire & Rescue, currently a service embedded in Gloucestershire County Council, will depend on whether there is a continuing authority or not. Financial impacts do not appear to have not been modelled.

7. Letters to the Secretary of State

- 7.1 Appendix A sets out the latest version of the draft covering letter agreed between six out of the seven principal councils to accompany the jointly prepared full proposals for one unitary council and two unitaries east / west. Gloucester City Council is preparing its own covering letter to accompany the jointly prepared full proposals and its own proposal for two unitaries comprising Greater Gloucester and the rest of Gloucestershire.
- 7.2 This first letter will be completed and reviewed once all six councils have made their decisions on which full proposal each is proposing / supporting. For that reason, it is recommended that Council delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to complete and sign the letter (at Appendix A) on behalf of the Council.
- 7.3 Each council is likely to also submit its own letter explaining which full proposal it proposes / supports and why, together with any other comments it wishes to make. Appendix B sets out a draft skeleton letter that might guide SDC's submission. It is anticipated that this will capture this Council's debate on the full proposals, setting out which full proposal it supports, the reasons for this, and any views on the other full proposals or the process which SDC would like to bring to the Secretary of State's attention. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the other political group leaders, to complete this letter after the Council meeting, for submission to the Secretary of State on behalf of the Council.

8. Next steps

- 8.1 The timeline for the seven principal councils in Gloucestershire to decide which full proposals to submit / support is as follows:

Council	Council meeting date	Executive meeting date
Cheltenham Borough	17 November 2025	18 November 2025
Cotswold District	26 November 2025	26 November 2025
Forest of Dean District	13 November 2025	19 November 2025
Gloucester City	20 November 2025	21 November 2025
Gloucestershire County	12 November 2025	19 November 2025
Stroud District	20 November 2025	n/a
Tewkesbury Borough	18 November 2025	n/a

- 8.2 In a committee system (Stroud District Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council), the decision will be taken by full Council. In an Executive / Cabinet model (all other councils), the decision will be taken by Executive / Cabinet, although all councils are debating the LGR proposals at full Council to inform those decisions.
- 8.3 The submission of full proposals by 28 November 2025 marks **stage 2, submission of formal unitary proposals**, of the LGR process. As specified in the invitation, each council can make only one formal proposal for unitary local government. The Secretary of State can decide to take forward proposals that are submitted with or without modification.
- 8.4 **Stage 1, inviting unitary proposals** was the statutory invitation letter of 5 February 2025 which went to the 21 areas of England which have two tier county / district structures.
- 8.5 **Stage 3, statutory consultation** is expected to be carried out in early 2026. The Government will carry out a statutory consultation for Gloucestershire. Technically, the Secretary of State must first consult any council which has not submitted a proposal together with other appropriate bodies or persons before a proposal can be implemented. In Surrey the Government consulted a list of statutory consultees and invited the views of any persons or bodies interested in the proposals, and included on the gov.uk website links to those proposals.
- 8.6 **Stage 4, decision to implement a proposal.** Once a statutory consultation is concluded, Ministers will decide which, if any, proposal is to be implemented, with or without modification. Ministers will judge proposals in the round against the criteria (appended to the invitation letter of 5 February 2025) and take into account consultation responses and representations received. In Gloucestershire it is anticipated that the Government will make its decision in Summer 2026.
- 8.7 **Stage 5, Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO).** Once the decision is taken, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will prepare the necessary legislation (the SCO) for Parliamentary approval. The SCO will establish a new single tier of local government and makes provision to abolish the predecessor councils. Any currently planned elections will be replaced with new elections for the new councils, which for Gloucestershire are expected to take place on 6 May 2027. An SCO is anticipated in Autumn 2026, following Government's decision.
- 8.8 The SCO will specify the arrangements for the new elections including names of wards / divisions and number of councillors to be elected, the functions the new 'shadow' council(s) will have in the transition period and establish suitable governance arrangements for the transition period prior to the anticipated 'go live' vesting date for the new council(s) of 1 April 2028.
- 8.9 **Stage 6, transition period.** Once the SCO has been made, existing councils carry on delivering services and fulfilling duties until vesting day, whilst preparing to transfer all assets, functions and staff on vesting day itself, when existing councils will be dissolved, and the new unitary council(s) take on the legal duties and powers for providing local government in the area. The 'transition body' will be responsible for getting ready for the

'go live' date and will be required to provide MHCLG with an Implementation Plan. This will be expected to cover matters such as Council Tax harmonisation, aggregation and disaggregation of services, staffing, disputes and continuity. During the transition period, the Minister can decide to direct the new council(s) to give them a role in decision making in the existing, predecessor councils, known as a Section 24 direction.

8.10 Stage 7, new unitary council(s) go live. For Gloucestershire this is anticipated to be 1 April 2028.

8.11 The seven principal councils are already working together on a road map for implementation to put Gloucestershire in the best possible position in the run up to LGR.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Officers at the seven principal councils have worked together to prepare the one unitary and two unitary councils east / west proposals, and are agreed that both are viable and deliverable. There has been little time to assess the viability and deliverability of the Gloucester City Council proposal for a 'Greater Gloucester' city unitary and a unitary council surrounding it.

9.2 The choice of which proposal to support is a policy decision, which Councillors should make by considering the best interests of the communities of Stroud District and the county of Gloucestershire against the three proposals prepared. This report therefore does not indicate a recommended option. However, it is recommended that Council supports one full proposal, rather than not supporting any, which is also an option.

9.3 Government will lead public consultation in early 2026 on all the full proposals submitted for Gloucestershire by 28 November 2025. Ultimately the Government will decide which of the submitted proposals will shape the future of local government in Gloucestershire. A decision is anticipated in Summer 2026.

10. Implications

10.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications from submitting a preferred option for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire to Government. There are however significant financial implications from LGR.

A summary of the financial position for new the council/s for the 1Unitary Authority /2Unitary Authority (east/west) options are set out in section 4 of this report. It sets out the expected cost, savings and a day one budget position of each new council. As included in the report from paragraph 6.10 the Greater Gloucester model uses different financial assumptions which have not yet been fully ratified by S151 Officers.

Financial impact on Stroud District Council

All three models assume that any budget gaps, including the reduction in funding as part of the Fair Funding Review, will be addressed prior to LGR. This is not currently modelled within the Stroud District Council Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and will need to be considered as part of budget setting for 2026/27 and future years.

All models set out an estimated cost of transition. These costs would need to be shared across the seven existing councils as these costs will be incurred prior to the vesting of the new council/s. The total cost and split of costs is not yet known/agreed.

It is likely that additional costs will also be incurred by Stroud District Council directly. This will include staffing costs relating to LGR and backfilling posts of staff working on LGR at SDC, in a countywide setting or for the shadow authority. There may also be recruitment costs and agency staffing expenditure for substantive roles as uncertainty over the future could impact the recruitment and retention of officers continuing to provide SDC services

until vesting day of a successor council. Additional support, for example training, could also be offered to staff to put them in the best place to move into a new authority.

At its meeting on 23 October 2025, Council agreed to put aside £1.5m towards the future cost of LGR in the MTFP. A reserve of £60k was also set aside from the 2024/25 Outturn position (Strategy and Resources Committee 26 June 2025). It is likely that additional funding will be required to cover SDC share of transition costs and additional direct costs, and this will need to be considered in the MTFP.

All costs relating to LGR are to be monitored and reported to Strategy and Resources Committee through regular budget monitoring reports.

In the run up to LGR statutory duties including the day to day running of the council, ensuring best value and a requirement to set a balanced budget remain in place. Government has also been clear that decisions regarding ongoing service delivery and financial strategy of existing councils must not compromise the sustainability of the new council.

As set out in paragraph 8.10 it can be expected that following the Structural Changes Order the Secretary of State will issue a direction under section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the Section 24 Direction). This would mean that Stroud District Council would require consent (from the new council, or as set out in the Direction) for entering into contracts of £1m for capital or £100k for non capital, or for the disposal of any land where the disposal exceeds £100k. This is to ensure that a new authority has oversight over decisions of the existing councils and that they are not to the detriment of the successor council.

Lucy Clothier, Strategic Head of Finance (S151 Officer)
Tel: 01453 754343 Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk

10.2 Legal Implications

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to invite areas to submit proposals for local government reorganisation. The Secretary of State exercised those powers in his letter to councils dated 5 February 2025.

The Government introduced the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill on 10 July 2025 putting into effect the Devolution Framework set out in the English Devolution White Paper published on 16 December 2024

The Secretary of State has powers under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (Part 6 – Economic Prosperity Boards and Combined Authorities) to make an Order for the creation of a Combined Authority and Strategic Authorities as defined in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.

Option 3 set out in this report will involve principal area boundary reviews, which if accepted would need to be conducted under various legislation.

The decision on the proposal that will be implemented in Gloucestershire will be a decision of Government. This decision will be taken following statutory consultation. Once the decision on which proposal to be implemented has been made the Government will prepare the necessary legislation.

There are no direct legal implications arising from the submission of the proposals for reorganisation there will be significant legal implications in the restructuring of local government following the Government's decision on the proposal to be implemented and these will be highlighted at the appropriate time.

Alice McAlpine, Monitoring Officer
Email: monitoring.officer@stroud.gov.uk

10.3 Equality Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the single unitary full proposal and the two unitary east / west proposal by the seven principal councils working together, and for the third full proposal, two unitaries based on a 'Greater Gloucester' city / its surrounding area, by Gloucester City Council.

The Equalities Impact Assessments for all three Local Government Reorganisation full proposals for Gloucestershire have been included as an appendix to each of the proposals (Appendix 7 of the one unitary and two unitaries east / west proposals and Appendix G of the Greater Gloucester two unitary proposal) and have been used to inform the options analysis.

10.4 Environmental Implications

Overall environmental and climate matters have been considered in the Options Analysis section of the full proposals.

At this stage, there is insufficient information about the changes that would be made to service delivery and ways of working that would help inform a decision. Once Government has decided on the Local Government Reorganisation model for Gloucestershire, and implementation programmes have been scoped, it will be possible to better analyse environmental and climate impacts.

However, each proposal should support environmental sustainability as each gives the opportunity to reduce duplication across existing councils, rationalise the public estate and assets, promote consistency in waste and recycling collections, and better integrate planning, transportation and housing to promote greener growth. A greater focus on neighbourhood-based delivery and digital accessibility should also reduce the need to travel.

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APPENDIX A

Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

cc. Alison McGovern MP

Minister of State (Minister for Local Government and Homelessness)

2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF

By email: Ministerial.Correspondence@communities.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

Proposals from Gloucestershire Councils for a Single Unitary Authority and Two Unitary Authorities (East / West)

As Leaders of six of the seven principal councils in Gloucestershire, we are pleased to submit two proposals as follows:

1. Single unitary council¹: A unitary council for the whole county, population 659k (2023 mid-year estimate); and
2. Two unitary councils² (East/West), one comprising the districts of Gloucester, Forest of Dean, and Stroud (population 349k) and the other comprising the districts of Cheltenham, Cotswold, and Tewkesbury (population 310k).

A third option, from Gloucester City Council, has been prepared outside of our joint arrangements and will be submitted under separate cover.

Joint working arrangements

The single unitary proposal and East/West two unitaries proposal have been jointly prepared, with a maximum degree of collaboration between all seven principal councils, involving:

- Use of a shared base of data and evidence throughout;
- A single option analysis, jointly developed and approved;
- A single financial model and underpinning assumptions and calculations;
- Service-by-service meetings and analysis to inform aggregation and disaggregation choices;
- A joint, option agnostic, public and stakeholder engagement programme; and
- A single drafting approach, with divergence only where scale and place matters make it necessary.

¹ 'Type A' proposal

² 'Combined' proposal (2x 'Type B' proposals)

Appendix A

The effort in achieving this outcome has been significant, and as Leaders we have been closely involved, ensuring we have given time and attention to working through challenges collectively, as your invitation requested. This hard work in establishing leadership trust is already paying dividends for Gloucestershire as we move quickly towards a robust plan for transition and implementation.

Although we now have sight of the Gloucester City Council proposal, we have had insufficient time since its publication earlier this month to undertake due diligence, and deliberate fully on its merits and risks. This process will be underway shortly and we intend to offer our conclusions as part of the Ministerial consultation on options.

Council decisions

The outcome of the various democratic processes for the six councils we represent, undertaken over recent weeks, is set out in the table below:

Council	Decision process / link	Option proposed (or other resolution)	Comments
Cheltenham Borough Council	tba setting out decision process i.e. Cabinet or Council		
Cotswold District Council	tba setting out decision process i.e. Cabinet or Council		
Forest of Dean District Council	tba setting out decision process i.e. Cabinet or Council		
Gloucestershire County Council	tba setting out decision process i.e. Cabinet or Council		
Stroud District Council	tba setting out decision process i.e. Cabinet or Council		
Tewkesbury Borough Council	tba setting out decision process i.e. Cabinet or Council		

Proposing Authorities

For clarity, the table above reflects that, in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007:

- The single unitary authority proposal for the County of Gloucestershire (attached) is proposed by [REDACTED] Council/s
- The East / West Two Unitary proposal for the County of Gloucestershire (attached) is proposed by [REDACTED] Council/s
- [REDACTED] Council is not proposing one of the attached options, but [REDACTED]

Additional information and representations from individual councils

The proposals submitted are deliberately impartially framed. However individual Gloucestershire Councils, via their democratic processes, have reached their conclusions. Each Leader is therefore writing to you to separately reflect and explain the position of individual councils. Naturally these letters will express more detail of the position reached by each Council, the key supporting reasoning, and include emphases or information of local importance. None of these additional representations are intended to contradict the substantive proposals attached.

Conclusion

We are happy to provide any further clarification on these proposals as needed and await confirmation of the next steps of the LGR process for Gloucestershire.

Leader	Signature
Cllr Rowena Hay Cheltenham Borough Council	
Cllr Mike Evemy Cotswold District Council	
Cllr Adrian Birch Forest of Dean District Council	
Cllr Lisa Spivey Gloucestershire County Council	
Cllr Chloe Turner Stroud District Council	
Cllr Richard Stanley Tewkesbury Borough Council	

Proposals attached and submitted

- Single unitary proposal and appendices

- ii. Two unitaries (East/West) proposal and appendices

APPENDIX B

Draft letter, to be completed after the Council meeting on 20 November 2025, to capture the views expressed at that meeting and SDC's support for / views on the three full proposals.

Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

cc Alison McGovern MP

Minister of State (Minister for Local Government and Homelessness)

2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

By email: Ministerial.Correspondence@communities.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State

Proposals from Gloucestershire Councils – Stroud District Council's views and support

Stroud District Council, at its meeting on 20 November 2025, considered the three full proposals that have been developed for Gloucestershire:

1. A single unitary council for the whole county, developed jointly by all seven principal councils
2. Two unitary councils (east / west), the east comprising Cheltenham Borough, Cotswold District and Tewkesbury Borough Council and the west comprising Gloucester City, Forest of Dean and Stroud Districts, developed jointly by all seven principal councils
3. Two unitary councils, based on a Greater Gloucester and a rest of Gloucestershire Unitary Council, developed by Gloucester City Council.

The value of District Councils

For the last 50 years or so, District Councils have delivered visible frontline services that matter to every resident and business in their areas.

We play a valuable role within integrated care systems by providing services that influence the wider determinants of health. We are committed to improving the quality of life in our communities through providing essential services such as waste

collection, planning and housing, the prevention of homelessness, welfare support, environmental health, parks and green spaces and leisure centres.

We play a unique role in place shaping, striving to create attractive places to live and work, and promoting a share in the prosperity of the economic development that we drive for our communities. We foster pride in our places, provide cultural and educational opportunities, and are close to the communities that we serve.

This is working well in Gloucestershire. We have not asked for Local Government Reorganisation.

Local Government Reorganisation

However, we have responded positively to the statutory invitation to submit proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire, working closely with our partner principal councils, to help unlock the longer-term prize of devolution, which would bring tangible benefits to the county as part of a Strategic Authority with devolved powers and funding.

We have done so because we believe that Local Government in Gloucestershire must continue to represent the concerns of our communities and that services continue to be responsive to local needs. We are committed to doing our best to ensure that Local Government remains genuinely local, with our communities genuinely empowered. We believe that our role in helping to shape the future of Local Government in Gloucestershire is important.

Stroud District Council support

Stroud District Council, at its meeting on 20 November 2025, voted to support the full proposal x for y reasons (include key conclusions from the debate).

Record vote – how many supported which full proposal.

Views on the other full proposals

Capture of points raised on the other two full proposals, including points in favour and concerns raised during debate.

Potentially acknowledge that the future of Local Government in Gloucestershire will be a Ministerial decision (whatever SDC's preference or the county's overall preference), and that SDC will play its part with partner principal councils to make viable and deliverable full proposals work.

Transition arrangements

Given that District Councils are close to our communities, our role in transition arrangements for Gloucestershire is important.

(In the event of supporting a single unitary council; We request that all predecessor councils should have equal representation on an implementation executive set up to oversee transition.

In the event of supporting two unitary councils: We request that all predecessor councils should have equal representation on any joint committee set up to oversee transition.)

(We could also request that in the event that the Ministerial decision is for one unitary council, it is constituted as a new council and that the existing county council and six districts are all abolished and a new council is set up. (Note: might be culturally important if unlikely to be implemented as a 'continuing authority' arrangement would be more practicable / cost effective)).

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