



## **Minutes of a meeting of Council held on Wednesday, 20 May 2026**

### Members present:

|                     |                              |                   |
|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Mark Harris (Chair) | Ray Brassington (Vice-Chair) |                   |
| Gina Blomefield     | Paul Hodgkinson              | Tom Stowe         |
| Claire Bloomer      | Nikki Ind                    | Jeremy Theyer     |
| Nick Bridges        | Angus Jenkinson              | Craig Thurling    |
| Patrick Coleman     | Julia Judd                   | Clare Turner      |
| David Cunningham    | Juliet Layton                | Michael Vann      |
| Tony Dale           | Mike McKeown                 | Ian Watson        |
| Paul Evans          | Dilys Neill                  | Len Wilkins       |
| Mike Evemy          | Andrea Pellegram             | Tristan Wilkinson |
| David Fowles        | Tony Slater                  |                   |
| Joe Harris          | Lisa Spivey                  |                   |

### Officers present:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Jane Portman, Chief Executive Officer  | Tyler Jardine, Trainee Democratic Services Officer              |
| Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) | David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer |
| Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer                                    | Kirsty Winters, Communications Officer                          |
| Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer                   |   |

## **98 Election of a Chair**

Councillor Mark Harris opened the meeting and then stood down for the first item on the agenda. Councillor Ray Brassington welcomed councillors, members of the public present, and those watching online. He introduced the first item of business, being the election of the Chair of Council for the Civic Year 2026/27, and called for nominations.

Councillor Juliet Layton stood to nominate Councillor Mark Harris for a second term, commenting on his excellent chairing over the past twelve months.

Councillor Tony Dale seconded the nomination.

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There were no further nominations for the position of Chair of Council, so the nomination was put to a vote and agreed by Council.

#### Voting Record

30 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Having been elected, Councillor Harris signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chair. The Proper Officer witnessed the signature.

Councillor Harris expressed his gratitude for the honour of being re-elected Chair of Council and affirmed his commitment to the role.

| <b>To APPOINT Councillor Mark Harris as Chair of Council (Resolution)</b>                         |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| RESOLVED: That Councillor Mark Harris be appointed as Chair of Council for the Civic Year 2026/27 |  |    |
| For   | Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Paul Evans, Mike Evey, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Craig Thurling, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Ian Watson, Tristan Wilkinson and Len Wilkins | 30 |
| Against   | None   | 0  |
| Conflict Of Interests   | None   | 0  |
| Abstain   | None   | 0  |
| <b>Carried</b>  |  |    |

## **99 Appointment of a Vice-Chair**

The Chair presided over the appointment of a Vice-Chair of Council and nominated Councillor Ray Brassington for the position.

The Chair called for a seconder. Councillor Paul Evans stood to second the nomination of Councillor Ray Brassington as Vice-Chair of Council for the Civic year 2026/27.

There were no further nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of Council.

The nomination was put to a vote and agreed by Council.

#### Voting record:

29 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

Councillor Craig Thurling did not vote.

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Having been elected Councillor Brassington signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Vice-Chair. The Proper Officer witnessed the signature.

| <b>To APPOINT Councillor Ray Brassington as Vice-Chair of Council for the Civic Year 2026/27 (Resolution)</b> |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| RESOLVED that Councillor Ray Brassington be appointed as Vice-Chair of Council for the Civic Year 2026/27.    |  |    |
| For   | Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Paul Evans, Mike Evey, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Ian Watson, Tristan Wilkinson and Len Wilkins | 29 |
| Against   | None   | 0  |
| Conflict Of Interests   | None   | 0  |
| Abstain   | None   | 0  |
| <b>Carried</b>  |  |    |

## **100 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Helene Mansilla, Councillor Jon Wareing, Councillor Daryl Corps and Councillor Laura Hall-Wilson.

## **101 Announcements from the Chair, Leader or Chief Executive**

The Chair invited Councillor David Fowles to speak. Councillor Fowles stood to thank officers and members for their good wishes and messages of support following his recent accident, stating that these had sustained him during his stay in the Acute Assessment Unit at Great Western Hospital.

Councillor Fowles confirmed that he was recovering well and, after making a light-hearted remark about his appearance, reiterated his sincere gratitude for the kindness and support he had received.

The Chair then invited Councillor Joe Harris to speak.

Councillor Harris stood to thank colleagues for their support during a recent Code of Conduct investigation arising from a Counter Fraud report, noting that no wrongdoing had been found. He welcomed the apology received from the Chief Executive and commented on the personal impact the matter and related social media speculation

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had had on both himself and his family. He also suggested that consideration be given to strengthening pastoral support for councillors facing high-profile allegations.

The member informed Council that this would be his final meeting at Cotswold District Council following his decision to take up a new role. He paid tribute to Council officers for their dedication and hard work during recent challenges, including the pandemic; cost of living crisis; energy crisis and Brexit, and thanked councillor colleagues from across the political spectrum for their support, challenge and collaboration over the years.

He reflected on his time serving on the Council, including ten years as Leader of his group and six years as Council Leader, and expressed pride in having encouraged others into public service. He concluded by stating that serving the Council had been an honour and thanked members and officers for their support throughout his political career.

The Chair then invited other Councillors to speak. Members paid tribute to Councillor Joe Harris on the occasion of his departure from the Council. It was noted that he had first become involved in local politics at a young age and had subsequently built a long and distinguished record of public service.

Members highlighted his leadership of the Council, his campaigning ability, and his commitment to key priorities including housing, climate action, and service improvement. His work during the COVID-19 pandemic, including efforts to maintain public communication and engagement, was particularly recognised.

Councillors across all groups acknowledged his visibility and energy in public life, his contribution at district, county, and national level as well as through the LGA, and his ability to engage with residents and colleagues alike. His mentoring of new councillors and support for colleagues at the start of their political careers was also noted.

While acknowledging that political debate with him could be robust, members expressed respect for his dedication and commitment to public service. Several members thanked him personally for his support and wished him well for the future, and his new career, recognising the significant contribution he had made to the Council and the wider community.

#### Chairs Announcements:

The Chair then moved to his announcements and also paid tribute to Councillor Joe Harris, stating that he was very proud of his contribution and legacy. He noted that Councillor Harris had made a significant impact on the political landscape in the Cotswolds, contributing to increased political engagement and changes in local representation over a number of election cycles.

The Chair observed that under his leadership the Liberal Democrat Group had grown substantially in representation and had led the Council for two terms, and described this as a key part of his legacy in changing local politics. He further noted that Councillor Harris was leaving public office at a point of success in his political career and commended the manner of his departure.

The Chair concluded by wishing him every success in his new career.

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As part of his announcements the Chair commented on his future involvement with an operator of a leisure-based activity in the Cotswold Water Park. He stated that he had previously worked with the operator for approximately 10 years in a marketing and advisory capacity, and that this engagement might in due course relate to planning applications before the Council concerning the regularisation and potential expansion of existing facilities.

He confirmed that he was not a director, shareholder, or office holder in the organisation, and that no planning applications or pre-application submissions had yet been made. The Chair then advised that he had discussed the matter with the Monitoring Officer and the Director of Planning and had agreed a protocol for future engagement to ensure there was no unfair advantage arising from his position as a Councillor. He emphasised that he was making the declaration in the interests of transparency.

The Chair then reminded Members that, with effect from 11 May 2026, the Local Government Pension Scheme would be available to eligible elected Members in England under the age of 75. He noted that details had been circulated and were available on the Member portal.

A planning training session for all Members on Wednesday 3 June at 2.00 pm was also highlighted. Members were encouraged to attend regardless of previous attendance, including both Planning Committee Members and those not serving on the Committee, in order to ensure a sufficient pool of trained Members for any necessary substitutions. The importance of attendance was emphasised, and Members were reminded of the significance of planning matters within their wards.

The Leader was then invited to speak.

Leaders Announcements:

The Leader advised Members of a government consultation recently issued in relation to proposed local government structural changes. It was reported that a meeting of Gloucestershire leaders had taken place, attended by Councillor Wilkinson on behalf of the Leader and Councillor Spivey, Leader of Gloucestershire County Council, together with officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Members were informed that a draft Structural Changes Order had been issued for comment, providing for the abolition of existing councils and the creation of new unitary arrangements. The deadline for responses had been set as 16 June, and concern was noted regarding the limited timescale and the fact that this preceded the Government's final decision on the preferred model for Gloucestershire.

It was reported that each of the seven councils had been asked to respond to 10 questions covering the three options submitted.

The Leader confirmed that, following discussions with the Chief Executive and fellow leaders, a report would be brought to Cabinet on 4 June to agree the Council's

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response. It was noted that this was an executive consultation and that the final decision rested with Government.

Members would be invited to submit comments, and further information, including the consultation document, would be circulated. It was also noted that discussions were ongoing between Gloucestershire leaders and Chief Executives to explore areas of common ground, including governance matters such as naming conventions and returning officer arrangements.

Members were advised of the anticipated timetable, including a Government decision ahead of the parliamentary recess, and potential legislation the following year, with implications for implementation and elections. Consideration was also being given to referring the matter to Overview and Scrutiny prior to Cabinet.

The Leader concluded by paying tribute to Councillor Joe Harris. He reflected on first meeting him in 2010 and campaigning alongside him in 2011, noting his early political involvement, including becoming Mayor of Cirencester at the age of 20 and later serving as Group Leader. Councillor Joe Harris's role in strengthening the Group's electoral position and supporting the formation and leadership of the administration from 2019, as well as his earlier work in opposition during challenging electoral periods was noted.

The Leader noted his strategic leadership, including development of the Council's corporate priorities and contributions to wider local government work, including at the LGA. He thanked Councillor Joe Harris for his leadership, support, and service, and wished him well for the future.

There were no announcements from the Chief Executive.

## **102 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest from Members present.

## **103 Announcement of the Leader on Cabinet Appointments**

The Leader presented the updated Cabinet portfolio responsibilities, noting that the document had been circulated as part of Agenda Item 6.

The Leader formally congratulated Councillor Evans on his appointment to the Cabinet, as Cabinet Member for Health and Communities. His portfolio included public health, safeguarding, and community safety partnership functions previously overseen by Councillor Tony Dale, as well as liaison with the voluntary and third sector, previously held by the Leader. It was also noted that Councillor Evans would take lead responsibility for work relating to young people and older people, including the Council's response to dementia-friendly communities, it was confirmed that a report on this work was expected to be brought to the July Council meeting.

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Members were advised of minor associated portfolio adjustments, including a change in title for Councillor Dale to Cabinet member for Leisure, Culture and Visitor Experience. The Leader concluded by thanking councillors for their support and looked forward to working with members and officers to enhance the district.

RESOLVED: Full Council NOTED the appointments of the Cabinet portfolio holders.

#### **104 Appointment to Committees 2026-27**

The Leader, Councillor Mike Evey introduced the item on committee nominations and working groups, referring Members to Annex B.

It was reported that the Council was required to review committee memberships annually and that Annex A set out the political balance calculations. Members were reminded that political balance arrangements had been agreed at the previous meeting in March 2026 and remained unchanged; accordingly, the existing committee allocations were carried forward for the new civic year.

Councillor Mike Evey, proposed the nominations as set out in Annex B on an en bloc basis, the nominations were seconded by Councillor Tom Stowe.

There being no questions or objections, the Chair moved to the vote.

#### Voting record:

30 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

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| <b>To AGREE appointments to Council committees and working groups for the Civic Year 2026/27 and to make appointments to the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of Committees for the Civic Year 2026/27 (Resolution)</b> |  |  |
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|---------------------------|--|--|
| Full Council RESOLVED to: |  |  |
|---------------------------|--|--|

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| 1. DETERMINE that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act"), the Council shall continue to apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A; |  |  |
| 2. APPOINT Councillors to serve on the Council's Committees and working groups as set out in Annex B for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council;  |  |  |
| 3. APPOINT Chairs and Vice-Chairs for the Council's Committees and working groups as shown in Annex B;   |  |  |
| 4. NOTE the arrangements for substitutions set out in part 4 of the report;  |  |  |

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| For | Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Paul Evans, Mike Evey, | 30 |
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|                       |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
|                       | David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Craig Thurling, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Ian Watson, Tristan Wilkinson and Len Wilkins |   |
| Against               | None  | 0 |
| Conflict Of Interests | None  | 0 |
| Abstain               | None  | 0 |
| <b>Carried</b>        |   |   |

### **105 Record of Attendance 2025/26**

The Leader, Councillor Mike Every introduced the report on member attendance for the civic year 2025/26 highlighting that the report was to note.

A query was raised regarding the recording of attendance for Members acting as substitutes on committees, suggesting that such attendance should be recorded as attendance as a substitute member rather than as an observer, in order to better reflect Members' contributions.

Officers clarified that Members attending as substitutes were recorded as having attended the meeting as a committee member, while the "observer" category referred to Members attending in a non-voting capacity, often in connection with portfolio responsibilities or committee liaison roles. It was noted that substitute attendance was therefore already reflected within the attendance figures.

It was further noted the distinction between substitute Members, who were entitled to vote, and observers, who were not.

The Chair further highlighted that attendance records related specifically to meetings of Cotswold District Council.

RESOLVED: Full Council NOTED the Record of Attendance 2025/26 report.

### **106 Appointments to Outside Bodies 2026-27**

The Leader introduced the report on appointments to outside bodies and scrutiny committees.

It was proposed that Councillor Angus Jenkinson continue as the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire County Council Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Dilys Neill continue on the Gloucestershire County Council

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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Conservative Group nominated Councillor David Fowles as substitute member for both committees.

Members were also advised of the establishment of the Gloucestershire Local Government Reorganisation Joint Scrutiny Panel, comprising two representatives from each Gloucestershire authority to scrutinise work relating to local government reorganisation. Councillor Angus Jenkinson was nominated as the administration representative and Councillor Gina Bloomfield was nominated as the Conservative Group representative.

The Leader also referred Members to the executive appointments to outside bodies set out in Annex A, Table 2.

The resolution was proposed by Councillor Mike Evey and seconded by Councillor Juliet Layton.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the recommendations of the Outside Bodies report.

Voting record:

30 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

| <b>To AGREE nominations to outside bodies for the Civic Year 2026/27 (Resolution)</b>  |  |    |
|--|--|----|
| Council RESOLVED to:   |  |    |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. CONFIRM the appointments to the Gloucestershire County Council Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee and the Gloucestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Annex A Table 1.</li><li>2. NOTE the appointments to outside bodies by the Leader of the Council in respect of executive functions, as set out in Annex A Table 2;</li></ol> |  |    |
| For  | Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Paul Evans, Mike Evey, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Craig Thurling, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Ian Watson, Tristan Wilkinson and Len Wilkins | 30 |
| Against  | None   | 0  |
| Conflict Of Interests  | None   | 0  |
| Abstain  | None   | 0  |
| <b>Carried</b>   |  |    |

## **107 Notice of Motions**

Councillor Paul Hodgkinson was invited to propose Motion 2026/003: Protecting our Cotswolds Hospitals.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Hodgkinson highlighted the importance of community hospitals across the Cotswolds, including facilities in Cirencester, Moreton-in-Marsh, Fairford and Tetbury. He stated that local hospitals provided essential healthcare services close to home, including rehabilitation, outpatient services, diagnostics, and minor injury provision, while also reducing pressure on larger acute hospitals.

Councillor Hodgkinson expressed concern regarding the gradual reduction of services within community hospitals and noted that residents were increasingly sceptical of assurances that service reductions described as “temporary” would later be restored. He stressed the importance of transparency, accountability, and meaningful consultation where changes to local healthcare provision were proposed. He further noted the importance of local healthcare services within a rural district with an ageing population and planned housing growth, and referred to significant public support for protecting local hospitals.

During the debate, Members from across the Chamber spoke in support of the motion and made the following points:

- Community hospitals played a vital role in supporting elderly and vulnerable residents, particularly those requiring rehabilitation or treatment closer to home.
- Minor Injury Units and local outpatient services were highly valued by residents and often provided quicker and more accessible treatment than larger acute hospitals.
- Local hospitals had played a significant role during the COVID-19 pandemic, including acting as vaccination centres and supporting wider community healthcare provision.
- Rural healthcare provision was particularly important given transport challenges within the Cotswolds and the increasing demand arising from an ageing population and planned housing growth.
- Members expressed concern regarding the long-term reduction and centralisation of healthcare services and the impact this could have on local communities.
- It was noted that stronger community healthcare and social care provision could help reduce pressure on larger hospitals and improve patient outcomes.
- Members also recognised the important contribution made by NHS staff, volunteers, and community organisations supporting local healthcare services.

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Councillor Claire Bloomer seconded the motion, expressing strong support. She highlighted the importance of community hospitals in providing accessible healthcare in rural areas, reducing pressure on larger hospitals, and supporting local communities. She also noted the impact of reduced services over time and the challenges faced by residents travelling longer distances for treatment due to limited public transport provision.

In summing up, Councillor Hodgkinson thanked Members for their support and reflected on positive experiences reported by residents of local hospitals and staff. He reiterated the importance of protecting community hospitals and ensuring that any temporary service reductions did not become permanent by default. He welcomed the suggestion of members that, when writing to NHS England, the Leader should seek clarity on the definition of "temporary", including an appropriate timeframe, to prevent the term being applied too loosely or without clear limitation. Concerns were expressed that measures described as temporary could otherwise become effectively permanent in the absence of proper review or accountability. He welcomed the cross-party support for the motion and urged Members to support it unanimously.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the motion proposed by Councillor Hodgkinson and seconded by Councillor Bloomer.

Voting record:

29 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

Councillor David Cunningham did not vote having left the Chamber at 7.03pm.

**Motion 2026/003 Protecting our Cotswolds hospitals (Motion)**

Full Council RESOLVED to:

1. REQUEST that the Leader of the Council write formally to Gloucestershire's NHS to seek assurances regarding the long-term future and sustainability local community hospital facilities emphasising that all temporary withdrawals of services should be just that - temporary, not permanent and to advocate for maximum utilisation of local community hospital facilities;
2. AGREE the vital role played by rural community hospitals in Cirencester, Moreton-in-Marsh, Fairford and Tetbury in providing accessible healthcare to residents of the Cotswolds.

For

Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Tony Dale, Paul Evans, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Craig Thurling, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Ian Watson, Tristan Wilkinson and Len Wilkins

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|                       |      |   |
|-----------------------|------|---|
| Against               | None | 0 |
| Conflict Of Interests | None | 0 |
| Abstain               | None | 0 |
| <b>Carried</b>        |      |   |

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### **108 Next meeting**

The next meeting of Full Council was confirmed as being on Wednesday 15 July 2026 at 6:00 pm

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.25 pm